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Arminianism and Adventism: Reflections on the Symposium

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October 16, 2010

Arminianism and Adventism: Reflections on the Symposium

Dr. Gary Land closed the presentations with his "Reflections on the Symposium." Conference is particularly important, because it tries to place Adventism in a context, which many Adventist scholars have failed to do.

Land noted three areas of concern in the plenary papers.

1. The problem of defending Arminianism as a theology focuses on God (Olson, Callen, and LaRondelle)
2. The problem of assurance of salvation (Stanglin, Whidden)
3. The problem of the relation Arminianism to Adventism (Fortin, Knight)

Land found the discussion of sanctification very interesting, for there is a vocal community of former Adventists who criticise the church for a works focus. An interdenominational conference of these topics would be helpful, as this issue apparently transcends the bounds of our denomination.

These papers help us understand the importance of defining our terms well. While terms like monergism and synergism may be too technical for the average person, they help theologians to know precisely what they are talking about. More explicit knowledge of history and theology is needed by those who speak and teach in the church.

We need to understand that our theological positions are part of debates that precede us. We need to know those debates, and let them inform our interaction with other faiths.

We need to understand that our positions are grounded in our history and experiences, and take this into account when analyzing our positions.

We need to know why many in our church are semi-Pelagian. What happened to Wesleyan Arminianism when it came into contact with the Christian Connection and Baptism in the Adventist Church. Why, if Ellen White was Arminian, why do so many read her in a semi-Pelagian way?

Why does semi-Pelagianism have such appeal to Americans? In its mythology is not reality, America is the land of the self made man. Where someone can make themselves free from constraints of family, class structure, etc. This is not compatible with Calvinism, nor truly classical Arminianism. To understand theology, we need not only look at theology but also the social and economic situation of American which continues to make semi-Pelagianism popular in the Adventist Church.

Posted by [David Hamstra](#) on October 16, 2010 in [Arminianism and Adventism Symposium](#) | [Permalink](#)

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At the end of this conference, I'm inclined to agree with these sentiments expressed by William Miller in his "Apology and Defence":

It is in the use of terms not found in the Scriptures, that disputations arise. For instance, the difference between the Calvinist and Arminian, I often thus explain: Both are in the same dilemma. They are like a company of men in the lower story of a house when the tide is entering, and from which there is no escape only by a rope by which they may be drawn up. All endeavor to lay hold of the rope; the one is continually afraid he has not hold of the right rope; if he was sure he had the right rope he would have no fears. The other has no fear but he has hold of the right rope; he is continually afraid his rope will break. - Now both are equally fearful they

may perchance not escape: their fears arise from different causes. How foolish it is, then, for them to begin to quarrel with each other, because the one supposes the rope may break, and the other that it is the wrong rope. {1845 WiM, WMAD 27.2}

Now I have found Christians among those who believed they were born again, but might fall away; and among those that believed that if they were ever born again they should certainly persevere. The difference between them I regard as a mere matter of education; both have their fears; and both believe that those only who persevere unto the end will be saved. I therefore look on men as bigots who quarrel with others, and deny that those are Christians who cannot see just as they do. {1845 WiM, WMAD 28.1}

Posted by: Bill Cork | [October 17, 2010 at 09:12 PM](#)

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