

# THE CONCEPT OF DEEP COMMUNICATION AND NEO-PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

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## **Анотация**

**Джулия Стрелкова. Концепцията за дълбоката комуникация и неопротестантската теология.** В тази статия се опитваме да представим основните идеи на представителите на неопротестантската теологии (Е. Брунер, Ф. Гогартен и Д. Бонхофер), които касаят техните възгледи върху проблематиката на човешкото общуване. Доказва се, че рефлексииите на дадените мислители са станали много важни за създаването на интегрална концепция на християнската нео-ортодоксия и задълбочаването на нашето философско разбиране на екзистенциалните и онтологическите аспекти на междуличностното общуване.

**Ключови думи:** неопротестантизъм; богословие; общуване; среща; диалог; съществуване; личност; междусубектно общуване

## **Анотація**

**Юлія Стрелкова. Концепція глибокої комунікації та неопротестантська теологія.** У цій статті ми намагаємося представити основні ідеї представників неопротестантської теології (Е. Брунера, Ф. Гогартена і Д. Бонхоффера.), які стосуються їхніх поглядів на проблематику людського спілкування. Доводиться, що рефлексії даних мислителів стали дуже важливими для створення інтегральної концепції християнської нео-ортодоксії і поглиблення нашого філософського розуміння екзистенційних і онтологічних аспектів міжособистісного спілкування.

**Ключові слова:** неопротестантизм; богослов'я; спілкування; зустріч; діалог; існування; особистість; між-суб'єктне спілкування

## **Annotation**

**Julia Strelkova. The concept of deep communication and neo-Protestant theology.** In this article we are trying to present basic ideas of exponents of neo-protestant theology, which concerns views on problematics of human communication. We are exploring the ideas of E. Brunner, F. Gogarten and D. Bonhoffer. These ideas are so remarkable for creating the integral conception of Christian neo-orthodoxy and making more profound our philosophical insights about existential and ontological aspects of inter-personal communication

**Key words:** neo-Protestantism; theology; communication; meeting; dialogue; existence; personality; inter-subjective intercourse

**Setting of the problem.** The framework status of communicative philosophy (philosophy of dialogue) in contemporary human studies enforce any investigator not just to discern the manifestations of this phenomenon in cultural existence of human kind, but also to make a specific mode of communicative reduction and by this way to preserve some situation of cognitive comfort accus-

tomed for any reasonable person, as a goal and result of cogito-act. In the same time, we should in some sense be ready to renounce the results of such cogito-act and being absorbed by deepest spheres of human inter-subjective communication and be ready to real meeting with Another, but not as ours alter ego, but as other ego, totally independent from Ourselves. The communication in its eventually existential dimension is hardly possible outside of this meeting. The most difficult, but meanwhile the moment in such approach to the communication is a reconciliation (retaining) in mind the paradox of being Another, as the fact of presence in my reality and his reflections in my mind is an act of catching (deforcement) by my subjectivity, an act of peculiar assumption by myself. Just such an antinomic way of being Another make the creating of philosophic theory of communication so difficult and enforced speculative thinkers appeals to religious ideas. May be these ideas can 'modeling' the profound communication more comparable. The special place among these thinkers deserves credits to protestant authors of XXc., as D. Bonhoffer, E., Brunner and F. Hoharten, who in this or that measure was involved in such called 'dialectical theology'

**Analysis of recent researchers and publications.** Meanwhile the sound resonance, which these ideas gets in Western Europe, in our native religious-philosophical studies such conceptions didn't find the proper reflection even until now. This fact clearly witnessed by absence of enough amount of translations of the works of these theologians and a lack of comments (D. Bonhoffer, may be pointed as the exception). But even if we take into account some information and materials in encyclopedic edition and separate approaches to summarize the ideas of mentioned authors in some publications – all these facts cannot make the situation as better. Among the rare Ukrainian writers, who was enlightened some aspects of the heritage of E. Brunner, D. Bonhoffer and F. Hoharten we can mention T. Gavriluc, V. Garadja, A. Kolodnuj, T. Lifintseva, K. Nikonov, S. Pimenov, L. Stasuk, D. Ugrinovich, M. Cherenkova and others.

Thus it is obvious, that we should make *the main aim* of our research is to conceptualize the basic ideas of neo-protestant theology concerning problems of deepest communication.

**The explication of basic material.** We should mention, first of all, that the term 'deep communication' were introduced in 1990-s by G. Batishchev (Batishchev, 1995) for designation that level of communication where the mentioned above meeting of two inter-subjectivities can happen, and where break-throughing senses, which ultimately cannot be desubjectivated, were established. Just here the existence of individual were enlightened. Properly saying, it is the same phenomenon, which was accentualised by Karl Jaspers as existential communication. It is very interesting, that Jaspers, as Batishchev (at the final stage of his intellectual evolution) was involved into religious world-view. Truth be told, the ways of these two different thinkers was rather different: the first came to religion from existential philosophy, but the second came through Marxism.

The way to fundamental rethinking of communication phenomenon by E. Brunner, one of the co-founders of dialectical theology, was also not so easy. In the beginning he was like-minded person of K. Barth, but after that became one of his die-hard opponent.

Without getting into special differences between Brunner's and Barth's conceptions, we want to dwell the issue concerning the problematic of communication. To the most fullest extent this aspect finds its expression in work "Truth and Meeting" ("**Wahrheit als Begegnung**"), had published in 1938. In this work Brunner make the connection between Revelation and meeting of two personalities, between I and You, between God and human kind. Thus Revelation can be exercised in dialogue between God and man. Let's keep in mind that the modern philosophy more and more frequently tells about dialogue as the topos, as the place, where the true being revealed.

In this context it would be so appropriate to mention M. Buber, who became the well-known author thanks to his work "I and You", published in 1923. In this work he defends the idea of more deep communication, comparing with ordinary and everyday life and conversation, the communication as a dialogue. This Buber's idea Brunner were adapted to Christian religious doctrine. The

essence of Christianity, according Brunner, is the meeting with God. This event claims the personal and free-will act of human kind, claims the possibility to come forward to call and undertake some obligations to own self. It claims to change the understanding of our selves, first of all. The essence of Gospel, points Brunner, is a personal meeting. Real Revelation it is not some rational words, it is not letters, which we can read, it is rather a personal event, the unfolding the meeting with Another. It is a moment of overpowering any subject-objective relations, and some new states of being appearing. In course of such meeting God gives us not any rational evidences, not just some information about Himself, but represent Himself immediately. And thus Brunner concluded that the word, which was recorded in Gospel by evangelists, is a Revelation just in some extend, because it includes the element of human understanding, human treatments and human response to it. Thus from one side the Scripture is a witnessing about Jesus Christ and in this extent it is the source of Faith and Theological teachings, but from another side it cannot be interpreted literally as an inquiry of God to man. Any translation of Word of God into human language inevitably restricted the Divine, and therefore we should consider the text of Scripture critically. Because the most important event is the personal meeting of man with God.

Here we can see that the position of Brunner is peculiar effort to overpower Bart's "theology of crisis". According this conception any secular things cannot bear the testimony about God adequately. Such things cannot help to find that moment in human nature that can intermediate the way to God. The only such intermediary is Christ. Brunner believes that Church is not right in interpretation of Revelation as some collection of doctrinal true statements about God, but not as Self-Revelation of God. From his point of view, the Truth as itself is always have a personal character, as Kierkegaard were saying. Truth as meeting is not just an information. Such Truth destroys any unpersonal notions of truth and mind. It can be expressed in I-You forms, believes Brunner (Brunner, 1962, 24). Accordingly, the Revelation cannot be grasped just theoretically or intellectually; it should be perceived first of all as an act of God, as an appearance of Christ. Thus Chris reveals Himself at first personally, and at second historically, as Christ. In this relation the truth is not something fixed, as platonic ideas, which we can recall or discover theoretically, but instead something, that happen and take place in space and time. Truth appears as an act of God in space and time. At the same time Brunner stressed, that the essence of this act is not any ideas or teachings about God, but God Himself. Revelation of God is a Theophany, the act in which the essence and the appearance are aligned to identity. In Revelation God present as God, but not as a message, an information about Him, and this spatial-temporal presence embodied in person of Christ endowed by Holy Spirit.

The correlation Word of God and historical circumstances and perception of this circumstances by people means searching the answer on question concerning human existence not just in Revelation of Christ but also in Revelation of created World, in human kind as an embodiment of reason and still small voice. That's why in theology of Brunner the elaboration of philosophical and especially ethical problems has a remarkable place.

It should be accentuating that the meeting as the way of finding truth figured in Brunner's inquisitions in the same meaning as in O.-f. Bolnoff works, who was a spokesman and researcher of existential philosophy. And if the philosophy of meeting is the philosophy of dialogue so that we can render the Brunner's theology as a dialectical theology, so that as conception that makes possible the synthesis of contradictions – God and human – in image of Christ, and, with accordance of dialogical character of such theology – Christ here became an enlightened point of intercourse of God and man as an existential truth. And this truth is in accordance with over-mind exhaustless in its deepest event of being – the event of personal meeting.

The position of exponent of neo-Protestantism F. Hoharten is in some extent resemble the Brunner's. As Bruenner was, Haharten finds the possibility to find the way to God for man just in communication, in dialogue between I and You. But in another sense this way is a path of human

to himself, to own authenticity, because its authenticity became possible only through involvement in relation with another peoples. Thus without the presence of God human kind is not exists, but in the same time we cannot say nothing about God without a human kind. Therefore, we can find God neither in inner world of inter-subjectivity of separated person, nor in outer world of things and objects. God appear in the moment when man meets man – it is the world of human relationships. And this world can be opened for any person just through his/her including into community, but not if he/she looser self in depersonalized mass, but can see the uniqueness of own personality, he/she sees him/herself as a person, who can create a historically signified events. History is the meeting of some certain I with some historical You, - points Hoharten. His way of reasoning is looks like Feuerbach's: the primary reality, discovered for man, is another man. Thus this world gave to man just through the mediation of another man. This world is specific correlator in interrelation between I and You. All specific characteristics of humanity, especially noddle and acting power, determined by not-cogitative and not-objective (not-acting) relation and always oriented into fixed and shaped past. If we would use the terms of early Marx, we can call such type of relation as "relation of communication", and by this term we can make the non-objective or even 'spiritual' character of this relation more evident.

And therefore the basic for any theology concerning transcendental nature of God obtained some unexpected features: transcendental essence became as if turned inverse, and the immanence of this essence became clearly evident. The same these concerned by the "deepest" of communicational relations, by such approach the whole conception in large extent loose its mystical character, and begin to look like a non-material essence as such.

In context of reflections on heritage of followers of 'dialogical' approach in protestant neo-orthodoxy, one of crucial roles belongs to ideas of D. Bonhoffer, as well-known thinker not just thanks to his attempt in creating "non-religious" and to his participation in antifascist movement of Resistance. His life and activity was interrupted by brutal death in Nazi prison. If we would concentrate just on that moments which seems significant from the point of view of our inquisition – to discover come features of representation problems of communication in neo-Protestantism, the main attention we should pay to such works of Bonhoffer as "Life in Christian Communication", "Resistance and Obedience", list of letters, which he was wrights in Nazis torture chambers.

It should be first of all to underline that the essence of Christianity for Bonhoffer was in Gospel teaching about love to one's neighbor. Our relation to Gad, declared religious scholar, not necessarily should be strictly religious, not as a relation to imaginable supreme highest and most powerful divine being; our relation with God is a new life in existence for another. Not an infinite and inaccessible tasks, but a persistently close and absolutely reachable our neighbor became a transcendent being. Bonhffer think, that being Christian means firstly to pray, and secondly administrate justice for people. The confessing of God's existence and believing in He as Creator of the world is not the matter. The key point is realization of Christian ethic principles, embodied in human behavior. Bonhoffer even makes a paradox conclusion that atheist in some circumstances can be more Christian, than a believer. "The adult world is more godless than the infant, and because of this the first is closer to God than the last" (Bonhoffer)

An another thesis of Bonhoffer was that Christ "catch" a man in "in the thick of the life". In one of his letters from prison, where he declares this idea, Bonhoffer seems to return to his graduate work and says that "thick of life" is an existence for another. Just in such readiness for another or, if we would use the Ukhtomski's term, "another-domination" the life in Christ is possible. Only through inter-personal relations, through deep connection between I and You the Christian church is possible. In another letters of last years of his life, Bonhoffer more and more enforced the communicative moment in interpretation of Christianity and declared that the ministry to our neighbor is the first duty of each believer: "It is hardly any another feeling can give us more joy than the feeling

that you can yield some benefit to people. Here the key moment is not quantity, but intension. Cause human relations is the main point of whole life. All another is close to adventure... This, surely, not means that we can neglected the world of things or a material benefits. Bat what is the best book or picture for me, any building or villa in comparison with my wife, my parents or my friend? But this can say about himself just that man, who had find an another human kind in his life. A lot of our contemporaries perceived another person just like a part of outer world. That is why they cannot feel specific character of humanity. We should be happy that we in our life were given the present of such feeling..." (Bonhoffer, 1994).

Bonhoffer's reflection on communication in Christian community is also sutured be deep philosophical ideas. In some extent his ideas are aligned to that of K. Jaspers. In his work "Life in Christian communication" we can find some concrete remarks concerning deep communication and its practical explications. First of all, our attention draws to dialectical understanding of condition of such deep communication the main of that is – the possibility for man to reach a solitude and privacy and even strive to it. "Just in communication, – points Bonhoffer, – we can get wise to be in solitude, just in solitude – to communicate (correctly) with another Christians in ecclesia... Somebody, who cannot bear the solitude, who hate to be alone, should beware of communication also. Some man, who joins the Christian communion just for escape himself usually abuse Christian communication. Meanwhile the participation in Christian communion far such a man can look like something spiritual, it is not the case, because really this man wants not a communication, but an oblivion of his/herself and alienation from people, that threatened by absolute isolation. An attempts to use the Christian communication as the panacea from solitude leads to destruction of communication, renouncing of it and eventually to spiritual death. If somebody wants just a communication, but not solitude, lives in emptiness of words and feelings. If somebody strives to solitude, but not to communication, could perished in false pride, self-deception and despair" (Bonhoffer).

We can consider Bonhoffer's recommendation to distinguish the time of life in Christian communion as a precondition for practical realization of strategies, mentioned above. The time for communication and the time for retirement should be estimated, because the day of communication, but without solitude cannot be full of sense.

Taking into account that communication and solitude are correlated with speaking and keeping silence, Bonhoffer try to realize its inner interconnection. As communication and solitude mutually foresee and provide each other, the speech (Word) and silence also dialectically confront to each other. In this context German author interprets silence not as dumbness, and communicating not as idle talks, silence not lead to solitude and idle talks cannot create a communication. The Word came not to somebody, who talks, but to someone who keep silence. The silence in the temple is the sign of God's and His Word presence.

At the same time such keeping silence is nothing more or less than the waiting of Word of God and his Blessing. We are keeping silence exclusively for sake the Word of God; we doing so at the beginning of a day, for God could saying first, we are being silent at the afternoon, because the last word is God's Word also. So, silence is not an expression of mistrust to God, it's an expression devout anticipation. The silence of Christian man is a silence of somebody, who listening, this silence can be interrupted at any moment for the sake of humbling, this silence is touching to Word.

As we can see exemplifying of some theses of Bonhoffre's theology, here we are dealing first of all with some exact and subtle philosophically imbalanced reflection of communicative (social) reality as a base ground of humane way of life and human existence. This reality is built up as a sphere of human intercourse. It is remarkable, that Christian faith in its non-religious version is naturally built in such intercourse. Just the presence of such faith makes its intercourse humanly oriented, and prevent any reduction of human kind to the object or simple thing. This faith also makes human communication more deep and spiritual and makes any dehumanization or technification impossible.

**Conclusions.** to summarize all that we had to say, it is necessary to emphasize that appearance and development of neo-Protestantism takes its place in context of active reinterpretation of basic values of European culture in first half of XX c. One of the axis's around that such reinterpretation occurs was a series of ideas, had expressed by participants of different fields of human studies, which was so far from each other. But meanwhile these researchers were in accordance concerning substantial role of human communication phenomenon in culture at all. In following such accordance leads to creating of new philosophical-humanitarian paradigm. Some Christian theologians, first of all Protestant, was directly involved in process of formation such paradigm. And the legacy of this authors we were trying to analyze in this article. Whereas they had significantly different views on engagement of communicative paradigm, political and ideological preferences, our point is that here its possible to say about common core in views concerning human communication. The key moments of this core is:

- Interpretation of communication as deep existential connection (Meeting) of I and You (Another). The way to such meeting is at the same time is the way to Self, to own personality (E. Brunner, F. Hoharten);
- The ultimate precondition of Meeting is openness of human personality, his/her willingness to bet own selfishness, to loose common comfort, the readiness to self-problematization;
- Ten necessary deep level in communication can be reached be realizing him/herself not just as somebody, who speaks and acts, but as the one who had fade on the edge of act and word (came still) and in this way became attentive to glance of Another, turned to myself, to voice and face of Another (in this moment it is easy to trace from Bonhoffer's ideas to contemporary interpretation of communication, most brightly expressed by E. Levinas);
- Such deep level of communication always stands in opposition to common subjective and practical or theoretical activity. This deep communication is the echo that pre-acting and pre-language reality in ourselves, which is not outside of us, but is not our merit. This reality ontologically exists pre-date of us, it is not physical, but metaphysical, transcendental for each person but immanent for human kind in his/her relation to neighbor.

At the and let's express a conjecture that the theological approach to communication, as it rendered in neo-Protestantism is necessarily needs some philosophical methods for reconstruction of this phenomenon. But at the same time philosophical way of thinking in such attempts to 'catch' the essence of communication finds its own borders, and beyond this borders we can see the area of religious metaphysics. In which form it is possible to combine such areas – we will try to inquire in our following publications.

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