

". . . in fact, the need for acceptance is something natural to man. We can live and breathe freely only in a circle in which we are accepted (MP: 110 f.).

". . . in truth, every man, whether he knows it or not, is always ultimately concerned with acceptance before God. . . . Every man feels, finally, that his existence is a questionable, uncertain affair; there lurks in him anxiety in face of nothingness and emptiness as well as the anxiety that he has been 'weighed in the balance and found wanting.' And the life of man consists in large part in the effort to deceive himself about this, to still this anxiety. This he seeks to do by many means, and he even seeks it in his drive for acceptance. In the feeling that he is inwardly nothing, he clings to the picture that others make of him. . . . At bottom, he wants to stand large, not before others, but before himself; at bottom, he wants to be accepted, not before others, ^{but} ~~by~~ before himself.

"Before himself! But that means, finally, before God. God has posed to him this disturbing question, whether he is something or whether he is nothing. He feels that he is responsible for himself, that he is called to be something. All human need for acceptance wants finally to create the answer to this genuinely vital question: Am I anything right at all, or am I nothing?" (114 f.).

"Just that is the basic sin: to want to be accepted before God by one's own power! Before God no one can be accepted as something by his own power; before God no one can boast. Such boasting violates the glory of God, the Creator. 'What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?' (1 Cor 4:7). In his drive for acceptance, man forgets that he is God's creature. And in that case it is of no consequence whether he speaks of God as the Pharisee does or whether he does not speak of God at all. Both are sin against God; both are man's wanting to be accepted before God by his own power, and so sin and self-deception" (116).

". . . men pervert their relation to God in that they are unable to confess what they are before God: creatures of nothingness, who have nothing that

they have not received from God, who are nothing without God's grace and who must again and again throw themselves on God's grace to be something, who can receive from God alone the acceptance that frees them from all frantic striving for acceptance" (117).

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