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### Arminianism and Adventism: Investigative Judgment and Assurance of Salvation

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# Memory, Meaning & Faith

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October 16, 2010

## Arminianism and Adventism: Investigative Judgment and Assurance of Salvation

Dr. Woodrow Whidden began with a word of indebtedness to Dr. Stanglin, stating that he understood many of his concepts instinctively, but is going to have to rewrite a chapter in his forthcoming book. He stated that his paper, "Investigative Judgment and Assurance of Salvation" will focus on perseverance. Whidden states that if Adventists still have one seduction coming out of the Reformed tradition, it's a once saved always saved wish. While acknowledging that constant threat of legalism, he senses that if Adventism has a threat, it's not legalism anymore, but an overweening cheap grace.

Whidden believes that one of the reasons Ford struck a chord in Western Adventism in the 70s and 80s was feeding off a post-legalistic lust for some kind of assurance of salvation. Many people point to our perfectionist emphases and the investigative judgment which tie together. But the assurance of salvation is sensitive and delicate and requires some nuancing. This is because of our differing struggles, our personal losses, and our unique spiritual sensitivities. But Seventh-day Adventism with its sense of a looming eschatological crisis, has produced unique sensitivities among its members. And so we've had a run of the investigative/pre-advent judgment in recent years.

Now only does Whidden believe that the Calvinistic Reformed solution is not that good, he believes the Arminian/Wesleyan/Adventist solution is better. He sees two key issues

1. The doctrine of God
2. Optimism about the transforming power of God

Regarding the doctrine of God: Thank God for Arminius. Thank God for Wesley. Thank God for Ellen White. The heart of this issues is understanding that the God that we serve is in an unremitting, lustful search for us to love him. Therefore, Whidden believes God has a special place in his heart for Adventists and other Christians who struggle with assurance.

What Ellen White got from Arminius, she probably got through Wesley. What Whidden has gotten from Scripture aided and abetted by Ellen White is that we need to be justified moment by moment.

Whidden cannot think of a more powerful concept of judgment than that our judge in Heaven's court is also our our advocate. So he doesn't know how, when you think about that, you can ever think of being lost.

Christ as our judge is there to sober us up, because every moment of life is fraught with moral, spiritual, and eternal significance.

Now that was all by way of introduction to the paper, Whidden said, before inviting us to flip to the middle of his "Investigative Judgment and the Assurance of Salvation."

There are problems with the once saved, always saved position. One is sinful presumption, which so often accompanies the belief that a person is so secure as to be lost. Therefore, proponents of once saved, always saved explain that those who manifest persistent evidence of apostasy were never really saved in the first place. This corollary makes the doctrine incoherent and on the practical level brings in all the problems it was trying to escape.

Therefore, all of us are dependant of the *a posteriori* elements, the evidences of our salvation. Were a bit hesitant about the witness of the Spirit, because of tendencies toward fanaticism. But we have the witness of faith; we know that we believe. Our testimony of when we first accepted Christ falls into this category.

Once saved, always saves is a theoretical guarantee, not a real guarantee, because within the theological system of Calvinism, God's will is inscrutable, so you can never be sure.

Whidden asks, How can it feel loving that once God gets us in his grasp, he hold us without fail. Human relationships that work this way are considered abusive. For Arminius and all Arminians, grace is not a force, it is a person who lovingly draws us to embrace his saving love.

One of the arguments by proponents of once saved, always saved is that once you are born of an earthly father, you are always his child. Therefore, once you become a child of your heavenly Father, you are always his child. He refers us to read the rest of his paper for a consideration of this argument.

One big problem with once saved, always saved is that it makes it as if Lucifer has a disadvantage to us. The Calvinists can say that Lucifer was made to be damned for the glory of God, but Whidden says that comes from another planet than himself.

In summary, he believes the important thing is to be constantly attentive to Jesus, and to nurture sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. I also agrees with Herb Douglass that our assurance is not about our faith but about God's faithfulness. Emotional moments, during alter calls for example, are important, but they are the beginning of a conscious experience.

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