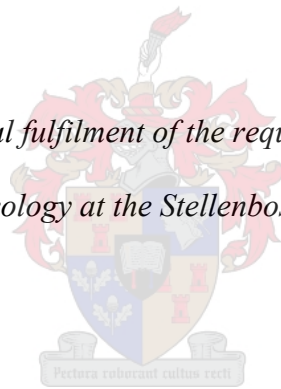


A church for others?
Queering the Ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology at the Stellenbosch University.*



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March 2020

Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945). It employs the insights of queer theology and queer theory as a hermeneutical lens. Presently, Bonhoeffer's theology is interpreted in light of contemporary issues; however, not much research has been produced linking his thought with queer theology. This thesis, then, contributes to this discourse focus; that is, it asserts to present queer theology as helpful hermeneutic within the theological mainstream in a transgressive manner. As such, this study queers the theology of Bonhoeffer; unearthing themes that may be dismissed by the present discourse.

Queering the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, this thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the logic of the study. It discusses the background; it articulates the problem statement; it presents the research questions and the hypothesis. The methodology the study employs is literary, interpretive and constructive. Therefore, it offers a close reading of primary texts by utilising queer theory and queer theology as a hermeneutical lens. The chapter does so by noting the importance of 'reading from the underside.'

Chapter two provides an overview of both queer theory and queer theology as academic disciplines. Queer theory is argued to be discursive opposition to pervasive heteronormative epistemologies. By highlighting the critical contributions of Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler, the chapter presents queer theory as discursively helpful. Following this, attention is afforded to queer theology; understood to be religious reflection on the experiences of those who are LGBTI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and sexual minorities). Moreover, queer theology is conceptualised as radical love; which destabilises traditional forms of theologising. The insights of Marcella Althaus-Reid, Gerard Loughlin and Elizabeth Stuart are quite helpful by articulating the need for considering queer theology as a valuable hermeneutic.

In chapter three Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* are discussed as primary texts informed by a queer theological reading. Using a queer theological hermeneutic, the chapter explores questions that are present in these works that may be worth considering for our contemporary ecclesiological conceptions, as they concern those who are LGBTI+.

Chapter four explores the reception of Bonhoeffer's theology by South Africa's theological community. The influence of Bonhoeffer is discussed in two sections: first, his ecumenically diverse and intergenerational reception from the 1960s until the present; second, the realisation

of his othered ecclesiology in South African social and religious life, paying attention to the developments in the Dutch Reformed Church's sexuality discussions.

In chapter five a proposal for ecclesial queering is presented for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa; by focusing on the discursive possibilities in its discussion of human sexuality. The chapter also reviews the research questions presented; it also offers recommendations for future research regarding Bonhoeffer studies and queer theology.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis is 'n studie van die ekklesiologie van Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). Dit gebruik die insigte van queer teologie en queer teorie as 'n hermeneutiese lens. Die teologie van Bonhoeffer word tans interpreteer in die lig van kontemporêre kwessies; daar is egter nie veel navorsing gelewer wat sy denke met queer teologie verbind nie. Hierdie tesis dra dus by tot hierdie diskoersfokus; dit wil sê, dit voer queer teologie aan as behulp same hermeneutiek vir teologiese diskoers. Hierdie studie *queer* die teologie van Bonhoeffer deur die onthulling van temas wat deur die huidige diskoers van die hand gewys word.

Die tesis word verdeel in vyf hoofstukke. Hoofstuk een bied die logika van die studie aan. Dit bespreek die agtergrond; dit artikuleer die probleemstelling; dit bied die navorsingsvrae en die hipotese aan. Die metodologie wat die studie gebruik, is literêr, interpretatief en konstruktief. Daarom bied dit 'n noukeurige lees van primêre tekste deur die gebruik van queer teorie en queer teologie as 'n hermeneutiese lens. Die hoofstuk doen dit deur die diskursiewe gebruik van 'n 'lees van die onderkant.'

Hoofstuk twee bied 'n oorsig van queer teorie as die queer teologie as akademiese dissiplines. Dit word aangevoer dat 'n queer teorie diskursiewe teenkating teen heteronormatiewe epistemologieë bied. Deur kennis te neem van die kritiese bydraes van Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick en Judith Butler, bied die hoofstuk queer teorie as behulp saam vir die diskoers. Hierna word aandag geskenk aan queer teologie; wat verstaan word as godsdienstige besinning oor die ervarings van diegene wie LGBTI+ (lesbiese, gay, biseksuele, transendente, interseksuele en seksuele minderhede) is. Queer teologie word gekonseptualiseer as radikale liefde; wat tradisionele vorme van teologisering destabiliseer. Die insigte van Marcella Althaus-Reid, Gerard Loughlin en Elizabeth Stuart is baie nuttig deurdat dit queer teologie as waardevolle hermeneutiese lens uiteensit.

In hoofstuk drie word Bonhoeffer se *Sanctorum Communio* en *Life Together* as primêre tekste bespreek, ingelig deur 'n queer teologiese lesing. Deur die gebruik van 'n queer teologiese hermeneutiek, ondersoek die hoofstuk vrae wat in hierdie werke aanwesig is, wat behulp saam is vir ons eietydse ekklesiologiese opvattinge, en hoe dit betrekking het op diegene wie LGBTI+ is.

In hoofstuk vier word die resepsie van Bonhoeffer se teologie deur die Suid-Afrikaanse se teologiese gemeenskap ondersoek. Die invloed van Bonhoeffer word in twee afdelings bespreek: eerstens sy ekumeniese en intergenerasie ontvangs vanaf die 1960s tot die hede;

tweedens, die verwesenliking van sy andersoortige ekklesiologie in die Suid-Afrikaanse sosiale en godsdienstige lewe, met aandag op die ontwikkelinge in die Nederduise Gereformeerde Kerk se seksualiteitsgesprekke.

In hoofstuk vyf word 'n voorstel vir kerklike *queering* vir die Verenigde Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika aangebied; deur te fokus op die diskursiewe moontlikhede in die bespreking van menslike seksualiteit. Die hoofstuk hersien ook die navorsingsvrae wat aangebied is; dit bied ook aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing met betrekking tot Bonhoeffer-studies en queer teologie.

Acknowledgements

This study project has been a labour of love; indeed, *radical love*. Given the focus on community in this thesis, I earnestly thank the following communities of which I have pleasure of forming part.

First, I am appreciative for the academic community in which I am located. I am thankful to Stellenbosch University and its Faculty of Theology, particularly the Department of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, for sharpening me throughout my years of study. Likewise, I am also grateful for the Linneaus-Palme Exchange Programme and Gothenburg University, Sweden, for the semester spent abroad. The opportunity undoubtedly broadened the horizon of my theological vision. I am immensely grateful for the compassionate care and critique offered by my supervisor, Prof Robert Vosloo. Throughout the years your support has motivated me to deepen and sharpen my intellectual gifts; for this I am most thankful.

Second, I am immensely thankful for the church-community. I am sincerely appreciative of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the congregation of Eerste River South for their continued support of my theological journey.

Third, I would like to thank my family – both biological and chosen. My family and friends have, in a very real sense, stimulated my inquiry into the church as home for those who are LGBTI+. Beloved, you have taught me the importance of embodying one's theology. I would like to thank my mother Veronica, brother Ronaldo and aunt Kathy Brown who intimately journeyed with me throughout these years; your support continues to sustain me.

Finally, language renders me inarticulate to express my earnest gratitude to the Triune G-d, who exists as a community of persons. Pursuing this study, I have come to understand the body's grace that much better – and for this I remain indebted to the Queer G-d who invites us to love radically.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who are LGBTI+, those who radically choose to love. Through this dedication, my hope is that the church catholic may become a home for all G-d's queer children; that we may all share in the *Corpus Christi*.

This thesis is also dedicated to the courageous activists of #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall, who taught me to dream of a more just world wherein the diversity of genders and sexualities may be affirmed and celebrated.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Background and Rationale

It is true that few twentieth-century theologians have captured the theological imagination of Western Christianity as Dietrich Bonhoeffer has. This indeed calls for a contemporary re-interpretation of Bonhoeffer, given his status as an iconic theologian of the previous century. Research on the othered ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, this study proposes, may be enriching for the broader field of Bonhoeffer studies. It is helpful given that little attention has (thus far) been afforded to Bonhoeffer's early ecclesiology; and what impact this has on his overall theological project. Therefore, this study on the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer might be fruitful in our time for two reasons.

First, globally, there seems to be a rise in far right-wing politics. The fascist undertones present in these political formations ought not to be overlooked. If anything, this may be eerily similar to the context of pre-World War II German society. In *The End Is Not Yet: Standing Firm in Apocalyptic Times* (2017), John de Gruchy explores these times and provides much insight. For him, ours is a time that should not be understood as the end apocalyptically; instead, the present is an opportunity to project a human vision for the future of humanity. In this time, de Gruchy (2017:164) writes: "there is much to do as we engage in hopeful action in the struggle for justice and peace as people of faith." His reliance on the theology of Bonhoeffer is here particularly important. As such, with the prevailing political pressures, the question should be raised what the church's role is.

Second, at present, a growing number of denominations are grappling with LGBTI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and sexual minorities) concerns. More pointedly, denominations affirming LGBTI+ partnerships are all the more increasing. The recent Pretoria High Court ruling places LGBTI+ right that much more in theological and denominational agendas of South Africa. This study is also located within the present dialogue on sexuality by the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, which has developed since 2005.

These two reasons underscore the need for research into Bonhoeffer's early ecclesiology, as outlined in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* and concretely practised at Finkenwalde. The rise of far right-wing politics has made Bonhoeffer a timely figure worth studying. Denominations' inability to create and nurture a church for others, especially those who are LGBTI+, centres and prioritises a need for such a study. Further, this study does not attempt to

argue for a Bonhoeffer who may be identified as LGBTI+; instead, the focus is concerned with how his theology may provide the impetus for the work of queering.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Researching the work of any theologian is not without challenges; mainly historical separation, and confessional biases. Even so, the temptation for Bonhoeffer studies may be entering his theological thought into the mainstream, subjecting it to the strictures of hegemonic theology. This, then, is the research problem explored.

This study sets out to explore the counterintuitive contours of Bonhoeffer's thought, with particular reference to his ecclesiology. It attempts to queer (to disrupt, to deconstruct) his thought for and in our contemporary time. In his ecclesiological thought, Dietrich Bonhoeffer considers the church as existing for others. By exploring his theology, this study investigates how this conceptualisation of the church may be a queering; and thus, worth investigating, and how it provides insight into contemporary conceptions of the church in light of the experiences of those who are LGBTI+.

As such, the primary research question this study attempts to respond to is: *what theological promise does a queering of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology hold for an understanding of the church as a church for others?*

In the effort of responding to the question raised, it is helpful also to consider secondary questions. These questions are:

What are the contours of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology?

What does is Bonhoeffer's conception of a church for others; and, how has this been received in our time?

What is meant by queering, and how does this relate to queer theory and queer theology?

What possible relevance may this have for South Africa?

These questions inform the logic of this study; that is, the present study attempts to respond to these questions while attending to contemporary South African theological and ecclesial concerns. In the concluding chapter, consideration will be afforded to each of these questions; in the light of the research produced.

Hypothesis

The ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer may indeed be interpreted through a queer theological hermeneutic successfully. Differently put, Bonhoeffer's counter-hegemonic theology invites and provides the impetus for such a queering. Queering the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer offers the theological promise which challenges ecclesial conceptions centring an analysis of concrete realities. However, this queering also highlights the need for reimagining the role of the church in society.

Moreover, the South African reception of Bonhoeffer's theology may be understood to highlight queering insights. By further queering Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, in and for our time, his works can provide critical motivation as to the role the contemporary church ought to fulfil.

Research Methodology

A brief methodological consideration is essential for the logic of this study. The research here proposed is *literary*, *interpretive* and *constructive*. It does this by presenting an analysis of a close reading of primary texts and employing a hermeneutic informed by queer theory and queer theology.

In order to employ a queer theological hermeneutic concerning the theology of Bonhoeffer, the study prioritises a 'view from below' or 'reading from the underside of history.' In his *Underside of Modernity* (1996), the Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel offers a reading of European modernity from below. This reading is focused on the experience and encounter of those constructed as 'other' by modernity; in Dussel's (1996:3) context, these are the Latin Americans who encounter modernity through the Spanish conquest. However, quite importantly, a reading from the underside must focus its attention on the *Lebenswelt* [the world of daily life]. Dussel develops his Liberation Philosophy as praxis for developing a reading from the underside. This philosophy is a "dialectic or the 'passage' that departs from a given or established system (be it political, erotic, pedagogical, fetishist, economic, etc.), and that enters into the depth of a future system of liberation" (Dussel, 1996:5). Therefore, a reading from the underside must be predicated on an analysis of materiality.

Still, it is essential to note that Dussel's philosophical thought cannot be divorced from his understanding of the community. He understands the community in theological terms; thus, the notion of sociality is quite central to his conception of philosophy and liberation. "The community is the real, concrete agent and mover of history. In the community, we are 'at

home,' in safety and security, 'in common.'" (Dussel, 1986:11). A reading from the underside, therefore, must pursue to do so in full view of the community.

Lisa Dahill employs the theoretical considerations of Dussel. She does so in the publication *Reading from the Underside of Selfhood: Bonhoeffer and Spiritual Formation* (2009). In this text, she considers the underside of women's experience of abuse; meaning, this is the hermeneutical key she uses to study the works of Bonhoeffer as they relate to subjectivity. Dahill (2009:235) concludes, "Looking at Bonhoeffer from the underside of selfhood confirms the best of his insights even as it opens new aspects of his significance invisible to those who share his biases."

Informed by the insights of both Dussel and Dahill, this study employs a reading of Bonhoeffer from the underside in the attempt to highlight what may be invisible to the hegemonic theological establishment. It does this reading using queer theology as a hermeneutical key; even so, this reading from the underside focuses on what implications this may have for our understanding of community.

Moreover, this study sets out to establish a relationship between Bonhoeffer's theology and queer theological, ecclesiological conceptions. This study focuses primarily on Bonhoeffer's works *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*. The reasoning for this demarcation is twofold. First, preference is afforded to these texts because they reflect Bonhoeffer's early ecclesiological thought; as opposed to his later works that may be considered as summarising, albeit also intensifying, his theological project. Second, *Life Together* is considered because of its critical reflection of the community at the Preacher's Seminary at Finkenwalde. This study, then, is focused on Bonhoeffer's early emerging ecclesiology and its reflection on the experience of a concrete community.

The practice of queering sets out to uncover insights in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology that may not be attractive to the hegemonic theological discourse and trajectory; thus, it unearths that which receives minimal attention. The discipline informs this practice of queering of queer theology; which is grounded in queer theory. Queer theology is religious reflection by those who are LGBTI+ on their experiences; thus, it is profoundly autobiographical. It undertakes to destabilise the normative assumptions about gender as essentialised; further, it critiques the presuppositions at work in society at it relates to the constriction of sexuality and politics. Therefore, queer theology is transgressive developing theology from the margins; it opposes the hegemonic theological establishment.

Given the literary, interpretive and constructive methodological orientations, it is needful that I present my positionality. Thus, noting my own context's limitations and institutional commitments. The author of this thesis is a black student, born after South Africa's 1994 democratic election, and a member of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. I am also a cis-gender gay theological student, studying at an institution that would not historically affirm my presence – as both gay and black.

Meaning, this literary and interpretive study of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology attempts to analyse his theology through the eyes of a black South African theologian who is gay. The intention and hope are that this study may stimulate the present discourse that calls for the embrace of persons who are LGBTI+, especially by the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the broader South African denominational landscape.

Relevance of Study within Degree Programme

This thesis is completed as part of the Master of Theology programme; which specialises in gender, health and religion. In recent years a great deal of socio-political and religious development has been made in South Africa, especially as it relates to gender and sexual minorities. Despite these developments, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and sexual minorities (LGBTI+) continue to experience discrimination, not least by religious institutions. In time this experience of discrimination and dehumanisation is receiving more and more attention; which has led to immense mobilisation by those who are LGBTI+ to hold societal institutions (including churches) to account for their practices of discrimination.

This study, pursued within this programme, attempts to focus attention on the experiences of discrimination by LGBTI+ people at the hands of church communities. It seeks to account for the intersectional experience of this dehumanisation that may be informed by discrimination concerning gender, sexuality, race and class alongside other identity markers. Therefore, this study genuinely sets out to queer the intimate links between gender, health and religion within church communities, in order to account for the experiences of those who are LGBTI+.

Structure of the Study

The investigation this thesis sets out to pursue may be demarcated as follows: it contains four chapters, in which an aspect of the hermeneutical framework will be explored.

Chapter one explores the methodology employed. It briefly discusses a conceptual understanding of queer theory and the later development of queer theology. It considers the

developments made in this field. This discussion sets out to provide the parameters wherein Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology will be studied and queered.

Chapter two presents a biography of Bonhoeffer; it does so to historicise the texts *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*. These serve as primary texts; moreover, they provide a conceptual outline for Bonhoeffer's reflection and articulation of the Christian church. An attempt will also be made to draw out some queering themes in these primary texts.

Chapter three discusses the reception of Bonhoeffer by South African theologians; mainly how he may have impacted their ecclesiological conceptions. It grapples with Bonhoeffer's impact on the works of Russel Botman, Allan Boesak and John De Gruchy. Each of these theologians has had a profound impact on the South African ecclesial landscape; thus, such consideration is helpful. This section discusses themes in their respective ecclesiologies that may have been informed by that of Bonhoeffer's. Further, it attempts to consider how the reception of the theology by Bonhoeffer may be read through a queer lens. This chapter will also attend to the societal and theological developments made in South Africa as it relates to those who are LGBTI+.

This study *concludes* with a summary of the overarching argument outlined in the preceding chapters. It highlights the hermeneutical contours of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*. It briefly considers how Bonhoeffer's reception paved the way for a possible queering. Then it suggests how this allows for a further queering, and a re-interpretation of Bonhoeffer for our time. Finally, it provides a proposal for how this queering may be shaped for contemporary church communities.

Conclusion

This introduction has sought to provide the logical structure of the study that will be developed in the following chapters. This chapter has presented the preliminary research concerns as they relate to the background and rationale; the problem statement and research questions probed; the research methodology employed; what relevance this may have to the degree programme pursued; and, the structure that this study follows. Subsequently, the following chapter attempts to present and provide an analysis of queer theory and queer theology as a hermeneutic for investigation.

Chapter 2 Queer Theory and Queer Theology – possible avenues?

Introduction

There is little doubt that the term ‘queer’ invites a myriad of misunderstandings. Previously the term was used pejoratively about persons in same-gender relationships, or those so perceived by society. These persons may have been lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or another sexual minority; abbreviated LGBTI+.

This chapter has two sections. First, it discusses queer theory. It investigates the origin and development of queer theory, locating it in its particulate history. It continues to discuss the contributions of key figures in the discipline of queer theory, attempting to capture their intellectual vision. Second, building on the discussion of queer theory, the chapter interrogates queer theology (particularly as an academic discipline). Therefore, it analyses the contributions of three paradigmatic figures in the discipline; and probing what the future of the discipline may be. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the argument presented, articulating the relevance of queer theology concerning the study pursued. A chapter is devoted to queer theory, and queer theology is presented in to highlight the theological promise a queering of Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology.

Queer Theory

Origin and Development

In the 1980s the term ‘queer’ became gradually used by LGBTI+ activists, quite subversively through reclamation. Since then, the term has been used in various forms; it is used both against heteronormativity and homonormativity. The former, heteronormativity, is understood to be the social order that privileges cis-gender heterosexual relations and epistemologies; whereas, the latter – homonormativity – is understood to be a social order that resists heteronormativity but seeks to maintain cis-gender homosexual relations, while excluding non-binary and gender non-conforming experiences.

In the 1980s, queer theory was developed as a discursive epistemology. The entry of queer theory into academia was not without complexity. As such, Sullivan (2003:v) writes: “Queer Theory does not want to ‘straighten up and fly right’ to have the kinks ironed out of it: it is a discipline that refuses to be disciplined, a discipline with a difference, with a twist if you like.” To be sure, Queer Theory from its outset was not solely concerned with sexuality. Instead, Queer Theory sought to understand how “the extensive range of ways in which notions of

sexuality and gender impact - at times implicitly - on everyday life” (Sullivan, 2003:vi). Queer Theory, then, goes beyond the sexual to wrestle with the many and myriad ways the constructed nature of gender and sexuality inform the prevailing social order; it attempts to do so resisting both systemic heteronormativity and the temptation of homonormativity.

It is not the focus of this thesis to list the development of gender and sexuality constructions in Western societies, though such constructions inform the study. Meaning, an extensive discussion of the gendered constructions of masculinity and femininity; nor the sexual constructions of heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality will not be provided here. Instead, the focus is on the unique development within the discourse of queer theory as an academic discipline. Jargose (1996:22) locates the origins of queer theory within the “homophile movement.” The homophile movement was an umbrella for those organisations that seek to advocate for sexual minorities in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, particularly in Europe and North America. Sullivan (2003:25) notes the reality that not all LGBTI+ persons belonged to the homophile organisations, nor subscribe to their assimilationist approach. Thus, this should be considered with many nuances. The homophile movements of this period preceded the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements of the late twentieth century, that sought to break away from its conservatism.

The raid of the Stonewall Inn – a gay and drag bar – on 27 June 1969 remains vital to trace the origins of queer theory. This raid by the police gave rise to a weekend of riots. Reflecting on this date, Jargose (1996:30) writes:

“The twenty-seventh of June continues to be commemorated internationally—most enthusiastically in the United States —as Stonewall Day, a date which marks the constitution of lesbian and gay identities as a political force. Stonewall functions in a symbolic register as a convenient if somewhat spurious marker of an important cultural shift away from assimilationist policies and quietist tactics, a significant if mythological date for the origin of the gay liberation movement.”

Stonewall, then, acts as the tipping point when gay, lesbian and transgender liberation movements sought to hold the heteronormative social order to account. A change followed it in the resistance method. Now gay liberationists no longer presented themselves as having a different object of romantic love (compared to the heteronormative ideal); instead, they questioned conventions of the given social order; that is, monogamy, gender behaviour and the

sanctity of the law (Jargose, 1996:31). The Stonewall moment, therefore, provided the impetus for a mass movement.

The events that led to Stonewall should not be dislocated from their historical setting. The late 1960s and 1970s was also the American period of the counter-culture movement. “In many western countries, the success and proliferation of the counter-cultural movements enabled gay liberation to emerge by providing new models of organisational structure, ethical and ideological stances, and practices of resistance,” writes Jargose (1996:33). Still, Sullivan (2003:26) offers critique for the mythologising of Stonewall; even though showing appreciation for it as a symbol in LGBTI+ liberation.

Three ideas were fundamental to the gay liberationists’ agenda. First, “For liberationists, then, the imperative was to experience homosexuality as something positive in and through the creation of alternative values, beliefs, lifestyles, institutions, communities” (Sullivan, 2003:29). Differently stated, this was the creation of gay pride; the very idea that one’s identity needs no excuse nor justification. Second, liberationists sought to link homosexuality with the notion that it not chosen (Sullivan, 2003:30). Of course, implicit in the argument is that idea that if one had a choice, one would prefer to be ‘straight’, thus making the right choice. Third, as a result of the previous two ideas; gay liberationists advocated for the public act of coming out – a declaration of one’s personal and political identity. Commenting on this, Sullivan (2003:31) notes:

“Once again, ‘coming out’ has its benefits and its disadvantages, but either way, the call to come out presupposes that such an action is in itself transformative and that the identity that one publicly declares is unambiguous - assumptions that poststructuralist theorists find inherently troubling.”

While the gay liberationist movement was immensely critical of its predecessor – the homophile movement – it was not above critical interrogation. This movement remained beholden to “white, middle-class, gay men, and of their sexist and misogynist agendas” (Sullivan, 2003:32). As a result, various LGBTI+ identities were simply ignored and disregarded. Women and black people, the working class, critiqued the movement for its failures to address their unique concerns.

There can be no doubt that Jargose’s termed homophile movement – through the various organisations – of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century played an essential role in the prioritisation of LGBTI+ concerns. This is even though their approach may be retrospectively

perceived as rather conservative and assimilationist. Still, its contribution cannot be overestimated. Building on the work of the homophile movement the gay (and lesbian) liberationist movement emerged in the late 1960s. For this movement, three ideas were central: homosexuality as positive; sexuality as unchosen; the need for coming out publicly. Fundamentally, the gay liberationist movement sought to normalise pride for sexual minorities.

Queer Theory as Academic Discipline

In the timely publication *Queer Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies* (2018), Brintnall and others chart the development of queer theory via a series of turns. Though these ought not to be understood chronologically; instead their division is thematic. The first queer theory as antinormative; it was Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's essay 'Queer and Now', in her publication *Tendencies* (1993) that alter the course of queer theory. Regarding this antinormative turn, Brintnall and Marchal (2018:9) write:

“It was becoming particularly apparent that queer theory could be extended, elasticized, so as to wrap around normality—or “normativity,” as one soon learned to say—in any of its hydraheaded forms and subject it to defamiliarizing and destabilizing analysis.”

In essence, then, the first turn listed sought to undo (or subvert) that which was constructed as normative by society. A second turn identified is queer theory's antisocial turn. During this turn, the focus was substantially placed on the question of the good citizenry by those who LGBTI+ in a world that is not affirming. Thus, Edelman (quoted in Brintnall & Moore, 2018:10) rightly declared:

“Queers must respond to the violent force of such constant provocations not only by insisting on our equal right to the social order's prerogatives, not only by avowing our capacity to promote that order's coherence and integrity.”

Edelman's proposition was not without critique. Reflecting on this challenge, Esteban Muñoz thus argues:

“Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain” (Brintnall & Marchal, 2018:11).

Therefore, the antisocial turn was entirely focused on what form queer citizenship may take in a world of violence against those who are LGBTI+. One cannot but note the links this question

has with the construction of identity, especially nationalism. The third turn highlighted is the temporal; similar to the antinormative turn, here the focus was on spheres that were not generally too gendered or sexual. Reflecting on time and community, Judith Halberstam argues that queer subcultures offer the production of “alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of” those rendered by society (Brintnall & Marchal, 2018:13). Thus, this turn allowed for the queering of time; in essence, a critique of social scripts that dictate the course of people’s lives and normativity.

The fourth turn is the affective turn. Primarily queer theory has centred its focus of affect theory on the relationship between queer historians and their queer subjects, probing what the nature of this relationship may be (Brintnall & Marchal, 2018:19). Questioning the temptation of anachronism and how the separation of time plays a role in queer historiography, Freccero suggests:

“we ought to acknowledge them instead, to allow ourselves to be openly haunted by them and by the long dead subjects who continue to make spectral—and ethical—claims on us from beyond the grave” (Brintnall & Marchal, 2018:20).

Uncovering the relations, as is the focus of affect theory, queer theory considers its historiography seriously. In all, the four turns (antisocial, antinormative, temporal and affective) delineate the historical development of queer theory as an academic discipline. This is quite important, as it is helpful to trace the developments to their specific historical moment. Still, this is not an adequate depiction of queer theory as an academic discipline. Thus, it may prove helpful to consider critical figures who contributed to its conception and development. In the following section, this study briefly discusses three such figures: Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler. Given the central role the works of these key figures play in the continuing development of queer theory, it is essential to offer a brief discussion of their intellectual focus.

Michel Foucault

The foundations of queer theory as an academic discipline builds on the work done in the homophile and gay liberationist movements. The 1980s was also a period when poststructuralism developed as an epistemological paradigm. “The impact of such theoretical shifts has been significant, not least of all in regards to notions of sexual identity and politics” (Sullivan, 2003:39). There is little doubt that the rise and development of poststructuralism are

indebted to the pioneering work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984). Foucault is well-known for transdisciplinary work in the fields of history, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. His contribution to LGBTI+ studies is predicated on his transdisciplinary approach. Further, Foucault’s works ought not to be divorced from his biography; he was himself a gay man and infected with AIDS (Halperin, 1995:3).

Foucault’s contribution to the then discourse on sexuality – which would later be gay and lesbian studies, then even later queer theory – rests on his texts *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (1976). For this study, two fundamental ideas are noted in the vast body of Foucault’s works and thought. An attempt will be made to highlight the relevance of these ideas throughout the study. The first idea central to Foucault’s thought is interrogating processes. Under this specific focus is afforded to a conception of history as becoming; and, discourse, practices and power-knowledge. Foucault’s conception of history follows that of Hegel and Marx; that a human is the product of history.

Nevertheless, he rejects their notion that history is determined by “an immanent structuring principle or preceded by an essence which unfolds in the course of its movement” (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014:6). Moreover, he agrees with Nietzsche that humanity does not progress from battle to battle when, eventually, warfare will be replaced with the rule of law. Fundamentally, Foucault’s conceives history as a ‘concrete body of becoming.’

As such, practices are repeated though not in the same way. As such, Foucault’s understanding leaves open the question if history progresses, regresses, moves in a circle or repeats itself – it may or may not do any of these acts. Therefore, “History is contingent, but not arbitrary: it did take this course of development, rather than that. In effect, Foucault subscribes to a version of causality which recognizes that, in a given historical situation, multiple and often opposing forces are active at once” (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014:7). At the heart of Foucault’s discussion of history, his concern for the specificity of transformation; alternatively articulated in the notion ‘history as concrete body of becoming.’ Differently stated, Foucault does not espouse pre-given order of things; instead, historical specificity produces the other.

Foucault goes to great lengths to discuss discourse; which should not be limited to only the spoken and written word. For Foucault, “Discursive practices are the local and historical contingencies which enable and constrain the knowledge-generating activities of speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, and so on” (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014:8). Thus,

discursive practices produce – as opposed to describing – the subjects and objects of knowledge. Again, the subjects and objects of knowledge are always historically formed.

Of course, power cannot be separated from a specific historical setting. When authoring his first genealogical publication, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault attends to the importance of practices concerning discourse. These practices, at least for Foucault, are concerned with the limitations and restrictions that make discourse useful and meaningful. Thus, on the topic of power, in his *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault:

“critically analyses the ways in which educational establishments, discourses, and discursive practices, construct adolescent sexuality in and through the division of time and space not only in the school, but also in the home, in work life and recreation, and in all aspects of daily life” (Sullivan, 2003:40).

In this text, he lays bare the intimate and intricate link between knowledge and power. These two, accordingly, are inseparable. More importantly, power is not only related to knowledge; it is also linked to resistance. For Foucault “power is not a substance but a relation. Power is therefore not possessed but exercised” (Halperin, 1995:16). Thus, Stehr and Adolf (2018:193) are correct by posing the question: who exercises power? Fundamental to the question raised is the relational nature of power. Power, following this, power is not unidirectional (from oppressor to oppressed); rather, it is understood to be fluid and immanent. Therefore, power cannot be conceived only in the negative (as oppressive, restraining and suppressing); it is also positive given its relational character. Halperin (1995:17) captures this best when writing “Power is therefore not opposed to freedom. And freedom, correspondingly, is not freedom from power—it is not a privileged zone outside power, unconstrained by power—but a potentiality internal to power, even and effect of power.” Given this analysis, resistance is not to be externalised from power. Resistance works within the network of power relations.

Another idea central to Foucault’s thought may be termed ‘organisation studies.’ In much of his later works, which are here considered, Foucault probes to reflect on the topics of resistance and security; and the human subject concerning freedom.

There should be no real doubt, that “infinite forms of resistance emerge in the context of organisations and continuously serve to undermine, to reform, and to reshape the form of imposed orders” (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014:12). Further, the significant changes in our global world have challenged and re-shaped the Foucauldian conception of resistance. No more

is this seen than in the sectors of finance and media; that largely determine present-day life forms in the global age. Thus, unsurprisingly Weiskopf and Willmott (2014:12) write:

“In so far as processes of financialization and social mediatization are succouring comparatively dynamic and fluid—‘post-bureaucratic’—organizations, employee creativity and subjectivity are increasingly seen as ‘human capital’ to be mobilized and churned, rather than as an unruly capacity that must be ‘moulded’ into disciplined patterns of identity.”

With this in mind, resistance should best be considered security. Foundational to Foucault’s understanding of security and resistance is the notion of biopolitics; here conceived as the intricate link between human biology and politics. Of this Evans (2010:415) writes:

“For Foucault, the biopolitical specifically referred to the political strategization/technologization of life for its own productive betterment. Effectuating, then, the active triangulation between ‘security, territory and population’, bio-politics forces a re-prioritization of those concerns ordinarily associated with human development/progress in a manner that complements traditional security paradigms.”

Biopolitics sets the parameters wherein resistance may be exercised. Using biopolitics and ‘apparatus of security’ as a conceptual framework, Foucault problematises the technologies and practices that organise relations and the process of subjectification. For Weiskopf and Willmott (2014:14) the logical conclusion of Foucault’s thought is: that “When conceived as human capital, the working subject becomes an ‘abilities machine’ incorporating pressing requirements to continuously modulate and reconfigure its abilities in response to the demands of competitiveness and threats of obsolescence.” Foucault’s critique of biopolitics (and thus the apparatus of security) is therefore justified, as it renders human subject objects in the grand order of things (vis-à-vis technologization and mediatization).

One cannot overstate Foucault’s contribution to queer theory; his works remain its philosophical foundation. This foundation is, undoubtedly, found Foucault’s texts *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume*; together, these tomes capture the gist of his contribution. Foucault spectacularly focused on queer theorists’ attention on the importance of history and organisation studies. The former, history, he considered as always in the process of becoming; thus, he presents humans as the products of history. The latter, organisation studies, informs his conception of resistance and development of biopolitics. Together these two ideas communicate the fundamentals of Foucault’s thought and his appreciation by queer theory.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

Few scholars are as credited the founder of queer theory as widely as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009) has been. As a literary critic, Sedgwick was duly immersed in French literary theories prevalent in the English world, as well as an avid deconstructionist thinker (Edwards, 2009:7). The American author and professor of English taught at numerous influential institutions, not least Hamilton College, Boston University, Amherst College, Dartmouth College, the University of California at Berkeley, Duke University and the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York.

Interestingly, Sedgwick had a notable command over a vast range of different media and genres. Edwards (2009:9) tellingly captures the numerous fields in which Sedgwick developed her scholarship: “Marxism, feminism, the New Criticism, deconstruction and the New Historicism, through postcolonial and queer theories to phenomenology and the psychoanalytic writings.” Therefore, Sedgwick’s contribution to queer theory – both its origin and development – are informed by her interests in these diverse fields of study.

In the early 1980s, Sedgwick published a text documenting the lives and works of those who had worked in the field of queer theory; of course, at the time queer theory was not yet mainstreamed in the academy. Many contend that this publication ignited the interest in LGBTI+ studies, “and helped transform queer theory from a latent to a manifest discipline” (Edwards, 2009:13). Further, the credit bestowed to her as a founder of queer theory is grounded on her publication *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Unlike any other author of the time, Sedgwick sought to shift gears from a sole focus on gay liberation to queering – thus developing a queer theoretical framework. Undoubtedly, this text also succeeds and builds on her previous work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). In her 1990 publication, Sedgwick offered a re-reading of critical texts published in the twentieth century attempting to do so by foregrounding it in an analysis of the “now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male” (Sedgwick, 1990:1). Fundamentally, Sedgwick asserted to provide a new language for the pressing questions of the late 1980s and early 1990s; a time of tremendous progress for the LGBTI+ movement. Therefore, this text now set the stage for the development of queer theory, following the archetypal work of Foucault.

Through her scholarship, Sedgwick has developed and deepened queer theory in three ways. A brief description of these ways is discussed; it is argued that these inform a more comprehensive understanding of queer theory, as conceptualised by Sedgwick. Grappling with

the development of sexuality in the broader discourse in the late twentieth century, Sedgwick develops the notion of ‘homosocialities.’ The notion should be understood within the particularity of sexuality discourse in the twentieth century; a time when heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality were dominant conceptions. Like Foucault, “Sedgwick was keenly aware of the historicity of sexuality and erotic desire in ways unlike other major figures in queer theory” (Doan, 2010:370). Sexuality should thus be understood within the particularity of a conditioned milieu, in this case, late twentieth century. For Sedgwick homosocial desire is an understanding of feelings that connect and divide people of the same gender. The antithesis to this is, then, homosocial panic (more widely known as homophobia). Edwards (2009:33) offers an apt description of Sedgwick’s ‘homosocial panic’: “By contrast, we might understand homosexual panic as relating primarily to the subtle, intimate warfare within a person, regarding whether or not he or she, his or her relationships, feelings or desires, were, are, or might be in some ways, at some times, in some contexts, or under some regimes, imagined to be homosexual.” Here it is essential to note the distinction Sedgwick (like other gender theorists) make between sex and gender. Building on the work of Gayle Rubin, Sedgwick noted that questions about gender and sexuality (though they are related) are not the same. Similarly, following Audre Lorde, Sedgwick sought to foreground her understanding of homosocial desire (and its antithesis, homosocial panic) within an intersectional framework; thus concluding “that patriarchy was both misogynistic and homophobic” (Edwards, 2009:36). While Sedgwick’s focus remains predominantly on men, it should not be forgotten; she develops this notion within the realms of literary criticism (where she engages twentieth-century writers who are men).

Second, Sedgwick devotes much of her works to the nuanced understanding of the closet – and what it means to those who are LGBTI+. As is widely known, the image of the closet is popular among those who are LGBTI+ for whom it represents “a room for privacy or retirement: a small, hidden or secret space, inner chamber” (Edwards, 2009:47). Coming out of the closet, of course, it is an act of self-disclosure when an LGBTI+ person communicates their sexuality. Sedgwick, in *The Epistemology of the Closet*, develops a nuanced conception of the closet; which is termed the ‘the spectacle of the closet.’ Edwards (2009:49) is particularly helpful here, reflecting on his reading of Sedgwick’s work, he writes:

“I wanted to offer you a vicarious experience of what it meant for me to be in and out of the closet, of what kinds of things I felt acutely and knew well or badly; although, it is also worth making clear from the outset that I was not seeking to claim these

experiences as universal. After all, no two people's experience of the closet will be the same. Some people don't ever come out of the closet. Some people were never in a closet in the first place. Some people's closets seem to be made of transparent glass, some of stained glass, others of paper, fabric, skin and bone."

It is this first-person account that Sedgwick asserts to prioritise in her work and development of the notion of the closet. Moreover, it should be noted that Sedgwick published this text in the 1980s when the AIDS epidemic had claimed the lives of countless gay men. The development of her understanding of the closet, then, should be considered within this context.

Third, part of the paradigmatic role played by Sedgwick in queer theory was the shift toward affect theory. Affect theory is understood to be a framework that seeks to organise affects (or subjectively experienced emotions) into various categories, thus symbolising their heir physiological and social displays. Sedgwick's turn to affect theory is to be found in her later works, primarily *Touching Feeling* (Sedgwick, 2000:21). Sedgwick, perhaps, displays herself most faithful to the tradition of literary criticism in by contributing this to queer theory. Affect theory, at least according to Sedgwick, informs queer theory in two profound manners.

Firstly, she breaks away from the hermeneutics of suspicion. This interpretive approach centres an apprehension of paranoia when engaging a text, thus a paranoid mode of criticism (Nyong'o, 2010:244). Essentially, Sedgwick attempts to alert readers that through a hermeneutics of suspicion:

"we combine the insatiable, spiralling suspicion of paranoia with a tendency to split ourselves, other people and the texts we are working on, and that are powerfully working on us, into good and bad parts, rather than conceptualising them as ethically complex and experientially changing wholes" (Edwards, 2009:109).

This does not do justice to us and the texts we engage. It merely seeks to compartmentalise our feelings uncritically. Still, Sedgwick probes a second break. Now, it is movement from shame (the French term *ressentiment*), which is much at the heart of contemporary criticism, to happiness. This shame is can also be understood to be what Klein terms the 'depressive position.' In the context of affect theory, "Depressive relationships are, therefore, those in which the respective parties know themselves and each other well, over a significant period of time and in a variety of contexts" (Edwards, 2009:111). Mindful of this, Sedgwick sets out to develop an alternative interpretive framework – a hermeneutic that is reparative, appreciative

and empathetic. This hermeneutic, according to Sedgwick, must be foregrounded in positive emotions – particularly happiness. Thus, expanding on this, Edwards (2009:119) states:

“Sedgwick has suggested a profound reorientation of literary criticism from the sentence ‘Shame on you’ to a primary emphasis upon happiness – a happiness which if it made us more contented, undemanding, trusting, peaceful and grateful, might trigger off fewer negative, paranoid-schizoid, shamefilled, affective and relational spirals.”

Further, it also worth note that Sedgwick’s turn to the affect cannot be separated from her personal life. Her later years were also the period she battled with breast cancer. This insistence on feeling (especially happiness) should, then, not be lost on the reader.

Following this brief discussion of Sedgwick’s life and works, at a bare minimum, she may be considered a paradigmatic figure in the founding and development of queer theory. She has done this most profoundly by her publication of *The Epistemology of the Closet* and *Touching Feeling*. Further, her prioritising of three ideals: homosocialities, which investigates homosocial desires over-and-against homosocial panic; a timely interrogation of the closet, recognising its symbolic power for those who are LGBTI+; and, the centring of affect theory, which considers subjective experiences as discourse development, while still calling into question a hermeneutic of suspicion. Advancing this argument, Sedgwick has shown herself to be quite a paradigmatic theorist; calling into question the norm, while still developing an alternative paradigm.

Judith Butler

Queer theory as an academic discipline would be unimaginable without the sustained contribution of Judith Pamela Butler (1956–). Since the late 1980s, the American Jewish philosopher has deepened the field of queer theory in quite a profound manner. Like Sedgwick, interestingly, Butler relies heavily on the work done by Foucault. Still, she is greatly influenced by Francocentric philosophy and German idealism.

Since entering the academy in the 1980s, Butler has taught at various prestigious institutions of higher learning; starting her lecturing career at Heidelberg University, the University of California, and presently at Columbia University. Given these diverse academic settings, Butler has sharpened her analytical skills in an array of disciplines; these include psychoanalytic, post-structuralist theory, politics, law, sociology, film studies and literary studies (Salih, 2012:2). As such, she is generally considered a pioneering figure in the fields of

queer theory, feminist theory and gay and lesbian theory. Therefore, her work in queer theory is undoubtedly comparable to that of Foucault and Sedgwick.

What, then, is the contribution Butler makes to queer theory? For the focus of this study, four ideas are worth highlight from the rather extensive work of Butler. The first idea worth consideration is Butler's conception of the human subject. She develops this idea rather early in her scholarship, as early as 1984 – in her doctoral dissertation, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, at Yale University (it would later be published in 1987 and 1999 respectively). At its core, “*Subjects [of Desire]* originally dealt with the reception of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* by French philosophers of the 1930s and 1940s” (Salih, 2012:19). Butler's treatment of Hegel is primarily predicated on the nineteenth-century text *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In her publication one observes various philosophical strands at work; Salih (2012:22) recognises phenomenology, the Frankfurt School, structuralism and post-structuralism. In other words, Butler relies on a great host of philosophers to elucidate her conception of the human subject. Salih (2012:41) articulates Butler's intellectual attempt characteristically: Butler undermines the notion that identities are pre-existing essences.

Second, Butler is probably best known for her 1990 publication *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. It has also come to be considered “one of the founding texts of queer theory” (Butler, 2010:vii). It is the second idea that Butler both problematises and reconceptualises. Following Foucault and Simone de Beauvoir, Butler rejects the notion of essentialised gender; instead, preferring the conception of gender as a social construct. Further, Butler also problematises the very point of departure – that is, the woman as subject and category – instead, she considers women as a subject-in-process (much like Foucault's conception of the human subject) and that this construction is predicated on the discourse vis-à-vis the acts it performs. Fundamentally, Salih (2012:45) is correct:

“Gender Trouble describes how gender ‘congeals’ or solidifies into a form that makes it appear to have been there all along, and both Butler and de Beauvoir assert that gender is a process which has neither origin nor end, so that it is something that we ‘do’ rather than ‘are’.”

Possibly Butler's most significant contribution to gender studies would be her conception of gender as performative. In the article ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, Butler (1988:519) narrates this complex conception:

“In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.”

Therefore, gender has no real ontological basis; it is predicated on social temporality – thus, it is a socially constructed reality operating without a power structure. Butler rejects the essentialist position that which views gender as physiologically determined. This rejection exposes the fact that gender is indeed constructed within time and space; thus, it is not solely a biological matter. Thus, following feminist theorists, Butler upholds the distinction between (sociological) gender and (biological) sex. Butler (1988:524) also rejects the gender binary (which recognises only man and woman) and the heterosexist social order (that privileges heterosexual relations at the expense of other configurations).

Third, Butler has contributed a considerable body of work to the idea of precarity and the precarious life. As a philosopher, Butler located her understanding of precarity within the realm of politics, particularly a democratic regime – building on much of Emmanuel Levinas’s work. At its heart, Butler’s conception of precarity is predicated on relationality. Thus, Ruti (2017:93) argues: “To ‘be’ a subject, for Butler, is to be ‘interrupted’ by otherness, by relationality, which is why her model asks (autonomous) ‘being’ to yield to (intrinsically non-autonomous) relationality.” Of course, this understanding has consequences: first, Butler holds the view that one’s precarity cannot be separated from another’s; second, precarity becomes a universal condition of human life. Even so, Butler is aware of the challenges this poses to her conceptualisation: particularly when universalising precarity the temptation for “Western intellectuals to imply that we are all equally vulnerable, oppressed, deprived and harassed” (Ruti, 2017:97).

Moreover, Butler’s conception of precarity should not be divorced from her understanding of grieving. Again, her conception of grief is within the realms of democratic politics, thus a political act. Butler’s interest in mourning is rooted in homosexual desire; of this McIvor (2012:412) states: “Because this desire faced social stigma, homosexual losses could not be registered or acknowledged; the ‘absence of cultural conventions for avowing the loss of homosexual love’ amounted to a ‘preemption of grief’.” In her conception, Butler articulates an ethical-political response to grief. The first is a move from foreclosure to prohibition; that

is, an act of repudiation and disruption. This act is concerned with the struggle between unacknowledged grief of homosexual desire and socio-cultural prohibition. For Butler, this view holds that:

“the work of mourning has a split orientation: it operates as an effective means of mobilizing rage against the material and discursive powers that be, while simultaneously involving an ethical responsiveness to the other and to ‘precarious life’” (McIvor, 2012:415).

Responding to her critics, Butler offers another response – now an ethical turn – the move from prohibition to dispossession. McIvor (2012:419) articulates this response as: “the performative disruptions of the prescriptive norming of subjects and bodies through social stigma towards the productive cultivation of ethico-political dispositions such as generosity and humility.” For this response, the act of grieving protests against the foreclosures that makes particular lives unlivable, which also renders certain losses unmournable. At heart in both these responses is Butler’s centring of precarious life and an openness to the other.

Finally, Butler’s has devoted much of her scholarship to the notion of recognition – this is best observed in her publication *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of sex* (2011). If anything, her consideration of recognition sums much of her scholarship, thus her contribution to queer theory. Of course, it should be noted that this conception flows out of her understanding of subjectivity and precarity. Again, Butler is not alone in her conception of recognition; she joins Axel Honneth, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser and Paul Ricoeur in their understanding (Ferrarese, 2011:759). As such, Butler conceives of recognition as predicated on reciprocity; thus, she writes “One comes to ‘exist’ by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other” (quoted in Ferrarese, 2011:761). This conception of recognition undoubtedly informs Butler’s conception of ‘the people’ a term used often in her recent works.

In her publication *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), Butler attempts to cast a vision of what community – a people – may look like within a democratic political system; needless to say, her treatment focuses primarily on the American context; still her insights are noteworthy. This understanding of ‘the people’ is much informed by her conceptions of subjectivity and recognition. In this text, Butler (2015:20) the formation of an assembly of people and how this relates to precarity, ‘liveability’ and the infrastructure where

people assemble. In brilliant fashion Butler (2016:64) summarises her conception of the body politic vis-à-vis assembling as ‘we the people’, she states:

“The bodies that assemble designate and form themselves together as “we, the people,” targeting those forms of abstraction that would cast bodily requirements once again into oblivion. To show up is both to be exposed and to be defiant, meaning precisely that we are crafted precisely in that disjuncture, and that in crafting ourselves, we expose the bodies for which we make our demand. We do this for and with one another, without any necessary presumption of harmony or love. As a way of making a new body politic.”

Butler’s scholarship continues to inspire new vision in the field of queer theory, even while it continues to expand. Her three texts *Subjects of Desire*, *Gender Trouble*, the essay ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’, *Bodies That Matter* and *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* have cemented Butler’s broad and enlightening vision of queer theory. Butler’s thought may be summarised in four views. First, she develops the notion of human subjectivity against the view that identities are pre-existing; instead, they are historically formed. Second, Butler rejects the essentialist view of gender; instead, she develops the view that gender is a social construct and is to be considered performative. Third, quite importantly, she focuses on precarity and grieving and how these should be considered within the realm of politics – which is predicated on the openness to others. Finally, Butler discusses the sense of community (or a people) within a democracy, for her this is built on the notion of recognition of subjectivity; moreover, such a democracy must create a liveable society. Given these reasons, Butler is therefore rightly considered quite a prominent figure in the development of queer theory.

Informed by this brief discussion of queer theory, attention is now moved to queer theology. Given the primary focus of this study, a queering of the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, it is needful to understand the contours of queer theology. Still, it should be recognised that the development of queer theology takes its cue from the advances in the discourse of queer theory; the two are thus intimately connected. Discussing the two in tandem, then, enriches a study that sets out to commit to a practice of queering.

Queer Theology

The roots of Queer Theology are firmly planted in the soil of the philosophical tradition of queer theory; much informed and influenced by Foucault, Sedgwick and Butler. Queer

theology is also a logical response to many of the religious trends of its time – particularly those of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (a period spanning from the 1980s through 2010s). Thus, it should not be surprising that queer theology utilises the theological paradigms offered by Liberation theologies, Feminist theologies, Political theologies and Body Theology. The reference to theologies in the plural is intentional; an attempt is made to recognise the various strands of these theological orientations and their organic development throughout the world (particularly the Global South).

Taking stock of the present trends in theology, Muers considers queer theology in conversation with feminist theology. Thus, she writes: “The development of theology rooted in gay or lesbian “experience,” especially in the USA, recalls the turn to “women’s experience” in feminist theology – and comparable debates arise about the essentialization of such “experience,” its relation to traditions and other norms of theology, and in particular its assumptions about the stability of gay or lesbian ‘identity’” (Muers, 2005:468).

The Cambridge Dictionary for Christian Thought offers a helpful definition for queer theology, penned by Lisa Isherwood (2011:423): “Queer theology is a political and sexual queering of theology that goes beyond the gender paradigms of the early years of feminist theology, and also transcends the fixed assumptions of lesbian and gay theology.” Without a doubt, Isherwood’s definition invites a range of questions. However, a succinct definition does not suffice. Isherwood fleshes out this definition more expansively, stating that queer theology is predicated on: the notion of sexuality as constructed; the recognition of plurality and its importance for reflection; and, the embrace of ambivalence and fluidity regarding sexual identities. Even so, the starting point of queer theology is the doctrine of the incarnation – thus, corporality and experience.

Moving beyond and challenging the theological traditions from which it borrows (such as feminist theologies and liberation theologies), queer theology uncovers the hermeneutics involved in normative theological reflection. Unsurprisingly it regards to class, race, and gender as critical tools when reflecting on sexuality about faith. Therefore, queer theology does not place itself at the centre of normative theological reflection; instead, it locates itself at the margins. Moreover, queer theology operates on the very margins of the theologies from which it borrows – feminist and liberation theologies.

Still, Isherwood describes two defining characteristics in queer theology and its present development. First, irony, parody, humour, and self-disclosure are fundamental to the tone and

genre of queer theology. Meaning, it is theology performed in the first person (the ‘I’); working from the margins, queer theology casts an alternative than the traditional normative. As such, Isherwood (2011:424) writes: “Queer theology is a form of autobiography because it implies engagement and a disclosure of experiences which have been traditionally silenced in theology.” Second, queer theology is a subversive force focused on closets (that which is hidden and undisclosed). In other words, queer theology is much interested in sexual desire and pleasure that have too long been dismissed. Therefore, queer theology challenges theologians to de-mystify, undo, and subvert.

Queer Theology as Academic Discipline

In his seminal text *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (2011), Patrick Cheng attempts to articulate the contemporary genealogy of queer theology. Probing a definition, Cheng (2011:9) considers the ‘queer’ in queer theology: first, it is an umbrella term referring to all those who are LGBTI+ (also including allies, straight people who affirm sexual minorities); second, it is self-consciously transgressive; third, it erases and deconstructs boundaries (particularly those superimposed by mainstream theology).

Still, Cheng ponders the informants at work in queer theological reflection. He follows the Methodist (or Wesleyan) Quadrilateral; meaning, queer theology is informed by four sources (scripture, tradition, reason and experience). However, Cheng posits that each of these sources must be understood to be queer. Thus, he rightly recognises:

“theology is a synthesis of all four sources, and each of these sources acts as a ‘check and balance’ for the other three. Of course, different traditions give different weight for each of these sources” (Cheng, 2011:11).

This recognition is quite helpful; it acknowledges well the complexities that different denominational traditions afford different weighting to each of the four sources. Even so, Cheng charts the genealogy of queer theology tracking its development since the mid-1950s. Thus, he highlights four different strands that inform queer theology. First, the evolution of queer theology starts with an approach termed ‘apologetic’; aptly captured by the slogan “gay is good” (Cheng, 2011:27).

Here various texts are central to the discussion: Derrick Sherwin Bailey’s *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (1955); the Anglican Norman Pettinger’s *Time for Consent?: A Christian’s Approach to Homosexuality* (1967); one of the founders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), the Catholic Jesuit John J.

McNeill's *The Church and the Homosexual* (1976); Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott's *Is the Homosexual MY Neighbour?: A Positive Christian Response* (1978); and John Boswell's well-read *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (1980). While no doubt forming the intellectual basis for gay and lesbian theologies, these texts contributed to the birth of queer theology – declaring the goodness and validity of sexualities that are not straight.

Second, liberation theologies have much inspired various strands of queer theology. Theologians such as the Latin American Gustavo Gutiérrez and African-American James Cone are particularly noteworthy; they argued God's preferential option for the oppressed. Thus, various texts were published informed by this new influence, affecting queer theology: Sally Gearhart and William R. Johnson's anthology *Loving Women/Loving Men: Gay Liberation and the Church* (1974); Malcolm Macourt's edited *Towards a Theology of Gay Liberation* (1977); George R. Edward's *Gay/Lesbian Liberation: A Biblical Perspective* (1984); and Robert Williams's *Just As I Am: A Practical Guide to Being Out, Proud, and Christian* (1992). Through these texts – and through the strand of liberation theology – theologians sought to open the church to the full liberation of LGBTI+ people; thus, their ordination to ministry and the affirmation of same-gender relationships. The influence of liberation theologies cannot be overstated; it provided the impetus that cemented the idea of queer liberation for this strand — queer liberation here meaning freedom from heterosexism and homophobia.

Third, relational theology was lesbian feminist theologians' response to gay men's silence about the intersections of gender and sexuality, and this was voiced in the 1960s. Cheng (2011:33) suggests "This strand of queer theology focused not so much on issues of acceptance or liberation, but rather finding God in the midst of the erotic—that is, mutual relationship—with another person." Hence, texts central to this strand are: Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's essay 'A Lesbian Approach to Theology' (1971); Sally Gearhart's essay 'The Miracle of Lesbianism' (1974); Carter Heyward's *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (1989); Mary E. Hunt's *Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship* (1991); and Elizabeth's Stuart's *Just Good Friends: Towards a Lesbian and Gay Theology* (1995). Nevertheless, Cheng (2011:35) notes that gay men theologians have contributed a vast body of work to the strand of relational theology – especially reflection wrestling with the HIV Aids epidemic.

Fourth, Cheng considers the fourth strand in queer theology is its very conceptualisation as 'queer theology.' Describing this strand, Cheng (2011:36) argues:

“This strand is based upon the theoretical work of queer theorists such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Specifically, queer theology challenges the essentialist notions of sexuality and gender identity, and it argues that these concepts are not so much ‘fixed’ but rather socially constructed through language and discourse.”

Again, various texts are essential in this strand: Mary Daly’s early work *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (1973); Robert E. Shore-Goss’s *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (1993) and his later revision of this text *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up* (2002); Gerard Loughlin’s *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (2007); and Leanne McCall and Maren C. Tirabassi’s editorial work *Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith* (2003). These texts highlight two critical features of this strand. First, the idea of sexuality as socially constructed is the foundation for its development; thus, essentialist conceptions of sexuality are opposed. Second, unlike before, this strand is greatly enriched by theological contributions of those who are bisexual and transgender theologies. In the previous strands, these theological reflections were not offered much attention. Highlighting these crucial texts in the academic field of queer theology, it quite clear that a vast body of works has been contributed to the development of this discipline. Given the different foci (ranging from works on theological anthropology, dogmatics to ecclesiology) these works continue to project a vision for the development of queer theology.

The entry of queer theology into mainstream theological and religious discourse is, rightly, as a result of queer theory. This recognition is quite helpful when reflecting on the development of queer theology. Cheng considers queer theology as the recognition of ‘radical love’; thus, he offers a helpful genealogy. Like many other theologies, queer theology is informed by the informants of scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Yet, Cheng notes for strands in the development of queer theology that ought to be considered: apologetics, which asserted the goodness of being gay; liberation theologies, articulating God’s preferential option for the oppressed; relational theologies, which centred affect theory by investigating the intersection of gender and sexuality; and queer theology, which challenges essentialist notions of identity. Therefore, the entry of queer theology into the academy is to be located within a history, which stretches back as far as the 1950s.

Marcella Althaus-Reid

The Argentinian lesbian, liberation and feminist theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid (1952–2009) is undoubtedly recognised as one who carved the path of queer theology. Born in Argentina, Althaus-Reid was baptised Roman Catholic and studied theology at *Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos*, in Buenos Aires.

She would achieve her doctorate at the University of St. Andrew in Scotland. Following this, in Scotland Althaus-Reid would be appointed lecturer at the University of St. Andrew's School of Divinity. There she became a professor and chair in Contextual Theology, and the first woman professor of theology. During her tenure as a professor, Althaus-Reid was also quite active in the ecclesiological life of the Metropolitan Community Church; a denomination established in the 1990s to provide an affirming faith community for those who are LGBTI+. Althaus-Reid's scholarship spans the various central dogmatic themes in the Christian faith; unsurprisingly, she has written extensively on the topics of incarnation, Mariology, Christology and the doctrine of God.

There is no doubt that Althaus-Reid contributed a significant body of work to queer theology and its development. As such, briefly discussing her scholarship is quite a difficult task; given this, three central ideas of Althaus-Reid's work are presented. First, Althaus-Reid attempts to provide a potential foundation for the development of queer theology. Fundamentally, Althaus-Reid (2007:303) probed that queer theology is “a radical form of the ‘love-talk of theology’, that is, a theology which introduces a profound questioning into the ways of love in our lives as individuals and as a society, and the things love can do in this world.” Althaus-Reid is quite clear, queer theology proceeds from the epistemological paradigm offered by queer theory – in her thought Butler is particularly essential.

Moreover, queer theology takes the project of deconstructing and destabilising the heterosexual epistemology and presuppositions in theology seriously. This heterosexual epistemology is elsewhere termed ‘T-theology’ (or Totalitarian theology) by Althaus-Reid. However, Althaus-Reid (2006:3) is clear, queer theology builds much on the work done by feminist and liberation theologies; and still, the goals of each of these theological orientations seeks to “help to denounce and transform the roots of many mechanisms of power and control.”

Second, quite central to her thought – borrowing from feminist and liberation theologies – Althaus-Reid centres the doctrine of the incarnation. This thought is no best articulated than in her publication *The Queer God* (2003). In it, Althaus-Reid seriously attempts to expose the

need for centring incarnation (to be understood as bodiliness and corporality) as a theological informant. However, she locates this understanding of incarnation outside of the hegemonic heteronormative worldview; instead, it should be focused primarily on the experiences of those who are LGBTI+. Therefore, Althaus-Reid (2003:2) posits:

“It also requires us to come clean about our experiences, which in some way or other always seem destined to fall outside the normative sexual ideology of theology. Further than this, it requires us to read a *contramano* (against the grain) issues of heterosexual institutions such as marriage and the subversiveness of popular spirituality in many non-Western cultures. It is from there that not only do we rediscover the face of the Queer God, but also find our relationship with God challenged and see emerging new reflections on holiness and on Christianity.”

Meaning, if the Christian is to mean anything in the twenty-first century and contribute to the liberation of people, then it must address the challenge that heterosexism presents. Further, Althaus-Reid’s claim that every theologian is bisexual represents how she underscores the importance of incarnation. Through this claim, Althaus-Reid (2003:15) destabilises the heteronormative construction of gender and sexuality. Thus, incarnation as theological informant can only be taken seriously when sexuality is considered and inherently part of the conceived bodiliness or corporality. In *The Queer God* Althaus-Reid analogously uses imagery that indicates a strong affirmation of bodiliness; thus, she speaks of “doing theology while naked”, and links theology with tango. However, at the heart of her centring of incarnation, Althaus-Reid (2007:309) contends that incarnational theology challenges the conceived nature of and the relationship between humanity and divinity.

Third, much of Althaus-Reid’s theology is predicated on the notion of ‘indecenty’ (or ‘*indecenting*’). Differently put, theology (if it is to grapple with the complexity of human sexuality and its relation to power) must assert itself as being indecent; that is, as a reflection from the margins. She captures this vision best in her work *Indecent Theology: Theological perversions in sex, gender and politics* (2000). Again, in this text too, Althaus-Reid attributes the work of queer theology to the contributions made by feminist and liberation theologies. As such, indecent theology is distilled in the quote: “The Argentinian theologian [or queer theologian] would like then to remove her underwear to write theology with feminist honesty, not forgetting what it is to be a woman when dealing with theological and political categories” (Althaus-Reid, 2000:2). Thus, queer theology – according to Althaus-Reid – undresses, uncovers and unearths how hegemonic power dictate and determine how people on the margins

(these are women, LGBTI+ and the impoverished); consequently, Althaus-Reid considers this ‘doing theology without using underwear.’ Still, indecent theology goes beyond this.

Althaus-Reid shows an appreciation for the critique liberation theologies offered the late modern neo-liberal economic system. For Althaus-Reid (2000:166):

“Economic desires walk hand in hand with erotic desires and theological needs. An economic model is a relationship model based on erotic considerations concerning the economy of bodies in society, their intimacy and distance and the patterns of accepted and unaccepted needs in the market and the making of the politics of satisfaction.”

Therefore, an *indecenting* of theology is predicated on an analysis of the market structures that continue to render sexual bodies products of consumption. Aware of the global realities, Althaus-Reid locates theology (specifically T-theology) at the root of the present economic structure. Thus, theology must address the gender, sexual and class construction posed by the economic desires; in fact, it must attempt to interrogate the intersections between these. In order to do this, following both Foucault and Butler, Althaus-Reid articulates her vision of subjectivity. Here subjectivity is strictly concerned with how the colonial order dictates and determines what is considered ‘decent’; thus, queer theology must propose a subversive orientation that grapples seriously with the task of *indecenting*. Hence, Althaus-Reid (2000:199) may very well be considered a theologian concerned with the development of the Global South or Developing World (previously termed the ‘Third World’). Given the close relationship between sexuality and gender, Althaus-Reid rightly sets queer theology on the path of interrogating the intersections of sexuality, gender and class.

Althaus-Reid has widely been hailed the parent of queer theology. Both her life and works prove the assertion to be accurate; of particular importance are her texts *The Queer God* and *Indecent Theology*. At least three reasons may be provided to argue this suggestion. First, Althaus-Reid considers queer theology to be ‘love-talk’ about God, the erotic and human experience; as such, the implied presuppositions of theology must be deconstructed to have meaning for those who are LGBTI+. Second, incarnational theology is at the heart of Althaus-Reid’s thought. Quite importantly, centring human experience destabilises the dualism between humanity and divinity. Finally, queer theology is predicated mainly on Butler’s view of *indecenting*; that is, theological reflection from the margins. Therefore, Althaus-Reid’s scholarship has presented her to be an influential figure in the development and deepening of queer theology.

Gerard Loughlin

Another key figure in the conceptualisation and development of queer theology is the English scholar Gerard Loughlin (1950–). He is also a Roman Catholic, following his study of English literature, Loughlin pursued theology at the University of Wales (co-supervised by the University of Cambridge's Trinity College) – his doctoral research focused on the philosophy and theology of John Hick.

After completing his studies, Loughlin was appointed the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Newcastle. Soon he moved to Durham University's Department of Theology & Religion. Loughlin's scholarship has been focused on his keen interests; these are gender studies, film study, narrative theology and Roman Catholic Modernism.

Loughlin's expansive scholarship may be summarised in two pivotal ideas. First, Loughlin wrestles greatly with the Biblical text. This is quite interesting, as opposed to mainstream Catholicism, Loughlin affords little credence to the magisterium – thus, instead of focusing his attention on Scripture. As such, it may very well be that Loughlin (1996:xv) attempts to advocate for an ecumenical position, in his development of queer theology. Contributing to Narrative Theology, Loughlin published his *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* in 1996. In this text, Loughlin surveys the terrain of postmodern theologies and probes the challenges it poses to the Christian faith. Primarily, Loughlin (1996:26) considers Christianity to be a faith of story-telling – thus the church as a community of story-tellers. Moreover, Loughlin (1996:224) considers Scripture as inviting the story-telling community to a life of sacramentality and liturgy.

Building on this, Loughlin published *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (2004). Unsurprisingly, this text took further the work presented in his *Telling God's Story*. Now, however, the focus was not only placed on Narrative Theology; in addition to this, Loughlin incorporated the theory of film study, gender studies and broader cultural studies methodologies. Again, though implicitly, Loughlin shows a preference for the priority of Scripture in the thought developed in this publication. However, unlike before, he grapples with what Catholicism renders the magisterium more explicitly; this may well be understood as wrestling with church history and the history of theology. In these two texts, Loughlin attempts to consider in earnestly the contemporary reception of Scripture and how it informs the theological imagination. This, no doubt, paved the way for Loughlin to edit the impressive text *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (2007); in it along with others he numerous themes advocated for by queer theology.

Second, another theme recurring in Loughlin's thought is Roman Catholic Theology's homophobia. More than elsewhere, Loughlin focuses strictly on the magisterium, especially how it conceptualises sexuality. It is well observed that "Catholic Church affirms a double standard regarding homosexuals inside and outside the Church" (Loughlin, 2004:73). Historically, the Catholicism has predicated its view of human sexuality (particularly homosexuality) on Scripture and its understanding of natural law. This allowed the denomination to conceptualise the distinction between 'being homosexual' and 'practising homosexuality.' This view is reflected in the ecclesiological documents *Declaration regarding Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics* (1975) and then its *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986), both were issued by the Roman Catholic Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Loughlin (2018:189) attributes this homophobia as "a matter of culture, of discourse, of disseminated and learned dislike. It is natural in the way that any taught antipathy is natural; natural in the context of a homophobic culture." While critical of human rights discourse, Loughlin does consider it a route to hold Catholicism accountable for the abuses it commits under the aegis of its homophobic theology. Recently Loughlin (2018:192) has noted the change in the tone of Roman Catholic Theology, and this is best represented in the approach adopted by Pope Francis. Recognising this, Loughlin (2018:193) advocates the notion of *imago Dei* should foreground any discussion on sexuality; though, the image here proposed should be rooted in the conception of human relationality (as opposed to the more general understanding of rationality). Still, Loughlin remains concerned with how Roman Catholic Theology presents an affront to the human rights of those who are LGBTI+.

Third, Loughlin interrogates the contribution queer theory makes to theology, especially given that its essence has no identity. He follows the conceptualisation of queer theory by David Halperin as 'identity without an essence.' Primarily for Loughlin (2008:145) theology "is queer because it answers to the queerness of God, who is not other than strange and at odds with our 'fallen' world. God's 'kingdom' is not ours." However, Loughlin rightly notes that queer theology builds on the receptively queering works of Gregory of Nyssa (who centred desire in his theology), St John of the Cross (who located desire in the spiritual) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (who recognised the relationship between the sexual and spiritual). Commenting on the notion of identity in queer theology, Loughlin (2008:149) states:

"Queer seeks to outwit identity. It serves those who find themselves and others to be other than the characters prescribed by an identity. It marks not by defining, but by

taking up a distance from what is perceived as the normative. The term is deployed in order to mark, and to make, a difference, a divergence.”

Identity is not central to queer theology; instead, it attempts to destabilise all constructed identities (particularly those that are hegemonic). Thus, the heart of queer theology rests on an articulation of itself as reference point, as opposed to having an inherent identity; of this Loughlin (2008:151) writes in summarising fashion: “The most that we can properly say about God is that God is, which is not a description but a point of theological grammar. Analogously, we can say that queer is, even if we cannot say in what queer consists other than by pointing to the effects of its deployment.” This, then, is what Loughlin conceives queer theology to be, a theological orientation that forgoes a preference for constructed identity.

Loughlin continues to be a leading voice in queer theology. His works *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* and his editing of *Queer Theology* seem to prove it. However, Loughlin may be considered as a critical figure of queer theology for three reasons. First, he centres an interrogation of scripture; and he does so in an ecumenical fashion. Second, Loughlin grapples with the Roman Catholic tradition by investigating its homophobia; which renders ‘homosexuals’ both ecclesial insiders and outsiders, distinguishing between ‘being homosexual’ and ‘practising homosexual.’ Third, for Loughlin queer theology has no essentialised identity; rather, it destabilises traditional conceptions of identity while utilising the resources of the tradition. Given this, Loughlin may rightly be considered a pioneering figure in the development of queer theology.

Elizabeth Stuart

The third pioneering scholar in queer theology here discussed is Elizabeth Stuart (1962–), from Britain. She was one of the first theologians to specialise in lesbian, gay and queer theology in the United Kingdom. In 1998 Stuart was appointed Professor of Christian Theology at King Alfred’s College (Winchester University); this lasted for a decade, after which she was appointed in a more senior position.

In 2006 Stuart was appointed Archbishop of the Province of Great Britain and Ireland of the Liberal Catholic Church International, until her retirement in 2016. Before this, Stuart served as a bishop in the Open Episcopal Church, an LGBTI+ affirming denomination in the United Kingdom. While in the academy, Stuart was also the founding chair of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality.

In 1997 Stuart published her seminal text *Religion is a Queer Thing: A Guide to the Christian Faith for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People*. In the publication, Stuart sought to distil and explore the insights of queer theology for the context of a local faith community. This guide was as practical as it was contextual, focusing on various themes not generally discussed regarding LGBTI+ and faith in the late 1990s. This publication was soon followed by another, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (2003). Now, building on the scholarship of gay and lesbian theologies, Stuart set out to put Christian theology on another trajectory altogether – that of queer theology. Thus, she addresses the notion of gay as good; while also addressing the mistakes and failures of the gay and lesbian theologies. As such, diagnosing the inadequacy of gay and lesbian theologies, Stuart (2003:105) writes (it is apt to quote her entirely):

“Gay and lesbian theology made the mistake of putting ultimate trust in the traditions of modernity rather the traditions of Christianity with the result that it has sometimes ceased to be recognisable as theology at all, and forfeited its place in contemporary Christian dialogue because it no longer speaks the same language nor does it follow the same ‘grammatical’ rules as its opponents.”

While the critique levelled against gay and lesbian theologies is quite sombre, Stuart’s analysis is best understood as an attempt to utilise the good that these theologies have offered and recognised its failures. Making this proposition, Stuart claims that Christianity is already queer; as such, she often cites the works of traditional theologians and schools of thought. Thus, any queer theology should unearth sources already present in the Christian tradition. Therefore, such queering should be quite critical of modernist approaches. The reasoning behind this is quite simple, for Stuart the church is ontologically queer. Tellingly and with much conviction, Stuart (2003:106) writes:

“For there is only one community charged with being queer and that is the Church and it so charged for a purpose: the preparation of the kingdom of heaven. Only Christianity can make queer theory a viable strategy for only Christians are called to imitate their God in acting *para phusin*, in excess of nature.”

Without doubt, Stuart’s exclusivist claims raise questions; she does not substantiate them. Still, her insight is worth consideration. These ideas very well serve as launching pad for the scholarship developed by Stuart. Hence, a brief discussion of recurring themes in her work is quite helpful.

First, Stuart calls for the queering of death. This should not be too surprising; the AIDS epidemic no doubt had quite an impact on her theology. While AIDS claimed countless lives since the 1970s, modern medicine has rendered death but a biological event – unlike previously. Following Michael Vasey, Stuart (2000:88) contends that a queering of death must be linked to desire and immortality. This is particularly the case as any consideration of AIDS should recognise its impact and theft of LGBTI+ lives. At the heart of her queering of death, Stuart (2000:91) attempts to “to deconstruct some of the idols of our age through rigorous engagement with culture from the perspective of the Christian tradition.” In her view, this is the task of theologians and queer theology more generally; that is, to queer death and our conception of temporality.

Second, Stuart explores the sacramental mystery. Like others, she rejects the modernist duality between divine and human, agreeing with many other feminist theologians (Stuart, 2004:228). Seeking to make sense of understanding the sacramental mystery, Stuart invites readers to step into the incense (informed by the high church liturgical practice). However, for Stuart feminist and queer theologies have failed to conceptualise of sacramental mystery; by neglecting and disregarding what she terms ‘the sacramental system’ – that is, vestments and liturgy. For that reason, Stuart (2004:232) states: “Liturgy provides the maps by which we interpret and navigate this world.” Therefore, it is incumbent on queer theology – argues Stuart – that the sacramental system should be reclaimed. For to do so would assert that Christianity is already queer, and as such has queering sources. Reflecting on the sacrament of baptism, Stuart contends that it destabilises various stable identities. Arguing that baptism is an identity change, Stuart (2003:106) writes:

“In other words baptism reveals the inadequacy of all other forms of identity and the desire caught up in them and therefore, ‘the rite requires us *not* to belong to the categories we thought we belonged in, so that a distinctive kind of new belonging can be realised.’”

It seems clear that Stuart’s conception of sacramental mystery is predicated on the already queerness of Christianity. More than that, in the sacrament of baptism – vis-à-vis the change of identity – the church may be considered a queer community, at least sacramentally. This conception is eerily similar to that of queer theory’s ‘chosen family’: family formed based not on biology but mutuality.

Third, Stuart penned an essay in the publication *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (2014, edited by Adrian Thatcher). In it, she explores the methodological approaches in theologies of sexuality – if anything, it charts the history of these theological developments. Of course, theologies of sexuality are a modernist invention; previously, theologies focused on sexual acts and their sinfulness (Stuart, 2014:1). Charting the methodologies, Stuart notes four movements. Firstly, *via positiva*, this path affirms the constructs of maleness and femaleness as theological categories, thus a positivist approach. Here theologians such as Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Pope John Paul II are essential figures. Primarily *via positiva* is predicated on the essentialist claim and maleness and femaleness is so created for reproduction. Secondly, *via negativa* endorses the view that desire plays a central role in the conceiving of the divine – theology and erotica as thus intimately linked. Stuart (2014:6) notes the work of Carl Heyward, who “defined God as erotic power and right relationship, the energy that calls us out of ourselves towards others into relationships based upon mutuality.” Similarly, the gay theologian J. Michael Clark argues that divinity must be reconceived in the face of the AIDS epidemic and its assault of LGBTI+ persons, so doing the dignity of these persons will be affirmed. Stuart (2014:7) admits that this warrants the temptation of idolising the erotic.

The third move, *via creative*, “human beings [now] participate with God in the bringing to birth of a new creation, the new creation which Christ inaugurates and into which Christians are baptized” (Stuart, 2014:8). The move calls into question perceived stable identities, including maleness/femaleness, marriage/singleness exposing their non-ultimacy. The theologians who argue for this conception are the present queer reception of Gregory of Nyssa, Kathy Rudy, Tina Beattie and Patrick Cheng. Fourth, *via transformativa*, now the focus is placed on the question: what is the future of theology and sexuality? Answering this question, Stuart (2014:11) advises “Theologians of sexuality need to turn to issues around the right ordering and channelling of desire towards its end in God.” This, if anything, should be the concern of any theology of sexuality. Following this fourth path – *via transformativa* – the church’s theology of sexuality would be enriched by the queering contributions of transgender and intersex people who challenge biological essentialism, asexual people who subvert the norm, and bisexual and pansexual people who embrace sexual fluidity. Stuart’s endorsement of this fourth path grapples earnestly with queer theology and deepens a queering project.

Through her works, *Religion is a Queer Thing* and *Gay and Lesbian Theologies* Stuart shows herself to be a queer theologian who altered the discipline. Her works, undoubtedly, track the

development of queer theology. This may be seen in three ways: first, in the face of the AIDS epidemic Stuart takes to the task of queering death and temporality; second, she asserts that a reclamation of mystery, sacramentality and liturgy is demanded; third, she recognises the methodological developments in queer theology, through her notion of *via positiva*, *via negativa*, *via creativa* and *via transformativa*. As such, Stuart's contribution to queer theology is not only methodological in focus; she also asserts to consider theme not generally considered.

Discourse Development

As all discursive paradigms, queer theology is not cast in stone. As such, the future of this theological tradition is well worth consideration. Cheng attempts to provide a possible analysis of what this future may look like; he notes two ideas. These ideas "are less concerned with fixed identities and identity politics, but rather with how these identities are fluid and constantly changing, depending upon the power dynamics of a given social context" (Cheng, 2011:39).

The first notion noted is that of intersectionality. The term was coined by the scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw and is informed by black feminist thought. The theory of intersectionality is "a crucial awareness in understanding the complexities and intricacies of the theory/method" at the intersection of the construction of one's identity (Kim & Shaw, 2018:xii). Thus, a black lesbian is not just a black woman but also a lesbian; the two identity markers are thus at an intersection. Intersectionality rejects the notion that one identity marker is centred at the expense of another; instead, proposing that identity markers should be recognised at an intersection. Therefore, intersectionality could be considered a discursive move. Carbado and others (2013:305) argue for intersectionality as various moves: firstly, it is a move that recognises itself as a work-in-progress; secondly, it is a move within and across academic disciplines; thirdly, it is a move across national boundaries; fourthly, it is a social movement. Primarily, then, the theory of intersectionality attempts to take the complex nature of identity seriously (in its intersected reality).

The second notion that seems to inform the future of queer theology is that of hybridity. This concept, of course, is rooted in postcolonial theory – notably the theorist Homi Bhabha's work *The Location of Culture* (1994). Hybridity may be understood to be the product of alternative life forms (these are social, cultural, political) which follow the colonial encounter (Acheraiou, 2011:2). Moreover, hybridity may also flow out of performative mimicry, an imitation of the colonial power (Lee, 2008:543). An analysis of hybridity seeks to uncover the impact of colonial powers on former colonies; probing the full scope of the effects. The focus on

intersectionality is quite timely in the present age of globalisation. Thus, queer theology may be significantly deepened by an analysis of hybridity.

It would do queer theology a great deal of good if it kept the future of the tradition an open question. Indeed, a concerted focus on intersectionality (appropriated from black feminism and critical race theory) and hybridity (appropriated from postcolonial theory) would deepen and enliven the future of queer theology. However, these cannot and will not be the only discursive informants. Thus, queer theology must remain faithful to its subversive and marginal orientation. Therefore, the future of queer theology may well be uncertain; but it must remain an open question that is open to all possibilities.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to provide an overview of queer theory and queer theology as academic disciplines. It is essential to recognise that the term ‘queer’ was reclaimed by those who are LGBTI+, to give expression to their lived experience in a world that is heteronormative. Meaning, using this term LGBTI+ people articulated their experience of the world, which continues to delegitimise their existence as a group of sexual minorities. Queer theory, then, set itself in opposition to the pervasive heteronormative epistemology at work in the academy. Thus, its entry into the academy is as a discursive epistemology. Even so, queer theory must be considered with its correct milieu, developing in the 1980s. Failure to recognise historicity does not adequately account for its complex development.

In order to account for the development of queer theory, the chapter further discussed critical figures in the discipline. There is no doubt that Michel Foucault contributed to queer theory, even before its conception. Much of the intellectual development in the development of queer theory is predicated on his thought. Fundamentally, Foucault’s most considerable contribution to queer theory is his conception of history. A view that supposed history as becoming; thus, not considered final and complete. As such, the human subject is thought to be the product of history. Thus, any conception of human subjectivity is founded on the prevailing discourse.

Another such figure is that of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who is widely held to be a founder of queer theory. Sedgwick’s conception of society is quite helpful; she develops the notion of *homosocialities* (wherein homosocial desire and homosocial panic are quite significant), which attempts to account for same-gender desire and homophobia. However, this conception of society is located within historicity. As such, she makes sense of this society using affect theory, which is the study of subjective experiences. Further, as a literary critic, Sedgwick

troubles the traditional hermeneutics of suspicion. Instead, she develops a reading of historical texts that follows a reparative, appreciative and empathetic route.

Any treatment of queer theory would be incomplete without a discussion of Judith Butler. In recent years she has occupied the status as a preeminent theorist in the field. Quite interestingly, Butler altered the field by moving beyond a mere rejection of essentialised genders. She articulated the view that gender is performative, thus having now an ontological basis. However, her insight into the community (or people) is quite helpful for this study. For Butler, a community is predicated on the recognition of the other's subjectivity. Nevertheless, Butler troubles this, even more, her focus on precarity is quite profound; it has two components: it is relational; and, it is a universal human condition. In essence, Butler's entire intellectual project attempts to reflect on a liveable world; that is, which adequately accounts for precarity.

It is quite crucial that queer theology is linked to queer theory, for its development would not have been possible without it. Thus, its historical context and intellectual sources are of great importance. As such, Cheng presents queer theology as 'radical love.' Differently put, radical love (or queer theology) sets out to destabilise traditional forms of theologising and religious reflection. However, at the same time, this destabilising utilises the sources fundamental to normative theologising; that is, scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Moreover, it is helpful to trace the various strands of queer theology's development; they are apologetic, liberation theologies and relation theologies. This, then, suggests that queer theology may rightly be considered an academic discipline.

The chapter continues to discuss three key figures in queer theology. The contributions of these figures are quite paradigmatic, and each reflected on the queer theology from their vantage point. Althaus-Reid is widely recognised as the parent of queer theology. For Althaus-Reid, theology was love-talk, that sought to reflect critically on God and the erotic (or desire). She centres incarnational theology as a fundamental informant of religious reflection. At the heart of her theological project, Althaus-Reid develops the notion of *indecenting*. Thus, all of queer theology must attempt to do so from the margin, even while destabilising (or *indecenting*) the norm.

A second key figure is Gerard Loughlin, who wrestles with the queering of sources (as proposed by Cheng). Loughlin rejects any notion of essentialised identity, arguing they have no ontological basis within a queer paradigm. Tackling tradition, Loughlin investigates Roman Catholic homophobia; which he argues renders 'homosexuals' both insiders and outsiders of

the church. However, that sets Loughlin apart is his preference for scripture. He uses a narrative theological lens to make sense of ancient texts, suggesting that the church is a story-telling community.

Elizabeth Stuart continues to be considered a key figure in the development of queer theology. Arguably, few theologians have been as critical of queer theology as Stuart has been; recognising both its successes and failures. As such, Stuart invites queer theology to the queering of theme not usually considered, such as death, temporality, sacramentality, mystery and liturgics. Possibly her most helpful contribution to queer theology is Stuart's charting of the different methodologies that inform it (*via positiva*, *via negativa*, *via creativa*, *via transformativa*). Even so, she prefers the prioritising of *via transformativa*; an epistemology that launches queer theology to act against the nature of the norm.

Following this discussion, this chapter has presented evidence that queer theory and queer theology are indeed academic disciplines. This discussion has highlighted the state of the discourse, its potential, underlying logic and contestations. As such, queer theology may rightly be used as a tool of analysis; in this thesis, the study of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology.

Chapter 3 Saints Living Together in Communion

Introduction

Building on the work outlined in the introduction and the previous chapter (which discussed the intellectual contours of queer theory and queer theology), this chapter interrogates two of Bonhoeffer's works *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*. These texts are here treated as primary texts, that are argued to inform the value of this study; thus, they are studied in detail. Differently put, by carefully analysing both texts, the research attempts to argue that a queering is at work in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology. The queering praxis here employed seeks to read these texts transgressively; that is, against supposed boundaries. Meaning attempts to shed light on themes present that may be brought into conversation with queer theology.

This chapter has four sections as its focus. First, it provides a biography of Bonhoeffer in order to historicise his life and works. Second, it discusses Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological thought, as outlined in *Sanctorum Communio*. Third, attention is afforded to *Life Together*; in this section, the effort is made to investigate how Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology may have matured and transformed. Finally, informed by both texts, an attempt is made to flesh out themes present when considering Bonhoeffer's text in conversation with queer theology.

Historicising Bonhoeffer

In order to understand the works of Bonhoeffer within their context, it is needful that he be adequately historicised. Given this, a brief biography is presented in order to ensure that he is understood as a person of and within his time. It remains crucial that one acknowledges that Bonhoeffer's struggle with and resistance against Nazi Germany served as one of the greatest informants of his theological project. The two texts *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* were produced at quite different periods in Bonhoeffer's life. This brief biography, then, attempts to highlight what influenced his thoughts in the writing of these texts.

This biographical sketch is quite mindful of the historical distance. In the recent publication *The Battle for Bonhoeffer* (2018), Stephen Haynes offers caution. Haynes is quite concerned about the democratisation of the Bonhoeffer-figure; that is, the mixed and contradictory receptions of him. Commenting on the populist reception of Bonhoeffer in America (possibly elsewhere too), Haynes (2018:3) notes: "Although the populist Bonhoeffer was fashioned on the right, he has become the currency of withers across the political spectrum." Thus, a hermeneutic of suspicion is required when analysing biographical depictions.

This study attempts to hold these two notions in creative tension. On the one hand, recognition of the populist representations of Bonhoeffer are helpful to explore what his legacy may mean in our time. Still, on the other hand, the biography and theology of Bonhoeffer should be interrogated for who and what it was in his day; thus, discursively working against the locked narrative.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on 4 February 1906, with his twin sister Sabine – the sixth and seventh of eight children. Throughout his life, Bonhoeffer would have quite an intimate relationship with Sabine (Reynolds, 2016:39). He was born to his father Karl, who was a professor, and his mother Paula (née van Hase), a teacher by training. At the time of his birth into his early childhood, the Bonhoeffer's lived in Breslau. Tellingly, though, Bethge (2000:1) notes that the family's roots “were not in Silesia, but in Swabia, Thuringia, and Prussia.” Marsh (2014:11) argues that Bonhoeffer was quite aware of his privilege from a rather young age.

In 1920, then aged fourteen years old, Bonhoeffer decided to pursue theological studies – much to the dismay of his father and family (Marsh, 2015). This decision is quite impressive; the Bonhoeffer's were not active in the life of their local congregation, though Dietrich received limited exposure via catechism (resulting in his confirmation) and his mother's religious instruction (given her involvement with the Moravian Brethren). A possible primary reason Bonhoeffer opted theology and ministry as a career path was to set himself apart from his siblings. Strikingly Bethge (2000:44) suggests:

“He was attracted by the prospect of grappling with the as yet unexplored subject. He was not yet driven by any love of the church or an articulated theological system of beliefs, and certainly not by a discovery of the Scriptures their exegesis. His interest in the discipline of theology was still much more philosophical than religious.”

At the age of seventeen, Bonhoeffer left his home for the study of theology, at Tübingen University (as was the family custom). This period of study was also engrossed in the inflation of post-war Germany (Nelson, 1999:27). During the first year, Bonhoeffer was entirely immersed in his studies. Even so, “There is no sign that Bonhoeffer had adopted a specific theological direction at Tübingen. His priority was philosophy” writes Bethge (2000:53).

The following year, as a result of a skating accident, Bonhoeffer set out to visit Rome with his brother Klaus. This visit is worth much note, given Germany's political climate at the time. Rome remained a centre of intellectual excellence in the mind of Bonhoeffer. During this period, Bonhoeffer had also visited North Africa. “Without informing their parents, they

[Dietrich and his brother Klaus Bonhoeffer] crossed the Mediterranean and spent ten days in Tripoli and in the Libyan desert” (Bethge, 2000:58). Following this brief period in Africa, the two returned to Rome.

What was most striking to Bonhoeffer about Rome was undoubtedly the Roman Catholic Church. In a sense, his experience of the church in Rome was quite different from that of his native Germany. Thus, one does not find it too strange for Bethge (2000:59) to comment: “his own Evangelical church at home struck him as provincial, nationalistic, and narrow-minded. In his letters from Roman and in his diary, when he spoke of his own church background he typically didn’t speak of ‘church’ but always of ‘Protestantism.’” In Rome, unlike in Germany, Bonhoeffer experienced the universality (indeed, the catholicity) of the ecclesia – which inspired him to consider the concreteness of the church. Unlike other Protestants of the time, Bonhoeffer did not approach Catholicism with disdain, but admiration and appreciation (Marsh, 2014:33). This had a most profound impact on his theological trajectory.

Returning from Rome, Bonhoeffer again pursued the study of theology at Berlin (which lasted until 1927). Berlin was altogether different from Tübingen, its “‘liberal and ‘positivist’ school of theology, embodied by its great teachers, opened before him” (Bethge, 2000:67). At this stage, Adolf von Harnack played a considerable role in the theological development of Bonhoeffer, liken unto this was the influence of Karl Holl (Marsh, 2014:44). Yet, Bonhoeffer wrote his dissertation with Reinhold Seeberg as supervisor– this tutelage continued until the completion of his studies in 1927. He did this in record time (no more than eighteen months), Bonhoeffer’s dissertation would be accepted 1 August 1927.

In 1928 Bonhoeffer set out to start his work as an assistant pastor, for a Protestant church in Barcelona. Feeling as though he was starting afresh, Bonhoeffer noted the muted effects of post-war Germany on this community. Quite importantly, unlike previously Bonhoeffer was now not too engaged in rigorous theological discourse but rather the practical tasks of the church. Again, during this time Bonhoeffer was austere attracted to the Roman Catholicism – as represented in the Spanish city of Barcelona.

The following year, in 1929, amid immense political changes, Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin. Now in Berlin, Bonhoeffer’s time would be concerned with three primary tasks: his position as an assistant lecturer; the publication of his dissertation; and, his postdoctoral work. In April 1929 Bonhoeffer began the work of his first task, as an assistant lecturer to Wilhelm Lütgert

(who lectured both in New Testament and Systematic Theology). The second task was preparing his doctoral dissertation for the publication.

In the summer and winter of 1929, Bonhoeffer took to the third task, his postdoctoral work *Act and Being*. It developed the argument made in his previous work, concerning how revelation becomes concrete. Bethge (2000:133) helpfully captures the concerns of Bonhoeffer's two works: "Theologically and sociologically, his first book was an argument for the concreteness of revelation in the form of community. The second book argued for the theological and epistemological struggle – basically for the same concreteness." In short, the year back in Berlin proved to be quite helpful to Bonhoeffer's theological development – particularly given his consideration of the Christian church.

In 1930 feeling immense freedom, Bonhoeffer set out his trip to America to study at Union Theological Seminary; after proving himself competent for a career in both the church and the academy. His time was also consumed with various speaking engagements, ranging from Unitarian to Lutheran. It would seem Bonhoeffer immersed himself in the cultural expression of black America; collecting publications of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People and listening to Negro spirituals. During his stay in America, Bonhoeffer committed much of his time travelling. Unlike what Bonhoeffer had been used to, Union offered a less dogmatic and exegetical course and a range of contextual theological courses (the likes of ethics, and analyses of American life).

During this period, Bonhoeffer continues his reflection on ecclesiology. Now his concern resided in the credibility, competence of the church and ecumenism. Thus, in this period, Bonhoeffer would work in three fields: the academy, the church, and the ecumenical sphere. Further, it was also during this time that Bonhoeffer met Karl Barth – with whom he would have a lasting relationship.

On 15 November 1931 Bonhoeffer was ordained with the laying on of hands, which Bonhoeffer endeared as the real assurance of apostolic succession. Now Bonhoeffer was appointed student chaplain to a Technical University in Charlottenburg. Sadly, his work there was most unfruitful. In Wedding, Bonhoeffer was assigned to teach confirmation class; this had an immense impact on the young minister.

Ecumenically Bonhoeffer's time was spent as youth secretary of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches in the Ecumenical Council for Practical Christianity. While Bonhoeffer's introduction to ecumenism was incidental, "He was

soon furiously involved in the internal battles about its orientation, and he defended it enthusiastically in public. The emerging world of the Protestant ecumenical movement became a vital part of his theology, his role in church struggle, and ultimately his political commitment” (Bethge, 2000:190). It should be noted, Berlin was duly regarded as an ecumenical centre, and Berlin University was considered a leading institution on this front. As such, Bonhoeffer was quite at home in the ecumenical movement – despite its liberal and humanist theology. The ecumenical conference in Cambridge influenced Bonhoeffer a great deal. It elected him to the role of international honorary youth secretary; whose task was to travel and do coordinating work.

“At noon on 30 January 1933 Hitler took over the leadership of the government from Hindenburg” (Bethge, 2000:257). As early as then, Bonhoeffer was quite involved in the resistance against Nazism; in fact, this would alter the very course of his life. That moment required more from the young theologian and minister than mere academic discourse; it was a time that called for action. In February of this year, Bonhoeffer was invited to speak on the radio; he discussed the development of the *Führer* concept. In no uncertain terms, Bonhoeffer critiqued this concept; suggesting that leaders ought to serve the interests of their followers (Bethge, 2000:260). Given his critique, the microphone was switched off; thus, censoring Bonhoeffer’s dissent. It was the first nine months of 1933 that proved to Bonhoeffer the need for action against the Nazi state apparatus. More than that, this period also proved to him how much he differed from those he considered allies – especially in the drafting of the Bethel Confession. Bethel, of course, was a locality on which the Nazi government put pressure on to pursue ‘mercy killings.’

In April 1933 the Nazi regime had passed anti-Jewish legislation; this resulted in the advancement of the Aryan Paragraph (which called for the dismissal of Jewish government employees). At this time Bonhoeffer would present a paper in Berlin titled ‘The Church and the Jewish Question.’ In this text “Bonhoeffer challenged this immoral legislation, called the churches to come to the aid of the victim of injustice – whether they were baptised or not – and, further, ‘not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to jam a spoke in the wheel itself’” (Nelson, 1999:35). Fundamentally, the argument set forth was for the church to help the state by the state.

In October 1933 Bonhoeffer moved to London to minister to two German parishes, one in Sydenham and the other East End. Two reasons may be offered why Bonhoeffer accepted these calls: first, it was honest parish work or church work; second, he sought to gain perspective on

the German church struggle in light of the bigger ecumenical picture. Barker (*DBWE 14, 7*) is helpful by noting the complexity of the church struggle; “the Church Struggle can be characterized as being multidimensional, involving the ‘neutrals’ and the German Christians, as well as the struggle between the Confessing Church and the Nazis over state encroachment into the church’s governance.” Part of this complexity was also the internal disunity in the Confessing Church – especially regarding the more radical and moderate forms of opposition. Bonhoeffer was, no doubt, one such radical. Further, it was during this period in London that his relationship with the Bishop of Chichester, George K.A. Bell (Nelson, 1999:33). Bell would prove to be a reliable friend on the ecumenical resistance against Nazism.

Even though he was in London, Bonhoeffer played quite a decisive role in preparation for what would be the ‘Confessing synod.’ This is, no doubt, over and against the opposition by the bureaucracy of the German church. On 29 May 1934, the first national Confessing synod constituted in Barmen. It was this synod that gave articulation to the Barmen Declaration, which declared the teachings of the German Christians as heretical. During this period, from London, Bonhoeffer was a proponent of separation from the German Evangelical Church. During this time Bonhoeffer had been considered an outsider both to ecumenical partners (who repudiated his advocacy for heresy), and those in the Confessing Church (who rejected his preference for the Sermon on the Mount and its implications).

On the ecumenical front, tremendous strides would be made at the Fanø conference in 1934; a collection of three bodies: the Management Committee of the World Alliance, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and the International Youth Conference. For this conference, Bonhoeffer had to prepare a lecture and organise – while also ensuring that the Confessing Church could participate. Interestingly, Bonhoeffer delivered his lecture after the conference had resolved. The articulation of this resolution read, “Here the Council solemnly resolved to throw its weight onto the side of the Confessing Church in Germany against the so-called ‘German Christians’ and by implication against the Nazi regime” (Rouse and Neill in Bethge, 2000:381).

In order to understand the Preachers’ Seminary, it may be needful to comment on the founding of preachers’ seminaries, as these were unique institutes at the time. Given that theological education was the task of the German church and state, the Confessing Church soon realised the need for the training of its clergypersons. This is especially the case since the *Reichskirche* required theological students to prove their Aryan racial purity. Historically, of course, preachers’ seminaries were neglected with many instead preferring ‘traditional theological

education’ – that which is pursued at a university. However, circumstances now required a revision of this notion. Following the counsel of many, Bonhoeffer agreed to lead the preachers’ seminary. Even with his willingness to provide the required leadership; by this time Bonhoeffer was already sceptical of the many compromises of the Confessing Church. Even with this reluctance toward the Confessing Church, yet “Bonhoeffer had a clear vision of the structure and curriculum of the new institution” (Bethge, 2000:424).

It is important to note that this time two tasks had befallen Bonhoeffer. Barker (*DBWE 14*, 2013:18) describes these tasks well: “The first concerned the renewal of the church and the training of future leaders for the church... The second task involved the church’s witness, which was centred on and grew out of God’s word as well.” This understanding of his mandate would guide Bonhoeffer in his directing of the Preachers’ Seminary. In effect, then, Bonhoeffer sought to reform the church with Scripture as a guide.

Zingst would be the first location for the preachers’ seminary; an island in the Baltic Sea, it was a resort village. Marsh (2014:227) offers a telling description of the spatiality of the seminary at Zingst:

“The first class of would officially be known as the Emergency Teaching Seminary of the Confessing Church, on the other hand, was initially lodged in an unheated timber-framed structure surrounded by windswept outbuilding and low-thatched huts that looked like outcroppings of the craggy coast. Bonhoeffer could not have been more pleased with the arrangements.”

By this time, Bonhoeffer was quite ready to lead this alternative form of monasticism – which would be thoroughly explored in his *Life Together*. Now he was serving the Confessing Church as director of the seminary; he would be employed by the Old Prussian Council of Brethren, who compensated his service (Bethge, 2000:424). This Council would appoint the Reformed theologian Wilhelm Rott to be his assistant, who was also a Barthian. Together they served the twenty-three candidates.

Two months later, on 14 June 1935, the seminary was relocated. Thus, all had to move out in exchange for a fixed abode. The new location for the seminary would be the estate of the von Katte family, in the country town of Finkenwalde. This estate had both a roomy house and a building previously used as a private school – these extra rooms were most useful (Bethge, 2000:426; *DBWE 14*, 2013:22). At this stage various patrons were willing to express their opposition to Nazism through the church opposition, this was not different. This new space

required decoration; all took to this task not least Bonhoeffer. Bethge (2000:427) recounts Bonhoeffer's "gramophone records, remarkable for those days, was at everyone's disposal; the rooms often rang with the then little-known Negro spirituals such as 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.'" Creating the library of the seminary was no simple feat; Bonhoeffer's collection of reference books, commentaries, dogmatics collection was its foundation – which inspired the ordinands. Interestingly, Reynolds (2016:105) notes that the manor house had two pianos; more than that, it was rather uncommon in German seminaries for music to play such a central role in the life of the community. This, indeed, proves Bonhoeffer's intention to create an alternative monastic community.

Finkenwalde required candidates to follow a structured daily routine. "The day began and ended with two long services" (Bethge, 2000:428). At the service, time would be devoted to choral singing and reading from both the Old and New Testaments. Interestingly, though, on Saturdays Bonhoeffer included a sermon; and Sundays no classwork would be permitted, rather time was spent on games. Bethge (2000:429) may be correct in his assertion, "All this was part of the practice of communal living and the personal training of future preachers; it occurred more through indirect suggestions than explicit words." Impressively, pursuing an alternative monastic community, the seminary sought to address the world rather than a recluse. Once a week time would be devoted to a discussion on contemporary issues; quite simply, the seminary did not withdraw from the challenges of the time.

Regarding the syllabus, the Finkenwalde experiment was not too strange. "Homiletics, catechetical studies, pastoral care and liturgical studies, lectures on the church, ministry, and community" these foci received attention (Bethge, 2000:441). Three concerns seem to be primary in the overall syllabus: homiletics, ministry and church, and confessional writing. Unsurprisingly, Bonhoeffer considered preaching as quite authoritative, thus nothing less than the very word of God. Fundamentally Bonhoeffer sought to communicate two ideas to the students regarding preaching. First, they ought to make proclamation concrete. Second, Bonhoeffer offered tremendously practical advice in the preaching task.

Concerning the ministry of the church, Bonhoeffer made significant attempts to address the ecclesial questions of the time. Here three issues seem to receive preference (Bethge, 2000:444). First, classes discussed legal and constitutional questions about the church – and thus, church polity. Second, attention was afforded to schism and reunification, which was most intimately related to the substance of a confession. Third, the ministry was also related to

apostolic succession; here, Bonhoeffer sought to crystallise that there is “no congregation without a ministry” (Bethge, 2000:445).

By July 1935 Bonhoeffer would devote most of his teaching time to the area of confessional writing. This may well be given his appreciation of Reformation theology, its orientation toward confessionalism – which, of course, was a topical question at the time. As any good Lutheran, the confessional writings fundamental to his lectures were the Smalcald Articles, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, and Luther’s Formula of Concord (Bethge, 2000:447). Following these texts, Bonhoeffer questioned their relevance regarding contemporary questions of ecclesiology and ethics.

Like before, during this time, Bonhoeffer’s work ethic was nothing short of amazing. His excellent memory came much to his aid, assisting him in finalising tasks speedily. His reading of exegetical literature also consumed this time in Finkenwalde; he was quite aware of the developments in discourse. Even so, much time was spent familiarising the Reformation theologians and confessional writings – particularly regarding Scripture. More telling, Bonhoeffer did not show much of an interest in church history. During this time, Bonhoeffer would also start the process of penning his *Discipleship*. Of this Bethge (2000:451) writes “did not appear at the preachers’ seminary with a manuscript ready for publication, but entire sections of his lectures went straight into the book.”

Moreover, the Finkenwalde experiment also offered Bonhoeffer the practical and theological stimulus to write his *Life Together*. The communal life at the preachers’ seminary offered for such reflection and eventually allowing for a publication. Therefore, Bonhoeffer showed remarkable mastery at balancing his life; thus, he could interrupt his work without falling behind.

In the few years, the Finkenwalde seminary existed was of the most troubling times for German Christianity (Bethge, 2000:493). Following the celebration of his thirtieth birthday, Bonhoeffer sought to plan a trip to Sweden with the seminary candidates. Knowing various ecumenical partners in Sweden, this did not prove too difficult for Bonhoeffer’s logistic planning. They would visit Stockholm; a tremendous media buzz accompanied their departure; both the Archbishop of Eidem and the seminarians made the newspaper. Given their open opposition to the Nazi state and church, Bonhoeffer had not finally lost his right to teach at Berlin. Now circumstances had irrevocably changed.

By July 1936, the first group of ministers in the Confessing Church would be arrested “under a law criminalizing all activities associated with non-‘assimilated’ (non-Nazi) churches and organizations” (Marsh, 2014:247). At this time, in Spring, the Confessing Church had also sent a memorandum to Hitler, this raised much of Bonhoeffer’s hope in the church. “In February 1937, during the fourth year of Hitler’s reign, the Ministry of the Interior issued an order against naming from the pulpit anyone who had been removed from his position or who had left the Reich Church because of conscience” (Marsh, 2014:257). The official crackdown of the opposition, especially the Confessing Church, had started. In February 1937 alone no less than eight hundred clergy and laypersons were imprisoned and arrested. In September yet another decree would be issued, the Fifth Implementation Decree for the Law to Restore Order to the German Evangelical Church; now preaching seminaries would be outlawed, the seminary at Finkenwalde too. Marsh (2014:260) describes this time, “For the Finkenwalde brethren who had been living in *gemeinsames*, there would be no further days according to daily Christian hours.”

Moreover, for Bonhoeffer, this action brought an end to the happiest years of his life.” Barker captures the essence of the Finkenwalde experiment, it “was more than a seminary in the traditional sense, with its focus on classes and lecture; it was also a community of like-minded individuals who shared common vocational goals.” If anything, the Finkenwalde Preachers’ Seminary sought to oppose the Reich Church and its policy of discriminating othering, by training ministers to create a church for others.

Primarily, this brief biography sought to provide historicization of Bonhoeffer’s texts. Reflecting on the Bonhoeffer’s complicated life, Reynolds (2016:17) writes: “Despite privilege, he went hungry during World War I, an experience unknown to most Westerners... Against the backdrop of Nationalist Socialism, Bonhoeffer’s struggle to be human stands out sharply.” The biography provided communicates two critical notions that inform succeeding chapters. First, spatiality serves as the foundation on which Bonhoeffer’s life is built. Consistently, Bonhoeffer engaged in the ecumenical movement but asserted to reform the Lutheran tradition. Second, while a citizen of the world, Bonhoeffer’s biography underscores the importance with which he approached the German political climate. Nazi Germany remains the most ardent informants of the refined theological reflection he provided throughout his life.

Further, two reasons should be provided on why this biography concludes at the closing of Finkenwalde Preachers’ Seminary. First, it sets his life as the point of departure of all his theological reflection and his activism, as previously discussed. Second, it undertakes to keep

track of his theological developments, especially as they relate to his ecclesiology. Which is quite crucial as his theological development cannot be divorced from his biography; preferably the former is informed by the latter. Reynolds (2016:6) captures these two ideas best, writing “the theological is always personal for Bonhoeffer. He could be reticent about his about his personal life, but his theology is always shaped by his dialogue with circumstances.” As such, while theology is the focus of this study, Bonhoeffer’s biography is essential.

Sanctorum Commnunio

Following years of study, in 1927 Bonhoeffer would complete his 354-page *Sanctorum Communio*, under the supervision of Reinhold Seeberg. For the discussion here presented, use is made of the English translation of the text by Fortress Press. The present section, then, discusses the content of this text; it does so by following a two-pronged approach. First, it provides a cursory view of the logical flow of its content. Second, it employs a queer theological analysis of the text by attempting to highlight various themes.

Marsh rightly notes the complex nature of the content of the dissertation. He argues “the theologians did not understand all the sociology, while the sociologists were perplexed by the theology, and neither camp wanted to betray its ignorance” (Marsh, 2014:56). Bonhoeffer, it should be stated, makes a unique contribution to theology using a sociological lens. Green captures Seeberg’s sentiment, saying:

“The author is not only well oriented in the discipline of theology, but also has worked his way intelligently into the field of sociology. He clearly possesses a great gift for systematic thinking, as demonstrated by the dialectics in the structure of his thesis as a whole, and in its detail” (quoted in *DBWE 1*, 8).

Seeberg does not only praise the insights of the study as presented by Bonhoeffer; he does provide at least two critiques regarding the thesis. First, Seeberg does not agree with the judgements produced by Bonhoeffer; instead, he considered these judgements informed by Bonhoeffer’s scholarly interest – especially the critique of Idealism. Second, Seeberg contends that the texts contain various redundancies; given this repetition, Seeberg posits that the dialectical proofs presented are not always convincing. Primarily, Seeberg’s (*DBWE 1*, 8) critique is that all of these “all these deficiencies are part and parcel of every youthful product”; meaning, they reflect the intellectual mindset of Bonhoeffer at the time. Consequently, one may argue that Seeberg perceived in this doctoral study the potential to sustain Bonhoeffer’s inquiry into the church and society.

On 17 December 1927 Bonhoeffer successfully defended the dissertation, no doubt with the assistance of his supervisor Seeberg. Following this, he was awarded the degree Licentiate in Theology *cum laude*, at the age of twenty-one years. Three years later, in 1930, the dissertation would be published by Trowitzsch und Sohn.

The preface of the publication, Bonhoeffer provides reasoning why the ecclesiology should be studied using the tools of sociology, and why this is worth pursuing within the field of theology. He writes:

“The more this investigation has considered the significance of the sociological category for theology, the more clearly has emerged the social intention of all the basic Christian concepts. ‘Person’, ‘primal state’, ‘sin’, and ‘revelation’ can be fully comprehended only in reference to sociality” (*DBWE 1*, 13).

Bonhoeffer makes clear that these concepts will – and indeed does – reflect throughout his body of work. At the heart of his conception of the church, then, is a focus on relationality and how Christ informs all relations; thus, he employs a sociological reading. Given this primary concern for relationality, it does readers well to consider the preference queer theology affords such relations: Cheng (2011:ix), as noted, terms this “radical love”; Moore and others (2018:19) link this understanding of being in relation to the affective turn in queer theory and theology. Subsequently, it is helpful to read Bonhoeffer’s *Sanctorum Communio* in the attempt to offer a queer given that different thematic foci coalesce. However, a discussion of the structure of the publication may present his theologising in a more organised manner.

At the very outset, in chapter one, Bonhoeffer sets out to guide the reader through the argument he develops. He defines social philosophy as fundamentally concerned with the relationships presupposed by knowledge and the empirical community; thus, it deals with the origins of sociality. It is a normative discipline, which provides guidelines for interpretation; which is different from sociology. It the study of the structure of the empirical community; the subject matter of its concern is constitutive structural principles. Therefore, it is not a historical discipline but rather systematic.

It is helpful here to place Bonhoeffer into conversation with Foucault. Foucault conceived of history as becoming; that is, the human subject is the product of history – also understood as human constructions, such as community, are the inventions of history (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014:6). History is thus methodologically important for Bonhoeffer; who sets out to understand the structure of the church, as historically revealed in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer

recognises that it is a theological study, not a sociological one. In both the fields of theology and sociology the distinction Bonhoeffer offers has indeed been criticised; not least by the sociologist Peter Berger. However, studying Bonhoeffer's work, Mawson contends that there that Bonhoeffer does employ theological logic in his argument. Mawson (2018:40) asserts:

“My claim is that Bonhoeffer's initial decisions with respect to social theory, those which Berger and others deem problematic, make sense *theologically*. His engagement with social theory proceeds, and should be read, only as part of a specifically ‘theological study of the sociology of the church.’”

Therefore, in the service of theology, Bonhoeffer presents his theoretical framework. As such, he offers a theological inquiry into the church (while utilising the insights of sociology). While the critique of this study is no doubt useful, like Mawson, I argue that Bonhoeffer's theoretical underpinnings should inform our readings of his theology.

Following a theoretical framework; *Sanctorum Communio* considers various ideas before describing Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology (which he articulates in chapter five). Chapters two through four, then, note three preliminary ideas worth highlighting – especially when brought into conversation with queer theology. The three ideas are the conception of the person; community; and, sin. It is quite helpful to recognise that these ideas provide the point of departure for the ecclesiology he develops in the final chapter of *Sanctorum Communio*.

First, considering the conception of the person, Bonhoeffer makes it quite clear that he conceives of the person as primarily related to community and God. He seeks only to explore the ontic conception person and not the social or empirical (*DBWE 1*, 19). Highlighting historical conceptions of the person by schools of thought (Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism and Descartes), Bonhoeffer refutes them; instead, he prefers a Christian understanding. Thus, he argues:

“This Christian concept of person necessarily builds upon the fact of the human spirit... In this general concept of personal spirit we must also overcome the idealist concept and replace it with one which preserves the individual, concrete character of the person as absolute and intended by God” (*DBWE 1*, 25).

The person here considered by Bonhoeffer is not primal; instead, it is after the fall, thus knowing good and evil. Quite crucial for Bonhoeffer is the rejection transcendental idealism, most plainly he argues against the idea that through reason one could become a subject – consequently one remains an object, thus not the person.

In order to develop his Christian understanding of the conception of the person, Bonhoeffer offers a threefold analysis. Firstly, he constructs the person as concrete and undivided (contrary to idealism), thus the person is a living individuality. Secondly, the person is only able to respond to the question of ethics within time. “The person does not exist timelessly; a person is not static, but dynamic. The person exists always and only in ethical responsibility; the person is re-created again and again in the perpetual flux of life” writes Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 28). Third, it helps to note the construction of the other – Bonhoeffer allows for it to be both God and another human person. Here it is helpful to acknowledge that fundamental to Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the I-You relationship person, community and God are inseparable; thus, another person may well be presented as the other. Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 33) summarises the idea, writing: “God or the Holy Spirit joins the concrete You; only through God’s active working does the other become a You to me from whom my I arises. In other words, every human You is an image of the divine You.” Therefore, individuality, an understanding of ethics located in time and an encounter with the other are quite fundamental to Bonhoeffer’s Christian conception of the person. It is essential to note the importance Bonhoeffer attributes to sociality; differently put, these concepts can only be understood through concrete social relationships (Mawson, 2018:68).

As previously stated, the queer theorist Butler’s scholarship is much concerned with subjectivity – specifically her doctoral dissertation on Hegel, *Subject of Desire*. Given this, it may be helpful to consider how this links with Bonhoeffer’s conception of the person in conversation with Butler. Like Bonhoeffer, Butler considers the self seriously in relation to the other. The self cannot know itself without the other; however, one is to understand this as a desire of the other. Salih (2002:26) reflects on this, saying:

“To put this another way, the subject can only know itself *through another*, but in the process of recognizing itself and constituting its own self-consciousness it must overcome or annihilate the Other, otherwise it places its own existence at risk. Desire, in other words, is tantamount to the *consumption* of the Other.”

One is not to understand ‘consumption’ here as negative. Instead, it is the encountering of the other and absorption into the self. Here the German term *Aufhebung* is quite helpful; which may mean to lift, to cancel and to preserve. Consequently, Butler “defines *Aufhebung* as a ‘developing sequence’ of desire, ‘consuming desire, desire for recognition, desire for another’s desire.’ It is only through the supersession or sublation of another that the Spirit can recognize itself” (Salih, 2002:27).

Reading Bonhoeffer's conception of the person from a different vantage point may offer helpful insights. In many ways, Bonhoeffer and Butler may be found in agreement; especially when considering individuality and ethics within time. Nevertheless, their understanding of the self in relation to the other may seem quite divergent. Still, this divergence may be most helpful for a contemporary reading of Bonhoeffer. Utilising the notion of desire as a tool to understand both the self and other, Butler opens profound questions about subjectivity. As stated, Bonhoeffer's conception of the person should be understood to be primarily related to sociality. Therefore, taking our cue from Butler desire may be a helpful tool to recognise the importance of encountering the other – whom Bonhoeffer conceives as God and another person – while also being attentive to the fact that this must take place within social reality.

Second, Bonhoeffer shifts his focus to relationships within the community. In our time, it may be helpful to understand this notion of relationality in terms of affect theory. Sedgwick utilises the insights of affect theory as the impetus for the development of a hermeneutic; which attempts to uncover the history of sexuality and the prevalence homosocialities at work in the community. Such a reading may stimulate our contemporary reading of Bonhoeffer's texts, which are primarily addressed to a masculine gendered audience. By using affect theory as a tool of analysis (for relationality), one may be better able to interpret Bonhoeffer for our time in which gender egalitarianism is pursued, which differs vastly from his.

Bonhoeffer's discussion of relationships is grounded in a broken history; that is, an understanding of sin and the former primal state. He writes "For us, though, the doctrine of the primal state is significant precisely because it enables us to grasp concretely the reality of sin, which infinitely alters the essence of things" (*DBWE I*, 36). Bonhoeffer further develops his conception of the person, offering a twofold analysis; in order to account for the reality of sin.

Firstly, the personal being as structurally open; that is, people are aware that they understand, express themselves and are understood by others. The notion of structural openness continues to inform much of queer theory and queer theology; especially in opposition to essentialist understandings of identity. Gender theorists are arguing for the individual as fluid; thus, affected by gender, race and other such social constructs (Tolbert, 2000:99). The motif present in *Sanctorum Communio* is that of the will; which is the self-consciousness and self-determination of the individual. Given the openness of the personal being; there would be no self-consciousness without community. In this way, then, is the personal being open.

Secondly, the personal being is also structurally closed. For Bonhoeffer the open and closed nature of the personal being is in a dialectical relationship, one could not exist without the other. At its core, the personal being is closed because “the recognition that self-consciousness and self-determination are irreducibly separate from everything social; these acts are inwardly directed” (*DBWE 1*, 46). Even so, the individual spirit lives only by sociality; otherwise it cannot. It is vital to note Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 48) offers equal weighting to both the individual person and the collective person. One is not superior to the other; instead, they are in relation. Butler’s analysis of human subjectivity is quite valuable here. For her the human subject (that is, person) is not a pre-existing identity; instead, the person is formed in community (Salih, 2012:41). Moreover, Butler claims that a community of people must assert to recognise the individual for it to be a community. Therefore, Bonhoeffer's conception of the dialectical between the open and closed nature of the personal being may offer some impetus for queering. Bonhoeffer writes:

“A community is a concrete unity. Its members must not be viewed as separate individuals, for the center of activity lies not in each member, but in all of them together. This unity must be the starting point for a concept of community, for there is no way from the many to the one” (*DBWE 1*, 49).

The concrete human community Bonhoeffer reflects on is predicated on reciprocity between the persons engaged. Bonhoeffer differentiates between a community [*Gemeinschaft*] and a society [*Gesellschaft*]. It is only in communities, not societies, and wherein human beings may live; thus, Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 58) follows Scheler who coined the term “life-communities.” As such, societies may be considered an association of rational action. The objective spirit is created when two persons will unite thus forming a third entity. Helpfully, Bonhoeffer notes:

“In a community, individuals are confronted by their objectified selves. Their own lives have flowed into the community, and now daily it stands before them as a content and form that they experience, as the regulative principle for their conduct” (*DBWE 1*, 62).

Again, temporality is essential for Bonhoeffer. Community, for him, reaches the boundary of time [*grenzzeitlich*]; whereas, society is time-bound [*zeitbegrenzt*]. It is only community and not society that can, within this understanding of temporality, be “from God and to God” (*DBWE 1*, 64). Given this, it is only the community that can be or become the church, not society. Sociality, then, is the foundation on which Bonhoeffer’s conception of community is built.

Third, considering the discussion of community, sin is the third idea worth highlighting. Principally, sin has distorted community both with God and between humanity. Bonhoeffer considers sin a universal reality. Interestingly, Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 71) argues that the conception of humanity as a species should be predicated on our culpability; as opposed to culpability founded on the species. However, the human being given that they are individual is also the human race. Failure to recognise this would not account for the social category that humanity is. Thus, Bonhoeffer writes “One falls away not only from one’s personal vocation but also from one’s generic vocation as a member of the human race. Thus, all humanity falls with each sin” (*DBWE 1*, 71).

It is important to note that Bonhoeffer argues that human sexuality, too, is implicated in the fall. Thus, Bonhoeffer does not revise the received tradition but advances it (Harvey, 2008:17). Sin, then, is a universal reality. The self is therefore presented as *peccator pessimus* [the worst sinner]; which must be foregrounded in both an experience of ethical solidarity and awareness of the self.

Queer theology, of course, is quite critical of pessimistic construction of sexuality; as presented in Stuart’s *via negativa* previously. The unjustified linking of sexuality to the fall exposes a range of complexities when reading Bonhoeffer in our time. A re-imagined reading of Bonhoeffer’s harmatological consideration would support his notion of culpability, yet it would be critical of the direct link with sexuality. It may, also, be helpful to offer Cheng’s conception of sin to this re-imagined reading. For Cheng (2011:73) sin is the rejection of radical love; interestingly, this rejection appeals to people universally, thus maintaining Bonhoeffer’s notion of culpability. Differently put, taking Bonhoeffer seriously, all of humanity is responsible for making manifest this radical love.

Given this understanding of the universality of sin and human culpability; the individual is intimately related to the collective person. Commenting on repentance within this framework, Bonhoeffer suggests it is not enough for individuals to repent and be justified. What is required is that the whole community commit to repentance. The ethical community (as informed by this treatment of the collective person) must be founded in integrated persons; that is, founded on the culpability of the integrated person as concrete. For Bonhoeffer, humanity is the community that is directed to embrace all human communities (indeed, all individuals). The conclusion thus presented is that humanity in Adam is the *peccatorum communio* [community of sinners]. The church, then, is the communion because humanity in Adam is superseded by the collective person in Christ existing as church-community.

As highlighted in chapter two, sexualities that are not heterosexual have throughout the centuries been discriminated and pathologised. The construction of sin as rooted in sexuality and the rejection of various forms of sexual expressing has contributed to this pathologising. Thus, it may be worthwhile to explore the question of Bonhoeffer's construction of sin is helpful for queer theology. If we understand Bonhoeffer's harmatological consideration as fundamentally universal, recognising human culpability and the church as community of sinner; then, I posit it to be quite helpful.

Queer theology's contribution of sin as a rejection of radical love is helpful for a re-reading of Bonhoeffer. Historically, theologians have thought of sin in quite legalistic terms. "This legalistic view of sin leads to the privileging of the pride and disobedience as the root causes of sin. It also leads to a negative view of sexuality" (Cheng, 2011:72). For Cheng, we may reconsider our conception of sin in at least three ways.

Firstly, all humans are equally sinful and fallen. This is quite an essential re-reading of theology by queer theologians given the pathologising of LGBTI+ people. Arguing for the universality of sin, queer theologians agree with Bonhoeffer's conception. Secondly, sin rejects radical love as the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. Cheng (2011:73), most interestingly, writes: "sin can be understood to be shame, or the refusal to be lifted up and to take our rightful place as people who are made in the image and likeness of God... For LGBT[I+] people, this takes the form of the closet." Quite fundamental to Bonhoeffer's understanding of sin is Christology. Differently put, sin is placed within the framework of God's reconciling work in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, on this front Bonhoeffer and queer theologians may be presented as concurring that sin is a rejection to God's redemptive work. Thirdly, sin can be understood as the separation of sexuality from race; thus, a rejection of intersectionality tool of analysis. Constructing sin in this third manner highlights how we may fail to account for the fullness of another's identity; therefore, not recognising their bearing of God's image. Bonhoeffer's prioritisation of the other is quite helpful for reading queer theology's third way of constructing sin. For him "every human You is an image of the divine You" (*DBWE 1*, 33). Failure to recognise who the other is may, therefore, be considered sin; given that it is a failure to recognise Godself. Intersectionality, which asserts to account for the fullness of who the other is, is quite helpful when considering sin.

When one understands Bonhoeffer's conception of sin in this manner, then, it proves most helpful for contemporary reading. Moreover, it highlights that Bonhoeffer's consideration allows impetus for contemporary queering. Understanding sin in these ways, then, Tonstad

(2018:124) suggests that, “sex and sexuality may not be perverted by the fall: they may be the results of the fall.”

Having discussed Bonhoeffer’s conception of the person, community and sin; attention is now shifted to his ecclesiological thought. It is important to note that these considerations offered to set the stage for his ecclesiology in *Sanctorum Communio*. Presenting a systematic inquiry into the church, Bonhoeffer follows a dogmatic approach. It is helpful to discuss his ecclesiology by observing four themes present in his work.

First, revelation is the point of departure that informs all of Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiological thought. Thus, any empirical study of the concept of the church must account for the revelation of God in Christ as the Word. Reflecting on the Word, Bonhoeffer considers the church-community as viewed by New Testament Scripture (*DBWE 1*, 85). He lists eight depictions. Firstly, the *ecclesia* [church] is the fulfilment of Jewish *qol* [assembly]. Secondly, the church-community exists, as a result, Christ’s action; both him as foundation and his real presence in the world. Thirdly, Paul identifies the church-community as the *corpus Christi*. Fourthly, the church-community is a collective personality in Christ. Fifthly, the church is the presence of Christ, as Christ is the presence of God. Sixthly, the church-community is the concrete *corpus Christi* only in eschatological terms, thus not pure. Seventhly, it is in worship and working-for-each-other that the church is visible as corporate body. Eighthly, Paul provides an organic image of the church-community – *vis-à-vis corpus Christi* – as such, the church is viewed only through the lens of Christ (this is of foremost importance). In these eight depictions, Bonhoeffer seeks to flesh out the questions to be explored. Introducing these questions, Bonhoeffer notes:

“The church is God’s new will and purpose for humanity. God’s will is always directed toward the concrete, historical human being. But this means that it begins to be implemented in history. God’s will must become visible and comprehensible at some point in history” (*DBWE 1*, 87).

Therefore, all thought about the church-community must be considered within a framework that prioritises a focus on history; revelation its relation to and the impact of sin; and Christology noting that reconciliation of humanity in Adam is by and in Christ. How may this be brought into conversation with queer theology?

Cheng (2011:44) understands revelation as God’s coming out, who embodies radical love. For queer theologians, though, God’s revelation is not limited to Scripture and reason, it also includes experience. The recognition of experience, therefore, locates it in history, much like

Bonhoeffer does. As such, Cheng (2011:45) notes: “the doctrine of revelation parallels the self-disclosure that occurs when an LGBTI[I+] person comes out to someone whom [they] love about [their] sexuality and/or gender identity. God reveals Godself to us because God loves us and wants to share Godself with us.”

When we understand revelation in this manner (as queer theology does), it allows for different readings of Bonhoeffer and ecclesiology. Meaning, it allows for the recognition that the church-community (recognising God’s self-disclosing revelation) must become a community wherein LGBTI+ people are embraced by their coming out of the closet - truly, by their enactment of revelation.

Second, Bonhoeffer considers the church established in Christ. Doing so, he lays the groundwork for his Christological imagination, on which he would build throughout his theologising. The primary argument provided is that Christ establishes the church and reconciles humanity with God. Sin, being universal, ensures that all of humanity is culpable. As such, Christ becomes the life-principle of the community thus established as its Lord. Meaning, “the entire new humanity is established in reality in Jesus Christ, he represents the whole history of humanity in his historical life” (*DBWE 1*, 92).

Further, it is essential to note the importance of the crucifixion, especially when considering the church as community of the cross. It is at the crucifixion where humanity is exposed to its culpability and solitude; hence, the crucifixion does not allow for the actualisation of the church. Instead, the church-community is only realised. “Thus the day of the founding of the actualized church remains Pentecost... the church originates with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and so too the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the church-community of Christ” (*DBWE 1*, 96). Bonhoeffer makes a distinction, Christ does not establish a new religion or religious community (to be understood as a society, *Gesellschaft*), but he establishes a church. Moreover, the church should not be misunderstood to be the Realm or Kingdom of God; instead, the church points toward the Realm as an eschatological objective.

The queer theologian, borrowing from Bonhoeffer, Cheng (2011:78) poignantly asks: “Who is Jesus for LGBTI[I+] people today?” This question remains at the heart of all queer theological discourse; given its Christian focus. Therefore, Cheng (2011:78) offers a response writing, “Jesus Christ can be understood by LGBT[I+] people as the *embodiment of radical love*, or radical love made flesh.” As the embodiment of radical love Christ, as argued by Bonhoeffer, realises the church-community.

Still, queer theology offers a transgressive view of how Christ established the church-community. At the heart of this transgressive view of Christ a return to and reinterpretation of the doctrines of the Christian faith, especially the incarnation (Ward, 1999:77). This transgression may be highlighted in four ways.

Firstly, Christ crosses the divine-human boundary. “No longer are ‘God’ and ‘humanity’ mutually exclusive categories, but they come together in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-human, who is fully divine and fully human” (Cheng, 2011:79). By crossing the divine-human boundary, Christ realises the church-community within history.

Secondly, Christ crosses social boundaries. Shore-Goss (1996:243) writes “Jesus preached and practiced the unbrokered reign of God. His egalitarian message and inclusive practices competed with other holiness brokers... Jesus' egalitarian vision of God's reign in his challenge to the Temple.” The life and ministry of Christ, then, suggests that he crossed social boundaries.

Thirdly, Christ crosses sexual boundaries. Althaus-Reid argues for a bisexual conception of Jesus; thus, positing for construction that goes beyond the binary understanding of sexuality. She writes, “Queer theologians have been focussing on a Christ who is neither this [heterosexual] nor that [homosexual], a Christ who embraces and shows life as fluid, changing, outside the reductionist patterns which confront people with irrelevant options” (Althaus-Reid, 2000:114).

Fourthly, Christ crosses gender boundaries. Transgender and intersex reflections of Christology prove most helpful here. Cheng (2011:83), reflecting on the work of Justin Tanis, writes: “Jesus’s life experience parallels that of many trans people. Jesus is harassed in the streets as well as alienated by his biological family... And, like Jesus, many trans people are killed for transgressing societal norms by being who they are.” Using this reading of Christ, the essentialist gender construction is opposed, in favour of recognising it as a spectrum. These four views offer a differing interpretation of the traditional doctrine of Christology.

When we read Bonhoeffer’s Christological claim about the realising and establishing of the church-community in the light of queer theology a new avenue is opened. It opens the path to consider seriously what Christ’s realising of the church-community may mean for LGBTI+ people. More importantly, it also highlights the possibility that Bonhoeffer’s description of Christ’s establishing of the church-community provides an impetus for contemporary queering. Such an act of queering is predicated on a transgressive view of Christ while recognising and wrestling with the history of Christological developments.

Third, Bonhoeffer argues that it is the Holy Spirit who actualises the church; building on Christ's work of realising. "Community with God exists only through Christ, but Christ is present only in his church-community, and therefore community with God exists only in the church ... The church does not come into being by people coming together (genetic sociology), rather its existence is sustained by the Spirit who is a reality within the church-community" (*DBWE 1*, 101). Actualising the church-community, it is helpful to observe two notes on how the Holy Spirit acts upon the church.

Firstly, it is helpful to note the community of spirit; which is defined as Christ establishing the church in love, through the Holy Spirit's instilling of faith and hope. Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 106) accents the importance of faith; noting "Faith acknowledges God's rule and embraces it; love actualizes the Realm of God." The ontic basic-relation (I-You-relationship) is renewed; thus, the other is perceived through the gospel, as such, the object of love. Love is here presented as having two reference points, God and the self. Advancing this idea, Bonhoeffer argues:

"The ethical command to love is not specifically Christian, but the reality of love is nevertheless present only in Christ and in his church-community; thus the Christian concept of love must presumably have a special meaning" (*DBWE 1*, 108).

Secondly, it is essential to note the unity of the spirit of the church-community. Unity in the church has already been established; it may be observed where conflict exists. Bonhoeffer compellingly argues:

"The point is not "unanimity [or uniformity] in spirit" [*Einigkeit im Geist*"], but the "unity of the Spirit" [*Einheit des Geistes*"]; this means the objective principle sovereignly establishes unity, unites the plurality of persons into a single collective person [*Gesamtperson*] without obliterating either their singularity or the community of persons. Rather, unity of spirit, community of spirit, and plurality of spirit are intrinsically linked to each other through their subject matter" (*DBWE 1*, 129).

At the heart of this argument is the claim that the unity of the church is not premised on human unanimity, but rather the unity of the spirit – which is the Holy Spirit. Meaning, the unity of the church is genuinely Christ existing as community.

By highlighting these three ways, Bonhoeffer makes it quite clear the church-community must be understood pneumatologically. How, then, may this be understood in conversation with queer theology? Cheng argues for the Holy Spirit (2011:101) as "pointing us toward radical

love.” Here two images may be helpful in order to understand the church-community pneumatologically.

Firstly, the Holy Spirit may be thought of as Gaydar; a social tool used to sense who else may be LGBTI+ in a social space. Of this, Cheng (2011:101) writes, “the Holy Spirit is like gaydar; it helps direct us to radical love.” This is quite helpful when considering Bonhoeffer’s notion that Christ establishes the church in love. Employing gaydar, LGBTI+ people often seek out who may be the objects of their love; Bonhoeffer makes a similar claim arguing the gospel plays the role of gaydar – that is, mediating the object of love.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is also the dissolver of boundaries. Much like Bonhoeffer’s suggestion that church-community experiences unity (not unanimity) because of the Holy Spirit; queer theologians argue for a celebration of diversity as the recognition of unity. As such, Cheng (2011:104) states “the diversity of the LGBT[I+] community is to be celebrated—whether it is gay senior citizens, queer young people, the BDSCM leather community, or the drag community—in whatever space they find themselves.”

In light of this discussion, it is quite clear that Bonhoeffer conceived of the church-community in a rather Trinitarian fashion. Taking the concrete and historical nature of the church seriously, it is helpful to consider it as the fourth theme. Bonhoeffer claims that the *corpus Christi* refers not to form [*gestalt*] but function; which is the work of Christ. Bonhoeffer differentiates between God’s Realm and the church, the church catholic (universal) and individual congregations, the congregation and the individual. Doing so, he opposes a hierarchical ordering – all must receive priority.

Bonhoeffer presents four forms and functions of the empirical church. First, a concrete form of the church is one where worship is predicated on the preaching of the Word and administering of the sacraments. Meaning, it is the word and sacrament that calls the continuously calls the church together into a concrete community (*DBWE 1*, 155). Assembling for worship, then, is essential to the church-community.

The second form is predicated on the Word of the *sanctorum communion*. “The church-community is the bearer of the office; this rules out any possibility of a special status of the office bearer” (*DBWE 1*, 162). As such, the offices are located only in Christ who exists as community. This position is quite anti-clerical for its time.

The third form and function of the empirical church concern its cultic acts, or sacraments. On the sacrament of baptism, Bonhoeffer writes:

“Baptism is thus, on the one hand, God’s effective act in the gift of grace by which the child is incorporated into the church-community of Christ; on the other hand, however, it also implies the mandate that the child remain within the Christian community. Thus the church-community as the community of saints carries its children like a mother, as its most sacred treasure” (*DBWE 1*, 164).

Baptism, therefore, is a response to God’s election in Christ; through his work of reconciliation. It is baptism which opens the door of the church to all. However, Bonhoeffer expresses criticism because baptism has been used by the empirical church, in the service of a missionary church.

On the sacrament of the Eucharist, Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 1*, 166) writes: it “is given to the *sanctorum communio* as an act that symbolizes God’s effective will for community.” The Eucharist is a twofold gift: at first, it is a gift to the individual; second, it is a gift to the church-community. This twofold gift is Christ who gives himself to the church-community (*DBWE 1*, 166). All the while, the Eucharist is also an act before God in the presence of the church-community. Bonhoeffer summarises the sociological nature of cultic acts of the empirical church as, it helps to quote him at length:

“Whereas baptism signifies the will of the church-community in its most comprehensive form to spread God’s rule, which for us implies the fact of a church-of-the-people, the church addressed by preaching consists of those who are personally faced with the decision whether to accept or reject God’s gift, and is thus both a church-of-the-people and a voluntary church. In the Lord’s Supper the church-community manifests itself purely as a voluntary and as a community confessing its faith, and is summoned and recognized by God as such” (*DBWE 1*, 169).

In his consideration of cultic acts, Bonhoeffer repeatedly notes that it is through the practice of these acts that children are incorporated into the church-community (*DBWE 1*, 164; Mawson, 2018:166). By contrasting society with community, Bonhoeffer reflects on young children, writing:

“Unlike the society, a community can support young children as well. This is not to introduce the genetic concept of community; rather, young children in a community are a part of their parents’ will until they can will for themselves—a thought that would be absurd in a society” (*DBWE 1*, 58).

In our time, this would be rightly critiqued. However, it is worth further exploration. The intention here is not to silence young children. Instead, it is to explore how they may be incorporated into and nurtured by the community. The queer theologian Edman's conception of 'pride' is particularly helpful. She writes, "Pride begins first and foremost with the ability to see oneself. If being seen by others is the prerequisite for a relationship of trust, being able to be seen by yourself is a prerequisite for self-trust" (Edman, 2016:109). Only when the church-community creates a space wherein young children are nurtured to see themselves for who they are, only then would they be able to will. If a church-community exists only when cultic acts are prioritised, then the community must embrace all into the Sacramental Mystery. In our time, this means that the children of parents in a civil union ought to be baptised and incorporated into the life of the community.

As a fourth form and function, Bonhoeffer considers the importance of pastoral care. As before, he claims that the church-community is one of relations; so too, does the pastor have a relation with each member. The pastoral office is predicated on two roles: priestly and advisory. The former is through the preaching of the Word and administering of the sacraments. The latter, though, is in the dispensing of pastoral care. The person acting in the pastoral office must model Christ to the church-community. Still, we ought to recognise: "It is not only Christ who is both *donum* [gift] and *exemplum* [example] for us human beings, but in the same way also one human being is so for another" (*DBWE 1*, 170). Pastoral care must, then, be rooted in the acknowledgement of Christ as existing in community.

The four forms here observed offers excellent insight into Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology. Perhaps it would be wise to consider two themes in conversation with these considerations. Presenting a depiction of the church as a priestly people, Edman discusses the themes of authenticity and hospitality. I argue that Bonhoeffer provides the motivation, via these four forms, for the church to engender the themes of authenticity and hospitality.

Reflecting on authenticity, Edman (2016:137) writes "We exist as people with complex lives, with intersecting and hybrid identities... Queerness in community demands that we respect the nuance and complexity of one another's authentic lives." As such, it calls for the recognition of intersectionality and hybridity as foundational to the life of the community. If we understand Bonhoeffer's four empirical forms as signs pointing toward authenticity, our conception of the concrete church is enriched because it takes the experiences of those in the community seriously. Edman, further, argues that authenticity invites the church to a healthy encounter with the other. She articulates this, saying: "The challenge inherent in the relationship between

Self and Other exists in every sphere of our lives. Church should be the place where we get to work it out. Church should be the place where our priesthood shows forth, where we make ourselves vulnerable” (Edman, 2016:152).

Taking further the encounter of the other within the church, Edman centres an ethic of hospitality – which she connects with eschatology. As highlighted below, Bonhoeffer presents these four empirical forms in light of the eschaton. “A posture of hospitality begins before anyone has arrived, and entails preparedness for those whom one does not know to anticipate. Once guests are present, hospitality involves a proactive impulse to see what people need and provide it” (Edman, 2016:153). By reading Bonhoeffer’s empirical forms through the lens of hospitality, the church may become home for the other – who may be Christ.

Presenting a systematic study on ecclesiology, Bonhoeffer concludes with an eschatological focus which suggests that theologians do not declare the final word on the church of Jesus Christ. Christian eschatology is essentially the eschatology of the church-in-community. Bonhoeffer’s teleological vision is that it may one day be real, that:

“the objective spirit of the church really has become the Holy Spirit, the experience of the ‘religious’ community now really is the experience of the church, and the collective person of the church now really is ‘Christ existing as church-community’” (*DBWE 1*, 198).

The hope of the *sanctorum communio*, then, is that in it is Christ who exists as community. This hope is anchored in a Trinitarian understanding of the church-community. Further, this hope via the church-community is concretised in history through the four forms that centre on worship, the Word, cultic acts and pastoral care. Offering a description of various themes present in *Sanctorum Communio*, I have attempted to present this in conversation with queer theology. By doing this, I have sought to prove that this work of Bonhoeffer motivates a queering.

Life Together

Having discussed *Sanctorum Communio*, it helpful now to turn to *Life Together*. Again, in this discussion, an investigation is probed into what impetus Bonhoeffer’s publication offers a contemporary reading. Geoffrey Kelly, the editor to the Fortress Press edition of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, introduces *Life Together* stating:

“In an ironical way we are indebted to the Gestapo for this remarkable book. It was because they had shut down the preachers’ seminary at Finkenwalde that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was finally persuaded to compose his thoughts on the nature and sustaining structures of Christian community, based on the “life together” that he and his seminarians had sustained both at the seminary and in the Brothers’ House at Finkenwalde” (*DBWE 5*).

One is left to wonder if Bonhoeffer would have set pen to paper had the Preachers’ Seminary Finkenwalde not been closed by the Nazi authorities. Marsh attributes the writing of this text to Bonhoeffer’s deep concern for discipleship. Informed by his reading of Psalm 119 and inspired by the call to live in the earth; Bonhoeffer sought to wrestle with the call to discipleship as he experienced it during his time at Finkenwalde (Marsh, 2015:264). Spectacularly, it took Bonhoeffer the brief period of four weeks to complete the manuscript. The context into which *Life Together* was birthed is thus one ridden with political conflict, especially as it related to the work of the Confessing Church. Therefore, *Life Together* should be read with this in mind; failure to do would perhaps render the text misunderstood.

Throughout the text, it seems Bonhoeffer attempts to provide a response to various questions posed. In chapter one, he responds to the questions: ‘what is community?’ and ‘what is a Christian community?’ In the following two chapters, Bonhoeffer answers questions about being together and being alone. After this, the question to which he attends is ‘what is service?’ Finally, he offers a concluding response on the Eucharist. Throughout the text of *Life Together*, one finds various questions raised; however, all of these are informed by Scripture. Marsh’s suggestion, then, proves true; it is given his wrestling with Scripture that Bonhoeffer sets out to reflect on living together as a church-community.

This study investigates three themes present in *Life Together*. First, quite apparent in the text is a focus on community; which may also mean church. Bonhoeffer’s interest in community and the church emanate from his student days; they, thus, reach a new pitch in the publishing of this text. Thus, Kelly (*DBWE 5*) argues:

“‘Christ existing as community’ challenges believers to behave as Christ to one another; this same Christ promises those who gather in his name to be present in, with, and for them... Bonhoeffer’s experiment in Christian community was in many respects an attempt to take the visible communion of saints depicted in *Sanctorum Communio* back to its roots in gospel praxis and the Reformation tradition.”

Community is of fundamental concern in this text. It would remain a central theological concern throughout Bonhoeffer's life. Still, it is essential to note that vastly diverse communities Bonhoeffer formed part of before his writing of *Life Together*. These communities spanned various nationalities (German, Spanish, American), languages, localities (some urban other rural) and age groups. There should be no doubt that these rich experiences of human communities informed his theological reflection.

On the theme of community, Bonhoeffer raises two questions. First, he asks: what is the Christian community in Jesus Christ? Here three thoughts are helpful. Firstly, it is only in Christ that Christians find salvation, deliverance and justification; as such, justification is *extra nos* or outside of us (*DBWE* 5, 19). For Bonhoeffer, the meaning and *telos* (or goal) of the Christian community is to experience one another as bearers of God's Word, that is God's message of salvation. Therefore, it is only through God's Word in Jesus Christ that the Christian community is formed.

Secondly, a Christian only comes through Christ. Bonhoeffer argues that without Christ, who is our peace, there is only strife. As such, Christ acts as the mediator between both humanity and God, and amongst Christians. Without Christ, as the centre, Christians could approach neither God nor other Christians. Thus, he writes: "Only in Jesus Christ are we one; only through him are we bound together" (*DBWE* 5, 20).

Thirdly, the Christian community is formed by election in Christ. Bonhoeffer makes this understandable, writing: "when God's Son took on flesh, he truly and bodily, out of pure grace, took on our being, our nature, ourselves... Now we are in him. Wherever he is, he bears our flesh, he bears us" (*DBWE* 5, 20). However, this election is not only for the present but is also into eternity with all other Christians elected in and through Christ. The doctrine of election forms the Christian community.

Second, the question is asked: what are the essentials of the Christian community? Of course, this is questioned with the previous response in mind. Now, in response to this question, two thoughts are essential. Firstly, the Christian community is not an ideal but a divine reality. This, then, calls for a moment of disillusionment; for it allows the Christian community to rediscover the actual form [*Gestalt*] of the community. Those who fail to depart from loving the ideal of the Christian community in effect destroy the community even if done in earnestness and sacrifice (*DBWE* 5, 24). Instead, by recognising the Christian community as a divine reality; Christians affirm that God founds it.

Secondly, the Christian community is not a psychic but a spiritual reality. Here Bonhoeffer is not endorsing a dualist understanding; instead, he advocates for the Christian community as pneumatic (spiritual). This contrasts with the psychic community which is predicated on emotionalism (*DBWE 5, 27*). The former is a community centred on truth; whereas the latter is centred on the desire of power. Bonhoeffer also focuses on ‘emotional conversion’ and ‘emotional love’; which is defined as:

“It has all the appearances of genuine conversion and occurs wherever the superior power of one person is consciously or unconsciously misused to shake to the roots and draw into its spell an individual or a whole community” (*DBWE 5, 28*).

Such an understanding of conversion ought not to be mistaken for that of the Christian, which is spiritual or pneumatic. Instead, Christian conversion is founded on justification in Christ. Meaning, Christ becomes the intermediary or mediator in the I-You relationship. Fundamentally, then, the psychic community results in bondage whereas the Christian (pneumatic) community creates freedom (*DBWE 5, 32*).

Such a consideration of community may be helpful for our time when brought into conversation with queer theory. In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Butler grapples with the notion of ‘the people.’ She argues: “‘The people’ are not a given population, but rather constituted by lines of demarcation that we implicitly or explicitly establish” (Butler, 2015:3). At the heart of Butler’s conception of ‘the people’ is the discursive attempt to ensure that all people may enjoy the good life; which she terms ‘liveable.’

For Butler, communities have an ethical obligation to address the precarity experienced by members within the community. The notion of precarity assists greatly to understand Bonhoeffer’s conception of the community; which he argues results in freedom and not bondage. Like Bonhoeffer, Butler argues that the community should be understood as a bodily reality. Thus, she writes: “this precarious and corporeal being is responsible for the life of the other, which means that no matter how much one fears for one’s own life, preserving the life of the other is paramount” (Butler, 2015:109).

Butler intimately links precarity to vulnerability; which together informs the ethical obligation of ‘the people’ or community. While Bonhoeffer prioritises the understanding of community as pneumatic; it should be noted that it is pneumatic because it is through Christ that community is formed. Here it is helpful to recognise some continuity with *Sanctorum Communio*, where he argues that Christ becomes the mediator through which we encounter the other (*DBWE 1,*

33). By linking precarity to vulnerability; Butler provides insight into the ethical obligation a community may have when understood in the manner Bonhoeffer sets forth.

The second theme quite central in *Life Together* is temporality. In his focus on the ‘Day Together’, Bonhoeffer outlines an order for daily living in the community. Of this Bonhoeffer writes: “A community living together gathers for praise and thanks, Scripture reading, and prayer” (*DBWE* 5, 37). These four ideas, then, form the focus of his initial thought on temporality.

First, for Bonhoeffer, the importance of prayer may be found in the Psalms. Placing the Hebrew Psalms as the primer for prayer, Bonhoeffer notes three critical ideas. Firstly, the Psalms teach Christians the meaning of prayer. That is, by praying through the Psalms, the Christian community is enlivened in the Word of God (*DBWE* 5, 40). Secondly, the Psalms also teach Christians what should be prayed. Thirdly, praying the Psalms teaches Christians to pray as a community. Bonhoeffer argues that the Psalms are not the only prayers to be offered; there is also corporate prayer. However, the critical task of individual prayer ought not to be neglected. Prayer, then, is an especially valuable resource for the community.

Second, the community must commit itself to regularly reading Scripture. Bonhoeffer argues that the whole of the Scriptural corpus should enjoy privilege, not particular readings. Doing so, the Christian community “participates in the events that once occurred on this earth for the salvation of the whole world. In so doing, it receives salvation in Jesus Christ here and in all these events” (*DBWE* 5, 46). Scripture, then, becomes a mirror in which the Christian’s life may be recognised – that is, their troubles, guilt and deliverance. Moreover, failure to take Scripture seriously, for Bonhoeffer, would mean that the Christian community ceases to be Protestant (*DBWE* 5, 47).

Third, “Singing together [*das Gemeinsame Lied*] joins the praying of the Psalms and the reading of the Scriptures” (*DBWE* 5, 49). Through the act of singing the community glorifies Christ, the foundation of its existence. Further, singing advances the cause of unity among the community; “This is singing from the heart, singing to the Lord, singing the Word; this is singing in unity” (*DBWE* 5, 51).

Fourth, the breaking bread together is essential to the community; it is then when the “congregation has been blessed by his presence” (*DBWE* 5, 56). The act of breaking bread by the community recognises three things. Firstly, it is Christ who blesses the community with gifts. Secondly, these gifts are given to the community for the sake of Christ; thus, it is an

obligation that seeks the wellbeing of the whole community. Thirdly, the community believes that Christ is present in its midst when it so requests. Therefore, Bonhoeffer notes:

“Every breaking of bread together fills Christians with gratitude for the present Lord and God, Jesus Christ... So in a special way, the daily breaking of bread together binds Christians to their Lord and to one another. At the table they recognize their Lord as the one who breaks bread for them” (*DBWE 5, 57*).

This is not the only perspective Bonhoeffer offers on temporality. Additionally, the focus is turned to the ‘Day Alone.’ Bonhoeffer notes that many flee solitude in search of the community; yet, he argues, it ought not to be this way. Neither should many flee the community in search of solitude. Quite the contrary, “Whoever cannot be alone [*allein*] should beware of community” (*DBWE 5, 65*). As such, both community and solitude are prerequisites for discipleship as practised a Christian. The life of the community can only be deepened once its members prioritise solitude. Giving substance to this, Bonhoeffer comments:

“Only in the community do we learn to be properly alone [*allein*]; and only in being alone [*Alleinsein*] do we learn to live properly in the community. It is not as if the one preceded the other; rather both begin at the same time, namely, with the call of Jesus Christ” (*DBWE 5, 66*).

Giving due regard to being in community, it is also important to note the form of solitude is also essential. Fundamental to being alone is the practice of silence; not to be understood as being incapable of speech. Instead, silence is to be considered a sacrifice on the part of the individual. As a sacrifice, silence is therefore embodied by the individual in three liturgical practices: a meditation on Scripture, prayer and intercession (*DBWE 5, 69*). However, primarily the day alone attempts to provide the individual with the spiritual (again, pneumatic) resources to make sense of life in an unchristian world.

Bonhoeffer’s conception of temporality is unique within the Nazi German context; mainly because it prioritises days together and alone. By conceiving time with a view on liturgical practices, Bonhoeffer opposes the German nationalism of his day. His construction of temporality it is worthwhile to bring it into dialogue with queer theory. Like Bonhoeffer, Halberstam (2005:1) argues “Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. They also develop according to the logics of location, movement, and identification.” In his conception of temporality, Bonhoeffer focuses primarily on the events outside of ordinary life, much like

queer theorists' view. Reflecting on queer time, Halberstam argues: "a way of being in the world and a critique of the careful social scripts that usher even the most queer among us through major markers of individual development and into normativity" (quoted in Moore et al, 2018:14).

Additionally, it may prove fruitful to reflect on Bonhoeffer's temporality (which is informed by liturgical practices) by considering the notion 'temporal drag.' Temporal drag should be understood not as the psychic time of the individual but of the movement of time of the collective political fantasy (Freeman, 2010:65). For queer theorists drag performance is anachrony, "a practice of archiving culture's throwaway objects" (Moore et al, 2018:16). In some sense, it may be argued that the Christian community participates in the archiving cultural objects – via liturgy, which may seem quite outdated. Understanding liturgical practices in this way, I posit the notion of temporal drag deepens a contemporary understanding of Bonhoeffer's temporality – which is grounded in liturgy. Reading Bonhoeffer's temporality alongside queer theory, thus, highlights its distinctiveness; and the impetus is may provide for contemporary queer reading.

The third theme considered is what I term 'embodied liturgical praxis.' This theme is outlined in the final two chapters of *Life Together*; 'Service' and 'Confession and Lord's Supper.' While these, no doubt, proceed out of the liturgical practices previously considered; they are still different.

One component of this embodied liturgical praxis is service. For Bonhoeffer, service is rooted in the understanding of justification by grace. Further, two ideals are foundational to this conception of service (*DBWE 5, 79*). On the one hand, service recognises that all in the community are created in the *imago Dei* (image of God); as such, diversity is celebrated and affirmed. On the other hand, forgiveness acts as a distinctive trait for the existence of the community; meaning, forgiveness is inherent in the identity of the community (*DBWE 5, 87*). Even so, forgiveness ought to be understood as a continual act; it pervades the life of the community.

This understanding of service is most aptly displayed in various acts of service, which is why I argue for the use of the term 'embodied liturgical praxis.' Three acts are here helpful. The first act is listening. As such, Bonhoeffer (*DBWE 5, 82*) argues: "We do God's work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them." Listening has previously been discussed concerning solitude; here, however, it is directed to others within the community. That is, it the

act of listening to those who share the community with the Christian. The second act of service would be active helpfulness. Meaning, the voluntary choice by a member of the community to assist others in their need; without regard for the favour being returned. The third act is bearing with others. Of this Bonhoeffer writes:

“Christians must bear the burden of one another. They must suffer and endure one another. Only as a burden is the other really a brother or sister and not just an object to be controlled” (*DBWE 5*, 85).

This is quite important; only in bearing the other does the relationship become one among subject (as opposed to a subject-object relation). Only when these three acts are done can the Word of God take its proper place in the community (*DBWE 5*, 87). Differently put, this embodied liturgical praxis prepares the community for the Word of God. As in his *Sanctorum Communio*, in *Life Together* the authority of the Word is prioritised. The Word of God serves as the very basis of the forming of the community. Given this, the Christian is given the responsibility to speak and to witness to the demands of the Word. “The more we learn to allow the other to speak the Word to us, to accept humbly and gratefully even severe reproaches and admonitions, the more free and to the point we ourselves will be in speaking” (*DBWE 5*, 89). Therefore, only by recognising the authority of the Word is the community able to experience its freedom in Christ.

Another component of the embodied liturgical praxis is found in confession and the Lord’s Supper (or the Eucharist). Bonhoeffer is clear; the Christian community is a community of sinner; truly *peccatorum communio* [community of sinners]. Bonhoeffer argues “the call within the Christian community to mutual confession and forgiveness goes out as a call to the great grace of God in the congregation” (*DBWE 5*, 94). However, it is Christ’s love that undergirds this community; the very love that declares the community justified. Meaning, this love should be understood as the sum total of salvation history in the person and work of Christ.

Confession by the members of the community is vital because it allows for various breakthroughs. First, it is a breakthrough to the community. Whereas sin ensures that people separate themselves from preferring isolation; confession breaks down this barrier. The act of confession restores the right relationship between members of the community. Second, confession is a breakthrough to the cross. If the root of sin is pride, as argued by Bonhoeffer, then in confession, this is replaced by humiliation. In confession, the “old humanity [*Mensch*] dies, but God has triumphed over it. Now we share in the resurrection of Christ and eternal

life” (*DBWE* 5, 96). Third, confession is a breakthrough to new life. Following confession, sin is now hated and forgiven; thus, a break is made with the past for the Christian, now pursuing new life in Christ. Confession, then, should be considered a renewal of the baptismal vows and joy. Fourth, confession is a breakthrough to assurance. By confession one’s sins to another, both Christians recognise their culpability in sinning – therefore, they are assured in their communion. Together these four breakthroughs shape the form that confession ought to take within the Christian community. Still, it is interesting that Bonhoeffer prefers the word ‘*to breakthrough*’.

It is also important to acknowledge that the act of confession is concretised in the community’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Differently put, the Eucharist is the logical conclusion of the community’s practice of confession. Confession also prepares the community for the Eucharist. Given the importance Bonhoeffer affords the celebration of the Eucharist (much like in *Sanctorum Communio*), he concludes stating:

“The community of the holy Lord’s Supper is above all the fulfillment of Christian community. Just as the members of the community of faith are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord, so they will be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and Christ’s community is complete. The life together of Christians under the Word has reached its fulfillment in the sacrament” (*DBWE* 5, 102).

Queer theologians are not unfamiliar with sacramentality; thus, a brief discussion linking Bonhoeffer’s embodied liturgical praxis to queer theology may be useful. Cheng (2011:120) argues “the sacraments can be understood as a *foretaste of radical love*. Just as foreplay can be a foretaste of sexual pleasure, the sacraments can be understood as a foretaste of ultimate destiny when we are reunited with God’s radical love.” By using such vivid bodily language, Cheng makes the fundamental claim that sacramentality is primarily concerned with sensory experiences – as such, visible signs of God’s invisible language. Here Cheng is in agreement with Bonhoeffer with strongly asserts to link liturgy with embodiment.

While Bonhoeffer’s concentration on confession is primarily concerned with sin; an alternative consideration may be advanced. In our time consideration of confession as witness may also be helpful in order to understand the impact of sin – like the rejection of radical love. When understood in this way, queer theology offers excellent insight. Reflecting on the theology of Chris Gaser, Cheng (2011:122) writes: “the act of coming out is most like the sacrament of the

Eucharist because ‘both involve a sacrifice and offering that creates at-one-moment or communion with God and others.’” Reading through a Eucharistic lens, confession as witness becomes a component of the embodied liturgical praxis of the community, especially for LGBTI+ people. In this light, Stuart’s (2004:232) sacramental mystery is quite helpful for understanding Bonhoeffer’s conception of community in *Life Together*.

By constructing community, temporality and embodied liturgical praxis in this way, Bonhoeffer presents his vision for the Christian community. Drawing *Life Together* in dialogue with queer theory and queer theology, this section has presented the motivation for considering Bonhoeffer’s work as providing the impetus for queering.

Queer Theology and Bonhoeffer’s Church-Community

In both *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer constructs the church in a particular fashion. In one case explicitly and in the other implicitly, for Bonhoeffer, the church-community is “Christ existing as community.” Further, quite fundamental to such a conception of church-community is the notion of love (here to be understood as ἀγάπη or *agapē*). Differently put, Christ’s love undergirds the life of the church-community.

Any queering, then, of Bonhoeffer’s church-community must keep track of the development of his thought on the terms he proposes. In this section, an attempt is made to do so; meaning, now the question will be posed: how may queer theology deepen Bonhoeffer’s conception of church-community? It does one well to remember Cheng’s (2011:44) contention that the heart of queer theology is radical love. Any queer hermeneutical consideration of ecclesiology, then, must be read through the lens of radical love.

It is helpful to consider the contribution of Mawson’s study, in *Christ Existing as Community* (2018), of Bonhoeffer’s *Sanctorum Communio* offers. For this section, two themes are discussed. First, the conception of the person, and as such personhood. It is quite helpful to quote Mawson (2018:66) at length when he writes about personhood:

“Bonhoeffer develops his Christian concept of person as an alternative to the reasoning subject of idealism, namely, a subject that exists prior to and apart from God, others, and reality. For Bonhoeffer, God’s address both reveals and constitutes the human being as person. Moreover, it is significant that God addresses and constitutes the human being as person through a concrete other. For Bonhoeffer, God’s address through this other reveals that the human being is not, in fact, foremost a reasoning

subject, but a person who already stands in concrete, living relationships with God, others, and reality.”

The human person, then, is one in relation to God and others. Such is the contours of what Bonhoeffer constructs as the person; one can already note what links may be made with queer theology.

In queer theology, much has been written on the subject of personhood and subjectivity. It, then, is helpful to draw these writing into conversation with Bonhoeffer’s conception of the person. Here three queer theologians’ reflections are considered; it should be noted; their point of departure is that of the people who are LGBTIQ+ therefore not heteronormative.

For Althaus-Reid (2000:4), the person is constructed primarily based on their experience; she follows the Liberation Theology tradition of Latin America. It is important here to note that experience also includes those that are sexual; which many theologians may be tempted to overlook. Therefore, Althaus-Reid’s consideration of the person (particularly those who are LGBTIQ+) is a process of undressing to the point of nakedness; for her, this is the task of deconstructing. Prioritising experience as a theological informant, failure to recognise the sexual is presented as mutilation on the part of the person or community (Althaus, 2000:12). Therefore, Althaus-Reid calls for theological indecenting of the person. Meaning, personhood is conceptualised as the total of one’s experience; while also employing the task of deconstructing (alternatively termed undressing). The person, then, is both an experiential and sexual subject. This indeed links with Bonhoeffer’s conception of the relational person. By arguing for sexual experiences to be taken seriously, Althaus-Reid recognises the person’s relation to others and God.

Rudy (2008:42) prefers a conception of the person informed by subaltern studies; as such, the person is thus constructed from the vantage point of their experience of interlocking oppressions. Auga offers a helpful bridge to understand subalternity concerning Bonhoeffer’s theology; here, two thoughts are essential. First, it helps to move beyond essentialised identities; this includes ‘the’ Christian identity (Auga, 2015:51). Second, informed by Bonhoeffer’s notion of religion-less Christianity, Auga (2015:54) argues for a theology that asserts to participate in the world – this is done from the point of departure of the subaltern (also termed the other). This, no doubt, rails against the Western notion of personhood predicated on rationality. On this point, Rudy agrees with Bonhoeffer that rejecting Western rationality as the foundation of personhood.

Alison considers the person, especially the LGBTIQ+ person, from an altogether different perspective. Reflecting on queer theology within Catholicism, Alison analyses the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of original sin. For him, then, the Catholic doctrine of original sin allows for the temptation of pathologising the lives (indeed, the personhood) of those who are LGBTIQ+ (Alison, 2008:54). Quite crucial for Alison is that Catholic theologians must return to the tradition's historic understanding of the doctrine of original sin. Doing so, it may allow the Roman Catholic Church to reconsider its construction of those who are homosexual (again, the denomination's preferred wording). Therefore, Alison's (2008:59) construction of the person is not beholden to a pathologising of those who are LGBTIQ+; instead, it recognises sin as a universal human reality not particular to those who are not heterosexual. Much like Bonhoeffer, then, Alison acknowledges the pervasive nature of sin. However, his argument follows that of Bonhoeffer that all humans are culpable; meaning, that culpability cannot be outsourced to a select grouping of the human community. Therefore, for Alison, the person is both sinner and saint; and also, this person is in relationship with God and others.

A second theme is that of the concrete community. It is quite clear the Bonhoeffer considers the church to be uniquely distinct from other communities. However, two ideas are fundamental to this distinct concrete community (Mawson, 2018:174). Firstly, the church is directed outward in submission to God's will; thus, it is not solely focused on its internal existence. Secondly, given its submission to God's will, the church is basically a community wherein humans participate willingly and actively.

Bonhoeffer's understanding of community is grounded in the idea of relationality; the members of the community are thus in relationship with each other (this can be seen in both *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together*). As argued in chapter two, one of the strands of queer theology is Relational Theology. This strand focused primarily on one's experience of God's presence within erotic and platonic relationships of those who are LGBTIQ+. It is, I think, helpful to consider Bonhoeffer's conception of the community as well as relationality with this insight offered by queer theology. This is for two reasons. First, it explores the reality that the community is comprised of people who embody and enact their sexualities. Second, as a result of recognising the first reason, this also exposes that the community affirms not all people's sexualities. Considering Bonhoeffer's relationality from this perspective may offer helpful ways to make sense of contemporary ecclesial communities.

It should be stated that queer theology is yet to produce a large body of works on ecclesiology. This thesis, then, deepens queer theology as a discipline by interrogating ecclesiology. Still,

some queer theologians have offered brief reflection in various of their works. Tonstad (2018:34) contends, writing “Although Christ’s body is made up of people of all gender and none, Christ remains the head of the body—that’s the sense in which the church is his body.” In queer theology, then, the church-community should thus be understood to be the *corpus Christi* [body of Christ]. Again, one notes Bonhoeffer’s notion of relationality; using the body imagery, Christians are implicitly presented as members of this body. However, queer theology goes further; it recognises the complexity of using bodily language and how this relates to identity. Thus, Christ’s body, and thus gender and sexuality, is mediated through several stories and images within the community. Meaning, the church-community can only become the *corpus Christi* when it affirms and celebrates the multiplicity of genders and sexualities within a community.

When considering community, Stuart’s focus on sacramentality is again helpful. Considering the body of Christ, Stuart (2008:66) states:

“The body of Christ is queer. That body is made available to Christians through the sacraments... is grounded in the queer nature of the body of Christ. Not only is this body available to Christians, they are caught up in it, constituted by it and incorporated into it, sharing in its sacramental flesh. They are in the process of becoming what he is, uniting themselves to him, and it is the sacraments that provide the moments of divine encounter which make this possible.”

Therefore, she continues to argue that baptism serves as the Christian’s primary identity; other identity markers are thus relativised concerning baptism. Still, further developing this notion of ‘sacramental flesh’, Stuart (2008:71) posits that baptism is fully realised in the Eucharist, it is at that moment when Christians anticipate the eschatological life; when all other identities are rendered non-ultimate. The church may, then, be presented as queer given that it nudges Christians to the eschatological horizon when all categories or identity markers will be dissolved in favour of the baptismal identity. Much like Bonhoeffer, Stuart argues that ontology of the church-community resides in Christ. Further, Stuart’s conception of sacramental flesh as presented vis-à-vis the sacraments shares much in common with Bonhoeffer; especially concerning the role of sacraments in the eschatological life of the church-community.

The queer theologian Cheng returns to the fundamentals of the dogmatics, much informed by the Nicene Creed. For him, the church is “an external community of radical love”; a community wherein boundaries are dissolved (Cheng, 2011:106). While Cheng advances the traditional

understanding of the church through the four marks, his consideration allows for its fourfold queering. First, oneness is not limited to unity; instead, it invites Christian to various configurations of relationships within the community. Further, the church should be regarded as ‘desirous’ because of its relational identity; doing so recognises sexuality.

Second, the mark of holiness may be understood as an ethic of hospitality. Thus, actions may be assessed through the lens of holiness (now transformed into an ethic of hospitality); as such, their worth should be more helpfully judged within the community. The queer priest Edman (2018:153) makes a similar claim; by arguing for an ethic of hospitality as essential to a priestly people. Third, the catholicity of the church is its affirmation and celebration of diversity. However, this catholicity provides the church-community with the impetus to provide the necessary support for its members (Cheng, 2011:110). Fourth, for queer theology apostolicity takes the church’s engagement with its tradition seriously yet it does so, in humility, recognising that is a community of saints who are simultaneously sinners. One may thus argue, for Cheng the church is Christ (who embodies radical love) queering the existence of the community.

From this brief discussion, then, the argument may be presented that queer theologians are already conversant with the subject matter of Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology (albeit not directly with Bonhoeffer). This is especially the case when considering the development of the concept personhood and community and relationality. Consequently, it ought not to be strange to draw from Bonhoeffer and queer theology simultaneously as hermeneutical sources. Taking seriously queer theology, one would have to affirm that it aspires to be a reflection on radical love experienced within the community.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to investigate Bonhoeffer’s works *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* as primary sources. It sought to investigate the ecclesiological thought he develops in them; paying attention to differences and continuities. Throughout the investigation, an attempt was made to present these sources in dialogue with queer theory and queer theology. In the final section of the chapter, a discussion highlighted which questions may be worth asking when reading Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology (as developed in the two primary texts) in the light of queer theology. The chapter has thus proven that queer theologians are already conversant with the subject matter of Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiological thought; albeit not with him directly. It, thus,

probes further investigation for a queer theological reading of Bonhoeffer and the impetus his works provides.

Chapter 4 Receiving and Realising Bonhoeffer's Othered Ecclesiology

Introduction

In chapter two, attention was afforded to the intellectual terrain of queer theory and queer theology, following this in chapter three, Bonhoeffer's works were discussed in conversation with queer theology. Now, in this chapter, a concerted focus is given to two foci. The first section attends to the reception of Bonhoeffer studies by the South African theological community. A depiction of Bonhoeffer's reception is presented to highlight what impetus this may provide for contemporary queering; here the theological contributions of Russel Botman, Allan Boesak and John de Gruchy are discussed. I argue that such queering is predicated on its ecumenical and cross-racial appeal; which was quite transgressive during apartheid. Therefore, this section seeks to contextualise a particular history of Bonhoeffer's South African reception.

The second section of the chapter considers how the church-community may be imagined. It does so informed by the research produced in queer theology and other theological traditions. Even so, it seeks to provide an analysis of the sexuality discussions on South Africa's Reformed ecclesial landscape. As such, it primarily considers how the Dutch Reformed Church (henceforth DRC) has received Bonhoeffer's theology in relation to its sexuality discussions.

Receiving Bonhoeffer's Othered Ecclesiology

The reception of Bonhoeffer studies by South Africa's religious community is quite impressive. The figure and theology of Bonhoeffer has and continues to exercise a great deal of influence on many theologians' imagination. Most interestingly and quite surprisingly, Bonhoeffer has been favourably received by South Africa's Reformed ecclesial communities.

Meiring helpfully charts the reception of Bonhoeffer. Of course, it should be noted, Bonhoeffer never visited South Africa. The reception and study of Bonhoeffer in South Africa, for Meiring, may be described in five stages. The first stage starts in the 1960s, with both the Sharpeville Massacre (21 March 1960) and the Cottesloe Consultation (December 1960) by the World Council of Churches. During this first stage, Meiring (2007:152) notes that Bonhoeffer's theology was used by local Christians to make sense of the South African situation; resulting in a witness against racism and apartheid.

The second stage logically proceeded from the successes achieved during the previous; yet still within the 1960s moving into the 1980s. Now, however, this stage sought to struggle for a Confessing Church; much informed by that of Germany (Meiring, 2007:153). The anti-

apartheid activist and clergyperson Beyers Naudé played a leading role, primarily through the Christian Institute of Southern Africa and its publication *Pro Veritate* (de Gruchy, 2015:98). As stated, this period spanned two decades; the South African Council of Churches would also publish its *Message to the People of South Africa*, declaring apartheid an ideology bearing a semblance to that of the *Barmen Declaration*.

Third, in the mid-1980s, the soil had been prepared for a confessional movement; thus, by 1982 the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared a *status confessionis* regarding South Africa's apartheid. Following this, in 1986 the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church (a daughter church of the apartheid-supporting Dutch Reformed Church of the time) adopted the *Belhar Confession*, thus declaring apartheid a heresy. Historically, the *Belhar Confession* cannot be separated from the *Barmen Declaration*; the two documents are located within a similar confessional tradition and should be understood as such. Thus, Bonhoeffer's influence was very much at work in the *Belhar Confession's* composition.

The fourth stage took place during that of the third; here, the traditions of Black Theology and Liberation Theology were being formed. Key figures during this time are the likes of Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane, Manas Buthelezi, Simon Maimela, Barney Pitso. Regarding this, Meiring (2007:157) writes:

“The same is true of many Third World countries where Dietrich Bonhoeffer was held in high esteem and it is certainly true of South Africa where Bonhoeffer's impact on liberation theologies and contextual theologies is stronger than that of any other 20th century theologian.”

The emerging tradition of Black Theology and Liberation Theology found its most profound expression in the *Kairos Document* (1986). It was at this stage that the South African readers of Bonhoeffer recognised the impetus of costly grace was to take to the task of resisting apartheid, what would be termed both “state theology” and “church theology”, opting instead for “prophetic theology.”

Fifth, following the entry into South Africa's democratic dispensation (since 1994), many have queried the relevance of Bonhoeffer's theology. In 1996 the Seventh International Bonhoeffer Congress was held in Cape Town, under the theme “Are we still of any use?” This event continues to inform much of the Bonhoeffer-inspired theologising in contemporary South Africa. In answer to the question, Meiring (2007:159) notes five responses that Bonhoeffer readers have provided. Firstly, they noted the need for a confession church here and now.

Secondly, the time had arisen for theologians to speak out injustice, put a spoke in the wheel. Thirdly, now was the time to learn things from below; thus, a reading from the underside. Fourthly, it was important the guilt be acknowledged. Fifthly, the missiologist David Bosch was greatly influenced by Bonhoeffer in his call for a church *for* others and a church *with* others.

Meiring's charting of the reception of Bonhoeffer is quite helpful to contextualise the terrain of Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa. It is clear, Bonhoeffer was not received by only a section of the South African theological community; for example, only white or black theologians, or only those who are Reformed. Instead, his reception was quite ecumenical. Consequently, it is useful to consider the recent publications regarding Bonhoeffer by South African theologians.

On the ecumenical scene, various theologians have garnered insights from the theology of Bonhoeffer; three theologians are here worth noting. Carel Anthonissen, of The Centre for Christian Spirituality in Stellenbosch, published his 'Living through the fire: Bonhoeffer's thoughts on a credible church for today' (2016). He sought to focus on Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology and how it could embody a sense of authenticity. Prior to this, Anthonissen had completed his doctoral dissertation, titled *Die geloofwaardigheid van die kerk in die teologie van Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1993). In both these works, one cannot but note the priority Anthonissen affords to the question of the church's credibility. Also, in 2016, Patrick Dunn wrote the article "Prophets, Faust, and First-Years: Bonhoeffer and the language of charismatic experience" (2016). Using a Global South analysis, Dunn investigated the reception of Bonhoeffer by neo-Pentecostal communities. This, to be sure, is quite a valuable insight; as it sheds light on Bonhoeffer studies within the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions. Two years later, Dunn would complete his doctoral dissertation, under the title *Discipleship as Theological Prolegomenon Implications for the Relation of Theory and Praxis in the Work of Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Bonhoeffer* (2018). In 2016, the academic and ethicist Dion Forster penned his article "A state church? A consideration of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in the light of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 'Theological position paper on state and church'". Studying the polity of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and its ties to political power, Forster analysed what insights Bonhoeffer's theology might offer regarding the state-church relation.

Interestingly, the latest works on Bonhoeffer by South Africans have been produced by young Reformed theologians; two are here noteworthy. In 2018 Henco van der Westhuizen published the article 'Whatever became of that earlier time of grace? Luther, Bonhoeffer and the

quintennial.’ Through this writing, van der Westhuizen discussed the contours of grace as conceptualised by both Luther and Bonhoeffer. In 2019, Manitza Kotze and Carike Noeth published ‘Friendship as a Theological Model: Bonhoeffer, Moltmann and the Trinity.’ In this article, the two women theologians investigated the concept of friendship in the works of Bonhoeffer and Jürgen Moltmann; they sought to do so with a lens of ethics and equality.

Three more senior Reformed theologians have also contributed to the recent body of works on Bonhoeffer. Nico Koopman published his ‘Bonhoeffer and the future of Public Theology in South Africa. The on-going quest for life together’ (2014). In it, Koopman attempted to deepen the growing tradition of Public Theology by asserting the Bonhoefferian impulse of pursuing life together. In 2017 Meiring contributed a chapter titled ‘Bonhoeffer and costly reconciliation in South Africa – through the lens of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.’ This was published in the book entitled *Ecodomy – Life in its fullness* (2017). Here the focus was placed in the work of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission in conversation with the theology of Bonhoeffer. More than a decade ago, Robert Vosloo published his ‘Body and Health in the Light of the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’ (2006). Here he argued for a prioritisation of the physical human body, especially concerning health, in theological reflection. Later, Vosloo would write his ‘The Feeling of Time: Bonhoeffer on Temporality and the Fully Human Life’ (2008). In it, Vosloo wrestled with the complex notions of human life within temporality, inspired by Bonhoeffer. Years later in 2017 Vosloo published ‘Time Out of Joint and Future-Oriented Memory: Engaging Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Search for a Way to Deal Responsibly with the Ghosts of the Past.’ The article discusses the need for reading Bonhoeffer with a historically aware lens, probing what responsible action may be. Following this, in 2019, Vosloo would also pen his ‘Prophetic witness in weakness.’ Again, Bonhoeffer’s theology was used to grapple with the notion of witness and prophecy in contemporary times.

This brief chronology sought to consider the works published in the last decade. It would seem, from this brief observation of recent publications, the theology of Bonhoeffer is consistently used as a hermeneutical key for the study of theology, ethics and society. Differently put, throughout these texts, Bonhoeffer is consistently presented as a referent in each theological reflection. It also becomes clear, from this brief listing of publications, that the study of Bonhoeffer has become dominated by Reformed theologians. Perhaps, in our time, the question should be raised why this is the case. Even so, this brief presentation highlights the reality that presently, Bonhoeffer’s theology is engaged by an ecumenically diverse and multigenerational

community of theologians in South Africa. This reality of diversity is most helpful to deepen the impact Bonhoeffer studies may have on the South African religious community, especially as it relates to queer theology. I contend that this ecumenical and multigenerational appeal offers helpful impetus for queering South African Bonhoeffer studies, given its transgressive nature.

The impact of this influence is most visibly observed in the theological publications of three theologians: Russel Botman, Allan Boesak and John de Gruchy. Now, attention is afforded to one publication of each of these figures, a work that prioritises the Bonhoeffer's theological impulse. It must be stated; no attempt is made to argue that in each of these publications the full scope of Bonhoeffer's influence on each theologian. Instead, given the focus of this study, the consideration is limited to work that sheds light on Bonhoeffer's influence in their theological imagination. Moreover, this section investigates their reception of Bonhoeffer, and what this means for the South African religious landscape.

Russel Botman

At a time when the people of South Africa imagined their political future conceptualising what would become a democracy; during this time Russel Hayman Botman (1953–2014) was at work on his doctoral dissertation. Under the supervision of the Reformed theologian Dirkie Smit, Botman pursued this entitling it *Discipleship as Transformation? Towards a Theology of Transformation* (1993). In this project, Botman sought to wrestle with the insights of Liberation Theology in conversation with the theology of Bonhoeffer, while attempting to contribute to the South African politics of the time. For this study, attention is afforded to how Botman understands Bonhoeffer's conception of discipleship. Following a brief analysis of this conception, I present a description of how this informed Botman's development of community during his rectorate at Stellenbosch University.

In his doctoral dissertation, Botman (1993:54) divides Bonhoeffer's conception of discipleship into three periods. The first period ranges from 1927 to 1931, during which *Sanctorum Communio* was published; the second period from 1932 to 1937, in which *Life Together* was written; and, the third period from 1938 to 1944. It does us well to consider all the three periods, even though the final falls out of the scope of the study. The reason for this is that it is in the third period, which Botman considers Bonhoeffer's notion of transformation as most concerted.

In the first period, four developments may be noted in Botman's analysis of Bonhoeffer. First, the guiding principle of Bonhoeffer's entire theological project sought to link ethics and history most intimately. Second, in *Sanctorum Communio* Botman observes the development of the notion of Christ existing as the collective person. As such, Botman (1993:59) writes: "His [Bonhoeffer] concept of the church was an existential one... When I say that Bonhoeffer was interested in the existence of the church, I do in fact mean 'the reality of a living church'." In *Act and Being* Bonhoeffer grappled greatly with revelation and ontology in relation to the church, this is the third development. Here the focus was placed on both the concrete and visible expression of God's will for the human community. The fourth development is Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology. As early as *Sanctorum Communio* one notes the implicit development of a notion of theological anthropology; at his inaugural lecture Bonhoeffer would flesh this out, entitled 'Man [sic] in Contemporary Philosophy and Religion.' Now Bonhoeffer would more clearly and consistently centre Christology in his understanding of the human community. In summary, these four developments provide great insight into how Bonhoeffer understands community; yet, it also sets the stage for how he would attempt to conceive of the transformation of the church-community. Therefore, Botman concludes: "The church [for Bonhoeffer] remained the true *theological locality* of act and being" (emphasis not mine).

The significant shift in Bonhoeffer's theology takes place in the second period; during this time, the metaphor of joy (or *chara*) would pervade much of his thought, which he linked to suffering. The first period exposed the pitfall of an elevated ecclesiology. Therefore, Botman (1993:77) argues: "It became a *danger* to his [Bonhoeffer's] *christology* and his *theological anthropology*... [Bonhoeffer] discovered that one had to see the church also in contrast to Christ and Christianity." As such, ecclesiology was now firmly understood as in service of Christology; whereas it may have been able to be confused in Bonhoeffer's previous works.

In the third period, Botman highlights Bonhoeffer's focused concentration on "discipleship as transformative responsibility." Here three developments are worth noting. Firstly, discipleship is to be understood as formation. Botman (1993:105) states: "Discipleship reaches its purpose in the two-fold existence of the church (locality) by fulfilling the formation (ethics as formation) of the world to meet the goal of God." This is quite important; formation should be considered the German word *gestaltung*. Meaning, discipleship is to take the form [*Gestalt*] of Christ. Secondly, this understanding of discipleship necessitates social responsibility. This was a time in which the church had defected from Christ, not embodying its confession. As such, Bonhoeffer sought to confront the challenges of projecting a this-worldly faith, predicated on

Christology. Thirdly, discipleship is directed towards transforming citizenship. Discipleship is understood as “the historical-anthropological mode in which the transform, which is Christ, would take shape in the present (evil) form of things” (Botman, 1993:118). Differently put, transformation (and as such, discipleship) is the making of history for the coming generation.

The reasons informing Botman’s doctoral topic is the political climate in South Africa during the early 1990s. The three developments he constructs shed much light on his construction of Bonhoeffer’s theology, and his reception of it. I have intentionally discussed Botman’s reception Bonhoeffer by charting of these three developments. I argue that understanding Botman’s doctoral dissertation, and this construction of discipleship and transformation, one is better able to understand what implications this has for his sense of community. Attention is now turned to Botman’s role in facilitating and developing community at Stellenbosch University, during the period of his rectorate.

The term hope may capture Botman’s tenure as Vice-Chancellor and Rector of Stellenbosch University. For two terms, from 2007 to 2014, Botman would lead the community in the attempt to embody hope. Botman’s conception of hope also influenced his development of pedagogics; as well as the theology of Bonhoeffer. In 2007 at his inaugural lecture as Rector, Botman would deliver an address titled *A Multicultural University with a Pedagogy of Hope for Africa*. Setting the trajectory of his rectorate, the lecture would prioritise the African location of Stellenbosch. Even more impressive, Botman’s hope is much inspired by Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992); yet, one must acknowledge Moltmann’s eschatological dimension of hope (Plaatjies van Huffel & Taljaard, 2017:109). Smit (2016:92) notes that Botman’s commitment to hope was grounded in his sincere love for the youth, the coming generation; which was also inspired by Bonhoeffer’s theology.

Further, this would be done through the launching of Stellenbosch University’s HOPE Project in July 2010. At its inception the project sought to address three responsibilities of the university: first, a moral responsibility to the poor and rural communities; second, a historical responsibility given the burden imposed by apartheid; third, a responsibility to embrace the challenges of the twenty-first century (*Public Launch of Stellenbosch University’s HOPE Project*, 2010). Informed by these responsibilities, the project sought to respond to the university’s unique needs of equity (to reflect the demographics of South African society) and service (to promote development that relevant to both South Africa and the African continent). In the manuscript of this address at the public launch of the HOPE Project one observes language eerily familiar to that of his doctoral dissertation.

This understanding of hope informed two other motifs in Botman's theology. The first is the notion of responsibility, which may also be considered ethics. Reflecting on Botman's influencers, Smit (2015:615) highlights: "For Bonhoeffer, responsibility was also a central notion and also for him it had everything to do with the future. His ethics is often described as an ethics of responsibility." Again, one cannot but note the influence of Bonhoeffer on both Botman's theology and his time as Rector. However, this theme of responsibility can be observed as early as in 1996. In this year, Botman (1996:85) would publish an essay in which critiqued the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through the lens of responsibility. This was, no doubt, quite courageous at the time when most of the world was celebrating South Africa's reconciliatory project. Thus, it may be rightly argued that Bonhoeffer's influence during the 1990s fermented by the time he took on the role as Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University.

Second, Botman's term in office has, in time, become characterised by the notion of transformation. Transformation, I posit, was another form in which his conception of hope was expressed. For the journalist, Marianne Thamm (2014) Botman's legacy as Rector of Stellenbosch University will continue to be marked by his concrete commitment to transformation. Smit (2015:622) terms this commitment to transformation "hopeful agency." This is quite telling; as in his doctoral dissertation, Botman is consistent that transformation must be focused on the future (here to be understood as eschatology).

Botman's term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University may, thus, be considered a time in which he tried "to make hope happen" (*Stellenbosch University Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013–2018*, 2012). Following this discussion of Botman's theology and biography, there should be no doubt that Bonhoeffer greatly influenced him. In fact, for Smit (2016:106), Botman went to great lengths to ensure that the Global South theological community invested its time in reading and reflecting on Bonhoeffer for their particular contexts.

More importantly, though, interpreting Bonhoeffer's theology, Botman focused his attention on deepening the sense of community at Stellenbosch University (Thamm, 2014). Stellenbosch University is significantly impacted by South Africa's racial history; being a historically white Afrikaans institution of higher learning. Throughout his term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor Botman sought to realise hope for the broader Stellenbosch community; while also centring an ethic of responsibility through transformation.

A critical study of Botman's theology and his tenure as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University would recognise the immense influence of Bonhoeffer; not least in the conceptions of hope and community. Conceiving of hope within the socio-political context of Stellenbosch may be understood to be an act of queering. This may be argued given its reclaiming of the university community as space for all. Fundamentally, Botman set out to 'form' Stellenbosch University to be a community that is home to both the son of the farm-owner and the daughter of the farmworker. This commitment was undoubtedly inspired by Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, which was buttressed on Christology. For this study, this opens interesting questions about queering ecclesiology which shall be explored later in the section.

Allan Boesak

There is no doubt that Allan Aubrey Boesak (1946–) is a premier contemporary South African theologian that draws on the theology of Bonhoeffer. Throughout the several decades, starting at early as the 1970s, Boesak has displayed a remarkable reception of the theology of Bonhoeffer in both his ministry, activism and scholarship.

Following his doctoral studies in Kampen, Holland, in 1976, Boesak returned to apartheid South Africa as both an activist and clergyperson. During the 1970s and 1980s, Boesak chaired the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa, an alliance that rejected the ideology of apartheid on theological grounds. As previously stated, Boesak represented the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) at the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982, when the *status confessionis* was declared. At this event he was also elected to the office of the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, serving until 1989.

During the 1980s Boesak played a vital role in the formation of the United Democratic Front; which was an umbrella organisation (for no less than seven hundred organisations) that sought to consolidate the resistance against apartheid. Throughout this time Boesak also played an influential role on the South African ecclesial landscape. From 1982 to 1986 Boesak exercised significant influence on the deliberations of the DRMC's drafting and adoption of the Belhar Confession. He also served in the office of Moderator of the General Synod of the DRMC in this period.

Throughout his theological journey, Boesak has produced a considerable body of works, that is quite diverse in focus. An overview of Boesak's theology is not the focus of this study. Plaatjies van Huffel, in the article 'The unsettling Story about Allan Boesak's Involvement in the Struggle against Apartheid' (2018), provides a helpful analysis of each of his works on the

South African theological community. Instead, for this section of the study, attention is afforded to how Boesak, informed by Bonhoeffer, constructs the concept of hope. In no other work does he do this as pronounced in *Dare We Speak of Hope?: Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics* (2014).

The influence of Bonhoeffer's theology pervades Boesak's publication. He acknowledges this (Boesak, 2014:20); throughout the text, at least fifty-seven explicit references are made to Bonhoeffer. However, it should be noted that Boesak reads Bonhoeffer's theology in conversation with the whole of Christian theology; thus, it is not strange for him to draw from the resources of Augustine, John Calvin and James Cone.

A brief analysis of the overarching argument is, therefore, in order for this focus of this study. The heart of Boesak's conception of hope is firmly grounded in history; it cannot be separated from the historical circumstances that give rise to reality. Reflecting on the South African context two decades in democracy, Boesak (2014:4) writes:

“For South Africans, justice—social, gender, sexual, and political—so treasured in our constitution, remains painfully elusive in our politics, and our social and economic policy framework has not achieved real economic transformation, wealth distribution, or the eradication of poverty.”

To wrestle with hope in an ahistorical fashion, then, completely misunderstands Boesak. Further, to attempt to speak about the concept of hope is an act of courage. Boesak (2014:14), here, attributes such an understanding of hope as an act of courage to Bonhoeffer, quoting: “Things do exist that are worth standing up for without compromise. To me it seems that peace and justice are such things.”

Primarily, Boesak questions not *if* we should speak about hope, but rather *why* and *how* we should do so. As such, in the publication, Boesak provides six considerations for how a community of faith should speak about hope; in an authentic sense, this is presented as normative (what ought to be done). First, hope can only be conceived if it is done with recognition of woundedness. As such, hope must be sustained by a language (both sign and signifier) of woundedness (Boesak, 2014:24) Further, such an understanding of hope through woundedness must also affect a community's development of God-images. Second, inspired by Augustine, Boesak (2014:43) contends that hope ought not to be separated from her children anger and courage. Thus, any reflection on hope must account for the anger experienced by a community for injustice. However, it must also acknowledge the shared courage of that

community for resisting in hope. Third, speaking of hope ought to be in struggle. Perhaps here one notices Bonhoeffer's influence most profoundly. Boesak (2014:80) considers struggle as the way of the cross; he, thus, reads hope here through the lens of Christology. In these first three considerations of hope, Boesak reflects on it concerning temporality. In other words, hope is presented as an articulation of present and prevailing realities; in the following consideration, one notes a shift in thought.

Accounting for the temporal dimension of hope, Boesak now attunes his attention to its futurity. Meaning, hope is now presented directed toward a *telos*; this should be understood eschatologically. As a fourth consideration, Boesak projects hope as an attempt to seek peace. He analyses the present global realities of terrorism and militarism; he offers a reading of history, the present and the future from the underside (Boesak, 2014:99). Such a reading, then, necessitates a sense of morality, this morality is predicated on peace. Fifth, hope can only be conceived in terms of the recognition of fragile faith – that is, the absence of absolute certainty in dogma. For Boesak (2014:142), fragile faith is the encounter of the women witnesses at the resurrection of Christ. That is, they only encounter and experience the resurrection because of the recognition of their fragile faith. Finally, Boesak (2014:147) offers that to speak of hope must be an imaginative practice – which he considers “dreaming.” Hope's (which Boesak consistently personifies) final word is an invitation to dream; that is, a dream sustained by an eschatological expectation. In Christological terms, this expectation is Christ; as such, Christ is the hope of the community. The second half of Boesak's considerations, as here notes, are directed toward a specific horizon. However, this orientation toward the future must be founded on grappling with the present – as he does in the first half of these considerations.

From the insights garnered from *Dare We Speak of Hope?: Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics* (2014), it seems quite clear that for Boesak, hope is a community project. Moreover, it wrestles with both the present and projects a vision of the future (which is understood in eschatological terms). For the remainder of this concentration on Boesak's reception of Bonhoeffer, it does us well to investigate his contribution to South African ecclesial life.

I present that the Belhar Confession may be a helpful tool to interpret this contribution. Boesak's role in South Africa's ecclesial life may be read through the three lenses of unity, reconciliation and justice. Throughout his ministry and theological journey, Boesak deepened South Africa's Reformed community in its commitment to unity. Reflecting on his in social transformation, Pillay (2017:109) writes: “For Allan Boesak, Jesus and politics did not

represent a strange combination but a necessary one – if we are to truly live out the gospel and declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ.” Unity, then, was an objective Boesak would strive toward within the Dutch Reformed Church Family, the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now the World Communion of Reformed Churches) and the greater body of Christian denominations.

The Bonhoeffer-inspired of hope not only allowed Boesak to commit to unity but also reconciliation. More than a decade after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Boesak would, alongside DeYoung, reflect on reconciliation. He did so in quite nuanced terms; offering many critiques for the processes that ensued, yet also highlighting many of its successes. Fundamentally, for Boesak (2014:35) reconciliation is grounded in solidarity; which he defines as “understanding what is at stake is not just the lives or deaths of those who are crucified day by day. At stake is the dying of our soul.” A similar constructive critique is articulated in an earlier article, in which he considers those in power as biblical Zacchaeus-figures (Boesak, 2008).

Boesak is commonly considered a social justice activist (Maluleke, 2016:62). Justice is, as such, a central motif in this theological contribution. Interpreting Boesak as an organic intellectual, Botha (2018:15) that Boesak sought to concretise a human rights culture in South African political and religious life. Meaning, reading the contextual challenges that beset South Africa at the time (and possibly in the present), Boesak recognised for a constitutional democracy to be founded on human rights. This is quite telling, his commitment to human rights has impacted two contemporary issues – they are gender and sexuality.

In 2005 Boesak published his *Die Vlug van Gods Verbeelding* [The Flight of God’s Imagination]; it contained six meditations on women in the Bible. For Landman (2017:176), this book is quite essential to understand Boesak’s role in the liberation of women, particularly black women in South Africa. However, this contribution must be understood historically. Plaatjies van Huffel and Landman (2005:234) critique Boesak for his earlier silence, writing:

“Alhoewel Boesak ‘n merkwaardige bydrae tot die besinning van die relasie tussen swart teologie en gereformeerde identiteit gelewer het, het hy nie die vroue kwessie binne die raamwerk van ‘n swart gereformeerde identiteit geplaas nie.”

[Although Boesak made a remarkable contribution to the discussion on the relation between black theology and reformed identity, he did not locate the issues of women within a black reformed identity.]

Boesak's concern for the experiences of women should, thus, be understood as a shift in his thought. In October 2019 Boesak also published *Children of the Waters of Meribah*; in which he explores and critiques Black Theology informed by the insights of Womanist Theology. Significant shifts have thus taken place in Boesak's thought on gender. From 2005 to 2008 Boesak convened a task-team of the URCSA General Synod, their task was to do a theological study of homosexuality. In 2008 the General Synod would discuss the findings of the task team's report; Boesak tabled the report. Following what he considered a discussion rooted in homophobia and unchristian character, Boesak walked out of the proceedings of the synod as a sign of protest (Adams, 2008). Boesak would remain critical of the homophobia at work in the URCSA. In 2019 Boesak an address at the Other Foundation, it was titled 'Taking Stand: a call to action by the church against injustice towards LGBTI people.' In the lecture, he would both the URCSA and South Africa's ecclesial community to account for their complicity in discriminating against those who are LGBTI+. Justice, then, not only shapes Boesak's theology it permeates his ministry and activism.

Boesak's ministry and witness through commitments to unity, reconciliation and justice should rightly be considered as inspired by Bonhoeffer. However, fundamentally, I argue that Boesak's commitment to these values (and as such to the content to the Belhar Confession) is grounded on his conception of hope. His hope, of course, must be understood to be located in the community (both in the present and future). Therefore, much like Bonhoeffer, Boesak – through his conception of hope – is primarily concerned with the community, and this community is predicated on an understanding of Christology.

John de Gruchy

The most senior contemporary Bonhoeffer scholar in South Africa is undoubtedly John W. de Gruchy (1939–). On both the national and international landscape de Gruchy acts as a leading interpreter of Bonhoeffer (Meiring, 2007:152); being part of the International Bonhoeffer Society since 1975. Thus, any consideration of the reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa must grapple with the body of works produced by de Gruchy. Further, as church historian, de Gruchy has wrestled with Bonhoeffer's theology with exquisite historical sensitivity, while speaking to the contextual realities of South Africa.

The contribution of de Gruchy to the South African reception of Bonhoeffer is impressive on various fronts. As a church historian, he sought to grapple with the theology of Bonhoeffer with historical sensitivity; especially during his tenure as a lecturer at the University of Cape Town. It is noteworthy that de Gruchy chose the theology of is Bonhoeffer as the topic of his

doctoral dissertation; thus, setting the trajectory of further inquiry into the German theologian. The direct impact of Bonhoeffer's theology on de Gruchy is best displayed in his work *Bonhoeffer and South Africa: Theology in Dialogue* (1984). de Gruchy is part of the United Congregational Church. However, like Botman and Boesak, his interpretation of Bonhoeffer is greatly influenced by Reformed theology. This may, indeed, be attributed to the history that Reformed theology and its denominations have played in the development of South Africa's religious landscape.

Before attending to the analysis of de Gruchy's sense of community, attention is afforded to his reception of Bonhoeffer. I intentionally present it here, rather than in the previous section about South Africa's reception of Bonhoeffer's theology. The reason for this is the personal dimension; in the previous section, the general South African reception was considered. Throughout his theological project de Gruchy attempts to bring himself into dialogue with Bonhoeffer's theology and time. Even so, this attempt is founded on four notes, which de Gruchy applies as tools to ensure historical sensitivity.

The first note is to be cautious affording Bonhoeffer a cult status. Here two dangers become temptations: Bonhoeffer may become co-opted to address the challenges of our time uncritically; and, Bonhoeffer may be reduced to nothing more than an intellectual interest (de Gruchy, 2014:53). As such, theologians should move beyond merely rendering Bonhoeffer's biography and theology as only hagiographic; thus, allowing for critique. A second note is an acknowledgement that Christology is at the centre of Bonhoeffer's theology.

Third, de Gruchy (2014:56) contends that martyrdom should be understood only in terms of his commitment and conceptualisation of discipleship. The fourth note is that Bonhoeffer should be read as one who attempted to draw the Christian faith into conversation with the "polyphony of life", that is, worldly realities (de Gruchy, 2014:59). The final note is that Bonhoeffer's theology must be understood to accent the notion of future generations. In order to understand the scope of Bonhoeffer's influence on de Gruchy, it is helpful to prioritise these five notes.

The body of works produced by de Gruchy continues to grow. For this study, though, it is helpful to offer an analysis of his work *The End Is Not Yet: Standing Firm in Apocalyptic Times* (2017). I consider this text for two reasons. First, de Gruchy offers it as a gift to the International Bonhoeffer Society; a gift he hopes would shed light on why Bonhoeffer is relevant for our

times. Second, this text is de Gruchy's most recent publication on the concept of community inspired by Bonhoeffer.

While the title of the publication may suggest that it intends to offer a declaration of present realities; instead, throughout the text, one notes de Gruchy centring questions are opposed to statements. Two primary questions are probed in the book: first, part one questions the notion of time; second, part two questions the notion of community. Time and community, then, are weaved together as the leitmotif that directs the project.

Considering time in part one, de Gruchy, first, questions if present realities may be perceived as the end (or apocalypse). Analysing the prevailing despair and totalitarian nationalism so pervasive in this early period of the twenty-first century, de Gruchy does indeed acknowledge that the present is tainted with pessimism. In a certain sense, the present has ushered in an apocalyptic reality that is most disconcerting for all people, not least people of faith. The securities of the past are no longer a reality. Responding to the question raised, then, de Gruchy (2017:xxi) contends with Bonhoeffer, that the present reality must be understood as: "It is a pen-ultimate, before the last. The entry of grace is the ultimate."

Second, posing the question "Where on earth is God?", de Gruchy presents a reading of the religious landscape informed by the histories of the previous few centuries. For de Gruchy, the relevance of God is predicated on grappling with the theodicy; which is the recognition of the reality of suffering. Further, this would require that we are honest about how our God-images are constructed in society. Again, quoting Bonhoeffer, de Gruchy (2017:43) problematises this question of God: "Is any room left for God? ...we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world."

In these two considerations, de Gruchy offers a nuanced understanding of the end concerning the question of God. On the one hand, it is indeed the end insofar as we must acknowledge that there has been a break from a previous reality of supposed securities. On the other hand, though, it is not the end because the present invites all people (including people of faith and theologians) to think anew about time, God and justice.

Having dealt with history and the construction of God in the theological imagination of people, de Gruchy now focuses attention on the community. The third consideration he offers concerns the nation-state; no doubt a modernist concept, but I take to represent a regional community. In the face of corruption that is pervasive throughout the global economic system, what is needed is a human understanding of democracy. For de Gruchy (2017:20) the nation-state must

be founded on a deep sense of democracy, he writes: “The only kind of democracy that accords with Christian conviction is a democracy that serves the common.” Here de Gruchy’s reading of politics is both humanistic and secular; yet, it may offer insight into the Christian community. Studying de Gruchy’s sense of community via the concept of the kingdom of God, Dreyer (2019:4) writes that it is “the rediscovery of Biblical eschatology provide the criteria by which we should evaluate what is happening in history.” Therefore, for de Gruchy democracy undergirds secular discourse in the same manner that eschatology does for the Christian community.

Fourth, de Gruchy considers the role of leaders. He does so by asking the question: *who* they are? Interestingly, this is not a question of virtues but identity. Here one observes the influence of Bonhoeffer in three ways. Firstly, leadership is generational; even so, it directed to ensure the goodness of life for the next generation (de Gruchy, 2017:128). Secondly, leadership is predicated on the acceptance of responsibility. Thirdly, leadership is informed by the impulse of ensuring peace. They are taken together, for de Gruchy (2017:145), whose leaders are embodied in his understanding of prophecy.

In this second part, considerations three and four, the notion of community plays a central role in de Gruchy’s thinking. The community of the nation-state must be founded on a deep democracy that is directed toward the common good; and, leaders of this community must enact the role of a prophet. Even so, this sense of community should not be divorced from history and God (addressed in the first part). Instead, de Gruchy rightly notes that it is not the end because, in the face of historic despair and suffering, we are presented with the opportunity to form community and act as prophets. As opposed to understanding the present time as the end (or apocalypse), we are directed to await the Second Advent – it is, then, a penultimate time. From this, it may be surmised that the notion of hope is central to the entire argument de Gruchy presents; it, then, should be understood as quite eschatological.

Queering the South African Reception of Bonhoeffer

From this brief discussion, it is quite clear, the contemporary reception of Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa remains dominated by the gaze of Reformed white men. As noted, this reality differs significantly from the origins of this reception – which as both ecumenical and racially diverse. Analysing the contributions of Botman and Boesak, this study attempted to provide an alternative reading with this reception. Moreover, this study is also an attempt to contribute from a different vantage point. My reading of Bonhoeffer is informed by the experience being both black and gay.

The contributions of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy Bonhoeffer is presented as not only relevant for the church. Instead, each theologian interprets Bonhoeffer within David Tracy's three publics: the church, society, and academy (Storrar, 2017:x). All three theologians were and are ordained ministers; Botman and Boesak in the URCSA, and de Gruchy in United Congregational Church. However, they also played essential roles in the South African and international ecumenical communities. Thus, their interpretation of Bonhoeffer was primarily pastoral.

Additionally, the three were and are professors of theology. Botman taught at both the University of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch University; later serving as its Rector and Vice-Chancellor. Boesak lectured at the Christian Theological Seminary and Butler University in Indianapolis, two schools in the United States of America. de Gruchy taught at the University of Cape Town. Thus, their interest in Bonhoeffer was significantly impacted by the latest developments in theological discourse.

What is most telling about this group of theologians is their activism. Indeed, as here suggested, South African Bonhoeffer studies are substantially predicated on the impetus of activism. These three theologians resisted apartheid, and they continue to critique various forms of injustice. It, then, seems quite clear that their interpretation of Bonhoeffer played a fundamental role in their commitment to activism in their various forms. Therefore, Bonhoeffer studies, at least in South Africa, may already be inviting theologians with little or no historical affinity to deepen it. It is to this implicit invitation that this study attempts to respond. Thus, any reading of Bonhoeffer today must assert itself to move beyond the confines of being intellectual; it must set out to take bodily form through activism.

Unsurprisingly, activism is at the heart of queer theology. Offering some links between queer theology and activism, Henderson-Espinoza (2019:xxix) states: "Activist Theology is grounded in the work of social healing, and it is work of telling story and curating belonging along lines of radical difference." Through their centring of activism in the academy, church and public; Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy offers helpful insight into queering Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa.

Throughout this section, an attempt has been made to argue that the conception of community that Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy present is predicated on the notion of hope. It is important to note that this notion of the community founded on hope ought not to be separated from Bonhoeffer's insistence of that the church is Christ existing in community; a community which

is founded on love. This assertion of Bonhoeffer and the claim by Cheng that queer theology is radical love are helpful informants for pursuing a queer reading of the theological insights of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy in relation to community. At least three comments are helpful to initiate this task of queering; here, I do not attempt offering a definitive word. Instead, this seeks to invite further consideration.

First, in all three theologians' thought transformation (both societal and ecclesial) is essential; yet, Botman is most consistent in his commitment to its discursive development. Primarily, Botman sought to create a community in which hope nurtures transformation. Again, the understanding of transformation is to be understood as pursuing the form [*Gestalt*] of Christ. Althaus-Reid (2006:3) offers a similar reading of both theology and community; she set out "to denounce and transform the roots of many mechanisms of power and control." Botman, then, provides the impetus to further his reflection of the community founded on hope through transformation by linking it to the lives and experiences of those who are LGBTI+. This may, to paraphrase Botman, prioritise the experiences of the LGBTI+ children of farmworkers; and thus, offer great insight into re-imagining community.

Second, the conception of the community as hope is pursued in the pursuit of unity and inclusivity. As stated, the reception of Bonhoeffer's' theology has inspired the adoption of various dogmatic documents by the South African ecumenical community; not least the *Kairos Document* and the *Belhar Confession*. Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy have played monumental roles in the South African ecumenical life; it may be helpful to grapple with the sense of community as one in which unity and inclusivity are pursued. A queer reading of their conception of the community would recognise that a church that permits or endorses homo-, trans- or queerphobia ought not to be considered united or inclusive. For Loughlin (2004:74), homophobia precludes the pursuit of unity. As such, through their conception of hope and community through unity and inclusivity, the three theologians motivate for the church to embrace those who are LGBTI+ as prerequisites for full unity and inclusivity.

Third, their conception of the community as hope is deeply connected to the notion of responsibility. It may be argued that hope informs, nay inspires, responsible action in, for and by the community; consequently, recognising responsibility is an act of courage. Such an understanding of responsibility concerning the community is twofold. On the one hand, it is pursued aware of the coming generation (Smit, 2016:161; Boesak, 2014:41; de Gruchy, 2017:128). Meaning, responsible action is performed and prioritised to ensure the realising of the common good for the next generation.

On the other hand, by recognising the importance of responsibility, leaders are positioned as prophetic figures (de Gruchy, 2017:145). Therefore, as prophetic figures, members in the community must address the reality that the lives of many are threatened by violence. This, then, is a helpful insight worth linking to queer theology. Edman (2016:46) links responsibility to the reality of risk; she writes: “Queer [LGBTI+] people have a particular relationship to risk. Our need to be honest about our identities is not merely an ethical exercise. In order to find deep, intimate connection—which is to say, in order to love and be loved, intimately—we have to reveal ourselves.” Recognising the risks involved in self-disclosing for those who are LGBTI+ the church ought to take its prophetic responsibility seriously by creating a community wherein the common good of both the present and future generation is pursued, truly where love and hope are centred. Focusing on responsibility Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy assert the importance of a community that is geared toward the experience of hope by all its members.

These three attempts at queering Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy’s sense of community are predicated on a primary concern for the conception of hope; an understanding of hope that is informed by love. Therefore, the hope of a community is that it is a love community [*Liebesgemeinschaft*]. Christ is the foundation of this community, both its hope and love. Consequently, the church is Christ queering the existence of community through hope. Centring hope as a hermeneutical key for consideration of community is quite remarkable. Doing so provides the community with an orientation; that is, it is directed toward and away from something. Following a queering of this community; by centring hope, the church directs itself to the eschatological *telos* [goal] when and where those who are LGBTI+ are affirmed and celebrated for their being in Christ, indeed as part of the *Corpus Christi* (Tonstad, 2016:277) In this sense, then, the theological contributions of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy provide the much needed queering impetus to realise the church as a community that embraces those othered because of their sexual identities. Pursuing the avenue of queering within South African Bonhoeffer studies new emphases and concerns may be highlighted. Further, given the transgressive character of Bonhoeffer studies, deepening this queering impetus may uncover that it is already part of the intellectual trajectory Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa.

Given this reading the reception of Bonhoeffer’s theology in South Africa, it is still needful to consider how this relates to queer theology. This reception, I posit, may provide the impetus for doing queer theology in our time using the South African reception of Bonhoeffer as an essential referent. This may be observed for three reasons.

First, Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa has consistently sought to grapple with the doctrine of incarnation; recognising the importance of corporality and experience. This can be observed from the intimate links between South African Bonhoeffer studies and the development of liberation theologies, especially Black Liberation Theology. As previously stated, the South African confessional tradition has been much inspired by Bonhoeffer's contribution to the Confessing movement in Germany. This may be observed from the various confessional documents that were formulated from the 1960s to the 1990s; of which *Kairos Document* and the *Belhar Confession* are examples. Inspired by their reading of Bonhoeffer, many black theologians and denominations in South Africa have taken to the task of formulating a theology that accounts for their experience of oppression; here the works of Boesak and Koopman are most notable.

Second, throughout the development of Bonhoeffer studies, a considerable number of theologians have espoused an implicit intersectional approach to theologising – this is most definitely a queering. Attending to doing theology employing an intersectional approach, these theologians have accounted for the reality that various identity markers inform religious reflection. This may be observed in the works of Botman who sought to attend to the legacy of colonialism in both the church and academy, with a focus on the poor; as well as for both Boesak and de Gruchy whose later theology continues to focus on empire. However, it should be noted that Bonhoeffer in his own theologising undertook a similar project by grappling with his Prussian-German identity in relation to his Christian faith. This intersectional approach, to be sure, offers telling insights into our collective conception of both the construction of the individual and community (Carbado et al, 2013:312). An intersectional approach is most helpful as it attempts to account for the whole human experience of the individual; thus, it asserts to recognise all those present within the community. Only by recognising the whole of the community and as such, the fullness of an individual's experience and identity is one able to conceive of the richness of that community. In this sense, then, an intersectional approach is a queering because it seeks to erase constructed boundaries that may exist within the community.

Third, the reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa provides the impetus for doing queer theology when understood in relation to the two fundamental characteristics of queer theology, as argued by Isherwood (2011:424). Firstly, queer theology commits itself to a project of religious imagining while embracing irony and parody; this should be regarded as an act of reclaiming the tradition. Secondly, queer theology is also subversive. Since its reception, South

African theologians have employed Bonhoeffer's theology in opposition to apartheid and other oppressive theologies. The theology of Bonhoeffer has been quite a crucial theological informant for activism. I contend that by committing to activism in opposition to apartheid theology; theologians were reclaiming the Christian tradition for themselves. Differently put, they subversively used the logic of Western Christianity to liberate themselves from its dehumanisation.

Reflecting on the interpretation of Bonhoeffer, Vosloo (2013:142) writes: "the sustainability of Bonhoeffer's legacy in South Africa does require that at times we interrupt – and perhaps even disrupt – the conversation about Bonhoeffer's relevance with questions regarding a responsible hermeneutic." Having presented a history of Bonhoeffer's reception in South Africa and offering a discussion of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy; this section sought to offer such an interruption (indeed, disruption) by centring a queer theological hermeneutic.

Cheng (2011:6) writes: "the meaning of 'queer' is a self-conscious embrace of all that is transgressive of societal norms." Given this definition of queer theology and queering praxis, I posit that the South African reception of Bonhoeffer's theology (especially in the works of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy) very well provides the groundwork doing queer theology. This groundwork is because of its notion of hope; that is, an eschatological hope which is directed toward liberation for a nation that has and continues experience various forms of oppression. It should be noted that South Africa's theological community has implicitly sought to actualise Bonhoeffer's othered ecclesiology, thus pursuing a church for others. Highlighting this, the impetus for such queering may be further explored.

Realising Bonhoeffer's Othered Ecclesiology

It is here that attention is shifted the *queer* reception of Bonhoeffer in the South African community. I contend that the reception of Bonhoeffer has paralleled with the concerns of queer theology. Queer is here understood to mean transgressive and not subjected to the prevailing norm, to unearth what the norm renders unimportant. Attention is afforded to ways in which the South African reception shows affinity to the concerns of queer theology. When critically assessed the reception of his theology might be considered queer in this sense for three reasons.

First, it is telling that both white and black theologians generally accepted the inception of Bonhoeffer's reception. This, of course, was not the practice of the time. Second, the Lutheran Bonhoeffer was widely received by an ecumenical community; his theology was and is

embraced by South African Charismatic, Pentecostal, Methodist and Reformed communities. Third, Bonhoeffer studies in South Africa continues to be an intergenerational project. Throughout the decades, Bonhoeffer's theology is received by each next generation. Given these three reasons, the reception of Bonhoeffer may rightly be presented as queer in the sense that it appeals to a diverse community of theologians.

Still, perhaps given this tradition of queering, it is helpful to queer the reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa further. I now place his reception in conversation with queer theory and queer theology. The intention here is to grapple with the notions of hope and community in the contributions of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy. Thus, I set out to ask queering questions *in* and *for* our time.

Given the influence of Bonhoeffer's theology has had on South African ecumenicity, it may be worthwhile to discuss various denominations' approach to LGBTI+ people. Across the various denominations, especially those that are Reformed, Bonhoeffer is presented as a critical voice by those calling for churches to take an affirmative position. However, no attempt will be made here to discuss the various positions of the denominations. As opposed to that, recognising that Bonhoeffer is widely received by those calling for the church's inclusion of LGBTI+ people, I set out to probe how this may be done. Fundamentally, this focus on the church is buttressed on the previous chapter's insights.

South African Society

This discussion must be located within the socio-political history of South Africa. The protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation has been the law since the signing of the Constitution in 1996. Interestingly, this protection is written into the Bill of Rights, stating:

“The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, *sexual orientation*, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996:6).

This is quite telling, protecting the rights of LGBTI+ along with other identity markers, ensures its importance. A decade later the in 2006 the Civil Union Act would be signed into law; it would recognise the union of two persons of the same gender. Ntlama (2010:191) rightly considers the context in which this legislation was adopted, writing:

“The legislation was adopted as a direct response to the landmark decision of the Constitutional Court in *Minister of Home Affairs v Fourie*. The Court had declared the lack of the legal recognition of same-sex [sic] relationships unconstitutional and had given Parliament a period of one year in which to develop a remedy that would allow same-sex partners to formalise their relationships.”

The legislative progress, as it pertains to the rights of those who are LGBTI+, should be understood as the product of activism. More recently, in 2018, a Member of Parliament submitted the ‘Private Members Bill (The Civil Union Amendment Bill)’ to Parliament for consideration; the submission seeks to strike down “the provision that allows marriage officers stationed at Home Affairs branches to refuse to constitute a civil union or marriage between persons of the same sex” (Lotter, 2018).

From a legislative perspective, South Africa has made tremendous progress from a vastly different reality before 1996. Further, currently under the leadership of the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Government is considering the synthesising of the present matrimonial legislation (Ensor, 2019). These are the Marriage Act (1961), Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) and Civil Unions Act (2006). The overhaul would attempt to present all three acts like one; thus, protecting citizens against discrimination. This, if anything, may be regarded as significant legislative progress.

Recent years have not only seen progress on the legal front. In 2016 the Academy of Science of South Africa published its report *Diversity of Human Sexuality: Implications for Policy in Africa*. This was, no doubt, quite an essential text for the psychological academic community; it sought to discuss sexuality critically and contextually. The report offered great insight into how society constructs community in relation to those who are LGBTI+. As such, the report's researchers concluded:

“To promote human welfare, we must advance two important goals: well-being and social justice. Recognising the harm of bullying and other exclusionary behaviours and the damage caused by physical violence and fear in LGBTI communities, scientists in Africa should engage more actively in research to reduce stigma, and work further to promote access to health care and educational materials for LGBTI communities” (*Diversity of Human Sexuality: Implications for Policy in Africa*, 2016).

Recognising these signs of progress, it may yet offer us a more clear-sighted view to consider the insights of The Other Foundation. The organisation has been at the forefront of pursuing

research about sexual minorities (LGBTI+) in southern Africa; it considers its works twofold, both defending and advancing the rights of those who are LGBTI+.

In the publication *Silent No Longer!: Narratives of engagement between LGBTI groups and the churches in southern Africa* (2017), The Other Foundation's researchers interrogate the voiceless stories of LGBTI+ people of faith. Interestingly, the author fundamentally asserts the claim: "From the earliest days of African LGBTI activism there have been Christian LGBTI groups that we inspired by the message of the Gospels rather than by international human rights discourse" (Gumba, 2017:19). This, I think, provides a great deal of impetus for theologian and religious scholars to consider how religion may be harnessed to re-imagine contributing to the common good as it relates to the lives of those who are LGBTI+.

In 2017 The Other Foundation also produced research into the violence that LGBTI+ people experience at the hands of religion. In response to the pervasive nature of this violence, the publication notes that theology, as it is generally considered, does not adequately grapple with sexuality as a site of struggle; this is especially the case because it maintains heteropatriarchy (West et al, 2017:19). It is quite essential to note the nuance at work in the publication: it grappled most critically with the reception of Scripture in community, while also interrogating the complex nature that theological traditions are developed and their role in communities.

The Other Foundation, more recently, focused on the reclamation of homo-, trans- and queerphobic rhetoric by those who LGBTI+; this is done in the publication *Stabanisation: A discussion paper about disrupting backlash by reclaiming LGBTI voices in the African church landscape* (2019). For the researchers, the present calls for a conceptualising a contextual liberation theology that prioritises the lives and experiences of those who are LGBTI+. Thus, they posit:

"in the process of doing theology we broadly propose that *Izitabane zingabantu ubuntu* [a humane queer] theology calls for and *embodied reclaiming* of all that is good and life-affirming within faith landscapes, *re-imagining* community and the engagement with the sources of faith and *remembering* our communal sacramental identity" (Davids et al, 2019:29).

The contextually relevant insight that The Other Foundation provides is indeed helpful for our time. While we have made much progress as a society (especially when compared to other African states), there remains work to be done to ensure both the safety and flourishing of people who are LGBTI+, particularly in our faith communities. The progress made should not

welcome lethargy in the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTI+, not least in faith communities. Thus, Stychin's (1996:445) caution in the mid-1990s is prophetic:

“The possibilities for a new dynamic of rights and social change in South Africa are undoubtedly reason for celebration. At the same time, the ways in which movements mobilize around rights must continue to be interrogated to determine whether and how the scope for transformation is constrained and/or facilitated in the sites of legal struggle.”

The signs of progress here described in South African society does indeed impact our theological reflection. The growing interest in reforming matrimonial legislation necessitates denominations to consider the marriage on terms not perceived before. Likewise, the research produced by The Other Foundation requires faith communities to three critical tasks. First, the church must exit the closet of silence; differently put, it must recognise the presence of those who of LGBTI+ within the community so doing acknowledging the voices. Second, the church must account for the violence that it not only permits but also endorses, which renders the lives of those LGBTI+ less than human. Third, possibly most importantly, the church is challenged to journey with the LGBTI+ community in their act of reclamation. Doing so, the church redefines its relation to and embrace of people who are LGBTI+; thus, co-creating a community wherein the diversity of sexualities is celebrated and affirmed. These three tasks are prerequisites if progress is to be made in the protection of the rights of those who are LGBTI+.

Dutch Reformed Church

It may now be helpful to consider the Dutch Reformed Church (henceforth DRC) a case-study worth exploring. The decision to present the DRC as case-study is threefold: first, as a denomination it has played a unique role in South African history; second, it may be considered the most observably influenced by the theology of Bonhoeffer; third, the history of its discussion of LGBTI+ sexualities is possibly the longest and most nuanced of the South African denominational landscape.

It may very well be argued that Beyers Naudé is a key DRC figure in the reception of the theology of Bonhoeffer in South Africa, at least through his witness (both before and after his resignation from the denomination). Since then, the reception of Bonhoeffer by the denomination has transformed dramatically. By the 1990s, a period of considerable socio-political uncertainty, the DRC took to the task of reinventing itself. Meiring (2007:162) tellingly writes of this shift, arguing:

“the time did come in the 1990s, when the church which not only happily lived with apartheid over the years, but provided a theology of separate development to go with it, confessed its shame and guilt, asking forgiveness of its fellow South Africans who had suffered over so many years, as well as of the ‘prophets inside and outside the fold of the church’ who warned against apartheid and were treated shoddily. Lastly, the church asked forgiveness of its own members who were led astray over the years.”

Given this, it is unsurprising that many DRC theologians consider Bonhoeffer, a critical interlocutor – not least four theologians previously mentioned. It should also not be a surprise that Bonhoeffer’s theology played and continues to play an essential role in the denomination’s reflection on sexuality (Janse van Rensburg, 2018; Marais, 2019; Schoeman, 2019). I should, however, state that Bonhoeffer’s theology in these discussions has featured more like an implicit referent. Meaning, by understanding Bonhoeffer’s theology (especially his ecclesiology) one is better able to understand the theological imagination of the DRC as it pertains to sexuality.

However, this cases-study would be remiss if it did not historicise the development of the denomination’s sexuality discussions and decisions. Human sexuality has been on the agenda of the DRC’s General Synod since the late 1980s. Throughout the decades, much progress and regress has been made; which is not the concern here. It is helpful to consider the development within the DRC in relation to and impacted by those in South African society, as noted above. Instead, my focus here is to consider recent decisions since the General Synod held in 2015.

As a Reformed denomination, the discussion of sexuality concerned three matters: first, the recognition of civil unions by its members; second, the baptism of the children of those members in civil unions; third, the ordination of those members who are LGBTI+. These same concerns may be observed as receiving focus throughout the Reformed world, both locally (URCSA) and internationally (Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Reformed Church in America, Church of Scotland). Therefore, by 2015 the DRC endorsed the position which considered homosexual attraction permissible but not acting on such attraction (which the denomination ‘practising homosexuals’). Interestingly, though, the denomination did not at this time support the discipline of members who were LGBTI+; even so, the church did not ensure the protection of LGBTI+ members from homo-, trans- and queerphobia.

It came as a tremendous surprise to the South African ecumenical community when the DRC decided to embrace its LGBTI+ members without limitations at its General Synod in 2015

(*2015-besluit oor Sefldegeslagverhoudings*, 2015). Meaning, LGBTI+ members' civil unions would be recognised and solemnised, their children baptised and LGBTI+ ministerial candidates ordained. This surprise was likewise shared by much of South African society, particularly LGBTI+ citizens, who had considered the denomination rather conservative given its history (Igal, 2015).

The surprise, and perhaps joy, was short-lived; a year later, the DRC would have an extraordinary synod to reconsider the decision. Quite unexpectedly, the seconder of the motion of the 2015-affirmative decision reconsidered his position; thus, now opposing the progress made. At this meeting of the general synod, then, the denomination decided to return to its pre-2015 status quo (*Só het die Sinode Besluit*, 2016). Igal (2016) observes that this was much unexpected by South African society; especially after the DRC was more widely received given its recent progressive politics.

Following this, eleven of the denomination's members took to legal recourse; they believed the 2016-decision to be an infringement of the church order. The Pretoria High Court would hear the case in August 2018. Quite surprising was the denomination's defence; it considered the 2016-decision justified on the grounds of good discrimination and the recognition of religious freedom by the Constitution (Wagner, 2018). Throughout this time, various activists resisted the 2016-decision of the DRC; most visible was the group called '#WhyDiscriminate.' Through social media, the group sought to focus the attention of the South African people on the proceedings of the court case. What was most peculiar about this group was that they were all students of theology, at Stellenbosch University (Collison, 2018). It was their theological training that had inspired them to protect and promote the rights of LGBTI+; as well as holding the church to account. On 21 August 2018 Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology had pledged its solidarity to the #WhyDiscriminate group, and as such the eleven members. In March 2019, the Pretoria High Court set the 2016-decision of the denomination aside; and rendered the 2015-decision the full status it was accorded previously (De Vos, 2019).

More recently, another change took place within the DRC's discussion of sexuality. With the 2015-decision declared the status quo, the DRC sought to reorient itself at the 2019 General Synod. However, again a decision was made by the denomination, though now with much church polity sensitivity. The decision recognises the full participation of members who are LGBTI+. It also seeks to ensure that the denomination remains and becomes an inclusive and diverse community, in which difference is celebrated. Further, the decision also acknowledges the pain caused throughout the decades and particularly in these recent years of the DRC.

This brief overview has been presented to highlight how the DRC has reflected on sexuality. While a critical analysis of what action is required is essential, it will not be presented here; instead, it will be discussed in the concluding chapter. Earlier it was noted that the DRC's discussion of sexuality has been greatly informed by Bonhoeffer's theology. I propose that this may be observed for three reasons.

First, the DRC has sought to remain and deepen its inclusivity and diversity. I contend that this implicitly draws from the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, his sense of community. Throughout the various decisions the denomination has made regarding sexuality (especially from 2007 to 2019); it has sought to welcome a diversity of opinions on the matter. Meaning, it has consistently attempted to pursue life together, even with great difficulty.

Second, consistently, the denomination has attempted to read the issues relating to LGBTI+ people through a Christological lens. The 'You' of those who are LGBTI+ was related to the 'I' of the denomination through Christ; here, Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communitio* is most helpful to understand. This Christocentric approach allows the denomination not only to recognise the diversity of sexualities but also celebrate and affirm it as reality.

Third, through the influence of Bonhoeffer's theology, the reception of his thought became deepened within the South African theological imagination. From the brief history presented of the DRC's sexuality discussion, it may rightly be argued that the Belhar Confession played an important role. In quite a profound manner, the DRC has throughout these discussions affirmed its commitment to unity, reconciliation and justice as it relates to those who LGBTI+. Since 2016 much of the discussion has been focused on the recognition of human rights (both its protection promotion); this can most certainly be linked to the reception of Bonhoeffer by South African theologians who have developed the human rights tradition.

Fundamentally, then, I contend that the DRC makes visible attempts as embodying the hope the is so important in the reception of Bonhoeffer by Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy. This hope is eschatological. It is the hope that inclusivity and diversity ought to be affirmed and celebrated – especially as it relates to those who are LGBTI+. Even so, this consideration should be read within the macro-narrative of South African society, as noted above.

Conclusion

Following the discussion of this chapter, it should be no surprise that the theology of Bonhoeffer has significantly contributed to the religious imagination of South Africa's

theological community. The influence of the twentieth-century Prussian-German theologian can yet be felt and observed in present theological discourse. As such, it is both helpful and essential to attend to grappling with the contours of his reception, not least as it relates to queer theology.

This chapter has attempted to highlight Bonhoeffer's influence on South African theology in two sections. First, attention was afforded to the reception of the theology of Bonhoeffer from the 1960s to contemporary times. At its initial stage of reception, quite interestingly, Bonhoeffer's reception was rather ecumenical and included both black and white theologians (which was the norm at the time). In time this has changed, while Bonhoeffer is still an interlocutor for various denominational traditions, South African Bonhoeffer studies have become dominated by Reformed theologians. Additionally, the first section also discussed the conception of community and hope through an analysis of the works of Botman, Boesak and de Gruchy. Here it was noted that perhaps these theologians provide the queering impetus needed to understand the church as a community that may affirm and celebrate those who are LGBTI+. It should be noted that the intention was to read not only Bonhoeffer in the works, but to read through and beyond them as hermeneutical keys for developing queer theology.

Second, a focus was afforded to the task realising Bonhoeffer's othered ecclesiology. An attempt was made to historicise the reception of Bonhoeffer in South African society, by paying close attention to the progress made in legislation and discourse. These developments, no doubt, had a significant impact on the religious life of South Africa. Therefore, it was helpful to analyse research concerning the religious lives of those who are LGBTI+ and their experiences. Following this, the Dutch Reformed Church was presented as a case-study worth exploring; given the implicit role of Bonhoeffer's theology in its sexuality discussions. In this section, then, the groundwork was laid for what will be explored in the concluding chapter.

This chapter made no attempt to provide a coherent queering praxis that could enable denominations to prioritise the affirmation and celebration of LGBTI+ people. This will be pursued in the concluding chapter, that is to follow. Instead, here, the intention has been to tease out the many and manifold ways the theological reception of Bonhoeffer impacted the South African religious landscape. Therefore, the objective was to highlight what impetus there may be to pursue queer theology, using Bonhoeffer's theology as a referent. Even so, it should be stated that this is a reading of Bonhoeffer's reception. His reception is not limited to the theologians discussed; instead, I argue that their works offer an interesting perspective into Bonhoeffer's reception. The intention is not to present his reception as homogeneous; rather it

is offered as an interpretation. I do not present this as an absolute of the reception of Bonhoeffer. Instead, by proposing this reading, it is hoped that an alternative theological point of departure may be embraced.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Introduction

Mindful of the argument thus far presented, the conclusion sets out to draw the discussion to a helpful close. First, it provides a brief yet substantive proposal for the queering of the URCA's ecclesial life; focusing both on the presbyterial-synodical and congregational levels. Second, it reviews the research questions posed in the introduction, noting that this study has responded to them. Third, it presents a brief discussion on the relevance and contribution this study makes to discourse. Fourth, it offers recommendations for future research in the fields of Bonhoeffer studies, queer theology and the South African theological academy. Finally, a brief overview of each is chapter is presented.

A Proposal for Ecclesial Queering

A study of the queering potential of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological thought would not meet its goal if it did not make a proposal for such an act of queering. That is, in this section attention is afforded to how a denomination and local congregations may be enriched by incorporating and centring Bonhoeffer's queering impulse in the life of the community.

Analysing the development of LGBTI+ discourse and resistance in South African society and within the DRC, in the previous chapter; here focus is placed primarily on the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (henceforth URCSA). This focus can be understood to have a relation to both the denomination and the local congregation; thus, the proposal sets out to address the concerns of both levels.

Much like the DRC before the 2015 decision, presently the URCSA does not allow for the recognition of civil unions, the ordination of LGBTI+ ministerial candidates and the baptism of the children of those who are LGBTI+. Human sexuality entered the anthropological-theological discourse of the denomination in 2005 at its General Synod. This General Synod would acknowledge the diversity of positions; while pleading for a spirit of love, patience, tolerance and respect (Boesak et al, 2008:1). It also rejected homophobia; and recognised the civil rights of those who are LGBTI+.

At its succeeding general synod, the *Report on Homosexuality to the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa* (2008) would be tabled. However, the synod refrained from deciding on its contents; instead, it was directed to regional synods, presbyteries

and congregations for further study. In 2012 the General Synod extended the period of further study; again, directing it to all levels of the denomination.

By the General Synod of 2016 another report was tabled; this time two views were considered a conservative position and a process position. This meeting would decide to adopt the process position, which set out to continue the discussion on all levels; translating into no real institutional change. Interestingly, thirty-six delegates chose to have their names signed to the minority vote; noting their opposition to the decision of the General Synod in favour of the affirmation of LGBTI+ people. In these years, there have been no notable reflections on the URCSA's construction of sexuality. Thus, I set out to provide a proposal for queering the life of the URCSA.

Queering Denominational Life

In chapter two, various themes feature strongly at the heart of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological thought. Four of these themes are worth noting; in fact, they may better a contemporary interpretation of his ecclesiology concerning the experiences and lives of those who are LGBTI+. The first theme worth consideration is that of temporality. In both *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* Bonhoeffer argues for the conception of community to be in time; interestingly, he does so while accenting the actuality of revelation. Differently put, for Bonhoeffer, the church-community is both "from God and to God" (*DBWE 1*, 64). Even so, it is essential to note the significance of the doctrine of incarnation; the church-community reaches the boundary of time because of God's revelation in the incarnate Christ.

In *Life Together*, most tellingly, Bonhoeffer explores temporality through the practices of the church-community. Devoting a chapter each to the 'Day Together' and the 'Day Alone', Bonhoeffer conceives of time and temporality as in the service of the church-community. Daily living is, therefore, both in community and solitude; though, daily living is buttressed on the liturgical practices of prayer, Scripture, singing, breaking bread (*DBWE 5*, 37). Temporality, then, is to be understood as deeply incarnational (having to do with God's revelation in Christ); and yet, it informs the life of the church-community.

In the article 'Time Out of Joint and Future-Oriented Memory' (2018), Vosloo explores Bonhoeffer's conception of temporality and ethical action. He notes: "Bonhoeffer thus indicated the need for the congregants to show solidarity with the contemporary world in its crisis and hope since they participate in history and should take up that responsibility" (Vosloo, 2018:4). Responsibility, then, is foregrounded in the attempt to account for historical injustices,

which Vosloo terms “ghosts of the past.” Only when doing so is a community better able to commit itself to ethical action within the time that exists; failure to recognise such responsibility would mean that the community rejects its essential role.

Following this understanding, a denomination such as the URCSA must attend to a focus on temporality in its ecclesial life. It is a church, both from God and to God; as such, it must take up the responsibility of accounting for the ghosts of the past (that is, historical injustices). There can be no doubt that the URCSA has historically discriminated against those are LGBTI+ (not unlike many denominations in South Africa). By focusing on the temporality, and as such ethical action; the URCSA may offer a more contemporary expression of the Belhar Confession which articulates a vision of responsibility informed by the ghosts of the pasts.

However, a consideration of temporality would go further; it cannot remain fixated on ethical action. Instead, by focusing on temporality, a vision for fully human life (which Butler terms “liveable”) should be projected. The present experience of discrimination by LGBTI+ members in the URCSA cannot be a liveable life. Such a vision projected, then, must attend to the two ideas of hospitality and death. In *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer is most helpful: “the concepts of person, community and God are inseparably and essentially interrelated” (Vosloo, 2008:340). Time, then, should be understood as in relation to conceptions of self and other (God, other persons and community).

Firstly, Bonhoeffer’s notion of the open nature of the person is quite remarkable; it prioritises an ethic of hospitality. Both the individual and the church-community, then, must enact and embody hospitality. By showing hospitality to the other (who may be LGBTI+), the church-community ensures that life is liveable for both the other and the community.

Secondly, radical otherness must be linked to death. Vosloo notes that Bonhoeffer’s notion “to serve time” is quite helpful; that is, the church-community serves God’s time. “It is to be a people of the present in the deepest sense of the word. It is to serve the need of the moment. This implies a certain critical solidarity with the times” (Vosloo, 2018:342). The queer theologian Elizabeth Stuart is also quite helpful here. For her, a queering of death (which is grounded in a conception of temporality) must “deconstruct some of the idols of our age” (Stuart, 2000:91). Given the rise of far-right politics, the lives of those are LGBTI+ are indeed threatened even in states where their rights are recognised; queering death, then, would recognise the limitations under which LGBTI+ people have to live. Therefore, failure to queer

death (and possibly temporality) by the church-community, would render the community as not in service of God's time.

Therefore, the URCSA must go beyond only conceiving time as it regards historical injustice. It must further endeavour to pursue the realising of the that which is liveable for both the other and the community. This can only be done by employing an ethic of hospitality; and, by recognising that it is a community in the service of God's time. Vosloo (2018:349) rightly concludes, "The gift of time is what makes us vulnerable, but it is also what enables us to live a fully human life." At present, the URCSA is afforded the gift of time to account for its contribution to historical injustice, that has shaped the dehumanising experiences of those who are LGBTI+. However, this may also be the time the URCSA pursues an embodying of the Belhar Confession by employing an ethic of hospitality.

The second theme to be explored is spatiality. To be sure, spatiality cannot be divorced from an understanding of temporality; in fact, the former is grounded in the latter. As has been highlighted in his biography, Bonhoeffer's theology was greatly influenced by space – this is especially the case when considering him a global citizen. It may thus be said that Bonhoeffer's ecclesial thought was entirely contextual.

Willie Jennings's (2010:250) exploration of spatiality is informed by the questions: "How are the people of God constituted? How is their identity established, given the boundaries that attend group identities today, whether they be nations, ethnicities, or peoples? Who are the people of God?" These are undoubtedly essential questions; primarily because they relate to ecclesiology. The answer Jennings offers in response to these questions is primarily Christological; it is in Jesus Christ (the revelation of God, the incarnate) that community is constituted, and identity takes its true form. It is the resurrection of Jesus that reconfigures the understanding of temporality, spatiality and relationality for the church-community. "In effect, there [is] a rebirth of peoples in the expression of a new cultural politic" (Jennings, 2010:271).

This cultural politic is predicated on an analysis of three spaces: socio-political; literary-artistic; and, exilic. While Jennings develops this cultural politic in order to understand American religious life; it is helpful to employ it for an analysis of South Africa. It has been stated in chapter four that significant developments have been made in South Africa as it relates to the lives of LGBTI+ people; not least in legislation and discourse. Interestingly, Jennings (2010:279) commits time to consider artistic lifeforms produced by African-Americans and how this contributes to an understanding of spatiality. For this consideration, it is helpful to

note that the South African cultural scene would be greatly impoverished without the contributions of artists who are LGBTI+ (Sizemore-Barber, 2017:117). Mahomed and Trangoš (2016: 1418) also correctly note that these cultural productions have and are creating a space wherein sexual difference is tolerated and accepted. Still, it is needful to consider how South African society may be considered an exilic space. “Exile here is not primarily the absence of a land or of a space, but of home, of a place constituted, in peace, safety, and prosperity. Exile in this regard is a matter of consciousness, born of the long histories of scattered existence” (Jennings, 2010:282). Despite the progress made in South Africa, it remains a socially conservative society. As such, many LGBTI+ people experience life as abnormally diasporic; that is, they are treated as a cultural and religious ‘other.’ This analysis is most helpful to grapple with the experiences of those who are LGBTI+.

This, then, is the socio-political, literary-artistic and exilic space wherein the URCSA exists as church-community. However, Jennings (2010:286) helpfully notes:

“The space for communion is always ready to appear where the people of God reach down to join the land and reach out to join those around them, their near and distant neighbours... This joining also involves entering into the lives of peoples to build actual life together, lives enfolded and kinship networks established through the worship of and service to the God of Israel in Jesus Christ.”

Jennings’ vision can only be realised when our conceptions of space are radically re-imagined. Still, the queer theorist Larry Knopp contends that this requires a queering of geography. Thus, he writes: “As a project, queer geography has been deconstructive and critical, and suspicious of certainties, universal truths, and ontological imaginations about the way the world works that are mechanistic or instrumental” (Knopp, 2007:22). Meaning, any universalistic claims about space must be rejected; instead, preference should be afforded to contextuality and particularity (especially as they relate to sexualities and their constructions). Queering spatiality would acknowledge that the empirical terrain includes the messiness of bodiliness; that is, fluidity, hybridity, incompleteness, moralities, desire and embodiment.

The *Report on Homosexuality to the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa* (2008) remains the most informative study produced by the denomination on human sexuality; albeit narrowly focusing on homosexuality. Under the title ‘African Society and Sexuality’ the authors account for the denomination’s located-ness in Africa as it relates to the construction of sexuality. The authors argue:

“Although homosexual activities of various kinds and for various reasons and purposes clearly were always part of the African society... Still, in Africa the influence of European values as well as Christianity did not allow such homosexual relations to become important as sources of spiritual power and religious education, as was the case in other parts of the world.” (Boesak et al, 2008:41).

It is thus clear, the authors of the report assert that religion-sanctioned homophobia must be linked to the colonisation of Southern Africa, as such impacting theological reflection by the colonised community. By offering consideration to the African constructions of sexuality before the colonial encounter, the URCSA does well to position itself as critical of contemporary hegemonic constructions of sexuality – which centres cis-gender heterosexuality which implicitly marginalises sexual minorities.

Space is quite crucial for the church-community; indeed, it provides the terrain in which the life of the community is pursued. It will, thus, do the URCSA a great deal of good to advance its consideration of spatiality in its sexuality discussion. If anything, it must forgo a reflection of the past (the pre-colonial constructions of sexuality); instead, it ought to project a vision for the role space plays both in the present and future.

Following both temporality and spatiality, the third theme to be considered is activism. Again, it is essential to note the intimate links between the three themes – they ought not to be divorced. There can be no doubt that Bonhoeffer played a tremendous role as an activist in Nazi Germany; this is best observed through his role in the Confessing Church. Indeed, the Finkenwalde Seminary experiment was an expression to his commitment to activism; though, he would not have termed it that, most likely preferring “responsibility.”

Further, there ought to be no doubt that Bonhoeffer’s reception by South Africa has also provided a tremendous impetus for the work of activism; this has been discussed in chapter four. Activism, then, lay at the heart of Bonhoeffer’s theology and his reception in the South African theological imagination. Given the priority Bonhoeffer affords to responsibility (here conceived as activism); it may be helpful to consider it in conversation with the church-community.

The Latinx queer theologian, Robyn Henderson-Espinoza’s conception of ‘activist theology’ is much inspired by Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*, which they (preferred pronouns) believe articulate the critical link between community, discipleship and right action. Reflecting on the

dissonance that present global ecclesial reality may expose, Henderson-Espinoza (2019:94) contends:

“I think the church has in many respects lost its vision for social impact and has focused more importantly on right belief. What I am hoping for is a theological movement where our ‘faith without works’ is a real thing we hold in our imagination, and attempts to fortify our social practices truly embody a call for social impact.”

Activism, then, is imaginative work; it sets out to tell a different theological story – one that reframes and revolutionises theological and societal discourse. Activism attempts to merge both faith and work in the hope for creating a liveable world. Centring activism in the church-community it would implicitly pursue Althaus-Reid’s indecent theology; that is, doing theological reflection from the margins. Activism, informed by indecent theology, would thus uncover the hegemonic power (which Henderson-Espinoza terms “supremacy culture”) at work in the world and even within the church-community. Thus, the church-community must commit itself to do the work of activism.

Much has been written about the URCSA regarding activism and social justice; so too, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa which together formed the URCSA. It may, thus, be said that the activism is at the heart of its founding, especially given the prominence afforded to the *Belhar Confession*. As such, it should not be strange to argue for the denomination to continue its tradition of activism; that is, its commitment to confessionalism.

However, in our time, this tradition of activism must attune its focus to the experiences of those who are LGBTI+ in the denomination. At present, the URCSA’s sexuality discussions centre the narratives and experiences of those who exercise power and influence; these are generally cis-gender heterosexual men. Consequently, the denomination silences the lives and experiences of those who do not exercise such influence; sadly, these are those who are LGBTI+. Only once attention is focused on those implicitly excluded (and discriminated against), can the denomination re-affirm its commitment to confessionalism and deepen its activist tradition.

Activism, or responsible action, is central to the church-community. Therefore, Henderson-Espinoza (2019:95) is right to assert: “There is no theology without activism, and there is no activist without theology.” At present, the URCSA cannot pride itself in its activist tradition, given that it continues to sanction the discrimination of those considered sexual others. If the

denomination seeks to deepen itself as a church-community, then it must centre the lives and experiences of those who are LGBTI+.

While it is crucial to provide a focus on the three themes of temporality, spatiality and activism; still, it must attempt to do while prioritising a consideration of relationality. Stated differently, the three themes only have meaning for the church-community when understood as grounded in relationality. In both *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* Bonhoeffer asserts the church-community must be read through the lens of sociality. Relationality, truly, undergirds Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology; Mawson (2014:75) note "the Christian is the one who is in Christ or exists in relation to Christ." This relationality is understood in Christological terms; that is, in the church-community members are related through Christ's mediation.

This allows for avenues of exploration for the URCSA if it is to become a church for others who are sexually different. Up to this point in its discussions, the denomination has only spoken of those who LGBTI+, as though an 'other'; moreover, at times this has been using crude homo-, trans- and queerphobic rhetoric. Now, though, in light of the importance of relationality in the church-community; the URCSA may be able to reconfigure its relationship with LGBTI+ members.

To be sure, difference will continue to mean that those of a different sexuality may be considered an 'other'; yet, when the relationship is understood Christologically, Christ becomes the person through which the supposed other is encountered. Only once the URCSA acknowledges this and does the work of relating to LGBTI+ people through Christ can it become a church for others.

By focusing on the three themes of temporality, spatiality and activism grounded in an analysis of relationships, the URCSA can embody its ontological identity as church-community. Even so, this requires Mawson's acknowledgement that: "The insight from theology, then, is that there is only ever the human being and community in its standing before God—that is, at once created, sinful, and reconciled." Reconfiguring its relationship with LGBTI+ people, the URCSA may become a sign of this community.

Thus far, I have presented a descriptive proposal for what it is needful for the URCSA to do on a denominational level; given its church polity, this is at the level of general and regional synods and presbyteries. In practical terms, this would enable the denomination to affirm and celebrate the ministry of those LGBTI+, their unions and the baptism of their children. The

focus thus far provided would afford the URCSA the discursive impetus to re-imagine its sexual theology; and as such have a direct impact on its synodical decisions.

Queering Congregational Life

It is indeed true that the institutional culture of the URCSA ought to change if it is to affirm and celebrate those who are LGBTI+. Even so, this is not enough; it is further required that the local congregations also be changed in order to become the embodiment of a church for other – as it relates to LGBTI+ members. Now, I will shift attention to what may be done on a congregational level; this consideration is informed by the queering of Bonhoeffer's theology thus far presented.

Attempting to provide the intellectual impetus for the work of queering in local congregations; here, three themes will be presented. First, local congregations must assert to interpret the world (including those othered) from the underside. In our time it helps to be suspicious of the cult status Bonhoeffer is often afforded (Smith, 2019:155). Reynold's focus on locked narratives is quite helpful. For her, it is vital to move beyond the continuous telling of a single story that gains a truth of its own (Reynolds, 2016:1). Reading Bonhoeffer and his theological project from the underside highlights recurring themes that may not be otherwise observed.

Lisa Dahill provides such a reading from the underside by focusing on Bonhoeffer's conception of the human subject, particularly selfhood. Most interestingly, Dahill (2009:9) foregrounds her analysis in the narratives and experiences of women survivors of abuse. Offering primary preference to the narrative, then, ensures that any conception focuses on the experiences of those often silenced in discourse and community. As previously stated, for Bonhoeffer, identity is not closed; instead, it is always open to the other – and, Dahill uses this to develop a contemporary Bonhoeffer-inspired conception of selfhood. Informed by feminist psychology, Dahill (2009:237) argues that the human subject must be understood in terms of power dynamics and human relations. If this is not acknowledged and accounted for a reading from the underside cannot be pursued.

Such an understanding of reading from the underside opens various discursive possibilities; three come to mind. Firstly, reading from the underside wrestles with the notion of subalternity. Here Gayatri Spivak's question is most important: "Can the subaltern speak?" Subaltern is taken here to mean the social group of people who are not the elite; who do not exercise power nor have a command on the privilege to affect the structurally systemic change needed to liberate itself (Spivak, 1998:26). To be sure, Spivak's analysis is primarily informed by Marxist

and Postcolonial theories; yet, it is nonetheless helpful. When brought into conversation with the URCSA's approach to sexually diverse people, it highlights the fact the within the denomination the subaltern cannot speak. A reading from the underside can only be pursued when the subaltern, for the URCSA this is LGBTI+ people, play a role as dialogue partners – as opposed to objects for theological reflection.

Secondly, Kimberlé Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality assists in a reading from the underside. Intersectionality uncovers the various ways in which persons experience oppression; it does so by focusing on a collection of identity markers. An intersectional approach to reading from the underside is quite helpful; because it acknowledges that gender, race, class, ability and a host of other markers contribute to a person's experiences of oppression. To understand intersectionality, it is best to conceive it as a movement. "Understood in this way, intersectionality is a concept animated by the imperative of social change" (Carbado et al, 2013:312). Centring an intersectional approach, the present human sexuality discussion within the URCSA would move to recognise the experiences of those who are lesbian, gender non-binary, bi- and pansexual; those who do not fall within the hetero-, homosexual and gender binary paradigm. Further, it would also recognise the reality that class, race and ability most deeply affect their lived experiences.

Thirdly, given the URCSA's links to coloniality and the missionary enterprise, it is helpful to incorporate an analysis of hybridity in a reading from the underside. Hybridity, in a sense, is a "contact point of diaspora"; where different and diverging identities meet (Hutnyk, 2005:79). For many LGBTI+ people of faith, their sexuality and faith are conceived as forming a hybrid identity; which may be othered by both LGBTI+ and faith communities. Thus, on both synodical-presbyterial and congregational levels, the URCSA must commit itself to the production of alternative life forms that critically undoes the negative impact of colonialism (Acheraïou, 2011:2).

Bonhoeffer's theology does indeed provide the impetus for pursuing a reading from the underside; even if such a reading would critique him and his work. For our time, though the process of queering congregational life can only be done if a reading from the underside is pursued. This reading should be grounded in the insights that may be offered by an analysis of subalternity, intersectionality and hybridity. Doing so, the church-community (in this case the local congregation) recognises the lives and experiences of those othered, those who are LGBTI+.

Second, local congregations must move beyond merely a reading from the underside; it must also wrestle with its orientation. Reflecting on the imagined space of the church-community, Jennings (2010:288) states: “My hope is for a joining of peoples not only to each other but also to the God who calls them to touch his [sic] body. For some, this deeply erotic image is disturbing. But it should be far less disturbing than the bodies that never embrace.” What is thus required is an orientation to the body, possibly both the resurrected body of Christ and the ecclesial *Corpus Christi*.

In her stellar text *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed discusses orientation at length, yet she queers its. Informed by the philosophy of Husserl, Ahmed (2006:2) argues that to be oriented is to be directed to an object which is located within space. Sexual orientation, then, is to be directed toward an object of one’s romantic and sexual attraction; sexuality is primarily spatial. As such, the navigation of a space can be interpreted through the lens of one’s sexuality. Therefore, it may be stated, that queer orientation is directed toward bodies (that are sexually and romantically attractive) and toward the other. Ahmed (2006:129) fundamentally claims that bodies become (that is, enact an orientation) within a particular space. This enactment of orientation, then, informs the relations within the community.

Deepening such an understanding of orientation, it may be helpful for the local congregation to become oriented toward the notion of desire. The Swedish systematic theologian Ola Sigurdson argues that love and desire are not divorced; instead they inform each other. Prioritising the doctrine of incarnational, desire (or eroticism) must be part of our consideration of orientation. He historicises this by arguing:

“In the Christian tradition, especially in its early phase but continuing at least up until modernity, biology, family, and kinship were not the primary characteristic of significant relationships, but rather the community (*koinonia*) established by the Church (*ekklesia*)... Relations between Christians should, then, have their basis in conceptions of a more radical difference than just genital differences” (Sigurdson, 2014:535).

By turning to eroticism and desire, as part of its orientation, the URCSA may be able to move beyond its present colonial pathologising of human sexuality (Henderson-Espinoza, 2018:296). Such a move would centre the doctrine of the incarnation and would recognise the reality that bodies are indeed oriented. Further, the embrace of erotica and desire may also deepen the local

congregation's understanding of the *eschaton*. Thus, Paul Lakeland (2010:259) writes: "In an ecclesiology of desire, what matters is the longing for more, for a closer union, for a better knowledge, for greater intimacy, and this can aid the search for balance between a focus on presence and a stress on absence." Following this, as discussed in chapter two, it is not too difficult to recognise Bonhoeffer's orientation toward Christ in his ecclesial thought; which is Christ bodily existing in a community of bodies.

The themes of reading from the underside and orientation may seem rather theoretical, yet it is quite essential for a queering of congregational life. The third theme explored is more practical; it is liturgical language and pastoral care. Language and liturgy are undoubtedly central to the life of the church-community; thus, consideration of it is quite essential. This consideration primarily considers the use of language and its impact on liturgical experience within the church-community.

The *Report on Homosexuality to the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa* (2008) is most certainly the most progressive document produced by the URCSA concerning sexuality. Even so, today it should rightly be critiqued for maintaining the colonial binary of sexuality (heterosexuality/homosexuality) and gender (man/woman). It does not entertain any nuance or recognition of sexual and gender identities outside of the binary. This, no doubt, has a direct impact on the construction of sexuality in local congregations; at present, homosexuality remains the focus of the conversation. It is for this reason that it would do the URCSA's congregations a great deal of good to focus on the importance of language.

Recently various Protestant denominations are making concerted efforts to use expansive and inclusive language about God and the church-community, which is quite essential (van Wyk, 2018). Maintaining the masculine forms of language in reference to God cements a culture predicated on patriarchy and possibly misogyny. Further, continuing the binary of 'brother and sisters' renders invisible those whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, and thus outside the gender binary.

Barbara Newman proposes that inclusive worship is founded on the creation of language and multisensory options to ensure that all may participate in the worship experience. Her proposition is not only helpful as it relates to gender and sexually diverse people but also for the embrace of those who are disabled; which may be understood to be to be worship informed by an intersectional approach. She helpfully writes: "Faith communities that have put this into practice have discovered that providing multiple avenues of participation within a common

language structure brings a richness and meaning for each one joining the conversation” (Newman, 2016:217:489). In both *Sanctorum Communio* and *Life Together* Bonhoeffer offers a priority to liturgy (which I have termed embodied liturgy); utilising his insight of the centrality of worship may helpfully assist local congregations in what van Wyk terms ‘finishing the reformation’ – that is, creating inclusive worship.

While corporate worship is the heart of the church-community, pastoral care is also quite crucial to the life of congregational life. Thus, it may be further helpful to consider what queering congregational life may offer pastoral care. South African society has indeed made several strides toward progress as it relates to promoting and protecting the rights of those who are LGBTI+. Still, those who are LGBTI+ (particularly the youth and elderly) remain the victims and survivors of violence because of their sexual and gender identities (Angiuita, 2011). It should also be acknowledged that this violence must be analysed using an intersectional lens; recognising who are most prone to victimisation.

In order to combat this grim reality, the pastoral care of the local congregation must be focused on the needs of those who are LGBTI+. However, this can only be done when it has seceded its colonial pathologising of sexuality, as previously discussed. The pastoral care here envisioned is primarily concerned with providing LGBTI+ people and allies with networks of support. Further, the pastoral care here proposed is not the sole task of the minister of the congregation; instead, it is the work of the church-community.

The Q Christian Fellowship has recently published a document titled *Affirmation Guide: Spirituality and Sexuality* (2019). The insights of this document are most helpful for this consideration of pastoral care. While the guide is focused on the individual, I posit that it highlights concerns that need attending by the local congregation. If the local congregation is to affirm and celebrate the lives of those who are LGBTI+, it is needful that it develops a healthy sexual ethic. Such an ethic must help both the individual and the community recognise: “The way in which a particular sexual or romantic practice shapes us toward or away from Christ and the way in which it is of benefit to the world must form the ground of our self-reflection” (Landis-Aina, 2019). Further, this sexual ethic must be grounded in a Christian witness, embodied humanity and foundational principals that ensure the liveability of all in the community.

What I am proposing with this pastoral care consideration is not altogether new for congregations in the URCSA. Instead, the infrastructure is already in existence to provide the

support networks necessary to affirm and celebrate the lives and gifts of those who are LGBTI+. The denomination on the congregational level has a host of ministries that may provide the terrain for this work; these are but not limited to Christian Youth Ministry, Youth Brigade, Christian Women's Ministry and Christian Men's Ministry. In truth, these ministries maintain the gender and sexual binary; yet they may be transformed to provide the support needed by LGBTI+ members.

We can be sure that Bonhoeffer's imagining of a church for others may not have been directed toward the experiences of those who were LGBTI+ in his day. However, in our time, it would do us well to re-interpret his ecclesial thought for the actualisation of a church-community that embodies all of humanity, especially those who are LGBTI+.

Inspired by this queering interpretation of Bonhoeffer's theology and his reception, the URCSA may well take to the task of becoming a church-community for those others who are LGBTI+. Even so, to do this task, it is needful that the denomination must focus on the importance of temporality, spatiality and activism; pursuing this would allow for the queering of its denominational life. Further, it must move beyond mere transformation on presbyterial-synodical levels; it must embody this queering in the life of local congregations. Thus, the local congregation should commit itself to interpret the world and those who are LGBTI+ from the underside; it ought to reconsider its orientation; and, its liturgical language and pastoral care should project a vision for the affirmation and celebration of those who are LGBTI+.

In this proposal, I have intentionally chosen to omit a discussion of the solemnising of civil unions, the ordination of LGBTI+ ministry candidates, and the baptism of the children of those who are LGBTI+. While these are, to be sure, quite important foci; they have dominated the discussion. My concern here has been the discursive potential of queering the denominational and congregational life of the URCSA. As such, this discussion may rightly be considered rather theoretical.

Moreover, in recent years – at least since the General Synod of 2012 – the denomination has been fixated on the present, without much regard for the future and implications of its decisions. Thus, the proposal here provided seeks to contribute to a discussion of what action may be needed when the denomination decides to solemnise civil unions, ordain LGBTI+ ministerial candidates and baptise the children of those who are LGBTI+.

As argued in chapter two, Bonhoeffer's ecclesial thought was primarily concerned with "Christ existing as community." His conception of the church-community, in both *Sanctorum*

Communio and Life Together, attempts to prioritise a reading of the church as a community [*gemeinde*] of faith, hope and love. The reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa sought to take this project further, especially accenting the virtue of hope.

A contemporary interpretation of Bonhoeffer may, as I have tried, argue that the church is Christ queering the existence of community. Therefore, I contend that both Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology and his South African reception provides the impetus for such queering. This proposal, then, has attempted to cast a vision for a community that is inspired by faith, hope and love; yet founded on, incorporated into and oriented toward the resurrected Body of Christ.

Review of the Research Questions

Drawing this study to a conclusion, it may be helpful to attend to the research problem and the research questions posed in the introduction. By doing this, an attempt is made to highlight the insights that this study has presented; and what this may mean for a contemporary study of the Bonhoeffer.

Primary Research Question

The primary research questions this study has sought to wrestle with is: *What theological promise does a queering of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology hold for an understanding of the church as church for others?* In response to this question, at least three insights have been presented in the argument this study has developed.

First, this study focused primarily on two texts produced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a period spanning from his study years 1927 to the dissolution of the Finkenwalde Preachers' Seminary in 1937. While Bonhoeffer lived a relatively brief period, executed in 1945; the period this study has investigated may present his thought as an 'early Bonhoeffer.' Differently put, ecclesiology would be a topic Bonhoeffer would wrestle with throughout his life. It was in the famous fragment 'An Outline for a Book', in *Letters and Paper from Prison*, that Bonhoeffer would coin the phrase "A church for others." Some form of continuity may thus be observed throughout of his ecclesiological thought; however, one should also keep track the development. Therefore, this study has focused primarily on the early texts that may have laid the groundwork for his later ecclesiological conceptions. It also discusses the continuities between the two text, which are written at different period in his life.

This study has highlighted that the heart of Bonhoeffer's ecclesial thought was Christologically inspired. Thus, the notion that the "church is Christ existing as community" should be

understood as his inquiry into the church using a Christological lens. Chapter two noted that the church-community, as developed in *Sanctorum Communio*, must be understood as predicated on an understanding of sociality; thus, relationality is essential to any conception of the church-community. For Bonhoeffer, then, the church-community is comprised of those who are simultaneously both sinner and saints; thus, it is a community of love [*Liebesgemeinschaft*].

By studying *Life Together* this study further inquired Bonhoeffer's conception of the church-community. Again, Christology is the hermeneutic through which Bonhoeffer understands the existence of the church-community. Though, now less analytically, Bonhoeffer focuses on the importance of the life of the church-community as it pertains to praxis; thus, much time is afforded to temporality and sacramentality. As *Life Together* was Bonhoeffer's attempt at reflecting on the Finkenwalde experiment; it may be argued that its insights give expression to his conception of a community of love [*Liebesgemeinschaft*].

Given this conception of the church-community, as a community of love; it is helpful to turn to the *second* insight this study has presented, concerning queering. Employing both queer theory and queer theology, this study has sought to pursue a queering of the theology of Bonhoeffer. That is, it set out to deconstruct and destabilise his theology and the reception of his theological project in our time. Since its inception queer theory has sought to problematise the norms of academic inquiry; especially as it relates to the experiences of sexual minorities. Queer theology, then, has attempted to pursue such problematising within the theological academy.

In chapter one it was argued that this act of queering follows a threefold focus: firstly, it affords a primary concentration on the experiences of those who are LGBTI+; secondly, it asserts itself as transgressive against the norms imposed by the received tradition; thirdly, it also erases the boundaries that may have been constructed. For Althaus-Reid the act of queering theology is the development of indecent theology; that is, theology created from the margins.

Queering the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, then, this study made an attempt to present an interpretation of his theology from the underside or from the margins. It did so by following a twofold process: firstly, it uncovered what impetus there may already be in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology for an act of queering; secondly, informed by the impetus uncovered, it further queered his ecclesial thought for our time by presenting a contemporary interpretation.

Offering a queering interpretation and vision of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, the *third* insight concerns what theological promise this may have for religious reflection. As has been noted, Bonhoeffer's theological legacy continues to exercise a great deal of influence on the theological imagining of contemporary theologians, not least in South Africa. Given this, a queering interpretation of this ecclesial thought set out to provide the impetus for the creation of faith communities that affirm and celebrate the lives of those who LGBTI+ in and for our time.

In chapter three this theological promise was closely investigated highlighting the reception of Bonhoeffer by the South African theological community; while also noting the present challenges that beset the nation regarding those who are LGBTI+. Employing then the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, the queer interpretation provided underscored why it is needful to conceive of a church for those othered who are LGBTI+.

Secondary Research Questions

In addition to the primary research question, various secondary questions were raised in the introduction. These are discussed here briefly.

What are the contours of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology?

All of Bonhoeffer's ecclesial thought is predicated on an understanding of Christology; truly, for him the church *is* and is to *become* the *Corpus Christi*. The notion that "The church is Christ existing as community", then, may be taken to mean that the church is to embody the crucified and resurrected Christ for is the incarnation revelation of God. Therefore, the contours of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology were greatly concerned with the doctrines of incarnation and revelation.

Even so, his inquiry into the church was shot through with an understanding of sociality. This is most telling, using both sociology and social philosophy Bonhoeffer attempted to understand the church-community theologically. Therefore, employing an interdisciplinary approach (quite unusual at the time) Bonhoeffer could rightly analyse the sociality of the church; and therefore, arguing for a church that should be understood as primarily a community of love.

What is meant by a church for others?

In order to respond to this question, the study has attempted to do so on two levels. First, by presenting Bonhoeffer's biography, this study set out to uncover those whom Nazi German society had constructed as others: such as the Jews, the Gypsies, the disabled and homosexuals.

There is no doubt, then, that these groups of vulnerable people may have been to whom Bonhoeffer's church for others was directed.

Second, yet, in our time the others are a different collection of social groupings. This study has here chosen to focus primarily on the othering of sexual minorities; that is, those who are LGBTI+. By doing so, this study has imagined how the church may exist for these others; moreover, it has attempted to project a vision for what the church may need to do for these others.

What is meant by queering, and how this relates to queer theory and queer theology?

Chapter one charts the development of queer theory as discursive development within the academy; though, it is rooted in the struggle for the civil struggle for gay and lesbian right in the twentieth century. In time this vision would be expanded to the whole of the LGBTI+ community; thus, arguing for gender and sexual identities social constructions. Queer theory, then, attempts to analyse and deconstruct how society constructs itself in relation to the lives and experiences of those who are LGBTI+.

Informed by the intellectual insights of queer theory, queer theology is its development within religious discourse. Meaning, queer theologians use queer theory as a hermeneutic for religious reflection; thus, uncovering the supposed norms at work in theological imagining. Althaus-Reid considers queer theology love-talk which questions society, individuals and the practice of religion. Inspired by this, Cheng conceives of queer theology as radical love; which undertakes to destabilise and deconstruct how theology is generally developed. Queer theology is therefore most intimately linked to queer theory.

Queering, then, is a re-interpretation of the received sources and an attempt to draw them into conversation with present realities. By focusing on the church in relation to the experiences of LGBTI+ people this study provides a queering of the conventional conception of church. Moreover, it deconstructs and destabilises the reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa in and for time.

What possible relevance this may have for South Africa?

This study probed to provide a contemporary interpretation of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology using queer theology as hermeneutical lens. This interpretation has offered a focus on the reception of Bonhoeffer's theology in South Africa; and how this may indeed be considered already queer.

This study may be considered relevant for South Africa for two reasons. First, given the societal developments in the promotion and protection of the rights of those who are LGBTI+, it is helpful to consider how this may affect theological reflection. Second, various denominations are presently reconsidering their understanding of human sexuality; this study thus makes a contribution to these discussions.

Moreover, by closely looking at the development of these discussions in the DRC and the URCSA, this study has attempted to project a vision for how these churches may need to consider the discursive potential when queering the ecclesial thought of Bonhoeffer. This is most relevant given the influence Bonhoeffer's theology has had in the development of these discussion both within the DRC and the URCSA. As such, this study is quite relevant for South Africa.

Following this review of the primary and secondary research questions, this study has proven the ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer may indeed be interpreted through a queer theological hermeneutic successfully. Moreover, in both his own theology and its reception in South Africa it may be argued that there is already a queering at work, as previously argued. Therefore, this study has attempted to advance this queering by considering our time and how the queering of the church may provide impetus for affirming and celebrating the lives of those who are LGBTI+.

Relevance and Contribution of the Study

The theme of community has pervaded this study, I would not like to employ it to highlight the contribution this study makes to various communities. This study makes a discursive contribution to no less than three communities.

Primarily, given peculiar focus on the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, this study makes a contribution to global Bonhoeffer studies. Drawing chapters one and two (respectively focusing on queer theory and queer theology and Bonhoeffer's ecclesial thought) this study has attempted to highlight how an alternative reading of him may deepen Bonhoeffer studies more generally.

While queer theology is still an emerging theological discipline, not much has been written on ecclesiology. By providing an inquiry into ecclesiology in dialogue with queer theology, this study highlights the pressing need for queer theologians to centre a consideration of ecclesiology. This is especially the case given that various denominations are becoming

affirming of those who are LGBTI+; queer theology, then, is best positioned to assist denominations with the work of creating affirming denominations.

This study also makes a contribution to the URCSA's discussion of human sexuality. Thus far not much research has been produced by the denomination that grapples with its construction of sexuality. This contribution (as set forth in chapter three), then, is twofold: first, it highlights the pitfalls in its construction of sexuality; second, it goes further by considering the ecclesial life of the denomination.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has only set out to open new avenues for research about the ecclesiology of Bonhoeffer, using a queer theological hermeneutical lens. As such, more research is indeed needed in order to wrestle with the depth of his ecclesial thought. I argue that further research is required on at least three fronts.

First, generally Bonhoeffer studies has focused on much of his later works. Meaning, future research is required that takes *Sanctorum Communio* seriously as the point of departure for Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological development. Investigating this text, it may highlight how and why Bonhoeffer develops his ecclesiological project in the manner that he later does. Thus, research that centres *Sanctorum Communio* is quite essential.

Second, queer theology may very well still be considered an emerging discipline. In South Africa research into queer theology has not yet entered the mainstream theological discourse. Future research should be done to contribute to the development of queer theological with the South African context as a point of departure. Moreover, with the societal progress regarding the lives of those who are LGBTI+; the academy is becoming quite focused on the insights offered by queer theory. Thus, queer theology must be researched in tandem with queer theory.

Additionally, not much research has been produced that reads Bonhoeffer's theology using a queer theological lens. Producing research that queers the theology of Bonhoeffer may deepen Bonhoeffer studies quite profound ways. This is especially the case given the influence Bonhoeffer has had on Western Christianity.

Third, given the impact of Bonhoeffer's theology on South Africa; it may be worthwhile to produce future research regarding how he has been interpreted. Moreover, it may be quite essential that this research critically investigates how interpretation has influenced the development of various denominations in South Africa, particularly those that are Reformed.

Conclusion

Informed by a review of the research questions, considerations of the contribution this makes and recommendations for future research; this study may be concluded. Under the title 'A Church for Others? Queering the Ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', this study has argued that in both his life and theology Bonhoeffer may be presented a queer figure (that is, transgressive); further, the reception of Bonhoeffer's theology may also be considered queer.

Fundamentally, then, this study has highlighted that Bonhoeffer's theology has queering potential; however, utilising a queer theological hermeneutic it is helpful to further advance this queering. Finally, this study has brought this queering potential in conversation with a South African Christian denomination; highlighting what work may be needed for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa to be affirming of those who are LGBTI+.

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