

Confession Humbles Pride by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The root of all sin is pride. I want to live unto myself. I become a law unto myself. I may covet and I may also hate, for I alone am judge.

In my pride I wish to be like God. Confession to another human being breaks this arrogance as nothing else can. The old, prideful Adam dies a disgraceful death in great agony. Since this humiliation is so painful, we would rather bypass it and think that it is enough to confess to God.

But in our degradation we find our portion in the disgrace of Christ, who was not ashamed to stand before the world as a sinner. Confession of sin before another person is an act of discipleship to the cross. By confession we gain freedom from pride of flesh or reason.

Complete self-surrender to the grace, help, and judgment of God occurs in confession. Everything is surrendered to God; we retain nothing for ourselves. Thus we become free of ourselves. What separates us from obedience and from certainty—our thanklessness, our lack of readiness to forgive, the things we would cling to as uniquely our own domain— everything is surrendered to Christ and forgiven by him.

In absolution God receives us once again in order to reign over our whole lives and to set us completely free. Confession is a conversion and a call to discipleship. We have nothing left, not even our sins; they are laid on Christ. He steps toward us and his joy and righteousness become our own,

Genuine community is not established before confession takes place.

The whole community is contained in those two people who stand next to one another in confession. If anyone remains alone in his evil, he is completely alone despite camaraderie and friendship. If he has confessed, however, he will nevermore be alone. He is borne by Christ on whom he has laid his sin, and by the community which belongs to Christ and in which Christ is present with us. In the community of Christ no one needs to be alone.