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## The Marks of Justification.

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So we have full, perpetual, and sure forgiveness. But that is something within us, and hence no one can know for certain whether his neighbor has it or not. Therefore in order that we may not err in our judgment when trying the spirits, God has given us two marks by which we can know whether a person is in the state of forgiveness or not. These two marks are the confession of the mouth and good works. Not good works alone, otherwise many would be in the state of grace who reject Christ. True, ancient and modern obscurants wish to persuade us that good works alone testify to the presence of justification, and in that way they, like the honorable Sultan Saladin, try to bring themselves into heaven on a bypath. God's house, however, has no small side-entrance; it has only *one door*, and that door is Christ. For beside this name there is none other under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved, even though they do all the good works that can be performed. The first mark, then, of the presence of God's perpetual grace is confession of Christ. Where that is wanting, there forgiveness of sins cannot even be thought of. On the other hand, where it is found, there we may at least assume that faith is present in the heart. And where there is faith, there is also forgiveness. Therefore Christ attaches so much weight to our confessing Him freely and openly before men. He says: "Whosoever shall confess Me <sup>1)</sup> before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10, 32. 33. On the basis of this declaration we say: Where there is a joyous confession of the Lord, there is also forgiveness; otherwise He would not confess in heaven the name of him who confesses His name here on earth. In fact, He caused the pillar among His apostles to make such a confession not only Matt. 16,

1) Ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοί. So that his confession abides in Me.

16. 17, but again after his denial of Him and his conversion. Christ knew very well what was in man, but He wished it to become publicly known that he who had fallen had found grace again. John 21, 15—17.<sup>2)</sup> So also Paul connects faith and its natural mark, confession, most closely, Rom. 10, 9. 10; yes, he says that he who calls Jesus his Lord has the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12, 3. And, finally, John directly designates the confession of Christ as the mark of a person's being of God and dwelling in Him. 1 John 4, 1. 2 he exhorts his readers: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. . . . Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." And toward the end of the chapter we read: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." 1 John 4, 15. And similarly 2 John 9. 10: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed." The confession of the mouth, therefore, is the very first mark of one's being in the state of grace. At any rate, we can conclude with certainty that he who does not confess Christ or even denies Him is not of God or at least did not abide in Him.

On the other hand, we cannot conclude with certainty that all who confess with their mouths are in the state of grace; for many will say, "Lord, Lord," but they do not have forgiveness. Therefore God has connected the testimony of works with the confession of the mouth. It is only when both are together that we have the certainty that a person is actually in the state of grace. Matt. 7, 21 we read: "Not every one<sup>3)</sup> that saith unto Me, Lord,

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2) *Totum hoc colloquium cum Petro fuit institutum, qui muneri suo apostolico, ex quo trina negatione exciderat, trina confessione restituitur. . . . Christus nominatim coram aliis discipulis ipsum alloquitur, ut non solum de vocatione ipsemet in conscientia esset certus, sed etiam reliqui discipuli cognoscerent, Petrum, peculiariter lapsum, . . . restitutum esse.* (John Gerhard, in *Harmonia*, III, 328. 329.) — Of course, the main point here is the reinstatement of Peter into his office. This, however, could take place only after he had been forgiven. So the confession of Peter, which was repeated three times, was, above all, a testimony to the fact that he was again in a state of grace.

3) *Ὅς πᾶς*. Not every one, yet some.

Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." But nowhere does this "doing" become so apparent as in the works of love. Therefore the Lord says directly, John 13, 35: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Discipleship, therefore, or the fact of one's being a Christian, or the state of grace<sup>4)</sup> — use whichever name you please — is not exclusively known by one's confession of the Christian faith, but also by one's works, especially by works of love. John teaches this also. For after having said: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God," 1 John 4, 15, he adds by way of complement: "And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him," 1 John 4, 16. Just so 1 John 4, 7. 8. And 1 John 3, 14 he says: "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." Here he expressly designates love as a mark of the transition from death unto life, that is, of justification.<sup>5)</sup> What is more, 1 John 3, 10 he says: "In this the children of God *are manifest* and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Compare also 1 John 3, 11. On the other hand, "every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him [God]." 1 John 2, 29. And in somewhat different words: "Whosoever abideth in Him [God] sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." 1 John 3, 6.<sup>6)</sup> And again: "And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2, 3. 4. In short, the fact alone that a person confesses Christ with his mouth does not conclusively prove that he is in a state of grace; no, good works, especially the works of love, must be present along with it. So well did the disciple whom Jesus loved understand the doctrine of his Master. Also St. Paul directly concludes that, where there are no works of love, faith, and with it forgiveness, has been lost. He says: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith

4) *Μαθηταί* are Christians. Acts 6, 2. 7; 9, 26; especially 11, 26.

5) 1 John 3, 14: *Translati sumus de morte ad vitam. Synekdochice [hie] effectus pro toto actu justificationis ponitur.* (M. Flacius, *Clavis*, 515.)

6) *Ἀμαρτάνειν*, in this text, is not the same as *ἀμαρτίαν ἔχειν*, which, according to 1 John 1, 8, also applies to the saints, but as much as *ἀμαρτίαν ποιεῖν*, to commit sin, as 1 John 3, 9 proves.

and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. 5, 8; compare 2 Pet. 1, 9. And Gal. 5, 6 he shows, *vice versa*, by what marks true justifying faith is known, saying: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." That does not mean that faith availeth anything before God *in so far* as it works by love, — for Paul certainly is the last man on earth whom one would dare to charge with that error, — but it means that only *that* faith justifies which by works of love outwardly proves itself to be a living faith.<sup>7)</sup> Confession of the mouth, consequently, and the works of love are inseparable sisters. If the works of love are wanting, then also the confession of the mouth is hypocritical; if the confession is wanting, then the works are not genuine. He is in a state of grace in whom both are found. If a man professes to be a follower of Mahomet, he has no forgiveness even if he feeds ten thousand poor. If a man confesses that he is a disciple of Christ and serves sin, he is a child of hell. For justification is known by two marks, not by one.<sup>8)</sup> This is also the doctrine of the Fathers.<sup>9)</sup>

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7) *Μάρτυρε οὖν, ὅτι ἡ πίστις ἐνεργεῖται μὲν δι' ἀγάπης, τουτέστι ζωσα δεικνύται.* (Theophylact.) — *Non nego, Paulum attingere beneficium justificationis, ad quod obtinendum neque circumcisio neque praeputium quid valeat, sed fides. Quod autem additur: per caritatem operans, non haec causam justitiae exprimunt, sed tantum ad periphraasticam notationem fidei spectant. Etenim quia docuerat Paulus, solam fidem in Christo Jesu valere, ne quis vana persuasione fidei seipsum falleret, apostolus ad retundendam inanem jactantiam hypocritarum per adjunctum effectum definire voluit, quod ea demum sit fides justificans, quae per caritatem sese non mortuam, sed vivam esse operando declaret, quantumvis non hac operatione, quae proximum spectat, sed altera diviniore, qua Deum et Christum intuetur, salvet ac bect homines.* (A. Hunnius, *De Justificatione*, 180. 181.)

8) Therefore the apostle recommends both in one breath, Heb. 13, 15. 16, and thanks God for both, 2 Cor. 9, 13.

9) Regarding the confession of the mouth see *Apology* (Trigl., 225): *Paulus sic loquitur, quod confessio salvet, ut ostendat, qualis fides consequatur vitam aeternam, nempe firma et efficax fides. Non est autem firma fides, quae non ostendit se in confessione.* Compare *Apology* (Trigl., 177). — With respect to the works of love we read in the *Formula of Concord* (Trigl., 923): "Therefore true, saving faith is not in those who are without contrition and sorrow and have a wicked purpose to remain and persevere in sins; but true contrition precedes, and genuine faith is in or with, true repentance. Love is also a fruit which surely and necessarily follows true faith. For the fact that one does not love is a sure indication that he is not justified, but still in death or has lost the righteousness of faith again, as John says, 1 John 3, 14. Compare also *Apology* (Trigl., 175).

From the viewpoint of this doctrine we also understand the words of the Lord which have caused so much controversy: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." The story in which these words occur is recorded Luke 7, 36—50: "And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now, when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee (*οὗ χάριν λέγω σοι*), Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

The whole matter is perfectly clear if we take the little word *for* in the clause "for she loved much" as basis of discernment,<sup>10)</sup>

10) [See THEOL. MONTHLY, Vol. VIII, p. 323, Note 3. — *Particula in „Esurivi enim,” etc., Matt. 25, 35, nequaquam habet significationem causalem, sed RATIOCINATIVAM. Neque enim hic a causis ad effectum, sed ab effectis ad antegressam causam ratiocinatur; hoc est, probat ex operibus misericordiae, fideles illos vere esse tales, quales ipsos proclamet, nempe haeredes regni. . . . Sic itaque Christus opera allegabit, non ut fontem vel causam aeternae haereditatis, sed ut testes declarantes, fidem electorum . . . sese protulisse per caritatem in facta seu opera.* (A. Hunnius, *De Justificatione*, 229.) ]

namely, thus: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; that is seen from the fact that she loved much, that is, that here, in your presence, she has shown Me much love." I hope it will not be asserted that this explanation of *for* was invented by me or by any other orthodox person for the special purpose of interpreting this text. At least the non-orthodox Aristotle knows the use of *for* as basis of discernment very well. Yes, he even makes a special class of such clauses as is the one in our text.<sup>11)</sup> And it cannot be denied that he had a thorough knowledge, not only of logic, but also of the Greek language. So we quote the example from his writings: "He has fever, for he breathes hard"; and we add another one, which is still better known: "It is raining, for the flagstones are wet." Now the moisture on the pavement is certainly not the cause, but the consequence of the rain, although it causes us to notice the rain. Therefore the clause must be circumscribed thus: "It is raining; this is seen from the fact that the flagstones are wet." Also in the Holy Scriptures this way of speaking is very common.<sup>12)</sup> We read, for instance, 1 Cor. 10, 5: "But with many of them God was not well pleased; *for* they were overthrown in the wilderness." How is it possible to take *for* in this text in any other way than as basis of discernment? Is it not senseless to say: The fact that God overthrew many Israelites was the reason why He was not well pleased with them? Is it not the other way: God was not well pleased with them; this was seen from the fact that He overthrew them in the wilderness? In the same way we circumscribe Luke 7, 47: Much was forgiven her; this is seen from the fact that she loved much.<sup>13)</sup> The preceding parable shows that we *must* circumscribe that way. We do not wish to quarrel about the question whether the Pharisee Simon was the debtor who owed the fifty denarii or not. It is irrelevant here whether little or nothing at all was forgiven him. One thing, however, is certain, namely: first the debts of both debtors were remitted, and then they loved. So, then, love in this parable is the consequence of the remittance of the debt. Philippi

11) Aristotle, *Rhetorics*, I: . . . *ὅτι νοσῶ, πυρέττει γὰρ, ἢ τέτοκεν ὅτι γάλα ἔχει . . . ὅτι πυρέττει . . . πυκνὸν γὰρ ἀναπνεῖ* [. . . he is ill, for he has fever, or she has become a mother, for she has milk . . . he has fever, for he breathes hard].

12) Matt. 16, 2. 3; 26, 73; John 16, 27 [comp. 1 John 4, 10. 19]; Acts 4, 33. 34; Ps. 116, 10.

13) So the Fathers of the Evangelical [Lutheran] Church without exception.

is right when he says: "It would certainly be a most arbitrary and senseless perversion of thought if, in the interpretation of the parable, love were suddenly called the cause of the forgiveness, while in the parable itself it appeared as the consequence of the forgiveness. Furthermore, this opinion conflicts with the antithesis which immediately follows. For the Lord does not proceed: 'To another one, however, little is forgiven because he loved little,' but: 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' Now, if the secondary statement says: 'Little love is the consequence of little forgiveness,' then the primary statement must also have the meaning: 'Abundant love is the consequence of abundant forgiveness,' and not: 'Abundant love is the cause of abundant forgiveness.'" (Philippi, *Glaubenslehre*, V, 1, 222. Compare also Luther, St. Louis Ed., VII, 1456—1458.) And finally, as regards the repeated forgiveness which the woman who was a sinner received, it by no means follows that one forgiveness was more abundant than the other. Christ might forgive you seventy times in one day, and yet you would not receive more at one time than at another. Moreover, these two absolutions are of a peculiar import. The great sinner had received full forgiveness long before; yes, she lived in this forgiveness as in her element. And it was this forgiveness from which flowed her humble love, a love which contained both, frank and open confession of Christ and good works. By these two marks it became manifest that she was now in a state of grace. Therefore she must needs be publicly absolved in spite of all pharisaic cavils. Therefore Christ first of all addresses His words to the Pharisee: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she hath washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore"—that is, on the basis of all these manifest facts—"I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven," or, as Luther circumscribes: "Because she publicly gives testimony of her faith by fruits meet for repentance, therefore she shall also *in your presence* be publicly absolved and regarded righteous." (St. Louis Ed., VII, 1459.) And then the Lord turns to the woman and repeats His declaration. Of course, God forgives when He says: "I forgive thee." Therefore the poor sinful woman received forgiveness at least twice; once, before she anointed Jesus' feet; the second time, through the Word which Christ spoke to her. It is even probable that she received forgiveness more than a thousand times before her blessed death.

However, that is not at all the reason why Luke records this story. What makes this story remarkable and unique is this, that a public sinner, on the basis of her public confession of Christ and her public works of love, is publicly justified. (Luther. St. Louis Ed., VII, 1456—1466.) The doctrine which flows from this is very important, namely, that there is a concealed and a public justification. The concealed justification takes place through faith, Luke 7, 50; public justification takes place according to the measure of confession and works of love.<sup>14</sup>) We have an analogy even in the case of a bodily healing. The woman who had an issue of blood secretly touched the Lord and was secretly healed; for as soon as she had touched Him, “straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.” Nevertheless Jesus still asks: “Who touched my clothes?” And when the woman, fearing and trembling, fell down before Him and told Him all the truth, He publicly confirmed that which had taken place in secret, saying: “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace and be whole of thy plague.” Mark 5, 25—34. Concealed and public healing, concealed and public forgiveness, must carefully be kept separate. Concealed forgiveness is received by concealed faith; public forgiveness is received by that faith which by confession and works of love has come out into the bright light of the sun.<sup>15</sup>) *(To be continued.)*

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