

January 2012

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Terry Dwain Robertson
Andrews University, trobtsn@andrews.edu

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The Implications of Arminius’ Understanding of the Intellect on Knowledge Exchange Strategies in the Mission of the SDA Church

Terry Robertson
James White Library
Andrews University

Abstract

I discuss the implications of the intellectualism/voluntarism debate for knowledge exchange systems, particularly as they apply within Seventh-day Adventist theological education. In the worldview of Arminius, the soul consisted of the Intellect, the Will, and Desire. Calvin argued that God first redeemed the Will, and then the Intellect was informed. Arminius believed that God appealed first to the Intellect, which in turn empowered the Will. Based on this description, I infer that this priority of the intellect speaks to the role of information and knowledge as prerequisite and causal in the salvation process, and thus knowledge exchange systems become instrumental in promulgating the experience of faith.

As a case study of this inference, I compare recent Calvinist statements and Adventist statements on the philosophy of education. Adventists focus on bringing the student as an individual to a saving and transforming knowledge of Jesus, a bottom-up approach; Reformed educators highlight preparing the student for responsibility within the community transforming society, a top-down approach.

I conclude that this distinction warrants the articulation of an intentional Adventist knowledge exchange policy for theological education that situates formal scholarship as another form of ‘evangelism.’

Introduction

I am interested in knowledge exchange systems¹ and scholarly communication, particularly as they apply within Seventh-day Adventist theological education. This research agenda includes reflecting on how experts collaborate to increase the collective store of knowledge, what systems they use to share that knowledge, and how this collective wisdom in turn contributes to fulfilling the mission of the church. While throughout our denominational history, much of this communication dynamic has been happening in the larger community of faith, I suggest that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would benefit from a more intentional and organized knowledge exchange strategy specifically for her theological education program.

Improving knowledge exchange systems that benefit graduate theological education students sounds appropriate, particularly since new Adventist Seminaries are currently being established outside North America/Europe/Australia. But in the give and take of everyday life, church administrators must make difficult choices based on economic limitations. These knowledge exchange systems are costly. Are they a necessity or a luxury? When it comes to these systems, what can we afford, and how do we balance the needs of theology students with the many other needs of the church?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception has focused largely on knowledge exchange systems that target a general public, a non-academic readership, and has continuously been engaged in publishing books and magazines that inform, evangelize, and disciple the congregation and reach out to the community at large. For the most part, this knowledge exchange has involved presenting established teachings within an accepted consensus, but it also assumes the teachings are new for the reader. This work is valid, and must continue to be fully endorsed by the community of faith. However, documented knowledge exchange

¹ This terminology has gained currency in the business and health management fields and refers to the strategies and technologies by which employees are prepared for leadership in global business contexts. This entails more than simply sharing instructional information, but empowers employees to knowledgeably solve problems and further the mission of the corporation. One pertinent application is discussed by Louise Kjaer, "Reflections from the Frontline: The Journal of a Knowledge Manager," in *Becoming Virtual: Knowledge Management and Transformation of the Distributed Organization*, ed. Jane E. Klobas and Paul D. Jackson (New York: Physica -Verlag, 2008), 180-196.

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between Adventist thought leaders, particularly those that mentor and train the next generation of church leaders, seems unwarrantedly inadequate. Thus much of Adventist theological education depends primarily on sources published outside the Adventist perspective. It is fully appreciated that in the past both economics and technology have raised insurmountable barriers to substantial and comprehensive academic level publishing, but looking forward, those barriers appear to be rapidly shrinking.

Theological education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is responsible for training qualified and effective leaders who will carry forward the mission of the church in a diverse global community. How should our knowledge exchange values and strategies be shaped in the light of these new opportunities represented by global outreach and emerging technologies? While I have raised a number of issues in this introduction, it is not the purpose of this paper to fully address this multifaceted and complex problem. But I am proposing that Arminius, a theology professor at the University of Leiden, and one who fully engaged the knowledge exchange technologies of his 16th century context, might have some timeless wisdom to offer that provides a soteriological/missiological context for this agenda.

The “What”: Arminius on the Priority of the Intellect

This is a conference reflecting on the life, times, theology and impact of Arminius, recognized as a key voice in the theological ancestry of Seventh-day Adventists. He lived and ministered in the late 16th century, a little over a hundred years after the invention of the printing press, a pivotal and revolutionary knowledge exchange technology. He is remembered because of his stand on predestination, which was different from that of his Reformed faith community in the Netherlands. Admittedly, I doubt Arminius thought much about knowledge exchange systems, seminary library budgets and scholarly publishing, though he was an active and thoughtful academic who fully engaged the information technology infrastructure of his day. He certainly did not write treatises on information and communication theory. But I am

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proposing that in his view of the epistemological in his soteriology,² particularly as it contrasted with that of his Calvinist interlocutors, he provides a nuanced perspective on the role that knowledge exchange systems play in the mission of the church. By extension, we can then infer that he speaks to our motivation and values as the economic resources are allocated for knowledge exchange by the church administration for the mentoring and training of new leadership.

Arminius, in his *Private Dispositions*, outlines a system of theology, moving topic by topic through an understanding of the nature and character of God and Jesus Christ, to the human predicament and the question of predestination. This in turn leads into a discussion of vocation, the election or calling of the saints. Throughout this description, there is a blending of the ontological and the epistemological in that, while the “reality” of salvation is fully established solely by the grace of God, the vocation entails the person who is called to come to know and assent to that “reality.” The following discussion will focus on this theme exclusively. The *Private Dispositions* then wrap up with a discussion of ecclesiology and sanctification.

First, for the essential definition of vocation:

The vocation or calling to the communion of Christ and its benefits, is the gracious act of God, by which, through the word and his Spirit, he calls forth sinful men [*reos*] subject to condemnation [*animalis*] of natural life, and out of the defilements and corruptions of this world, to obtain a supernatural life in Christ through repentance and faith, that they may be united in him, as their head, destined and ordained by God, and may enjoy [*communione*] the participation of his benefits, to the glory of God and to their own salvation (XLII:I).³

While the “efficient cause of this vocation is God” (XLII:II), and the “antecedent or only moving cause is the grace, mercy and philanthropy of God” (XLII:III), the “instrumental cause of vocation is the word of

² Keith D. Stanglin, *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603-1609*, Brill’s Series in Church History (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 236-244.

³ Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius, D.D., Formerly Professor of Divinity in the University of Leyden*, trans., James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 2:104.

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God, administered by the aid of man, either by preaching or by writing” (XLII:IV).⁴ A further distinction is then developed by Arminius between external and internal vocation. “The external vocation is by the ministry of men propounding the word. The internal vocation is through the operation of the Holy Spirit illuminating and affecting the heart, that attention may be paid to those things which are spoken, and that [*fides*] credence may be given to the word. From the concurrence of both these, arises the efficacy of vocation” (XLII:X).⁵ Thus is described one facet of knowledge exchange, the “ordinary instrument” by which a knowledge of God’s calling is mediated to a sinner is through the act of preaching, one person communicating knowledge of God’s word to another person. This is an epistemological transaction.

In the next disputation, Arminius turns to the steps by which salvation is actualized.⁶ “Faith is the foundation on which rests the obedience that is yielded to God” (LXIII:II).⁷ Obedience is defined according to three parts, repentance, faith, and holiness of life. This disputation (LXIII) parses repentance. As a response to preaching of the law and gospel, a causal relation to the word of God and the Spirit of Christ, “it first urges a man by the word of the law, and then shews him the grace of the gospel, which is thus skillfully made, removes all self-security, and forbids despair, which are the two pests of religion and the soul” (LXIII:VIII).⁸ The “antecedent to this response is the knowledge or acknowledgment of sin” (LXIII:V).⁹ The concept of a response to the external vocation resulting in knowledge is an epistemological categorization incumbent on the called.

In the progression of Arminius’ development of obedience, he next addresses faith in Christ. After defining faith, “generally,” he narrows the focus.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 2:105.

⁶ J. V. Fesko, “Arminius on Union with Christ and Justification,” *Trinity Journal* 31, no. 2 (2010): 210-211. Fesko provides a helpful comparison with other contemporary theologians on this theme.

⁷ Arminius, 2:107.

⁸ Ibid., 2:108.

⁹ Ibid., 2:107.

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Evangelical faith is an assent of the mind, produced by the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, in sinners, who, through the law, know and acknowledge their sins, and are penitent on account of them, by which they are not only fully persuaded within themselves that Jesus Christ has been constituted by God the author of salvation to those who obey him, and that he is their own Savior if they have believed him as such” (XLIV:III).¹⁰

This section expresses the necessary conditional epistemological response of faith to the ontological reality of God’s action. The action verbs representing the epistemological response of the human person to the gospel (this tacitly incorporates the concept of access to the gospel through the means of preaching, spoken or written), include: “assent,” “know and acknowledge,” “are persuaded,” and “believe.” These responses are ontologically “produced” by the Holy Spirit, and “constituted by God the author.”

In the further parsing of “faith,” particularly in understanding what it means to “assent,” Arminius draws the following distinction:

Knowledge is antecedent to faith; for the Son of God is beheld before a sinner believes on him. But [*fiducia*] trust or confidence is consequent to it; for, through faith, confidence is placed in Christ, and through him in God. The author of faith is the Holy Spirit, whom the Son sends from the Father, as his advocate and [*vicarium*] substitute, who may manage his cause in the world and against it. The instrument is the gospel, or the word of faith, containing [*sensum*] the meaning concerning God and Christ which the Spirit proposes to the understanding, and of which [*persuadet*] he there works a persuasion.¹¹

Note the repetition of the concept that the gospel is the instrument containing the meaning by which the Holy Spirit proposes and persuades the understanding.

Along these lines, Richard A. Muller in two separate articles brings into the discussion the relation between the intellect and the will. The first examined Calvin’s position, and a second explored Arminius’

¹⁰ Ibid., 2:109-110.

¹¹ Ibid., 2:110.

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position in contrast with the Reformed position of his time.¹² In the first, he documented Calvin's voluntarism, and the second, Arminius' intellectualism. He explains that Arminius and Calvin shared the same worldview, emerging out of medieval scholasticism. In their perspective, the soul consisted of the intellect, the will, and the desires.¹³ Calvin argued that in faith and salvation the will took precedence (hence voluntarism), while Arminius held that the intellect took precedence (hence intellectualism). Based on this description, it is suggested that this priority of the intellect speaks to the role of information and knowledge as prerequisite and causal in the salvation process, and thus knowledge exchange systems become instrumental in promulgating the experience of faith.

Muller explains the difference between the two positions in this way:

does the person approve and appropriate the knowledge to which the intellect has assented *because* the will follows the dictate of the intellect as it proposes the good, or does the will have the capability of denying the known good, or perhaps even of willing that it not be brought forward to full intellectual assent? In other words, intellectualism assumes that the causal faculty in the grasping of the good is the intellect, whereas voluntarism assumes that it is the will.¹⁴

¹² Richard A. Muller, "Fides and Cognition in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin," *Calvin Theological Journal* 25, no. 2 (1990); Richard A. Muller, "The Priority of the Intellect in the Soteriology of Jacob Arminius," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (1993). In a later work, Muller defends the Calvinist position, see Richard A. Muller, "Grace, Election and Contingent Choice: Arminius's Gambit and the Reformed Response," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will: Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 2:251-278. For a much more detailed analysis of Calvin's thought on the will see Dewey J. Hoitenga, *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

¹³ See Norman S. Fiering, "Will and Intellect in the New England Mind," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1972): 516-517. Fiering acknowledges that this distinction between the intellect and the will is archaic. However, he traces the intellectualism/voluntarism debate in New England in the late 17th century, and it can be inferred that the issues it raised continued to be influential on into the mid-19th century, influencing early Adventist theology.

¹⁴ Muller, "The Priority of the Intellect," 58-59.

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According to Muller, the implications of this distinction are far reaching in the understanding of the relationship between faith and salvation. Both Calvin and Arminius agree that it is only by the grace of God that salvation can be experienced. But they differ on how the grace is mediated. For Arminius, grace appeals to the intellect which then guides the will. The emphasis is on the causal sequence. As Muller further describes:

The gospel must simply be heard, understood, and approved, all within the normal realm of intellectual function. Accordingly, the causal “antecedent” of repentance can be described as a knowledge of sin in the mind, while the causal “antecedent” of faith is the knowledge instrumentally communicated by the gospel to the mind. Arminius, therefore, also seems to allow a role for the intellect in the salvation of the individual, the intellect directing the will toward the known good in cooperation with the divine grace of illumination, with the result that both grace and the normal arbitrating function of the intellect at the root of willing bring about the renovation of the will.¹⁵

It appears that this distinction may be one of the key underlying presuppositions that inform the contrasting conclusions concerning predestination and faith.¹⁶ What does the preaching of the Gospel accomplish? Under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, does the message appeal foremost to the intellect of the hearer, or does it first transform the will of the hearer? Appealing to the intellect grants the hearer a choice, though having the choice at all is solely through God’s grace. By contrast, the belief of the prior transformation of the will, albeit solely by God’s grace does not appear to allow for comparable choice; the choice has already been made for the soul.

¹⁵ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶ Stanglin reviews the debate, but suggests that the real distinction between Arminius and his colleagues is his intentional differentiation between *fides* (faith, epistemological assent) and *fiducia* (trust/confidence, an act of the will), and that *fides* is prior to *fiducia*. “Given that neither intellectualism nor voluntarism determines one’s soteriology, perhaps the more relevant difference between Arminius and his colleagues in the discussion of the intellect and the will is not the question of causal priority, but the degree to which the intellect and will were affected by the fall and restored after regeneration,” Stanglin, 102.

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This distinction is further illustrated by understandings on how the reign of God is to be realized. Heirs of both Calvin and Arminius reflect on the teachings of Jesus as the standard by which the kingdom of God is understood and agree in substance on what living in the kingdom is like, such as in the values of social justice. To highlight the distinction between the two, the Calvinist approach might be described as a top-down process, while the Arminian approach is a bottom-up approach.¹⁷ The one perceives a community of chosen who bring about the kingdom values by transforming the larger community through its political and social institutions. The other gives priority to transforming individuals to live as citizens of the kingdom.

This top-down Calvinist perspective is illustrated in the Calvin College “Expanded Statement of Mission”:

God chooses a people to receive Christ’s forgiveness by faith, live in renewed covenant relationship, and enter into eternal life. God’s people are to live as the visible embodiment of the covenant promises. They manifest the universal scope of divine love; drawn from every tribe and language and people and nation, they become one body, one priesthood, one church.

Through this people God declares the restoration and completion of the creation. The church calls men and women to faith in Jesus Christ, and as agents of covenant renewal the people of God work to see God’s reign over the whole creation. The redeemed are called to correct the

¹⁷ The distinction between “top-down” and “bottom-up” is widespread in many disciplines, most notably political science, economics, software engineering, and cognitive psychology. I was introduced to the distinction in Steven Johnson, *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software* (New York: Scribner, 2001). He explains the concept as it applies to both urban and online community development. In its application within a theological concept see Methodist theology professor, Joerg Rieger, “The Word of God and the People of God: Revitalizing Theological Discourse from the Bottom Up,” *Quarterly Review* 21, no. 1 (2001): 33-44. Rieger refers several times to John Wesley as an example of bottom-up practical theology. The Emergent Church movement also has applied this concept to church leadership, see Kester Brewin, *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for Church That Is Organic/Networked/Decentralized/Bottom-up/Communal/Flexible/Always Evolving* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). This also underlies the choice of “knowledge exchange” rather than the more common term in knowledge management circles, “knowledge transfer.” The idea of exchange is more “bottom up” than the “top down” transfer language.

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exploitation and oppression of people, to alleviate pain in the world, and expunge evil from themselves. The confessing community forms the principal witness to the awakening reign of God, and provides a vision of spiritual liberation that also requires liberation from injustice and bondage.¹⁸

This can be contrasted with what Richard Rice, an Adventist theologian who shares Arminius's understanding of the place of God's love, emphasizes when he introduces the reign of God theme:

Because God's relations to his creatures are motivated by love, he does not establish his reign by the imposition of sheer power. His reign depends on the willing acceptance of his subjects. The situation which God seeks—in fact, the only situation which will satisfy him—is the glad acceptance of his lordship that arises from an appreciation of his loving character. Consequently, God gives his creatures the choice of serving him or not. He allows them time to examine the alternatives and make an intelligent decision. . . .

On another level, the reign of God reminds us that God's lordship is universal. Every aspect of life is subject to his sovereignty. This justifies the attention Seventh-day Adventists have given over the years to such matters as physical health and religious education, and it calls us to extend the sovereignty of God into others areas as well.¹⁹

Underlying this expectation of an “intelligent decision” is a knowledge exchange system by which the Gospel is made accessible to the intellect through normal communication channels. Thus, in its testimony, the community of faith, as it reaches out to a lost ‘individuals’ throughout the world, must be as clear, accurate, and thorough as possible.

A further consideration, perhaps anachronistic but at least tacitly warranted, is the problem of misinformation. Keith Stanglin traced much of Arminius's controversy with his Calvinist colleagues to the problem

¹⁸ Calvin College, “Calvin College—Expanded Statement of Mission,” Calvin College <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/part1b.htm>, (accessed 5 November 2011).

¹⁹ Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 14-15.

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of the assurance of salvation. As noted above in the *Private Dispositions*, Arminius identified the “two pests of religion and of souls”²⁰ as self-security at one extreme, and despair at the other, both of which were the fruit of misinterpreting the relation between the law and the gospel. Stanglin observes that Arminius viewed this dialectic as derived from Reformed soteriology.

Arminius considered the dialectic of *desperatio* and *securitas* to be the direct result of certain distinctive aspects of soteriology increasingly taught and commonly accepted in the Reformed churches. Arminius’s contention is that Reformed soteriology in general and predestination in particular provided fertile ground for these two pests of religion and of souls to be fruitful and multiply.²¹

Thus, it is possible to conclude that for Arminius, the obtaining of true and adequate information was a necessary antecedent to experiencing the assurance of salvation, while the obtaining of incomplete or false information could result in the loss of salvation. Believing misinformation, what Arminius calls the “accidental”²² has eternal consequences. By extension, preaching the truth versus preaching error may affect the salvation of the hearer.

So What: Philosophy of Education as a Case Study

As a case study of how this priority of the intellect in the salvation process plays out in a contemporary application, I will reflect on how this assumption nuances an understanding of the purpose of the academic in the mission of the church. To illustrate the difference, recent published statements by both Adventist and Reformed thinkers will be discussed. Primary texts for this comparison are “A Statement of Seventh-Day Adventist Educational Philosophy,”²³ and the “Calvin College–

²⁰ Arminius, 2:108.

²¹ Stanglin, 181.

²² Arminius, 2:104.

²³ “A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy,” (paper presented at the First International Conference on the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education, Andrews University, April 7-9, 2001), available from education.gc.adventist.org/publications.html, (accessed 1 November 2012).

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Expanded Statement of Mission.”²⁴ Further discussion on the topic will be cited from George R. Knight, noted Adventist educator, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., current president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

The value of education is equally appreciated by both the heirs of Arminius and Calvin. Prior to the Civil War in the United States, two thirds of the institutions of higher learning had been founded by those with Calvinist roots.²⁵ Since its beginnings in Battle Creek in 1874, Adventist higher education has over-achieved, and colleges and universities have been established throughout the world.

The Adventist Philosophy of Education

First, note the pertinent themes from a broad consensus statement prepared at a meeting of Adventist educators focusing on the Adventist philosophy of education.

Adventists believe that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s character and purposes can be understood as revealed in nature, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. The distinctive characteristics of Adventist education—derived from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White—point to the redemptive aim of true education: *to restore human beings into the image of their Maker. . . .* Education in its broadest sense is a means of restoring human beings to their original relationship with God. Working together, homes, schools, and churches, cooperate with divine agencies in preparing learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come. Adventist education imparts more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. Its time dimensions span eternity. It seeks to develop a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of all human beings; to build character akin to that of the Creator; to nurture thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others’ thoughts; to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition; to ensure maximum development of each individual’s potential; to embrace all that is true, good, and beautiful.²⁶

²⁴ Calvin College, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

²⁵ Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), ix.

²⁶ A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy.

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I wish to highlight a couple of key elements in this statement. The first is the focus on the redemption and restoration of the individual. This is further evidenced later in the document as follows, “As a child of God, the student is the primary focus of the entire educational effort, and should be loved and accepted. The purpose of Adventist education is to help students reach their highest potential and to fulfill God’s purpose for their lives.”²⁷ Desired outcomes for Adventist education express the intention that students “have had the opportunity to commit themselves to God with a desire to experience and support the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to live a principled life in harmony with God’s will.”²⁸ These assertions fall within the practical implications of Arminius’ granting of priority to the intellect. Students are granted the opportunity to experience redemption and restoration through education, but when all is said and done, it is still the student who must choose to accept this truth.

The second element is the hope expressed in a new earth. In the grand meta-narrative of salvation history, the choices made by the student as provided by this educational opportunity make a difference. The limited education that is experienced now finds its ultimate fulfillment in the New Earth. What is made of current opportunities will be completed and come to fruition when the kingdom of God is fully established and evil is fully destroyed. Adventist eschatology makes a significant contribution to this philosophy.

George R. Knight contributed his perspective on redemption as the primary purpose of Adventist education:

No Adventist with the slightest knowledge of Ellen White or the book *Education* is surprised by the equating of education with redemption. To them that equation sets forth the core of what education is all about. They have no difficulty with the primary function of education being the introduction of young people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and with a secondary purpose being the development of the *imago Dei* in each child in its mental, physical, and spiritual aspects. Such an educational purpose, of course, naturally implies that the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

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primary function of the teacher is that of being a pastor or minister to his or her children within the setting of the classroom.²⁹

Both of these sources emphasize that the purpose of education is the redemption of the student and the restoration of the image of God in that student, preparing him or her for citizenship in this world and the world to come.

A Calvinist Perspective on the Purpose of Education

In the Calvinist perspective of education, these two elements have a somewhat different emphasis, which once again reflects this question of the relation of intellect and will that Arminius and his interlocutors debated.

Thus, Calvinist expressions emphasize the role of education in the covenant community and the bringing about of the kingdom of God in contemporary society. For example, in Calvin College's *Expanded Statement of Mission*, it is expressed this way. "First, the aim of Christian education is to let faith find expression throughout culture and society. Second, the life of faith, and education as part of that life, find their fulfillment only in a genuine community. Third, the Christian community, including its schools, is called to engage, transform, and redeem contemporary society and culture."³⁰

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., has written a thoughtful and accessible philosophy of education from a Calvinist perspective. He discusses the ultimate hope of humanity using the Hebrew concept of *shalom* in his introductory chapter, and then again in the epilogue.³¹ But his orientation is still focused on the transformation of contemporary society, and reflects the eschatological ambiguity prevalent in Calvinism. He concludes:

Seen in its broadest reach, Christian education is for the kingdom of God, Christian higher education equips us to be agents of the kingdom, models of the kingdom in our own lives and communities, witnesses to

²⁹ George R. Knight, "The Devil Takes a Look at Adventist Education," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 10 (2001): 179-180.

³⁰ Calvin College, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/part2b.htm>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

³¹ Plantinga, 12-16, 137-144.

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the kingdom wherever we go in the world. In a fallen world, Christian education is a powerful engine for ministering to the world along the same line that we hope for the world. From time to time we do need to see this big picture of the kingdom of God in order to find our calling inside its frame. But day to day, the issues of good and evil come to us undramatically. They will come to us in a score of small questions that test and reveal our commitment to God's will on earth.³²

Contrast this with the first words in Ellen White's discussion of education:

Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.³³

Summary

To summarize the highlighted distinctions, Adventists focus on bringing the student as an individual to a saving knowledge of Jesus, transforming the individual, a bottom-up approach; Reformed educators highlight preparing the student for responsibility within the community transforming society, a top-down approach. Adventists emphasize preparing students as individuals for the joy of service in the world to come; Reformed educators emphasize bringing peace to this world through engaged interaction. These distinctions reflect how Arminius and the Calvinists interpreted the doctrine of predestination, based in part on the argument about the priority of the intellect. Adventists following Arminius assume the individual must make an intelligent choice to follow God and educate to that end; the Reformed following Calvin assume the formation or calling of the community as a divine act, and educate to fulfill the mission of the community.

³² Ibid., 143.

³³ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 1.

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It is recognized that in both Adventist and Reformed philosophies of education, there is considerable agreement. Full treatments of their educational philosophies cover many of the same themes in complementary terms, and I would argue that much can be learned by both schools of thought from each other. These nuances only emerge when brief focused statements distill certain core values.

Now What: Implications for Knowledge Exchange in Adventist Theological Education

Following Arminius, if we as Adventists view the mission of the church to be the exchange of a saving knowledge of God (particularly through preaching), and that the causal priority in salvation lies within the intellect in a bottom-up paradigm, it follows that it is the responsibility of the church as an organization to strive to ensure that the knowledge it provides is as thorough and accurate as possible. The sharing of misinformation, albeit unintentionally or in ignorance, has definite, tangible, and potentially unhappy eternal consequences if it causes informees to reject saving truth. By contrast, in a deterministic perspective, the distribution of misinformation, or even blatant disinformation, does not alter the eternal outcome for the informee.

While this moral obligation to accurately represent the truth applies to all of the communications of the church, one area in my assessment where there continues to be an inadequate flow of knowledge exchange to this purpose is in the training and mentoring of church leaders. Yet it is in those future church leaders that we invest our continued direction. It is imperative that they have access to the best, most accurate and thorough knowledge that can be provided.

Because of the costs associated with current knowledge exchange systems, for example, the publication of books and periodicals, libraries, international conferences such as this one, etc., most students, particularly those outside North America/Europe/Australia, have limited access to the best knowledge resources. And yet it is these global students that will become the leadership for over 90% of Seventh-day Adventists. The publishing of paper based books and journals that would be particularly appropriate for graduate level Adventist theology students targets too small a market for economic viability. More so, theology students are not a demographic known for their financial clout. However, emerging digital technologies are opening possibilities for new

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knowledge exchange systems that can facilitate distribution and access to quality Adventist knowledge products appropriate for graduate level theological education for most educational institutions.

As church administrators reflect on the significance of global knowledge exchange for leadership formation, they should include the following considerations:

1. Recognize that the major economic cost of supporting new knowledge exchange systems will be in time and not cash. Theological researchers and educators need to be supported within their current salaried time to properly author works that share their knowledge, and to be provided with additional tangible non-cash recognition for their contributions. While some of this is currently in place, more ought to be done and to be more equitably distributed throughout the worldwide Adventist educational system.

2. Recognize the critical and biblical role that research plays in fulfilling the mission of the church.

In his epistles, Paul addressed two extremes towards knowledge exchange. The Thessalonians seem to have been cautious to the extreme, unwilling to consider anything new. So Paul counsels them:

Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to the good, reject whatever is harmful (1 Thess 5:19-22).³⁴

At the other extreme we find the Ephesians, who seem to have been gullible, ready to uncritically adopt any new ideas that came along.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph 4:14-16).

³⁴ All Scripture references are quoted from the *Holy Bible: Today's New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2005), available from <http://www.biblegateway.com>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

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And Peter concludes his second epistle,

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen (2 Pet 3:17-18).

Thus with a deep appreciation and gratitude for the 'Truth' God in His providence and grace has granted, the church must continue to "grow up" while remaining steadfast in her "secure position." Knight has reflected on the role of critical research in Adventist education, echoing Paul's challenge to "test all things."

Philosophy of education is something to which we tend to give lip service. But when it comes right down to budgets and positions, the target is practice, methods, curriculum, and psychological foundations, all too often without the benefit or adequate philosophical undergirding or exacting philosophical critiques on whether a particular practice or approach or theory is even worth implementing from the point of view of Adventist educational philosophy. In short, in most places, including Adventism, serious philosophy of education has fallen on hard times.³⁵

Scholarly research serves both as a critique and a stimulus, but to be effective, the knowledge gained must be exchanged, particularly with the up and coming leaders.³⁶ Thus, the desired outcome is that the message of salvation can be more effectively and more accurately proclaimed to an increasingly diverse world. Rightly conceived, scholarship is one more way to fulfill the gospel commission, to "do evangelism." As such, supporting it can be justified as good stewardship of church financial resources.

³⁵ Knight, 174.

³⁶ As a librarian, I advocate for access to the scholarly output of church. One source that is routinely overlooked is Conference proceedings. The expenses incurred in holding such conferences, and the costs of bringing thought leaders together, is substantive. Yet how accessible is this scholarship to remote Seminary students? Much more could be done using online technologies to bring together and organize this material for ready access by global students.

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3. Recognize scholarly competence as a gift and calling of the Holy Spirit and maximize the impact of this evangelistic ministry by not moving the best scholars into administrative posts, but rather supporting and recognizing their work within the educational milieu.³⁷ This recognizes that active participation in knowledge exchange builds both individual and community competence from the bottom up, one individual at a time, one new thought leader at a time. Thus, participation should be considered a normal responsibility of all those engaged in theological education.

4. Recognize that because research in theological inquiry is largely text based, the library plays a critical role in accessing prior knowledge. There is a difference in library support between the heirs of Calvin and Adventists. A review of the reported library expenditures for materials at Presbyterian/Reformed seminaries in North America indicates that on average, they invest twice as much per student as Andrews University.³⁸ The Adventist emphasis on global outreach, on wholeness, and on preparation for the world to come suggest this is an anomaly that needs further consideration.

Conclusions

As one facet of his argument rejecting Calvinist predestination, Arminius viewed the act of preaching as the external and instrumental antecedent to a vocation of faith and faithful living. As his heirs, Adventists view “the primary function of education being the introduction of young people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.”³⁹ This experience of growing a saving relationship begins with the evidence communicated by an informer in a way that it can be accessed through normal channels by the intellect of the informee, and with the mediation of the Holy Spirit, then leads the informee to a saving relationship with God. Thus, informees become in-formed, and the knowledge exchange transaction is complete. This exchange process finds its ultimate motivation and meaning in the hope of a New Earth. Training and supporting preachers/teachers for God-focused knowledge

³⁷ Knight, 176.

³⁸ “Statistical Records Report (2007-2008),” *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 63 (2009): 308-319.

³⁹ Knight, 179-180. In the context of this article, Knight is describing what happens in education generally. I suggest it applies equally to theological education.

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exchange through effective theological education is one responsibility the church can collectively assume to complete its mission. For the rest, it is the miracle of God's grace embracing new hearers of the Word of truth through the power of the Holy Spirit that bears fruit for eternity.

Improving knowledge exchange systems that specifically benefit graduate theological education students is therefore essential, particularly for the new Seminaries that are currently being established outside North America/Europe/Australia. These knowledge exchange systems are relatively expensive, though emerging technologies are significantly reducing the direct costs of distribution and access to knowledge products.

Are they a necessity or a luxury? The desired outcome of theological education is a church leader who is committed, competent and articulate, who can coherently evangelize the Gospel message in local contexts and lead others to a saving knowledge of God. Investments in leadership knowledge formation promise proportional returns—particularly from an Arminian bottom-up perspective.

Terry Robertson received his MA in Religion from Andrews University and his MLS from Indiana University. He is currently the Seminary Librarian at Andrews University. trobtzn@andrews.edu