

Luther's disputations on Rom. 3:28 from 1535 to 1537

Justification

- Man is a sinner and cannot change his wrong being and acting by his own power. The root, from which all individual sins arise, is unbelief, i.e. the denial of the relationship with God.
- Christ's person and work effect the justification of the sinner.
- Salvation is granted through the word of God: The *law* convicts, accuses, and condemns the sinner; the *gospel* grants the sinner Christ's righteousness.
- Faith, wrought by God, takes hold of the justification granted by the word and makes it its own.
- Justification is both imputative (as a one-time imputation of Christ's righteousness, which makes the believer completely righteous before God) and effective (as the believer's ongoing process of becoming righteous).
- Throughout his life, the believer is simultaneously new and old, spiritual and carnal. Therefore, he is always in need of justification (*simul iustus et peccator*).
- Good works are the natural and necessary consequence of faith in justification, and they are oriented toward the law. Good works have no soteriological significance.

Law

- three types of law:
 - moral law (*lex moralis*)
 - ceremonial law (*lex ceremonialis*)
 - judicial law (*lex iudicialis*)
- two functions of the law:
 - *usus politicus* / *civilis* (secular function as external disciplining of man)
 - *usus theologicus* (religious function as exposure and indictment of sin)
 - [tertius *usus legis* / *usus in renatis* (ethical function as guidance of Christian life based on faith)]
- The law and the works of the law have no soteriological significance.
- The believer stands in the dialectic of Christian freedom from the law and ethical subordination to the law.
- No one can fulfill the law in accordance with its intent and scope. Only Christ fulfilled the law, granting his righteousness through faith in the word. Although believers cannot fulfill the law, they strive to do so knowing their obedience to the law is irrelevant to their salvation.

Anthropology

Differentiation of philosophical and theological anthropology:

- The self-perception and self-knowledge of man is reliable and sufficient to lead the life in the world.
- Any further questions about the origin and destiny of the world, as well as the human being who finds himself in it, can only be answered theologically, based on the Bible.

Luther's demarcation from Aristotelianisms and scholasticism:

- Luther concedes a limited validity to the classical definition of man as *animal rationale*, himself also uses conventional anthropological terminology, schemes, and ideas, and appreciates man's inner-worldly existence within the framework of his distinction of two regiments and kingdoms.
- However, from the perspective of theological anthropology, the fundamental principles of Aristotelian-Scholastic anthropology must be reconsidered or even rejected. This applies to both the substance-ontological approach of the Aristotelian conception of man and the theological adaptation of Aristotelian anthropology.

Human being and action as *opus Dei*:

- The creatureliness of man means that man finds himself in a personal relationship with the Creator God, namely as a creature consisting of body and soul, whose peculiarity consists in the fact that he was created in the image of God from the outset, destined to reproduce and to rule over his fellow creatures.
- However, this creature has reversed its relationship with the Creator and co-creation by aspiring to be like God. Through this sinful presumption, it has lost its personal relationship with God, which defines its creaturely nature. Instead, it has become inextricably self-focused and subject to sin, death, and the devil.
- Through faith in Christ, the believer is freed from the powers of disaster and restored to a salvific relationship with God. Because man's creatureliness is restored through justification and he recognizes God's comprehensive renewal of his being and actions, he acknowledges his humanity as an existence wholly owed and undeserved. Thus, the essence of human existence is being justified by faith (*homo = iustificari fide*). Though this new reality opposes the still-present reality of sin (*simul iustus et peccator*), the spiritual person is truly just before God and grows in justice throughout the Christian life.

Sources

- Two series of theses *De fide* and *De lege* on Rom. 3:28 (Sept. 11, 1535): WA 39:44–53 (LW 34:105–132)
- *Disputatio de homine* (January 14, 1536): WA 39/1:174–180 (LW 34:133–144)
- Third and fourth series of theses on Rom. 3:28 (January 14, 1536): WA 39:82–86 (LW 34:145–196)
- Series of theses *De operibus legis et gratiae* on Rom. 3:28 (June 1, 1537): WA 39/1:202–204

Faith

- Faith is God's work in the believer, taking effect through the understanding, affirmation, and trust (*fides qua*, *notitia/assensus/fiducia*) of the object of faith (*fides quae*).
- The object of faith is Christ. Faith is a personal relationship with Christ (*fides apprehensiva Christi pro me*), which brings about the forensic and effective justification of the sinner.
- Faith is mediated by the gospel word (*promissio-fides* relationship).
- Faith creates certainty of salvation (*certitudo*) and prevails through challenges and adversities.
- Faith is the foundation of Christian practice in good works by serving as an ethical guide and by submitting to biblical directives and worldly structures.
- A critical examination of the medieval understanding of faith (*fides acquisita/infusa*, *fides informis/fides caritate formata*, *fides implicita/explicita*) is necessary.

iustificari hominem per fidem
sine operibus legis
(Rom. 3:28)