

From: Bob Kirk
Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2006 8:44 AM
To: David Bickel
Subject: RE: Lutheranism and Calvinism

Hello David,

I apologize for intruding into your inbox.
I'm a Lutheran Christian and stumbled across [your dawnrealm.org article written on Oct 20, 2005 titled, "Calvinistic Modification of Justification by Faith Alone"](http://yourdawningrealm.org/article/written-on-Oct-20-2005-titled-Calvinistic-Modification-of-Justification-by-Faith-Alone).

Quit simply, I was astounded as I read. In my own wrestling with the Reformed view of election and the Lutheran view the universality of grace, I've come to the same conclusions, in the same manner. Both Arminian and Reformed theologies, for all the distance they would portray as being between themselves, essentially bring man to the very same point - namely the logical requirement to look within themselves for assurance of salvation rather than to Christ.

In the former, man must of his own "free" will make a choice. Salvation while said to be in Christ, rests on the certainty that they've made the choice. But like any man, choices can be second-guessed and doubt can arise as to whether the sincerity was really present, whether the conviction was strong enough to have really made the necessary choice, and whether it was adequately sufficient.

Likewise for the latter, if Christ did not die for and atone for all mankind, the promises of Law and Gospel do not apply to all mankind.

God's call in the proclaimed word is not addressed (and therefore sincere) to all who may potentially hear it, only the veiled elect (rather than considering all who hear it to be potentially among the elect as do Lutherans). That said, natural man does retain the ability to be fearful of things and to hear and be moved by threat. He also retains the ability to have belief in things, objects, propositions etc.

To generalize using the example of Roman Catholic theology which both Reformed and Lutherans find contentious, Catholics believe that hell is real and that wrath is coming on sin. They are fearful of this and move to "do something" about it. To be sure, Protestants disagree with what that body prescribes as spiritual remedy. But Catholics do believe that they can be made righteous in the sight of God by their own right intentions and actions, the reception ex opera operato of the mass, etc.

Infused grace and the individuals own perceived righteous "value" satisfies the trembling conscience. The point is that people who profess to be in Christ's church fear wrath, feel sorrow, and believe something that assuages conscience.

But the Reformed man fearing the wrath of God must be faced with a question not so dissimilar from the Arminian who asks "Did I really choose Christ sufficiently?" If they consider the question of their own salvation as the Catholic would above, they must inevitably ask: What I have as faith, is it real? If the promises of God are not universal, then the promise of grace I heard when I trembled in fear before the Law may not have been for me. They are then forced to trust or find trust in the value of their own faith and somehow peer into the Lamb's book of life and find in that answer the answer to whether they are actually among the elect, since only the elect are those to whom the sincere call goes out and to whom true faith is given.

In the end both appear to me to render "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" as being not the unwavering promise of propitiation for sin made in Christ's blood on the cross (though both claim that is the means of being atoned for), but in something in man.

I apologize again for intruding and for the length of this message, but I wanted to thank you for your article. I am working on a blog of my own where this issue and others will by God's grace be touched on in the future. I wonder if you would mind if I linked your site and/or article from my blog?
Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Bob Kirk