

Confession as “Breakthrough to community”: Impulses from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology for an individualized and polarized world¹

Christoph Barnbrock

Lutherische Theologische Hochschule in Oberursel, Germany
barnbrock@selk.de

Abstract

Based on Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s threefold definition of confession as a “breakthrough,” this essay explores the question of the extent to which confession, which has largely fallen out of practice, can still have significance for state and society in the 21st century. In doing so, the practice of confession is brought into dialogue with the trends and challenges of our time. In this way, it becomes apparent that, viewed through the lens of confession, being human appears in a new light. The feeling of shame can be overcome through the new experience of fellowship. Evil no longer has to be excluded from perception. But it is precisely in this way that repentance, change of behaviour and mutual reconciliation become possible.

Keywords

confession; loneliness; reconciliation; anthropology; shame

Manifold breakthroughs in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*

In *Life Together* Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes confession as an event of various breakthroughs.² The first mentioned is the “breakthrough to

1 Permission was given for this essay to also be published as Christoph Barnbrock, “Beichte als ‘Durchbruch zur Gemeinschaft’”, *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 44, no. 2/3 (2020): 192–206.

2 DBW 5:93–102; cf. Christine Schliesser, Beichte als ‘Angebot göttlicher Hilfe’. Ökumenische Ermutigungen auf den Spuren Dietrich Bonhoeffers, in Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel, Christine Schliesser and Ralf Wüstenberg (eds.), *Beichte neu entdecken. Ein ökumenisches Kompendium für die Praxis* (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht 2016), 205–

community”.³ It is quite surprising that Bonhoeffer starts from this idea. Where individual confession still plays a role at all, the relatively individual situation of a penitent before a confessor may dominate in the imagination of many. The community aspect does not seem to be immediately apparent in such a setting. The other dimensions, confession as “breakthrough to the cross”, as “breakthrough to new life” or as “breakthrough to assurance”⁴ seem to be much more understandable.

And yet, this is precisely where Bonhoeffer starts with the idea of community. This is of course not least based on the main concept of his book *Life Together*, from which these thoughts are taken. For Bonhoeffer, Christian life has a strongly communal aspect. But it is more than that. Bonhoeffer identifies a pious perfectionism which may contribute to the fact that pious hypocrisy becomes widespread, and which leads to loneliness. He states:

Many Christians would be unimaginably horrified if a real sinner were suddenly to turn up among the pious. So we remain alone with our sin, trapped in lies and hypocrisy, for we are in fact sinners.⁵

Confession, on the other hand, paves the way to new relationships, in which the sinner is perceived and borne as a sinner by his specific community. Once more Bonhoeffer:

We can admit our sins and in this very act find community for the first time. The hidden sins separated the sinner from the community and made the sinner’s apparent community all a sham. The sins that were acknowledged helped the sinner to find true community with other believers in Jesus Christ.⁶

I would like to take this as a starting point and ask to what extent the idea of acknowledgement of sins and confession could be relevant anew in our societies in the 21st century. Of course, Bonhoeffer’s thoughts were initially

215; Peter Zimmerling, *Bonhoeffer als Praktischer Theologe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 176–182.

3 DBWE 5:89; DBW 5:94.

4 DBWE 5:90–92; DBW 5:95–97.

5 DBWE 5:87; DBW 5:93.

6 DBWE 5:89–90; DBW 5:95.

developed for the specific situation of the Finkenwalde Seminary.⁷ It is not possible to transfer those thoughts immediately to the situation of societies and Christian churches of the 21st century. On the other hand, it shall be proven that Bonhoeffer's thoughts contain impulses for how a specific Christian lifestyle may enrich the *Life Together* in our societies.

An untimely message

Now one might object, however, that the subject of confession and following considerations that it might be helpful to perceive one's own guilt and to admit it in the face of others have fallen somewhat out of time.

Although Peter Zimmerling is observing that “a rediscovery of confession is taking place in different contexts”, he also states that “confession is hardly noticed in the Protestant setting”.⁸ This seems to be true even though there have been several attempts in the last years to address this issue and to support a renaissance of confession.⁹ Individual confession as Bonhoeffer had in mind, and even forms of a common confession in the context of worship services don't seem to be a phenomenon of our time.

Even more, in our days, in which performance and self-portrayal (for example in the social media) play an important role for many people, the thought that the admittance of one's own guilt could represent a helpful access to the life of a community is rather alien, yes, it seems downright absurd. Many people are convinced that integration into a community takes place through the demonstration of efficiency, performance, and the presentation of the significant aspects of one's own life.

Consequently, the polarization in many societies of our world is characterized by the fact that the (political or social) opponent is put in a (often overly) bad light and one's own actions – largely without self-

7 See Geoffrey B. Kelly, *Editor's Introduction*, *DBWE* 5:6-20.

8 Peter Zimmerling, *Studienbuch Beichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 9 (own translation).

9 Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel, Christine Schliesser and Ralf Wüstenberg (eds.), *Beichte neu entdecken*, (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht 2016); Zimmerling *Studienbuch Beichte* and also Werner Klän and Christoph Barnbrock (eds.), *Heilvolle Wende. Buße und Beichte in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2010).

criticism – are presented as (particularly) successful. At the same time, we experience that these tendencies do not contribute to humanity or to working together in a globalized world, but quite the contrary to isolation or at best to community building in comparatively manageable small groups.

But even though Bonhoeffer’s thoughts on confession as a “breakthrough to community” seem to be outdated, at the first sight there are some indications that these considerations become more and more relevant in the present and in the future.

Links to scholarly observations in the 21st century

Loneliness as a major social issue

For many people it was quite a surprise when Tracey Crouch was appointed in 2018 as “Minister of Loneliness”¹⁰ of the United Kingdom. Others had long since picked up the signals. The German psychiatrist Manfred Spitzer has summed up his observations in his bestseller *Loneliness* which was published first in the very same year:

A large part of the people in the developed, “Western” world suffers increasingly from loneliness.¹¹

[Loneliness] is much more dangerous for each individual than other known deadly disease.¹²

A “breakthrough to community” seems to be more important than ever – not only for spiritual or theological, but also for social reasons.

It is a paradox that the use of social media, which enables networking with people all over the world, leads to an increase in loneliness. Manfred Spitzer puts it this way:

10 Ceylan Yeginsu, U.K. Appoints a Minister for Loneliness, *The New York Times*, January 17, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-britain-loneliness.html> [Accessed: 23 December 2019].

11 Manfred Spitzer, *Einsamkeit. Die unerkannte Krankheit* (München: Droemer, 2019), 44 (own translation).

12 Spitzer, *Einsamkeit*, 45 (own translation).

Contrary to expectations, however, the use of Facebook and other online social media leads to lower life satisfaction; mutual trust dwindles, depression accumulates, and loneliness increases. In addition, online social media puts a strain on existing relationships, causes separations and divorces.¹³

Young people who grow up with these networks experience the task of presenting themselves attractively here as a great challenge. Vera King reports:

The young people perceive the permanent posting as hard work. In the interviews, many emphasize how important it is to work on the pictures in order to get attention. It goes hand in hand with the fear of loss of status and embarrassment. The constant manipulation also perpetuates the fear of being rejected for what you really look like.¹⁴

Even if this quotation emphasizes the appearance, it sounds quite a bit like what Bonhoeffer expressed with reference to confession:

The hidden sins separated the sinner from the community and made the sinner's apparent community all a sham. The sins that were acknowledged helped the sinner to find true community with other believers in Jesus Christ.¹⁵

It is precisely the difference between being and appearance and the fears associated with it that ultimately contribute to loneliness. Confession and therefore a relaxed approach to one's own dark sides could help to get out of this masquerade and to enter – as I am – into community and fellowship with others.

Narcissism and perfectionism as major psychological issues

Manfred Spitzer identifies increasing narcissism as the psychological driving force behind these tendencies.¹⁶ Others like Hans-Joachim Maaz share this observation. Maaz takes “self-instability” and feelings of

13 Spitzer, *Einsamkeit*, 140–141 (own translation).

14 Elisabeth von Thadden, *Die berührungslose Gesellschaft* (München: C. H. Beck, 2018), 119 (own translation).

15 *DBWE* 5:89–90; *DBW* 5:95.

16 See Spitzer, *Einsamkeit*, 13–45.

“inferiority” as basic phenomena in the narcissistic disorder.¹⁷ This in turn leads to power-sapping consequences:

Since a self-esteem cannot be experienced basally, it requires external confirmation. The narcissist does everything to get the confirmation he needs to live: effort, diligence, perfectionism, excellence, appearance, manipulation, gifts, bribery, promises, participation, leadership – all, all out of one need: to be “loved” for it.¹⁸

The relationship that arises from such selfish pursuit of love has nothing to do with true community as Bonhoeffer has it in mind.

Maaz notes: “For reasons of self-protection, the narcissist lives between idealizing himself and devaluing others. This maintains distance on both sides.”¹⁹ It doesn’t create a relationship. That would require something else, as Maaz continues:

Real closeness comes [...] from a relationship at eye level. In a relationship in which it is possible for both to open up and communicate honestly without having to hide anything. When no social mask and no social phobia are needed anymore to bend and adapt or to refuse and withdraw for the sake of narcissistic recognition, then real closeness arises.²⁰

Bonhoeffer’s idea of “fraternal confession”²¹ can also be understood as such a “relationship at eye-level” which may lead to a new community and to closeness. That is why he demands experience of the cross from the persons to whom Christians should confess their sins:

[...] [T]hey know the human heart from the cross of Jesus. Such persons know how totally lost is the human heart in sin and

17 Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Die narzisstische Gesellschaft. Ein Psychogramm* (6th ed., München: dtv, 2017), 23–29 (own translation).

18 Maaz, *Die narzisstische Gesellschaft*, 28 (own translation).

19 Maaz, *Die narzisstische Gesellschaft*, 72 (own translation).

20 Maaz, *Die narzisstische Gesellschaft*, 73 (own translation).

21 DBW 5:94 (own translation).

weakness, how it goes astray in the ways of sin – and know too that the same heart is accepted in grace and mercy.²²

As already mentioned, the narcissistic imprint is then often accompanied by a tendency towards perfectionism.

A characteristic feature of perfectionism is the pathologically exaggerated sense of performance, in which only those who have flawless, admirable, and extraordinary qualities count. Perfectionism is often accompanied by an irrational fear of rejection, the fear of not being good enough, of not meeting the demands, and by a fearful concern for one's own reputation.²³

This is how the Austrian Psychiatrist Raphael M. Bonelli describes the phenomenon. In his book *Perfektionismus* (“Perfectionism”), he provides many examples that illustrate how perfectionism disturbs, if not even destroys, relationships. To overcome perfectionism, he demands “self-acceptance in the awareness of one's own faultiness, mediocrity and ordinariness.”²⁴

Only with a realistic self-assessment one can [...] move in society without a mask. This is the way to an inner freedom that is the counterpart of perfectionism. “Imperfection tolerance” frees one from egoism, the compulsion to control, the claim to flawlessness, bitterness, and accusation. Inner freedom therefore lends light-heartedness and natural authority, it makes you flexible and independent.²⁵

Confession as an experience of being accepted by God and by other Christians despite one's own sin and failure could help to lead to such a “realistic self-assessment” and the freedom to act which goes with it.

22 *DBWE* 5:94; *DBW* 5:89.

23 Raphael M. Bonelli, *Perfektionismus. Wenn das Soll zum Muss wird* (München: Droemer 2019), 13 (own translation)

24 Bonelli, *Perfektionismus*, 14 (own translation).

25 Bonelli, *Perfektionismus*, 14 (own translation).

Performance as a major guiding principle

Now, such individual developments are frequently not introduced without the corresponding social formative forces. Hartmut Rosa describes major tendencies in the western societies as follows:

No matter how successful we have lived, worked, and managed individually and collectively *this year, next year* we must become a little faster, more efficient, more innovative, and better in order to maintain our place in the world – and in the following year the bar will be set a little higher.²⁶

Admittedly, in such a performance-based society the trend towards perfectionism seems obvious. One must be better and better each year. However, perfectionism in its problematic form stands in the way of real performance:

Surprisingly, the perfectionist usually blocks himself and cannot, for fear of failure, rise to “magnanimitas”. Therefore, the fearful perfectionist neurotic slips further and further into the pettiness of the penny and bean counter, while the big things pass by.²⁷

These considerations alone should encourage us not to answer the demands of the performance-based society with individualistic perfectionism. Already against this background the value of a calm handling of one’s own failure, as it can be performed ritually in confession, can become clear.

But that, in turn, would have nothing to do with the “breakthrough to community”. This aspect could come into focus if we no longer perceive achievement as an individual factor. Nina Verheyen makes the steep assertion: “Individual performance does not exist [...]”.²⁸

Those who are introduced as children to the girths and tastes of the upper classes, those who as teenagers internalize the need to do a little sport early in the morning and read a good book late in the evening, those

26 Hartmut Rosa, “Gelingendes Leben in der Beschleunigungsgesellschaft,” in Tobias Kläden and Michael Schüßler (eds.), *Zu schnell für Gott? Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2017), 22 (own translation).

27 Bonelli, *Perfektionismus*, 55 (own translation).

28 Nina Verheyen, *Die Erfindung der Leistung*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (München: Hanser, 2018, 204 (own translation).

who as young adults have enough money to pay service personnel of all kinds – cleaning ladies, window cleaners, later nannies – those who receive optimum medical care throughout their lives and always live in a beautiful apartment that really does provide space for relaxation, those who regularly go on holiday can afford to perform well [in German: ... *der*, ja, *der* kann es sich eben leisten, viel zu leisten.]²⁹

If we understood performance in such a way that it does not always depend solely on us as individuals, but that performance is always a collective value, this would also change the way we deal with guilt and failure. It is the community to which we owe our efficiency. And it is also again the community in which we may experience ourselves as the ones who fail, without being abandoned. If we perform, if we fail – it is never just all about us, but about us, being part of a community. From here, too, Bonhoeffer's idea of the “breakthrough to community” can be made newly plausible.

Consequences for doing theology

Being human – newly discovered

If we now reflect on the theological impulses that result from Bonhoeffer's thoughts on confession, it should be fundamentally noted that human beings can only ever be thought of in community with others, and that this community can only be lived out if there is room to deal with one's own failures and shortcomings in a sober and calm way.

Against all claims to perfection, both our own and those of others, it must be stated that a Christian, as Lutheran theology emphasizes, is simultaneously just and a sinner.³⁰ It is this realistic view, which can be practiced in confession, that prevents people from blocking themselves in their striving for perfection or losing themselves in self-deprecation. To be able to admit mistakes, sins and failures without falling into a bottomless pit, but to experience being held with all this by God and others, is a treasure that opens in confession.

29 Verheyen, *Erfindung der Leistung*, 205 (own translation).

30 Cf. Christoph Barnbrock and Christian Nedden (eds.), *Simul-Existenz. Spuren reformatorischer Anthropologie*, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019).

Yes, perhaps at this point the dignity of man can even be discovered anew. Armin Nassehi describes the uniqueness of human beings in the face of technical progress in the following way: While machines become more and more fast, reliable, and intelligent, he states: It “is probably the excellent privilege of man not only to make mistakes but also to be permitted to make mistakes.”³¹

From this, as Nassehi puts it, deeply human fundamental experience, the urge for perfectionism arises for many. Raphael Bonelli closes his book on perfectionism with the following thoughts:

Perfectionists want to be good without knowing what that means. They are eternally searching and dare not to ask. They are not in balance, not at peace with themselves. They long for the absolute, for transcendence, for perfection – which they do not have and do not know. What they urgently need is an inwardness that fills their inner emptiness. And here ends the competence of psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy.³²

And I dare to say: Here the competence of theology begins. Or to put it with Henning Luther: “Only when we understand ourselves as fragments do we recognize our dependence on completion.”³³

Overcoming shame

For a rediscovery of confession as Bonhoeffer envisioned it, however, it would have to be considered that, at least in the contexts I can observe, we are dealing with a shift from a guilt orientation to a shame orientation. Hartwig Harms once put it this way:

As is often spoken of guilt in the church, the words drip from the ear of the listener. For the understanding of guilt in everyday life is different from our theologically shaped understanding of guilt.

31 Armin Nassehi, *Muster. Theorie der digitalen Gesellschaft* (München: C. H. Beck, 2019), 226, highlighted in the original (own translation).

32 Bonelli, *Perfektionismus*, 333 (own translation).

33 Henning Luther, *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts* (Stuttgart: Radius, 1992), 173 (own translation).

Misconduct is usually experienced more shamefaced than guilty – and the shame is artfully hidden.³⁴

This growing sense of shame is probably related to the increase in narcissism described above. Here, Bonhoeffer's thoughts on confession have both difficulties and connecting factors.

The difficulties consist in the fact that, as Harms puts it, “shame is artfully hidden”. Bonhoeffer echoes this when he asks: “Why is it that it is often easier for us to acknowledge our sins before God than before another believer?”³⁵

Here special sensitivity is needed in order not to expose the shamefaced counterpart, but to give him space where he can be with his shame. Kristian Fechtner describes the task like this:

But a discreet Christianity needs a special feeling for the limits of shame it encounters [...]. [...] The religious culture of late popular Christianity needs niches and the back rows of its church buildings, which make it possible to leave the intimacy of the religious in the half-shade. Not everything that constitutes one's own life can and must be shown.³⁶

And the same applies not only to religiosity, but also to dealing with one's own failure.

On the other hand, in the perception of the life of shame there are also connecting links to Bonhoeffer. For “the guilt-oriented person wants forgiveness, the shame-oriented person seeks restitution in his community.”³⁷ But this is exactly the aspect that Bonhoeffer describes when he speaks of confession as “breakthrough to community”.

34 Hartwig F. Harms, “Scham und Schuld,” *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 39, no. (2015): 154 (own translation).

35 *DBWE* 5:92; *DBW* 5:97.

36 Kristian Fechtner, *Diskretes Christentum. Religion und Scham* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015), 174 (own translation).

37 Harms, “Scham und Schuld,” 159, emphasis in original (own translation).

Impulses for our societies

Considering what we have reflected so far, I will ask what role churches in which confession has its place as a “breakthrough to community” can play for the respective societies.

In times in which the lie seems to be more and more accepted in society and politics, and it is almost a disadvantage and a weakness to admit mistakes,³⁸ the churches could indeed be venues for learning a different way of living together.

For as much as lying and covering up failures may lead to the fact that my own supporters stay on my side, all this also contributes to the deepening of the rifts in society and the increase of polarization.

Our societies need a “breakthrough to community” – and Christians could serve as role models of dealing with sin and guilt in our societies. Our countries will have no future as communities if we hide behind masks and facades and thus keep our distance from each other, but only if we find our way back to community with each other, and that means: confronting each other with our dark sides and then experiencing that we are also held and borne even with them.

“Cheap grace”?

Now, however, something would be missing if one were to reduce Bonhoeffer’s impulse to understand confession as a “breakthrough to community” merely to being held with all guilt and all failure.

Bonhoeffer’s trenchant approach, on the opposite side, stands against “cheap grace” as it can be grasped at the beginning of his book *Discipleship*:

Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church. Our struggle today is for costly grace.

Cheap grace means grace as bargain-basement goods, cut-rate forgiveness, cut-rate comfort, cut-rate sacrament; grace as the

38 See Philipp Hübl im Gespräch mit Liane von Billerbeck “Wer regieren will, muss lügen können”, *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, December 16, 2019. [Online]. Available: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/politik-und-wahrheit-wer-regieren-will-muss-luegen-koennen.1008.de.html?dram:article_id=465912 [Accessed: 24 December 2019].

church's inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit.³⁹

Confession as a “breakthrough to community” is thus, according to Bonhoeffer, not to be understood as a ritual automatism, but is always embedded in the context of reconciliation and, as far as possible, satisfaction:

Thus, there remains only one path for those who in following Jesus want to truly serve God in worship, and that is the path of reconciliation with their sisters and brothers. [...]

This is still a time of grace, for brothers and sisters are still given to us and we are still “on the way with them.” The day of judgement lies before us. There is still time to offer satisfaction to a sister or brother; there is still time to pay what we owe to those to whom we are indebted. The hour is coming in which we shall be handed over to the judge. Then it will be too late; then righteousness and punishment shall rule until the last debt is paid. Can we understand that our sisters and brothers are not given to Jesus' disciples as an expression of the law, but of grace?⁴⁰

Change of behaviour

Accordingly, Bonhoeffer's idea of the confession as a “breakthrough to community” can only be understood combined with a change in one's own thinking and behaviour, as he himself tries to describe it with the idea of “discipleship”.

As much as the motive of an “costly grace” may at first give the impression that here it is above all about new, additional burdens that would have to be carried, the basic concern of Bonhoeffer, however, is to emphasize “that our sisters and brothers are not given to Jesus' disciples as an expression of the law, but of grace”.

It is precisely in this way that the fellowship with the Christian brothers and sisters becomes both a mirror of confession and a guideline, so that a space opens here in which the individual is freed from his own determinations.

39 *DBWE* 4:3; *DBW* 4:29.

40 *DBWE* 4:93–94; *DBW* 4:125–126.

While the one who is trapped in perfectionism and narcissism has to make a desperate effort to justify his previous behaviour or to keep up the illusion of infallibility, and thus ultimately remains fixed on his previous patterns of action, the other one who deals with his own failure gains new options of living and becomes more flexible.

He can leave behind what has been and has failed and is able to start anew. In this way the law of being infallible before oneself, before others and before God is broken, and the grace that is realized in a merciful handling of failure releases new living options. New approaches to fellow human beings arise. Other modes of living become conceivable.

Reconciliation

The need for a change of behaviour on the one hand, but also the value of dealing with one's own guilt on all sides on the other hand, is particularly evident in situations of cruelty. The genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda is one example. Katharina Peetz dealt in a paper with the question of the significance of "sin and justification in post-genocidal Rwanda".⁴¹

In this context it is absolutely clear that "cheap grace" has no place, which would not appreciate the suffering of the victims and would not demand from the perpetrators either insight into their guilt or repentance and would lose sight of the aspect of compensation (as far as this is possible at all).

But it is remarkable that in the struggle for reconciliation, as it is shown for instance in the confession of guilt of Detmold,⁴² just the honest dealing of all participants with their own sinfulness is shown to be an essential element in the reconciliation process. Thus, members of the Tutsi community also confessed guilt on their own initiative. Peetz writes about this:

This self-understanding is not cynical because it is self-understanding: in the Detmold Confession, for example, the

41 Katharina Peetz, "Sünde und Rechtfertigung im postgenozidären Ruanda," in Christoph Barnbrock and Christian Neddens (eds.), *Simul-Existenz. Spuren reformatorischer Anthropologie* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2019), 206–222 (own translation).

42 Das „Dettmolder Bekenntnis“ – ein Modell der Konfliktbewältigung. [Online]. Available: <https://www.kirchenkreissaarostbutare.de/detmolder-bekenntnis-deutsch-englisch/> [Accessed: 29 September 2023].

members of the Tutsi group freely admit their own guilt and confess it, precisely because this seems to them to be central to interpersonal reconciliation. They see themselves as people who are entangled in guilt in multiple, often contradictory ways: as individuals, but also as part of destructive, sinful structures and mechanisms.⁴³

Here it becomes exemplarily clear how much a comprehensive perception of the entanglement in sin and guilt can then again, in the knowledge of God's mercy, pave new ways to each other. Here it becomes clear on a social level what Dietrich Bonhoeffer means when he speaks of confession as "breakthrough to community".

Bibliography

- Barnbrock, Christoph. Beichte als "Durchbruch zur Gemeinschaft". *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 44(2/3). 2020:192–206.
- Barnbrock, Christoph and Neddens, Christian, eds., *Simul-Existenz. Spuren reformatorischer Anthropologie*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019.
- Bonelli, Raphael M. *Perfektionismus. Wenn das Soll zum Muss wird*. München: Droemer, 2019.
- Fechtner, Kristian. *Diskretes Christentum. Religion und Scham*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *DBW 4: Nachfolge*. Edited by Martin Kuske and Ilse Tödt. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, eds. Eberhard Bethge, Ernst Feil, Christian Gremmels, Wolfgang Huber, Hans Pfeifer, Albrecht Schönherr, Heinz Eduard Tödt, and Ilse Tödt. Gütersloh: Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1987.

43 Peetz, "Sünde und Rechtfertigung im postgenozidären Ruanda," 220 (own translation).

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *DBW 5: Gemeinsames Leben. Das Gebetbuch der Bibel*. Edited by Gerhard L. Müller and Albrecht Schönherr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, eds. Eberhard Bethge, Ernst Feil, Christian Gremmels, Wolfgang Huber, Hans Pfeifer, Albrecht Schönherr, Heinz Eduard Tödt, and Ilse Tödt. Gütersloh: Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1987.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *DBWE 4: Discipleship*. Edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey. Translated by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, eds. Victoria J. Barnett, Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr., Barbara Wojhoski. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *DBWE 5: Life Together: Prayerbook of the Bible*. Edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly. Translated by Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, eds. Victoria J. Barnett, Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr., Barbara Wojhoski. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Das Dettmolder Bekenntnis – ein Modell der Konfliktbewältigung. [Online]. Available: <https://www.kirchenkreissaarostbutare.de/detmolder-bekenntnis-deutsch-u-englisch/> [Accessed: 29 September 2023].
- Harms, Hartwig F. Scham und Schuld. *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 39(3). 2015: 153–188.
- Hübl, Philipp im Gespräch mit Billerbeck, Liane von. Wer regieren will, muss lügen können, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, December 16, 2019. [Online]. Available: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/politik-und-wahrheit-wer-regieren-will-muss-luegen-koennen.1008.de.html?dram:article_id=465912 [Accessed: 24 December 2019].
- Kelly, Geoffrey B. Editor's Introduction. In Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *DBWE 5*:vii–xix.
- Klän, Werner and Christoph Barnbrock, eds., *Heilvolle Wende. Buße und Beichte in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2010.

- Luther, Henning. *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts*. Stuttgart: Radius, 1992.
- Maaz, Hans-Joachim. *Die narzisstische Gesellschaft. Ein Psychogramm*, 6th ed. München: dtv, 2017.
- Nassehi, Armin. *Muster. Theorie der digitalen Gesellschaft*. München: C. H. Beck, 2019.
- Peetz, Katharina. Sünde und Rechtfertigung im postgenozidären Ruanda. In *Simul-Existenz. Spuren reformatorischer Anthropologie*. Edited by Christoph Barnbrock and Christian Neddens, 206–222. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019.
- Prüller-Jagenteufel, Gunter, Schliesser, Christine and Wüstenberg, Ralf, eds., *Beichte neu entdecken*. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2016.
- Rosa, Hartmut. Gelingendes Leben in der Beschleunigungsgesellschaft“. In *Zu schnell für Gott? Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz*. Edited by Tobias Kläden and Michael Schüßler, 18–51. Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2017.
- Schliesser, Christine. Beichte als “Angebot göttlicher Hilfe”. Ökumenische Ermutigungen auf den Spuren Dietrich Bonhoeffers. In *Beichte neu entdecken. Ein ökumenisches Kompendium für die Praxis*. Edited by Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel, Christine Schliesser and Ralf Wüstenberg, 205–215. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2016.
- Spitzer, Manfred. *Einsamkeit. Die unerkannte Krankheit*. München: Droemer, 2019.
- Thadden, Elisabeth von. *Die berührungslose Gesellschaft*. München: C. H. Beck, 2018.
- Verheyen, Nina. *Die Erfindung der Leistung*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. München: Hanser, 2018.
- Yeginsu, Ceylan. U.K. Appoints a Minister for Loneliness. *The New York Times*, January 17, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-britain-loneliness.html> [Accessed: 23 December 2019].

Zimmerling, Peter. *Bonhoeffer als Praktischer Theologe*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.

Zimmerling, Peter. *Studienbuch Beichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009.