The Formation of the Prisoner-Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Close Reading of *Letters and Papers from Prison*, from April 5, 1943, to July 20, 1944

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A dissertation submitted in *fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of the Arts in Religious Studies

Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2015

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to take Dietrich Bonhoeffer's prison experience seriously as a spiritually and theologically formative journey through liminal displacement. Using the anthropological theory of liminality as a lens for analysis, it offers a close reading of Bonhoeffer's prison writings, examining the porous nature of the sociocultural and metaphorical boundaries of the prison space as expressed in notes, letters, essays, prayers, poetry, and theological letters. In doing so, the thesis suggests that Bonhoeffer's dramatic transition into the prison space results in an "in-between-ness" (Palmer et al. 2009) that suspends the prisoner "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967) light and dark, inside and outside, above and below, sacred and profane space, dislocation and located-ness, suffering and hope, life and death. Chronologically examining distinct phases of liminality – separation, transition, anticipation – the study shows a cumulatively transformative movement in which the prisoner is drawn ever more deeply into the reality of his own life, and an ever increasing relationality with others, with God, and with the suffering of those who inhabit the *view from below*. It is observed that by taking an active role in navigating liminality, Bonhoeffer encounters multiple turning points at the heart of betwixt space, which break up "default modes of perception," (Wannenwetsch 2012) transforming the prison cell into a privileged place of insight that ultimately catalyses a transformative new vision of reality and the Christian life. Within liminality the borderlines and boundaries of the prison space remain just porous enough to create the possibility for alternative ways of viewing reality. Through theological, poetic, and polyphonic anticipation, Bonhoeffer risks imaginative resolve by reframing liminality as a Gethsemane-like displacement, stations on the way to freedom, and participation in the polyphonic nature of life. In it is concluded that Bonhoeffer's prison experience represents a uniquely formative space in which he was drawn into participation in the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ.

Keywords

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, prison experience, liminality, the view from below

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Of course, a Masters thesis is always a communal effort, no matter how solitary and lonely the hours spent writing can become. Many people in my life have contributed to the thoughts and insights contained within this study, whether directly through dialogue, discussion, critical feedback, or less directly through playful times of rest and celebration, conversation, friendship and loving support. Here I would like to thank the people that have contributed in large and small ways to the completion of this thesis.

Foremost, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to my supervisor John W. de Gruchy, for his continuous insight and support in thinking deeply about Bonhoeffer's prison experience and its meaning for his life and theology. Having spent many years in the process of editing *Letters and Papers from Prison* (DBWE 8), de Gruchy exudes an immensity of knowledge on the subject of Bonhoeffer's prison experience, and yet he is never short of grace filled hospitality and humility towards the novice who approaches the subject for the first time. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my parents, who through constant encouragement, financial support, and loved filled friendship, continue to remind me of "what we become only through others" (DBWE 8:154, 2/57). I would also like to give a special thanks to my father for offering editing support in cutting out all the unnecessary phraseology of the thesis.

My sincere thanks also go to Robert Steiner, who not only offered vital feedback in preparing the final draft of the thesis, helping me to think through the human elements of Bonhoeffer's prison experience, but who also has been my mentor and friend for many years. It was Robert who first offered me a glimpse of the concrete spirituality and faithful questioning that arises within the view from the below of Pollsmoor Prison. Memories of singing the Afro-Spirituals – that so captivated Bonhoeffer himself – in the communal cells of awaiting trial prisoners at Pollsmoor, will last with me a life time. Thank you.

I also want to thank a list of dear friends who have supported me along the way, offering insight, support, encouragement, and in the end, editing, feedback, and a swift kick in the ass. This list includes but is not limited to Rob Stegmann, Jono Schoots, Charissa Shay, Khegan Delport, Zach Hancock, and Wayne and Jennifer Eaves. And to Danielle Shay who kindly offered to print and deliver the thesis for me. You are beautiful human beings, and mean a great deal to me. Thank you.

For freeing me up in the last phase of this project, so that I might finally finish it, I would like to thank my employers and colleagues, Mark and Scott LoMurray, and Cody Sletten. It is my honour and pleasure to work with such great individuals, who embody such strength, resilience, and joy for life. You each embrace the polyphonic life that Bonhoeffer envisioned. Thank you.

Saving the best for last, I would like to thank my long-suffering wife who has endured many trials, postponements, extensions, and conversations about Bonhoeffer; who has cooked way more than her fare share of meals and who has carried us both through to this end, always encouraging me and anticipating a resolve to this liminal period. As we wait in anticipation for our son to be born, I thank you for journeying with me through this process and for always loving more than yesterday, but less than tomorrow. Thank you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

> "It remains an experience of incomparable value that we have for once learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, in short from the perspective of the suffering. If only during this time bitterness and envy have not corroded the heart; that we come to see matters great and small, happiness and misfortune, strength and weakness with new eyes; that our sense for greatness, humanness, justice, and mercy has grown clearer, freer, more incorruptible; that we learn, indeed, that personal suffering is a more useful key, a more fruitful principle than personal happiness for exploring the meaning of the world in contemplation and action. But this perspective from below must not lead us to become advocates for those who are perpetually dissatisfied. Rather, out of a higher satisfaction, which in its essence is grounded beyond what is below and above, we do justice to life in all its dimensions and in this way affirm it (DBWE 8:52).[1]

Bonhoeffer wrote this now famous fragment entitled *The View from Below*, sometime near the end of 1942, shortly before he was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo on the charge of "subversion of the armed forces" (de Gruchy, 2007:18). In the final section of his essay, entitled "After Ten Years" (DBWE 8:52, Prologue), Bonhoeffer exhorts his fellow conspirators and family of the need and privilege of learning to view the events of world history, not from the commanding position of the noble and privileged, but *from below*, from the perspective of the victims of world history.

This "new epistemological principle," as Wannenwetsch (2012:355) calls it, represents a perspective that Bonhoeffer discovered, as his involvement in the conspiracy movement located

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[1] From Bonhoeffer's essay "After Ten Years" (DBWE 8:52, Prologue). In a footnote of *DBWE* 8, it is indicated that this final paragraph of the essay was initially part of an "incomplete sketch that Bonhoeffer did not include in the final text" of the essay (DBWE 8:52, Prologue).

him, his family, and his fellow conspirators, no longer among the privileged of society, but among the threatened, the suspect, and the marginalised. As Bonhoeffer suffered in solidarity with the underprivileged in Barcelona, in Harlem, in Bethel, in the resistance movement, and then in Tegel prison, he experienced a shift in perspective that he came to cherish and value, as it transformed his own life and thought in crucial ways.

This perspective, which he named the "incomparable… view from below," allowed a level of access to spheres of reality and insight not available to those who had not learned wisdom through the personal experience[2] of suffering or through communion with Christ's suffering[3] (Wannenwetsch 2012:356; Dahill 2001:197; DBWE 8:48-50, Prologue). This perspective offers privileged access and insight, as Wannenwetsch (2012:356) indicates, by breaking up "default modes of perception from within," allowing space for a new way of viewing and experiencing reality to emerge in the wake of this break.

The view from below, written just before Bonhoeffer's arrest, is now positioned as the final section of the prologue to his Letters *and Papers from Prison* (here after referred to as *LPP* or *DBWE* 8); it prefigures what became the embodied reality of Bonhoeffer's lived experience of institutional confinement.[4] What the prison experience meant for Bonhoeffer might best be captured in terms of the *view from below,*[5] a concept he discovered most fully in the intense "test

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[2] Under the heading *Sympathy* in his essay 'After Ten Years', Bonhoeffer reflects on the reality that "most people learn wisdom only through personal experience" and that minus the experience of personal suffering, most people lack the ability to "take any kind of preventive action" because they otherwise have a "dull sensitivity toward the suffering of others" (DBWE 8:48, Prologue).

[3] Bonhoeffer's reflection on suffering, under the heading *Suffering* in 'After Ten Years' (DBWE 8:49-50, Prologue) should be read in connection with his epistemological principle 'the view from below.' Suffering in "freedom, in solitude, in the shadow, and in dishonour, in body and in spirit" is what paradoxically connects a Christian to the suffering of Christ. This reflection on suffering in many ways foreshadows Bonhoeffer's experience of imprisonment. See also DBWE 6:88-91, for Bonhoeffer's understanding of comformation to the crucified One.

[4] Bethge most likely placed 'After Ten Years' as the prologue to *Letters and Papers from Prison*, because it functioned as a transitionary document, bridging "the gaps between Bonhoeffer's final months of freedom, and his arrest and imprisonment" (de Gruchy 2010:11). Written as a reflection upon "the events and issues of the past months as the conspiracy had gathered momentum," the essay revisits particular themes from Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*, but it also prefigures Bonhoeffer's prison experience, suggesting that he may have at least had an inkling that his involvement in the resistance movement would lead to imprisonment (de Gruchy 2010:11).

[5] Suggesting that Bonhoeffer's prison experience was an embodied *view from below* is, however, held in tension with a very real sense that Bonhoeffer remained a privileged prisoner, quite unlike main military and political prisoners of the Third Reich. Appendix A of the this thesis seeks to trace the contours of Bonhoeffer's privilege. This portrait of Bonhoeffer as *A Privileged Prisoner* was not included in the body of this thesis as it offered more of a biographical approach to Bonhoeffer's imprisonment rather than a close reading of his texts. I have included it as an Appendix to further contrast the betwixt space Bonhoeffer experienced in Tegel, as both a privileged prisoner and an outcast and suspect criminal.

and trails of living a faithful life under the Nazi regime;" a path which eventually ranked him among the outcast and reviled himself (Wannenwetsch 2012:355).

In Berlin's military interrogation prison – Tegel – Bonhoeffer delved deeply into the reality of the *below*, participating in the "underside of history" in solidarity with his fellow prisoners and ultimately with God's own vulnerability (Kelly & Nelson 2003:84). Cut off from his family, friends, and his fiancé, isolated, interrogated, deprived of former privileges, risking the shame and guilt of being condemned as a traitor, the prison context became a concrete *view from below*. Life in prison represents Bonhoeffer's final "turning from the phraseological to the real" *view from below* (DBWE 8:358, 3/135).

This study seeks to offer a portrait of Dietrich Bonhoeffer the prisoner-theologian,[6] chronologically tracing the contours of his prison experience from his arrest and imprisonment on April 5, 1943, to the failure of the coup on July 20, 1944. In so doing, I to take the prison experience seriously as a place of spiritual and theological formation; a distinctive era in the formational narrative of Bonhoeffer's life and work. Employing the theoretical framework of liminality, I suggest that the dramatic transitional event of imprisonment resulted in an "in-between-ness" intensified by separation and detachment from former structures of identity and order. Amidst this disorienting state of liminality, Bonhoeffer came to discover a privileged spiritual depth afforded by the perspective of an awaiting trial prisoner; *the view from below*.

Having lived and written almost entirely from a position of privilege and authority, imprisonment represented the first time that he had truly experienced forced submission, where his usual freedom, his societal and familial privilege, as well as his "dominating ego," were curtailed by force (Dahill 2001:190). This disorienting transition thrust Bonhoeffer into a repetitive state of liminality that threatened a depersonalising sense of fragmentation, yet promised a uniquely formative and theologically generative space. Within this space Bonhoeffer

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[6] Haynes (2004:99-103) book *The Bonhoeffer Phenomena: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* presents a compelling description of the many portraits of Bonhoeffer that have emerged over the more than half a century sense his death. While Haynes includes a section titled "Prisoner of Conscience and Modern Martyr" in his portrait of the Universal Bonhoeffer, this section focuses more significantly on his image as a modern day martyr than it does on Bonhoeffer as a prisoner. This is not, however, Haynes' fault, as he seeks simply to work with material that has emerged from academic and popular images of Bonhoeffer. The stark absence of this image within Bonhoeffer studies points to the tendency to jump straight to his theology or poetry, or even to his death as the most compelling example of his life and witness.

assumed an active role in navigating the disorienting tensions of prison life. Seeking to preserve his experience he sought to "come to terms with it, let it become fruitful, and not push it away" (DBWE 8:201, 2/29). This active participation in the prison experience invites us to follow Bonhoeffer in exploring the meaning and potential fruitfulness of his prison experience. It provokes certain questions for inquiry. How does he come to terms or respond to his experience of life in prison? In what way can this experience be considered fruitful or formative? And if it can, what is the structure and content of this formational period? Finally, what connections remain to be uncovered between Bonhoeffer's personal formation and his theological writings from prison?

In examining Bonhoeffer's prison experience, I hope to fill a gap in Bonhoeffer studies that remains relatively unexamined. Although Bonhoeffer research has long been interested in particular features of his prison writings; his fictional endeavours, his poetry, his use of musical metaphors, and most prominently his prison theology, no work to my knowledge, exists pertaining to a comprehensive examination of the prison context as a formative motif in his prison writings.[7] By focusing on texts pertaining to the prison experience, I aim to understand not only the theologically productive elements of his writings, but more importantly, the spiritually and theologically formative journey he encountered in cell 92 of Tegel Prison, that gave birth to his fragmentary prison writings.

The primary thesis of this study is that when Bonhoeffer's social status fundamentally shifted as a result of his imprisonment, he experienced a period of liminality, which changed his view of self, the other, of God, and the world in significant ways. In prison, Bonhoeffer underwent a significant and unique period of formation as a result of his lived experience that opened him up to a fresh encounter with God and a liberating participation in the life of Jesus Christ (Incarnate, Crucified, Resurrected). This final *view from below* represents a process of becoming that, although he was in many ways prepared for, ultimately catalysed a transformation of selfhood that had not yet been afforded because of his familial and cultural privilege.

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[7] The primary exception (outside of strictly biographical texts) relates to studies that have focused on specific issues or themes emerging from Bonhoeffer's prison experience. Studies of this nature worthy of mention include Millies' (2011: 113-134) enlightening comparison between Bonhoeffer and Delp's prison writings; and Martin's (2005:206) compelling comparison between Bonhoeffer's strategy of rhetorical misdirection during his interrogation and the literary genre of "trickster narratives";

This study focuses on the prison experience as a central factor for understanding Bonhoeffer's life and work; it was clearly significant for Bonhoeffer himself. The meaning that he attributes to his prison experience can be seen in the perspective and access that it grants to spheres of reality and insight not afforded "outside" the prison walls. In the world of Tegel, Bonhoeffer turns towards the *here* of his prison experience. Following his lead, this study seeks to preserve his experience; examining his keen observation of his new social situation and the way in which he develops remarkably new insights intimately associated with his existence as a prisoner. In this context Bonhoeffer discovers insights that help him to cope with imprisonment and reframe his experience; understanding what it means to be human as well as a Christian in the prison context (DBWE 8:79, 1/17). Rigorous observation of self, his fellow prisoners, and the spatial and temporal context of the prison itself, prompt Bonhoeffer to reconsider how to deal with reality (spiritually and theologically) from the perspective of the *below*.

Background and Rationale

Before discussing the theoretical framework and research methodology of this study, let me first sketch the background to Bonhoeffer's prison writings, their posthumous publication, and the four characteristic approaches to Bonhoeffer research and the interpretation of *LPP* in particular. Rather than repeating the work of other's here, I will offer a brief presentation of this history, pointing to important studies of the subject, while seeking to locate my own research within the larger landscape of Bonhoeffer studies and the study of *LPP* (DBWE 8). Following this background I will explain the rationale underling the present research study and why further research is needed in terms of Bonhoeffer's prison experience and his prison writings.

Bonhoeffer was arrested by the Gestapo on the 5th of April 1943, and incarcerated in Berlin's military interrogation prison (Tegel) on the charge of "subversion of the armed forces" (de Gruchy 2007:18). He spent eighteen months in Tegel prison until on October 8, 1944, when he was transferred to the "detention center in the cellar of the Reich Central Security Office building on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse" (de Gruchy 2007:18). He was later taken to Flossenbürg Concentration Camp and hung on April 9, 1945; sentenced to death for his involvement in the conspiracy plot to kill Hitler (Bethge 2000:799; de Gruchy 2007:18). While in Tegel, Bonhoeffer

wrote occasional letters, essays, reports, prayers, sermons, poems, and an outline for a book. Some of this material, as de Gruchy (2005:69) recounts, was kept by family members, some (particularly from the illegal correspondence) was "preserved during the war years in gas mask containers in the Schleichers' garden at Marienbyrger Alle 42, so they could be retieved afterwards," and some was lost along the way "having never reached their destination in the first place," or having been misplaced or "destroyed for security reasons."

After Bonhoeffer's death, Bethge posthumously published some of this archival material in 1950.[8] Only later did Bethge realise the impact that these "theological letters" would have, causing a "theological sensation, and by a book which Bonhoeffer had not intended to write, consisting as it does of excerpts from letters… and addressed as it is to a friend, not to the world in general" (Bethge 1975:20-21). Later a more substantial edition of *Widerstand und Ergebung* (*Resistance and Submission*) was published (1951) including selections of the familial correspondence. It was further translated and published in the English language as *Letters and Papers from Prison* in 1953 (de Gruchy 2005:119).[9]

Despite being incomplete, occasional, fragmented, and not intended as a "theological monograph" (de Gruchy 2005:69), Bonhoeffer's prison writings have continued to invite serious engagement by theologians, philosophers, and popular interest from a wide diversity of Christian communities and thinkers.[10] In fact of all Bonhoeffer's works, none has contributed more to his status as a major figure in twentieth-century Christianity, than his *LPP* (de Gruchy 2010:1). While tracing the lines of this interpretive history[11] is not within the present scope of this

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[8] The first edition contained only Bonhoeffer's most explicitly theological letters, which Bethge wanted to share with a close circle of friends, including "former Finkenwaldian colleagues" (de Gruchy 2005:119).

[9] Regarding the remarkable story of the editing and publishing of Bonhoeffer's prison writings see Bethge, E. 1959. "The Editing and Publishing of the Bonhoeffer Papers." *The Andover Newton Bulletin*, 52 (December):1-24; and de Gruchy, J.W. 2005. *Daring, Trusting Spirit: Bonhoeffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 68-69, 118-120.

[10] de Gruchy (1999:94) also notes that Bonhoeffer's life and work (not limited to but including *LPP*) "continually attracts biographers, novelists, dramatists, and film-markers, just as his poetry has inspired composers."

[11] For more on the influence and reception of *Letters and Papers from Prison*, see de Gruchy, J.W. (1999). The Reception of Bonhoeffer's Theology. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer.* de Gruchy, J.W. (ed.) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; de Gruchy, J.W. (2010). Editor's Introduction to the English Edition. In: *Letters and Papers from Prison.* DBWE 8. de Gruchy, J.W. (ed.) Minneapolis, MA: Fortress Press, p.1-34; de Gruchy, J.W. (2005). *Daring, Trusting Spirit: Bonheoffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge.* Minneapolis: Fortress, p.69-70, 118-120; and Marty, M.E. (2011). *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison: A Biography.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

research study, I will seek to locate my own interpretive approach within the wider landscape of four characteristic approaches to Bonhoeffer research that have come to define the field.

Drawing on the earlier work of Feil, de Gruchy (1999:99) has attempted to categorise four distinctive characteristics within the scholarly study of Bonhoeffer's life and work. Although these four characteristics refer to Bonhoeffer's life and work as a whole, they also bear importance for the interpretive history of *LPP*. These four characteristics, as de Gruchy (1999:99-100) summarises them,[12] can be listed as follows. The first concerns studies offering a "comprehensive approach to Bonhoeffer's theology" (Godsey 1960; Feil 1985; Dumas 1971; Marsh 1994).[13] The second highlights studies concerned with tracing the "different phases in Bonhoeffer's development," progressing through his ecclesiology (Harvey 2010:102123), to his Christology (Philips 1967; Pangritz 1999: 134-153), and finally focusing on various phrases or notions in his prison theology, such as a "world come of age" or a "religionless Christianity" (Wüstenberg 1998; Selby 1999: 226-245). The third approach focuses on studies of particular topics within Bonhoeffer's theology, such as his biblical hermenuetics (Wüstenberg & Zimmermann 2013), his use of musical metaphors (Kemp 1976; Ford 1999; Pangritz 2002:28-41; Smith 2006:195-206), his anthropology (Green 1972; Green 2010:71-90), his philosophical foundations (Marsh 1994), or specific issues within his ethics (Rasmussen 1972), such as the role of the Bible in his view of the mandates and the ethical life (Brock 2005:7-29; Guth 2013:131-150) or discernment of the will of God (Dahill 2002:42-49; Dahill 2007: 68-76). The fourth and finally characteristic de Gruchy (1999:100) notes, focuses on issues concerning "practical theology," such as Bonhoeffer's understanding and "approach to preaching or pastoral care." More recent engagements with this final approach are studies concerned with spiritual formation and Christian spirituality (Kelly & Nelson 2003; Kelly 1999:246-268; Dahill 2003:1-15; Dahill 2006:1-19), as well as contextual studies that offer critical and creative dialogue with

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[12] Here I rely on de Gruchy's summary of Feil's four characteristics because I lack access to Feil's German text. See, Feil. E. 1992. Aspekte der Bonhoefferinterpretation. *Theologische Literaturezeitung,* 117(January-February). p.1-2.

[13] The references that follow each characteristic approach, point primarily to studies produced or translated in the English language. These references are not intended to be comprehensive of the field but to point to past and more recent studies that have taken each characteristic approach. For a more comprehensive list of past studies on each approach, see de Gruchy (1999:99-100).

Bonhoeffer's theology, such as studies that interpret Bonhoeffer's life and work through the lens of feminist criticism (Dahill 2009; Dahill 2010:176-190; Guth 2013:131-150).

The present study, while seeking to bring a number of these approaches and voices into dialogue, falls more specifically within the approach common amongst Bonhoeffer research in the English-speaking world, that of focusing on contextual issues (de Gruchy 1999:102). By focusing on the specific context of imprisonment as a place of formation, this study is in line with other studies that have sought to interpret Bonhoeffer's writings in light of his life and work (Bethge 1961),[14] seeking to distil life experiences in places of struggle and otherness, that were ultimately formative for Bonhoeffer and his theology.[15] Rather than tracing phases of his theological development throughout his life, as in the second characteristic, I will trace the phases of his life in prison as places of spiritual and theological formation. I seek to contribute to a portrait of the "historical" Bonhoeffer and his experience of prison. This approach will be explored further below in outlining the research methodology of this study. I mention it here, however, to draw attention to a gap in Bonhoeffer research regarding Bonhoeffer's life in prison and his prison writings.

The rationale for further research in relation to Bonhoeffer's prison experience and his *LPP* (DBWE 8) can be explained in terms of three different streams of influence. Firstly, with the publication of the new English translation of *LPP* (DBWE 8), new historical as well as reference material has been made available to the Anglo-Saxon world. This publication has made available to interpreters, a more comprehensive picture of the context of Bonhoeffer's life and work (before and during his imprisonment), "revealing how he is driven and shaped, both in his thought and his decisions, by his conversation partners and the challenges he confronts" (Calvin 2009). In this way, the publication of the 16 volume *DBWE* provides, as Robert Vosloo (2013:15) indicates, an ideal opportunity and invitation for "a new generation of interpreters to bring their own questions and insights to the interpretation of Bonhoeffer's life and writings." Published in 2010, containing new material, *DBWE* 8 continues to prompt further investigation

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[14] This approach insists that Bonhoeffer's writing cannot be separated from his life, as Bethge (1961:22-88) first suggested in his Aldin Tuthill Lectures given at Chicago Theological Seminary in January 1961.

[15] Such studies include, but are not limited to, Williams' (2014) study of Bonhoeffer's encounter with Harlem's black Jesus; Steiner's (2004; 2007:22-42) enlightening study on Bonhoeffer's early travel experiences and his notion of the boundary; and Root's (2014) study of *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*.

into the significance of Bonhoeffer's prison experience and its impact on his life and theology. My research is a response to this invitation and seeks to bring a different set of questions and a new body of material to the interpretations of Bonhoeffer's *LPP*.

Secondly, many interpreters of Bonhoeffer's prison writings, both past and present, have largely focused their attention on those letters usually referred to as the "theological letters," commencing with his letter to Bethge April 30, 1944.[16] Regarded by many readers and interpreters as the essential piece of Bonhoeffer's prison writings and "the core of its contents" (de Gruchy 2010:2), the "theological letters" have received the most attention, provoking considerable scholarly and popular interest. However, the publication of new historical and reference material in *DBWE* 8 related to Bonhoeffer's prison experience, demonstrates that while the "theological letters" remain central to this collection, they represent a small portion of Bonhoeffer's prison writings. There is, as de Gruchy (2010:2) has suggested "a great deal more" to Bonhoeffer's prison writings than what is reflected in the "theological letters," just as there is, "a range of genres other than letters: poetry, meditations, prayers, reports, a book outline, and some pithy, cryptic notes."

There remains, however, a considerable gap in the study of Bonhoeffer's prison experience, thus justifying a need for further research pertaining to *LPP* (DBWE 8). Starting from a contextual analysis of Bonhoeffer's formation in prison, rather than a major theological theme or particular concept, the present study seeks to fill a gap in Bonhoeffer research and contribute to our historical picture of Bonhoeffer the prisoner-theologian. Thus having surveyed the broad terrain within which the present research project has materialised and the necessity for further research, I now turn to an assessment of its general shape and framework.

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[16] This is particularly the case in the English-speaking world, where until the 1971 publication of *Letters and Papers from Prison*, a great deal of Bonhoeffer's prison writings remained unavailable. Interest in his "theological letters" is not surprising, due to the fact that these letters contain Bonhoeffer's most evocative and mysterious phrases, such as 'a world come of age', 'the religious a *priori'*, 'non-religious interpretation', and 'religionless Christianity.'

Theoretical Framework

Imprisonment represented a dramatic transitional event that shaped the direction and quality of Bonhoeffer's life, thought, and spiritual formation. I argue that the nature of this dramatic event induced a period of *liminality* (van Gennep 1960), defined as "the instability, ambiguity, and suspended identity that can occur in the transition from one significant role to another" (Noble & Walker 1997:30). This disorienting state of liminality induced a time of contextual and inner dissonance that Bonhoeffer came to value as it facilitated considerable personal growth and transformative change. Using the anthropological theory of liminality as a lens of analysis, I will distil patterns of thought and experience, as expressed in Bonhoeffer's prison writings, that indicate a process of formation or transformation taking place amidst the transitional context of an awaiting trial prisoner. My contention is that Bonhoeffer underwent distinct transitional phases within the prison space that ultimately correspond not only to common experiences of prisoners documented elsewhere, but also to the distinct stages of liminality as proposed by van Gennep (1960), Turner (1967), among various other scholars. I will briefly outline the conceptual framework of this study, regarding the liminal transitions at the heart of Bonhoeffer's experience and the formative and transformative space that this creates for the inmate of cell 92.

Before moving to a discussion of how I intend to make use of this theoretical tool in understanding the various stages of Bonhoeffer's prison experience I will sketch the conceptual development of liminal theory and the wide landscape in which it is now applied. The terms "liminal" or "liminality" are derived from the Latin word "limen" meaning "threshold" (Moore 1991:20). The conceptual theory of "liminality" was first developed in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep (1960), who worked in the context of rituals and ritual performance in small-scale societies. Extending van Gennep's work on the concept of liminality, Victor Turner (1967) expanded the concept for a wider application in "complex societies" (Moran 2013:342). Although the concept was originally grounded within the ethnographic context of Anthropology, it is now commonly applied within various disciplines, to denote any "object, social group or subject in a state of transition, no matter how temporary or permanent" (Fiol 2010:139). Boland (2013:231) notes that "Turner's theories have enjoyed widespread popularity, especially amongst theorists who celebrate the freedom, creativity and potentially subversive or transformative

powers of liminality." To some extent, this broader application of liminality is "justified by Turner's own expansion of the concept in his later publications" (Fiol 2010:139).[17]

In spite of this wide range of application,[18] liminality continues to denote significant life transitions in which an individual or group passes through three distinctive phases. van Gennep (1960) described these phases as *separation*, *liminality* (sometimes also referred to as *transition*), and *aggregation* (also referred to as *incorporation*). The initial *preliminal* phase (accompanied by *separation*) is distinguished by a social "state" in which an individual or group is detached from a "relatively fixed or stable condition" within the formal structures of society (Turner 1967:95). The middle phase of this transitional process, the *liminal period* (accompanied by *transition*), is marked by a state in which the liminar (the liminal subject) "is ambiguously separated from prior relationships and roles and has not yet acquired the attributes of a future state" (Noble & Walker 1997:31). This phase of liminality represents an ambiguous "interstructural situation," in which the liminar is "betwixt and between" all sociocultural points of classification (Turner 1967:94-97). The final *post-liminal* phase (accompanied by *incorporation*) marks the passage through liminality as "consummated" and the individual our groups is "incorporated" back into the structure of society or culture, yet with a newly transformed status (Turner 1967:94).

Drawing on the theoretical framework of liminality, the present study chronologically structures the distinctive phases of Bonhoeffer's imprisonment in relation to the three distinct phases of liminality; *liminality as separation* (the interrogation period), *liminality as transition* (the

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[17] Turner and Turner (as cited by Cody & Lowlor 2011:209) characterise this development as follows: "By identifying liminality, Van Gennep discovered a major innovative, transformative dimension of the social . . . for liminality cannot be confined to the processual form of the traditional rites of passage in which he first identified it. Nor can it be dismissed as an undesirable (and certainly uncomfortable) movement of variable duration between successive conservatively secure states of being, cognition, or status-role incumbency. Liminality is now seen to apply to all phases of decisive cultural change . . . Van Gennep made his discovery in relatively conservative societies but its implications are truly revolutionary."

[18] The theoretical framework of liminality has now been evoked in a wide range of analysis, from political and spatial geography (Bhungalia 2010), organisational and institutional politics (Bar-Lev & Vitner 2011), marketing theory and liminal consumption as a negotiation of threshold selves (Cody & Lawlor 2011), symbolic consumption and the "extended self" (Noble & Walker 1997), transitional experiences of first year University students (Palmer, Kane, and Owens 2009), psychoanalysis (Moore 1991), liminal subjectivities and religious change (McCloud 2010), prison visiting rooms as liminal carceral spaces (Moran 2013), carceral topography in prison literature (Fludernik 1999), to the role of liminality in spiritual formation (Rohr 1999:132; Frank & Meteyard 2007), just to name a few.

awaiting trial period), and *liminality as anticipation* of incorporation (holding out for the coup).[19] There is, I believe, some justification for this kind of division and structure, in relation to Bethge's editorial division of the 1971 edition of *LPP*.[20] The theoretical framework of liminality, however, helps to illuminate further reasoning for the distinctive divisions of *LLP*, as it marks particular transitions at the heart of Bonhoeffer's prison experience in relation to previously acknowledged landmarks in the legal proceedings of his case. These transitions indicate a process, a becoming, and a transformation, as Bonhoeffer passes through distinctive phase of a liminal displacement, *separation, transition, and anticipation*. Further characteristics of liminality will be explored at the beginning of each chapter and as they are employed throughout the study.

Research Methodology

I have composed this text around three formative periods in Bonhoeffer's life in prison and will trace the contours of his life and work as they develop chronologically. Here my method draws on Bethge's (1961:22-88) narrative approach, which insists that his life and work cannot be separated and that his theology must be read alongside his biography. Methodologically this will involve a circular hermeneutical process. In the first place it will involve paying close attention to selected features of particular texts and passages of *LPP* that foreground the contours and discontinuities of Bonhoeffer's prison experience and give expression to prominent themes, motifs, images, and impressions that emerge from this context. Secondly, it will involve an inductive interpretive process, moving from observations of the particular details and contours of the text, towards interpretive conclusions. What patterns or subterranean connections emerge

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[19] My reasoning for interpreting the third phase of liminality as *anticipation* rather than *incorporation* will be described below.

[20] De Gruchy (2010:12) indicates that when Bethge was editing the 1971 edition of *LPP* he "restructured the volume into four chronological periods determined by the decisive points in Bonhoeffer's legal investigation, interrogation, and trial." These breaks between sections function as a way of bracketing off particular turning points and conveying a chronological development in Bonhoeffer's experience and in the themes of his writing. While these breaks remain in many ways artificial, they help to indicate distinctive landmarks in the legal proceedings of his case and within his prison experience as a whole. As readers move from one section to the next, they encounter new themes and experiences. And while there is a great deal of continuity between the sections, there are also significant breaks and developments.

from these details, giving meaning to the whole? Here the interpretive process seeks understanding of the formative nature of the prison experience and dialogue with other interpreters as well as primary literature in drawing conclusions about Bonhoeffer's experience, before returning to the text to trace the ever-developing expression of this experience. This hermeneutical circle is clearly evident in Bonhoeffer's own attempt to make sense of his prison experience and its formative nature. In fidelity to Bonhoeffer's own meaning making process, however, it is important to make an analytical distinction between expressions that emerge from Bonhoeffer's text and themes that are externally imposed upon the text or brought into dialogue with the text in the interpretive process. Therefore, I will seek to further outline the hermeneutical process, while also defining key terminology and concepts that help to externally frame Bonhoeffer's experience and highlight its formative nature.

It terms of a "responsible hermeneutic" (Vosloo 2013:132) it must be noted that interpretation of experience is always highly problematic in that "[w]e can never know completely another's experience, even though we have many clues and make inferences all the time" (Bruner 1986:5). Therefore, it is important to define what I have referred to as Bonhoeffer's "prison experience" and address certain interpretive limitations in examining "experience" and its relation to "expressions" of experience. Here it must be acknowledged that the text of *LPP* is already removed from the actual "raw" experience that Bonhoeffer faced in the historical reality of his cell (Ellis & Flaherty 1992:5). In putting his thoughts to paper, Bruner (1986:6) reminds us that there is a clear distinction between "reality" (what happened in Tegel prison), his "experience" (how that reality presented itself to his consciousness), and his "expressions" (how his experience is framed and articulated). This progressive flow of reality, experience, expression, is further suspended in an interconnected web of past memory, present experience, and future anticipation linked to "expectation and potentiality" (Bruner 1986:8). In this light we lack any means of accessing the reality or even the actual experience Bonhoeffer encountered in Tegel, regardless of the fact that he himself was not always "fully aware of or able to articulate, certain aspects of what has been experienced" (Bruner 1986:5).

Dilthey's (as cited by Bruner 1986:5) answer for overcoming these interpretive limitations is that we must "trancend the narrow spheres of experience by interpreting expressions." By this he meant to focus on "understanding, interpretation, and the methodology of hermeneutics" (Bruner

1986:5) in analysing expressions of experience in cultural texts, which in Bonhoeffer's case are represented in the form of notes, letters, essays, narratives, fiction, drama, poetry, musical and artistic references, and theological texts. This broad array of cultural material is given to us in Bonhoeffer's text (DBWE 8) and represents the encapsulations of his experience, or as Turner (1982:17) wrote, "the crystallized secretions of once living human experience."

Bruner (1986:6) insists that the relationship between experience and its expressions "is clearly dialogic and dialectical, for experience structures expression" and in turn "expressions also structure experience," further enriching and clarifying experience by establishing limits, framing or reframing experience, and there by constructing it. In this sense Bonhoeffer's "prison experience" is encapsulated in his expressions contained in *LPP*. These expressions are structured by his raw experience and yet they also reframe, construct, and give structure his experience. In seeking to interpret Bonhoeffer's prison experience and its formative nature, I will be interpreting this hermeneutic circle, which takes place in the texts of *LPP* and gives expression to his experience. While this means that we can never fully capture the rich complexity of Bonhoeffer's fragmentary prison experience, it does not limit us from interpreting his expressions, articulations, and representations of his experience. Like his experience, his expressions are correspondingly fragmented and incomplete, and thus interpretation of such will be at times fragmented. However, it is precisely within this liminal fragmentation that we can see a process of formation taking place.

This leads us to a discussion of formation and how it will be interpreted throughout the study. The question of formation immediately points to a wide diversity of personal and social factors, in which space, time, history, memory, spiritual practices and ritual, human development, and experience, all play an important role, impacting the development of identity, selfhood, and relationality with others; concepts which Bonhoeffer demonstrated an interest in from the very first of his published writings.[21] In the context of this study I make use of Bonhoeffer's own

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[21] See *Sanctorum Communio* (DBWE 1), *Act and Being* (DBWE 2), and *Creation and Fall* (DBWE 3), for primary material relating to Bonhoeffer's interest in human selfhood. In addition, the following secondary studies are of importance for understanding the significance of the Christian community within the broader fabric of human personhood and relationality in Bonhoeffer's theology. The most extensive study of Bonhoeffer's conception and lived experience of selfhood is Lisa Dahill's (2009), *The Underside of Seflhood*, upon which my study will rely heavily. See also, Green (1972), Marsh (1992), and Zimmermann & Gregor (2010).

conception of formation to trace the contours of his prison experience. Bonhoeffer developed this notion of formation in a manuscript titled "Ethics as Formation," which later became part of his *Ethics* (DBWE 6). Green (2005:7) notes that in this manuscript, Bonhoeffer was attempting to spell out "christological [*sic*] impulses in direct contradiction to the ethos of the Third Reich." Bonhoeffer wrote:

> Formation occurs only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ, by *being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified, and is risen*. This does not happen as we strive "to become like Jesus," as we customarily say, but as the form of Jesus Christ himself so works on us that it molds us, conforming our form to Christ's own (Gal 4:9[4:19]). Christ remains the only one who forms…. To be transformed into his form is the meaning of the formation that the bible speaks about (DBWE 6:93-94).[22]

For Bonhoeffer, formation is not a process that a person can accomplish through self-determination or through the "struggle to be heroic or a demigod" (DBWE 6:94). Formation is not something that a person can "do" through pious spiritual discipline, or by attempting to "form the world with their ideas" or elaborate plans (DBWE 6:93). Rather, authentic formation takes place as a person is drawn ever deeper into the reality of their own life, "whose centre and meaning, like that of all reality, is Jesus Christ" (Dahill 2009:93). For Bonhoeffer, "Formation happens only from and toward this form of Jesus Christ" (DBWE 6:97).

This is the conceptual context within which Bonhoeffer's own formation must be set, and in which I will seek to trace the contours of his formative engagement with the prison context.[23] He envisaged formation taking place in stages, as a person is drawn into *Gleichgestaltung* with Jesus through the three-dimensional experience of Jesus' own being: as the Incarnate, the Crucified, and the Risen One. These three-dimensions of conformation with Christ, accentuate important

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[22] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's. The following extended quote, further illustrates Bonhoeffer's understanding of conformation. For Bonhoeffer: "Christ remains the only one who forms. Christian people do not form the world with their ideas. Rather, Christ forms human beings to a form the same as Christ's own. However, just as the form of Christ is misperceived where he is understood essentially as the teacher of a pious and good life, so formation of human being is also wrongly understood where one sees it only as guidance for a pious and good life. Christ is the one who has become human, who was crucified, and who is risen, as confessed by the Christian faith" (DBWE 6:93-94).

[23] In terms of a hermeneutical approach to the study of Bonhoeffer's spiritual formation and conformation to Christ in prison, I draw on the work of Sandra Schneiders (as cited by Dahill 2009:6) who insists that "Christian spirituality as an academic discipline studies the lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith and living discipleship in their individual and corporate actualization(s)." In its most broad sense, she continues, the study of spiritual formation, seeks to examine "the experiences of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives" (as cited by Dahill 2009:7).

existential elements of Bonhoeffer's prison experience and contextualise the way in which the self is moulded or transformed in participation in the life of Jesus Christ (DBWE 8:501, 4/187).[24] In prison Bonhoeffer's conceptual or phraseological understanding of conformation undergoes an embodied transformation to the real.[25]

Social Location

In analysing the prison context as a formative *view from below*, it must first be acknowledged that every *view* is a *view* from somewhere. Thus the context of my own social location on reading and interpreting Bonhoeffer's prison writings must be acknowledged before outlining the methodological concerns of this study. It is now widely accepted that everyone's understanding and therefore everyone's discourse, reflects a limited perspective, depending, in part, on location and context. The myth and illusion of anonymous, objective, authoritative, and disinterested interpretations of written texts, and theological and academic ones in particular, have now been dispelled. It is not only inevitable, but also invaluable that interpreters bring something to their interpretation of written texts. Vosloo (2013:119) notes, in regard to Bonhoeffer studies, that every:

> reading of Bonhoeffer differs vastly depending on where a person is situated intellectually, culturally, economically, geographically and so on. This obvious but often neglected insight reminds us that the interpretation of Bonhoeffer cannot sidestep some important hermeneutical questions such as: "Who are we who interpret Bonhoeffer?" "Where are we situated?"

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[24] While extensive research has probed the theological point of Bonhoeffer's conception of selfhood and human sociality, as well as Bonhoeffer's spirituality, little to my knowledge, has been done to trace his spiritual formation within the social location of imprisonment. The primary exception is Lisa E. Dahill's (2009) study, which explores Bonhoeffer's spiritual formation. Dahill's study of Bonhoeffer's spiritual formation in prison, however, focuses primarily on the popular texts of the third and fourth periods of his imprisonment. Dahill's work will thus function as an important starting point for my own research; however, I hope to take her findings further in understanding the specific social location of imprisonment, in the life of Bonhoeffer. Other important studies of Bonhoeffer's spirituality that inform my work are: Kelly and Nelson (2003); Kelly (1999); Nelson (1980); and "Northcott (2009).

[25] For Bonhoeffer's understanding of the "turning from the phraseological to the real," see *DBWE* 8:358, 3/135.

The acknowledgement of a situated reading is an important hermeneutical issue and plays an important part in a responsible hermeneutic. It is therefore important to disclose my particular historical development and social location, highlighting particular limitations, interests, and inevitable blind spots that I bring to my reading of Bonhoeffer. As a white, middle class, European educated, American, who is a member of a United Congregational/Presbyterian congregation (Rondebosch United Church in Cape Town, South Africa), a theology student, and a Youth Pastor engaged in both congregational ministry, as well as prison ministry, my approach to the admittedly vast subject matter of reading Bonhoeffer and his *LPP* is inevitably perspectival and interested. Though every aspect of social location influences the reading of a text, I will call to attention two important areas that effect this text and are instructive regarding methodological concerns. In turn my own social location draws attention to what Vosloo has described as a responsible hermeneutic and as such his suggestions will be interwoven in the following discussion.

The first is that I read Bonhoeffer in the 21st-century, as an English-speaking American. I am, therefore, once or even twice removed from the linguistic and cultural world in which Bonhoeffer lived and thought. Lacking a working knowledge of the German language, I am privileged to work with the new English translation of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (DBW). I still lack access, however, to a vast quantity of monographs, journal articles, conference papers, and books, which have been written and/or published over the past decades in the German language. I also lack access to the original German text of Bonhoeffer's letters and papers, a detail most acute in relation to interpreting and understanding Bonhoeffer poetry. In addition, my access to Bonhoeffer's social location within the cultural milieu of the educated elite bourgeoisie of Germany and the Protestant *Bildungsbürger* during the period of World War II is limited and relies entirely on historical material as a guide. Acknowledging these limitations, I will do my best to make use of primary and secondary material in understanding important cultural and linguistic factors that bear significance for this study.

This social location, however, draws attention, as Vosloo (2013:133) indicates, "to the vulnerability entailed in the interpretive process because of the discontinuity between Bonhoeffer and us, between his time and ours." As such, it require that we "take seriously the strangeness of the past" and the fragility of historical memory (Vosloo 2013:133-135). This point highlights the

fallacy of historical objectivity and the importance of approaching the past with "the necessary combination of suspicion and trust" (Vosloo 2013:135). Examining Bonhoeffer's prison experience, I seek to do just that by offer a fresh portrait of the continuity and discontinuity of his life and work. The reader of this thesis will discover a combined sense of familiarity with specific texts (trust), as well as a surprisingly fresh perspective of this period of Bonhoeffer's life and work (suspicion).

The second significant factor relating to my own social location is that I read Bonhoeffer as a spiritual care-worker engaged in the work of prison ministry at Pollsmoor Prison (Correctional Facility) in Cape Town, South Africa. I have been part of a team offering spiritual care and rehabilitation services to male awaiting-trial juveniles for the past three years. In addition, I have engaged in both the communal practice and the academic study of contextual bible study with awaiting trail juveniles. In this work I have become acutely aware of the incredibly disorienting and often traumatic transitions that young men face upon entering the prison for the first or even second or third time. This sense of disorientation is particularly pronounced during the awaiting trial period. Anticipating their sentence or release functionally suspends these young men in an in-between state of liminality, caught between despair and hope, guilt and liberation. Yet I have also observed the power of reframing this liminality as a spiritual displacement and an opportunity for formative and transformative experiences. In this regard I have experienced the transformative power of bible study, the spiritual practice of prayer and meditation, and the role of music[26] in fostering a formative resiliency in the face of profound discomfort and personal challenges. My study of Bonhoeffer's prison experience greatly informed this work and I hope to in reverse bring something of this work to bear on my interpretation of Bonhoeffer. My interest in approaching LPP from the angle of Bonhoeffer's lived experience of institutional confinement is obviously influenced by my own vocational interests and I intend, as consciously as possible, to allow my experience of working with awaiting trial prisoners to form part of my own

[26] Taking a note from Bonhoeffer's own biography, we made use of the Afro-Spirituals in our sessions; playing guitar and singing song of lament and liberating hope.

responsible hermeneutic in interpreting Bonhoeffer prison experience and formation within the space of the prison.[27]

As part of my methodology, I intend, as consciously as possibly, to allow my own experience of working with awaiting trial prisoners, to form part of my own responsible hermeneutic in interpreting Bonhoeffer's prison experience and formation within the space of the prison; to be part of "re-awakening the text's meaning" and bringing areas of Bonhoeffer's experience into sharper focus through the historically and culturally situated lens of my own perception and experience, as well as observations of the social and experiential matrix of the prison environment.

This hermeneutical approach is part of the creative interpretation of Bonhoeffer's words and texts, in which I, as the interpreter will play an active role in exploration of the phenomena. Gardiner (1999:63) highlights that for the active interpreter, "[t]he goal is not objective explanation or neutral description, but rather a sympathetic engagement with the author of a text, utterance or action and the wider socio-cultural context within which these phenomena occur." While my sympathetic engagement with "Bonhoeffer the prisoner" will inevitably offer a limited perspective of Bonhoeffer and of his prison writing, a complete explication of any of his texts is ultimately impossible and all interpretations of his texts, however critically focused and potentially rigorous, are also necessarily partial, selectively highlighting or emphasising certain features of his text or legacy which may be important to one interpreter or stream of interpretation, while down playing or completely silencing other features.

Sources

The above discussion brings into focus the task of selecting relevant source material and texts for examining Bonhoeffer's prison experience. Throughout the course of this study I will make use

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[27] For some this kind of interpretation poses a hermeneutical inaccuracy. Gadamer (1996:388), however, has indicated that in reading a text: "One intends to understand the text itself. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says."

of the new critical edition of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English (hereafter referred to as *DBWE*) to analyse and interpret Bonhoeffer's experience and theological reflections from prison. Amongst the 16 volumes of this new edition, the primary focus will remain on the text of *LPP* (DBWE 8). Offering a close reading of this primary text will remain the focus of this study.

Other primary texts dealing with Bonhoeffer's experience during the same time period will be consulted to provide further layers of texture as well as important background information regarding this time period. Of special note are *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940-1945* (DBWE 16), *Fiction from Tegel Prison* (DBWE 7), as well as *Love Letters from Cell 92* (1944), not included in the *DBWE*. Other volumes of the *DBWE*, not related directly to Bonhoeffer's prison experience, will be consulted where necessary to trace out the development of earlier lines of thinking or to show the impact of his experience of prison upon the development of his "new theology" (de Gruchy 2010:20). The primary area of focus, however, will remain on Bonhoeffer's experience of prison and his reflections, thinking, and ministry to others as expressed in *LPP*.

Finally, I will consult various secondary sources for further biographical and historical material regarding Bonhoeffer's time in prison. In terms of biographies, I will primarily use Bethge's (2000) monumental biography, as well as Ferdinand Schlingensiepen's (2010) more recent biography. I will also draw upon de Gruchy's (2005) illuminating biography of Bethge. Other historical materials regarding the wider context of Bonhoeffer's time in Tegel will include the *Editor's Introduction to the English Edition* (de Gruchy's 2010:1-34), the *Editor's Afterword to the German Edition* (Gremmels 2010:565-596), as well as excerpts from *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Zimmerman & Smith 1964). Other secondary sources such as articles and books will be consulted as important interpretive partners for understanding Bonhoeffer's spiritual and theological development in prison.

Delimitations of Study

Following the above discussion of important sources it is also necessary to describe the limitations and restrictions of this study. Although a close reading of *Fiction from Tegel Prison* (*DBWE* 7), *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940-1945* (*DBWE* 16), and *Love Letters from Cell*

92: Dietrich Bonhoeffer-Maria von Wedemeyer, 1943-1945 (Bonhoeffer et al. 1994) would add incomparable value to a comprehensive understanding of Bonhoeffer's life in prison, the scope of the present research project demands obvious limitations, and will, therefore, not focus on these rich and important documents. Limiting the material also takes seriously the contribution that the recent publication of *DBWE* 8 makes to our understanding of the "historical Bonhoeffer" and his time spent a Tegel. Needless to say, at 750 pages, *DBWE* 8 demands detailed and careful analysis, thus requiring the exclusion of other material except where this is essential to the task at hand. Texts from these three volumes that closely relate to Bonhoeffer's prison experience will therefore only be brought into dialogue where they either critically challenge or open up new potential ways of reading and interpreting it.

Delimination of material within *DBWE* 8 is also necessary. For the purposes of the present study I will focus primarily on the first three periods of Bonhoeffer's life in prison, from April 1943 through July 18, 1944. My rational for doing so is threefold. Firstly, this period has been the most widely neglected in Bonhoeffer studies, particular in regard to the interrogation and awaiting trial periods, and thus requires detailed attention. Secondly, it is clear that with the failure of the coup attempt on July 20, 1944, Bonhoeffer realised that his fate was sealed and that his imprisonment would most certainly end in death. This realisation in many ways thrust Bonhoeffer (if only in his own knowledge and not yet in legal status) into a newly distinctive social status within prison – the death row prisoner. This transition clearly gave Bonhoeffer renewed vigour for his theological work, freeing him from the disorienting space of liminality and allowing him to construct a new vision of the Christian life and the church from the material of liminal separation, transition, and anticipation. The third and final reason for not including the period after the failure of the coup in this study, is that the period following the coup (in obvious connection with the theological material from April 30, 1944, onward), has received the most attention from Bonhoeffer scholars over the years, with volumes and volumes of journal articles, book chapters, and entire works devoted to understand the fragmentary pieces of his "new theology." This section would require an entire thesis of its own and would likely stretch the bounds of this present work. My intention, however, is that the present study might lead to further research in this regard, offering a new lens for interpreting Bonhoeffer's prison theology within the context of his prison experience.

In addition to limiting the broader scope of material, I will also limit material within the first three section of *LPP* (DBWE 8) based on its relevance in relation to Bonhoeffer's prison experience. I will confine my attention to those sections, ideas, and themes that impinge most directly upon our theme and that have received stark attention, like Bonhoeffer's fragmentary notes on the "sense of time" (DBWE 8:70-74, 1/11 & 1/12), his essay "What does it mean to tell the truth?" (DBWE 16:601-608, 2/19), texts relating to his temporal, ethical, and spatial engagement with the prison space, as well as his prison reports (DBWE 8:205-206, 2/80; DBWE 8:343-347, 2/131). I will also focus on texts which specifically foreground the prison experience, texts which indicate transitions and turning points in his experience, texts which characterise his liminal pastor role within the prison, as well as texts that express what he came to view as the fruitfulness of suffering and imprisonment. Finally, I will focus on texts which draw attention to Bonhoeffer's anticipation of resolve within liminality; this will include pertinent theological texts, poetic texts, and texts relating to Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphors. In short, I will focus this study on texts that highlight the social location of the prison context and express the formative nature of his liminal passage through separation, transition, and anticipation.

As a way of introducing the study and guiding the reader through Bonhoeffer's fragmentary prison experience, I want to point out five central motifs to pay attention to as we trace the contours of his experience in the first three sections of *LPP*. Subsequent to a rigorous process of examination, these motifs repeatedly emerged as core elements of Bonhoeffer's formative encounter with liminality*: discipline, sociality, suffering, death* and *freedom*, and *wholeheartedness.* I do not intend to limit or confine my analysis to these motifs, but rather to offer them as a way of making the finer details of Bonhoeffer's journey of formation more accessible. Bonhoeffer's formational experience in prison interweaves with these five motifs, shaping the trajectories of his encounter with the *below* and with the life of Jesus Christ. They are deeply rooted in his theology and life. As part of his personal formation and what he brings to his experience of prison, they undergo intensification in prison, in which they are reformed and rethought in light of his experience of liminality. Through the process of intensification they become more grounded in reality and the *view from below*. In Bonhoeffer's own words, the trajectories of these motifs undergo a "turning from the phraseological to real" (DBWE 8:358, 3/135). Although this popular phrase of Bonhoeffer's is usually understood in the context of his own emphasis, on his "first impressions abroad, and under the first conscious influence of Papa's

personality" (DBWE 8:358, 3/135), the fact that his reflections come to the fore during his imprisonment, should highlight the reality of a final turning toward the real. As this study progresses through the phases of Bonhoeffer's life in prison, close attention will be paid to the development and transformation of these motifs in relation to Bonhoeffer's formational encounter with the prison context.

Chapter 2: Liminality as Separation

Discipline
If you set out to seek freedom, then you must learn above all things
discipline of your soul and your senses, lest your desires
and then your limbs perchance should lead you now hither, now yon.
Chaste be your spirit and body, subject to yourself completely,
in obedience seeking the goal that is set for your spirit.
Only through discipline does one learn the secret of freedom.[28]

I am now learning daily how good my life with you has always been, and besides, I now have to practice myself what I have told others in my sermons and books.[29]

Introduction

In this chapter I will offer a close reading of the interrogation period, which encapsulates the letters and papers written between April 11 and July 30, 1943, and details Bonhoeffer's initial response to imprisonment and interrogation. It is clear from this material that his initial exposure to the carceral space is marked by a profound sense of separation. This sense of separation is characterised by a leaving behind of old structures of identity and order, functionally plunging him into an utterly alien and disorienting experience, filled with admission procedures, interrogations, insults, isolation, and a loss of autonomy. Having lived and written almost exclusively from a privileged social location, from the position of those who are "above," Bonhoeffer now faced a temporal, ethical, and spatial disjunction brought on by forced submission; the "below" of the prison cell. During this period he is forced "to come to terms and put up with a completely new situation" (DBWE 8:56, 1/2); a situation in which he is dislodged from his previous status-role and no longer in control of his own time, space, or fate. In this space he is forced to be disciplined and practice what he has in the past taught others from a position of authority, from "above." The prisoner's own portrayal of separation, can, I believe, be characterised as the initial stage of liminality (separation), in which the liminar wrestles with the dissolution or suspension of familiar cultural and social structures of identity and order, and experiences an inversion of previously held beliefs, values, and meaning.

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[28] First stanza of Bonhoeffer's poem 'Stations on the Way to Freedom' (DBWE 8:512, 4/191).
[29] Letter to Karl and Paul Bonhoeffer, May 4, 1943 (DBWE 8:66, 1/9).

Aiming to distil the subterraneous themes of his prison experience, I will examine three distinctive arenas of Bonhoeffer's transition into prison life: *temporality*, *telling the truth*, and the *transformation of space*. Each of these sections will seek to highlight his initial exposure to and awareness of liminality within the prison environment. By foreground Bonhoeffer's experience of separation I intend to show his early response to the disorientation of imprisonment and the forms that his response takes. Examining how the prison space is a place of formation for Bonhoeffer provides the underlying guide in the following analysis. Its answer will involve firstly a detailed look at Bonhoeffer's own writings during this period. What does he communicate about his initial experience of imprisonment and interrogation? How does he respond to this experience and what resources does he use to both conceal and transform his experience of liminality? The approach I will take, which I contend is intrinsic to Bonhoeffer's own process, will then draw together the themes of these particular responses and attempt to distil the subterraneous threads of the formative and transformative possibilities of being thrust into the "below."

I will look closely at two early essays as well as various thematic threads of his official letters; each in turn highlighting significant aspects of his experience of separation, his response, and the production of emerging new possibilities. Four guiding motifs permeate these writings and bear a particular relation to his experience of separation: time, life, death, and sociality. The last of these, sociality, remains hidden in language of separation, yet comes to the fore in combination with the other motifs. These reoccurring motifs (which are prevalent in Bonhoeffer's earlier writings) undergo intensification due to the "below" of the prison cell, ultimately binding him to the life of Jesus Christ in and amidst a repetitively disorienting experience of liminality. In countering the temporal, ethical, and spatial disjunction of forced submission Bonhoeffer sought to instil a strict inner discipline, transforming the prison cell into a monastic enclosure, and thereby submitting to life in the face of death, while also consciously constructing a place of resistance to the dehumanizing forces of the prison system.

Separation and Temporality

I will begin my analysis of Bonhoeffer's experience of liminality by offering a close reading of a set of fragmentary comments and notes pertaining to the theme of temporality. This is a logical starting point in as much as it sets the framework for understanding his prison experience as a liminal one. Although Bonhoeffer never used the terms liminal, liminal space, or liminality, the phraseology of his notes on the experience of time in a prison cell, point to the transitional phenomena that scholars like Moore (1991), Fludernik (1999), and Moran (2011) describe as an experience of liminality. Following a brief introduction to Bonhoeffer's notes on temporality in relation to the theoretical framework of liminality, I will discuss what he experiences as a certain intensification of temporality, brought on by disorientation in his prison cell. Building upon this, I will argue that, for Bonhoeffer, time bore a particular relationship to personhood and death, ultimately drawing God's relation to his life and death into sharper focus.

While there is little disagreement among Bonhoeffer scholars regarding the disorientation Bonhoeffer experienced during the interrogation period, the substance of this disorientation remains largely unexamined in relation to his notion of temporality. The one exception is Vosloo's (2008) insightful article exploring Bonhoeffer's notion of temporality and the fully human life. Vosloo's (2008) analysis of the prison period, however, is quite brief and simply states that he experienced an intensification of time. While I will draw on Vosloo's article in regard to Bonhoeffer's notion of temporality, I hope to take his argument further in exploring the themes of sociality and death that arise within the prison cell. In what follows, I intend to lay the groundwork for understanding his fragmentary notes on time within the context of liminality. This is vitally important for understanding Bonhoeffer's prison experience as a whole, as well as the personally and theologically formative possibilities that emerge from this context.

It is clear that upon returning from the War Court interrogation room,[30] Bonhoeffer found little solace in the solitude of his cell. Concrete and steel marked the new boundary and limit of his existence and represented both a material and a symbolic disjunction from his familiar world.

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[30] *DBWE* 8:560 indicates that Dohnanyi was interrogated for the first time on April 12, just 8 days after he was arrested along with his wife Christine and brother-in-law Dietrich. It is therefore likely that Bonhoeffer was also interrogated for the first time on April 12.

The coerced alteration of his life and world initially gave way to a crisis of spatial and temporal meaning, the earliest stages of which he recorded on the back of a few scrap pieces of paper in May 1943 (DBWE 8:70-74, 1/11 & 1/12).[31] These fragmentary notes correspond to a small study Bonhoeffer had told his parents (on May 15, 1943) he was working on, called a "sense of time" (DBWE 8:79, 1/17). Although this study is lost, a few fragments of his thinking remain in his notes (DBWE 8:70, 1/11). These indicate that while confined within his cell twenty-three-and-half hours a day, he experienced an overwhelming and tormenting sense that his life and past were no longer within his grasp and that all possible futures were growing dark.

The salient themes of these notes relate to separation, memory, the past, and the emptiness of time. These themes are undoubtedly intensified by the admission procedures (material separation and humiliation), his interrogations (in which the past was questioned, distorted, misinterpreted, and alternatively presented by Bonhoeffer himself), and through the material reminder of subjugation and the impermanence of his temporal existence. These carceral factors must have triggered a certain intensification of time for Bonhoeffer and brought about a period of disorientation.

The particular nature of this disorientation, however, must be understood within the context of the prison procedures he is likely to have undergone. The admission procedures[32] of institutional prison function as a process of "mortification" and "structured humiliation" of an inmate's sense of self; striping the prisoner of personal belongings and identity, replacing them with institutional belongings and identity (Casella 2007:68). This process functions as a "form of initiation into the institutional world," in which a separation from personal property and a "defacement of self-identity" takes place (Casella 2007:68). Goffman (as cited by Casella 2007:68) characterises this initiation as a practice of "leaving off and taking on." Like other initiation rites, the first stage is a *separation* from one's former world, transitioning the initiate into an unfamiliar time and space often termed liminality or liminal space.

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[31] Footnote [1] of the 'Notes 1, May 1943' (DBWE 8:70, 1/11) indicates that these notes were written on the back of a piece of paper, on which Karl Bonhoeffer had "listed the contents of a package that had been dropped off for Dietrich."

[32] The key elements of which are present in Bonhoeffer's own description, as cited in the introduction.

Bonhoeffer's use of the word separation during this period, points to the effectiveness of this approach to carceral production. While Bonhoeffer shows an incredible resilience in the face of this kind of institutional initiation, evidence from his notes signify that he experienced it as particularly disorienting.[33] As a pre-trial prisoner, however, it is important to note that he was not fully initiated into the institutional identity of Tegel, but was consigned to a temporary holding space in-between his former status and his new life as a prisoner.[34] Remaining a pre-trial prisoner throughout his time at Tegel functionally suspended him in time and space between two possible worlds. He was imprisoned and under investigation, but not yet convicted of transgressing the law or subverting the state. This transient social and legal status heightened his experience of liminality, intensifying his sense of "Separation – *from what is past and what is to come*" (DBWE 8:73, 1/12).[35] Moreover, this state of betweenness was intensified by continual postponements of his trial, a feeling that legal matters were not being handled properly, and six months of waiting before he received the warrant for his arrest (DBWE 8:434, 2/131). These factors heightened his sense of separation, dominating his reality and threatening to become a permanent state of liminality from which he could not emerge.

Faced with the loss of his social status and vocation, his network of relationships, and a growing awareness of his own mortality, Bonhoeffer's is detached from former structures as he transitioned into the ambiguity of his prison cell. The physical and psychological effects of this transition submerged Bonhoeffer in a foreign spatial and temporal reality, which he described as a "[s]eparation from people, from work, from the past, from the future, from honor, from God" (DBWE 8:70, 1/11). Here he refers to the "e*xperience of time*" as an "experience of *separation,*" most pronounced in his separation from Maria and his friend Bethge (DBWE 8:72, 1/11). For Bonhoeffer, time is embedded within relational and social meaning structures. As his sense of

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[33] Bethge (2000:51) recounts an apocryphal story from Bonhoeffer's time at Tübingen University, which indicates "something about how hard his contemporaries found it to imagine him subjecting himself to someone else's will," particularly in cases of ritual humiliation. Bethge (2000:51) writes, on the second day of "his two week service in the Ulm Rifles Troop as a member of the so-called Black Reichswehr," Bonhoeffer "was ordered to clean out the barracks with a toothbrush as punishment for throwing his washwater out the window; instead, however, he immediately returned to Tübingen." Although Bethge maintains the story is apocryphal, it shows something of how people perceived Bonhoeffer in relation to forced submission, humiliation, and ritual initiation.

[34] Moran (2011:331), as we will see in a later section of this study, contest Goffman's theory of a linear and total "leaving off and taking on" of institutional identity, for as he claims, the prison boundary is much more permeably than Goffamn proposes in his theory of a "total institution."

[35] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.

time broke free from the anchor of these relationships and his place within them, he began to experience the emptiness of time as a perpetual separation from his own life.

The initial stage of liminality (separation) threatens a perpetual state of limbo, if integration back into society is restricted (Moore 1991:20). For Bonhoeffer this threat was particularly real. Yet, from this early stage, he could see that the prison cell held the potential for transformative new ways of viewing the world. Although he wrestled with the impact of his new spatial and temporal reality, he also realised that "boundary situations" (DBWE 8:180, 2/73) such as this, "may be good and necessary in order to learn to understand human life better" (DBWE 8:79, 1/17). Within his prison cell he was learning "how much joy and sorrow the human heart is able and forced to contain at the same time" (DBWE 8:63, 1/6), and he believed that this indeed would have an outcome. Though he was unsure what it would be at this early stage.

These fragments from Bonhoeffer's notes on time illustrate the relational character of time and the need to reframe separation as a place of insight and learning, in order to weather the liminal space between joy and sorrow, presence and separation. One senses that he is trying to find a way through the sorrow and separation toward a newly formed relationality with others. Although he sought the fruitfulness of this experience, it is clear that temporal ambiguity brought on a certain crisis of meaning.

Serving Time

Unfolding the content of this crisis let me first offer a brief and somewhat crude sketch of Bonhoeffer's notion of temporality as it relates to his experience of imprisonment.[36] Vosloo (2008:341) indicates that from *Sactorum Communio* (DBWE 1) onward, Bonhoeffer continually sought to ground his theology in a "concrete and timeful understanding of personhood and community." Bonhoeffer argued throughout his *Ethics* (DBWE 6) against a timeless or abstract ethic that detaches the truth or the ethical from "particular persons, definite times and concrete

[36] Here I rely heavily on Vosloo, R. 2008. The Feeling of Time: Bonhoeffer on Temporality and the Fully Human Life. *Scriptura*, 99:337-349.

places and relations" (Vosloo 2008:346).[37] His understanding of temporality and of the task of "the moment" was thus shaped by an endeavour to live responsibly as a person of the present, in the midst of time, and in response to the concrete other and "the will of God" through "kairotic engagement with reality" (Vosloo 2008:341-346).

To "Serve the Time" (*Dienen der Zeit*)[38] – the theme of one of Bonhoeffer's sermons in Barcelona – meant to serve God's time, by discerning one's course of action as a people of the present, who derive their power from having both feet firmly on the ground, much like the giant Antaeus (DBWE 10:527). This understanding of "serving time" had ultimately been part of Bonhoeffer's decision to engage in political resistance. In the early period of his imprisonment, however, this conception of time seems to be disconnected from fixed points of orientation.[39] Stripped of personal belongings, vocation, and identity, detached from community, and separated from home and God, Bonhoeffer experiences time without its familiar anchors, intensifying the theme of 'After Ten Years,' "Who Stands Firm?" (DBWE 8:38, prologue).

In connection with Bonhoeffer's own metaphor, the transitional phenomena of liminal space can be understood as an experience of goundlessness, involving certain impressions of discontinuity, frustrations and anger, and the destabilisation of previously held ethical constructs and personal coping mechanisms. No longer grounded in action and communion, time becomes survival, intensifying the "horrific nature of time" in its continual movement "toward death" (Vosloo 2008:342).[40] Whereas his earlier conceptions of "serving time" had been forged in action and resistance, he was now forced into a position of groundless submission to time, from which he could not escape: incarcerated time.

One of Bonhoeffer's initial responses to this intensification of time was to regard it as "characterizing pretrial detention" (DBWE 8:79-80, 1/17). For one thing, it was represented

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[37] He makes a similar argument in his essay on "telling the truth," written from his prison cell in Tegel (DBWE 16:601-608, 2/19). This essay will be the focus of the next major section of Chapter 2.

[38] In this sermon, Bonhoeffer had preached that "(T)he present is sacred, it stands under God's eyes, it is consecrated, it is permeated by eternal light… Whoever flees the present is fleeing God's hour; whoever flees time is fleeing God. Serve time!" (DBWE 10:528-529).

[39] In the confines of his prison cell, where he had nothing but endless and empty time, he began to question, as he wrote in his first letter to Bethge, whether or not it was "really for the cause of Christ" that he was now suffering and for who's sake he was now inflicting distress on his family and friends (DBWE 8:180, 2/73). This question, which Bonhoeffer would later dismiss as a temptation, plagued his conscious in the early phase of his imprisonment. Was he really a prisoner for Christ's sake or simply a prisoner?

[40] Here Vosloo (2008:342) is commenting on Bonhoeffer's August 26, 1928, sermon in Barcelona, on 1 John 2:17.

materially in the work of his predecessor, who had scribbled above the cell door: "In one hundred years everything will be over" (DBWE 8:79-80, 1/17). While Bonhoeffer did not share his predecessor's particular interpretation of time, he understood the need to find a means of coping with the emptiness of time (DBWE 8:80, 1/17).

Part of his coping strategy was to explore the theme of time through writing, for "[o]ne writes more fluently from direct experience and feels liberated" (DBWE 8:98, 1/25). In this way he sought to find peace and stability by engaging groundlessness head on. As a navigation tool, his notes indicate a certain loss of fixed points of orientation that threatened to become a dangerous space and time without end. What he appears to fear most was not the prison cell itself, but rather a state of perpetual "between-ness," which lacked any real transformation or resolution, as it had for his predecessor. Bonhoeffer called this experience the "*Emptiness* of time" (DBWE 8:73, 1/11).[41] This emptiness reflects both a spatial and a temporal disjunction of time that threatened to envelop him: "no *possession* (that outlasts time, no *task*…," no life giving action or *telos,* just empty time. (DBWE 8:72, 1/11).[42] He feared that this emptiness would result in "[d]ifferent mental patterns of behavior toward the past… forgetting… caesura experiences[43] […] Self deception, *idealizing* the past […] fading memories, self-pity, *passing time – killing* time…" (DBWE 8:72, 1/11). Experiencing the fragility of memory[44] and the difficulty of reclaiming one's past, Bonhoeffer feared that this emptiness was leading to an unhealthy "discontent – tension, impatience, yearning, and boredom," which he considered an "expression of despair" (DBWE 8:73, 1/11).

In a later note, presumably from 1944, Bonhoeffer refers to the emptiness of time as the "horror vacui [the abhorrence of the void]" (*NL*, A 86; DBWE 8:72, 1/11, fn. 13).[45] The image here evoked of the empty void threatening to consume everything, shares a thematic likeness with

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[41] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.
[42] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.
[43] "Caesura experiences" indicate an interruption or break in one's life. Although Bonhoeffer will later argue against any such experience of caesura taking place, it appears that his early experience of prison had at least focused his attention on the possibility of such an interruption or break taking place.
[44] On June 4, 1943, Bonhoeffer requested that his parents send him "something good on the forms and functions of memory? I am interested in it in this connection" (DBWE 8:98, 1/25). He was referring to memory in relation to a "sense of time."
[45] Bonhoeffer's poem 'The Past' explicitly highlights this experience of the void: "Frenzied defiance and rage beset me, I sling wild, useless questions into the void. Why, why, why? I keep asking" (DBWE 8:420, 3/158).

what Eliade (as cited by Moore 1991:15) terms an experience of "profane space."[46] Profane space, is space and time with:

> "no fixed point or center from which one can gain orientation. There is no contact with the really real, with the power that alone can renew life and through which regeneration can occur. Profane space is a formless expanse, homogeneous in its fundamental unreality. It is a space essentially devoid of creativity… it is in fact the locus of the deterioration of the cosmos as ordinary temporal duration, profane time, runs its course" (Moore 1991:13).

Within his prison cell Bonhoeffer's language points toward the conceptualisation of time as a profane and destructive force: "the ravages of time – the gnawing of time," in which time became "as torment, as enemy" (DBWE 8:73, 1/11). In this Bonhoeffer sensed a deterioration of the cosmos, which he described in a letter to his parents on May 15, 1943:

> The peace and serenity by which one had been carried are suddenly shaken without any apparent physical or psychological reason, and the heart becomes, as Jeremiah very aptly put it, an obstinate and anxious thing that one is unable to fathom. One experiences this as an attack from the outside, as evil powers that seek to rob one of what is most essential" (DBWE 8:79, 1/17).

The temporal deterioration brought on by the liminality of profane space, appears to have presented Bonhoeffer with the true meaning of temptation [*Anfechtung*] (DBWE 8:79, 1/17) and a particular sadness of heart that he would later describe to Bethge, as *tristitia* and *acedia*: the "burdensome companions of his life" (Gremmels 2010:567; DBWE 8:180, 2/73). This existential articulation of despair reveals a certain disconsolate unease with "the intrusion of nothingness into a life aware of its impermanence and without any sure anchor" (Millies 2011:130).

Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer seems to have recognized the potential threshold contained within this experience. Although human beings are inextricably caught within time that cannot be undone, freedom, even in prison can be found in love and in the "healing [of] time" (DBWE 8:72-73, 1/11). Here Bonhoeffer foresaw a future healing of time, but knew that this only comes with the

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[46] Liminality is often regarded as a profane space, as it represents marginality, difference, and possible contamination of sacred or even ordinary time and space. Prison particularly falls within societal conceptions of contamination and the profane. Evidence suggests that Bonhoeffer's parents struggled to change their own conceptions of imprisonment as a social and cultural space of the profane. On April 28, 1943, Paula Bonhoeffer wrote to Bonhoeffer: "We are trying to come to terms with our old concepts of an arrest being a *shameful thing*. They only make life unnecessarily difficult, for one must understand that in these difficult times there is so much suspicion involved in the way people are judged, and how difficult it must be to remain unaffected by that" (DBWE 8:64, 1/7). Emphasis is mine.

"scarring over" (DBWE 8:73, 1/11) or "cicatrized existence" (DBWE 6:88) of time.[47] Indicating that the wounds of time would leave their mark in the formation of a scar.

One final reference from Bonhoeffer's official correspondence further highlights the liminal quality of separation and its potential formfulness. In a letter to his parents on 15 May 1943, Bonhoeffer makes reference to Psalm 31, "My times are in your hands" (Ps. 31:15; DBWE 8:80, 1/17). Vosloo (2008:347) remarks that "[h]ere we see how Bonhoeffer does not merely reflect on the anxiety of time in the face of death, but also makes reference to the prayerful assertion of God's relation to our life and times." This truth, is held in tension with the question that seeks to dominate his experience of liminality: "Lord, how long?" (Ps. 13:1). Caught in the liminal space between these two biblical assertions, Bonhoeffer is suspended between profane space and sacred space, between despair and hope, between the ravages of time and the healing of time. With these two biblical assertions, Bonhoeffer joins the Psalmist in the in-between space of lament and praise, reframing liminality as a spiritual displacement. Looking forward to the healing of this rift, Bonhoeffer struggled to hold onto the past by practicing an active memory; "recollection of spiritual trials, musical pleasures, personal relationships, [and] travels" (Beaudoin 2002: 349). Although memory could not resolve liminality, it did hold off other alternative options.

Time, Death, and Personhood

One of these alternative options was death by suicide. Contemplating this final option (again in his notes) Bonhoeffer wrote: "suicide, not out of a sense of guilt, but because I am practically dead already, the closing of the book, sum total" (DBWE 8:74, 1/12). Gremmels (2010:567) notes that these handwritten notes themselves "show that Bonhoeffer retracted the thought of suicide" as he crossed "out the passage from 'discontent' to 'closing of the book.'" This suggestion indeed corresponds to Bonhoeffer's own rejection of suicide in his first letter to Eberhard Bethge (DBWE 8:180, 2/73). Bonhoeffer's contemplation of suicide can be understood more out of fear of compromising his fellow conspirators' safety if he was unable to stand up

[47] See *Ethics* (DBWE 6:88) regarding "scarring over" or "cicatrized existence."

under interrogation, rather than his own despair. He had in fact conceptualised a justification for self-sacrifice in such instances in his *Ethics* (DBWE 6:200-201).[48] Regardless of his motivations, however, it is clear that Bonhoeffer perceived that his life in the confines of his prison cell was now on a horrifying trajectory toward death (non-being): "Waiting – but with utter calm, for *death*" (DBWE 8:72, 1/11).[49]

More important than Bonhoeffer's rejection of suicide, however, is the emergence of death as a theme in his notes and later in his fictional writings. Here we could argue that secluded from ordinary spheres of everyday life, the walls of the prison cell symbolised invisibility and death of social connections; isolation severing the prisoner from former relationships and structures of meaning. In this context the prisoner experiences a sense in which he is "neither living nor dead from one aspect and both living and dead from another" (Turner 1967:96-97). It appears that the impermanence of time, held for Bonhoeffer not only the possibility of physical death, but also the death of personhood. Without a sense of one's past, he feared that life would be lost in loneliness and non-being.[50] In this liminal space, loneliness in fact "reveals personhood because loneliness is the confession of lost relationship; it is clutching to find your personhood […] the feeling of loneliness is the closest experience that we have to death. It is to be dead to all others; it is to be alone" (Root 2013:61). Though the threat of physical death was not yet glaringly evident, the theme of death becomes a prominent part of Bonhoeffer's attempt to recover his past in his fictional writing during the interrogation period.

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[48] In *Ethics* Bonhoeffer had come to acknowledge the ethical justification for the "freedom to sacrifice one's life" through self-inflicted death, particularly in specific cases when a person was not acting "exclusively and consciously out of personal self-interest" (DBWE 6:200). Already in *Ethics* (probably contemplating his own arrest and potential interrogation), Bonhoeffer had argued that "If a prisoner takes his own life because he fears that under torture he would betray his people, his family, or his friends…" and if he could "spare them serious damage only by freely taking his own life, then self-inflicted death is so strongly subordinate to the motive of sacrifice that all condemnation of the deed becomes impossible" (DBWE 6:201). Bonhoeffer compared the conscious sacrifice of self through self-inflicted death, as in the case stated above, to be fundamentally indistinguishable "from the self-evident Christian duty to leave the last place in the lifeboat of a sinking ship to another and to die with open eyes, or to use one's own body to shield the body of a friend from a bullet. One's own decision becomes here the cause of one's own death, even though the distinction remains between direct self-inflicted death and risking one's life while commending it to God." (DBWE 6:201-202). See fn. 107, DBWE 6:201 for indications of possible sources from which Bonhoeffer draws the example of a full lifeboat.

[49] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.

[50] The most unreserved expression of this experience is capture in Bonhoeffer's poem 'The Past' (DBWE 8:418-421, 3/158).

Further exploring this connection, we note Renate's (2000:197) observation that Bonhoeffer's fictional "drama is fraught with a high degree of tension–understandably, given the stressful situation of the writer's early weeks and months of imprisonment and hearings." This tension revolves around the theme of death, which Renate (2000:198-199) claims is the primary theme of the drama, while also being present but in "a much more peripheral role" in the novel. Though it is most prominent in his fiction, the theme of death also surfaces throughout his letters in the constant reminder of the effects of war on people that are close to him and again and most graphically in the chained death-row prisoners who occupied the cells on either side of his own.

However, the theme of death is starkly absent in the initial stage of Bonhoeffer's official correspondence.[51] Bonhoeffer explored the theme of death almost exclusively in his fictional musings and fragmentary notes, where it was safe to maintain a relative distance in anonymity. It appears he may have preferred to keep silent on this theme in his correspondence, as it was one of the things that effected him most deeply. Only once he is again in command of his situation does he open up to write on the theme of death. This time it is through the medium of poetry,[52] which openly "expresses his feelings about himself and the prospect of his own death" (Green 2000:3). In his poetry, death is viewed with new eyes, having passed over the threshold of liminality and into a generous and incorporated experience of what it means to be a wholehearted and wholly present human being on the boundary of one's own death.

Bonhoeffer had previously contemplated this threshold on the boundary between temporality and death, in a sermon in Barcelona in 1928. There he had indicated that life does not go on forever, but like all great works of beauty must perish. Death as it reveals the impermanence of life calls us all to treat it "as the ultimate boundary with utmost seriousness" (Vosloo 2008:342). In the same sermon he called his audience in Barcelona "to open their eyes for the beginning of newness on this boundary" (Vosloo 2008:342).[53] For Bonhoeffer the connection between time

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[51] The exception is a brief reference to the death of Maria's father and brother (DBWE 8:57, 1/2) and Bonhoeffer's notes on separation and the emptiness of time (DBWE 8:72, 1/11).

[52] In particular Bonhoeffer's poems "Stations on the Way to Freedom" (DBWE 8:512-514, 4/191), "The Death of Moses" (DBWE 8:531-541, 4/197), and "Jonah" (DBWE 8:547-550, 4/199) all express the salient recurring death motif.

[53] Bonhoeffer's eyes would eventually be opened to the discovery of newness on the boundary of death, but not until he was on the cusp of it himself. The last stanza of his poem 'Stations of the Way to Freedom,' which has been devoted to the theme of 'Death,' carries this discovery of newness (DBWE 8:154, 4/191).

and death implies a distinctive liminal quality, opening up new possibilities on the boundary of life.

I mention the themes of personhood and death in Bonhoeffer's poetry here to show the liminal character of time. We can see that time for Bonhoeffer, is inalienably bonded to the themes of personhood, the past, and to death. His sense of losing the past and his fear of death are explicitly connected to the liminal experience of structural and social invisibility in isolation, in contrast to being connected to his loved ones. In the early stages of his imprisonment, Bonhoeffer's very real and tangible sense of separation, brought about by liminality, begins to unravel his sense of self, calling into question his own personhood in relation to others. While this connection and its ultimate reframing are most pronounced in Bonhoeffer's "Who Am I?" (DBWE 8: 459-460, 3/173) poem, the root of this questioning of personhood is concealed in his exploration of time in the initial stage of his imprisonment. As imprisonment drastically changed Bonhoeffer's social, relational, spatial and temporal status, his view of self ultimately began to change. Both imprisonment and interrogation had forced him into a position of submission that threatened to destroy both his community and his very being.

Bonhoeffer's response was to wrestle with these themes through writing, while also practicing gratitude for the gift of the other. Navigating liminality and anchoring his new spatial and temporal existence within God's time and order, required an acknowledgement of the impartibility of time. Throughout his imprisonment, he continued practicing an active memory of his own history and past. Beaudoin (2002:349) suggests that this practice of active remembering is part of a "*Christian technology of the self,*" that played a prominent role in his daily routine and ordering of the carceral space. Bonhoeffer's active dialogue with the past, occurred through writing letters, plays, fictional stories, and eventually poetry, "enabling him to regularly reintroduce himself to his own history" and to the symbols that had given his life and his relationship meaning (Beaudoin 2002:349). Actively remembering his past facilitated a renewed relationship with his own concrete history and community, allowing him to associate the meaning and purpose of his life in the present through a continuous connection to both self and others. This technique helped him to break free of imprisoning subjectivity. Let us now turn to explore Bonhoeffer's early attempts to counter imprisoning subjectivity by reorder reality in the face of his interrogations.

Separation and Telling the Truth

The second essay that Bonhoeffer wrote in prison was about "telling the truth" in specific cases of conflict.[54] This essay, combined with his non-theological work on "the sense of time," reveals both the inner challenge of liminality, as well as his capacity to navigate the space in-between familiar structures of social and political life. I offer a reading of this essay on truth against the backdrop of imprisonment and interrogation. Interrogation was, for Bonhoeffer, an invasion into his inner personal life and selfhood and as such, provoked a particular liminal crisis of meaning. A crisis that required a response if he was to ward off or resist possible alternatives, which he saw as idolatrous distortions of reality and truth. The leitmotifs of personhood, death, and sociality again play a prominent role in Bonhoeffer's response to liminality. Here, however, rather than the explicit theme of death, life plays a prominent role, taking on responsibilities for others lives in the face of death. Against this backdrop I argue that the essay functions as a reorientation of the categories of *above* and *below*, grounding reality and truth in a concrete relational and living encounter with others, which forced Bonhoeffer to reorient his position amidst the liminal space *below*.

Furthermore, it is my contention that the themes developed in this essay – life, reality, and a refutation of metaphysical idols or conceptions of God – form part of the foundational thinking of "the theological turn," which takes place in April 1944. This largely overlooked essay shares striking similarities to the development of what Wüstenberg (1998:112-136) observes in the Tegel theology, namely Bonhoeffer's theology of life. My intention here is not to refute Wüstenberg's claim that Bonhoeffer's conception of "life" develops in particular ways in late

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[54] Bonhoeffer first mentioned the essay titled 'What Does It Mean to Tell the Truth?' to Bethge on November 18, 1943 (DBWE 8:182, 2/73), around the same time he was beginning to work on his 'Prayers for Prisoners.' However, he presumably began the essay at an earlier date "under the impact of the interrogations and the urgent accompanying constraint to conceal the truth" (DBWE 16:601, 2/19, fn 1). It is my contention that due to the sensitive nature of the essay's subject matter, Bonhoeffer refrained from mentioning its existence until the first illegal correspondence with Bethge, although he had begun working on it much earlier. This argument is further substantiated by the fact that no mention of the essay is made outside of his illegal correspondence. Although the essay presumably only "reached the manuscript form in which it appears here [in DBWE 16] by the time of his final report about it" (DBWE 16:601, 2/19), on December 15, 1943 (DBWE 8:223, 2/86), its inception and its content are grounded early on in the interrogation period.

correspondence with Bethge and under the influence of his reading of Dilthey in prison.[55] However, I do contest his late starting point. Wüstenberg (1998:136-137) claims that Bonhoeffer's earlier "statements on the theme of life can yet be understood from the perspective of the manuscripts to Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* (in 1940-1943)," this is, he claims, "no longer the case with his understanding of an earthly, christological life, an understanding that is critical of religion (1994)." While Bonhoeffer's essay on "telling the truth" does indeed share linguistic similarities with *Ethics* in relation to the theme of life, it also points towards the development of thought and emphasis that Wüstenberg insists is definitive of his later prison theology. It is not my primary aim to argue this point, but rather to substantiate my claim that the prison experience does in fact play a fundamental role in the development of Bonhoeffer's late Tegel theology. Read against the backdrop of this claim, Bonhoeffer's essay shows the latent substructure of his turn to reality, his theology of life and his critique of religion. Let me now turn to offer a reading of the essay.

Facing interrogation, Bonhoeffer had little doubt that he would be forced to lie if he was to conceal the truth about the conspiracy and save himself and his fellow conspirators. A favourable outcome for the conspiracy itself depended upon Bonhoeffer's ability to protect the truth. This deception, however, posed an ethical dilemma for Bonhoeffer and it was critical that he develop a strategy that would allow him to satisfactorily answer the questions of his interrogators, while revealing no more than necessary (Martin 2005:208). To orient himself within the liminal space of the prison cell Bonhoeffer needed a way of locating his ethical discourse within God's ordering of the world, without the former structures of order and authority grounded in the *above*. This required a strategy and a language that would simultaneously reveal and conceal the truth.

Reflecting deeply upon the context of speaking the truth, he faced questions of meaning: "What does 'telling the truth' mean?" and "who" requires of us that our words be true? (DBWE 16:601, 2/19). Drawing upon the conceptual language of *Ethics*, he explores the meaning of "telling the truth" and the way in which "the truth" is *ordered*, *legislated*, and given *authority* within certain *offices* or *mandates.* From the perspective of juridical order (*Ordnung*), "telling the truth," meant

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[55] It is obviously important to note that Wüstenberg (1998:137) does indeed trace the influence of Dilthey in Bonhoeffer's thought back as early as 1929.

relating the facts regarding his involvement with the *Abwehr* office, his UK classification (sparing him from military service), his international travel, and his involvement in Operation 7. In answering the above questions, however, Bonhoeffer sought to inscribe an alternative vision of reality,[56] in which he pushed for the concept of 'truth' to be seen, not as an abstract 'ought,' some external metaphysical form, but a lived and concrete reality and relationship that can only be determined in context. In so doing, his essay mobilises a space of resistance, underwriting his development of a rhetorical strategy designed to misdirect the offensive attempts of his interrogators, and undermine their authority to demand of him the truth.[57] In addition, it reveals another attempt at navigating liminal space.

Bonhoeffer begins his argument with the question, "who" requires of us that our words be true? To whom one speaks the truth is of critical importance (DBWE 16:602, 2/19). In his analysis of one's relation to truth, Bonhoeffer argues that truthful speech – as it is contained within language and governed by the dynamics of distinct relationships (i.e. parent/child, husband/wife, friend/friend, teacher/student, governing authority/subject, and enemy/enemy) – must inevitably vary in accordance with the "who" that demands the truth.[58] Failure to properly perceive the "who" question, would ultimately lead to the destruction of the relational encounter through disregard for the "living truth between persons" (DBWE 16:604, 2/19).

Bonhoeffer grounds the essence of truth within the sphere of relationality and life itself, as a means of protecting his small community of co-conspirators. Here we can see in a very real way, that for Bonhoeffer, truth must be relational and living. This reality is never far from view in his essay on the meaning of "telling the truth." Bonhoeffer writes:

> Depending on the person to whom I am speaking, the person who is questioning me, or what I am discussing, my word, if it seeks to be truthful, must vary. A truthful word is not an entity constant in itself but is as lively as life itself. Where this word detaches itself from life and from the

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[56] Larson (2010:146) indicates "the work of the prison writer is to inscribe an alternative map of her/his cultural, social, and moral location by writing alternative bonds of personal or historical association."

[57] Martin (2005:206) offers a compelling analysis of Bonhoeffer's "rhetoric of misdirection," highlighting particular similarities between his interrogation strategy and the genre of "trickster narratives."

[58] Bonhoeffer illustrates this point throughout the essay in and through the parent/child relationship. He writes: "The truthfulness of the child toward parents is by its very nature something different from that of parents toward their child. While the life of the small child lies open to the parents and the child's word is to reveal all that is hidden and secret, the same cannot be true of the reverse relationship. In regard to truthfulness, therefore the parents' claim on the child is something different from that of the child on the parents" (DBWE 16:602, 2/19).

> relationship to the concrete other person, where "the truth is told" without regard for the person to whom it is said, there it has only the appearance of truth but not its essence (DBWE 16:604, 2/19).

For Bonhoeffer, the truthful word can only maintain its essence if it remains attached to its source of life, abiding in relationship to the concrete other. Truth itself has no life apart from its relationship to the other or to its given context within the "real." Bonhoeffer holds that this core premise is true, even if God is the one that demands the truth of us. To argue that truthful speech is owed "not to this or that person but to God alone…" is correct in so far as it does not "thereby disregard that even God is not a general principle but is the Living One who has placed me in a life that is fully alive and within this life demands my service" (DBWE 16:602, 2/19).[59]

A Challenge to Above and Below Hierarchies

Bonhoeffer's discussion of truth here draws on the conceptual language of *Ethics* and is grounded in his "doctrine of mandates," in which the "offices" (e.g. parent, husband, teacher, governing authority, pastor, magistrate) of society are authorised within four divine "mandates" of relation and authority (marriage and family, work, church and state) (Green 2005:17-18; DBWE 6:388-408). These "mandates" describe the divinely ordained patterns of authority and ethical responsibility in society.[60] Although a detailed analysis of Bonhoeffer's doctrine of mandates lies outside of the scope of the present project, [61] it is important to note the particular way in which his interrogation destabilised this former ordering and called for a reorientation of his own position within the structures of *above* and *below*. It is my contention that this

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[59] Bonhoeffer's essay on "telling the truth" further validates Wüstenberg's (1998:xv) argument "for the centrality of 'life' as a theological category in Bonhoeffer's prison theology."

[60] This notion ("doctrine of mandates") is highly complex in Bonhoeffer's thinking and offers revisions to several ideas in traditional Lutheran theology: "the doctrine of order of creation," the "doctrine of the 'three estates,'" and the "doctrine of the 'two kingdoms'" (Green 2005:18), as well as possible revisions to Emil Brunner's "orders of creation," which Guth (2013:133) suggests were "all prone to Nazi corruption."

[61] For Bonhoeffer's primary discussion of the mandates, see his *Ethics* (DBWE 6); as well as his essay "A Theological Position Paper on State and Church" (DBWE 16:502-528, 2/10) and "A Study on 'Personal' and 'Objective' Ethics" (DBWE 16:540-551, 2/13). For a Feminist revision of Bonhoeffer's Mandates see Guth, K.V. 2013. To See from Below: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Mandates and Feminist Ethics. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 33(2): 131-150.

destabilisation and reorientation played a formative role in Bonhoeffer's experience of liminality, suspending him between two definite poles of ethical authority.

In a section of *Ethics* titled "The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Topic," Bonhoeffer had grounded the authorisation for ethical discourse within the objective position of those who hold offices of the "*above*":

> [The] authorization for ethical discourse […] is granted to and bestowed on people, not primarily because of their subjective achievements and distinctions, but because of their objective position in the world. Thus it is the old person and not the young, the parent and not the child, the master and not the servant, the teacher and not the student, the judge and not the defendant, the governing authority and not the subject, the preacher and not the parishioner, to whom the authorization for ethical discourse is granted. This is an expression of the *orientation from above and below*, which is an intrinsic and essential quality of the ethical, even though it is so highly offensive to the modern mind. Without this objective order of above and below [*Oben und Unten*], and without the courage to be "above" – which modern people have so completely lost – ethical discourse degenerates into generalities and vacuous talk, and forfeits its character as ethical […] We cannot avoid the fact that the ethical demands a clear ordering of above and below (DBWE 6: 372-3, 375).

It is this hierarchical structure, apparently endemic to Bonhoeffer's doctrine of mandates that Barth was so highly critical of (Weissbach 1967:147). For it attaches more importance, Weissbach (1967:147) writes, to authority from "above" than to "freedom even of the person at the bottom." Barth's (as cited by Weissbach 1967:147) fundamental question regarding Bonhoeffer's conservative view of governments and authority, was: "Is the notion of the authority of some over others really more characteristic of the ethical event than that of the freedom of even the very lowest before the highest?" Whether or not Bonhoeffer asked himself this question while writing his essay on truth we will never be known. Nevertheless, having lived and written almost exclusively from the privileged social position of the *above,* from the office of pastor and teacher, Bonhoeffer now found himself in the submissive position of the *below*, of servant, subject, and defendant. Although he was by no means the lowest in Tegel prison, Bonhoeffer was now discovering what it meant to be at the bottom and subject to governing authorities. [62]

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[62] The movement from *oben* to *unten* hand indeed begun early during Bonhoeffer's involvement in the conspiracy, as he "renounced his position of secure dominance and moved for the first time in his life into a situation of genuine vulnerability" (Dahill 2009:87). However, it is clear that imprisonment intensified this experience and called for a certain reordering and discernment of reality and self.

This new position appears to have provoked a particular psycho-social crisis for Bonhoeffer, in which he felt the need to defend his authority, not only to engage in ethical discourse *below* but also to refuse the invasive demands of his interrogators to "reveal all that is hidden and secret" (DBWE 16:602, 2/19). In the position of the *below*, it is clear that Bonhoeffer experienced his interrogations as an alienating invasion by the *above* into his inner personal life and selfhood. What he would later refer to as an "illegitimate prying into the mystery of life" (DBWE 8:215, 2/84).[63] This invasion is personified through the actions of the teacher in Bonhoeffer's essay. Disregarding the responsibility of his office, the teacher transgresses the boundaries of his office by demanding that the child reveal hidden secrets about his family (DBWE 16:605-606, 2/19). The teacher who was not justified in this intrusion is in actuality "guilty of the lie," while the child's lie, which sought to protect the order of the family "corresponds more closely to the truth" (DBWE 16:606, 2/19).

Read autobiographically, this classroom scenario mirrors Bonhoeffer's new social position. For the first time in his life he has been placed in the submissive position of the *below*; the child, the student, the subject, the defendant. Finding himself suspended within God's clear and objective ordering of *above* and *below* he experiences a betwixt space. Here familiar points of orientation are detached from stable anchors in the *above* world of the *Bildungsbürger*. Unlike the child, however, Bonhoeffer does not lack "the experience, the discernment," nor "the capacity for appropriate expression" (DBWE 16:606, 2/19). His essay can be understood as a formative response to his experience of liminality from *below* and a means of justifying his hidden rebellion against the divinely mandated authority of his interrogators. The experience of *below* forces Bonhoeffer to rethink his ethical categories, so that he can locate his own position within the orders of the cosmos and justify his ongoing conspiratorial activity as being grounded in Christ's own vicarious representative action as a *Stellvertreter*.

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[63] In this same letter to Bethge on December 5, 1943, Bonhoeffer indicates that "[t]ruthfulness" does not at all mean that whatever exists must be uncovered […] exposure is cynical; and even if cynics appear particularly honest in their own eyes or act like fanatics for the truth, they still miss the decisive truth, namely, that after the fall there is a need for covering [Verhülling] and secrecy [Geheimnis]." This was precisely what attracted Bonhoeffer to Stifter during his imprisonment: that "Stifter's greatness lies in the fact that he refuses to pry into the inner realm of the person, that he respects the covering and regards the person only very discreetly from without as it were, but not from within" (DBWE 8:215, 2/84).

It would be overstating my case, however, to speak here of a fundamental shift in Bonhoeffer's conception of *above* and *below*. While the concrete reality of interrogation offered him a new view of the world, there remain certain continuities in his experience and writing that ultimately undermine any fundamental shift in his thinking regarding the hierarchical structure of the mandates. Feminist scholarship continues to point out certain tendencies that persist in his prison writings – namely his continued insistence on the objective mandate of marriage, in comments about his future marriage to Maria and in his wedding sermon for Eberhard and Renate Bethge (DBWE 8:82-87, 1/18) – that ultimately undermine any notion of a change in his thinking or a shift in his understand of the classificatory categories of mandated authority and responsibility. These patriarchical tendencies, which reflect the cultural norms of his social location, reinforce "social roles and patterns of relationship conducive to inequality" (Guth 2013:134). Thereby undermining any concrete revision of his previous conception of the mandates that might give authority and responsibility to those who find themselves at the bottom. This critical point has contributed to the necessity for the kind of feminist correction and revision that Dahill (2013:53-84)[64] offers in relation to the categories of *above* and *below* or that Lovin (1984:143) and Guth (2013) offer in relation to the mandates more generally. So I am not arguing for a fundamental shift in Bonhoeffer's thinking, but rather a nuanced perspective of the discontinuities in which the space of interrogation thrusts Bonhoeffer into the *below*. His essay seeks to protect the life of those who see the world from *below*, including his own, and in this way represents a formative experience of the *below*, even if he remained blinded to the ways that he continued to hold onto the position of *above* in terms of gender relations.

Truth as a Question of Encounter

It is my contention that Bonhoeffer's essay on "telling the truth" represents a formational encounter with Jesus Christ that is made possible by the disorienting space of the *below* that throws the self and the ego off balance and opens up a place for embracing Christ and life itself

[64] Dahill (2013:57) suggests that a "critically hermeneutical view of gender corresponds much more fruitfully to the rest of Bonhoeffer's thinking and witness than his own explicit gender views do, suggesting that, had he survived the war, he might well have found his own categories of "above" and "below" – and the inherited gender roles that went with those for him – called into question by the Gospel and his own best thought."

in a new way. Throughout the essay, as he had done throughout his carrier, Bonhoeffer grounds the contextual reality of truth within his Christology. In his *Christology* lectures of 1933, in the later development of his prison Christology (with the question "who is Christ actually for us today?") (DBWE 8:362, 3/137), as well as in his fragmentary "Outline for a Book" (DBWE 8:499-504, 4/187), Bonhoeffer's starting point is the question of "who." This indispensable question is what Pangritz (1999:137) calls a "question of encounter." Bonhoeffer argues that truth itself can only be discerned through particular contexts and encounters in the concrete place of lived life in the world. This is so, because truth is not an idea but a person; truth is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is in the world. Truth cannot be detached from the "who" of relationality, escaping safely into the metaphysical realm of God, for in Jesus Christ "God's truth became flesh in the world and is alive in the real" (DBWE 16:605, 2/19). Jesus Christ remains the "who" that mediates an encounter with the truth in the concrete place of lived life. Therefore, for Bonhoeffer, to speak truthfully, requires "a long, earnest, and continual effort that is based in experience and the perception of reality" (DBWE 16:603, 2/19).

In the same way, Bonhoeffer's mobilisation of resistance to political evil "is grounded not in theories of social ethics, but in Christology" not in Christological abstractions but in a living connection to Jesus Christ (Dahill 2003:1). Here Bonhoeffer begins to offer a Christological vision of truth, which counters the truth of perverted juridical order. In his essay on "telling the truth," we can already see a pattern of thought beginning to emerge during the interrogation period, which represents the embryonic phase of his later prison Christology. Bonhoeffer develops a sequence of interconnecting propositions; the living truth is relational and cannot be detached from the lived world or from its relationship to the concrete other. To do so would be to disregard the living truth, which is alive in the real, through the person of Jesus Christ. Discovery of the '"right" and truthful word for any given circumstance – read answering the questions of his interrogators – is a matter of discerning the real, in which "one's gaze and thought must be oriented toward how the real is in God, and through God, and toward God" (DBWE 16:603, 2/19).

Although not yet fully articulated, this encounter is an encounter with the One who "is there for others" (DBWE 8:501, 4/187). What Bonhoeffer later says about "faith," could here be said about "truth;" "[f]aith [or speaking the truth] is participating in this being of Jesus;" his "being-

for-others" (DBWE 8:501, 4/187). If this reading holds, then it is safe to say that Bonhoeffer's later prison Christology owes at least a share of its genesis to Bonhoeffer's early struggle to be there-for-others as he navigated the difficulty of speaking the truth during his interrogation. Through this context specific encounter with Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer experiences a person-forming participation in the being of Jesus, "[b]ecoming human [*Menschwerdung*], cross, resurrection" (DBWE 8:501, 4/187). Thus, Bonhoeffer's essay on "telling the truth" and the world behind the text, form a unique part of his final "turning from the phraseological to the real." Here the "who" question of his *Christology* lectures is taken up again, moving more and more from Christological abstraction, and absolute forms of the metaphysical, whether in terms of truth or God, toward a fully embodied and concrete encounter with Jesus Christ and outright participation in his being there-for-others (DBWE 8:501, 4/187).

Truth and the Mystery of the Living One

Furthermore, Bonhoeffer's encounter with Jesus Christ from *below* calls into question the ethical authority of the *above* who denigrate life and its meaning. By rooting truth within the Christological character of reality, Bonhoeffer seeks to ward against idolatrous distortions of reality or truth that claim authority over life itself. He writes that "[t]hose who say 'God' are not allowed simply to cross out the given world in which I live; otherwise they would be speaking not of God who in Jesus Christ came into the world but rather of some sort of metaphysical idol" (DBWE 16:602, 2/19). Although Bonhoeffer clearly maintains the mandates of his *Ethics* – in which truthful speech is authorised within relations of the mandates, such as governing authority and subject – these mandates always involve a necessary responsibility regarding the "preservation of the world toward and for the sake of Christ" (Green 2005:20). Drawing on his language of the "orders of preservation" (DBWE 3:139-140), Bonhoeffer insists that such mandates of authority are responsible to the Living One who defines and governs the preservation of the real world.

Bonhoeffer here makes use of two critical allusions to the National Socialist state, its complex truth games, and its claim to biopolitical sovereignty over life. Although these allusions are at times oblique "because of the danger of writing direct attacks on the regime," they resound with

clarity given the acoustics of Bonhoeffer's social location (Green 2005:24).[65] I hope to show that these two critical allusions (the "metaphysical idol" and the "cynic"), share characteristic similarities with political/historical allusions in *Ethics* (Green 2005:24), and can be taken as clear challenges to National Socialist ideologies and laws that infringe upon the rights of humanity and personal life. Bonhoeffer argues for the justification of an ethical "borderline case" or boundary situation, declaring the necessity of responsible action in the face of authority that has inverted values such as truth for the purpose of personal gain and political power, ultimately wreaking havoc on humanity and destroying community and life itself.

Let us examine each of these allusions in relation to *Ethics* before turning to the larger symbolic and historical landscape. First, the "metaphysical idol." For Bonhoeffer, the concrete encounter with Jesus Christ thwarts distortions of the image of God and protects truth and the nature of life as gift in the lived world. In *Ethics* Bonhoeffer had highlighted the danger of a kind of "myopic pragmatism" that in responsibility to a cause, transgresses the limits and boundaries of responsibility through the idolization of certain values (such as truth), ultimately inverting "all of life through the dominance of things over people" (DBWE 6:260). This idolatrous inversion of truth "destroys human beings by sacrificing them to the idol" (DBWE 6:260). Following Karl Barth's (as cited in DBWE 16:602, 2/19) "polemical use of language,"[66] as well as this section of *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer's critique of the "metaphysical idol" refers not only to the distortion of the image of God, but to any "absolutised image of man… posited by human invention." Any general abstract principle that inverts the value of the ethical ("the true, the good, the right, the beautiful") in service of a cause (National Socialism) or an image of man (the Führer), thereby desecrates its value by seeking to replace the "mystery of the living and life-giving God" for "the mystery of an enthroned but lifeless idol" (DBWE 16:602, 2/19).

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[65] Levi Strauss (1952:25) in his book *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, illustrates how the context of persecution, "gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only. It has all the advantages of private communication without having its greatest disadvantage-that it reaches only the writer's acquaintances. It has all the advantages of public communication without having its greatest disadvantage-capital punishment for the author. But how can a man [*sic*] perform the miracle of speaking in a publication to a minority, while being silent to the majority of his readers? The fact which makes this literature possible can be expressed in the axiom that thoughtless men are careless readers, and only thoughtful men [*sic*] are careful readers. Therefore an author who wishes to address only thoughtful men [*sic*] has but to write in such a way that only a very careful reader can detect the meaning of his book."

[66] The German editors of *DBWE* 16 indicate this discursive connection in footnote [4.] of the essay (DBWE 16:602, 2/19).

Echoing *Ethics*, the allusion of the "metaphysical idol" deconstructs the deification of abstract truth, which in the service of the cause deems human beings as unworthy of life. It denounces the narrow horizons, self-centred interests ("myopic pragmatism"), and slogans of the National Socialist's, which rang "*Recht ist, was dem Volke nützt,*" ("Justice is what is useful for the people"), as lifeless and detached from responsibility (DBWE 6:260, fn. 52). Countering the "metaphysical idol," Bonhoeffer's essay grounds truth in the person of Jesus Christ, the Human One, whose living truth is incarnated in the world, whose justice and truth are directed to the concrete neighbour within the reality of the lived world. Truth is grounded not in abstract legal facts but in selfless love for the real human being. Bonhoeffer's formative experience of interrogation and his response, give rise here to language that is beginning to move toward the conceptual language of his "world interpretation" developed later in the prison experience.

Bonhoeffer's second allusion is the "cynic," who "puts on display a dead idolatrous image of truth" and wreaks havoc on the human community by preying on human weakness (DBWE 16,604, 2/19). This image shares a particular affinity with "the tyrannical despiser of humanity" in *Ethics*, which is of course representative of Hitler (DBWE 6:85-86; Green 2005:24). Bonhoeffer describes the cynic as one who claims to "tell the truth" in all circumstances:

> By putting a halo on his own head for being a zealot for the truth who can take no account of human weaknesses, he destroys the living truth between persons. He violates shame, desecrates the mystery, breaks trust, betrays the community in which he lives, and smiles arrogantly over the havoc he has wrought and over the human weakness that "can't bear the truth." He says that the truth is destructive and demands its victims, and he feels like a god over the feeble creatures and does not realize that he is serving Satan" (DBWE 16:604, 2/19).

Again through the inversion of truth, both the "cynic" and "the tyrannical despiser of humanity" (both of which I believe to be allusions to Hitler) hide their secret and profound distrust for human weakness behind "the stolen words of true community" (DBWE 6:86). They praise themselves with "repulsive vanity" becoming zealots of truth and goodness, yet they despise "the rights of every individual" and trample the weak (DBWE 6:86; DBWE 16:604, 2/19). One passage of *Ethics* draws an even closer connection between the two allusions. Here Bonhoeffer highlights the power of "the tyrannical despiser of humanity" to deem others unworthy: "he considers the people stupid, and they become stupid; he considers them weak, and they become weak; he considers them criminal, and they become criminal […] his conventional protestations of solicitude for people are bare-faced cynicism" (DBWE 6:86). Indeed the cynic alludes to

Hitler, the despiser of humanity, who “despises what God has loved, despises the very form of God become human” (DBWE 6:87).

These two allusions reverberate within a political and symbolic landscape, in which the National Socialist state had absolutised the image of the Führer, making a claim over truth and life in service of the biopolitical structure of the state. In Agamben’s (1998:83) illuminating analysis of the National Socialist state, “[t]he Führer represents precisely life itself insofar as it is he who decides on life’s very biopolitical consistency.” Within this juridical-political context, the Führer and the state after him, hold the sovereign power to decide “the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant;” to deem “life unworthy of being lived” (Agamben 1998:83). The Führer’s words that the ”new State knows no other task than the fulfilment of the conditions necessary for the preservation of the people,” found what may be the most “rigorous biopolitical formulations” of the National Socialist state. In the words of Verschuer (as cited in Agamben 1998:83), they “mean that every political act of the National Socialist state serves the life of the people. . . .” Thus, the concentration camp, and at another level military interrogation prisons like Tegel, were consequential acts in service of the “life” of the *Volk*.

Within this symbolic and political landscape, Bonhoeffer writes as one of the potentially disposable bodies of the state. His life was both included in the juridical order [*Ordnung*] and yet remains there on the verge of exclusion, in the realm of biopolitical liminality. For Bonhoeffer, this is a completely new experience of the “view from below.” During his involvement in the conspiracy, Bonhoeffer had become familiar with the destructive mechanisms and systems of ‘thingification,’ whereby human beings desecrate “the true, the good, the right, and the beautiful,” by defining their usefulness in the service of state ideologies (DBWE 6:260). Now he had become the “thing” itself. From this new position Bonhoeffer draws upon his earlier *Ethics*, seeking to inscribe an alternative map of life by locating it within the reality of the Living One and thereby naming the destructive forces of the National Socialist state and the Führer as an abstraction, a “metaphysical idol” or even an “enthroned but lifeless idol.” In the interrogation rooms of the Reich War Court, the contestation over truth was the liminal boundary between life and death for Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer’s essay on “telling the truth,” written from the desk in his prison cell, ultimately counters this destructive force by insisting upon the fundamental preservation of life amidst

lifeless biopolitical forces of power. This notion of life, present throughout Bonhoeffer's essay, thus represents an early fragment in the development of what Wüstenberg (1998:136) refers to as Bonhoeffer's theology of life, in which the "concept of life becomes the central connecting concept between the human existence of Jesus and meaningful Christian human existence, exhibiting thus 'life-christological' content." This largely overlooked piece in the development of Bonhoeffer's theology of life, which acts as a bridge between his *Ethics* and his "philosophy of life," also plays a fundamental role in his response to the disorientation of liminality. In and through the creation of this essay we can see Bonhoeffer's own embodied and concrete participation in the "life" of Jesus Christ, who is grounded not in metaphysical abstraction, but in the concrete reality of this world. Responding to the invasion of his interrogators, Bonhoeffer experiences what would later become the world orienting stability he was longing for in the liminal space of his prison cell.

Ethical Liminality in Borderline Cases

In light of the above, another section of *Ethics* becomes important for understanding what Bonhoeffer is doing in his essay on "telling the truth." In a section titled 'History and Good,' written in the beginning of 1942, Bonhoeffer argued that there are specific occasions within historical life, when the "strict observance of the explicit law of a state, a corporation, a family […] entails a clash with the basic necessities of human life [Lebensnotwendigkeiten]" (DBWE 6:272-273). Within such occasions, which he terms "borderline cases," extraordinary situations call for "appropriate responsible action" that may depart from the "domain governed by laws and principles, from the normal and regular" state of legal affairs (DBWE 6:273). Such occasions might be termed political or biopolitical liminality**.** Within such cases, "deception"[67] may be the only appropriate responsible action "for the sake of one's life necessities" (DBWE 6:273). Those acting in free responsibility must be willing "*to become guilty [Bereitschaft zur Schuldübernahme]*" (DBWE 6:275). Here again Bonhoeffer's argument is grounded in his Christology. Responsible action finds its origin in Jesus Christ's "vicarious representative

[67] Bonhoeffer replaced "lie" with "deception" in the original.

responsible action [stellvertretend verantwortliches Handeln]," which was not concerned with new ethical ideals or goodness (Matt. 19:17), but solely with a "love for real human beings" (DBWE 6:275). Responsible action cannot withdraw from the community of human guilt, precisely because it is responsible, exclusively concerned about other human beings, and originates in selfless love for the real human being (DBWE 6:275).

Bonhoeffer's essay on "telling the truth" is the embodiment of responsible action within such a borderline case. In lying to his interrogators, Bonhoeffer knew that he was taking on guilt, not in relation to juridical order and the governing authority, although that may also be true, but in relation to God's judgment. He was willing and able to do so precisely because the living truth has its origin, its essence, and its goal in the mystery of the Living One. He understood this responsible act of deception to be grounded solely in Christ the Living One who took on guilt in love for real human beings. Not in self-interested protection of his fellow conspirators, friends, and family, but in selfless love of the human community.

As a result, Bonhoeffer developed an ethically and theologically rigorous framework for speaking the truth within a space of biopolitical liminality. When the orders (*Ordnung*) of authority transgress the boundaries and limits of responsibility; when ethical concepts are inverted and evil is disguised as good, and right, and true, then it is the task of the responsible ones to act and to resist.[68] Amidst the fixed *discursive practices* of the state, designed to control and fix truth and life itself, Bonhoeffer embodies his *Ethics* of responsible action.

While Bonhoeffer lamented having never finished his *Ethics* (DBWE 8:181, 2/73), this thesis suggests that he did indeed complete the final chapters of his *Ethics*, not as a published work, but in and through his life, lived in responsibility to the mystery of the living and the life-giving God, and in conformation with Jesus Christ (Incarnated, Crucified, Resurrected). This is the formfulness of liminality, which opens up the space for a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ.

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[68] This essay function as a postlude to his section 'Who Stands Firm?' in "After Ten Years." Who stands firm in the groundlessness and liminality of *below*; who stands firm in the face of interrogation and imprisonment? "Only the one whose ultimate standard is not his reason, his principles, conscience, freedom, or virtue; only the one who is prepared to sacrifice all of these when, in faith and in relationship to God alone, he is called to obedient and responsible action" (DBWE 8:40, prologue).

Separation and the Transformation of Space

I have argued thus far, that for Bonhoeffer, the prison cell symbolised a break or disjunction from his former life and a growing sense of separation from his past and his future. Most importantly, however, he felt cut off from the relationships that gave meaning to and formed his own person. Detached from former socio-cultural meaning structures, he was thrust into the disorienting space of the profane. This experience of separation threatened to become a permanent state of between-ness without a fixed point or centre to gain orientation. Life in his cell was suspended between the void and any possible future, between death (non-being) and life itself. I have also argued above that enforced submission and rigorous interrogation challenged social and ethical hierarchies, inverting the good and the true, and ultimately relocating him from the world of the *above* to the world of the *below*. From this new position, Bonhoeffer developed an ethical and theological justification for a borderline case or boundary situation, grounding his ongoing conspiratorial activities within the "life-christological" preservation of life grounded in concrete reality, thereby freeing him to act responsibly in genuine love for real human beings.

The focus of my analysis thus far has rested primarily on texts outside of Bonhoeffer's official correspondence during the interrogation period. These texts have offered critical insight into his early spatial, temporal, as well as ethical experience of imprisonment. In this final section, I will turn to examine Bonhoeffer's official correspondence. This material shows that he turned toward the disorientation and discomfort of liminality from very early on, attempting at times to contain and reframe and at other times to let go. While the structures of the prison cell required submission, Bonhoeffer countered by instilling a strict inner and outer discipline, deepening the carceral design through the cultivation of a monastic order. Transforming the space of his cell into a monastic enclosure, Bonhoeffer was able to adapt to his situation and construct a place of resistance to the depersonalising forces of incarceration. This process of liminal transformation is slow in becoming and only beings to take shape in the second and third period of his imprisonment, however, the embryonic stages of this transformation are present right from the start; in form, if not in content. Through ritual performance, Bonhoeffer sought to transform the profane space of his cell into a sacred space of liminal displacement. In what follows, I will further seek to illustrate how the prison space becomes a formative place, in which Bonhoeffer is freed to encounter God in new ways.

Reading Bonhoeffer's Official Letters

I will first make a few important observations regarding interpretation of Bonhoeffer's official letters. In contrast to his early notes on a "sense of time" and his essay on "telling the truth," Bonhoeffer's official letters offer a decidedly different picture of life in Tegel. They reflect a composure and reserve that mask any real sense of a crisis of meaning. The themes of personhood, death, the past, and even life, are starkly absent. Here the theme of discipline takes prominence, as well as the performance of spiritual practices and the attempt to make sense of the meaning and fruitfulness of liminality. Nevertheless, the production achieved in and through his response to separation and telling the truth (ethical separation) stands concealed within the experience of liminality expressed in his official correspondence. In contrast to the argument as it has preceded thus far, Bonhoeffer official correspondence suggests that he in fact valued his experience, for the way that it deepened his spiritual life and his understanding of being human. Looking toward his official correspondence then, three observations become important for understanding and interpreting his letters.

The first observation is biographical. Bonhoeffer was known for being particularly proud of his bourgeois cultural inheritance, which had taught him the practice of discipline, reserve, and keeping silent about things that impacted one most deeply (Bethge, R 2000:202). He avoided self-promotion, valued privacy and discretion, and only rarely spoke of his deepest emotions, longings, and fears.[69] In addition, it was not at all part of "his family's tradition to speak openly and easily of intimate matters" (Beaudoin 2002:347). In this characteristic style, Bonhoeffer used his letters to reassure his parents that he was indeed doing well and that they had no need to be anxious or worried about his imprisonment (DBWE 8:56, 1/2).[70]

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[69] In prison, as well as in other places, Bonhoeffer believed that confession was the only authentic place for sharing one's innermost feelings and emotions. Dahill (2009:8) notes that Bonhoeffer "considered those who freely poured out their hearts to observers to be shamefully immodest." See chapter 3 for discussion on this point in relation to Bonhoeffer's fellow prisoner and walking partner. See also DBWE 8:200-201, 2/79; 286, 2/108.

[70] Bonhoeffer's efforts to comfort his parents seems to have had an effect, as indicated in an unpublished letter from Paula Bonhoeffer on April 22, 1943 (*NL*, A 76,6): "Your letter has been a great relief to us. While we did not expect anything other than that you would calmly accept the external deprivations you are experiencing, it does give us great relief to read in your letter that you are really not doing badly and that we should really believe it."

The second observation is socio-political. Bonhoeffer used his official correspondence[71] to mask certain realities of his experience, not only from his parents, but also from the Reich Military officials who censored his letters. In Tegel, the institutional structures of surveillance functioned to conceal and limit the boundaries and trajectories of potential discourse. What and to whom he writes was confined by the power and limits of surveillance.[72] In this context, Bonhoeffer was forced to present a performative image of himself, as a strong and capable pastor. Who being ignorant of legal matters – was perplexed by his sudden imprisonment, but willing to do his civil duty, enduring his time in Tegel in submission and obedience. Although this creates an interpretive environment of suspicion, it also focuses our attention on what he does in fact say and to whom. It invites us to think along with Bonhoeffer in understanding what he intends his readers to "know and indeed believe" (DBWE 8:56, 1/2).

This leads to a third observation regarding his official letters. As a skilful writer, Bonhoeffer uses his official letters to contain and reframe his own experience. Writing is essentially an extension of his being. It is part of his way of relating both to himself and to others. It follows that Bonhoeffer uses his letters to observe, understand, interpret, and reflect upon his own experience of being a prisoner. In addition, his letters function as a quintessential part of his meaning making process. They act as a container helping him to draw very clear boundaries around his experience, holding back raw emotions and despair, while at the same time participating in the ongoing formation of self and community. In this way, they function as a reframing device, offering a medium for alternative appraisals and discernment of reality. While the boundaries of his life are severely curtailed and governed by surveillance and censorship, they are also self-imposed to some degree by internal censors and restrictions.

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[71] The archive of letters written by Bonhoeffer during the interrogation period were addressed exclusively to his aging parents, Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer, with the exception of one letter written to his bother-in-law and fellow conspirator Hans von Dohnanyi (DBWE 8:69, 1/10). DBWE 8 also contains a number of letters written to Bonhoeffer, including many letters from Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer, five letters from his brother Karl-Friedrich (DBWE 8:58, 1/4; 77-78, 1/15; 93-94, 1/23; 103-104,1/28; 116-117, 1/35), one letter from his sister Susanne Dreβ (DBWE 8:88, 1/19), one letter from his brother-in-law and fellow conspirator Hans von Dohnanyi (DBWE 8:59-61, 1/5), one letter from his bother-in-law Rudiger Schleicher (DBWE 8:65, 1/8), two letters from the Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor Dr. Manfred Roeder to Karl Bonhoeffer (DBWE 8:58, 1/3; 77, 1/15), one letter from Karl Bonhoeffer to the Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor (DBWE 8:75, 1/13), as well as two of Bonhoeffer's personal notes (DBWE 8:70-73, 1/11; 73-74, 1/12), and one "Wedding Sermon from the Prison Cell" (DBWE 8:82-87, 1/18).

[72] "Until the end of July 1943, the censor only permitted Bonhoeffer to write letters to his parents every ten days" (DBWE 8:56 f.3).

Due to the complexity of his situation, Bonhoeffer's official letters contain varying degrees of self-revelation. Untangling the lines of these threads in understanding the formative nature of this prison experience is not an easy task. His letters – regulated by internal and external censors – include moments of self-disclosure and self-containment, revelation and deception.[73] Likewise, the theme of internal and external, disclosure and containment arise, I argue, not only as a facet of misdirection, but also as a result of the transitional phenomena of liminality. Nevertheless, these letters, as Beaudoin (2002:348) suggests, "always threaten to trick the reader, disavowing their originary referent in a lonely solitary prison cell." Or as in the words of Ricoeur (as cited by Vosloo 2012:54) they are "like flashes of light in the dark." Yet, these flashes of light continue to illuminate a life longing to discover wholeness amidst fragmentation. To discover the formative nature of his prison experience, we must read these letters like the censors, with critical and scrutinising eyes, stitching together the important threads that emerge from his often fragmentary and at times incomplete letters (Beaudoin 2002:348). All the while searching for the subterraneous continuities of his experience, his sense of self, and his continuing longing for connection to others on the "outside" world.

Liminality between Inside and Outside

Bonhoeffer's life in a cell, as has been argued above, was initially tormenting, particularly as enforced solitude[74] resulted in a dramatic loss of autonomy. "The door slammed shut and locked" (DBWE 8:418,3/158), severing the connection between the autonomous world "out there" (his former life) and the restrained world "in here" (the prison cell).[75] This troubling sense of being "locked in" produced an external (agency impinging on him) and internal (frustration of

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[73] Bonhoeffer considered this to be part of humanity's awareness of shame: "Shame contains an acknowledgement of and protest against disunion, which is why human beings live between concealment and dislocation, between hiding and revealing themselves, between solitude and community. […] The most profound and most personal joys and pains must also be kept from being revealed in words" (DBWE 6:305).

[74] Hauerwas (2009:113) indicates that there is an important distinction in Bonhoeffer's thinking between solitude and loneliness: "In *Sanctorum Communio*, he distinguished solitude from loneliness, associating the former with 'divine wrath'. Accordingly, he observed that 'Solitude is an ethical category, and being under God's wrath is worse than the misery of loneliness' (DBWE 1, p. 285)". However, in prison Bonhoeffer arrives at a new understanding of solitude. He writes, "Despite all the deprivations, I have also come to cherish the solitude" (DBWE 8:240, 2/89).

[75] See DBWE 8:61, 53, 80, 381, for specific uses of "in here." Variations of the metaphor, including (but not limited to) "inside/outside" and "internal/external," are present throughout DBWE 8 and will be noted as they occur.

agency: not being able to get out or act) disjunction during the interrogation period.[76] Within his cell the outside world along with the external circumstances of imprisonment (legal and carceral) were outside of his control. For him, the external deprivations, though significant, were more easily overcome than the "considerable internal adjustment" demanded by the solitude of his cell (DBWE 8:56, 1/2). As a result, the internal world was perceived as the solitary arena of agency. Yet, thereto he felt "restrained" and "confined" by an inner restlessness and lack of autonomy.

Taking up this point Marsh (1994:138) argues that the "prison" - a metaphor Bonhoeffer had used in *Act and Being* to signify "intolerable self enclosure" – had "now become [concretely] real, ironically vicious and mocking."[77] What had been a "lonely self-imprisonment" in his younger years (Dahill 2009:30) was now dominated, not by the "masterful ego" (Dahill 2009:60), but by the material enclosure and subjectification of his cell. Thus relegating all individual action and/or agency to the "realm of the invisible" (DBWE 8:155, 2/57). The contours of this self-enclosure are configured in Bonhoeffer's early correspondence through outside/inside metaphors, underlining his spatial experience of the prison cell and its unbearable imprisoning solitude. Responding to this situation he attempted to focus on "what one still has and what can be done […] and on *restraining* within oneself the rising thoughts about what one cannot do and the inner restlessness and resentment about the entire situation" (DBWE 8:79, 1/17).[78] This theme is again notably present in a letter to Dohananyi on May 5, 1943: "We must simply let go of what we cannot accomplish and *confine* ourselves to what we can and should do" (DBWE 8:70, 1/10).[79] In both texts, the external carceral sphere of restraint and confinement accent a sense of interior enclosure, in which Bonhoeffer was forced to turn inward to find an inner order and resolve for enduring his present situation. Although many interpreters of Bonhoeffer are highly suspicious of interiority and inwardness,[80] as was Bonhoeffer to an

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[76] See DBWE 8:56, 66, 68, 79, 84, 88, 91, 98, for references to internal or external relations.
[77] Quoting Bonhoeffer, Marsh (1994:138) goes on to say: "In *Act and Being*, written a decade and a half earlier in 1929, Bonhoeffer described the world-constitutive claims of autonomous reason as a cry that only "dissembles the mute loneliness of isolation," sounding "without echo into the world governed and construed by the self," keeping the self a "prison to itself."
[78] Emphasis is mine.
[79] Emphasis is mine.
[80] See Williams (1988:36-53) for a evaluation of what he sees as a critique of modern accounts of interiority and of the therapeutic self.

extent,[81] it is clear that the carceral space initially intensified an experience of inwardness and self-enclosure. Longing to escape the circularities of solitude and the insidious monotony of his cell, Bonhoeffer's chief task was to achieve an integrity of self in the face of assaults that came both from within and outside the self.

The experience of self-enclosure and containment reveals an important feature of Bonhoeffer's experience of liminality. Drawing on metaphor theory, Fludernik (1999:47) "treats the metaphor of containment [represented through outside/inside metaphors] as a prototypical scenario in which the subject or object resides within a container."[82] Typical of prison literature, "the container metaphor functionalizes the enclosing circumference of the container" and figures the "coordinates of carceral topography" (walls, doors, windows) through egress (exit) and ingress (entry) movements (Fludernik 1999:47). The container represents a limitational boundary (either prison walls or the body's skin) – between the outside and the inside, the internal and the external – the circumference of which operates as a boundary, enclosing the subject within a liminal sphere. Operating as a threshold, the boundary of the container can be transgressed either positively or negatively in either direction – egress or ingress (Fludernik 1999:47). Examination of the container metaphor, calls attention to important features of Bonhoeffer's experience of carceral liminality, in which the structure of the carceral space is figured symbolically in his self-identity, taking on internal and external relations within solitary confinement. Here we can observe the formative nature of the prison space acting negatively upon the prisoner and enclosing the self in isolation.

A critical text that further illustrates the containment metaphor and its correlated movements of egress and ingress is found in Bonhoeffer's letter to Bethge on May 30, 1944. Although this letter is from a much later period, it represents the climax of an outside/inside disjunction that began during the interrogation period and remained throughout the course of his imprisonment.

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[81] See Northcott (2009:11-29) for a nuanced exploration of Bonhoeffer's understanding of human identity, interiority, and inwardness. See also Marsh, C. 1992a. 'In Defence of a Self: the Theological Search for a Post-Modern Identity', In *SJT* 55, 427-448; Marsh, C. 1992b. The Overabundant Self and the Transcendental Tradition: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the Reflective Self. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 60(4):659-672.; and Marsh, C. 1994. *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of his Theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, for a description of Bonhoeffer's notion of the "Overabundant Self" and the "Reflective Self."

[82] The following section draws from the carceral topography of Fludernik's (1999) essay Carceral Topography: spatiality, liminality, and corporality in the literary prison.

> I'm sitting up *here in* my cell, the house is quiet, a few birds are still singing *outside*, and there's even a cuckoo calling in the distance. These long, warm evenings, which I'm now experiencing here for the second time, exhaust me somehow. They make one *long to be outdoors*, and one could do crazy things if one weren't so 'sensible.' Could one perhaps have become *too* sensible already? After such a long time of deliberately beating back every desire one has, two serious consequences might follow: either one is burned out *inside*, or things all build up until one day there's a terrible *explosion* (DBWE 8:407, 3/152).[83]

Here the container metaphor and the relation between outside and inside, constitutes more than a spatial or territorial dividing line (like crossing the boundary between two nation states or walking through the outer gates of the prison). The boundary here constitutes a true threshold whose crossing marks a potential temporal and spatial transgression or transformation (Fludernik 1999:46-47). In this text, the physical separation of outside/inside is figured symbolically as a bodily experience of containment. Desires held within the body through sensibility, may lead either to destruction from within, or transgression of one's skin in an explosion. Furthermore, the deprivation of freedom and the danger of interiority in containment are intensified by the presence of bird's singing in the distance *outside.* The bird's ability to fly away, escaping imprisoning subjectivity, symbolically represents Bonhoeffer's most fervid and pressing desires. Highlighting the symbolic nature of birds in prison literature, Fludernik (1995:55) suggests that the bird's escape, retroactively "enhances the prisoner's sense of solitude and hopelessness […] exacerbating the prisoners despondency."[84]

Alternatively, Bonhoeffer recognises that containment holds the potential for becoming "truly selfless" by crossing the boundary of self-enclosure and transcending the confines of imprisoning selfhood (DBWE 8:407, 3/152). Having experienced this interiority as "self-torture," he chose instead to "escape into thinking, writing letters," and for his own protection, forbid himself from desires that might contribute to his own sense of solitude and hopelessness (DBWE 8:407, 3/152). Here he realises that the threshold can be transgressed (negatively) or transcended (positively) from either side. Though he is unable to cross the threshold of the container, he finds a way to escape potential transgressions of the self. Bonhoeffer's letter to his parents on May 15, 1943 (mentioned earlier), illustrates a similar example of the egress/ingress boundary. Here physical

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[83] Emphasis mine, except for Bonhoeffer's own italics "Could one perhaps have become *too* sensible already?"

[84] In Bonhoeffer's poem, 'Who Am I?,' enforced confinement is employed in the scenario of being caged like a bird: "Restless, yearning, sick, like a caged bird, / struggling for life breath, as if I were being strangled, / starving for colors, for flowers, for birdsong" (DBWE 8:459, 3/173). Here the prototypical imaging of being caged is employed to metaphorically image the imprisoning subjectivity of enforced confinement (Fludernik 1995:56).

containment had forced upon him an experience of "temptation" that came both from an "inner restlessness and resentment" and as an "attack from the outside" (DBWE 8:79, 1/17).[85]

Positively figured, the boundary of the carceral topography (the walls and door of the cell), which were built to confine, also hold the threshold for a transcendent liberation, as in Bonhoeffer's letter to Bethge on November 20, 1943. Here the prison cell becomes an analogy for transcendence: "a prison cell like this is a good analogy for Advent; one waits, hopes, does this or that – ultimately negligible things – the door is locked and can only be opened *from the outside*" (DBWE 8:188, 2/73).[86] Ingress that had formally represented an attack from the outside is now transformed into a possible egress or escape. Waiting, which had intensified the loss of autonomy and agency now becomes a threshold of spiritual significance. In this way, the very same door that represented the limit of his existence, "opens him further to One who alone can open our prison doors" (Dahill 2006:12). In the space of the cell, transcendent freedom comes from outside the container of the cell and the self, through a positive connotation associated with the door of his cell.[87] Here we can begin to see the formative nature of the prison space as it create a place for symbolic an opening up of the intolerable self-enclosure.

In addition to the role of Christian holidays such as Advent,[88] Bonhoeffer experienced a similar egress through the reception of letters that penetrate the prison boundary. Receiving a letter from his parents, he writes: "It is as if the door of the prison cell opened for a moment, and I experienced with you a slice of life on the *outside*. The longing for joy in this sombre building is great. […] One therefore makes the fullest use of all *internal* or *external* sources of joy" (DBWE 8:98, 1/25).[89] Again, the container is opened from the outside and life is experienced in genuine alterity. We can see here that Bonhoeffer is making every effort to achieve integrity of the self, in the face of an internal and external absence of joy.

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[85] Here Bonhoeffer's comments are followed by a reference to his essay on the "sense of time," and therefore can be related to a temporal experience of liminality.
[86] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.
[87] Fludernik (1999:49) comments on the liminality of the prison door, writing that "[t]he most important opening of the prison walls, the door, constitutes a point of egress but also of ingress […] therefore ambivalent in its positive and negative connotations."
[88] This theme will be explored further in Chapter 3 of this study.
[89] Emphasis is mine.

It follows, as Moran (2013:339) rightfully indicates, that though the carceral space "seems to be sharply demarcated from the outside world, the prison wall is in fact more porous than might be assumed." As a result, the carceral topography of containment becomes a powerful metaphor for the structural "openness of personal being" (SC 73; Dahill 2009:43). In liminality, the container marks off the boundary of both the body and the prison cell, acting "as a space of betweenness [*sic*] where a metaphorical threshold-crossing takes place between outside and inside," and between Self and Other (Moran 2013:339). Thus experiences of freedom, of transcendence, of communion, and of home, are not inherently inhibited (though they seem to be) by the confines of the prison walls or by self-imprisonment. The boundary between the inside and outside, the past and the future, empty time and healing time, the enclosed self and the abundant self, individuality and community – the disjunction of which Bonhoeffer initially experiences as a profane space (formless and void) – overtime, become the very threshold whose crossing signals a freedom and a transformation of selfhood; a liberation from self-enclosure. Thus, in the confines of liminal space Bonhoeffer experiences the "openness of personal being" in a fresh and profound way:

> It is remarkable how in such night hours one's thoughts revolve quite exclusively around those people without whom one wouldn't want to live, and thinking of oneself recedes entirely or as good as disappears. Only then does one sense how interwoven one's own life is with the life of other people, indeed, how the centre of one's own life lies *outside* oneself and how little one is an isolated individual. The line 'as if it were a part of myself' is quite true, […]; human life extends far beyond one's own bodily existence (DBWE 8:149-150, 2/54).[90]

Experiencing the threshold of self-liberating communion with others, Bonhoeffer concludes that he no longer feels like an isolated individual, trapped in self-enclosure. This spiritual depth comes from God who has led him into liminality, who is guiding him through the void, and who will give him back his personhood. The two biblical passages that sum up this experience of liminality for Bonhoeffer, are Jer. 45:4-5 and Ps. 60:2. Both passages speak of a liminal existence, in which a former stability is destroyed so that a new life can grow in the cracks: "O God…. You have caused the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering" (Ps.60:2) (DBWE 8:150, 2/54). It is likely that Bonhoeffer gravitated towards these biblical passages in his reading of scripture, because they correspond with the theme of his own experience; former structures breaking down, being plucked up and the earth being torn open.

[90] Emphasis is mine.

Here the enforced solitude of *below* has broken down former social structures of selfhood, tearing open a holy space of displacement in which sacred liminality can do its work.

Liminality and the Divine Ordering of Reality

As argued above, the isolating enclosure of his prison cell was eased through symbolically configured metaphors for the transcendence of self-enclosure. This transformation came not as the result of the "masterful ego" or a concerted act of resistance, but rather, through the development of a quasi-monastic order. The disorientation of liminality opens up a formative space for incorporation of others as the centre one's own life. Building upon the section above, I will show how Bonhoeffer's cell was transformed from a penal enclosure into a monastic enclosure, through the performance of spiritual practices he learned at Finkenwalde and elsewhere. These spiritual disciplines receive a new depth and reality as a result of the enforced solitude of *below*. Bonhoeffer sought to bring order to his experience of enforced solitude, reframing it as a liminal and sacred displacement. This reframing represents both a fundamental response to, as well as the generative fruit of the liminal reality described in the previous two section. Reframing liminality as a sacred displacement, Bonhoeffer sought bring the "microcosm that is the self – body *and* soul… into peaceable harmony with the macrocosm of cosmos and Church that are the theatres of the glory of God" (Northcott 2009:24).

This transformation began in the daily struggle to order his new spatial and temporary experience. Seeking to hedge in the emptiness of time, contain his desires, and regain a sense of agency and order, Bonhoeffer found an "antidote" in the establishment of a "strict order" (DBWE 8:74, 1/12) and a daily routine (DBWE 8:63, 1/6; 66, 1/9; 79, 1/17) from which he did not depart. Bethge (2000:831) indicates that this order consisted of "physical exercise, his long-accustomed meditation, and, after his Bible was returned to him on the third day, memorizing and reading the Scriptures." These practices of discipline represented the one remaining place of control and a primary means of overcoming self-enclosure in the confines of solitude. Bonhoeffer feared that the transgression of this order, "would have been the beginning of capitulation, from which presumably worse things would have followed" (DBWE 8:227, 2/88) – including a loss of orientation and subjective identity. Contesting with capitulation, Bonhoeffer

endeavoured to reorient the disordered self within the formational practices of the Christian tradition (Northcott 2009:23). Patterning his day on a cycled rhythm of reading, meditation, prayer, and academic work initially helped in easing the horrifying passing of time and gave him "some strength for inner order" (DBWE 8:227, 2/88).

To some extent, however, Bonhoeffer's official letters reveal a disciplined and conscious suppression of self-disclosure and the reality of his carceral suffering. Attempting to fight back disorder and inner temptation he appears weary of admitting, even to himself, just how oppressive life in prison was. He sought instead to reframe his experience as a "good steam bath for the soul" (DBWE 8:56, 1/2). This reframing, though part of his effort to reassure his parents, also points towards the implications of a life lived in the cost of discipleship and the self-denial and taking up of one's cross that he saw as an integral part of following Jesus Christ (Willmer 1999:175).

In addition, Bonhoeffer's letters reveal a particular self-mortification and detachment of the self and its desires. At some level, it appears that he feared that the body, confined within the architecture of solitude, would be prone to sentimentality, becoming the irrational and unruly site of emotion and desire that threatened to lead the mind, soul, and spirit astray.[91] In this environment, the body was to be trained through discipline in order to quiet its loud coercive demands. For example, when reflecting on his growing sentimental relationship with animals, he wrote: "Prisoners are probably inclined in general to react to the lack of warmth and comfort they experience in their environment with an excessive heightening of their emotional side and may easily overreact in all personal and emotional matters" (DBWE 8:110-111, 1/31). Bonhoeffer feared this would lead to a "so-called prison psychosis," and in such cases, he believed that the Christian faith was effective in restoring order to one's life and in rendering levelheadedness (DBWE 8:111, 1/31).

On a hypercritical level, Bonhoeffer's assessment of the prisoner's experience of material incarceration highlights the kind of "examination" and "normalization" techniques analysed by

[91] This view of the body and its emotional irrationality can also be read into the first stanza (Discipline) of Bonhoeffer's poem 'Stations on the Way to Freedom" (DBWE 8:512, 4/191).

Foucault (Gordon 1999:399).[92] By categorising the excessive heightening of emotional reactions as abnormal behaviour leading to prison psychosis, Bonhoeffer essentially normalises the body's behaviour by demarcating the boundaries or limits of what is respectable or sensible (Gordon 1999:399; DBWE 8:407, 3/152). To restore order to the body Bonhoeffer turned to the Christian tradition. Read here through a critical Foucauldian lens, Bonhoeffer's self-mortification and self-suppression of emotion and desire (DBWE 8:407, 3/152) implies an internalisation of the disciplinary requirements of the monastic and carceral structures that confine and restrain the soul within normalised categories of bodily behaviour. Reframing the prison cell as a monastic enclosure of interior solitude and a "good steam bath for the soul," Bonhoeffer's language evokes notions of the *discursive practices* of the "technologies of the self," through which "the micro-powers and technologies of control" (Lacombe 1996:332), at work inside and outside the carceral enclosure, achieve the subjugation of bodies, "ensuring that the 'soul' conforms to the existing rules, codes, and mores" (Gordon 1999:399).[93]

Bonhoeffer's critical surveillance of self and other prisoners may have at times fallen prey to the "examination" and "normalisation" techniques of the panoptic "gaze." This was likely true throughout his life, especially due to his own social privilege and cultural heritage. On another level, however, these moments of observation were also part of a growing self-awareness.[94]

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[92] Gordon (1999:399) indicates that the power of normalisation "determines the 'acceptable' limits of behavior [*sic*] by demarcating the normal and 'respectable'" (Gordon 1999:399).

[93] Ulrich (2009:156) maintains that there is "no hint" of the "disciplining techniques analysed by Foucault and others" in Bonhoeffer's practice of discipline. It is my belief, however, that he too quickly discards Foucault's analysis in an attempt to safeguard the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines against Foucault's notion of technologies of control. Moreover, it is naïve and theologically irresponsible to disregard the correlating technologies of subjectification of body and soul that Foucault highlights in both the carceral and monastic contexts. To speak about discipline in the prison context with out mention of Foucault, would be to speak of Bonhoeffer's theology without acknowledging his Christological focus; the two have become synonymous. Northcott's (2009:24) evaluation on this point is more nuanced than Ulrich's and becomes instructive for understanding Bonhoeffer's experience of enforced solitude. Northcott (2009:24) insists: "we cannot understanding Bonhoeffer's theological account of human identity […] without seeing it in the context of his recovery of what Foucault, I think rather misleadingly, calls the 'technologies of the self.'" Beaudoin's (2002:348, emphasis is his) thesis takes us further, arguing: "*Bonhoeffer's letters reveal fragments for a Christian technology of the self founding an apophatic relation to the self.*" See Beaudoin, T. 2002. I Was Imprisoned by Subjectivity and you Visited Me: Bonhoeffer and Foucault on the Way to a Postmodern Christian Self. *Currents in Theology and Mission*,29(5):341-361.

[94] Although Bonhoeffer later speaks of an aversion to such self-reflection/self-awareness (DBWE 8:221, 2/86) and "condemns those in the fields of pastoral or psychological counselling who advocate such self-knowledge," his letters reveal a sustained attentiveness to the movements of the Spirit and attention to the self (Dahill 2009:58). Bonhoeffer's "reluctance to open himself to self-disclosure" is in part, a manifestation of the fact that he had "extremely strong personal boundaries and was careful and intentional about what he revealed and to whom" (Dahill 2009:207). His earlier theological reflections overwhelmingly associated the self with sin and self-disclosure with a

Bonhoeffer's withdrawal from emotional sensitivity was ultimately provoked by a heightened connection with the order of creation and an embrace of earthly life. During his daily walks, he had developed a deep connection with the tits (chickadee's) that nested in the courtyard. When a "heartless fellow destroyed everything" by knocking the nest to the ground (killing them in the process), Bonhoeffer sensed a vulnerability and a self-disclosure that frightened him (DBWE 8:110, 1/31). This insensitivity threatened not only to destroy his hope, but his vulnerable humanity. Withdrawing from this abuse into the self, Bonhoeffer observed his own heightened connection with creation and the danger of disclosing the connections between the self and life outside the self in such a space of vulnerability. His normalisation of emotion arguably functions as self-defence rather than self-enclosure. This self-awareness eventually comes full circle in a deeper awareness of the Christian faith, "properly understood" (DBWE 8:110, 1/31).

The pattern of connection-withdrawal-deeper-connection highlights an important aspect of Bonhoeffer's ordered life. In his cell, where the chaos of empty time threatened to undo the primal structures of reality itself, Bonhoeffer longed for an ordered life, as a way of participating in a divine order. Amidst the void, Dahill (2006:5) writes that "a fundamental gift of God is simply that of the most basic ongoing ordering of things: space to breathe, a structure of prayer and communal life that points to the reality of God ordering and ruling all things still." Through spiritual practices and a quasi-monastic order, Bonhoeffer sought to open a space within the self, for the experience of a different reality. One not governed by the dominant carceral discourse and order of that surrounded him ideologically and materially. For Bonhoeffer, this cosmic order counters (rather than unconsciously internalises)[95] the external discipline of the structural carceral requirements. In this way he participates in the formation of the self in Christ and in the order of the Christian community. Participation in this divine ordering of reality ultimately strengthened his resolve against the disciplinary order of his cell.

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shameful exposure of self. Throughout his imprisonment, there is a sense that he is struggling to reconcile an authentic self-awareness with his deeper fears of self-disclosure as shameful. Bonhoeffer's poetry represents an openness to self-disclosure and a new sense of self that is on the verge of making itself visible. The beginnings of this transformation can be detected in his early self-defence and his need to draw clear boundaries around his experience.

[95] Bonhoeffer saw such an unconscious internalisation as a problem: "Now after four weeks of imprisonment, the quick, conscious, internal reconciliation with my fate is being gradually complemented by a certain unconscious, natural acclimation to the situation. This is a relief, but it also has its problems, for one should rather not want or ought to get used to this situation; you will feel the same way" (DBWE 8:66, 1/9).

Resisting a naïve analysis of this transformation (from carceral enclosure to monastic enclosure); it is important to illustrate two ways in which Bonhoeffer's view of Christian discipline counters the carceral disciplinary forces analysed by Foucault. Firstly, Bonhoeffer's understanding of a counter order, glimpsed in his teaching from a weekend Confessing Church retreat in 1940,[96] illustrates how the order of the Christian community stands in opposition to a state order of useful or passive subjectification. Bonhoeffer conceived of two opposing "orders" facing each other:

> On the one side, the state's demand toward exerting all energies to secure life for the people, and, on the other side, the ordering of the Christian community to submit to the command of Christ alone. If the state continues to force each individual to work on its own behalf, it thereby prevents the individual person who believes in God from achieving the highest insight on the Christian path. Currently work is a necessity. This means that the state has made a necessity into a virtue by setting up work as the most important consideration at present. For this reason, the Confessing Church must fight to ensure that the state allows the individual sufficient free time to live out the Christian faith (DBWE 16:66, 1/15).

Here the order of the Christian community, in submission to Christ alone liberates the individual from the coercive disciplinary techniques of National Socialism. In contrast to the practiced production of "passive subjectivity" through structural technologies, towards the end of producing useful individuals and working bodies, Bonhoeffer saw in the ordering of the Christian community, a way of setting the body free in God's good world, by setting limits to "governmental power over the body" (DBWE 6:213). In *Ethics,* Bonhoeffer's notion of protecting bodily life, insists that "[t]he human body never becomes simply a thing that might fall under the unbounded power of the other person, to be used only as a means to that person's ends. The living human body is always the human person himself or herself" (DBWE 6:214). Within this discussion, he regarded the exploitation (*Ausbeutung*) of the human body by other persons or institutions, including arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, to be a "violation of the freedom that is granted to the human body" (DBWE 6:217). In submission to the reality of Christ in his cell, Bonhoeffer was discovering anew how God's cosmic order ultimately shelters "the mystery of human bodiliness" (DBWE 6:214) and creates a space for an embrace of bodily life that resists the coercive forces of the state apparatus. This insight may form part of Bonhoeffer's later aversion to the blackmail of religion that uses power over to coerce the weak into religion.

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[96] These notes, which record Bonhoeffer's teaching at the retreat, are part of a Gestapo surveillance report written by a participant of the retreat, Heinz Bracks, who was operating as a Nazi spy (DBWE 16:68, 1/15).

Secondly, the transformation of his cell into a monastic enclosure, counters naïve appraisals of self-mortification and interiority. On this point, Northcott (2009:24) insists that Foucault's "technologies of the self" is misleadingly in that it locates the invention of Christian spiritual practices in medieval monastic Catholicism, and in the panoptic "gaze" of God, that penetrates the subject. Countering this appraisal, Northcott (2009:24) argues that these practices of spiritual discipline gain their sustaining force, not in medieval monasticism and the panoptic "gaze," but in the "Jewish disciplines of the soul" (practices of contemplation, confession, meditation on the Word and singing of Psalms); in the practices of the early desert fathers (solitary life and substantial human interiority); and within the larger "divine plan of salvation of the world." Bonhoeffer's practice of prayer and meditation on the Word and Psalms was not a passive subjectification produced by power,[97] but an agency forming conformation of the self (body and soul) to the cosmic purposes of God revealed in Jesus Christ and the way of the cross. The desert fathers, the monastics, and Bonhoeffer in his prison cell after them, all engaged in the spiritual struggle of liminality. Displaced from their former lives, they sought to "purify their desires and recover the true self, restored by the Spirit, through *askesis*, prayer, and solitude" (Northcott 2009:25). Therefore, as Northcott (2009:24) maintains, it is inaccurate to speak of the practices of the monastic enclosure as "technologies of the self," as they are primarily:

> …practices by which Christians for two thousand years have trained themselves together *and* in solitude for the holy life, so that the microcosm that is the self – body *and* soul – is brought into peaceable harmony with the macrocosm of cosmos and Church that are the theatres of the glory of God, even as each individual self bears the divine image (Northcott 2009:24).

Liminality and the Enforced Solitude of *Below*

Bonhoeffer's transformation of the carceral space of the prison cell into a monastic enclosure, helped him to navigate the disorientation of liminality by reframing it within a long line of Christina tradition grounded in practices of the Israelites, the desert fathers and monastics.[98] For

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[97] See Gordon (1999:395-414) for an ontological reading of "Foucault's Subject." Here Gordon (1999:396) argues: "in his later work Foucault strove to resituate the subject, seeking balance between agency and structure, activity and passivity.

[98] Rather than producing a docile body, these practices of spiritual discipline cultivated agency and formed the self in harmony with the cosmos.

Bonhoeffer, this monastic discipline did not originate in his prison cell, although it certainly took new shape there. Already with the Seminarians at Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer had built solitude into the patterned rhythm of life, with both times together as well as the "need for prayerful time alone" (Kelly & Nelson 2003:154). At Finkenwalde and in the years of his active involvement in the conspiracy, Bonhoeffer sensed that daily meditation and prayer were the key to following Christ in social, political, and spiritual liminality, without which each day would be "without meaning and substance" (DBWE 16:139, 1/71). Throughout the war, Bonhoeffer continued to remind the ordinands in his circular letters, of the importance of these practices. In one such letter, Bonhoeffer urged his former students not to abandon the vital practice of daily meditation, for it was, "particularly important for us today" (DBWE 16:244, 1/44). Bonhoeffer's further elaboration of the point is instructive for understanding the significance of his life in prison. He goes on to say:

> Daily silent reflection on the word of God as it applies to me […] tends to become the crystallization of all that brings inner and outer order to my life. With the interruption and dissolution of our previously ordered life that the present age has brought about – with the danger of losing our inner order through the profusion of events, through the all-consuming claims of work and service, through doubts and moral conflicts [Anfechtung], battle and unrest of all kinds – meditation gives our life something like constancy. It preserves the connection with our former life, […] it sustains us in the healing community of the congregation, […] it is a fountain of peace, of patience, and of joy; it is like a magnet directing all the available powers for ordering our life toward its pole; it is like pure deep water in which the heavens with their clouds and sun are radiantly mirrored. But it also serves the Most High, in that it opens for God a space of discipline and quiet, of healing order and contentment (DBWE 16:254, 1/144).

In prison Bonhoeffer needed this healing order more than ever, this magnetic pole of orientation, this constancy of life that brings together the fragmentary elements of ones past and of ones disoriented self. In the enclosure of his cell, as the world outside continued to race by, he was learning afresh the absolute necessity of spiritual order, discipline, and prayer in a chaotic world. This was not a blind submission to an abstract fate or to the apparently inevitable will of God, but a participation in a divine order, a means of discovering the constancy and integrity of ones life, hidden in the liminal space that daily silent reflection creates for God. Finding this significance afresh in the practice of daily meditation on God's Word helped Bonhoeffer to endure the constant waiting with patience and gratitude.

Building on the practices of Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer reframes the liminality of his cell within this wider tradition, thereby deepening his carceral solitude through the self-disciplining (body

and soul) practices of the monastic enclosure.[99] This disciplinary order is grounded in the human capacity to open a space of discipline and quiet for the continual conformation of the self to Christ. Countering the external discipline of the prison regulations with a self-imposed inner discipline (Gremmels 2010:568), Bonhoeffer's cell becomes a site of autonomy and agency and his body the liminal site for both submission to God and resistance to any encroachment on the freedom of bodily life.

These practices reflect both Bonhoeffer's sympathies for the *vita contemplativa*,[100] as well as the pathos of his spiritual life. Yet, his overall sympathies for solitude and silence derive from an earlier biographical feature. Dahill (2001:190) claims that "[f]or Bonhoeffer, the only way out of the sterile and lonely wasteland his 'imprisoning ego' had created was to experience himself as 'totally claimless' in the face of the 'absolute demand' of the other."[101] Beginning in the early 1930's, Bonhoeffer framed his conversion to Jesus Christ in prayer and Scripture, as a movement into submission, "of surrendering at last to reality in the form of the concrete divine or human other" (Dahill 2001:191). Whereas, the silence and solitude of Finkenwalde had been part-and parcel of this process of spiritual growth, prison now represented the "absolute demand" and "total claim" of the other. It is my contention that in the liminal space of enforced solitude, the

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[99] Fitzpatrick (2003:99-100) refers to three levels of "enclosure" within monastic orders. Each of these levels corresponds with Bonhoeffer's experience and deepens our understanding of his life in a prison cell. The first level is material, signifying a particular space within physical boundaries, in which only those who belong go and from which they leave only for specific purposes. The second level is juridic, indicating a particular order, rule, or law that governs the life of this material space and those who live in it. The third and final level refers to the monastic value – solitude. Solitude is both a material and an interior space that indicates the "practice or discipline of enclosure as a way of guarding one's heart" (Fitzpatrick 2003:100). Or in the words of Olivera (as cited by Fitzpatrick 2003:100): "Solitude of the heart and the concentration of all one's strength in the search for God require an *interior solitude* fortified and manifest by exterior solitude."

[100] Bonhoeffer had patterned the life of Finkenwalde on communities he had visited in England, including Anglican monasteries, as well as the "seminars of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, plus the Methodist College of Richmond" (Kelly 1996:13).

[101] Bonhoeffer was born into a culture and family that prized intellectual achievement and fostered critical thinking and ego strength. Ultimately this upbringing spurred him on toward the driving intellectual ambition that characterized his early years of study. While Bonhoeffer was an amazingly gifted and brilliant young thinker who earned a great deal of praise and attention for his success as a theological thinker, this ultimately came at a cost for him personally. Drawing on Green's (1972) seminal work on human sociality, Dahill (2001:189) observes that Bonhoeffer's "experience of this drive of ambition and ego was an extremely alienating one" that often left him feeling "cut off from God and others in their genuine alterity." Even as a boy, Bethge (2000:39) recounts, that "despite his reputation for sociability and even-temperedness," Bonhoeffer was known for suddenly withdrawing "from a lively conversation into solitude" (Bethge 2000:39). Therefore, not in spite of, but as a result of his "dominating ego", Bonhoeffer often experienced what he describes as a "self-confinement and isolation of the very loneliest solitude with its tormenting desolation and sterility" (DBWE 2:42).

boundaries of Bonhoeffer's prison cell became a threshold for self-enclosure, whose crossing signalled a new transformation of self. The prison cell, figured symbolically, becomes the threshold for a final liberating jailbreak from the "imprisoning ego."

This movement is fundamentally intensified by the enforced solitude of prison. At Finkenwalde, silence and solitude were chosen in freedom, at least for Bonhoeffer. In his cell at Tegel, solitude was not a freedom but the only option. On May 15, 1943, just over a month into his imprisonment, he wrote to his parents, "Despite all my sympathies for the *vita contemplativa*, I am nevertheless not a born Trappist monk. Anyhow, a time of enforced silence may be a good thing" (DBWE 8:81, 1/17). Although he longed for silence and solitude, Bonhoeffer sensed that enforced silence presented a completely new challenge.[102] This challenge is seen in the clear contrast between the practices of Finkenwalde and those of Tegel. At Finkenwalde Bonhoeffer had been in control.[103] He had continued to stress the practice of contemplative meditation, solitude, and prayer even in the face of much resistance from the ordinands and other church authorities. While he engaged in these practices along with the ordinands, he was not in anyway a postulate himself. He remained in control of these practices, in the position of the *above*, while the ordinands held the submissive position of *below*. As a result, the completely new situation brought on by imprisonment demanded a considerable internal adjustment for Bonhoeffer. He now practised enforced silence in the cell of the *below*.

There is little doubt that this gave him a new perspective on the practices of Finkenwalde. But more than that, it forced him into a liminal position of submission, opening a space for the self's confirmation with Christ through the ritual practices of meditation and of reading and memorising the scriptures. Bonhoeffer was now participating in the contemplative life, detached from the centre and displaced from the controlling position of *above*. Like the practices of the desert fathers and the monastics after them, solitude was intended to be a chosen liminal displacement, leaving the ego off balance in a shapeless world where new questions and answers could to arise. Being forced into this liminal space was uncomfortable, yet Bonhoeffer was

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[102] Karl Bonhoeffer also expressed his concern for Dietrich, regarding prolonged isolation: "It is unhealthy to be dependent solely on meditation, even for someone who enjoys being alone, for it is contrary to our nature as human beings, who, after all, have been given language as a means of communication" (DBWE 8:76, 1/14).

[103] Reflecting on morning and evening devotion in a letter to Bethge on February 4, 1941, Bonhoeffer longs for memories of Finkenwalde: "I miss Finkenwalde, Schlönwitz, Sigurdshof more and more. *Life Together* was in many was a swan song' (DBWE 16:139, 1/71).

discovering that it held the potential for developing new eyes – the "view from below." In the context of emptiness instead of fullness, of defacing anonymity instead of persona, of poverty instead of plenty, and of *below* instead of *above* – Bonhoeffer was now learning to understand, more than ever before, what it meant to be human before God. No longer in control of these practices, but in submission to them, something genuinely new could happen. In the context of disorientation and enforced solitude, Bonhoeffer experiences a transformation of the formless space of the profane, into a sacred space where God could do something new.

Conclusion: Navigating Separation

Throughout this chapter my aim has been to delineate the contours of Bonhoeffer's reflective engagement with imprisonment, as derived from his experience and as articulated in his writings on a "sense of time," "telling the truth," as well as fragments from his official letters. I have characterised this engagement as an experience of liminal space, in which he longed for a place to stand in a groundless world and for order amidst the formless chaos of empty time. Initially he grounded himself through the practice of active remembering, through the "life-christological" practice of maintaining relation to the living truth in boundary situations, and through the cosmic ordering of reality and self experienced through the spiritual disciplines of the Christian tradition. The formative and transformative space Bonhoeffer experienced during this period can be seen in the way that each unique response to liminality reframes the *below* of imprisonment as a liminal displacement, transforming the spatial and temporal spheres of his prison cell into a fruitful monastic enclosure.

Returning in conclusion to question the formative nature of his prison experience, we can see that while Bonhoeffer endured the defacement of self-identity brought on by prison admission, initiation, and interrogation, he also consciously resisted taking on an institutional identity. He allowed himself to let go of certain lost privileges, while at the same time privately and publically resisting the behaviour of prison formation that he saw displayed in the guards and prisoners of Tegel. The liminal space created by his dramatic transition into the prison space provoked three movements that can be seen as spiritually and theologically formative for Bonhoeffer. Each of Bonhoefer's responses to the disorientation of liminality, as interpreted

above, function simultaneously as a resistance to the isolating separation of imprisonment and a submission to the generatively formative encounter with the self, with others, with Jesus Christ, and with God. In the form of his notes on time Bonhoeffer consciously resists the emptiness of time experienced in a prison cell through active remembering and recovery of the past. Here the leitmotif of death plays a prominent role, exposing the vulnerability of personhood, the fragility of memory and the past, and the profound absence of the others intensified by separation. In the form of his essay on "telling the truth" he offers an alternative vision of reality, locating truth in life itself through "life-christological" content and thereby denouncing the lifeless and destructive forces of the biopolitical power of National Socialist ideologies. In this movement we see an early development of his later theology of life, grounding his own life in the concrete reality of this world by participating in the life of Jesus Christ and becoming-for-the-other. And finally in the deepening of the carceral space of enforced solitude we see the practices of the Christian spiritual tradition transform the materiality of his cell into the liminal space of the monastic enclosure. No longer in control of these practices Bonhoeffer is free to encounter the God of displacement in a new way.

Chapter 3: Liminality as Transition

Action
Not always doing and daring what's random, but seeking the right thing,
Hover not over the possible, but boldly reach for the real.
Not in escaping to thought, in action alone is found freedom.
Dare to quit anxious faltering and enter the storm of events,
carried alone by your faith and by God's good commandments,
then true freedom will come and embrace your spirit, rejoicing.[104]

> But isn't it an essential part of human maturity, as opposed to immaturity, that your center of gravity is always wherever you happen to be at the moment, and that even longing for the fulfillment of your wishes can't pull you off balance, away from being your complete self, wherever you are?[105]

Introduction

This chapter offers a close reading of the awaiting trial period (August 1943 to April 1944).[106] Bonhoeffer's letters from this period indicate a struggle to find his centre of gravity in the present moment (in prison) and remain his complete self amidst the discontinuity and fragmentation of liminal space (DBWE 8:324, 2/122). This struggle to find a balance as one's complete self can be characterised as the second phase of liminality – transition – in which the liminar "must move from the liminal condition… by breaking through critical inflection points or turning points at the heart of the betwixt condition" before entering or becoming "incorporated into another social status" (Palmer, Kane, and Owens 2009:41). Two fundamental aspects of this transition are the search for a new "self-concept" (Noble & Walker 1997:32) and the capacity to construct an integrated and meaningful view of life out of the fragments of liminal disorientation. In contrast to the traditional theoretical framework of liminality, which purports a distinctively linear progression from the transition phase, toward – in this context – a relatively stable and new socially embodied incorporation into prison life, I will highlight the curiously "static and

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[104] Second Stanza of Bonhoeffer's poem 'Station on the Way to Freedom' (DBWE 8:513, 4/191).
[105] Letter to Eberhard Bethge, March 19, 1944 (DBWE 8:324, 2/122).
[106] de Gruchy (2010:13) notes that on July 30, 1943, "Bonhoeffer was informed that the preliminary investigation into his case had been concluded." This marked the end of the interrogation period and the beginning of a transitional period characterised by waiting – Awaiting the Trial.

frustratingly repetitive" nature of Bonhoeffer's experience of liminality in the prison space (Moran 2011:340).

Drawing on Moran's (2001:340) observations of the "static and repetitive" quality of liminality in the prison space, I am not implying non-movement in Bonhoeffer's spiritual journey. Moving in and out of repetitive liminal moments, Bonhoeffer does not remain the same, since every repetitive act occurs within a context that has been effected by the further movement of time, history, and memory (and previous liminal performances), so that repetition always implies "difference" and "movement" because it occurs in a different context of meaning. Countering the traditional understanding of liminality as a linear transition "between two distinct forms of being" (Moran 2011:340), I will show the cumulative transformative effect of both resisting and submitting to the ongoing nature of liminality, simultaneously prolonging a state of between-ness and opening up the tensions within liminality towards a cumulatively formative and transformative state of being.

Although Bonhoeffer observes in himself a "gradual process of habituation and adaptation" (DBWE 8:145, 2/50), it is clear that he resists the carceral structures designed to guide the prisoner's transition into carceral identity and prison life. As he observed himself becoming comfortable with the conditions of imprisonment he made a conscious effort to reorient himself (DBWE 8:145, 2/50). I believe that this process of conscious reorientation can be understood within the framework of "turning points" at the heart of Bonhoeffer's experience of betwixt space. These turning points interrupt regular patterns of behaviour and thought associated with his betwixt transitioning and ultimately shape, alter, or indeed accentuate the ways in which he makes meaningful connections with others and discovers spiritual and theological meaning and significance in the events of prison life. For the purposes of this study, a turning point is defined as an event or an experience, which triggers and results in the prisoner's discovery of meaning within the prison experience; meaning that ultimately goes beyond separation and suffering, inviting possibilities for spiritually and theologically formative growth.

The argument as it proceeds will examine two fundamental areas of experience that function as turning points, in which liminality becomes potentially formative and transformative. The first section examines what Bonhoeffer describes as a "state of being led." Here I focus on Bonhoeffer's concrete spirituality and the ways in which the tensions experienced in the prison

space call for a renegotiation of self, relationality, and the spiritual significance of life with God. The second section focuses on multiple role transitions expressed in his letters, giving shape to his emerging pastoral role within the prison space and his developing humanistic insights concerning the preservation of life. I examine how specific transitions between multiple roles and social locations of responsibility through the practice of spiritual care for others, simultaneously calls into question his self-concept, while also offering a stable pole of orientation for others. It is concluded that by resisting incorporation into prison life, Bonhoeffer not only prolongs the disorientation of liminality, but ultimately learns to live as a whole human being in the midst of liminality, holding together the fragmentary pieces of his life so that through participation in the life of Jesus Christ they might become part of some larger whole.

Transition and Bonhoeffer's Concrete Spirituality

In light of the broader purpose of this chapter, I intend here to trace a set of transitional experiences or turning points within liminality that highlight Bonhoeffer's developing spiritual life within the prison space. To substantiate this argument I will examine a set of contrasting experiences, which give voice to the formative nature of betwixt space. The discontinuities and continuities of this space are shaped and accentuated by these opposite poles of experience: home and prison, absence and communion, and dislocation and located-ness. It is clear that Bonhoeffer experiences the space between these themes as simultaneously liberating and constraining in relation to the development of a concrete spirituality.[107] Rather than collapsing the tension between these internal and external conflicts of opposites – that appear irresolvable in their original form – Bonhoeffer discovers a space in which the opposites can be brought together, fundamentally bridging the inner and outer experience. In this "between" or transitional arena, an experience of freedom is found. By tolerating the tension of opposites without settling on one pole of the spectrum, Bonhoeffer learns to navigate liminality and over-time a new state of being is realised, despite his continued experience of liminality.

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[107] Dahill (2009:86) indicates, "an authentically Christian spirituality, for Bonhoeffer, is necessarily highly concrete. The interconnections between God and the world that for him define 'concreteness' are manifested always and only in the particular."

Bonhoeffer conceptualises this process as a space in which "God meets us not only as Thou but also in the 'disguise' of an 'It'" (DBWE 8:304, 2/115). Giving rise to the question: "how to find the 'Thou' in this 'It' (i.e., 'fate'), or in other words… how 'fate' really becomes 'the state of being led'" (DBWE 8:304, 2/115). This notion emerges within liminality as the trajectories of "resistance" and "submission" present Bonhoeffer with a contrast of opposites (DBWE 8:303, 2/115). Navigating the boundary line between these two forces he determines that there can be no principle distinction – when to "stand up to 'fate'" and when to "submit to it" –but rather, "both must be there and both must be seized resolutely" (DBWE 8:304, 2/115). In this way one learns to endure the present situation and "make the most of it," and "[o]nly on the *other side* of this twofold process" can one "speak of 'being led'" (DBWE 8:304, 2/115).[108] In light of Bonhoeffer's own conceptualisation of navigating the betwixt space between resistance and submission, I will attempt to trace Bonhoeffer's process of "being led" through liminality, toward full participation in the life of Jesus Christ. This process is an essential part of discerning the will of God, which he believed, always "lies very deeply hidden among many competing possibilities" (DBWE 6:321). What follows should give shape to a number of possibilities Bonhoeffer perceived in betwixt space.

The argument as follows, will proceed by examining four categories of contrasting themes: home and prison, absence and communion, and dislocation and located-ness. In each section I aim to show how within the tensions of liminality, Bonhoeffer encounters turning points as he navigates the concrete space between resistance and submission. Moving him from a constant state of betwixt space toward a "state of being led" (DBWE 8:304, 2/115) through liminality, ultimately arriving at a willingness to "receive with open and outstretched hands what God gives" (DBWE 8:342, 2/130).

Home and Prison

Bonhoeffer's notion of "what we become only through other people" marks a particular turning point within liminality, as it accentuates the ways in which the prison space not only deepens his

[108] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.

understanding of sociality, but more importantly, for the way it enlivens his desire to experience the presence of God in the concrete materiality of his prison cell (DBWE 8:154, 2/57). The emergence of this notion of becoming, I argue, is very closely tied to the repetitive nature of liminality, in which the prisoner is suspended between home and prison; when receiving visitors, letters, and packages within the prison space. Drawing on Moran's (2013:339) deployment of a "geographical engagement with liminality," I will show how the visiting room, and in turn, the reception of packages and letters – those spaces in which Bonhoeffer encountered significant others from his life – act as betwixt space, suspending him between momentary "performances of home" and the isolation of his prison cell. In the midst of this space we can observe a transient threshold-crossing between the "outside" and "inside" of the prison boundary (Moran 2013:347). I argue here that this experience of liminality ultimately blurs the boundary between the self and the other and calls for a (re)negotiation of his self-concept and his relationships with others. While constituting a frustratingly repetitive state of liminality, this space also holds a cumulative transformation for Bonhoeffer, drawing him into a place of authentic communion and an ever-increasing relationality with others, even in the midst of continued isolation and separation.

Turning to the text of Bonhoeffer's letters let me sketch what I believe to be a few key moments in this turning point at the heart of liminality. On October 13, 1943, while contemplating a stanza from Storm's "*Oktoberlied*," Bonhoeffer reflected on the significance of the "outside" world having gone mad and yet remaining "gorgeous" and "entirely resilient" (DBWE 8:166-167; 2/65). The contrast in Storm's stanza between madness and resilience seems to have echoed in his consciousness, opening up his own frustrated sense of separation from the outside world. In this same letter he reflected upon moments that strengthened his own resilience and put him in touch with a bit of home. He writes:

> Yet in the end the 'world' is summed up, at least for me, in a few people one wants to see and with whom one wishes to be together. These occasional appearances by you and Maria for a short hour, as if from far away, are actually that from which and for which I primarily live. This is being in touch with the world where I belong (DBWE 8:167; 2/65).

The occasional appearance of loved ones, although failing to replace his desire to be free, appears to mediate some level of contact with the outside world and in particular the world where he belongs. Bonhoeffer's description of Maria and his parents' visit demonstrates the liminal nature of the visiting room; it's as if, at least for that hour, he is transported "far away,"

experiencing in the process a sense of having a taste of home and of life on the outside. This description highlights what Moran (2013:347) terms a "performance of home," in which the prisoner is enabled to participate in domestic activities, such as discussing family issues, exchanging goods and clothing, and just being together, all of which re-engages the prisoner "with their family members in a space within the prison" (Moran 2013:347). Although still under the watchful eye of the institution and its staff, the visit represents participation in a kind of "normal" life, here performed metaphorically between the "outside" and "inside" of the prison boundary.

This state of indistinction or between-ness is not uncommon in the experience of incarcerated prisoners. For instance, in Moran's (2013:339) study of carceral visiting spaces, he argues that visiting rooms act as in-between spaces in which prisoners come "face-to-face with persons and objects that come from and represent their lives on the 'outside.'" Moran's (2013:339) study shows how prison-visiting rooms act as liminal space or spaces "of betweenness where a metaphorical threshold crossing takes place between outside and inside." Within the space of visiting rooms, prisoners encounter the "living embodiment of their previous life outside the prison – people from the outside – and can, for the duration of the visit, suspend the immediate reality of incarceration and discuss the affairs of their family, friends, and hometown" (Moran 2013:346). In contrast to Goffman's interpretation of the prison as a "total institution," Moran (2013:339) instructively insists that the interpenetration of objects, goods, visitors, and even ideas – as in the case of Karl, Paula and Maria's visit – reveals the "blurred nature of the prison boundary" (between outside and inside) and the permeability of the prison walls that are perceived as impenetrable. This permeability ultimately intensifies the prisoner's transient state of liminality, again breaking down the distinctions between "inside" and "outside." Here persons and objects from the "outside" are present within the walls of the prison and the prisoner on the "inside" experiences the feeling of having been transported home, if only temporarily, "outside" the prison walls.[109]

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[109] The opposite of which can also be experienced by visitors, who temporarily become part of life on the inside and momentary prisoners of the same walls. A clear example of this arose after Holzandorf's highly illegal and secret visit, organised for Bonhoeffer and Susanne, which left Susanne contemplating the meaning of Bonhoeffer's comment: "how terribly nice of Holzandorf." Susanne later wrote "[a]nd with that adjective so

We can see expressions of betwixt space elsewhere in Bonhoeffer's letters; in other reflections upon visits from family and friends, and similarly in his reflections on the reception of packages or letters. Although Moran's focus remains on visiting rooms as geographical liminal spaces, I contend that the reception of packages and letters also function as catalyst for liminality and a metaphorical threshold crossing. For example, Bonhoeffer regarded packages as a mediation of an "indirect connection" (DBWE 8:80, 1/17) with his family and friends. Making use of the contents of one such package, he gave them thanks writing, "[I] feel surrounded by all of you during breakfast, which is all the better since I find especially the morning the most difficult part of the day to cope with inwardly" (DBWE 8:119, 1/37). Here the gift of a package mediates not only the love and concern of his family, but the presence and personhood of its senders. Bonhoeffer's description of opening the package denotes a metaphorical threshold-crossing of the prison boundary, suspending him in the space between absence and presence. The package itself initiates a temporary performance of home, in which he experiences the presence of his family at breakfast time, even as he eats alone in his cell. The materiality of the package shifts Bonhoeffer's focus from the carceral to the domestic environment. Crossing this threshold Bonhoeffer senses the development of an inward resilience in the face of imprisonment.

In addition, visits with Maria, although rare, were also liminal moments of connection with reality. Together they could discuss books they had read, matters pertaining to both their respective families, and their future home together and how it might be arranged. Maria took great care to bring Bonhoeffer what he needed or to deliver goods sent by his parents. These ordinary conversations and material goods enabled Bonhoeffer to re-engage with his fiancé in a space within the prison. Although he feared that Maria would not be able to weather this storm alongside him, he refused to over spiritualise his present situation or divert their conversations from reality. When Maria's mother and grandmother made the suggestion that they make use of their visiting time for the discussion of profound "religious problems" or questions, or even as a "little prayer service" together, Bonhoeffer refused, insisting that this

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often used by him in past times, our childhood and youth is back with us and the horror of those closed walls has gone." (Dress 1964:216).

would have been an abstraction from the ordinary life he longed to return to (DBWE 8: 338; 2/128). He was pleased that Maria was "of the same mind" in being "radically opposed" to such a "planned procedure" (DBWE 8:338-339; 2/128). Each moment with Maria was a space apart in which he could get "in touch with a bit of real life" (DBWE 8: 338; 2/128), something incarceration was sorely lacking. In the solitude of his cell he was forced to live primarily in his head, reading and reflecting upon his experiences. In contrast, his visits with Maria offered a brief reprieve from his enclosure, opening him up to ordinary domestic conversations and grounding him once again in reality. The engagement of domestic activities during visits, sharing family news, delivering food or books, discussing their future home together, once again demonstrates the essence of the visiting space as one in which home is performed. These performances of the materialities of home, broke open the prison walls and temporarily transported Bonhoeffer into the possibilities of their future life together.

Above all, the most tangible sign of connection was mediated through letters, "which the prisoner used to assure himself of the nearness of those from whom he was separated" (Bethge 2000:838). Although he longed to be dealing with "real people" rather than "thoughts of imagined figures" (DBWE 8:170, 2/67), these letters, as Bethge (2000:838) writes, "became Bonhoeffer's elixir of life in Tegel. He lived for them and through them." When letters arrived in Bonhoeffer's cell, he felt "as if the door of the prison cell opened for a moment," and he could experience "a slice of life on the outside" (DBWE 8:97, 1/25). These descriptions among numerous others, demonstrate the capacity of a letter to breakdown the "outside-inside" distinction. Although he remained under the watchful eye of the institution and its censors, there is a kind of "normal" life that is performed in and through his correspondence. The simple act of reading or writing letters, which contained familiar domestic topics, located him in a betwixt space, in-between the "inside" and "outside" boundary of the prison walls. Within this place of liminality, he could participate in the life of his family and friends and they in turn could participate in his.

Having surveyed a few key texts highlighting the permeability of the prison walls and the liminal space created by the performance of home within the prison context, I now turn to a discussion of the potentially formative and transformative effect of these metaphorical threshold crossings.

Moran (2013:347) notes that the carceral visiting space "can be understood relatively unproblematically as a liminal space in the sense of betweenness and indistinction." In contrast, however, the transformative role of this space remains relatively unclear to scholars who study liminality within the prison space. For Bonhoeffer, these spaces appear, at least from the above descriptions, to pose a significant challenge, forcing him to hold the tension between the closeness and intimacy experienced when crossing the threshold and the post-liminal reality of returning to the loneliness of prison life. From the privileged perspective of the reader, however, we can see that Bonhoeffer is not unchanged by the event. At points Bonhoeffer indicates a perceived sense of resilience, newly able to cope with the most difficult parts of the day. Although this doesn't necessarily represent an immediate progression from liminal space to another status entirely, there is a sense, in which Bonhoeffer also hints at a cumulative effect, connecting him to his life on the outside and the people whom he wished to see and be together with. These moments helped Bonhoeffer to reframe his fragmentary experience of life in prison and contribute to a sense of hope amidst his present reality. While remaining in solitude, he finds himself living from and for these moments of connection.

Recurrent exposure to this ordeal, however, becomes a transformative course in and of itself for Bonhoeffer, especially when each occurrence is followed by an immersion back into the distinctively coercive and depersonalising environment of Tegel. Returning physically or merely cognitively to his cell, he is reminded of the deprivation of prison life and his growing dependence on the help of others. Acknowledging an "indebtedness to others" (Beaudoin 2002:348), Bonhoeffer is grasped by a sense that he is becoming something more as a result of being completely dependent upon the generosity of others. On September 13, 1943, after receiving a whole stack of letters and a visit from his parents, he writes, "a day with mail rises noticeably out of the monotony of all the others" (DBWE 8:154, 2/57). He goes on to say:

> It is a strange feeling to be utterly dependent for everything on the help of others. But in any case, one learns in such times to be grateful and hopefully not forget it later. In normal life one is often not at all aware that we always receive infinitely more than we give, and that gratitude is what enriches life. One easily overestimates the importance of one's own acts and deeds, compared with what we become only through other people (DBWE 8:154, 2/57).

Here the cumulatively transformative effect of liminality lies not only in reframing prison life, but also a reframing of "normal life." The indistinction of liminal space has made him keenly aware of what in "normal life" is often overestimated, undervalued, or overlooked. Bonhoeffer,

who is known for his call to responsible action and deeds for the other, is forced to (re)negotiate his relationship to others. The text above indicates a constraining and yet liberating sense of gratitude for what he is becoming through others. Crossing this threshold he discovers that the walls of the self, like the walls of the prison, are more permeable than previously thought and we receive infinitely more than we give or do for others. Or as Butler observes, "[p]recarity exposes our sociality, the fragile and necessary dimensions of our interdependency" (Butler 2009:x).

Turning toward the formative context of solitude, we can see that the materiality of visits, packages, or letters, became for Bonhoeffer not only a lasting experience of connection, but bearers of a deeper spirituality reality. While reflecting on the reception of a Pentecost package from his parents, Bonhoeffer writes: "[d]espite the deep certainty about our connection in spirit, the spirit [Geist] nevertheless always seems to have an unquenchable desire to make visible this connection of love and thinking about one another, and then the most material things become bearers of spiritual realities" (DBWE 8:107, 1/29). He goes on to say: "I believe this is analogous to the desire in all religions to have the spirit become visible in the sacraments" (DBWE 8:107, 1/29). Here Bonhoeffer picks up on the betwixt space of the sacraments, in which material things communicate a union of spirit and body. While Bonhoeffer remains an awaiting trial prisoner and there is no immediate post-liminal transition that might change his status, he is, through repeated occurrences of this event, drawn into a place of authentic communion and an ever increasing relationality with others and God. In the midst of continued isolation and separation, Bonhoeffer discovers his own process of conformation to the Incarnate One, the one who makes the spirit of God present and visible in the material reality of his own life.

Absence and Communion

Another turning point in Bonhoeffer's spiritual life, which is immediately apparent from his illegal correspondence with Bethge, is the absence and then mediated presence of what had been a "singular friendship" (de Gruchy 2005:59).[110] Having been "so utterly accustomed to sharing

[110] Their prolonged separation, which was brought on by Bonhoeffer's imprisonment, was broken on November 26, 1943, when Bethge first visited him in Tegel prison; followed by a series of letters over the course of the next few

everything" with Bethge in the years preceding his imprisonment, the sudden and long interruption of their friendship (brought on by imprisonment), represented what Bonhoeffer referred to as a "profound readjustment and a great deprivation" (DBWE 8:221, 2/86). Reconnecting with Bethge was for him a "*necessitas,*" filling a "spiritual hunger" that had become more "tormenting than physical hunger" (DBWE 8:240, 2/89). In the renewal of this connection Bonhoeffer finds himself living in an empty space, suspended between absence and communion. He concludes that the only way to maintain authentic communion with Bethge and with others is to allow the emptiness of this betwixt space to remain unfilled through the practice of radical openness.

I do not intend here to offer an interpretation of the meaning and significance of their friendship as it developed either before or during imprisonment; that path has been traversed by many, including Bethge (1995:80-104), de Gruchy (2005:59-86), and in a lesser way by Hauerwas (2009:91-113) and Dahill (2009:105-106), among others.[111] My focus is on the formative renewal of their friendship as it triggers certain lasting impressions that give meaning to Bonhoeffer's self-conception and spiritual life at the heart of liminality. This section is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to point out two interlocking ways that I see the renewal of their friendship functioning as part of a cumulative turning point in Bonhoeffer's transitioning liminality. These two events relate to the practice of mutual confession, and the development of a sense of *communitas* or shared spiritual and psychological support within liminality. Cumulatively, these two events are fundamental in Bonhoeffer navigation of prolonged liminality and help him to avoid an endless state of limbo that might disrupt fundamental aspects of his psyche (McCraken 1987).

In the first place, the renewal of their friendship made possible the continuation of a radical openness experienced in the practice of mutual confession and functioned as a space for self-

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weeks and months, ending with Bonhoeffer's last correspondence – 'Outline for a Book' - and Bethge's last letter to Bonhoeffer on September 30, 1944 (de Gruchy 2005:86). This illegal correspondence was established "through the good services of one of Bonhoeffer's guards, Corporal Knobloch" who smuggled the letters out of the prison and mailed them from his home (de Gruchy 2005:69).

[111] On the theme of friendship in the correspondence between Bonhoeffer and Bethge, see *Letters and Papers from Prison* (DWBE 8), 248, 268, 284, 523-524, 526-530 and *Conspiracy and Imprisonment* (DWBE 16), 134-36, 138-42. Dahill (2009:105) writes that the four letters contained in DBWE 16, which were "written between Dietrich and Eberhard for Dietrich's birthday, February 4, 1941, provide moving reflections from each of them on their abiding pleasure in this friendship."

disclosure and the deepening of Bonhoeffer's spiritual life. Having been refused access to a pastor,[112] those in charge of the prison had cut him off from pastoral care. Although this ultimately prolonged his sense of liminality, he regarded it as beneficial, as he depended all the more intimately on the Bible and would not have been able to speak to a Chaplain in the same way that he could speak only to Bethge (DBWE 8:178-179, 2/73). With the opportunity of the uncensored illegal communication, he was again able to request what he needed most, his pastor, with whom it was possible to practice radical truth-telling and authenticity. In his first letter to Bethge he requested:

> And now today, be for me—after so many long months without worship, confession, and the Lord's Supper and without consolation fratrum—my pastor once more, as you have so often been in the past, and listen to me.… In the first twelve days here, during which I was kept isolated and treated as a dangerous criminal—to this day the cells on either side of mine are occupied almost exclusively by death-row prisoners in chains—Paul Gerhardt proved of value in unimagined ways, as well as the Psalms and Revelation. I was preserved in those days from all severe temptations [Anfechtungen]. You are the only person who knows that "acedia"-"tristitia" with its ominous consequences has often haunted me, and you perhaps worried about me in this respect— so I feared at the time. But I have told myself from the beginning that I will do neither human beings nor the devil this favor; they are to see to this business themselves if they wish; and I hope I can stick to it (DBWE 8;179-180, 2/73)

Here for the first time Bonhoeffer is able to share the depths of his experience, giving further shape to the struggles he had only briefly alluded to in letters to his parents or contemplated himself in short and fragmentary notes. This first letter to Bethge acts as a summary of his prison experience thus far, detailing a sense of the continuities and discontinuities of liminality and the resilience and spiritual resources he accessed in response to disorientation. Bonhoeffer devoted his energies throughout the course of the next five days (from the 19th to the 22nd of November), to pouring himself out in the text of his letters to Bethge; recounting experiences of prison, confessing regrets, asking for forgiveness, admitting his weaknesses and struggles, and pondering whether their mutual experiences will have changed them or whether they will remain entirely their "old selves" (DBWE 8:184, 2/73).

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[112] Here I am trying to work with Bonhoeffer's own expression, "You know that those in charge here have even refused me access to a pastor" (DBWE 8:178-179, 2/73). However, Bethge indicates, "after the situation eased following the hearings he received frequent visits from two pastors of the Berlin church": Pastor Hans Dannenbaum and Pastor Dr. Harald Poelchau (Bethge 2000:852). Contact with these Pastors was illegal and had to remain concealed to protect the Pastors from disciplinary measures. Nevertheless, it remains true that Bonhoeffer could share with Bethge in a way that he could with no one else. See Poelchau's (1964: 222-225) description of visiting Bonhoeffer in prison.

Saturated in a world of surveillance, Bonhoeffer had learned the art of misdirection, yet he longed for a place of radical openness and authentic transparency. The growing fear that he had stated in his New Years essay of 1942 was becoming ever more real; that in learning the "arts of obfuscation and equivocal speech" he might "become suspicious of human beings" and fail to speak to others "a true and open word" (DBWE 8:52, Prologue). In his correspondence with Bethge, he sought now for an "inner strength to resist" what had been forced upon him in this event, struggling with all his being to find his way "back to simplicity and honesty" (DBWE 8:52, Prologue). In this way, his correspondence with Bethge would become the one true place where he could "speak and hear the complete truth" (DBWE 8:235, 2/88). He soon requested of Bethge: "With you I will put on no pretence, nor you with me. We never did so earlier and don't ever wish to" (DBWE 8:235, 2/88).

Dahill (2009:105) notes that in the establishment of the practice of radical openness through confession (which had started at Finkenwalde), Bonhoeffer had "for the first time experienced the liberation of honest and mutual self-disclosure and the awesomeness of the trust and freedom this brings." Renewing this practice through correspondence, Bonhoeffer once again began to experience the liberating capacity of mutual self-disclosure, helping him to navigate his transition into and through liminality.

From this point forward, their friendship, correspondence, and mutual confession, functioned as a key component of Bonhoeffer's transition into the heart of betwixt space. It also played a part in the renewal his spiritual life, allowing him to explore and reflect upon his prison experience and the inner and outer discrepancies in his notion of the self; "I often wonder who I really am: the one always cringing in disgust, going to pieces at these hideous experiences here, or the one who whips himself into shape, who on the outside (and even to himself) appears calm, cheerful, serene, superior…" (DBWE 8:221, 2/86). Noble and Walker (1997:33) claim that this gap between one's "*ideal self*" and one's "current perceptions of who we are" – what they term "*self-concept discrepancy*" – is often intensified during periods of liminality, as a result of ambiguity surrounding one's transitioning sociocultural role. Although Bonhoeffer partially rejected the self-conflicting experiences of prison – considering that there were "[m]ore important matters… at stake than self-knowledge" (DBWE 8:221, 2/86) – it is clear from his correspondence with Bethge, that through a posture of radical openness, he was able to successfully navigate the psychological and

emotional consequences of the gap between his inner and outer experience of the self. While Bonhoeffer abandoned this line of thought before finding a resolution, it is clear that Bethge's friendship and the practice of radical openness through confession, became an integral component of Bonhoeffer's sense of self and served multiple roles during his liminal transitioning.

In the above text, as in many other places of their correspondence, we see a pattern of shared practices and symbols of past relationship, which play an important part in Bonhoeffer's identity and spiritual life; worship, confession, the Lord's Supper, the hymns of Paul Gerhardt, the texts of the Psalms and Revelation, as well as past knowledge of self-disclosure shared between friends in confession. Although he was denied access to some of these practices, their continued symbolic significance – now fully represented in his friendship with Bethge – allowed for part of his former identity to be transported into the space of the prison, taking shape in new forms. Transitioning into the prison space necessitated some leaving behind of the connections of personal relationship, however, Bonhoeffer relied all the more intimately on the symbols of this relationship to ease the transition into the new space of the prison. The symbolic nature of their correspondence and mutual confession was like the "the first drops of water in a long time from a spring," in the absence of which Bonhoeffer "spiritual life had begun to wither (DBWE 218, 2/86).

The second feature of this turning point is the renewal of sense of authentic communion communicated through shared spiritual and psychological support, mediated through their letters. Here Bonhoeffer was able not only to share his own struggles, but also to listen and hear Bethge's struggles as he transitioned into a military role at the "military training camp in Lissa" and then onto the Italian front (de Gruchy 2005:70). Through the discussion of shared disorienting experiences the two developed a feeling of what Turner (1969:250) termed "*communitas,*" in which liminal entities experience "unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities." This bond and mutual support continued to develop throughout Bonhoeffer's imprisonment and functioned as a key turning point in his navigation of liminality. It did not fill the emptiness of time or cure the pain of absence, but rather kept it open to new possibilities. This is clearly illustrated in a letter to Eberhard and Renate on Christmas Eve 1943. Seeking to guide them as they faced a period of separation (during Eberhard's military training), Bonhoeffer reflected on the difficulty of

remaining connected to the people who you are attached to and have shared all important experiences with, even in the midst of separation.

> There is nothing that can replace the absence of someone dear to us, and one should not even attempt to do so; one must simply preserve and endure it. At first that sounds very hard, but at the same time it is a great comfort, for one remains connected to the other person through the emptiness to the extent it truly remains unfilled. It is wrong to say that God fills the emptiness; God in no way fills it but rather keeps it empty and thus helps us preserve – even if in pain – our authentic communion. Further, the more beautiful and full the memories, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude transforms the torment of memory into peaceful joy (DBWE 8:238, 2/89).

Here the emptiness experienced in transitional spaces of painful separation is transformed through gratitude and a posture of openness to the other. Maintaining this tension, rather than collapsing it, Bonhoeffer discovered a means of preserving the precious gift of authentic communion with others. In this way, "times of separation are not lost and fruitless for common life, or at least not necessarily, but rather in them a quite remarkably strong communion – despite all problems – can develop" (DBWE 8:238, 2/89). Through this posture of openness one learns not to anxiously worry, but rather "entrust the other person to God wholly and without reserve, and let our worries become prayer for the other person" (DBWE 8:238, 2/89). Holding the empty space created by absence entails a certain level of vulnerability to pain, to hurt, and to wounding. And yet, as Bonhoeffer discovers, it is the very place in which the solitary life produces transformational fruitfulness, binding us not only to the other, but also to God who is present amidst the emptiness of liminality.

In conclusion Bonhoeffer's correspondence with Bethge clearly facilitated a place in which he could not only give expression to the struggles of his prison experience, but also reframe and give meaning to his experience of liminality, through the practice of a radical openness in mutual confession and the maintenance of authentic communion (preserved in times of separation), These expressions further structure his experience as being fruitful for understanding their common life together and the strength of communion that is fortified by times of liminal separation. In this way, the renewal of their connection through letters, functions as a turning point at the heart of Bonhoeffer prison experience, opening him up to the meaning of liminal displacement as a form of authentic communion with others and with God.

Dislocation and Located-ness

The final transitional experience I will consider in this section is Bonhoeffer's experience of celebrating the Christian holidays in a prison cell. Although his letters surrounding the holidays are filled with hope, they also indicate a heightened sense of dislocation from his family and friends. Having significant symbolic meaning, these days continued to evoke past memories of his family gathered together or of the various places in which he had celebrated together with Bethge. The contrast between memories of past celebrations and the context of his present reality clearly intensified his sense of betwixt space and suspended his transition into prison life. It is my contention, however, that this dislocation also served the purpose of focusing his attention on a fresh encounter with the days of the Christian year, discovering within his prison cell a new located-ness in a truth and reality not governed by carceral regulations or previously experienced in festivals celebrated at home. In this way the Christian holidays are an integral component for understanding Bonhoeffer's prison experience, as they serve multiple roles during his liminal transition. These include his anticipation of spending the holidays once again with his loved ones, which became both a point of orientation and a point of dislocation. But more than that, these times of the year served the purpose of locating his prison experience within the concrete reality of Christ.

Here again, Bonhoeffer's spirituality, as has been argued throughout this study, is deeply christocentric, continually appealing to the person of Jesus Christ for the revelation of reality and the ongoing conformation of one's own life and action. This christocentrism, as Dahill (2009:179) suggests, is obviously quite broad for Bonhoeffer, "intended not to imprison ultimate truth within the Christian sphere but to open Christians to truth and reality wherever they encounter it." Building upon this insight, I will show, how turning to the rhythm of the Christian calendar, Bonhoeffer not only draws strength from past memories of holidays spent together with family and friends, but more importantly, discovers a located-ness in the unexpected and unplanned ways in which the life of Jesus Christ interrupts the isolation of imprisonment and breaks open a surprisingly liberating encounter with reality.

Let me first offer a general sketch of the ways I see the Christian calendar functioning as a transitional experience in Bonhoeffer's developing spiritual life. In the times surrounding

important holidays, his letters are filled with a profound sense of hope. This hope, in part, rests in anticipation that he will once again spend, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, or Christmas together with his family and friends. Continuing a long used practice, Bonhoeffer marks his letters to indicate important days of the year.[113] In addition to communicating important dates of origin for his readers,[114] these signifiers helped Bonhoeffer to measure the passage of time in solitude. One gets a sense from reading these holiday letters that they play an important function as temporal markers or points of orientation, breaking up the endless time of prison life and anchoring him in a deep and resilient sense of hope in the future: "I am very confident that we will celebrate Easter together again in freedom" (DBWE 8:241, 2/89). As each holiday nears, his letters reflect on past memories and an anticipated desire for connection with loved ones. Anything from familiar songs to vivid imagery triggers powerful memories of family festivals or important holidays spent with Bethge at Finkenwalde, Schlönwitz, and Sigurdshof (DBWE 8:201, 2/79).

As each holiday came and passed Bonhoeffer refused to be discouraged about remaining in a prison cell. At times he was content to have experienced a sense of peace and gratitude for past memories: "Christmas is over. It brought me a couple of quiet, peaceful hours, and a great deal from the past was quite present" (DBWE 8;245, 2/92). And at other times he simply reconfigured the next holiday as a point of orientation: "So Easter too will come and go without our being home and seeing each other. But I'm not putting off hopes any further than Pentecost" (DBWE 8:337, 2/128). This endless cycle of disappointment followed by repositioned hope illustrates a sense of dislocation from his home and the world in which he belongs. Although he refuses to let it discourage him, the symbolic meaning of the holidays remains located in a space of indistinction, both inside and outside of prison boundary; either with memories of home present with him in his cell or in his cell but longing to be at home. The reoccurring rhythm of the holidays continued to prolong Bonhoeffer's betwixt transitioning, keeping him suspended between these two space; home and the prison cell.

There is also a sense in which these days belong to him and his loved ones. This is most fully articulated in his final reference to the Christian calendar: "We had put off seeing each other again from Christmas to Easter to Pentecost, and one holiday after another passed by. But the

[113] Such as, Wednesday after Easter, Second Sunday in Advent, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
[114] As his letters would often arrive many days if not weeks after they had been sent.

next holiday will certainly belong to us; I no longer have any doubts about that" (DBWE 8:424, 3/160). Here we can see that the rhythm of the Christian calendar, although provoking a profound sense of dislocation, also gave Bonhoeffer a way of measuring time and maintaining a very real, if not distant, connection and special bond with his family and friends. These moments in time foster a sense of resilience amidst dislocation, breaking up the monotony of prison life and ensuring that he would never lose hope in the freedom to once again celebrate these traditions of life and meaning together with his family and friends.

In contrast to their role as moments of dislocation, the days of the Christian calendar, overtime, also fostered a sense of located-ness. Though they provoked a particular sense of liminality, existing simultaneously inside and outside the carceral space, they also became a concrete space of resistance to the dislocation of imprisonment. That is to say, that under the guise of familiar religious pageantry, the practices and rituals of the Christian year became a fertile place for resistance to germinate, all the while shielded from the direct surveillance of the prison guards. During Advent, for example, Bonhoeffer describes humming the tunes of Advent songs, holding his own "Sunday devotions," hanging "the Advent wreath on a nail [in his cell]," and attaching "the Lippi nativity scene inside it" (DBWE 8:201, 2/79). And then at Christmas he lit Maria's candles and read the Christmas story to himself (DBWE 8:245, 2/92). Seen from a critical perspective, these unassuming spiritual practices represent the careful reconfiguration of the prison space and its symbolic meaning. As we know from Foucault's (1979) analysis of space, and the carceral space in particular, the mechanisms of power operative within the carceral system depend upon the particular arrangement of space. The Panopticon, after all, works because of the way it arranges space in a particular way. Bonhoeffer's reconfiguration or arrangement of space within his cell, therefore acts as a resistance to the mechanism of power that denied him access to sacred music and spaces such as the prison chapel. Within Bonhoeffer's spiritual practices during Advent and Christmas, something of a counter-site is constructed. His arrangement of space and sound within his cell located him in the life and reality of Christ, thereby inverting the mechanisms of power that depend upon the particular arrangement of space in the prison.

As a site of resistance we can begin to see how the prison cell itself becomes a new location for uncovering the contradictions, tension, and immanent possibilities of the Christian holidays. Of

all the holiday references in Bonhoeffer's prison letters, Christmas appears to function most prominently in this way, continuing to hold a special place in his consciousness. The located-ness of Christmas in his cell slowly emerges as he nears his first Christmas in prison. Writing to Bethge on 20 November 1943, he comments: "In case I am still sitting here in this hole at Christmas, don't let that bother you… As a Christian, one can celebrate Christmas even in prison – at any rate, more easily than at family festivals" (DBWE 8:186. 2/73). While this first reference reveals a level of ambiguity in relation to the prison space itself, there is a sense in which the prison cell becomes an authentic place to encounter the incarnate Christ. The development of this notion of the located-ness of Christmas begins to develop as Christmas nears. In a letter to his parents on the first Sunday in Advent, 28 November 1943, Bonhoeffer reflects on the nativity scene by Altdorfer, "in which one sees the holy family with the manger amid the rubble of a collapsed house" (DBWE 8:206, 2/81). Noting the particular located-ness of the holy family, Bonhoeffer enquires after Altdorfer's intent; maybe "here," in midst of bombing raids, of war and loss of life, in the midst of imprisonment, "even here one can and ought to celebrate Christmas" (DBWE 8:206, 2/81).

This reflection on the Altdorfer's nativity scene must have evoked memories for Bonhoeffer's of first encounter with the painting in Munich in 1940, when he bought one hundred postcards of the painting and mailed them out with a circular Christmas letter to the Finkenwalde brothers. A few sections of that letter further indicate the meaning of this image and its particular located-ness for Bonhoeffer. In his letter he considered the possibility of an authentic Christmas celebration amidst the rubble of war. That when we are confronted with the significance of Christmas and the birth of Christ, we far too often "want to stick our heads into the sand" and "escape to some isle of the blessed. […] how often we Germans have made of Christmas just such an island onto which one can escape from the actual reality of life for a few days or a least a few hours" (DBWE 16:106, 1/47). But Bonhoeffer insisted that amidst the horrors of war, reality comes crashing back, shattering the unreality of the Christmas celebration we've constructed. Yet, Bonhoeffer goes on to write, "for this reason we now also hear the ancient tidings with new meaning and new longing. […] (s)o too our Christmas celebration does not lead us out of the needs and burdens of our life in the world, does not lead us straight to paradise" (DBWE 16:107-108, 1/47).

It is clear, that building on this previous interpretation of Christmas, Bonhoeffer begins to discover his own located-ness within the liminality of his prison cell. This located-ness did not stop him from hoping to spend Christmas once again with his family and friends. No, he continued to look forward to a time when he would celebrate Christmas in freedom. And yet, turning to his cell as the concrete place in which Christ is born, he discovers his own located-ness within the life of Christ. This point is illustrated as he returns to contemplate the significance of Christmas in a letter to his parents on 17 December 1943:

> Viewed from a Christian perspective, Christmas in a prison cell can, of course, hardly be considered particularly problematic. Most likely many of those here in this building will celebrate a more meaningful and authentic Christmas than in places where it is celebrated in name only. That misery, sorrow, poverty, loneliness, helplessness, and guilt mean something quite different in the eyes of God than according to human judgment; that God turns toward the very places from which humans turn away; that Christ was born in a stable because there was no room for him in the inn—a prisoner grasps this better than others, and for him this is truly good news. And to the extent he believes it, he knows that he has been placed within the Christian community that goes beyond the scope of all spatial and temporal limits, and the prison walls lose their significance (DBWE 8:225-226, 2/87).

Here the beauty of this particular Christmas is not that he is celebrating it in a prison cell, but rather that being located in a prison cell means that he can't turn away from the beauty of Christmas. His located-ness in the prison space becomes spiritually and theologically formative as it opens up an encounter with "the authentically transcendent God who comes not in the forms we expect or imagine…, but in surprising and liberating reality" (Dahill 2009:182). This liberating reality, is formative precisely amidst the constraints of a dislocating experience of liminality. Separated from family and friends, dislocation strips away the sentimentality of Christmas, leaving the radical poverty and liberating reality of the Incarnation bare: God for us, God with us (Dahill 2007:13). Here God is seen as turning toward the very place where society has turned away, completely turning social categories of exclusion upside down.

Thus it can be concluded that by holding the tension between dislocation and located-ness, Bonhoeffer refuses both incorporation into a socially embodied prison status or a fundamental turn away for the concrete reality of his prison experience. Rather, turning toward the concreteness and particularity of his cell he discerns the "Thou" in the disguise of an "It." This ever-deeper immersion into the reality of his own life, the centre and meaning of which, like all of reality, is Jesus Christ (Dahill 2009:93), uncovers "the poverty of the manger and the

depths…, darkness and pain of the world into which Jesus is born" (Dahill 2007:13). In this location Bonhoeffer is left standing by the manger with Christ,[115] cherishing "the richness and goodness of the world in all its complexity and miraculous beauty within which God has become incarnate" (Dahill 2007:13).

As a place of resistance this spiritually and theologically formative insight transcends the prison walls by dissolving their meaning and significance as forces of punishment and incorporating their spatial and temporal limits within the healing and restorative bounds of the Christian community. Experiencing Christmas on this liminal borderline, Bonhoeffer concludes in a letter to his parents, that it will "take its distinctive place forever in the series of diverse Christmases" that he had "celebrated in Spain, in America, [and] in England" (DBWE 8:225, 2/87). For Bonhoeffer, this participation in Christ's story gives his experience a meaning and significance that transcends the waiting, longing, loneliness and isolation of his imprisonment. Though they can take others things from him, they cannot take this meaning making process. Regardless of the outcome, whether it will shame him or exonerate him, his experience has become part of a meaningful narrative that has purpose and significance beyond the annoyance of the present circumstances.

Drawing this section to a close, we can now conclude that liminality opens a space in which Bonhoeffer is drawn, through turning points at the heart of liminality, into a place of authentic communion and an ever increasing relationality with others and God. By navigating the boundary line between home and prison, absence and communion, dislocation and located-ness, Bonhoeffer experiences a state of being led through liminality and the contrasting tensions of resisting or submitting to fate. In this context, as I have attempted to show, the materiality of the prison space suspends the symbolic nature of separation, facilitating a space of formative growth, in which Bonhoeffer discovers that we become only through other people and that even in

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[115] This is in reference to Bonhoeffer's reflections on the Paul Gerhardt hymn, *Ich steh an Deiner Krippe hier* ("I stand beside your manger here"). Bonhoeffer writes to Bethge: "Perhaps this line can also be of some help to you in the coming weeks. Also, in these past few days I have discovered for myself the hymn "I stand here at your manger . . ." Up till now I had never really made much of it. Probably one has to be alone a long time and read it meditatively in order to be able to take it in. Every word is extraordinarily replete and radiant. It's just a little monastic-mystical, yet only as much as is warranted, for alongside the "we" there is indeed also an "I and Christ," and what that means can scarcely be said better than in this hymn" (DBWE 8 230, 2/89).

separation, God helps to preserve this formative connection, binding us to each other and to God's self. In the liminal space created by visits, letters, packages, renewal of friendship, and isolated celebrations of the Christian holidays, Bonhoeffer discovered a located-ness in the unexpected and unplanned ways in which the life of Jesus Christ interrupts the isolation of imprisonment and breaks open surprisingly liberating encounters with reality. These encounters with liminality helped Bonhoeffer to navigate the boundaries between a necessary resistance to fate and an equally necessary submission to the "Thou" in the disguise of an "It." Liminality experienced in the confines of a prison cell thereby became a new location for uncovering the contradictions, tensions, and immanent possibilities of the Christian life.

We can now see how these turning points functioned as sites of conformation, leading Bonhoeffer further into the burdens of life in the world (rather than beyond), as the very place where God is present and where transcendence is experienced in the earthly life of Christ. Liminality sharpens this sense of located-ness and brings into focus the often neglected, overlooked, or invisible qualities of life and its beauty. In this way liminality inverts reality, locating the margins of society, where sorrow, poverty, and loneliness abound, as the very place of Christ's Incarnate presence.

Transitions and Bonhoeffer's Liminal Roles

Having examined the texts above relating to Bonhoeffer's concrete spirituality and its development within liminality, let me now turn to examine three distinctive role transitions that he experiences and enacts in the prison as his mobility and freedom to practice pastoral care opens up during the awaiting trial period. As highly skilled social actor, Bonhoeffer negotiates liminality by making three fundamental transitions between social roles and categories in Tegel Prison; from observed-prisoner to participant-observer, from imprisoned-pastor to pastor-to-prisoners, and from object of carceral regulations to subject of boundary creation, protector of human boundaries, and preserver of life. Here Bonhoeffer's observations of fellow prisoners and the prison system, his pastoral ministry to fellow prisoners and wardens, his prayers written for prisoners, and his carefully prepared prison reports, offer us a window into his continued life of ministry within the liminal space of imprisonment. This material narrates his pastoral concerns,

his anthropological and religious observations of fellow prisoners, and his longing for a stable ground within betwixt space. Written from the confines of his prison cell these particular fragments highlight Bonhoeffer's continuing conformation to Christ and his continued journey toward authentic human maturity and wholeness. Transitioning between multiple roles and social locations of responsibility through the practice of spiritual care for others, Bonhoeffer discovers a stable grounding for the self and for others through performative pastoral acts.

From Observed-Prisoner to Participant-Observer

During the awaiting trial period, Bonhoeffer began to take an active role in negotiating the space in-between observed-prisoner and participant-observer. As a prisoner, he was an object of constant surveillance. Yet he navigated this experience through his letters and his action, by redirecting surveillance back onto the material world of the prison system. Examining the structural impact of incarceration on prisoners, Bonhoeffer observed certain social and cultural phenomena that arise from experiencing long periods of isolation and deprivation of freedom. His reflections demonstrate a desire to understand particular responses to existential suffering, as well as the processes by which isolation and suffering are understood and managed through various meaning making or coping strategies discernable in the behaviour and interpretations of fellow prisoners. These observations oscillate between structural, interpersonal, and self-reflection, offering further insight into the experience of life as a prisoner and opening up new ways of living within the liminal space of imprisonment.

Bonhoeffer's observations of the prison environment and his fellow prisoners indicate that extended isolation and deprivation of freedom have "a demoralizing effect in *every* respect on most people" (DBWE 8:187, 2/73).[116] Particularly in the case of young prisoners, who "suffer to such a degree under the extended isolation and the long, dark evening hours that they break down completely under it" (DBWE 8:223, 2/86). He concludes that "[i]t is in fact insane" to confine prisoners to their cells without any meaningful work (DBWE 8:223, 2/86). This insanity is furthered for Bonhoeffer in the imbalance between "minor stupidities" and "major

[116] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.

consequences" enacted through carceral punishment (DBWE 8:187, 2/73). Impacted greatly by those prisoners who are condemned to death, Bonhoeffer conceptualises a "different penal system" based on a "principle" of proportionate punishment, which maintains an analogical correlation between offence and consequence. This system would penalise "'absence without leave' by cancelling all leave; 'unwarranted wearing of medals for bravery' by deploying the person to dangerous frontline service; 'thievery of comrades' by temporarily marking the thief; 'illicit trading of food' by reducing the person's rations, and so forth" (DBWE 8:187, 2/73). His thinking in this regard grew out of an engagement with "O.T. *law*,"[117] in which he found no system for deprivations of freedom (DBWE 8:187, 2/73). Although he never fully develops this alternative system, he later indicates that "a fundamental reform of criminal justice" continued to occupy his thought and he hoped this experience would "bear fruit someday" (DBWE 8:232, 2/88).

The above fragments indicate two initial movements in Bonhoeffer's thought. The first is an assessment of the present system, its structures, and its impact on the well-being of prisoners. The second is a remapping of criminal justice in light of the lived experience of prisoners. Let me unfold both of these movements in turn, before moving on to particular responses to the experience of imprisonment.

Firstly, Bonhoeffer observes a demoralising futility experienced by fellow prisoners, resulting from the material isolation of incarceration. Confined to their cells, isolation deprives prisoners of their liberty and restricts their movement; it suspends familiar meaning structures, severing connections with family, social roles and responsibilities, flattening any possible future, workable resolution, or knowable outcome to the present situation. Indiscriminate punishment ultimately intensifies this flux of instability and uncertainty. Without familiar points of orientation, "[n]othing holds fast; nothing stays in place. Everything is short term and short winded" (DBWE 8:284, 2/108). This spatial and temporal language identifies and articulates a sense of liminality observed in other prisoners in the isolation of their cells. Amidst liminal disorientation, Bonhoeffer observes in his fellow prisoners, an inability to control or interpret their situation, to change the parameters of their condition through participation, or even to

[117] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's.

understand the logic or correlation of their punishment in relation to their offence. Amidst this betwixt space, prisoners, especially the younger ones, completely break down in darkness and dissolution.

Observing this wide spread phenomena in other prisoners he interprets the carceral space as a catalyst for instability and despair. Here he initially identifies the spatial configuration of the prison and its isolating enclosure, as an insane ordering of punishment leading to demoralising deprivation of life and essential freedoms. From his privileged position as participant-observer, his observations demonstrate an implicit judgement of the carceral structure, indicating that its systems of justice no longer take responsibility for what Foucault (1979:9) phrased, the "violence that is bound up with its practice." While exposing the failure of this system, Bonhoeffer refuses to stop short at assessment.

In a second movement, he pushes forward toward a remapping of the common structures, conditions, and established orders of the penal system. Bonhoeffer's alternative visioning of proportionate punishment remains both underdeveloped and carries with it certain hidden power structures,.[118] Nonetheless his attentiveness to reality and his persistent determination to work from and yet move beyond his experience of prison, his observations of fellow prisoners, and his reading of Scripture, lay the ground work for future possibilities for the criminal justice system and its preservation of human freedom. For Bonhoeffer, punishment is a necessary boundary for the preservation of life, rather than a platform for the indiscriminate use of power and the deprivation of human freedoms.

In this regard, Bonhoeffer's observations of the prison environment indicate that recurring boundary violations are the *modus operandi* of the prisoner's existence; violations perpetuated both by petty tormentors and well-intended caretakers. He writes to Bethge on November 22, 1943, declaring that he becomes "quite ferocious" whenever he sees "entirely defenceless [*sic*] people being unjustly roared at and abused" (DBWE 8:190, 2/73). He continues: "These petty tormentors of others, who vent their cruelty in this way and of course are found everywhere, can upset me for hours" (DBWE 8:190, 2/73). As Bonhoeffer's observations progress there is a

[118] In Foucault's (1979:105-106) terminology, this system of proportionate punishment is called "analogical punishment." Although "analogical punishment" purports visible and just power relations, Foucault (1979:105-106) indicates that the "power that punishes" in this system, simply remains "hidden."

tension in his thinking. On the one hand, he observes the vulnerability of defenceless prisoners exposed to the cruel reality of institutional imprisonment and senses a growing concern for those who experience the world from *below*.[119] On the other hand, he maintains a position of superiority over other prisoners who are not able to navigate liminality with the cultural reserve and personal composure that he assumes is prudent.

This latter judgement gives rise to observations of prisoners who retreat inwardly from the inevitability of their situation, taking refuge, however temporary, in what they know of themselves and in habitual patterns or illusory ways of controlling reality and collapsing the tension of liminality towards self-interests and personal desires. Here he observes in his fellow prisoners the need to talk, indiscriminately chattering about personal affairs without regard for the truth or for honest confession (DBWE 8:295-296, 2/112). Exposed to constant boundary violations, prisoners turn toward their own experience, talking "ceaselessly about their affairs to others" even when others are no longer listening (DBWE 8:295, 2/112). They "just want to talk about themselves" and can no longer "carry on a conversation about anything beyond personal affairs" (DBWE 8:296, 2/112). He concludes that he is "surrounded almost entirely by people clinging to their desires, so that they're not there for anyone else; they don't listen anymore and aren't able to love their neighbor [*sic*]" (DBWE 8:325, 2/122).

Although Bonhoeffer's observations lean toward the panoptic gaze, essentially normalise the body's behaviour by demarcating the boundaries and limits of what is respectable or sensible (Gordon 1999:399), it is clear that he is trying to make sense of his own experience and response to liminality. Turning to view responses to liminality, he searches for theological resources that Christianity might offer within this context.

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[119] Even the well-intended visitors leave the prisoner in his prison cell helplessly exposed to secondary victimisation. Discerning this situation, Bonhoeffer observes that even the "sweet old man" who came to the prison on his own initiative to play Christmas carols on his trumpet, exposes prisoners unknowingly to further misery and difficulty. The prisoner has no way of protecting himself from torment or exterior stimuli. Listening to the drifting sounds of Christmas carols, prisoners are forced to block out misery by whistling and making lots of noise, "simply in order not to weaken" (DBWE 8:232, 2/88). Bonhoeffer concludes: "in the face of this misery that reigns in this building, a remembrance of Christmas that is merely more or less only playfully sentimental is inappropriate" and "can in fact become dangerous" (DBWE 8:232, 2/88). What is truly needed is a good personal word or sermon to help strengthen prisoners in their misery. Unable to offer this word or sermon, Bonhoeffer is left felling "sorry for the many helpless young soldiers in their cells" (DBWE 8:232, 2/88).

Responding to what he observes in others, Bonhoeffer decides that a Christian must truly "live as if there were no wishes and no future," letting go of control or possible outcomes and instead turning toward ones discomfort by engaging the experience of liminality. In this way, one learns to become one's true self (DBWE 8:325, 2/122). As Bonhoeffer engages his own sense of liminality in this way, he is surprised to see how others begin to orient themselves toward his person, relying upon him, seeking advice from him and looking to him for stability. Engaging his own experience of liminality, Bonhoeffer is able to be there for others, to listen to them, and to love his fellow prisoners by offering them his one remaining possession, his true self.

This contemplative detachment from wishes and anticipation of the future (a characteristic Bonhoeffer would transcend in the third period of his imprisonment) helped Bonhoeffer to stay grounded within the prison space without seeking external sources of power as he observed in his fellow prisoners, who had begun "to read fortune cards to predict whether an alarm will come that night!" (DBWE 8:207, 2/81). Observing other prisoners response to liminality, Bonhoeffer notes that during "tumultuous times superstition blossoms" and "people are quite prepared to pay attention to it, even if only with half an ear" (DBWE 8:207, 2/81).[120] Although Bonhoeffer rejected such superstition attempts to explain reality or predict the future, he does indicate that they "are reminders of intercession and church community, of God's wrath and mercy, and of divine guidance" (DBWE 8:322, 2/121). Given theological significance, these responses clearly form part of Bonhoeffer's own negotiation of liminality. Without an eschatological *telos*, however, these superstitious customs reflect habitual patterns of cognitive dissonance, seeking refuge from suffering and discomfort by to clinging to the familiar, although cheap, external explanation that might lighten the misery of imprisonment. While these habitual cognitive patterns are a way of understanding one's suffering, Bonhoeffer concludes that they ultimately offer an illusory consolation, rather than any real hope in a possible future or outcome (DBWE

[120] The three superstitious customs that Bonhoeffer lists are: (1) "[k]eep your fingers crossed for me," (2) "[t]ouch wood," and (3) "[n]o one can avoid his fate." To these he adds a fourth, "[w]hat's the use of that?!" (DBWE 8:322, 2/121). Searching for a deeper significance for these superstitious explanations, Bonhoeffer tries to "observe to what extent people still believe in anything 'supernatural'" (DBWE 8:322, 2/121). Correlating superstitious customs with some kind of supernatural belief, he extrapolates three ideas that appear to be widespread amidst the liminality of imprisonment: 1) superstitious customs are connected to a fundamental longing to know that others "are watching over you;" 2) that there is some metaphysical explanation for one's suffering ("God's wrath at human hubris") or; 3) that one's suffering is part of some larger plan or fate and cannot be avoided (DBWE 8:322, 2/121).

8:322, 2/121). They reflect a submission to an abstract fate rather than a submission to reality or God.

The above observations lead Bonhoeffer to consider his own experience of suffering. Writing in the same letter to Bethge (March 9, 1944), he remarks that too much is unnecessarily made of the question of suffering. Articulating here the embryonic stages of his later theological thinking concerning suffering, Bonhoeffer implies that one's own suffering isn't what really matters, but rather the suffering of the church, and therefore God, amidst the sufferings of the world. Drawing upon the example of the Catholics, he conveys the impression that knowing what "suffering and martyrdom really are" in terms of historical memory allows one to "remain silent about minor harassments and hindrances" (DBWE 8:323, 2/121). Although Bonhoeffer longed to offer comfort to others who suffered in Tegel and beyond, his comments here reflect a willingness to engage his own experience of imprisonment, as a means of participating, not in some abstract fate, but in a larger eschatological plan; in the sufferings of God in the world.

In conclusion, Bonhoeffer's role as participant-observer of imprisonment, calls attention to his willingness to engage liminality in search for a stable and enduring ground. His critical analysis of the prison system cast judgement on the dehumanising structures of institutional incarceration, while also seeking to point the way forward toward a more just and human system. Towards this end, he believed that the foundations of Christianity provided the necessary resources for the navigation of liminality and the reconstruction of justice. In a letter to Bethge on November 27, 1943, he summarises this engagement by indicating that the intense experiences of war and imprisonment, if survived, would "presumably provide the necessary experience for a rebuilding of the life of the peoples, internally and externally, that is only possible on the foundation of Christianity" (DBWE 8:201, 2/79). He therefore instructs Bethge: "we must really preserve our experience, come to terms with it, let it become fruitful, and not push it away" (DBWE 8:201, 2/79). He believed that exposure to liminality during war and imprisonment, over time, would offer necessary insight into the experience of being human and the resources within Christianity for living in a groundless world. By letting go of what cannot be changed and searching for a firm grounding in God's own suffering in and through the church, Bonhoeffer engages liminality as a participant-observer and lays the foundation for his pastoral ministry to other prisoners.

From Imprisoned-Pastor to Pastor-to-Prisoners

Observing the demoralising effects of extended isolation and deprivation of freedom, as indicated in the analysis above, Bonhoeffer longed to comfort his fellow prisoners in their suffering. In a letter to his parents at Pentecost he wrote: "Were I the prison chaplain, I would on such days go from cell to cell from early in the morning until late in the evening; then much would happen" (DBWE 8:105, 1/29). The boundaries of the prison cell, however, presented a serious limitation to such a desire. As the awaiting trial period brought new freedoms and mobility, the pastoral inclinations of the inmate from cell 92 found a performative space and audience within the Tegel community, as he began to offer spiritual care to others through conversation, by creating a safe space for others, and through his "Prayers for Prisoners" (DBWE 8:194-198, 2/75-2/77). During this period we can observe a transition in Bonhoeffer's role from imprisoned-pastor to prisoner-pastor. Although this transitioning role gave him a new sense of agency, it also clearly provoked a certain self-concept discrepancy.

During air raids, during times of exercise in the prison yard, and in the infirmary – where he himself had occasionally been treated for illness – Bonhoeffer became, as Poelchau[121] (1964:222) recounts, "the pastor of his fellow prisoners, and even, increasingly, of his wardens." Rapidly earning an unofficial membership on the infirmary staff,[122] he helped the sick, made quick decisions during air raids, and spread calm to those around him (Schlingensiepen 2010:342). Poelchau (1964:223), the chaplain who made illegal pastoral visits to Bonhoeffer's cell, later admitted that while they discussed many things in their times together, pastoral and otherwise, Bonhoeffer was often "the pastor and I the prisoner."

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[121] Dr. Harald Poelchau was the chaplain in charge of the civil part of Tegel prison. He "was not actually supposed to visit the military wing of the prison, but was so well regarded in Tegel that he had no trouble gaining access to Bonhoeffer in his cell" (Schlingensiepen 2010:344). Poelchau and Hans Dannenbaum (another prison chaplain at Tegel) realised at once what "an 'assistant chaplain' they unexpectedly had in prison" and quickly put Bonhoeffer's gifts to use amongst the other prisoners (Bethge 2000:852). Not only was he more than adequately qualified for such an unofficial chaplaincy position, but he knew the existential struggles of the prisoners, having grappled himself with the physical and spiritual deprivations of imprisonment.

[122] Poelchau (1964:222) recounts that "[t]he medical orderlies especially became attached to him, and often sat up late talking with him in the sick quarters."

The above description highlights Bonhoeffer's liminal transitioning in Tegel and opens up a key interpretive lens for understanding the interrelation between his ministry to fellow prisoners and his own formation in prison. Bonhoeffer's transition from pastor to imprisoned-pastor and then again from prisoner to pastor-to-prisoners, accents the inherent tension and fluidity of his liminal existence. Living "midway between two identifiable states," he belonged to neither world while embedded firmly within both (Cody & Lawlor 2011:209). In this betwixt space Bonhoeffer again experiences "a moment in and out of time," eluding or slipping "through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions" in the carceral space (Turner 1967:95-96). In this betwixt space Bonhoeffer clearly experiences a suspension of identity, no longer attached to fixed and/or definable social categories (Cody & Lawlor 2011:209); neither his former status and vocation, nor his new social location and label as a "convicted criminal" (DBWE 8:344, 2/131). Becoming a pastor to prisoners, wardens, and even the prison chaplain, he occupied a privileged position of liminality, in-between social categories.

Amidst this ambiguity, Bonhoeffer is forced to negotiate the complexity of his liminal self and the symbolic and spiritual resources available between two distinct socio-cultural identities (Cody & Lawlor 2011:207). Various fragments from his letters, call attention to the growing relational ambiguity of his liminal role as pastor-prisoner and prisoner-pastor. For instance, after interactions with fellow prisoners and guards, he is amazed by the way that people "marvel" at his "peace and cheerfulness [Heiterkeit]" (DBWE 8:188, 2/73). Even the wardens that locked him in his cell would request prayer and comfort in times of need, asking him, "Pastor, please pray that we have no alarm tonight!" (DBWE 8:214, 2/84). Because of his personal calm and personality, military prisoners and wardens of Tegel quickly became captivated by his presence and capacity for thoughtful discussion and good advice, and began to covet his company. He wrote to Bethge, recounting the strange goings on of a political prisoner/pastor: "prisoners who work in the kitchen or outdoors tip one another off in the afternoon as to when I am going to be in the infirmary and then come up with some reason or another because they think it nice to converse with me" (DBWE 8:223, 2/88). Bethge (2000:848) further indicates that even the guards "tried to rotate their duties so that they were assigned to the section of the corridor where Bonhoeffer's cell was. He was so good to have a conversation with, and one always got some sound advice in dealing with one's own little troubles."

This fluid inversion of regularized social roles, which is particularly stressed in Poelchau's comment above, left Bonhoeffer questioning:

> [W]ho I really am: the one always cringing in disgust, going to pieces at these hideous experiences here, or the one who whips himself into shape, who on the outside (and even to himself) appears calm, cheerful, serene, superior, and lets himself be applauded for this charade—or is it real? What does "poise" [Haltung] mean, actually? (DBWE 8:221, 2/86).

Although this text clearly anticipates Bonhoeffer's later poem "Who Am I?,"[123] and is widely discussed in that context, it takes on a different layer of meaning when set within the context of his liminal pastoral ministry from which it arises. Here it illustrates the liminality of his self-concept as provoked or called into question by the complex negotiation of various and performative identities in the service of spiritual care to others. In the midst of a threshold existence, midway between convicted criminal and prison chaplain, Bonhoeffer's sense of self emerges as a dialectic of light and darkness, strength and weakness, serenity and disgust, resistance and submission. Rather than attempting to whip "himself into shape" he is content to live firmly within this liminal identity, thus allowing the threshold self to be formed in the in-between space of liminality. In this context, what is more important than "self-knowledge" is the acknowledgement of a widespread experience of groundlessness that exists beyond the confines of the self. This is intensified by Bonhoeffer's sense of the ambiguity of the fate of the German nation, its church, and its people. In this context, he tried to keep bigger issues in mind.[124] His primary task was learning to live as a whole person amidst the constantly shifting ground of liminality, while simultaneously learning to let go of what cannot be accomplished and striving

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[123] I will not deal specifically with the many interpretive voices that have grappled with the meaning of this well-known text (in connection with other similar fragments on the self as well as Bonhoeffer's poem 'Who Am I?'), however, I would like to note my awareness of a variety of interpretive stances within Bonhoeffer scholarship. Although interpreters agree that Bonhoeffer clearly opposed an inner/outer distinction on both theological and psychological grounds, interpretations of this opposition range in perspective: Williams (1988:36-53) enlists Bonhoeffer in a critique of the modern quest for the authentic self through interiority and inwardness; Wannenwetsch (2004:290-291) enlists Bonhoeffer's suspicion of interiority in a recovery of the moral self through public worship and liturgy; Marsh (1992a:427-488; 1992b:659-672; 1994), in dialogue with modern German philosophical thinkers, argues for a dialogical self-becoming through the Christological relation between self and other; Northcott (2009:24-26) and Beaudoin (2002:348-361), in different ways, propose the formation of human identity through the practice of Christian technologies of the self – 'arcane discipline;' and finally, Dahill's (2009:202) interpretation remains the only one I am aware of, that in light of historic Christian spirituality, laments Bonhoeffer's universally negative mistrust of "the process of growth in introspection and self awareness."

[124] "If one only keeps the bigger issues in mind while experiencing these small, recurring disappointments, then one soon perceives how trivial are one's own deprivations" (DBWE 8:135, 2/44).

to reframe reality in terms of responsibility and authenticity – "who I *really* am."[125] In this space, Bonhoeffer experiences what Marsh (1992b:670) terms the "dialogical self-becoming of the individual," in which one discovers through Christological relation to reality, "how the center of one's own life lies outside oneself and how little one is an isolated individual" (DBWE 8:149, 2/54).

Although this threshold existence is presented in fragments throughout his letters, this thesis proposes an intensification of liminality brought on by Bonhoeffer's performance of pastoral care to fellow prisoners. The threshold self stands before an applauding "audience," striving to mediate the indeterminacy of the current blurred socio-cultural positioning. The theoretical framework of liminality, serves to underline the performative mediation and interrelation between Bonhoeffer's own questioning of authentic human identity and self and his practice of spiritual care in Tegel. That is to say, that his particular approach to spiritual care is more than dispositional, it is also structural, emerging from the spontaneity of his experience of the threshold self and the formational reshaping of the self in liminality.

Taking this point further, the above text, along with its use of the word *Theaterleistung* ("charade," literally, "theatrical heroics"), highlights the performative nature of Bonhoeffer's mediation of the liminal self within the carceral space (DBWE 8:221, 2/86, fn 17). He acknowledges the space between his outer, active, and performative self, and his inner and passive-lived experience of liminality. As a "skilful and culturally astute social actor" (Bar-Lev & Vitner 2011:669), Bonhoeffer turns toward the carceral space as a threshold, becoming through this turn, a "stable pole" from which others find a fixed point of orientation (DBWE 8:213, 2/84). Although the "authority" of this role is performative, "it is not just put on for a show but is authentic and unselfconscious" (DBWE 8:213, 2/84). This authentic performative self is an active and conscious self, aware of ambiguity within the self and yet determined to live in the flux of in-between space, keeping ones "centre of gravity" wherever one happens to be (DBWE 8:324, 2/121). Being his complete self, through pastoral care enlivened by his own

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[125] In contrast to Wannenwetsch, Williams, and Hauerwas, who focus on Bonhoeffer's suspicion of interiority and inwardness, Northcott (2009:17) insists that this text (along with the 'Who Am I?' poem) is part of a search for a "true individualism, as opposed to the fictional selves fostered by the will to power" and the technologies of control and subjectification.

prison experience, he helped to create a balance, both for himself and for others (his audience) amidst the instability of imprisonment and the constant air raids of war.

Furthermore, we can see that the materiality of the prison environment both constrains and enables Bonhoeffer's performance of the self. In constraint, it produces separation, confinement, and the disoriented self. Yet this space simultaneously enables the performative space for a mediation of the threshold self through care for others. Through a series of performative acts, tangible spaces of liminal freedom are produced, which tacitly create a transformative climate, not only resisting existing norms of carceral control, but enabling the conditions for a sense of autonomy and degrees of freedom to be experienced by both Bonhoeffer and the prisoners for whom he cares. Bar-Lev & Vitner's (2011:667)[126] study of spatial configuration as the materialisation of power relations highlights precisely this point; how particular spaces simultaneously "enable and constrain certain performances" (Bar-Lev & Vitner 2011:667). Though the prison space remained fairly stable in its "powerful invocation of 'regularized and constrained repetition of norms'" (Butler 1993:95, as cited by Bar-Lev & Vitner 2011:668), the widespread experience of liminality enables Bonhoeffer's performance of pastoral care in Tegel, temporarily re-scripting the carceral space, resulting in a suspension of normal social categories and the destabilisation of "dominant forms of social reproduction" within the prison (Bar-Lev & Vitner 2011:668). This social destabilisation is furthered by the crisis of air raids, during which the existing order is temporarily suspended and Bonhoeffer's performative "poise" becomes a communicative means of negotiating the ambiguity of liminality. Thus, Bonhoeffer experienced imprisonment as both containment and as threshold; as prisoner and as pastor.

One letter in particular, written to Bethge on February 1 and 2, 1944, recounts much of Bonhoeffer's thought concerning pastoral care to fellow prisoners, giving further substance to the portrait of Bonhoeffer as prisoner-pastor. Reflecting on the air raids of January 30, he tells Bethge of the prisoners who came to him the next morning seeking "a bit of comfort" (DBWE 8:284, 2/108). Acting as a guide for navigating betwixt space, Bonhoeffer attempts to guide his fellow prisoners in learning to live authentically in the world as they search for stability within the flux of distress, anxiety, sorrow and instability. Fragments of this letter indicate that his

[126] Bar-Lev & Vitner (2011) draw their theoretical framework for spatial configuration primarily from Foucault, Butler, and Goffman.

primarily pastoral concern was creating a silent holding space or "safe zone" (Dahill 2009:228), in which he could "really share someone's particular distress and not try to wipe it away or touch it up" (DBWE 8:284, 2/108). Outside of a gentle questioning that subtly suggested what really matters, he believed it was responsible to maintain silence, leaving space for distress to be expressed "*without interpretation*" (DBWE 8:284, 2/108).[127] Yet, he had no sympathy for "false interpretations" of distress that sought to take refuge from discomfort in exchange for a false grounding and comfort. He concluded: "I think that true consolation must come upon one unexpectedly, the same as the distressful situation did" (DBWE 8:284, 2/108). This was clearly true in Bonhoeffer's experience and he sought offer it to his fellow prisoners.

Regarding "love for another" as consisting "first of all in listening," Bonhoeffer gave fellow prisoners a safe space defined by clear boundaries, in which prisoners could co-exist without fear of abuse or domination (Bonhoeffer 1985:36). With Bonhoeffer, fellow prisoners had fewer barriers of privilege to cross to receive spiritual care. Here was a pastor who new the *view from below*, who truly new their struggles, and who experienced the same sense of liminality. Who at the end of the day heard the same steal door slam shut, who experienced the same lonely nights of solitude in a cold and grey prison cell, and who shared the same haunting anxiety about the impending future. The life of spiritual discipline that Bonhoeffer had cultivated during the interrogation period had prepared him for this task. He now offered himself to other prisoners as a performative way of resisting the frightening depersonalisation of Tegel. While at the same time submitting to the God who could be found in the suffering of a prison cell. As a result, the performative self offered a stable gravitational pole of orientation for other prisoners and prison staff.

Turning form the above analysis of Bonhoeffer's transitioning pastoral role in the prison space, let us now turn to examine how the fruitfulness of this experience has given birth to the powerful spirituality contained in his prayers. It is with this same passion and certainty, as illustrated in his pastoral ministry, that Bonhoeffer had written "Prayers for Prisoners" (DBWE 8:194-198, 2/76-

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[127] Emphasis is Bonhoeffer's. Regarding silence in spiritual care, Bonhoeffer had written: "The pastor's duty in this form of spiritual care may be to be silent for a long time in order to become free of all 'priestly' behavior and conceited clericalism. That silence, which is the unconditional prerequisite for spiritual care, aids our preaching, for only after a long period of listening is one able to preach appropriately" (Bonhoeffer 1985:31).

2/78),[128] at the request of Poelchau. These prayers were to be distributed amongst his fellow prisoners cells at Christmas 1943 (DBWE 8:182, 2/73; Bethge 2000:850, 852).[129] Bethge (1990:77, as cited by DBWE 8:194, 2/75, fn. 1) insists that these prayers belong "to the most profound expression of Bonhoeffer's spirituality."[130] He insists that "[t]hey were not jotted down spontaneously but were composed after extended meditation and experienced discipline" (Bethge 1990:77, as cited by DBWE 8:194, 2/75, fn. 1). As such, they represent the fruitfulness of his own spiritual journey amidst liminality, carrying the spirit of the Psalms and the spiritual essence of Gerhardt's hymns, and arising as they do, from daily prayer, meditation on the Psalter, and memorisation of Gerhardt's hymns (Bethge 2000:850; Smith 2006:198). They reflect the stamina and vitality of Bonhoeffer's spirituality, as well as his sensitivity toward the suffering of others and his ability to pray with and for them, as Christ prayed with and for him through the Psalms.

They also reveal Bonhoeffer's "misgivings" about praying for oneself in times of need; a matter that he wished to revisit in discussion with Bethge (DBWE 8:276, 2/106). While he considered it shameful that it "takes a crisis to shake us up and drive us into prayer" (DBWE 8:276, 2/106), he had also come – through reflection on the Psalms and his reading of the Old Testament in his cell – to realise that "[t]he entire history of the children of Israel consists of such cries for help" (DBWE 8:276, 2/106). It follows that Bonhoeffer was slowly coming to view the cry for help in prayer not as an individual or pietistic cry, but as the cry of the beloved community, in solidarity with the sufferings of loved ones, with fellow prisoners, and with all who carried out their difficult duty in Tegel and beyond (DBWE 8:196, 2/76). These prayers then represent the cry of

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[128] These prayers are written for three specific occasions, morning and evening prayer, as well as a 'Prayer in Particular Need' (DBWE 8:198, 2/78). The first two prayers echo the pattern of prayer that Bonhoeffer advocated in the life together of Finkenwalde, which revolved around opening and ending the day in prayer (Kelly 1999:254).

[129] Once completed, the prison chaplains "obtained illegal access to Bonhoeffer's cell and distributed the prayers among the cells" (Bethge 2000:850).

[130] Kelly and Nelson (2003:227) indicate that while Bonhoeffer is often "more noted as a man of action," his writings also reveal "a man of deep, personal prayer." From Finkenwalde to Flossenbürg Bonhoeffer had practiced daily prayer and devotion. The depth of his prayer life and the life orienting meaning and substance he received from it can be seen throughout his involvement in the conspiracy (in circular letters to the Finkenwalde seminarians and in letters to Bethge). This intimacy in prayer grows in maturity during his imprisonment as he came to learn the prayer of those below. Even at the end, Fischer-Hüllstrung (1964:232) recounts seeing Bonhoeffer through a half open door at Flossenbürg, "kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God." Seeing this Fischer-Hüllstrung was "deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer."

a community in the liminal displacement of exile,[131] calling out for the world ordering hand of the Creator, Saviour, Judge, and Redeemer God to act. On behalf of those who suffer together with Christ in darkness, loneliness, restlessness, bitterness, poverty, and misery, and with those who are imprisoned and abandoned. The communal nature of these prayers is further reflected in the Trinitarian audience, in the omission of individualistic penitent language, and in the plea for strength in giving an account before God and others (DBWE 8:196, 2/76). Believing that prayer was a critical aspect of community, Bonhoeffer sought to draw everyone in the sprawling prison of Tegel, for whom liminality and existential suffering were the *modus operandi*, into the depths of prayer where he himself had found a firm ground within liminality and from which he drew his own strength.

Although Trinitarian in their structure the heart of Bonhoeffer's "Prayers for Prisoners" is again Christological. Their words carry a particular weightiness, much like the kind he described in a letter to Ruth Roberta Steahlberg (March 23, 1940) as words that "come not from some semantic reflection or observation but quite simply from daily personal intimacy with the crucified Jesus Christ" (DBWE 16:41, 1/3). In them, he shares a pattern of daily prayer, through which we "orient ourselves to the image of the crucified Christ and allow ourselves to be called to conversion" (DBWE 16:41, 1/3). Bonhoeffer refused to use these prayers as an opportunity to impose an esoteric religious life upon his fellow prisoners, nor to lead them to belief in God as an answer to their hardship, their weakness, or their inherent sinfulness. He considered any such attempt to be part of a "religious blackmail" he refused to participate in (DBWE 8:276, 2/106).

Resisting such "empty spiritual verbosity," Bonhoeffer wrote prayers with weight, prayers that "come directly, as it were, from the cross of Jesus Christ himself," where "Christ is so present to us that it is he who is speaking our words" (DBWE 16:41, 1/3). Through prayer, the Incarnation thrusts us into the place where God has chosen to be found:

> Lord Jesus Christ,
> You were poor and miserable, imprisoned and abandoned as I am.
> You know all human need,
> You remain with me when no human being stands by me,

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[131] "In me it is dark, but with you there is light. / I am lonely, but you do not abandon me. / I am faint-hearted, but from you comes my help. / I am restless, but with you is peace. / In me is bitterness, but with you is patience. / I do not understand your ways, but you know [the] right way for me." (DWBE 8:195, 2/76).

> You do not forget me and you seek me,
> You want me to recognize you and turn back to you
> Lord, I hear your call and follow.
> Help me! (DBWE 8:195, 2/76)

This passage of his prayers illustrates Bonhoeffer's own conformity to the Incarnate and Crucified Christ within his prison cell. Although weary of "religious blackmail" Bonhoeffer hoped that through these prayers his fellow prisoners would indeed experience a world ordering conformity by hearing the call of Jesus and following after (DBWE 8:195, 2/76); not in weakness or from the boundary of personal agency, but from the very centre of their bodily existence. He hoped that the incarnation and suffering of Christ would invoke strength and agency, not guilt or shame. This point is made clear in a letter to Bethge: "Perhaps you will have noticed in the prayers I sent you that they don't focus on asking for forgiveness of sins. From a pastoral as well as a practical viewpoint, I would consider a "methodist"[132] way of proceeding entirely inappropriate here" (DBWE 8:296, 2/112).

As Feil (1985:189) indicates, Bonhoeffer held that "God's power always resides in what, in this world, is called weakness, and in his solidarity with the weak." Through his prayers, Bonhoeffer encouraged his fellow prisoners to trust in the God who is found in weakness and powerlessness. The constant theme is a call for God to accompany and protect the one who prays from the underside of life, where Christ too remains when no human being stands by.[133] It is a plea of commendation and accompaniment, commending oneself to the God who knows the place of the imprisoned and abandoned and who promises to accompany us through human suffering and liminality. These prayers are a plea for assurance of God's presence in weakness and in the experience of abandonment, freeing us "from fear and despondency" so that we can live before

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[132] Regarding the use of the term "Methodist," Feil (1985:189) declares: "Bonhoeffer rejected the temptation to lead people to God by reminding them of their weakness [i.e. sinfulness]. He called that course the way of Methodism, since behind it there lurks once again our human power, albeit our alleged power, for forcing others to come to God." Aware of the power dynamics operative in the prison and within Germany at the time, Bonhoeffer rejected the method of communicating God as just another power broker dishing out punishments and artificially elevated privileges.

[133] Kelly and Nelson (2003:233) suggest that the constant theme of the prayers "was trust in God's love and acceptance of whatever God has permitted in their regard." However, I consider this interpretation overly simplistic, because it focuses primarily on a position of submission, rather than the dynamic interplay between resistance and submission present throughout the prayers.

God and others (DBWE 8:196,2/76),[134] protecting us from the "assaults of darkness" and allowing our "body and soul to come to rest" (DBWE 8:197, 2/77). They aim to strengthen the prisoner in bearing the hardships of life, so that one might stand firm in service of the world and others.

This brief examination of some of the themes of Bonhoeffer's liberating prayers also draws our attention to their defiance or resistance function. In the context of the prison cell, prisoners are discursively fixed and "othered" subjects, clinically ordered and accounted for by the carceral mapping of the state and its systems of domination and power that seeks to isolate and interrogate personal identity. Yet, the carceral map of Tegel did not fully account for the surviving creativity and tactical capacity of Bonhoeffer's liberating spirituality. In the section of Bonhoeffer's prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ, the axis of narrative power is relocated; from the ominous and ever present gaze of the prison guards, to the powerless, poor, miserable, *imprisoned*, and abandoned Christ. Within the theology of Bonhoeffer's prayer, power is relocated to the one who has tasted the experience of being fixed as an "othered" subject. Because Christ too has been "othered," he knows the depths of human need experienced by the prisoner, and in this way, he is the one who remains when all other human beings have abandoned the prisoner. Not only is this prayer an early expression of Bonhoeffer's theology of "Jesus the man for others," but it is the indispensable site of resistance within Bonhoeffer's spirituality. And he offers it now to his fellow prisoners. Having been previously banned from the public distribution of written material, his voice had been silenced and his language destroyed by the coercive power of the state, yet through the public distribution of prayers Bonhoeffer returns to language to offer a communal resistance to the depersonalisation of the prison system.

In addition, the Trinitarian language of his prayers acts as a de-isolation and de-territorialisation. By participating in the community of God, prayer is an act of resurrection, a re-envisioning of reality and of the narrative of power and justice: God is Judge, not the Reich War Court. In this way, prayer functions as a translation of the daily suffering of the individual into a higher vision of the self as participating in the suffering of God. In this way, his prayers form the starting point

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[134] "Grant me freedom again / and in the meantime let me live in such a way / that I can give account before [you] and others. / Lord, whatever this day may bring – your name be praised" (DBWE 8:196, 2/76).

for anticipating the resolve that is given voice in his poems "Christians and Heathens" (DBWE 8:460-461,3/174) and "Who Am I?" (DBWE 8:459-460, 3/173) and in his prison theology. In these prayers we can see the de-territorialisation of the self; as the self who suffers is imprisonment and abandonment, and is finally constructed anew in an act of de-isolation, through the prayerful construction of a Trinitarian audience: God in three persons hears the cry of the sufferer. This associative constituency or community hears and offers the gift of the true self, only now self-consciously other than that demanded by the prison regime (Larson 2010:147). From the perspective of a prisoner, Bonhoeffer crafted these prayers not only to speak to the prisoners' existential situation, but also to lift the prisoner's perspective beyond the isolating individuality that characterises the survival instincts of life in prison.

In conclusion, Bonhoeffer's transitioning role from imprisoned-pastor to pastor-to-prisoners, indicates a transition at the heart of liminality, opening him up to an experience of the threshold self. Through the performance of spiritual care for others, Bonhoeffer not only experiences a fragmentation of the self, but he also learns to give his authentic self (light and darkness, strength and weakness) to others through the language of prayer, which is grounded in the powerlessness of God, as experienced in the prison context, and in a world orienting conformity to the Incarnate and Crucified Christ. Bonhoeffer's prayers are the crystallisation of his prison experience and his emerging pastoral role within Tegel, coming to a transformative climax as they invite the suffering community of prisoners, wardens, and chaplains to participate in the community of God. This threshold experience clearly represents a formative movement in Bonhoeffer's own spiritually and in many ways it acts as a catalyst for Bonhoeffer's construction of a theological and poetic anticipation of resolve, which we will examine in the fourth chapter of this study.

From Object of Carceral Regulations to Subject of Boundary Creation

In contrast to Bonhoeffer's "Prayers for Prisoners," his prison reports[135] remain a vastly unexplored part of *DBWE* 8. The present thesis, however, brings them in to focus. As a prisoner,

[135] Bonhoeffer's reports consist of a 'Report on Experiences during Alarms' (DBWE 8:205-206, 2/80), proposing protective measures after the November 26, 1943, air raid which hit Tegel prison; and a 'Report on Prison Life after

writing a critical analysis of the prison environment, these reports again foreground Bonhoeffer's privileged existence. Furthermore, they accentuate Bonhoeffer's capacity to assess reality,[136] to decide, and then to act in responsibility and responsiveness to a given concrete situation (DBWE 6:221). Featuring certain humanistic themes,[137] the reports represent his decision to act in responsibility for other human beings[138] as a continued resistance to the depersonalisation and dehumanisation of incarceration. Having surveyed Bonhoeffer's pastoral role and the themes of resistance and submission through prayer in the previous section, this section will analyse the salient themes of his reports, foregrounding the place of resistance and his concern for the preservation of life in "doing justice among human beings" (DBWE 8:389, 3/145). Here I suggest a final transition at the heart of liminality, in which Bonhoeffer breaks through the objectification of carceral regulations and positions himself as a subject of boundary creation, protector of human boundaries, and preserver of life. This final transition is set as the last document of the awaiting trial period, and as such it represents a threshold in Bonhoeffer's formative prison experience. In connection with his observations of the prison system and his pastoral ministry and prayers for prisoners, these reports, although not theological, illuminate the prison context as a place of insight and an ever deepening concern for the suffering of human beings and those who inhabit the *below* of world history.

The first report – "Report on Experiences during Alarms" – was provoked by a particularly traumatising air raid on November 26, 1943. In a letter to Bethge, Bonhoeffer describes the aftermath of an aerial bomb or explosive that hit the infirmary, severely demolishing the prison walls, doors, windows, roofing and leaving "prisoners crying for help yet without anyone caring for them except us from the infirmary" (DWEB 8:202, 2/79). He recounts that while helping the effected prisoners "one constantly has to be careful" when opening the doors of serious offenders that "they don't crack you over the head with the leg of a chair in order to run away" (DBWE

One year in Tegel' (DBWE 8:343-347, 2/131), written for General Hase, around April, 1944, which unveils the degrading methods of punishment and living conditions of Tegel prison.

[136] For analysis of Bonhoeffer's notion of reality, see Nissen, U.B. 2011. Letting Reality Become Real: On Mystery and Reality in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ethics. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 39(2): 321-343.

[137] For an analysis of Bonhoeffer as Christian Humanist, see de Gruchy (2009:2-24), Zimmermann (2010:25-48), Nissen (2010:187-190), and the collection of articles in Zimmermann and Gregor's (2010) *Being Human, Becoming Human*.

[138] See *DBWE* 6 (220, 283-85) and Nissen (2009:197-98). "This means that a human being necessarily lives in encounter with other human beings and that this encounter entails being changed, in ever so many ways, with responsibility [Verantwortung] for the other human being" (DBWE 6:220).

8:202, 2/79). Though he first told Bethge that this experience was simply "unpleasant" (DBWE 8:202, /79), he later indicated that while "lying on the floor in utter darkness," he had little hope for a good outcome (DBWE 8:204, 2/79). This baptism by fire ultimately led him "back to prayer and the Bible" (DBWE 8:204, 2/79).

Although this event confirmed the sustaining importance of prayer and daily meditation on Scripture, his report on this event indicates a certain refusal to withdraw from "responsibility for the whole," into an isolated and private monastery (DBWE 6:220). Entering into public discourse surrounding the preservation of life, Bonhoeffer's report questions the security concerns of the Tegel prison system. While he suggests that the primary consideration should be "safeguarding lives," the ellipsis that ends the report, implicitly implies that the opposite is true (DBWE 8:206, 2/80). Locked behind the doors of their cells Bonhoeffer hears agonising screams and cries for help from wounded awaiting trial prisoners (DBWE 8 205, 2/80); cries he could not silence, nor comfort. Ultimately, the structural parameters of the prison rendered immediate treatment of wounded prisoners impossible. Bonhoeffer deduces four necessary measures from his experience during the air raid; each related to the successful and immediate treatment of seriously wounded prisoners, and the physical and psychological preservation of bodily life. With this report, he hoped he could "make some difference" and that he would again be of "some assistance" to the wider community (DBWE 8:202, 2/79). Thus the report is not merely the testimony of an isolated individual, but incorporates the selves of the entire community, publicly resisting the life threatening deprivations of incarceration during severe air raids and insisting upon the preservation of life, both physically and psychologically (DBWE 6:220). Led back to prayer and the Bible, Bonhoeffer's reports, as with his prayers, are a representative act on behalf of the cries of the suffering community of Tegel.

His second report, which focuses on 'Prison Life,' serves two primary functions. The first is an *empowering function*. As a kind of narrative testimony of his experience in Tegel, it offers detailed documentation of prison life, providing a validation of responsibility and potential agency and freedom[139] in a context where "prisoners have practically no possibility of asserting

[139] Regarding "freedom" in relation to responsible action, Bonhoeffer writes: "To act out of concrete responsibility means to act in *freedom* – to decide, to act, and to answer for the consequences of this particular action *myself* without the support of other people or principles. Responsibility presupposes ultimate freedom in assessing a given

their rights when they are treated unjustly" (DBWE 8:344, 2/131). Secondly, it serves a *defiant or resistance function*. As a public record intended for the desk of General Hase, it seeks to make visible the hidden mechanisms of depersonalisation and dehumanisation inherent in the material conditions of Tegel. Bonhoeffer foregrounds the violation of regulations, the "nasty and brutal" behaviour of wardens toward prisoners, the inadequate provision of food and meaningful participation, and the psychological effects of solitary confinement and extended humiliation (DBWE 8:344-346, 2/131). As a resistance document the report is aimed at influencing prison policy and the just maintenance of regulations. It uncloaks and assesses the hidden conditions of injustice within the Tegel prison system by publicising particular material conditions of incarceration, as experienced by an individual as well as the collective prison population.

The salient themes of the report (overall treatment, food, occupation, lighting, air raids, and sickness) represent humanistic concerns that insist upon the necessary preservation of human life and the well-being of prisoners both physically and psychologically. Doing his homework to compile the report, Bonhoeffer indicates that the prisoners' food portions are below regulation (15g of sausage instead of 25g). Their food, in staggering contrast to food eaten by the staff, has had all the "goodness" cooked out of it and on some days, it is "beneath contempt," completely devoid of substance, lacking any trace of fat, meat, or potatoes (DBWE 8:345, 1/131). He concludes that this diet is "completely inadequate" for young prisoners serving long sentences (DBWE 8:345, 2/131). In addition, there is no meaningful work to be done, no games to be played, no "common projects" that "could benefit the whole community, … no religious services" (DBWE 8:345-346, 2/131). In these conditions, the younger prisoners "are bound to suffering in body and soul from the lack of occupation and supervision" (DBWE 8:346, 2/131). Though the prisoners have the right to light in their cells, they often sit in darkness during the winter months, because of the indifference of the staff. They are unnecessarily exposed to the dangers of bombing raids "without any protection," only because the wardens refuse to put the more than ample labour force of prisoners to productive and communal work, in carrying out the recommendation of his pervious report (DBWE 8:346, 1/131). For these and various other reasons, Bonhoeffer concludes that the material conditions and the indifference and brutal

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situation, in choosing, and in acting. Responsible action is neither determined from the outset nor defined once and for all; instead, it is born in the given situation." (DBWE 6:221).

intolerance of the wardens, causes only bitterness and psychological depression amongst the almost seven hundred prisoners of Tegel.

Collectively, Bonhoeffer's reports are concerned with the well-being of human beings, both prisoners and wardens alike.[140] As such they represent what de Gruchy (2006:18) calls a "critical humanism." In stressing the necessary requirements of a meaningful bodily life in Tegel, his reports strive for "human well being in all its dimensions" (de Gruchy 2006:30-32); access to rights, just treatment and the right to appeal, adequate food and nutrition, meaningful work, play, and a common cause within community; the right to light, to the protection of life from unnecessary dangers, and to adequate and timely treatment for the sick or injured. Insisting upon the right to human well-being, Bonhoeffer implicitly counters the dehumanising and depersonalising tendencies of the prison system and casts a critical judgement on its refusal to honour the common humanity of its prisoners (de Gruchy 2006:30-31). In and through these documents, Bonhoeffer actively takes on responsibility for other human beings and for the entire community of Tegel.

Embodying his *Ethics*, as well as the fruitfulness of his prison experience, these reports confirm a growing sense that "[i]dividuals do not act merely for themselves alone; each individual incorporates the selves of several people, perhaps even a very large number" (DBWE 6:220). Through an encounter with the suffering of fellow prisoners – his concrete neighbour, given to him by God – he takes on responsibility and is changed through encounter. In the "moment" of writing these reports, Bonhoeffer chooses to live in reality and is no longer an isolated individual, "but the one who is responsible for other people" (DBWE 6:221). Amidst the transition from object of carceral regulations to subject of boundary creation, Bonhoeffer deepens his humanistic concerns for the common cause of the humanity of the Tegel community, taking on responsibility for those who suffer within its walls and calling the powers that be to account. This transition can be seen as a major turning point in Bonhoeffer's experience of liminality, moving him from a repetitive state of *limbo*, toward a momentum gaining anticipation of life it all it multidimensionality and worldliness.

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[140] "I must not fail to mention that there are also a number of wardens whose conduct toward the prisoners is calm, matter-of-fact, and when possible kind; but for the most part these men remain in subordinate positions" (DBWE 8:345, 2/131).

Conclusion: Learning to Live In-Between

The above exposition of Bonhoeffer's spirituality and his developing pastoral role within liminality, underlines the formational quality of liminality amidst the struggle to maintain a balance while living suspended in-between resistance and submission. Grounded in Christian Humanism and in responsibility for other human beings, his spiritual life and his practice of spiritual care are simultaneously "embodied in this world, and yet driven by a sense of the transcendent" (de Gruchy 2006:31). He refuses to escape from the corporal or material into the transcendent beyond or other-worldly monastic enclosure of his cell, but rather turns towards his prison experience and other prisoners, discovering in and through an encounter with the other, a deeper and more constant ordering of creation, self, and genuine sociality. As painful and disorienting as liminal displacement was, it offered a remarkably open window into the spiritual life and the meaning of being human. *In* and *through* Bonhoeffer's turn toward the liminal quality of the *view from below*, he experiences God as the beyond in the midst of his life, although he had not yet conceptualised its meaning as such (DBWE 8:367, 3/137).

Drawing together the threads that have been explored throughout this chapter, we can now say that Bonhoeffer's spirituality is indeed grounded in the experience of a "worldly transcendence" (de Gruchy 2010:29), in which faith endures concrete hardships and remains in love, truth, and connection to this life and this earth.[141] In fact, it is the concrete hardships of imprisonment themselves, which create the catalysing space for the fruitfulness of the spiritual life. At the heart of liminality, Bonhoeffer experiences a sense of being led through the contrasting tensions of betwixt space (between home and prison, absence and communion, dislocation and located-ness), discovering in this movement, a "dialogical self becoming," in which the self becomes through others, participates in radical openness, and is conformed to the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. As Bonhoeffer learned to live in the in-between space of the prison, the horizons of his vision for humanity and the Christian life expand, risking new imaginative possibilities that would begin to take shape in theological, poetic, and metaphorical anticipation (themes we

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[141] For further analysis of transcendence in Bonhoeffer's thought, see Vosloo, R. 2012. Bonhoeffer, Transcendence and the 'Turn to Religion.' In *Culture and Transcendence: A Typology of Transcendence.* Stoker, W & van der Merwe, W.L. Eds. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 45-61.

will explore in the next chapter) of life in all its worldliness. Located in this betwixt space, of contrasting light and dark, despair and hope, exile and home coming, Bonhoeffer discovers the "Thou" amidst the "it" of his prison experience, and learns to participate in the life of Jesus Christ. As such, these distinctive turning points become part of Bonhoeffer's final turning from the phraseological to the real, taking their distinctive place in the narrative of his formative life and work.

Chapter 4: Liminality as Anticipation

Suffering
Wondrous transformation. Your hands, strong and active, are fettered.
Powerless, alone, you see that an end is put to your action.
Yet now you breathe a sigh of relief and lay what is righteous
calmly and fearlessly into a mightier hand, contented.
Just for one blissful moment you could feel the sweet touch of freedom,
Then you gave it to God, that God might perfect it in glory.[142]

> Being a Christian does not mean being religious in a certain way, making oneself into something or other (a sinner, penitent, or saint) according to some method or other. Instead it means being human, not a certain type of human being, but the human being Christ creates in us. It is not a religious act that makes someone a Christian, but rather sharing in God's suffering in the worldly life.[143]

Introduction

Throughout this study I have attempted to show the ways in which the prison space functions as a liminal place of formation for Bonhoeffer. Examining the different phases of liminality, I have argued that separation provoked a particular sense of temporal, ethical, and spatial disorientation associated with the leaving behind of old structures of identity and order (*above* and *below*); and that inner and outer transitions at the heart of liminality facilitated the possibility of breaking through betwixt space toward new and surprising encounters with the self, with others, and with God. Each of these sections sought to articulate different nuances of liminality and highlight Bonhoeffer's formative engagement with the prison space. We have seen how the borders of liminality remain particularly porous and open to the convergence of new meaning that emerges from within the tensions between life and death, truth and reality, profane and sacred space, home and prison, absence and communion, dislocation and located-ness, and resistance and submission. It has been concluded, thus far, that these tensions, although experienced in a disorienting and repetitive state of liminality, over time contributed to a cumulative and concretely transformative new vision of reality and the Christian life.

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[142] Third Stanza of Bonhoeffer's poem 'Stations on the Way to Freedom' (DBWE 8:513, 4/191).
[143] Letter to Eberhard Bethge, July 18, 1944 (DBWE 8:480, 3/177).

In the present chapter, I will attempt to take this line of analysis one step further by showing how liminality sharpens Bonhoeffer's sense of longing and focuses his attention on positioning the extremes of prison life within the human context of this world, through creative anticipation of the future. Here I will show how turning toward the reality of prolonged liminality, a space of convergence is opened, in which longing (the penultimate) is transformed through a*nticipation* of alternative ways of interpreting future realities (the ultimate), into a new state of being human. "[N]ot a certain type of human being," as Bonhoeffer concludes, "but the human being Christ creates in us" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177). In Bonhoeffer's words, this generative liminality is a space in which "high tension gives off big sparks" (DBWE 8:351, 3/132). These "big sparks," so to speak, both emerge from the creative space of liminality, as well as offering navigational direction for living in-between the tensions of continued imprisonment and the struggles of his country and church in the midst of war. In what follows I will examine the highly creative space of liminality, which gives rise to *theological, poetic, and polyphonic anticipation.*

Before proceeding, however, two theoretical distinctions must be made. Firstly, although seminal theorisations of liminality have largely understood liminal space as a negative, ambiguous phase, many scholars have begun to conceptualise how liminality can be experienced positively. Franks & Meteyard (2007:220), for instance, argue that between spaces ultimately provoke "[t]he need to let go of, leave behind or even be forcibly expelled from old ascendant forms of self-definition and identity so that God can be found in ways never before experienced." The texts quoted at the beginning of this chapter indicate such a process, in which familiar structures of meaning, support, and security – i.e., actions or efforts to make "oneself into something or other (a sinner, penitent, or saint)" – are stripped away, leaving the prisoner and God free to "encounter each other in new and life changing ways" (Franks & Meteyard 2007:220). In this way, liminality is experienced positively, as a spiritually and theologically formative event, in which the prisoner is freed enough from past structures to reflect on his life and theology, "envision new ideas and ways of doing, and dreaming new dreams… with ultimate meaning, new and old insights, and alternative ways of interpreting reality" (Lee 2001:98). Liminality remains just porous enough and open to new possibility that new illumination and transformation can produce fresh vision for life.

Secondly, in traditional theorisations of liminality, the third phase of the liminal transition has been understood as a phase of incorporation, in which the liminar arrives or enters into a new and stable social status, on the other side of liminality. In Bonhoeffer's case, however, a liberating passage out of liminality and into a new social status only occurs once he knows himself as a death row prisoner, and concretely in his death. It can easily be argued that he remains in a state of *limbo* throughout the course of his imprisonment, until his untimely execution at the hands of the Nazis. I will argue, however, that he does not remain in the same phase of liminality, but rather, experiences a movement toward a new state of stability and being, through anticipation of formative resolve within betwixt space. Therefore, I contend that Bonhoeffer experiences a sense of wholeness within the confines of his prison cell, through anticipation of creative resolution, thereby incorporating certain elements of past liminality and future possibility into his present liminal reality. This creative process arises from within the anti-structural space of liminality and yet it also offers stability and structure to his experience as he seeks to navigate the continued betwixt space of imprisonment and give thought to alternative interpretations of reality.

In light of these distinctions, I have characterised the third period of Bonhoeffer's imprisonment (April to July 1944) as a highly creative phase of liminality, in which *anticipation* produces *theological, poetic, and polyphonic* possibilities that bridge the tensions of liminality and ground Bonhoeffer in a wholehearted "sharing in God's suffering in the worldly life" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177). The argument as it proceeds will briefly examine these three areas of anticipation, *theological anticipation, poetic anticipation,* and *polyphonic anticipation.*

Theological Anticipation

In the face of prolonged imprisonment and impending death Bonhoeffer sought to discern how and where God could be found. Prison life presented him with two similarly unsatisfying options, an escape into a metaphysical beyond (hoping in resurrection as a way of escaping the hardships of prison life) or a turn toward an inner life (resigning to the mystical life of his monastic enclosure). Bonhoeffer saw in each of these options, a false escape from reality. Rejecting metaphysics and inwardness Bonhoeffer turns instead to concepts of life and the world, in which "God is the beyond in the midst of our lives" (DBWE 8:367, 3/137). This

"beyond," as Reichold (2013:240) indicates, "is not a metaphysical entity" or an "individualist category" but points to the other human being and to human life itself. I will attempt to show how liminality produces a space in which God and indeed Jesus Christ can be encountered in new and liberating ways, not at the edge of human boundaries – "at the point where human knowledge is at an end… or when human strength fails" – but in-between these boundaries at the centre of "human life and human goodness" (DBWE 8:366-367, 3/137). While I do not claim to give a proper interpretation of Bonhoeffer's notion of a "worldly interpretation,"[144] I will attempt to show how liminality opens the space for a deconstruction of false notions of God, freeing Bonhoeffer to anticipate a fresh encounter with "the God of the Bible, who gains ground and power in the world by being powerless" (DBWE 8:478-479, 3/177). My contention is that by reframing liminality as an encounter with the "suffering God," Bonhoeffer learns to live in-between, sharing in "God's suffering in the life of this world" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178). Through theological anticipation, Bonhoeffer learns to watch in a Gethsemane-like displacement with Christ.

Bonhoeffer's first few letters in April 1944, preface the developments that take place in his "theological letters."[145] As such, they ground his "theological turn" in what has emerged from a year spent in prison.[146] Writing to Bethge on 11 April 1944, Bonhoeffer remarks, "I have been

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[144] Bonhoeffer scholars, not least of all Bethge (2000:853-892), followed notably by Feil (1985:99-205) and Wüstenberg (1998:68-157), have explored Bonhoeffer's notion of a "worldly interpretation," particularly in regard to relation to "the world come of age" and the development of a "nonreligious interpretation." Other notable works dealing with the development of this line of thought include Dumas (1968:163-214), Selby (1999:226-245), and Reichold (2013:229-241). My intention in this section is not to retread this clearly worn path, but rather to point toward a largely overlooked element in Bonhoeffer's "worldly interpretation." That is to say that seminal works on this period have largely focused on Bonhoeffer's understanding of the world and religion, and the development or turn that occurs in Tegel prison as a result of his prison readings, notably the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey. While I do not dispute this well defended line of argument, I do content that the most obvious of influences, Bonhoeffer's experience of prison and the fragmentary tensions he endures in his cell, have been widely neglected as contributing to the fruitfulness of his prison theology.

[145] Bonhoeffer's first explicitly "theological letter" to Bethge was on 30 April 1944 (DBWE 8:361-367, 3/137). Followed in quick succession by other "theological letters:" May 5, May 29, June 8, July 16, July 18, July 21. de Gruchy (2010:15) comments that "[t]ogether with his 'Thoughts on the Baptism of Dietrich Bethge' in May and the 'Outline for a Book,' they embody Bonhoeffer's 'new' theology from prison."

[146] Due to a fundamental change in the style and content of his letters (revealing a new excitement for his work) (Schlingensiepen 2010:349; DBWE 8:505, 4/188), Bonhoeffer scholars have conceptualised a "theological turn" beginning with Bonhoeffer's letter to Bethge on 30 April 1944 (DBWE 8:361-367, 3/137). A number of interpretations exist for understanding this "theological turn." They are listed here only in brief form. The first and most immediate response of "commentators after the Second World War, including Karl Barth," was to "ascribe Bonhoeffer's new theological ideas to the shock of his arrest and imprisonment" (Schlingensiepen 2010:350). This interpretation, however, has largely been rejected due to an acknowledgement that Bonhoeffer was well in control of

told not to expect any change in my current situation for the time being, and this comes after having fresh promises made to me once a fortnight until now" (DBWE 8:352, 3/132). This event marks a decisive shift in Bonhoeffer's prison experience, indicating "that he should no longer count on a court trial, but should rather adjust to the idea of staying in Tegel for sometime to come" (Schlingensiepen 2010:349). In the letters that follow Bonhoeffer begins to reflect on the past year of imprisonment and its meaning for his life: "It certainly makes a great difference being in prison for a year instead of a month; one gains not only interesting or strong impressions but a huge new dimension in one's life" (DBWE 8:360, 3/136). Although he feared he was becoming less sensitive to the deprivations of imprisonment and that this might lead to forgetfulness (DBWE 8:360, 3/136), he also observed the potential fruitfulness which arises from carrying around a sense of longing amidst the tensions of liminality (DBWE 8:351, 3/132). In this reflective space he noted that "things that we have worked out for ourselves" – i.e., separation, hardships, tensions, disorientations, suffering, transitions – whether "consciously or unconsciously, will never be forgotten, since they have changed from being powerful experiences to taking definite shape as clear insights, purposes, and plans, and as such will keep their meaning for our future life" (DBWE 8:360, 3/136).

The transformation described here, of powerful experiences taking shape as clear insights and meaning points toward the formative possibilities that betwixt space opens for the prisoner. In this space, as hope for release faded, Bonhoeffer faced the boundary of his own limitations and strength (death). In the "theological letters" that follow we see a tension in his writing, between a powerful God who acts and a God who acts in powerlessness. Here he faced a number of competing options; wait for God to act in power, look for escape in a better life beyond, or turn

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his situation by the time he started formulating these new theological ideas. The second interpretation is observed in a change in his reading partners, turning from Stifter, to "philosophers and scientists like Carl Friedrich von Weizäcker, José Ortega y Gasset and Wilhelm Dilthey, and instead of theological books he read *The Homeric Gods* by W.F. Otto and *Die Geschichte der preußischen Akademie* (History of the Prussian Academy) by his teacher, Adolf von Harnack" (Schlingensiepen 2010:349). It is believed that a great deal of this material (specifically Dilthey), influenced Bonhoeffer's new theological direction (Feil 1985:99-205 & Wüstenberg 1998:68-157). Thirdly, and more practically, we can observe a shift in his overall outlook on his situation. During this period, he received word from Sack's "that he should no longer count on a court trial, but should rather adjust to the idea of staying in Tegel for sometime to come" (Schlingensiepen 2010:349). This is believed to have shifted his outlook and thinking – no longer hoping for a quick conclusion to his imprisonment, but rather, making the most of his time in light of his continued imprisonment. And finally, in connection with a shift in Bonhoeffer's outlook on his present situation, it is believed that he started to look forward in anticipation to the success of the conspiracy and its plot to assassinate Hitler.

toward the brokenness and pain that accompanies liminality, viewing it not as an unwelcomed intrusion, but as the very place where God is found. Although it is clear that Bonhoeffer chose the later of these options, there are some indications that he didn't start there.

While not forming a prominent theme in his "theological letters," it does appear that Bonhoeffer contemplated the first option, for a time: wait for God to act in power. In his letter to Bethge on 30 April 1944, he indicates a longing for God to "arise and accomplish something," thereby saving him from his impending death. Here God's action is almost certainly tied to his hope that the resistance would make its move on Hitler, shaking the world and changing his personal circumstances (DBWE 8:361, 3/137). Longing to be free he continued to wonder, "how God will go about solving what seems beyond any solution" (DBWE 8:361, 3/137). Whether or not this was simply a cryptic reference to his hope that the coup would succeed or an actual longing for God to act in power, we may never know. However, his reference to Psalms 58:11[147] and 9:19-20[148] in this regard seem to validate his lamenting desire for God to act on earth and judge his accusers.

Held in tension with a desire for God to act in power, however, is Bonhoeffer's deconstruction of the "deus ex machina" (DBWE 8:366. 3/137). Although, he directs his critique at "religious people," it is clear that Bonhoeffer – himself on the liminal boundary between life and death – hoped that God would indeed "appear to solve insoluble problems or to provide strength when human power fails" (DBWE 8:366, 3/137). This must have been at the heart of his experience, longing for God to show God's self in power and judgement. He quickly resolves, however, that this is "a dubious proposition," and that it leaves room for God "only out of anxiety" (DBWE 8:366, 3/137). Bonhoeffer's own liminal experience opens up a space for future criticism of religion and metaphysical conceptions that no longer correspond to reality.

Turning his attention to belief in the resurrection, he concludes that anticipation of the resurrection "*is not* the 'solution' to the problem of death" either (DBWE 8:367, 3/137). Rather, one must find God in the "beyond" that lies "in the midst of our lives" (DBWE 8:367, 1/137). Here we can see Bonhoeffer turning toward liminality and the darkness and death that

[147] "People will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a god who judges on earth."
[148] "Rise up, O Lord! Do not let mortals prevail; let the nations be judged before you. Put them in fear, O Lord; let the nations know they are only human."

accompany it. Reaching his own limit to change the outcome of his fate, he resolves to leave that which cannot be solved unsolved and focus rather on living in-between the limits and tensions of liminality, at the centre where God and the church reside (DBWE 8:367, 3/137).

Searching for a justification for his developing conception of a worldly redemption (in a letter to Bethge on 27 June 1944), Bonhoeffer turns to the Old Testament, drawing on two scriptural metaphors, which capture something of the reality of his own experience of liminality: exodus and exile. Here Israel is redeemed "out of Egypt and later out of Babylon" so that they "may live before God, as God's people on earth" (DBWE 8:447, 3/169). In contrast, to these Old Testament images of redemption, Bonhoeffer argues that the emphasis of Christianity and its redemptive proclamation of resurrection have come to be understood as lying on the other side of "death's boundary," and as such have been sought as a means of "being redeemed out of sorrows, hardships, anxieties, and longings, out of sin and death, in a better life beyond" (DBWE 8:447, 3/169). Disputing this understanding, Bonhoeffer insists, "Christian hope of resurrection… refers people to their life on earth" (DBWE 8:447, 3/169). Drawing them ever deeper into the reality of sorrows, hardships, anxieties, and longings as a way of encountering God in the midst of their lives.

Bonhoeffer's theological reflections on exodus, exile, and resurrection, anticipate an alternative images or perspective of liberation and redemption, one that offers no escape route out of earthly tasks and difficulties, but rather turns towards the shadowy reality of death as a participation in the life of Christ in this world.[149] Grounding resurrection in the worldly life of Christ, Bonhoeffer re-frames liminality as an anticipation of a liberating new encounter with God this side of the boundary of death. Writing of Christians in the plural, Bonhoeffer casts his own experience of liminality in the scriptural image of Gethsemane:

> Like Christ ("My God why have you forsaken me?"), they have to drink the cup of earthly life to the last drop, and only when they do this is the Crucified and Risen One with them, and they are crucified and resurrected with Christ. This-worldliness must not be abolished ahead of its time; on this, NT and OT are united. Redemption myths arise from the human experience of

[149] "I find it a tremendously liberating thought that Christ is not at all dulled to the suffering and sin in the world as we are, but rather that he experienced and bore it all unceasingly" (DBWE 16:359, 1/202).

> boundaries. But Christ takes hold of human beings in the midst of their lives (DBWE 8:448, 3/169).

Here we can see the truly formative nature of liminality, in that it opens a space of conformation and indeed participation in the life of Jesus Christ (Incarnate, Crucified, and Resurrected). Jesus' resurrection does not somehow rescue him from the reality of imprisonment and death but rather draws him ever more deeply into the heart of his experience, "in a wholly new way" (DBWE 8:447, 3/169). This journey of formation involves a certain leave of letting go or leaving behind of the powerful illusion of God as the deus ex machina, creating a new space for encountering the real God, "the biblical God of the cross" (Dahill 2009:95).

Herein lies the true experience and purpose of Gethsemane, that like Christ, God might lead "us to a truer recognition of our situation before God" (DBWE 8:478, 3/177). The God who we encounter in Gethsemane is the "God who is with us" and at the same time "the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34!)" (DBWE 8:478, 3/177). Within a Gethsemane-like displacement we are free to encounter the God who "consents to be pushed out of the world and onto the cross;" the God who "is weak and powerless in the world and in precisely this way, and only so, is at our side and helps us" (DBWE 8:479, 3/177).

Taking up the imagery of Gethsemane a further time, Bonhoeffer notes Jesus' question to the disciples, "Could you not stay awake with me one hour?"[150] Here the profound discovery of the Gethsemane like displacement is that God not only stands by our side in our suffering, but that we too are called to "stand by God in God's own pain" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177).[151] At the heart of liminality, Bonhoeffer encounters this startling reality, which is an inversion of "everything a religious person expects from God" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177). Although the notion of the suffering God was not a new idea in Bonhoeffer's theology, the call to companion God through God's own pain and suffering was a newly liberating encounter with the suffering God.[152] Here we can

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[150] Matt 26:40b.

[151] This notion later forms the second stanza of Bonhoeffer's poem 'Christians and Heathens':

> People go to God when God's in need,
> find God poor, reviled, without shelter or bread,
> see God devoured by sin, weakness, and death.
> Christians stand by God in God's own pain (DBWE 8:461, 3/174).

[152] "God suffered on the cross. Therefore all human suffering and weakness is a sharing in God's own suffering and weakness in the world. We are suffering! God is suffering much more. Our God is a suffering God" (DBW 13:412).

see the development of a new sense of agency and a renewed invitation to be "worldly," precisely at a point in which he had more reason than ever to withdraw from the reality of the world.

Dahill (2009:96) notes that "[a]lthough he does not explicitly use the term 'formation' here, these letters are very much concerned with how Christians develop." I would add to this that they are reflective of Bonhoeffer's own transformational experience taking shape as a result of liminality. Within this space Bonhoeffer's self-definition and identity are thrown off balance – "not thinking first of one's own needs, questions, sins, and fears" – and he allows himself "to be pulled into walking the path that Jesus walks, into the messianic event" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177). This "worldly transcendence" (de Gruchy 2010:28) truly captures the essence, meaning, and fruitfulness of liminality, and leads Bonhoeffer to the conclusion that:

> Being a Christian does not mean being religious in a certain way, making oneself into something or other (a sinner, penitent, or saint) according to some method or other. Instead it means being human, not a certain type of human being, but the human being Christ creates in us. It is not a religious act that makes someone a Christian, but rather sharing in God's suffering in the worldly life. (DBWE 8:480, 3/177).

In conclusion we can clearly see that Bonhoeffer proposed this alternative understanding of Christian faith, as a means of anticipating God's own pain in the suffering of the world and in this way allowing himself to be drawn into the world as a companion and participant in the life of Christ. Liminality opens this creative and transformative space, forcing him to let go of and leave behind old self-definitions (saint, sinner, church leader, so-called priestly figure, unjust person) and throw himself "completely into the arms of God" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178). So that he might discover how to live fully in the midst of the world and all of its "tasks, questions, successes and failures, experiences, and perplexities" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178). Reframing his prison cell in this way, he experienced the transformative power of staying awake with Christ in Gethsemane. Herein lies the true meaning and purpose of liminality as theological anticipation, in that it opens a space for a new world orienting construal of life and reality. Concluding his first letter to Bethge after the failure of coup, July 21, 1944, Bonhoeffer expresses his gratefulness for his prison experience and its theologically formative power: "I am grateful that I have been allowed this insight, and I know that it is only on the path that I have finally taken that

I was able to learn this. So I am thinking gratefully and with peace of mind about past as well as present things" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178).

Poetic Anticipation

Above I argued that anticipating a theological resolution to his experience of liminality, Bonhoeffer reframed his life in prison as a Gethsemane-like participation in the life of Christ and the sufferings of God in the world. It is clear that this theological anticipation presented the possibility of a threshold (between metaphysical and inward escapes from reality), grounding him in life and in the world, in all its hardships and perplexities. Building upon this insight I will seek to further nuance the role of anticipation within liminality by turning to the development of poetry in Bonhoeffer's prison writings.[153] Here I argue that his poetry calls specific attention to the formative tensions and borderlines of his experience, further marking transitional points at the heart of liminality that anticipate a threshold or passage through betwixt space and into transformative moments of resolution in God's presence and the presence of others. My contention here is twofold: that liminality provides the very "catalyst for the creative impulse" (Wry 2009:198)[154] to write poetry, and that the creative production of poetic language itself opens a space for the tensions of liminality to find resolution in communion with God and others.

My intention here lies not in challenging other prominent interpretations of the genesis of Bonhoeffer's poetic venture,[155] such as Brock's (2009:61-67) persuasive argument, but rather in

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[153] In the days between June and December 1944, Bonhoeffer began a surprising new venture into the realm of poetry; writing ten poems that covered a wide range of topics. De Gruchy (2010:30), I believe, rightly insists that Bonhoeffer's poetry needs to be taken "as the most mature of his reflections arising out of his prison experience." De Gruchy's comment is particularly pertinent, not only because he points toward the depth of human maturity contained in these poems (which has often been overlooked), but also because he insists that Bonhoeffer's poetic reflections arise from his prison experience. While this point may seem obvious, not all interpreters, as we will see, have noticed the latent carceral themes and references that emerge again and again in his poetry.

[154] Wry (2009) notes that Turner (1969:50) defined the "liminal phase or space as a catalyst for the creative impulse; it frequently generates 'myths, symbols, rituals, works of art… periodical reclassifications of reality… [that] incite us to action as well as to thought.'"

[155] Brock (2009:65) notes that the development of poetic writing in Bonhoeffer's prison letters is "susceptible to a range of interpretations." He writes that the persuasive sociological account suggests that Bonhoeffer's natural cultural reserve, which kept him from writing poetry, was ultimately "broken down under the increased pressure to maintain emotional contact with loved ones." The equal persuasive psychological account argues "that the movement from more pedestrian letter writing into more revealing forms of writing is an artifact of a human craving

building on previous interpretations to offer the possibility of an alternative reading of his poetry that takes seriously the context of liminality experienced in the prison space. That is to say that stark attention has been given by other interpreters, to the role of the prison context in Bonhoeffer's poetic venture or in understanding the formative nature of his poetry within his prison experience as a whole. I am not implying that other interpreters haven't read his poetry against the backdrop of his prison experience, but rather that few have viewed it as the anticipated and transformative climax of his prison experience, which gives meaning to the whole. Working very closely with his prison experience as a whole, one can argue that his poetry functions as a reflective revisiting of his spiritual journey amidst liminality; bring to the fore many of the themes and motifs that have emerged throughout his experience (now in modified form) and converging with new meaning, significance, and resolve. In these poems Bonhoeffer's evolving persona as "the poet" (Brock 2009:62), gives new voice to the conflicting tensions of separation and communion, success and failure, despair and hope. As such, these poems yield new meaning when read against the context of liminality, calling attention not only to the tensions of liminality, but more importantly to the borderlines and transitional spaces in which Bonhoeffer experiences a literal or conceptual anticipation of illumination and/or transformation (Wry 2009:197). In what follows, I will seek to ground Bonhoeffer's poetry in this context, examining the emergence of what Wry (2009:iii) calls a "liminal poetics."[156] Following a discussion of how I see poetry emerging as the creative product of liminality, I will offer a reading of Bonhoeffer's poem, "Stations of the Way to Freedom." I do not claim to offer a comprehensive interpretation of this poem,[157] but rather seek to illustrate how Bonhoeffer's poetic venture emerges as a creative product of liminality, leading him out of a stasis and through threshold moments of transformation.

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for the deeper levels of contact which keep human souls alive." A third and less persuasive account might suggest that the development of poetry in his writing was a "natural expression of an artistic genius" that had remained dormant until awakened by the extremes of his prison experience.

[156] Wry has analyzed the role of such liminal spaces in the poetry of Walt Whitman (Wry 2009) as well as the influence of Emerson and Thoreau on Whitman's poetry (Wry 2010), highlighting the way in which a "liminal poetics" in their poetry functions to lead "a community of readers out of stasis and through threshold moments of conversion" (Wry 2010:iv).

[157] For a more comprehensive interpretation of this poem see Ulrich (2009:147-174). The editors of *DBW 8* and *DBWE 8* have also noted important interpretations of the poem in the original German language version of "Stations on the Way to Freedom"; see DBWE 8:512, 4/191, fn. 1.

Firstly, let me explain how I see liminality as the catalyst for Bonhoeffer's poetic language. Brock (2009:66) notes that Bonhoeffer "may well have had an aptitude for poetry never before recognized, having been stifled under cultural and temperamental reserve." Liminality, however, as we have scene, created a space in which past structures of self-identity and social and cultural order were suspended or abrogated, throwing the self off balance and opening an instant of pure potentiality and imaginative new risk. Within this betwixt space, Bonhoeffer had put on various performative personas to navigate the difficult tensions of liminality; the innocent imprisoned pastor, the strong son, the participant-observer, the prisoner-pastor, etc. Amidst these disorienting sociocultural transition he had learned a new kind of intimacy with God, not limited by the usual social and cultural self-conceptions; an intimacy, which Brock (2009:66) indicates, was also "learned from Luther and the Psalms" and from months spent in meditation, prayer, and reflection in the isolation of his prison cell. Now putting on the persona of the poet for the first time, Bonhoeffer risked a new kind of intimacy with God, in which God and the self encounter each other in images and forms not previously expected; as co-companions in the sufferings of the world ("Christians and Heathens").

In this context Bonhoeffer wrote poetry not only for "those he loved, who shaped him, and who he was shaped by" (his family, friends, fiancée, his church, and his God) (Brock 20009:66), but also as a means of giving further shape to the formfulness of his prison experience, so that he might position the symbolic meaning of his experience within the human context of relationality. As the catalyst for this poetic venture liminality provoked the salient themes of his poetry, the borderlines and transitions of which are rife throughout the poems. The cultural form of poetry, however, provided the template for anticipating a transformative resolve; healing the rift, bridging the gap, and restoring wholeness to the self, the world, and his relationships (Northcott 2009:26). Emerging from the heart of liminality, poetry offered healing to the conflicting and unresolved tensions of betwixt space. This healing balm represented the ability "to find solace, comfort, connection, meaning, and purpose midst of suffering, disarray and pain" (Puchalski et all 2009:890)

In this regard we might say that the symbolic nature of poetic language was particularly suited to both hold the conflicting tensions of liminal space and deepen the symbolic meaning of imprisonment that Bonhoeffer had previous only been able to hint at. Wannenwetsch (2009:4)

highlights this point, when he writes that "being of a somewhat apophatic nature," poetic language is "suited to express the thought that can hardly be thought, the insight that is only just within reach." Having searched and searched for the words to give meaning to the formfulness of his prison experience, Bonhoeffer found in poetry a form "capable of capturing the coincidence of opposites, of expressing harmonious tensions as well as demarcating rapture and fracture" (Wannenwetsch 2009:4). Poetic language, like nothing else allowed him to explore the unresolved tensions in his life without judgement or shame. It enabled new risks of imagination in order that he might restore the fragments of his own self, bridge the separation between family and friends, and risk the kind of intimacy with God and others that he had learned in the Psalter and through meditation and prayer in his prison cell (Brock 2009:66).

As the creative product of liminality, Bonhoeffer's poems revisit many of the themes prevalent throughout his prison letters and papers (not just his later letters): separation from the past, from loved ones, and from the self ("The Past," "The Friend," "Who am I?"); ethical liminality and vicarious responsible action ("Night Voice," "Jonah," "The Death of Moses"); pastoral care for other prisoners ("Night Voices"); an inner/outer self-concept discrepancy ("Who am I?"); transitioning from object of carceral regulation to subject of boundary creation ("Night Voices");[158] the various phases of liminality ("Stations on the Way to Freedom"); reframing suffering as companioning God in God's own suffering in the world ("Christians and Heathens"); and facing death ("Night Voices," "Jonah," "The Death of Moses," "Stations on the Way to Freedom"). Searching for resolution in the face of death, these poems risk imaginative resolution to the tensions of liminality. As a fresh articulation of many of the themes and motifs of his prison experience, his poems re-frame separation, disorientation, and suffering as a spiritual displacement, in which false notions of existence and comfort are deconstructed, creating space for considerable personal growth and formation; reshaping his self-concept and willingness to inhabit liminality as a sacred space of "wonderous transformation" (DBWE 8:513, 4/191), even in the face of death.

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[158] The stanza which most prominently illustrates this liminal move from accused to accuser reads as follows:
"Harassed and hunted by humans,
rendered defenseless and accused;
bearers of unbearable burdens,
it is we who now accuse" (DBWE 8:466, 3/175).

Bonhoeffer's poem "Who Am I?" (DBWE 8:459-460), by way of introduction, beautifully illustrates this capacity of poetry to capture the unresolved tension of liminality and anticipate resolve without collapsing or disregarding the context from which this resolve arose. The question of "who," which runs throughout the poem and also forms the centre of Bonhoeffer's Christology,[159] emerges here, not in Christological form per se, but from the liminal borderlines of a conflict between the outer or public face of the self and the inner struggle for self-identity that was provoked by his transitioning pastoral role in the prison space: "Who am I? This one or the other?" (DBWE 8:460, 3/173). This "question of transcendence" (DBWE 12:302, 2/12) points toward an ongoing search for a worldly transcendence that offers a threshold in the midst of liminality. Unable to resolve this tension through letters or radical openness with Bethge, Bonhoeffer had pushed it aside.[160] Determined to find resolution he returned to explore its meaning through poetry. This time, with the tensions of the threshold self raised in poetic anticipation, and previous attitudes and actions deconstructed, Bonhoeffer "can more truly come to find God as the true and ultimate sources of security and life" (Frank & Meteyard 2007:219): "Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, thou knowest me; O God, I am thine!" (DBWE 8:460, 3/173). At the heart of liminality, Bonhoeffer experiences this liminal moment in time, free and unbound by social norms that define and psychologise the conflicted self, and he is drawn across the threshold into communion with the "Thou," no longer disguised as an "it." Here poetic anticipation risks imagination that it might bridge the gaps and offer healing to the threshold self. Seeking to further illustrate the role of poetic anticipation let me now turn to offer a more in-depth reading of Bonhoeffer's poem "Stations on the Way to Freedom" (DBWE 8:512-514, 4/191), as it further highlights the potentiality of liminal poetics in moving the liminar out of a stasis and into a transformational *communitas* with God and others.

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[159] The question of "who" forms a prominent theme in Bonhoeffer's Christological reflections; from his summer semester lectures of 1933, through his essay on "telling the truth" and his letters to Bethge (DBWE 8:362, 3/137), and on into his "Outline for a Book" (DWBE 8:499-504). Pangritz (1999:134) claims that this question in fact "forms the *cantus firmus* of Bonhoeffer's theological development from beginning to end" and the centre of his Christological thought.

[160] It is clear, however, that Bonhoeffer had begun to come to a more appreciative perception of the inner/outer conflict of the self, sometime just before or after he wrote this poem: "Since human beings live as much from their "outer" to their "inner" selves as from their "inner" to their "outer" selves, the assumption that one can only understand the essence of a human being by knowing his most intimate psychological depths and background is completely erroneous" (DBWE 8:457, 3/172).

Stations on the Way to Freedom

De Gruchy (2010:17) notes that this poem "was written immediately after Bonhoeffer heard the news of the failed coup attempt and realized that his fate was sealed." As such, it comes from the fourth and final period of Bonhoeffer's imprisonment and represents what I believe to be a reflective revisiting of the overall meaning and purpose of his prison experience. I included it here, as it represents the most powerful expression of the capacity of poetic anticipation and weaves together many of the themes that have emerged throughout this study.

First let me draw a few distinctions between my approach to the poem and the approaches taken by Ulrich (2009:150-174) and Robertson (1999:75-80), as I believe this speaks to the formative nature of the poem within liminality. Ulrich (2009:150) clearly states that "Bonhoeffer's writings cannot be separated from his life, especially his letters from prison to which some of the poems belong." The approach he offers for reading the poem, however, in many ways betrays this connection, as it often points away from rather than pointing toward the poems groundedness in Bonhoeffer experience of imprisonment. Attempting to avoid the biographical manner of Robertson's reading, which he claims views the poem as "a blueprint for the Christian life," Ulrich (2009:152) instead reads the poem "as a schedule for God's presence." The poem, he claims, "indicates *the places of God's acting*, of God's presence" in the life of the disciple:

> He is present where *discipline* is lived
> He is present where we really *do* what is right,
> He is present where we *suffer* because of our dedication to Him,
> and he is present where all earthly bounds and blindness dissolve to reveal his will. (Ulrich 2009:152)

As such, Ulrich (2009:152) sees the primary subject matter of the poem, as Bonhoeffer's description of a life lived in submission and dedication to "God's will and action in any walk of life." The poem points, as he indicates, toward "specific *places* for submission: discipline, action and suffering" (Ulrich 2009:153). Here I am in agreement with Ulrich's emphasis on specific places of God's presence, but believe that his overall approach betrays this emphasis when it turns toward reading Bonhoeffer's particular "stations" as "public places" in light of Bonhoeffer's "orders" or "mandates" and the poem as a whole as intending "a message – to the Church" (Ulrich 2009:153-154). This I believe betrays the particularity and concreteness of "specific *places*" fore-grounded by the poem, in an effort to universalise these places in the life

of discipleship. In addition, Bonhoeffer's preliminary notes, which sketch the theme of the poem, seem to indicate a personal rather than a public correlation between the various stages of his imprisonment and the process of learning or more appropriately being taught to submit to the presence of God in and through these distinctive places or stations:

> Discipline 1: Learn to control yourself
> Action 2: Learn to act. Reach for the real, not / hover over the possible
> Suffering 3. Learn to suffer – put in another's hands.
> Death 4. Learn how to die. Highest of feasts on the way to freedom (*NL*. A 67,6; DBWE 8:512, 4/191 ft. 1)

Read against the backdrop of Bonhoeffer's prison letters, the rough themes of the poem sound like a manual with instructions for surviving a long imprisonment, in body and with one's spirit and soul intact. As such they correspond closely with the various phases of his imprisonment and his guarded response to liminality (as outlined in this study). Taking up Ulrich's initial insistence on the concrete and specific particularity of *places* of God's presence, I will approach the poem as Bonhoeffer's own reflective revisiting of his prison experience and the specific places or spaces in which he learned or was taught to submit to the presence and will of God: discipline, action, suffering, and death. Here I intend to draw a connection between Bonhoeffer's particular response to the various phases of liminality and his conceptualisation of stations on the way to freedom. I will also examine how the poem anticipates freedom in death as a resolution to liminality, without collapsing the tension of betwixt space.

Though my approach offers a biographical reading of the poem, it also differs from Robertson's (1999:75-80) in scope and intention. Roberton's biographical reading of the poem views the stations of Bonhoeffer's poem as distinctive periods throughout his life, from his early practice of discipline to his eventual death. This biographical reading, I believe, overshoots the limits of the poem and misses the anticipatory power of the poems resolve. Ulrich's (2009:151) valid criticism of this reading rests in its suggestion that Bonhoeffer's poem might be made into a "catechetical teaching" to be taken as a pattern for the Christian life, on the way to achieving some goal – perhaps "the goal to become a saint." The tendency, however, of both Ulrich and Robertson, is to universalise the particularity of Bonhoeffer's spirituality for the universal church or for the life of discipleship. It is my belief that it is only by focusing on the value of

Bonhoeffer's particular experience amidst imprisonment – as it emerges in this poem – that the non-universality of the poem becomes relevant for the life of the Christian disciple.

Let me now turn to the poem itself. Reading the first stanza against the backdrop of Bonhoeffer's earlier letters we can immediately hear echoes of his struggle to navigate the profound sense of separation he had experienced during the interrogation period. With the privilege of some distance from that early struggle the poet has a clearer vision of what once was a tormenting and isolating time. His question – "[w]hat is freedom?... formally love… [r]egarding freedom in prison…" (DBWE 8:72, 1/11) – posed in his fragmentary notes on time, clearly grounds his search for freedom concretely in the prison experience and in the disorientation of separation. Likewise the instruction, learn to control yourselves, from his early sketch of the poem, points toward his response to the context of competing senses and desires, which sought to lead him astray. Back then, as he wrote to his parents in April 1944, all of his "impressions were fresh and vivid; deprivations and pleasures were more intense" (DBWE 8:359, 3/135). He had feared that his senses and desires might betray him, compromising either his ability to withstand his interrogations or to maintain a sense of order in his spirit and body. The temporal, ethical, and spatial separation brought on by imprisonment and the liminal transition into the prison space had forced him to instil a strict order and discipline in his daily routine.

Now, almost a year and half later he is able to see that a disciplined life of obedience had formed and shaped him ("*Keusch*" the German word for "chastity"), grounding him in a secret freedom, in spite of his continued incarceration and inability to act or be with his loved ones. A key element of learning to control oneself in this way lies in the transformation of the prison space into a monastic like displacement and enclosure. Within *this* very place, in the tension of the prison cell/monastic enclosure, Bonhoeffer had experienced the presence of God; and it is amidst this continued liminality that he anticipates a resolution to his earlier question about freedom in prison: "[o]nly through discipline does one learn the secret of freedom" (DBWE 8:512, 4/191).

The second stanza, which focuses on action that reaches for the real rather than hovering over the possible, echoes the tensions between contemplation and action experienced during the awaiting trial period. Its language points to one letter in particular, written to his parents on 13 September

1943. Contemplating the “stormy world events” that were racing by outside the prison,[161] as well as the “incessant waiting” that hovered in the background of the awaiting trial period, Bonhoeffer wished that he could “accomplish something useful” (DBWE 8:155, 2/57). He knew that he must learn how to act, but was resigned to the fact that: “at the moment that place can only be the prison cell, and what one can do here plays itself out in the realm of the invisible, and there of all places the expression ‘doing’ is quite inappropriate” (DBWE 8:155, 2/57). Restricted from participating in the storm of events racing by on the outside world, Bonhoeffer wrote: I sometimes think of Schubert's "Münich" and his crusade. (DBWE 8:155, 2/57).

This brief reference to Schubert’s Münich (monk), casts a vivid image of Bonhoeffer standing alone in the solitude of his cell, as the outside world with its colours, songs, and crusades, moves past at rapid speed. Dahill (2006:11) helpfully points out that Schubert’s monk is “imprisoned in a new cell not because of his monasticism (per se) but because of the worldliness and political investment of his profoundly monastic spirituality.” Likewise, in this place of submission, Bonhoeffer continues to experience a disjunction between the freely chosen monastic life and the chained and confined enclosure of his cell. He does not willingly embrace imprisonment as a submissive retreat from life into asceticism, but rather continues to long for home, for open skies and fields of flowers, for nights of music with family and friends, and for an ongoing part to play in solidarity with the suffering of his family, his Church, his country and its victims. And yet, the monastic life, which he cultivated in his prison cell, helped to ground him in concrete reality. Transforming the space of his cell into a monastic enclosure, he had discovered the true meaning of boldly reaching for the real. He learned to enter the “storm of events” (DBWE 8:513, 4/191) taking place within liminality, transitioning between various roles of responsibility and action as a spiritual anchor for other prisoners. Casting judgement on the carceral system, he had envisioned an alternative system, calling the powers that be to account for their deprivation of life and human freedom. Through poetic reflection on the tensions between contemplation and action Bonhoeffer here anticipates the true meaning of freedom, which is not sought but rather will come and “embrace your spirit, rejoicing” (DBWE 8:513, 4/191). Here in the betwixt space

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[161] In his 13 September 1943, letter to his parents, he wrote of “[t]he stormy world events in recent days,” possibly referencing “the Allied landing on Sicily on July 10; the overthrow of Mussolini on July 25; the capitulation of Italy on September 3; and the Allied landing in southern Italy on September 9 (‘Operation Overlord’) (DBWE 8:155, 2/57 ft. 5).

of the prison cell Bonhoeffer encounters the embrace of real freedom in the presence of God; a freedom that is not limited or restricted by the walls of the prison nor by separation from loved ones.

Although the majority of Bonhoeffer's personal reflections on suffering (the theme of the third stanza) were explored during the awaiting trial period, where he was still uncomfortable talking about his own suffering, we can see a new development taking place as he begins to see his own suffering as a continuation of action and a consummation of freedom (DBWE 8:493, 4/183). The third stanza echoes in resounding harmony with Bonhoeffer's theological anticipation of finding resolve in the suffering of God. In this way, his poem anticipates a "[w]ondrous transformation" as he learns to suffer; "[p]owerless" and "alone," he relinquishes his own action and breathes a "sigh of relief" as he "calmly and fearlessly" lies his own suffering "into a mightier hand, contented" (DBWE 8:513, 4/191). On the liminal borderlines between fettered action and powerless suffering, the poet anticipates laying what is righteous in the hands of God and experiencing the blissful and unmediated touch of freedom. Here he anticipates that what remains unfinished and unresolved, "might be perfected… in glory" (DBWE 8:513, 4/191). In this stanza, as in the third period of Bonhoeffer's imprisonment, we can begin to see how poetry offers a resolution to liminality in communion with God. God does not rescue the poet from the task of learning to suffer, but rather promises to perfect it. The abstract nature of this perfection is given a face in the following stanza.

The fourth stanza, of Bonhoeffer's verse clearly locates the poem in the prison context, not only because it awakens the motif of death that seems to bookend his entire prison experience, but more importantly in its carceral imagery used to personify death; "chains," "earthen enclosures," and "walls" that deceive and contain the body. Freedom, which has remained illusory throughout his imprisonment, coming only in glimpses and in shifting streams of light – "sought through discipline, action, and suffering" – is now anticipated in life's final station, death. Here the poet crosses the threshold of transformation, in which death that is initially encountered as the prison walls, chains, and enclosures, is welcomed as the "highest of feast" and the one whose face is discerned in the very face of God. "In this sense" Bonhoeffer resolves, "death is the epitome of human freedom" (DBWE 8:493, 4/183). One could say that framed in this light, Bonhoeffer saw his own submission to death as his final act of resistance.

In death Bonhoeffer anticipates a poetic passage through transformative moments of resolution in God's presence; having sought freedom through discipline, action, and suffering, he now anticipates resolution in God. The poem simultaneously represents both the creative space that liminality produces and the world orienting capacity of poetic language in re-framing and anticipating a whole life amidst a fragmented liminality. This death, however, is no longer a solitary death, but shared with Jesus Christ and with God in the sufferings of the world. Through poetic anticipation of his own death Bonhoeffer experiences full *communitas* with Jesus Christ and God. Boudewinjse (1990:10) explains,that "liminality engenders communitas" as it suspends the patterned arrangements of roles and status "regularly operative in given society." Communitas represents "a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals" and thus "[t]he bonds of communitas are *anti-structural* in that they are undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, nonrational (although not *irrational*) (Boudewinjse 1990:10). In death Bonhoeffer anticipates the dissolve of all existing social barriers, walls, and earthen enclosures and further anticipates encountering God face to face on equal terms. In radical openness to God Bonhoeffer anticipates a mystical resolve of fragmented liminality. Nowhere is the power of this resolve within liminality more poignantly expressed than in his letter to Bethge, which directly follows the poem:

> "Everything we may with some good reason expect or beg of God is to be found in Jesus Christ. What we imagine a God could and should do – the God of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with all that. We must immerse ourselves again and again, for a long time and quite calmly, in Jesus's [*sic*] life, his sayings, actions, suffering, and dying in order to recognize what God promises and fulfills. What is certain is that we may always live aware that God is near and present with us and that this life is an utterly new life for us; that there is nothing that is impossible for us anymore because there is nothing that is impossible for God; that no earthly power can touch us without God's will, and that danger and urgent need can only drive us closer to God…. what is certain is that in suffering lies hidden the source of our joy, in dying the source of our life; what is certain is that in all this we stand within a community that carries us. To all this, God has said Yes and Amen in Jesus. This Yes and Amen is the solid ground upon which we stand." (DBWE 8:514-515, 4/192).

In conclusion, Bonhoeffer's poetic anticipation represents threshold moments of transformation that are grounded in the life, sayings, actions, suffering, and dying of Jesus Christ. Through continual immersion in the liminality of discipline, action, suffering, and death, Bonhoeffer learns to participate in the life of Christ and live with a full awareness of God's presence. This illumination or transformation would not be possible without the catalyst of liminality breaking down barriers of separation and driving him ever closer to the reality of God in the world. In this

way the prison experience has a meaning and a purpose. Its meaning is given shape through poetic anticipation that the tensions of life will resolve in communion with those who stand with us and carry us conceptually, if not literally, through displacement. To this God has said Yes and Amen in the life of Jesus Christ and it is this Christological reality, which is the ground of all reality, that offers a "solid ground upon which we stand" (DBWE 8:515, 4/192). Having passed over the threshold of liminality, Bonhoeffer finds solid ground in conformity to and participation in the life of Jesus Christ (Incarnate, Crucified, Resurrected).

Polyphonic Anticipation

Having examined the role of theological and poetic anticipation, I will now seek to add one final piece to our understanding of anticipation within liminality: polyphonic anticipation. Amidst the fragmentation of his life, Bonhoeffer continued to love and celebrate the created world in all of its multidimensionality; the light and the shadow, the joys and the sorrows, the longings and the passions, the success and the failures. This is likely the most startling aspect of Bonhoeffer's prison experience. That after nearly a year and a half in an ugly prison cell and in the face of almost certain impending death, he continued to be grounded in the fullness of life, in earthly love for others, and in wholehearted love for God. Through poetic anticipation Bonhoeffer had sensed that the fragments of his life would find their resolve in God at the end of life. Yet he longed to find a connection between the ultimate and penultimate, so that living in the here and now he might experience resolve this side of death. Conceptualising this longing and its meaning, Bonhoeffer searched for a metaphor or image that might hold the multidimensional tensions between the fullness of life and the fragmentation of liminality. As a lover of music and an accomplished musician, it is not surprising then that Bonhoeffer turned to musical metaphors as a way of weaving together the fragmentary tensions of his experience of liminality. Here Bonhoeffer's use of the *Art of Fugue*[162] and the development of the "polyphony of life," together anticipate how "the fragments of life can enrich our lives today [in the penultimate] even if their ultimate significance and recapitulation remains hidden" (de Gruchy 2001:160). It is my

[162] Although Bonhoeffer's thought on the *Art of Fugue* emerge during the awaiting trial period, I have included them here for thematic purposes.

contention that through the use of musical metaphors, Bonhoeffer was able to articulate and give shape to the formfulness of his prison experience, anticipating that even in the midst of his fragmentary existence, facing the impending threat of death, "the polyphony will resolve" (Smith 2006:205).

Again I do not claim here to offer a comprehensive interpretation of Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphors.[163] My intention is rather to show how these musical metaphors anticipate a resolution to liminality, this side of death. In what follows I will examine Bonhoeffer's use of the *Art of Fugue* and the "polyphony of life" as two liminal metaphors that bridge the gap created by liminality and restore wholeness to life.

De Gruchy (2001:158) writes that the *Art of Fugue* provided Bonhoeffer "with a way of understanding the fragmentary nature of life and the ambiguities of the ethics of free responsibility." His thoughts in this regard were prompted by his own awareness of fragmentation within his country, culture, and within his own professional and personal life. Writing to Bethge on 23 February 1944, he contemplated: "What matters, it seems to me, is whether one still sees, in this fragment of life that we have, what the whole was intended and designed to be, and of what material it is made" (DBWE 8:306, 2/115). Bonhoeffer's intention lies in anticipating how the penultimate fragments of his life might contribute to the whole of the ultimate. Although he considered some fragments fit for the trash, others would remain meaningful "because only God could perfect them, so they remain fragments – I am thinking, for example, of the *Art of Fugue*" (DBWE 8:306, 2/115). The *Art of Fugue* functions here as a symbolic analogy helping Bonhoeffer to make sense of the contrasting and fragmentary themes of his prison experience and life, and how they might be woven together into a greater harmonic resonance even if they fail to come to conclusion or remain uncompleted like Bach's *Art of Fugue* (Pangritz 2002:36). He continues:

> If our life is only the most remote reflection of such a fragment, in which, even for a short time, the various themes gradually accumulate and harmonize with one another and in which the great

[163] Regarding a comprehensive interpretation of Bonhoeffer's use of musical metaphors in relation to his theological development in prison, see Smith (2006:195-206); Pangritz (2002:28-42); de Gruchy (2001:158-168); Ford (1999); Begbie (2000); and Kemp (1976).

> counterpoint is sustained from beginning to end… then it is not for us, either, to complain about this fragmentary life of ours, but rather to be glad of it (DBWE 8:306, 2/115).

Here the margins and borderlines of his fragmented experience become the very site of productive inquiry, gradually culminating in harmony with the great counterpoint. At this stage, however, Bonhoeffer had not yet conceptualised what held these fragmentary themes together. Nearly four months later, at a time when he felt most alone, separated from his family and friends during the celebration of the Baptism of Dietrich Bethge, Bonhoeffer risked new imaginative creativity, coining the phrase "polyphony of life" (de Gruchy 2001:160). His thoughts in this regard were originally prompted by concerns for Bethge and Renate who would be separated again when Bethge returned to the Italian front. He wrote to Bethge attempting to comfort him: "[w]hen you are in love, you want to live, above all things, and you hate everything that represents a threat to your life" (DBWE 8:393, 3/147). Although his starting point here is crafted for Bethge, it is almost certainly intensified by his own separation from Maria. The passage that follows is grounded in earthly love and the desire to live so that one might experience the fulfilment of this love. He continues by introducing a further musical metaphor:

> there is a danger, in any passionate erotic love, that through it you may lose what I'd like to call the polyphony of life. What I mean is that God, the Eternal, wants to be loved with our whole heart, not to the detriment of earthly love or to diminish it, but as a sort of cantus firmus to which the other voices of life resound in counterpoint … Where the cantus firmus is clear and distinct, a counterpoint can develop as mightily as it wants (DBWE 8:394, 3/147).

In this risk of metaphorical imagination Bonhoeffer discovers a threshold for passions and desires that until now had remained contained and disciplined for fear of transgressing the boundary of the self. In this context, the polyphony of life reframes the "sensual, and glowing love" in the Song of Solomon, as "contradicting all those who think being Christian is about tempering one's passions" (DBWE 8:394, 3/147). Here life's polyphony breaks open the stasis of the disciplined life reflected in Bonhoeffer's first stanza of "Stations on the Way to Freedom" and grounds the body and its passions in the human nature of Christ, as a counterpoint to Christ's divine nature. Or as de Gruchy (2001:161) writes "[the] Christian life is a blending of the bodily and the spiritual without their confusion, *eros* and *agape*." It is not coincidental that this kind of erotic love is evoked by the polyphony of life (de Gruchy 2001:161); as no other art form than music can evoke such bodily and ecstatic resonance, involving all the senses of the person. Bonhoeffer claims that if the cantus firmus resounds within early love, "only then will it sound

complete and full, and the counterpoint will always know that it is being carried and can't get out of tune or cut adrift, while remaining itself and complete in itself" (DBWE 8:394, 3/147).

Read against the context of Bonhoeffer's continued experience of liminal space, the polyphony of life not only directs life's emotions, desires, and passions toward its firm foundation in the cantus firmus (Jesus Christ), but it also offers a threshold for awakening them, validating them, and allowing them their own contrapuntal independence and integrity within the full spectrum of the human context of relationality. As such, Bonhoeffer concludes that "[o]nly this polyphony gives your life wholeness, and you know that no disaster can befall you as long as the cantus firmus continues" (DBWE 8:393-394, 3/147). This is, I believe, a transformative moment in which the penultimate counterpoint is given wholeness and meaning in anticipation of the ultimate cantus firmus. Polyphonic anticipation breaks open liminality in wholehearted participation in the life of this world and the life of Christ, with all of its contrasting tensions. In addition, as this metaphor continues to develop, emerging in Bonhoeffer's prayer and in his later letters, it gradually comes to describe not only love, but also happiness and danger, sorrow and pain alongside joy (DBWE 8:397, 3/148), daily threats, and finally the full multidimensionality of the Christian faith (DBWE 8:404, 3/152).

In conclusion, the musical metaphors through which polyphonic anticipation took shape, allowed Bonhoeffer to articulate the formfulness of life amidst liminality and confusion. Anticipating this liminal harmonic resonance, he came to understand how "Christianity puts us into many different dimensions of life at the same; in a way we accommodate God and the whole world within us. We weep with those who weep at the same time as we rejoice with those who rejoice" (DBWE 8:405, 3/152). This kind of metaphorical anticipation knows how to lament and how grieving for changing, but it also knows how to celebrate change that has already been wrought in human love and in the fullness of life. The metaphorical language of polyphonic anticipation moves Bonhoeffer to see the ordinary fragments of life in an extraordinary way, giving further voice to "what he meant by belonging 'wholly to the world' while still knowing by faith the truth of one's rootedness in Christ" (Smith 2006:205). In this way the conflicting tensions and dissonance of liminality find their anticipated resolution or coherence in the polyphony of life. And thus in the midst of betwixt life, confined to his prison cell, bereft of family, friends, and his fiancée, and

distinctly aware of the fragmentary nature of life, Bonhoeffer anticipates the unseen restoration and resolve of life's fragmented themes.

Conclusion: Anticipating and Embracing Resolve

From his arrest and imprisonment through to the failure of the coup, Bonhoeffer experiences, articulates, and attempts to live within the tensions of liminality in Tegel prison. By the third period of his imprisonment, this struggle to live in-between became the catalyst for an expansive Christian vision of life in all it multidimensionality; dark and light, despair and hope, success and failure, dying and living, suffering and resurrection. Here the overarching contours of separation and transition that accompanied him through the first year of imprisonment and opened a huge new dimension in his life, began to take definitive shape as theological, poetic and polyphonic anticipation of a surprising and liberating encounter with the God of the cross. Tracing the contours of this formative journey, I have argued that the boundaries of liminality remain just porous enough for the possibility of transformation and new insights, which risk alternative new ways of understanding and participating in the life of this world, in the life of Jesus Christ (Incarnate, Crucified, and Resurrected) and in the sufferings of God in the midst of the ugliness of a prison cell.

Bonhoeffer's prison experience, although devastatingly tragic in its trajectory toward death, prepared a fertile ground for theological, poetic, and polyphonic anticipation to germinate, take root, and to grow into a captivating new vision of God and the Christian life. In summary, let me draw together these three movements of formational fruitfulness, through which Bonhoeffer articulates different nuances of liminality and finds resolve amidst the fragmentary tensions of life.

Through theological anticipation, Bonhoeffer reframed his prison experience as a Gethsemane-like displacement, in which the Christian is conformed to the sufferings of Christ and experiences redemption in this world; not by escaping it or being preserved from pain, but by being drawn ever more deeply into the hardships of this world and the sufferings of God in the concrete lives of those who inhabit the *view from below*. Through poetic anticipation, Bonhoeffer

found a space in which he could risk imaginative resolve of the threshold self, in the worldly embrace of God. Emerging from within liminality, poetry offered a way of structuring, reframing, and giving meaning to the tensions of his prison experience, so that through poetic liminality he might transcend unresolved tensions, anticipating a threshold or passage through betwixt space and into transformative moments of resolution in God's presence and the presence of others. Though polyphonic anticipation, he discovered a way of framing the formfulness of life amidst fragmented liminality and began to anticipate how these ordinary fragments find their coherence in extraordinary contrapuntal participation in the polyphony of life, whose cantus firmus is Jesus Christ.

Within the betwixt space of his prison cell, Bonhoeffer experienced both the fullness and emptiness of presence and absence and anticipated theological, poetic, and polyphonic resolution in the worldly embrace of the "Thou;" discovered and experienced in the ugliness of the "it." In this way, he learned to live wholeheartedly in the midst of life's trials and perplexities, grounded in the sure and true knowledge that his life (penultimate) was but a fragment of some larger whole (ultimate). Liminality offered a space in which he could let go of former structures of identity and order, and throw himself into the arms of God, discovering in this embrace what it means to be the human being that Christ creates in us.

Conclusion

I have endeavoured throughout this study to take Bonhoeffer's prison experience seriously as a place of formation. Through a detailed and close reading of his prison writings a unique picture of the prisoner-theologian has emerged, which traces the contours of his engagement with the prison space and its impact on his life and thought. Having journeyed with Bonhoeffer through liminal displacement, I now intended to take a step back and observe the wider landscape of this formative experience. From the loneliness and separation of the interrogation period, Bonhoeffer moved quite a distance during his time in prison; from his early attempts to counter temporal, ethical, and spatial separation through discipline and spiritual practices; through transitional turning points in his spiritual life and active pastoral ministry, which helped him to find a centre of gravity between resistance and submission, and remain his complete self; to letting go of what could not be resolved and throwing himself into the arms of God, anticipating – through theological, poetic, and polyphonic resolution – the embrace of the suffering God in the midst of the world's pain. This movement through liminal displacement drew Bonhoeffer ever more deeply into the reality of his own life, as well as an ever increasing relationality with others, with God, and with the suffering of those who inhabit the world *below*.

Amidst these contrasting tensions – suspended between home and prison, hope and despair, absence and communion, life and death – Bonhoeffer experienced a privileged "period of reflection," in which former structures of meaning and identity were suspended, forcing him to think about the meaning of the Christian life and the ultimate powers that "generate and sustain" it (Turner 1967:105). The prison space provided a unique location for this task, as it broke down default modes of perception and brought into sharper focus the meaning and value of being human before God that so often goes unnoticed, unappreciated, or is simply inaccessible in normal life. Within this space Bonhoeffer articulates a transformational encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, who is nothing like what the "religious person expects from God" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177), nothing like "[w]hat we imagine a God could and should do" (DBWE 8:524, 4/192). Liminality provoked a certain deconstruction and criticism of false notions of God, which no longer corresponded with the God of the Bible or with the formative nature of his liberating encounter with the Incarnate, Crucified, and Resurrected Christ, "whose presence in

his life" and in the confines of his prison cell, "provided release from the confines of lonely self-imprisonment." (Dahill 2009:30).

Reflecting on the formative nature of liminality within the prison space, we can now see that the trajectories of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, as fundamental dimension of conformation to Christ, each weave their way throughout Bonhoeffer's prison experience, empowering the reality of his life in a prison cell; helping him to come to terms with his existential struggles and to rest in the affirmation of a true and authentic self (Incarnate). The prison cell provided a view of the incarnation that was striped of all sentimentality, leaving the radical poverty and liberating reality of the Incarnation bare. Within this Gethsemane-like displacement, the very same door that represented the limit of his liminal existence became the transcendent threshold of the "One who alone can open our prison doors" (Dahill 2006:12). In this new location and *view*, immersion in the life, sayings, actions, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ (DBWE 8:515, 4/192), broke open a liberating encounter with life, driving him ever closer to God in the midst of the world. Through discipline, sociality, suffering, death, freedom, and wholehearted love for this world, Bonhoeffer experienced the extraordinary transformation of his prison cell, as the very place where Christ is present and where God can be found. Far from preserving him from pain, this process of formation thrust Bonhoeffer, willingly and unwillingly into "walking the path that Jesus walks" (DBWE 8:480, 3/177), staying awake with Christ in Gethsemane, and participating in the sufferings of God in the sufferings of the world (Crucified). In the final days of his imprisonment, as the threat of death loomed large, his uniquely formative prison experience opened him up to the fullness of freedom and life, as he was conformed in radical trust and anticipation of new encounters with God in the "multidimensional, polyphonic" of life (Resurrected) (DBWE 8:405, 3/152). Here, in cell 92, he had learned and was still learning to completely renounce "making something of oneself" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178) and to throw himself fully into "the midst of life's task, questions, successes and failure, experiences, and perplexities" so that he might "become a human being, a Christian" (DBWE 8:486, 4/178). Through theological, poetic, and polyphonic anticipation, Bonhoeffer risked imaginative resolve by reframing liminality as a Gethsemane-like displacement, stations on the way to freedom, and participation in the polyphonic nature of life.

Bonhoeffer's prison writings offer us a glimpse into a life of faith that sustains the long and lonely path of liminal displacement. We can see how his changing social location as a prisoner, correlates with liberating turning points at the heart of his liminal experience, discovering in and through an encounter with the otherness of his prison cell, a deeper and more constant ordering of creation, self, genuine sociality, and a final turning from the phraseological to the real. This study has sought to offer a fresh perspective on Bonhoeffer's prison experience and the ways in which his experience acts as the catalyst for the most interesting and lasting of his theological insights. I believe it has yielded a possible new avenue for reading Bonhoeffer's *LPP*; contributing both to a portrait of the "historical" Bonhoeffer as well as to the task of interpreting his life alongside his witness and theology. Bonhoeffer the prisoner resists being the suffering martyr or the glorified saint, but rather points toward a complete and authentic identity as the companion of God and participant in the life of Christ. In this way, he learned to become a human being, even in the mist of the dehumanising ugliness of his prison cell.

Appendix A: A Privileged Prisoner

From the outset, it is clear that Bonhoeffer was an unusual prisoner. Although his prison writings and his eventual end share a striking resemblance to the life and writings of other political prisoners,[164] the overall character of his life in prison was very different from other political prisoners of the Third Reich. Understanding the unusual nature of his privileged position is critical for understanding his experience; setting his prison writings firmly within a social and historical context. Failure to do so would lead either to an exaggeration of his suffering or an undervaluation of the specific context in which his writing took place – the prison cell.

The following spheres of privilege offer important qualifications for understanding Bonhoeffer's social location. Firstly, *Bonhoeffer was a military political prisoner*. When initially arrested on the charge of "subversion of the armed forces," the Gestapo were unaware of his involvement in the conspiracy against Hitler, however, they remained confident that he was engaged in subversive activities (de Gruchy 2007:18). It was his connection to the *Abwehr* office under the command of Admiral Canaris that interested the Gestapo and the Reich Central Security Office. As a member of the *Abwehr*, he came under the jurisdiction of the military War Court and was held as a military/political prisoner at Tegel Prison.

Bethge (2000:799-800) suggests, that Bonhoeffer's role in the *Abwehr* was of secondary importance. The primary object of the prosecutors' investigation "sought to strike at Canaris's entire *Abwehr* office" by breaking Hans von Dohnanyi,[165] the chief defendant in the trial. Interest in Bonhoeffer was secondary, so his interrogations and overall treatment in prison were less severe than that of other political prisoners. Schlingensiepen (2010:342) remarks that, "When one considers how political prisoners were treated in Adolf Hitler's Germany from 1933 onward, and what Hans von Dohnanyi was made to suffer, it is clear that Bonhoeffer's lot in Tegel was unusual."

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[164] See Millies (2011:113-134) for a comparison of the striking similarities between Bonhoeffer and Alfred Delp's prison writings and their responses to the experience of imprisonment in Tegel.
[165] Hans von Dohnanyi, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law and fellow conspirator.

Although specific gaps in our knowledge of Bonhoeffer's treatment persist,[166] it is widely acknowledged that it was "unusual." Other political prisoners arrested for subversive acts reported torturous treatment when interrogated by the Gestapo: "Prisoners were met with the usual 'passive' torture: bright lights shining in their eyes at all hours, a meagre diet of bread and water, and sleep deprivation … [t]hen there was verbal torture … the prisoner often stood for hours, having had little sleep or nourishment" (Coady 2003:75). In Bonhoeffer's case, we have no indication that he was ever tortured. Bonhoeffer was either spared this kind of treatment or concealed it from the recipients of his letters.

Although Bonhoeffer had been arrested and taken to Tegel under top-secret conditions, his situation changed radically after family connections were made known (DBWE 8:344, 2/131).[167] What little we do know of his first few days, was recorded by him in a later "Report on Prison Life' written for his uncle General Hase (DBWE 8:343-347, 2/131).[168]

After twelve days, General Hase made a phone call to prison commander Captain Maetz to indicate his concern for his nephew Dietrich. Overnight, Bonhoeffer became a "privileged prisoner," with whom Maetz went for daily walks in the courtyard, and for whom other privileges were afforded: the offer of a cooler and more spacious cell,[169] which was cleaned for

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[166] Particularly in regard to the interrogation period and his last few months after he was transferred to the detention centre in the cellar of the Reich Central Security Office building.

[167] General Hase was Paula Bonhoeffer's brother and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's uncle. He was the Major General and military commander of Berlin at the time, and thus had jurisdiction over Tegel, its commander, and its military staff.

[168] "For the first night I was locked in a reception cell; the blankets on the cot stank so abominably that in spite of the cold, it was impossible to cover oneself with them. The next morning a piece of bread was thrown into my cell, so that I had to pick it up off the floor…. For the first time from outside my cell came the foul curses inflicted on those detained for interrogation by the prison staff; since then I have heard the abuse daily from morning till night. When I had to line up for inspection with the other new arrivals, we were addressed as "scoundrels," etc., etc. by a warder. Each of us was asked why he had been arrested, and when I said I did not know, the warden answered with a jeering laugh, "You'll find out soon enough!" It was six months before I received the warrant for my arrest. […] I was taken to the most isolated single cell on the top floor, and a sign was hung outside forbidding anyone to enter without special permission. I was told that I was not permitted any correspondence until further notice and that, unlike the other prisoners, I was not to be allowed outdoors for half an hour each day, although I was entitled to it according to the prison regulations. […] Otherwise, during the next twelve days the cell door was opened only to bring me food and take out the latrine bucket. Not a single word was exchanged with me. I was given no information about why I had been imprisoned or for how long. […] I had been put in the section for the worst cases, with prisoners who were condemned to death and were kept shackled hand and foot." (DBWE 8:342-344, 2/131).

[169] On August 3, 1943, Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents, indicating that he did not "want to request transfer to another floor" as he "didn't consider that decent with regard to the other prisoner who would then have to move" into his cell, "presumably without tomatoes and such" (DBWE 8:127, 2/40). He was later moved from the third floor where he was initially held, to cell 92 on the first floor, "because of the increased risk of bombing raids" (Bethge

him every day; larger portions of food; and the extension of visiting times with his family and fiancée, where possible (DBWE 8:344, 2/131; Schlingensiepen 2010:342).[170]

This change in Bonhoeffer's situation highlights a second sphere of social, cultural and political privilege: *Bonhoeffer was a high profile prisoner from the educated elite bourgeoisie*, with important family and political connections and means of securing legal and material privileges. Much of Bonhoeffer's experience in prison only makes sense in this light. His existence as a prisoner in Tegel was at times different from that of his fellow prisoners.[171] Nevertheless, it is clear that while Bonhoeffer welcomed certain privileges that stemmed from his family connections, he was embarrassed by public reactions to his privileged status.[172] He sought wherever possible to use his privileges in service of others or to refuse privileges that might come at the "expense of the other prisoners" (DBWE 8:344, 2/131).

A third sphere roots Bonhoeffer's privilege in Tegel in his cultural and intellectual formation among the Protestant *Bildungsbürger*. Karl Bonhoeffer had always had "high expectations" of his children "as if it were their inherent duty to fulfil the potential they had been given" (Nelson 1999:24). Dietrich's formation and education had prepared him to be a *practiced writer and public leader*, skills that gave him a privileged social and cultural position among his fellow prisoners. Although Bonhoeffer was willing to transgress or redefine the boundaries of the *Bürgertum* – as reflected in his involvement in the conspiracy, in certain themes of his *Ethics,*

2000:799; see also DBWE 8:151, 2/54). Although Bonhoeffer rarely reflects self-critically on his privileged position in Germany society, in prison he begins to recognise that his privileges at times have consequences on his fellow prisoners.

[170] Poelchau (1964:223) recounts another event that explicitly elevated Bonhoeffer's status in Tegel. In June of 1944, General Hase paid a visit to Bonhoeffer in prison, he "stayed for five hours, drank champagne with him and thus raised Bonhoeffer's position officially" – a position, however, that "he had already secured in the hearts of men through his very personality."

[171] The contents of a package delivered to Bonhoeffer at Tegel during a visit from his family may further substantiate the case for understanding Bonhoeffer's privileged existence as a prisoner, as well as the social status and wealth of his family during time of war. On May 8th a package was delivered containing the following "— 1 brown suit, 1 pair of black boots — 1 blue shirt — 1 pair of socks — 1 handkerchief — 1 washcloth — 1 hairbrush — 2 pipes, 1 cleaner — 1 packet of tobacco — 3 boxes of matches — 50 cigarettes — 60 Recresal tablets — 1 Haag Cola — 125 g butter — 125 g bacon fat — 125 g cheese — 200 g sausage — 1 tin of pork fat — 1 container of malt extract spread — 1 box of cookies and sweets — 2 hard-boiled eggs — 1 loaf of bread, 1 small bag of sugar cubes — 1 package of pumpernickel" (fn. 1, DBWE 70, 1/11). The contents of this package would have been rarely found in any working class home during WW II let along in the cell of a military prisoner.

[172] Bonhoeffer writes: "The result [of his family connections being known] was that the staff treated me with exceptional politeness, and some even came to apologize, saying, 'Of course we didn't realize,' and so on…. How embarrassing!" (DBWE 8:344, 2/131).

and in aspects of his imprisonment – he was also prepared to endure the challenges of prison with calm composure, as if it were part of his civic duty.[173]

Bonhoeffer's competence in political matters, his commanding grasp of language and his experience over the past few years in the realm of political espionage,[174] allowed him to make use of his writing, his speech, and his leadership qualities, to navigate his experience, concealing certain information, and securing certain privileges for himself and fellow prisoners. The collection of archival material from this period is a testament to Bonhoeffer's capacity for writing, as well as his mastery of persuasion and misdirection (Martin 2005). Skills that helped him to protect the secrecy of the conspiracy and mobilise alternative forms of communication with the outside world; convincing a sympathetic prison guard to risk his life to smuggle out illegal letters so he could maintain contact with his friends and family, and send and receive important information regarding the conspiracy.

On a psychosocial level, Bonhoeffer's situation was eased, through his instilled *hospitality and manner towards others*. Guards and prisoners alike were attracted to his personality and demeanour, and feeling that he was someone with whom they could talk. He maintained clear boundaries with guards and prisoners and exuded a level of mutual respect not characteristic of the prison environment. "When guards took the liberty of speaking disrespectfully to him, he corrected them sharply and had some success in doing so" (Schlingensiepen 2010:342). He even attempted to reason with guards who used excessive force, venturing to alter their treatment of other prisoners.[175]

Bonhoeffer's privileged status was not limited to his familial relations or socio-cultural status. His privileges were also hard won as he inverted the structural roles demanded by the prison

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[173] This point is clearly illustrated by Bonhoeffer's reflection in Tegel, on a statement he attributed to Adolf Schlatter. Bonhoeffer writes: "[f]rom my student days I recall Schlatter telling us in his ethics lectures that one of the civic duties of a Christian was to endure a pretrial detention with calmness. At the time these were empty words for me. Over the past weeks I have sometimes thought of them. And now, with the same calmness and patience as we have had thus far, let us continue to endure the remaining time imposed on us" (DBWE 8:115, 1/33).

[174] Reflecting on his involvement in the conspiracy he wrote in his essay 'After Ten Years': "We have become cunning and learned in the arts of obfuscation and equivocal speech" (DBWE 8:52, Prologue).

[175] "The same people who take out their frustrations on other prisoners bow and scrape to me, and attempts to reason with them about how they treat the others don't get far. They will agree with what I'm saying at the moment, but an hour later they are carrying on the same as before" (DBWE 8:345, 2/131).

system, through hidden and public acts of resistance (Scott 1990).[176] The success of this depended entirely upon leaving his guards with the misguided perception that their power remained intact.

Bonhoeffer's delicate game of privilege and trickery came with obvious limitations. Due to the constant surveillance of his actions and censorship of his letters, he had to be extremely careful as to how far he could push the boundaries of privilege and resistance. He was keenly aware of the extent of his surveillance just as he was of the concrete and steel that restricted his body.[177] He knew that one misstep would spell the end for himself and his fellow conspirators. Bonhoeffer's privilege mustn't be overstated, for it did not spare him the grueling interrogations of the War Court, the isolating despair of the prison cell, the psychological effects of separation from family and friends, the daily threat of bombing raids, nor death on the hangman's gallows. The last years of Bonhoeffer's life were lived amidst these contrasting continuities and discontinuities of prison life, between a privileged status and a status as an awaiting trial prisoner; between resistance and submission, *above* and *below*.

[176] See Scott, J.C. 1990. Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press.
[177] An aspect that Larson (2010:146) highlights in regard to skilled prison writers.

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