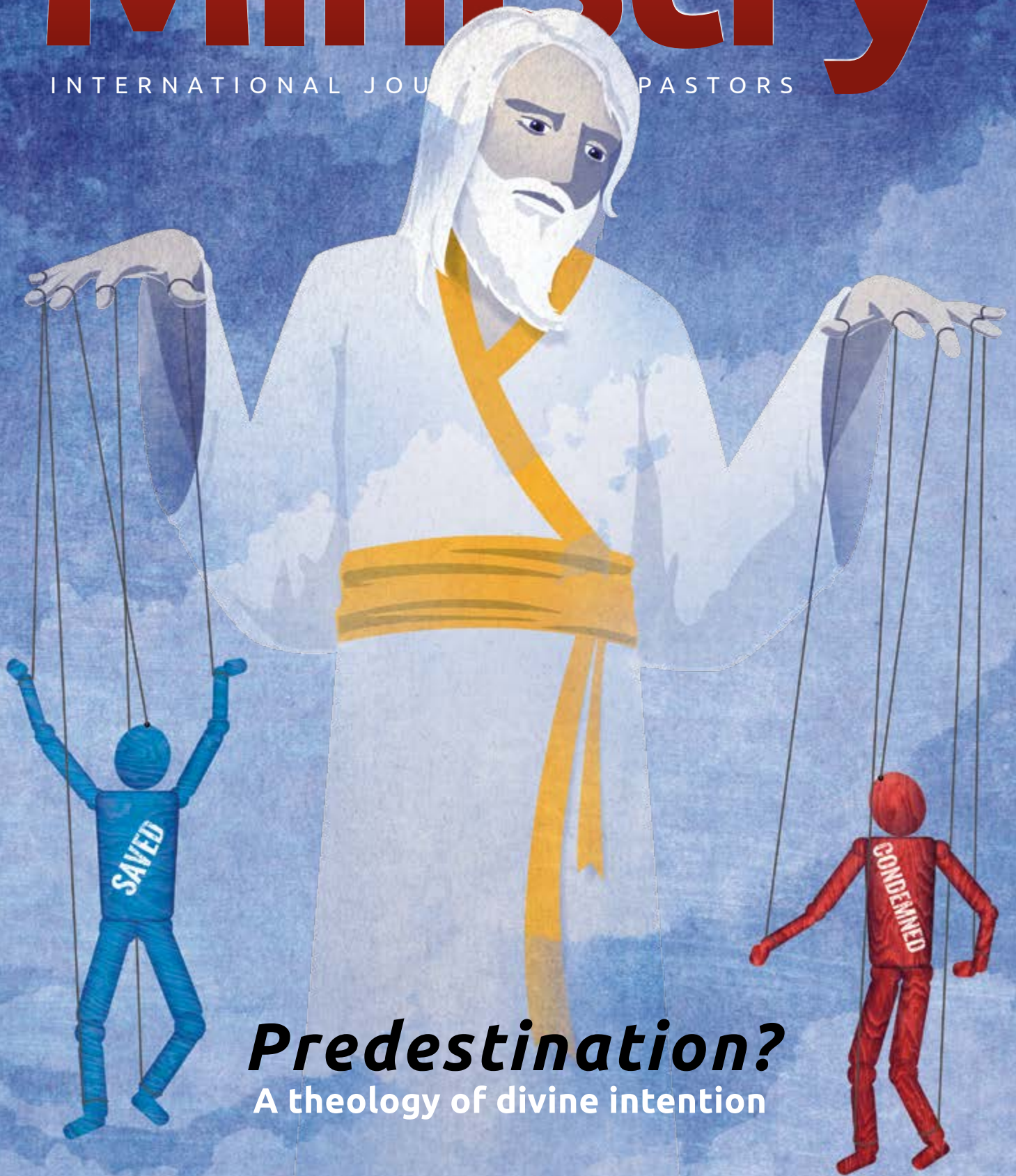


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Predestination?
A theology of divine intention

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06 Predestination? A theology of divine intention

Kim Papaioannou

Through an examination of things such as vocabulary, syntax, and context, the author attempts to determine the true meaning of “divine intention.”

10 Defending basic rights: A conversation with Public Affairs and Religious Liberty leaders

Derek J. Morris and Willie E. Hucks II

As a result of this interview, you will gain a deeper understanding of the work and involvement of these leaders in the religious liberty and public affairs in our world.

15 Love and judgment: God’s triumph—Part 1

JoAnn Davidson

Read in this article a description of God’s attitude of justice and judgment in the face of unrighteousness and sinfulness.

19 The pastor: Forming a shared vocational vision

Skip Bell

Read these seven elements that illustrate themes of a biblical vision of pastoral ministry noted in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

23 Job 42:6 and the absence of sin in Job’s repentance

Daniel Xisto

The author asks a question as he studies the life of Job: How can we resolve what appears to be a contradiction?

04 Letters

05 Editorial

26 Revival & Reformation

27 Resources

28 Dateline

30 The Pastor and Health

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“I have preached many times on John 4 and have led Bible studies on it and thought I understood this Samaritan woman. Valentine provided fresh insight that will change forever how I interpret this tale.”

Substitution and transformation in Leviticus

It seems to me that Professor Gane has left something out of part 2 of his article (“Legal Substitution and Experiential Transformation in the Typology of Leviticus”—January 2014). Indeed, the priests in Leviticus are said to forgive sins in cooperation with the sinner and following specific procedures. In the New Testament, Christ gave the apostles power to forgive or retain sins.

But what Christ also said, and the laws of the universe seem to echo, is that as you sow, so shall you reap. That is, the consequences of the sin remain; what forgiveness does is reestablish communion with the Holy Ghost so that one has the best chance of coping with and ameliorating the “bad karma” caused by the sin. If one discharges toxic waste into a stream and then confesses the sin and is forgiven, the toxic waste remains; both you and society have

the duty to clean it up—you, because you did it; and society, because you are part of it and have enjoyed its benefits.

—Dean Bekken, email

The wedding at the well

I truly appreciated Kendra Haloviak Valentine’s article, “The Wedding at the Well” (January 2014). I have preached many times on John 4 and have led Bible studies on it and thought I understood this Samaritan woman. Valentine provided fresh insight that will change forever how I interpret this tale.

—Thomas W. Goodhue, Long Island Council of Churches

Dr. Valentine’s article “The Wedding at the Well” is a delightful and insightful exposition on a most provocative Gospel passage. She invites the reader to consider the risks Jesus took as He crossed traditional and religious boundaries. She challenges us to experience the misgivings the disciples expressed when they discovered what

their Lord and Master had been up to in their absence. Especially helpful is the author’s elaboration of the “thirst” motif. I found this article to be a delight and a fine example of an expositor’s hermeneutical skills.

—Lawrence G. Downing, email

The gospel’s worldwide ethos

I enjoyed Larry Lichtenwalter’s article “The Gospel’s Worldwide Ethos: Culture, Identity, and Heart Implications of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit’s Outpouring—Part 2” (January 2014). It built up Christ, and I feel we need more imagination and effort to make Christ the center of our doctrines and preaching.

—Ellsworth Wellman, Yakima, Washington, United States

Loving by listening

Kudos for Larry Yeagley’s article “Listening Love” (January 2014). As he has done in previous articles, Yeagley offers an insightful, practical approach to ministry. He understands human need and describes a ministry and outreach that relates to people as humans rather than potential pelts on a harvester’s belt.

—Lawrence G. Downing, email

Spiritual intimacy

Thank you for the exceptional article “Spiritual Intimacy: The Challenge and Delight” (January 2014). It is heartwarming, practical, and full of possibilities for deeper shared spiritual journeys as pastoral couples. We will be translating the article to share with the pastoral couples in our territory. We know they will be blessed too.

—Lynn Ripley, Ilsan, South Korea



Difficult questions

Theodicy—if God is good, all wise, and all powerful, why does so much evil exist in the world? I asked myself that question recently while I was visiting the Genocide Memorial in Kigali, Rwanda. I have gathered with family and friends at open graves before and wiped away my tears, but I had never stood beside a mass grave containing the remains of 250,000 victims of a horrendous mass murder. Where was God between the beginning of April 1993 and the end of July 1993? And where was God during all of the other genocides on almost every continent in the twentieth century?

Some would like to argue that we get what we deserve. After all, doesn't it say somewhere in the Bible that you reap what you sow? In the time of Jesus, some suggested that the 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them must have been worse sinners than the other inhabitants of Jerusalem. But Jesus said, 'No' (Luke 13:5).^{*} That is not an accurate description of reality. That is a distorted picture of the character of God.

Why then is there so much heartache and suffering in the world? Is everything predetermined? Are some predestined to suffer? Predestined to be lost? In this issue of *Ministry*, we tackle some of these difficult questions. Sometimes we have to learn to live with unanswered questions and simply trust the loving God who so clearly revealed Himself both in the Scriptures and most completely in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.

In our lead article, Kim Papaioannou challenges us with this startling assertion: "If God, through sovereign decisions, predestines some to salvation and some to damnation, then surely He is the ultimate source of sin

and suffering." We invite you to examine his exegesis of Romans 8:29, 30 and share your feedback.

Daniel Xisto, one of our student writing contest winners from 2011, addresses another important issue related to the theme of suffering. If we are experiencing suffering, should we assume that God is punishing us? And should we repent, even if we are unaware of any wrongdoing? The author of the book of Job describes this man from the land of Uz as "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). Why, then, did Job experience so many tragedies in his life? Perhaps the author of the book was mistaken. Maybe Job was getting what he deserved, as some of his "friends" would later suggest. And yet if you continue to read the narrative in Job 1, you will discover this testimony

You'll also enjoy part 1 of a two-part series on love and judgment. Perhaps you have met individuals who treasure God's love, grace, and mercy but struggle with His justice. JoAnn Davidson's series sheds light on this important topic.

These are just three of the excellent articles in this issue.

A reminder


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If we are experiencing suffering, should we assume that God is punishing us?

from the Lord Himself: "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (v. 8).

Job's friends were mistaken. Job wasn't receiving a judgment from God that he deserved. He was indeed blameless and upright. Why then did Job repent in dust and ashes after his audience with the Lord (Job 42:6)? Is he repenting of some secret sins or repenting of a flawed attitude toward God? This article will challenge you to think deeply.

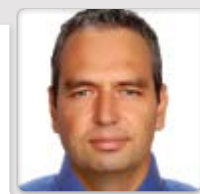
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We pray that you will be blessed as you study and share what you learn with colleagues and members of your church family. 

^{*} All verses quoted are from the New King James Version.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

Kim Papaioannou, PhD, teaches New Testament and chairs the PhD program at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.



Predestination? *A theology of divine intention*

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29, 30).¹

Do you believe in predestination?” My interlocutor knew that I did not, but asked the question anyway. He was thinking that by quoting Romans 8:29, 30 or one of the three other similar texts (Acts 4:28; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5–12), he could win an easy theological victory. Not quite.

My disbelief in the doctrine of predestination is primarily philosophical. If God, through sovereign decisions, predestines some to salvation and some to damnation, then surely He is the ultimate source of sin and suffering. Furthermore, if a person also believes that hell consists of everlasting torment (which I do not believe), the problem is greatly compounded: God considers guilty those who never had a choice in the first place and punishes them with a punishment immeasurably disproportionate to the sins that they committed and over which they had no choice.

However, I am a biblical scholar who deals primarily with the text, and so when confronted with a text like Romans 8:29, 30, I have to put aside my philosophical outlook, stare at the text directly, and—through an examination of things such as vocabulary, syntax, and context—try to determine its true meaning.

Modern Greek usage

The word translated “predestined” in Romans 8:29, 30 and in the other relevant texts is the Greek verb *proorizō*, a compound word made up of the preposition *pro* (“before”) and the verb *orizō* (“appoint, decide, determine”). The cognate noun *proorismos* does not appear in the Bible but will be briefly discussed, for this word is relevant. Etymologically, neither word denotes predestination of the type understood by Calvin or Augustine and their followers. The focus of both is intention rather than result, as we will see below.

Both words are very common in modern Greek. The verb *proorizō* is used primarily of parents making plans for their children.² For example, a couple may want their son to become a doctor. To facilitate this goal, they might send him from an early age to the best schools, put money aside for his education, hire private tutors for after-school tutorials, limit his free time, or even curb his social interactions. When parents do this, Greeks would say that they are *proorizō* the son to be a doctor. This is their intention.

Of course, there is no guarantee the son will become a doctor. The son may discover that he does not have the acumen or the perseverance to become

a doctor, or he may prefer to become a teacher, engineer, football player, or (better still) pastor. *Proorizō* highlights intention, not result.

The force of the cognate noun *proorismos* is similar. Primarily, this word designates the destination of a journey.³ If a person decides to travel from point A to point B, then point B becomes his *proorismos*, his destination. When he sets out, he may have every intention of reaching the destination. But a host of reasons—a last-minute change of plans, a flat tire, an accident—may prevent him from reaching the intended destination.

Neither the verb *proorizō* nor the noun *proorismos* carries the meaning proposed in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination; rather, both focus on intention. This may explain why there are very few predestinarians in Greece, even among ecclesial bodies, who traditionally believe in predestination.

But to what extent may we use modern Greek to understand biblical Greek? First, *proorizō* and *proorismos* are extremely rare in ancient literature. As such we will be well served to look at their use in more modern times, as we just did; after all, contemporary Greek is a close cognate to biblical Greek. Second, while the Greek language has

evolved through the centuries in syntax and grammar, vocabulary has been the least affected aspect of the language. Modern Greek uses much the same vocabulary as biblical Greek and with much the same meaning.

Ancient Greek usage

Useful though it may be, we do not need to rely only on modern Greek. Classical Greek concurs with the above picture. We have one clear use in secular Greek, in the writings of the medical

the word *proorismos* indicates that, both for him and his readers, the word *proorismos* alone did not convey the essence of predestination.

John of Damascus (seventh–eighth centuries A.D.) ties *proorismos* with God’s will and foreknowledge⁷ and notes specifically that God “does not will evil to happen neither does He force virtue/goodness.”⁸ This implies that divine *proorismos* is not absolute but allows human choice. Methodius I (ninth century A.D.) uses *proorizō*

they are usually accompanied by an infinitive (e.g., Matt. 13:17; Luke 15:16; Acts 4:28; 21:25; 25:25; 27:1; 1 Cor. 7:31; 2 Cor. 2:1; Titus 3:12). This is also the case with *proorizō* in at least three cases (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:11, 12).

In both classical and biblical Greek, the infinitive is habitually used to indicate intention or result.⁹ While the notion of result might suggest that predestination could be in view, this is not so. When the action in view is still in the future, the infinitive designates



[Christ] pursues us with His grace, rebukes us to restoration, visits us even when we turn our backs on Him, and empowers us to walk the walk of faith. And He has done and does everything necessary for our salvation.

doctor Hippocrates (fourth century B.C.), who uses *proorismos* to describe the desired outcome when medication is administered.⁴

Several uses in the writings of the Greek fathers also indicate intention. Origen (third century A.D.) notes that the call of the gospel is the beginning, not the destination (*proorismos*), of the Christian walk.⁵ Anastasius (c. A.D. 700) likewise explains, in his rebuttal of predestination, that if there was such a thing as absolute predestination (*propepēgmenos kai ametathētos proorismos*) people who became sick would not call for healing or go to doctors.⁶ The very fact that Anastasius uses the words *propepēgmenos kai ametathētos*, meaning “presettled/pre-hardened and irrevocable,” to qualify

together with the phrase *proaireseōs anthrōpinēs*, meaning “human will/desire/choice.” The fact that the human will, desire, or choice involves divine *proorismos* indicates that no absolute predestination is in view.

We see from the above that the meaning of *proorizō* and *proorismos* has remained constant in Greek from classical times to modern, and that the emphasis is on intention not irrevocable result. We will now see that the syntax also points in the same direction.

The syntax of intention

Equally important to vocabulary is syntax. In biblical Greek, when verbs of cognition or volition, such as *proorizō*, appear in the aorist or perfect tenses,

intended result.¹⁰ Indeed, in the development of the Greek language, the use of the infinitive slowly subsided, and verbs of volition began, instead, to take a subjunctive. The subjunctive is a mood of potentiality in contrast to the indicative, which more solidly establishes reality. This is indicated also in English by renderings of volition verbs such as “decided to,” “determined to,” and “wanted to.”

That *potentiality* is the most natural accompaniment to verbs of volition is self-evident. When I say that I have decided to do something or want to do something, the implication is that the decision or desire, though firmly established in my mind, must yet await its realization in practice. I have decided to do something; whether I get the

opportunity to carry it out remains to be seen.

In the transition from classical to biblical Greek, the infinitive was sometimes replaced by a prepositional phrase. With regard to the use of *proorizō* in the New Testament (NT), we see that four times the verb is accompanied by a prepositional phrase. In Romans 8:29, *proorizō* is followed by *eis to einai auton* (“so that He might become”); in 1 Corinthians 2:7, *eis doxan ēmōn* (“for our glory”); in Ephesians 1:5, *eis huiothesian* (“for adoption”); in Ephesians 1:11, 12, *eis to einai ēmas* (“so that we might be”). The preposition *eis* may indicate geographical or chronological movement or intent.¹¹ Since *proorizō* does not deal with time or geography, the first two options are out. The only use of the preposition *eis* that fits is *intent*. Moreover, in two of the four verses (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:11, 12) where we have a prepositional phrase, we also have the infinitive *einai* (“to be”). As we already noted, infinitives indicate intent or intended result.¹²

We conclude that the syntax of the verb *proorizō* in the NT clearly and unequivocally indicates divine intention, either through the use of the infinitive with *proorizō* or through the use of prepositional phrases that indicate intent.

The context of intention

Last but not least is the evidence from the context. Space does not permit a full contextual discussion of the texts of predestination, but a few points are worth mentioning.

Acts 4:28 records the words of believers after Peter and John had been released from their arrest. At first sight, it appears that the sufferings of Jesus at the hands of Jews and Gentiles was predestined: “to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined [*proōrisen*] to take place.” But immediately afterward, the believers continue with an entreaty to the Lord for His protection: “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” (v. 29).

Why entreat the Lord for protection if all things had been predestined from the beginning? Such an entreaty makes sense only in the context of the battle between good and evil. The disciples know that they can gain victory only if the Lord intervenes on their behalf, and so they entreat Him to do as much.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1–10, Paul explains that, when he first came to Corinth, he came in weakness and was filled with fear and trembling (v. 3), possibly because of the relative lack of success in Athens, which had been his previous stop, or perhaps because of the notorious reputation of Corinth. In such a context, Paul “decided” (*ekrina*) to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (v. 2). Why fear and tremble if everything is predestined? And in what context did Paul “decide” what to preach if all was predestined?

The verb *proōrisen* here applies to the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” (v. 7), the plan of salvation as realized in Christ and His death on the cross. Was the sacrifice of Jesus predestined to happen? We should think very hard before we answer in the affirmative. The sacrifice of Jesus would make the temptation of Satan, “‘All these [kingdoms] I will give you, if you fall down and worship me’” (Matt. 4:9), or the taunt of the thieves on the cross, “‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us’” (Luke 23:39), look meaningless. Indeed, even the entreaty of Jesus at Gethsemane, “‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will’” (Matt. 26:39), would seem empty.

If all had been predestined before, then the entreaty carries no meaning. By contrast, if we understand *proorizō* to refer to intention, to God’s plan for the salvation of humanity, then the words of Jesus take on an amazing depth, reflecting His own unyielding commitment to the salvation of humankind. Jesus first agreed to the plan when it was laid out before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). And, again, in Gethsemane, in human form and in the moment of His greatest weakness, He willingly submitted Himself to go

through with the plan of salvation. Christ was not obliged to die for humanity, a slave to sovereign predestination; He willingly and fully gave Himself over to be crucified.

In Romans 8:29, God *proōrisen* believers “to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” The words “to be conformed” bring in the element of potentiality. The words “in order that he might be” translated from the Greek *eis to einai*, a construction that, as noted above, habitually indicates intention or purpose.

Furthermore, God’s intentions are focused on “those whom he foreknew,” (Rom. 8:29), indicating that His plans are based not on arbitrary sovereignty but on the intimate knowledge of human beings and their response to the gospel. The whole construction speaks primarily of God’s intentions and plans. While there is a strong assurance in Romans 8:30 that God’s plan will come to reality for committed believers, the language of intent and potentiality noted here indicates that no predestination in the Calvinist sense is in view, only the working out of the will of God in the hearts of those who respond.

Finally, in Ephesians 1:5–12, Paul explains how, in Christ, God *proorisas* believers to receive the gift of salvation. This gift is offered *kata prothesin*, “according to [God’s] purpose,” not according to an arbitrary, sovereign decision. The passage is peppered with infinitives and prepositional phrases highlighting intention (*eis huiothesian*, *eis epainon doxēs*, *eis oikonomian*, *anakefalaiōsasthai*, *eis to einai*). The focus yet again is on God’s intentions and purposes, not on a predestined outcome.

Synthesis

We have looked at the vocabulary, syntax, and context of texts that are cited in support of predestination. The vocabulary underlines intention/purpose and not predestined outcome. The syntax puts the emphasis on intention/purpose and not predestined outcome. The context is saturated with words

and syntactical constructions that highlight intention/purpose and not predestined outcome. Nothing in these texts requires they be read as teaching predestination.

Predestinarians may counterargue that, in God's sphere, intention/purpose equals result because God is sovereign and all powerful, and that His will always will be brought to fruition. But such an outlook is theological/philosophical, not exegetical. As far as exegesis is concerned, the vocabulary, syntax, and context put the emphasis on intention. Had the NT writers wanted to put the emphasis on the absolute determinativeness and irrevocability of God's intentions, they could have easily phrased their writings differently.

The picture I get from studying the texts of *proorizō* and *proorismos*

is of a God who, like a gentle Father, lovingly makes every provision for the salvation of the humans He created. He pursues us with His grace, rebukes us to restoration, visits us even when we turn our backs on Him, and empowers us to walk the walk of faith. And He has done and does everything necessary for our salvation.

But, beyond all His best efforts, we must give our consent if the plan of salvation is to become a reality in our lives. He will never force His will on us. This may lead to the painful reality that though God wants all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9) and Christ indeed died for all (John 1:29), not all will be saved. Some may be lost by their own free choice. Such is our loving God, a God I can relate to, both philosophically and exegetically. ❖

- 1 All references are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Cf. Greek Dictionary, s.v. "destine" and "ordain," <http://www.greek-dictionary.org/translate-english/destine>, <http://www.greek-dictionary.org/translate-english/ordain> and also the lexicon at www.kypros.org/cgi-bin/lexicon, both accessed September 2, 2013.
- 3 WordReference.com, www.wordreference.com/gren/%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%82, accessed September 2, 2013.
- 4 E.g., Hippocrates, *Praeceptiones* 3.2.
- 5 Origen, *Philocaliasive Ecloga de operibus Origenis a Basilio et Gregorio Nazianzeno facta* 25.2.5.
- 6 Anastasius, *Questiones et responsiones* 16.2.12; cf. 16.4.32.
- 7 Joannes Damascenus, *Expositio fidei* 9.19.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 44.3.4.
- 9 See A. B. Moumtzakis, *Syntaktikates Archaia Ellenikes [Syntax of Ancient Greek]* (Athens, Greece: Organismos Ekdoseon Didaktikon Vivlion, 2007), 84.
- 10 See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Cambridge, United Kingdom: University Press, 1961), 196.
- 11 Moumtzakis, 185.
- 12 See Rom. 3:26; 4:11; 4:16; 15:16; 1 Cor. 10:6; Eph. 1:12; James 1:18 for uses of *eis to einai*, all of which indicate intention or intended result, not predetermined result.

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Derek J. Morris, DMin, is editor, *Ministry*.

Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, is associate editor, *Ministry*.



Defending basic rights: A conversation with Public Affairs and Religious Liberty leaders

Editor's note: From time to time, we interview the various entities that serve the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. In this issue we interviewed John Graz, director of the General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL); Dwayne Leslie, associate director, PARL, and director of Legislative Affairs; and Ganoune Diop, associate director, PARL, and director of United Nations Relations. We hope as a result you will gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the work of this department.

Willie Hucks (WH): *What does Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) mean? What do you wish to accomplish in both public affairs and religious liberty?*

John Graz (JG): The religious liberty department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized in 1901. After the Second World War, they added Public Affairs to the department. We have several branches. One is defending and promoting religious freedom. Most of the time we work through the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) to more easily access authorities, because, in this association, we don't represent just one church, but a group of people who defend religious freedom.

The second branch is public affairs. *Public affairs* means that everything connected with government comes to our department. It's like a foreign affairs department. We also deal with things connected directly with religious freedom from a legal point of view. We have

a congressional liaison, Dwayne Leslie. Everything going on in Washington, DC, he knows about and represents the church there.

Another branch, interchurch relations, came under our department in 1980. All connections with other religions, not just churches, go through our department. And we also lead the General Conference council of interchurch relations.

Another branch contains protocol. Every time we receive a dignitary, ambassador, head of state, or minister of government at the General Conference, it goes through our department.

We work in Washington, because we need to know what's going on regarding the United States (US) government, especially legislation that could affect our religious freedom. We need the right information to do our best to protect our freedom.

We are recognized at the United Nations (UN) and have a great influence on several problems internationally.

Our department is involved in defending and promoting human rights.

Derek Morris (DM): *Dwayne, tell us what you do in regard to interacting with Washington, DC.*

Dwayne Leslie (DL): It's important for the world church to have a presence in Washington, DC. So, I am the liaison between the world church and Washington, whether that is the United States Congress, White House, State Department, or other executive agencies—any groups based in Washington that impact the church or church interests. Part of my responsibility is to stay on top of all pending legislation that might impact the church and relate to religious freedom. I'm part of several interfaith roundtables that are interested in the protection and promotion of religious freedom. And then, where certain topics might be of interest to the church and other faiths, we join interfaith initiatives to promote and protect religious freedom.



John Graz

We should be tireless advocates for freedom in Washington and elsewhere around the world. I regularly meet with congressional staffers, the State Department, and other government agencies. I also deal with the faith community so that when the church needs assistance, I have those relationships already in place to be advocates for us.

We currently have two Seventh-day Adventist members serving in the United States Congress. The newest member, Dr. Raoul Ruiz, was elected in November 2012 from California's 36th District. After he was elected, I made an appointment to sit down with him, introduce myself on behalf of the church, and make connections with his staff. I am a point person for when folks in the church need a contact.

DM: *What about your department's work at the UN?*

Ganoune Diop (GD): I represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the UN, probably the most significant international relations forum. All nations have space regarding mediations for relations. My job is to convince world leaders, diplomats, decision makers, lawmakers, you name it, that they gain to have Adventists living in each one of their countries. And in doing so, I have opportunities to articulate who we are, what we believe, and our theology.

The UN is based on three pillars: The first one is peace and security; they focus on and have instruments there to solve problems related to wars, conflicts between nations, and how to bring about peace and security. The second pillar is development and justice; without development and justice there will be no peace among nations nor security because people would be fighting for things like resources. Then we have a third pillar: human rights. It is actually further subdivided into three pillars: freedom, equality, and human dignity. Adventists have much to offer there. Why? Because we are Christians, and Jesus spoke about peace, security, freedom, equality, and dignity.

When it comes to the middle pillar, development in particular, Adventists have probably one of the most significant portfolios as far as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We make contributions regarding education, health, youth, women, humanitarian issues, and, of course, human rights. We are very small compared to other organizations, but I believe we can start building infrastructure in order to be able to make more of a difference than just alliances. Hopefully, as Adventists, we will gradually develop an infrastructure to be able to directly influence the system. Amazingly, I found out at the UN that you have theologians, thinkers, who are bringing to the table aspects of their core values that sway decisions.

JG: Our department is also in charge of conversations with other churches. The result is that they recognize Adventists are a Christian church. Many look at us as a sect or cult. Our conversations have changed their vision of us. Now we will focus on how we can promote and defend religious freedom. Dr. William Johnsson, former editor of the *Adventist Review*, is in charge of this conversation with other churches.

Dr. Diop is a member of the Committee of the Global Christian Forum, where everyone can be represented: Pentecostal, Russian Orthodox, and so on. And I have been secretary ten years now of the Christian World Communion, the highest group of religious leaders, and Bert Beach, former PARL director, was secretary for thirty-two years before me. This means that one of the highest interchurch groups has had an Adventist secretary for more than forty years. Even if we are a minority, we are recognized as being part of a Christian community. Mingling with other Christians gives us an opportunity to talk about religious freedom and about things that are directly connected with our presence in the society and the world.

WH: *How do you see the state of religious freedom in the world today, and on what levels is your department working to promote and defend it?*

JG: The state of religious freedom since I've been here, eighteen years now, has been decreasing around the world. When I came in 1995, we had a lot of hope about countries like Russia. Russia had legislation that was very open. Billy Graham came to Moscow, and Mark Finley gave a big campaign in the Kremlin. Public evangelism would be very difficult today. And all of central Asia was open, but now, it's more difficult there. There are a limited number of churches, and it's very difficult to open new churches.

We need to know what's going on. We have excellent colleagues worldwide giving us information. And when we have

a problem somewhere, we work through what we have. One of our jobs is to build a network with whom we can work. So when something happens, we know who can help and don't waste our time.

The firstfruits of religious freedom are the right to preach what you believe; the right to be different, if you want to be different; and the right to be united with others, if you want to be united. And we are defending these basic rights. But we cannot do that alone. We have to work with others, to make friends with others, and we are stronger in doing that. And this is the way we use to pass legislation that protects Adventists.

DL: The Pew Forum conducts an annual survey that looks at restrictions on religion throughout the world. Over the last few years, the number of people living under restriction has been steadily increasing. The most recent report noted that 75 percent of the world's population now lives under some form of restriction

on religion. Previously it was 70 percent. So things aren't getting any better. And so, in a place like Kazakhstan where they're implementing restrictive religious laws, many churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, lost their legal status and were forced to satisfy both quantitative and qualitative tests to get reinstated as a religion. While the Adventist Church and many other churches have now been reinstated, we still must speak out because these religion laws are still quite oppressive. While reinstatement allows you to meet within an authorized building, it prohibits you from practicing your faith in certain ways outside of that specific location. For example, a Bible study in your home would not be permitted. Many of the churches that did not get reinstated now are subject to raids and actual liquidation. Those things are happening today, and people aren't hearing that. It is important to note that many people of other minority faiths are being persecuted, suffering, and restricted

from following their conscience. Those are the kind of things we need to speak against.

GD: When you look at restrictions, you have, on the one hand, government restrictions. But you have also the hostility of the population. Between 80 to 90 percent of those persecuted for their faith in the world are Christians. Every year about 150 thousand Christians are killed. I was at the UN for the Human Rights Council and was approached by a president of an NGO. He specifically told me what is happening right now in Sudan, where Christians are basically killed or forced to leave the country and their churches are burned. And this is happening while we speak. Unfortunately, it is increasing in various parts of the world.

Our job is to look at what is happening, inform the church, and encourage the church on how to do things. We are not going to stop the tide of evil in this world. However, it will help if members



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are educated and carefully trained as to how to relate to others. Biblical foundations and principles help us relate to other people in the way that Christ did.

JG: We have visited countries where people are persecuted. We spent a few days in eastern Indonesia just after the war between Christians and Muslims. We visited both Muslims and Christians and encouraged them to be present in the peace process. We saw the result of religious intolerance—several thousand people were killed and many churches, even mosques, and houses burned. There are also people in prison, like Sijjad Masih, a young Adventist, twenty-eight years old, accused of blasphemy. He is innocent but was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. In Pakistan and other countries, the blasphemy law and the law on apostasy create a very oppressive situation for religious minorities. Every time we travel, we meet with authorities and religious leaders and see what we can do to help. Sometimes just our presence can help.

DM: *I want to bring us to the International Religious Liberty Association, which just celebrated its 125th anniversary. Tell us who can belong and how you see that organization making a difference.*

JG: The first association organized by the church was the National Religious Liberty Association in 1888. They then spread outside of North America and became the International Religious Liberty Association in 1893. In 1946, the association decided to open its membership to all who are really concerned and want to defend this principle, not only Adventists. And if you believe in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, you can become a member of the association. We have held, in just the last fifteen to eighteen years, four world congresses. The first one had about 320 to 350 participants. The last one had nine hundred participants. Fifty religious freedom experts—most of them non-Adventist—were invited, along with government officials. It's a

fabulous opportunity to meet officials of government, talk together, and focus on religious freedom.

DL: The Liberty Dinner is one of the highlights on our calendar every year. The dinner, cosponsored by *Liberty Magazine*



and the North American Religious Liberty Association, promotes religious freedom for all people. It is also a great vehicle for us to share with government officials and diplomats in Washington, DC, a bit about the church and the IRLA. We are making plans for what will be our twelfth Liberty Dinner. Through these years, we have been fortunate to have a very distinguished group of speakers address our attendees. Of course, we make sure the dinner is not seen as a political event, so we invite speakers from both ends of the political spectrum. Past speakers have included Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, John McCain, Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird, and US Senate Chaplain Barry Black. A recent article on the dinner noted that “it’s the leading religious liberty event in Washington,” so we’re extremely proud of that.

We usually anticipate around 180 to 200 people including representatives from the White House, members of Congress, congressional staff, ambassadors, and senior embassy staff as well; plus leaders from many of the faith communities in the Washington, DC, area. We typically have many embassies represented, which provide us with an excellent opportunity to develop relationships.

DM: *Tell us about your annual think tank on religious freedom.*

JG: We organized a meeting of experts in 1999 that became one of the top annual think tanks of religious freedom. Every year we have this meeting

with twenty-five to thirty experts. And, something that is really unique—our meeting of experts is invited by secular universities. We were invited to the University of Sydney, Toronto, and this year we will go to Athens. Of course, the majority of experts in this group are university professors. A book is being published soon by a professor in Spain about the International Religious Liberty Association.

GD: The meeting of experts is like a think tank for religious freedom. The word *expert* is not meant to be self-serving. Prominent people from several universities come. This will be number fifteen. We meet people who think differently, but we have common ground as far as religious freedom is concerned. You find people of faith or of not faith there. We are able to mingle with people operating at the cutting edge of research, who make needed intellectual contributions. We need to relate to people at all levels of expertise. And I think the meeting of experts allows us to mingle with thinkers, who in turn have an opportunity to know us and for us to know them. We produce mostly joint statements out of those meetings. We look where we have

common values with people and build upon those common values.

We choose themes by observing the world—what are the trends? I am working with professors in France and Madrid, of different faiths by the way. We work on a common value, from which we can build. Being humane together, even if we are from different faith traditions or of no faith tradition, I think it's a tremendous lesson.

WH: *Why do you hold festivals of religious freedom?*

JG: When religious freedom is threatened, everyone is affected. Instead of having just a confidential meeting, we enlarge and try to reach people; so we started a mass festival. The concept is simple: we believe the time has come to say “Thank you” for religious freedom. It means, in every country where we have religious freedom, we should say “Thank You” to both God and the government. It becomes an event where many believers realize that if they were born in Saudi Arabia, in Pakistan, now, they would be in prison. Fortunately, they are living in countries where they have religious freedom. When we have large meetings of fifteen thousand to forty-five thousand people, people love religious freedom and want to keep it. From 2006 to 2013, two hundred thousand people attended our festivals. More than fifteen festivals are planned in 2014. No churches or religious organizations have held such mass meetings in the past. It has changed the image of religious freedom, which is no longer a meeting led by a group of experts, but by all people.

GD: The biblical principle behind this is “encourage the good” so that the people can be motivated and continue to promote it.

JG: And everywhere they have a festival; they want to have a symposium, a congress liberty concert, and other events. Because of the festival, the city of São Paulo declared May 25, the day of the festival, the Annual Day of



World Religious Freedom. It is the first megalopolis in the world to have its own annual religious freedom day.

WH: *What can pastors and other local church leaders do to help defend and protect religious freedom?*

DL: One of the main things they can do is help increase awareness in their local congregations. Many church members are unaware of the restrictions on religious freedom across the globe today. Everybody can pray for those currently being persecuted around the world. To be even more active, let your local representatives know that this is an issue that is very important to you. Even though you may think, *Well, what influence can I have on a foreign country here in the United States?* many of our leaders in Washington are very concerned about what's happening throughout the world. Follow the many resources to keep up with what's happening throughout the world. Our department has a Twitter account I manage every day. I read through the domestic and international news and highlight three to five stories of religious freedom issues for people who are interested in keeping up-to-date on a daily basis; that's a great source to then share with your local congregation. So, please follow us on Twitter: @IRLA_USA. You can also watch our television show, *Faith and Freedom*, each week on Hope Channel.

Check online for the broadcast times in your specific location.

JG: We have a scheduled Sabbath of Religious Freedom, the fourth Sabbath of January. Also, every church should have a Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director and could have a club of religious freedom. We can make a difference.

GD: I personally don't think it's going to get better, unfortunately, even for Adventists. Ellen White had a prophecy about religious liberty getting worse, even here in America. It is going to be terrible, actually. It is rare that she is that specific. But she also says, while we have this freedom, we ought to do all we can to reach out to people. And that is the time right now.

JG: She also said that we shall lift up the banner of truth and religious liberty in these last days. When people ask why we are defending religious freedom, I often answer, “Because it's a gift of God, a human right, a sign of the kingdom of God, and a prophetic message.” As Ganoune said, we know that one day we will lose our freedom. Some people say, “If you know that, why are you doing this?” I answer, “*We know that people will die, but we build hospitals. We do that because we know that's part of the kingdom of God, to protect religious freedom for all.*” Religious freedom is one of the best expressions of God's character of love. ❧

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Love and judgment: *God's triumph—Part 1*

Christians treasure God's attributes of love, grace, and mercy, but many are uncomfortable with His justice because divine judgment deals with human sinfulness and guilt. Among many things the Bible makes plain, one of the foremost is God's attitude of justice and judgment in the face of unrighteousness and sinfulness. Listen to the thundering voice of Amos: "Let justice run down like water. And righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24).¹ Or listen to Hosea's portrayal of God's contempt of deceit:

They are deeply corrupted [9:9],
They have spoken words,
Swearing falsely in making a covenant [10:4].
"My people are bent on backsliding from Me.
Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him" [11:7].
"Ephraim has encompassed Me with lies,
And the house of Israel with deceit" [11:12].

Or go to Jeremiah:

"Your iniquities have turned these and your sins have kept good from you.
For wicked men are found among my people;
they lurk like fowls lying in wait.
They set a trap;
they catch men.

Like a basket full of birds,
their houses are full of treachery;
therefore they have become great and rich,
they have grown fat and sleek.
They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness;
they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper,
and they do not defend the rights of the needy" (5:25–28, RSV).

Such tough and demanding texts reveal that guilt is not merely a psychological problem—it involves the reality of sinfulness.

A truth often ignored is that God is not indifferent to sin and we as sinners are all under judgment. To God sin is a grievous issue, a rebellion against Him, and hence He cries out: "How can I pardon you?" (v. 7, RSV); "Shall I not punish them?" (v. 29)—denoting that sin brings upon punishment.

God, per se, has no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked, nor does He enjoy the suffering of the sinful, but sin is so hateful to God that it penetrates His heart with grief and sorrow. He is deeply troubled over how we have transgressed His path and chosen to live a life of sin. Between His love of holiness and His hatred of evil, God experiences utter anguish at having loved us and then having been betrayed by us. Hence, judgment gushes out of His holiness and righteousness. He grieves like a human parent because

of our sinfulness, and guilt causes Him deep hurt and pain. Christians treasure the privilege of calling God "Father." Why should there be any dismay when He demonstrates the strong affections of a father and His protective concern over His human family? What kind of Father would He be if He did not deal with the terrible evil harming His children, His "property"?

Look again how Jeremiah portrays God's feelings on Ephraim's betrayal and His yearning for his return:

"Is E'phraim my dear son?"
["I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms,
But they did not know that I healed them" (Hos. 11:3).]
"Is he my darling child?
For as often as I speak against him I do remember him still.
Therefore my heart yearns for him.
I will surely have mercy on him,"
says the LORD (Jer. 31:20, RSV).

What we learn from passages such as this is that God's wrath against sin is real, even as His love for His people never fails. The thought is not restricted to one or two prophets; it is pervasive throughout Scripture. Nowhere is God's wrath ever denied. Indeed, the extensive presence in the Bible of God's hatred and judgment toward sin must be stressed because of the modern tendency to deny it or explain it away. To deny or ignore God's hatred and judgment of sin will lead to a failure to

understand the holy nature of God and our own sinful predicament.

God's wrath and the seriousness of sin

Having said that, it is important to note that the wrath of God underscores the seriousness of sin. In Scripture, sin is not a minor deficiency that a loving God will sweep under the rug. God loves righteousness (Ps. 11:5–7; 33:5; 48:10), and hatred marks His attitude to unrighteousness (Zech. 8:17).

Not surprisingly, the Bible also calls upon those who love God to exercise a similar attitude: “You who love the LORD, hate evil!” (Ps. 97:10). Perhaps, because sin does not cause an inner revulsion or anger in us, we find it hard to imagine God’s wrath against sin. While many Christians have difficulty with this aspect of biblical teaching, biblical writers fully understood the twin aspect of God’s love for sinners and God’s wrath against sin.

God's judgment against sin

How do we understand divine wrath against sin? If we think of this as an uncontrollable outburst of fury, that attitude is a pagan notion and completely foreign to Scripture. When the Bible speaks of God’s wrath, it speaks of it as the absolute hostility of the Holy God to every form of evil. It is not an unpredictable flare-up of personal animosity but God’s holy and unquenchable antagonism for evil. Biblical writers often present God as Judge with a moral fortitude that cannot tolerate sin, but they insist on divine judgment on sin. Daniel saw in vision two aspects of the heavenly tribunal at work: life to those who live according to God’s will and everlasting death to those who are subject to God’s wrath because of their sin (Dan. 12:1–4). So John the revelator saw God’s love and wrath at work in His attitude toward sin (Rev. 20:11–15).

The Bible is replete with such narratives of God as Judge. Abraham saw and addressed God as the Judge: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

(Gen. 18:25). In that acknowledgment we see God not only as One who rightly punishes evil but also as One who would not needlessly destroy even though some people so deserve.

When Abraham converses with God about judgment, he was already called into a covenant relationship with Him: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Even as God is about to pronounce judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, He affirms His blessing on Abraham: “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him[.] For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:18, 19).

Such a promise of blessing at a time of divine judgment is extraordinary. Sodom’s sinful reputation has already been established: “the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD” (Gen. 13:13). Their sin ascends to confront God: “And the LORD said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me’” (Gen. 18:20, 21). Genesis 19 describes the debased “men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter” (v. 4) determined to abuse Lot’s guests. God strikingly restates His covenant promise to Abraham even as He prepares to rain down judgment against this particularly depraved city—insisting His ultimate purpose is blessing (v. 18). Judgment is necessary, but God’s goal is blessing.

Regrettably, in the end, not even ten righteous people could be found in Sodom. “Pity the city that lacks even ten innocent people, as Sodom does: All its men gather at Lot’s door . . . to the last person (Gen. 19:4).”² Yet Abraham’s query whether God would “‘destroy the righteous with the wicked’” (Gen. 18:23) He answered. The

divine Judge is very merciful. Though Lot and his daughters hardly qualify as righteous, angels drag them away from the impending cataclysm.

The point is noteworthy. Because of God’s mercy to Lot, the Israelites could later understand how God was directing their conquest of Canaan. That direction was not just to eliminate nations because they were perverse but contained within it the possibility of saving even a tiny minority if that was the case in the city, as He did in Sodom, and earlier during the Flood (Gen. 6; also during the conquest of Jericho, Josh. 2).

Sodom: A biblical type of human society

Thus Sodom becomes a biblical type of human society at its worst, which instructs us of how ripe for judgment they were. Later Moses compares Israel’s future idolatry to Sodom and Gomorrah: “The coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it; ‘The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, . . . which the LORD overthrew in His anger and His wrath.’ All nations would say, ‘Why has the LORD done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?’ Then people would say: ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, . . . for they went and served other gods and worshiped them’” (Deut. 29:22–26).

God’s promise of land to Israel in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham needs to be understood in this light. Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is a climactic divine action against injustice and violence. This does not mean, however, that the Israelites were in some exalted position of sinlessness. On the other hand, God’s deliverance of Israel demonstrates God’s great mercy and grace toward them.

Isaiah also compares Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah, condemning it for its bloodshed, corruption, and injustice (Isa. 1:9–23). He also likens the future divine judgment of Babylon to that of the two infamous cities: “‘Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah’ ” (Isa. 13:19).

Likewise Ezekiel compares the enormity of Judah’s iniquities to Sodom’s sins of arrogance, affluence, and ignoring the poor:

“‘Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt is, in fact, no different from what God has done with other nations, for all are under God’s sovereignty. In fact, Israel is not the only nation that has an exodus: “‘Are you not like the people of Ethiopia to Me, O children of Israel?’ says the LORD. ‘Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, And the Syrians from Kir?’ ” (Amos 9:7).

Divine judgment against the Canaanite nations is repeatedly portrayed in moral terms: God acts in divine justice against the excessive and vile wickedness of these nations. And He will do precisely the same to His people if they follow after the appalling practices of the Canaanites.

The children of Israel, redeemed from oppression and slavery, unfortunately allow ungodly tendencies that follow. The wrath of God’s judgment therefore punishes their grievous rebellion just as severely as it had the Egyptians. Their miraculous Exodus deliverance ends in exile, proving, as the prophets regularly insist, that Israel’s moral condition is no different from what plagues all humanity—hardness of heart, deafness to God’s Word, unwillingness to walk in His ways, and sinful rebellion (Deut. 10:12). Their fundamental need was a new heart (Isa. 43:25; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:24–32).

The book of Judges illustrates the same principle. As Israel settles into the

*To deny or ignore **God’s hatred and judgment of sin** will lead to a failure to understand the holy nature of God and our own sinful predicament.*

in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.

“‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you . . . have done’ ” (Ezek. 16:46–48).

Amos speaks similarly. Israel cannot claim that only they matter to God. Tragically, they become a sinful nation. They assert they are God’s special people, but their relationship with Him deteriorates so desperately that God has to administer justice: “‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities’ ” (Amos 3:2).

God’s judgment, God’s glory

Moses’ farewell sermon, the book of Deuteronomy, pointedly begins and concludes with Israel’s sinfulness. The opening chapter recalls the tragic failure of the Exodus generation. It ends with the future failure of later generations that will eventually lead to an outpouring of God’s judgment with other nations watching with astonishment: “‘Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce burning anger?’ ” (Deut. 9:24, NIV). The reply comes, “‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt’ ” (Deut. 29:25).

land of Canaan, over and over they turn away from the living God. Again and again God brings other nations as tools of judgment against Israel’s apostasy and rebellion (Isa. 7:18; 9:11; Amos 6:14; Hosea 10:10).

In the last years of the monarchy, the great empires of the world are described by the prophets as instruments in the hand of God to punish Israel: “‘Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath [Israel]’ ” (Isa. 10:5, 6).

God can elect any nation as His agent of judgment. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon carried out divine judgment on Egypt (Ezek. 30:10, 11). Later, Babylon

itself will fall under divine judgment of the Medes and Persians for its violent excesses (Isa. 13:17–19; 47:6, 7).

Jeremiah's language is especially striking: God calls King Nebuchadnezzar "My servant" as the Babylonian army takes Israel into exile (Jer. 25:9; 27:5, 6; 43:10) because of Israel's persistent wickedness. Both God and Nebuchadnezzar "will not pity or spare or have compassion" (Jer. 13:14, RSV) as Jerusalem is destroyed. Both God and Babylon break, destroy, scatter, drive away, fight, strike down, pursue, and send Israel into exile. Biblical history faithfully recounts how different nations set themselves defiantly against God and become so incorrigibly wicked that they finally have to be destroyed.

The prophet Habakkuk, concerned about Judah's wickedness, injustice, and sinfulness, wrestles with this issue as he prophesies during the last years of Judah (1:2–4). The divine Judge responds that He is raising up the Babylonians (vv. 5–11). Habakkuk expresses his concern that the Babylonians are idolaters and violent oppressors, even more wicked than Judah, and should themselves be judged (vv. 12–17). He acknowledges that Israel is sinful but cannot understand why God uses an even more wicked people to administer judgment.

God responds that, yes, Babylon has evil motives and is arrogant and violent, but she will be punished for her sins: as she has done to others, so it will be done to her (2:6–20). But for now, the sovereign God can use nations such as Babylon to accomplish His will against Judah. Yet, because of this, Babylon will not escape divine justice, and remarkably God's glory will ultimately be manifest!

Habakkuk does not stop there. He recalls how God revealed His glory and power in Egypt on behalf of Israel and urges God to "remember mercy" "in wrath" (3:2), and then expresses his faith:

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation
(vv. 17, 18).

The prophet Nahum acknowledges that even nature trembles before the sovereign Creator, who will administer righteous retribution (1:2–6) against the city of Nineveh as one "who plots evil" (vv. 7–11), even though it earlier repented.

The prophet Ezekiel also struggles with God's judicial dealings. He is of the very generation that experiences God's judgment as he is taken captive. Israel's sins are so awful and extensive that God has no alternative but to fulfill the covenant threats of which He has warned: "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions" (Ezek. 36:17–19, NIV).

From the human perspective, Israel's captivity is political and humanly orchestrated, but in the divine perspective revealed through the prophets, God is at work, carrying out His sovereign global purposes.

The sovereign God rules the world with one standard of righteousness. Everyone lives equally under God's moral scrutiny. Again and again the prophets insist that everyone is accountable to the sovereign divine Judge. The God who calls Abraham to

be a blessing to all nations is the God who governs all nations. He calls Israel to be His treasured possession, but He also insists, "The whole earth is mine."

During some acts of judgment God takes a more active role, at other times a more passive one, delivering people into the hands of their enemies (Isa. 65:6, 7; Ps. 81:11, 12); or He gives people up (Ps. 81:11–16; Isa. 34:2; 43:28; 47:6; 64:7; Jer. 29:21; also Rom. 1:24–28), again reminding us that there is an intrinsic relationship between sinful deeds and their consequences. In His acts of judgment, God also works through human agents within and outside the covenant line. He also employs the elements, such as the wind, water, and darkness, for He is sovereign over all creation.³ In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, God issues judgment with fire (as He promises to do again, according to Revelation). Yet His ultimate intention is always to bless so everyone "will know that I am Yahweh." There are no spectators: all people are involved. The covenant between Yahweh and Abraham had a universal dimension from the beginning.

Divine wrath is connected more often with God's covenant name Yahweh than with any of His other names. There are times when the wrath of God is directed against the other nations. And the importance of these passages should not be minimized, for God's wrath is directed against all evil. But more often God's wrath is directed against His chosen people.

(Part 2 will appear in the May 2014 issue of *Ministry*.) ❖

1 All verses, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version.

2 John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 228.

3 E.g., the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14: 15). Divine use of the forces of nature is thus seen throughout the Old Testament, including sickness and famine (Num. 11:33; Deut. 28:20–24, 58–61; 2 Sam. 24:15–17; Pss. 88:16; 90:5–8). Even animals and birds can be employed (see Jer. 7:33; 12:9; 16:4; 19:7; 27:6; 28:14—paralleled with "the sword" in 15:3). Desolation of the land, an effect of human iniquity, can be used by God as an instrument of judgment (Jer. 3:2, 3; 5:24, 25; 14:2–12). God's good creation is at stake because of sinful human behavior.

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The pastor: *Forming a shared vocational vision*

Who defines the vocational vision for pastoral ministry? Is it the employing denomination? Is it the congregation the pastor serves? Is it the church board? Is it the demand of the moment—preaching, evangelism, mission, church planting? Is it the Great Commission? Or is it the One who gives the commission?

The purpose of this article is to discover a biblical foundation for a pastoral vision. Such a foundation offers the hope of transcending differing perspectives while relating to the various expectations of the church and broader community. Articulating a biblical vision for the pastor is an ambitious undertaking. Perhaps a good place to begin is to look at the relationship between Paul, the seasoned apostle, and Timothy, a developing pastoral leader. But first, some thoughts on developing the vocational vision of the pastor.

Forming the vocational vision of the pastor

In the world of business, every aspiring business leader needs to possess a mental image of what the organization exists to do, why it matters, and how their endeavors help the organization thrive.¹ Only such a vision can make the business prosper. Pastors, too, must possess a mental image of what they ought to do and how they will

do it if they are to be effective in their ministry or leadership.

How does a pastor arrive at the right mental image regarding a biblical vision for ministry? The answer is complicated. To be sure, a pastor has prayed over a sense of calling and struggled with his or her vocational decision. Usually this search and the struggle go on in the context of a faith community that has contributed to the pastor's spiritual development. Any faith community has certain traditions that influence ministry models, and those may or may not be biblically formed.

What a beginning pastor believes he or she is called to be and do is heavily influenced by the early years of vocational employment. That experience generally trumps Scripture. So what starts as a personal calling advances to professional employment extended by the church organization with concurrent, conflicting models.

Seminary life and study are intended to biblically shape one's worldview, vocational vision, and ministry practice. But the seminary is not the only institutional factor shaping vocational vision. Indeed, some pastors may bypass seminary altogether. A church organization may envision ministry in very concrete terms such as baptisms or tithing, which may reflect positively on mission but often leads to numerical and result-oriented thinking about ministry. In such a culture,

biblical dimensions of discipleship often retreat to the background.

Church organizational leaders and seminary professors share the same responsibility, to reflect on a biblical vision for pastoral ministry. Church organizations form internships, field education, voice ministry priorities, and deliver ongoing professional growth activity. More to the point, the pastors' initial ministry experiences shape their vocational vision, and as they struggle to make sense of them, they either internalize or shed lessons they learned in seminary.

From my experience with pastoral interns and seminarians, I have found that a crucial part of their formation involves sorting out which mental models of pastoral ministry are legitimate and which they will discard. To be at peace with their calling, pastors must ultimately understand their calling within their relationship with God. Some agonize with the leading of the Spirit in the direction of biblical service while they compromise with the realities of their career. Choosing to follow where Christ leads rather than protecting career interests is the secret of sacrificial service and Christlike formation of vocational vision. But that does not come easily.

Pastoral vision and the church

Important as the question of vocational vision may be, the first and

foremost question in pastoral vision should be our understanding of ecclesiology, soteriology, and missiology of the church. The nature of pastoral ministry corresponds to beliefs about the church. Paul defines the church as “God’s household, . . . the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).² Pastoral ministry’s action words—nourish, lead, protect, seek, know—emerge from how pastors relate to the church, and they are couched in such biblical metaphors as the flock, household, vineyard, or body. The meaning of pastoral ministry does not rest in the actions of such ministry, the practice in relation to the church, but in the nature of the church itself.

ministry. Creating church community is the starting point for the vocational vision of pastoral ministry. Biblical narratives and tenets of the church provide the right foundation for constructing a pastor’s vocational vision and must accompany a pastor’s lifelong formation.

The following seven elements illustrate themes of a biblical vision of pastoral ministry. They emerge from the nature of the church and are noted in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

1. Pastoral vocation and the commission. The heart of pastoral vocation is calling others to become disciples of Christ. The mission of the church is to make disciples, and a pastor lives out this central theme in his or her voca-

the church requires true discipleship formation. Disciples are responsible, maturing, reproducing members of the body of Christ with lives marked by spiritual growth. All pastoral practices such as missional activity, nurture, worship, building small-group structures, corporate governance, or networking with other organizations contribute to discipleship formation when meaningfully approached and sustained. Forming disciples is the vocation of the pastor. Any other purpose is a distraction.

Paul admonished Timothy to focus on spirituality in his own experience and among those he served. Such spirituality means to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance

Choosing to follow where Christ leads rather than protecting career interests is the secret of sacrificial service and Christlike formation of vocational vision.

Our concern here is not the existence of varying models of the church from which the pastor will have to make a choice, but the fact remains that some enter ministry with little or no opportunities for reflection of that choice. It is so crucial and cannot be minimized in understanding the essence of biblical pastoral leadership and the creation of church community. Pastors attend to gathering the church, developing the culture of the church, and celebrating covenant practices. These themes of the church give structure to a pastor’s vocational vision.

Too often, once a pastor is engaged in a parish assignment, little time or effort is given to the reflection of a biblical model of the church and

tion. Paul urged Timothy, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage, with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).

God seeks the salvation of all humankind. Hence the primary mission of the church is to be used by God to make disciples. Pastors embody this vision in their view of the world. Paul speaks of God as one “who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). He urges Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Whatever else we believe about pastoring, disciple making lies at the core.

2. Pastoral vocation and the forming of disciples. A biblical vision for building

and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim. 6:11, 12). He urges Timothy to reproduce discipleship: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). The common theme of discipleship must knit together the purposes behind all activity in pastoral life.

3. Pastoral vocation and worship. Worship flows from and shapes our discipleship, and pastors guide the art of worship as one contribution to discipleship. A personal devotional life, private and public prayer, corporate worship, Communion, baptisms, weddings, and dedications all form meanings and relationships. A pastor promotes

worship practices in coherence with the calling and shared meanings of a community of disciples.

The church is drawn to worship when it comes together. Paul envisions Timothy's ministry as helping believers know how they "ought to conduct themselves in God's household" (1 Tim. 3:15). A pastor's vocation provides biblical guidance in implementation of worship in a worshipping community. Paul admonishes Timothy to serve in a manner that assures these services will be entered into with faith and love (2 Tim. 1:13, 14).

4. Pastoral vocation and theological reflection. A further essential element of pastoral vocation is forming disciples who can practice theological reflection as they experience their faith lives. If pastors fail to foster biblically grounded theological reflection, flawed paradigms of discipleship and ministry may form. Paul warns that without appropriate theological reflection some will "devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith" (1 Tim. 1:3, 4).

Paul urges Timothy to be a devoted student of Scripture, affirming that the scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul's concern is that Timothy become a student of Scripture and one who leads others to the study of Scripture (vv. 14–16). A pastor's primary vocation is disciple making, in which all new disciples will commit themselves to theological reflection and biblical faithfulness even as they live in cultural diversity and social plurality. A disciple committed to the study and demands of the Word will not let cultural diversity interfere in enjoying true discipleship with others who are also bound by God's Word.

For too many, pastoral ministry involves a choice between practices and theology. Having been trained in biblical languages, biblical studies, theology, and ministerial competency in the seminary, pastors embark on

years of in-field training focused on ministry, public and personal evangelism, counseling, and the like. While some use theological reflection as a backdrop to the busy life of their parish ministry, others concentrate on the organizational work of the church to the neglect of theological reflection. And still others focus on numerical indicators of productivity and tend to bypass ministry in favor of mission and church growth.

But ministry and pastoral work cannot be so dichotomized. Faithful ministry combines both the theological and the practical, the ministerial as well as pastoral, soul saving with soul conserving. Edward Farley describes the responsibility of pastors to the congregation as both practicing theologians and reflectors of that theology. Theological depth and width, knowledge and application, are at the core of pastoral practice and strength. "If theology names the interpretive life of faith, a thinking of situations under Gospel, and if all believers are in this sense theologians, then church leaders and ministers, as believers, are also theologians."³

5. Pastoral vocation and making meaning. Pastors help others develop the art of giving meaning to life's situations, both joyful and critical. This is done through reflection on the sacred text, faith traditions, the broader narratives of human proficiency, and spiritually grounded experience. A pastor must be able to interpret his or her own life experience, and then, in turn, develop that practice among parish members. Meaning making is accomplished as pastors develop competencies in listening, conversing, teaching, and preaching.

Paul envisioned disciples who could practice the art of meaning making. Exhorting that believers find joy in a higher purpose than financial gain, he states, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). He urges believers to understand life's challenges and interpret them spiritually. Urging maturity amid the difficulties of life, he counsels, "Pursue

righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:11, 12). Paul acknowledges suffering but expresses hope, confidence, and purpose in the gospel (2 Tim. 1:12; 2:8–11). "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," he declares (2 Tim. 3:12).

6. Pastoral vocation and building relationships. A pastor's ministry is relational. Discipleship is essentially a fourfold relationship: upward with God, inward with oneself, and outward with those of one's faith community and with others who are also objects of God's love. If the gospel is to become relevant and meaningful, it must be through visible, caring, relational connections of the entire congregation with the community the church serves. On such a relationship, pastoral vocation must find its sure and certain direction. Paul voices such relational vision for the church: "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing" (1 Tim. 2:8).

Pastors who see their ministry as relational help people form communities whose relational character is thoroughly and visibly shaped by the gospel. They lead the community to experience the fulfillment of God's purpose for them. Such an experience involves talking, exhorting, praying, forgiving, crying, and laughing as a community of redemption.

7. Pastoral vocation and community leadership. Finally, the vocational vision of pastors would provide mature, trusted voices of leadership in the community. Such pastors will involve themselves in community life and equip churches to interpret neighborhoods, exploring the economic, social, and political context of their surroundings. They encourage awareness of the historical and biblical narratives that define the vision of the broader community.

Paul sensed this role of the pastor in the community, urging Timothy "that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone"

(1 Tim. 2:1). When envisioning the life of a church leader, Paul urges the leader to “have a good reputation with outsiders” (1 Tim. 3:7).

The practice that helps a congregation engage in their broader community begins with surfacing and reflecting on their own corporate stories. As pastors develop and guide in that process, they build congregations that are able to provide community leadership.

Conclusion: An integrated vocational vision

A vocational vision for the pastor must be biblically grounded. A pastor must sift through the voices endeavoring to define his or her vocational life, opting instead to find meaning in a prayerful, Spirit-led inquiry with Scripture.

Who establishes the vision for the pastor? As servants of God and His

church, the vision of the pastors is identified with and inseparable from the ministry of the church. The vision is voiced in themes such as discipleship, worship, theological reflection, meaning making, relationships, and community leadership. Such a vision establishes the pastoral vocation as vital, integrated throughout God’s redemptive intention in our communities and a challenging ministry. The vocation is expressed in such acts as preaching the Word, leading people to Christ, seeking people for Christ, leading and organizing the local church for mission, protecting, knowing people and their needs, sacrificing for others, and serving.

An integrated vocational vision for pastoral ministry demands *both* prayerful consideration of calling *and* disciplined ongoing formation of professional practice. In the pastoral vocation, calling and professional development are inseparable. God

redeems our time and transforms our lives. Thus, pastoral ministry is not a narrow skill set and cannot be accomplished by commitment alone but is integrated into the demanding and broad set of practices involved in pastoral leadership. Faithful servants of God study to discharge all the duties of ministry (2 Tim. 4:5).

John Piper puts it this way: “The aims of our ministry are eternal and spiritual. They are not shared by any of the professions. It is precisely by the failure to see this that we are dying. . . . The world sets the agenda for the professional man; God sets the agenda for the spiritual man.”⁴

1 Peter F. Drucker, “The Theory of the Business,” *Harvard Business Review* (Sept./Oct. 1994): 95–104, esp. 100.
 2 All scripture passages are from the New International Version.
 3 Edward Farley, “Theology in the Life of the Congregation,” in *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church’s Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 8.
 4 John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 3.

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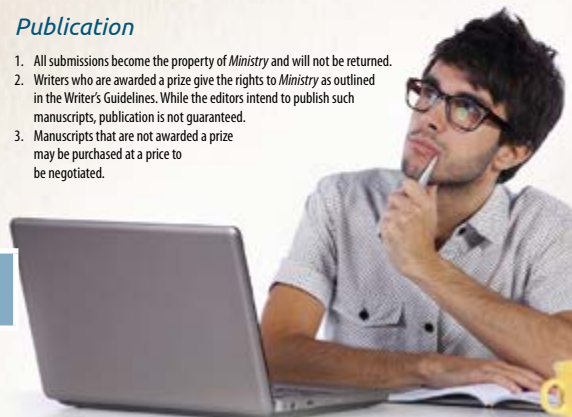
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Job 42:6 and the absence of sin in Job's repentance

Scripture describes Job as “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (1:1).¹ God Himself endorsed this depiction when He twice declared, “there is no one like him on the earth” (1:8; 2:3). In contrast with these early endorsements of Job’s character is Job’s final proclamation of repentance (42:6), ostensibly admitting a failure to maintain an upright character and integrity.

How can we resolve what appears to be a contradiction?

Careful biblical exegesis allows for an alternate reading of Job 42:6, one that does not necessitate an admission of transgression. Rather, Job 42:6 can be seen as the result of what happens when sinful human nature encounters the divine. And although Job’s nature was sinful, his integrity remains intact and God’s confidence in him was justified. Also, what Job shows us is that, when disaster strikes, we are at liberty to dialogue candidly with our Maker. When the injustices of this world inundate us, God encourages straightforward and forthright discourse with Him, the One who knows our innermost pain.

History of interpretation

At first glance, one could easily conclude that, in his suffering and anguish, Job sinned against God.

The key to properly understand Job’s moral posture, however, hinges on an accurate understanding of the original language. The Hebrew language uses several terms to describe sin, the most frequent being *ḥāṭā*, “to miss a goal or way.”² A second term often used to describe sin is *ʿwn*, meaning iniquity or actions in defiance of God’s stated commandments. A third term to describe sin is *ps̄*, signifying transgression and open rebellion against God.³ When compared with the latter two, *ḥāṭā* is apparently the least egregious. This term is used in 1:22 and 2:10, where the Bible declares that Job did not sin.

If the early assertions of Job’s sinless character hold throughout the entire book, this would consequently imply that Job was not acting defiantly when he professed, “I will complain in the bitterness of my soul” and later “I loathe my life,” (7:11, 16, NKJV). Moreover, this would suggest that Job was not in open rebellion when he lamented,

“[God] tears me in His wrath, and hates me; . . .
He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces;
He has set me up as His target, His archers surround me.
He pierces my heart and does not pity;

He pours out my gall on the ground” (16:9, 12, 13, NKJV).

It seems counterintuitive that, even in all of this, Job did not so much as “miss the mark.” Nevertheless, various scholars support this conclusion.

Before we examine the overwhelming support, we should note that a minority of commentators hold that Job *did* sin. Thomas Aquinas argued that Job’s sin was not a grave offense, but one “out of levity.”⁴ John C. Shelley observes that some commentators conclude Job was guilty of pride and self-deification.⁵

Accusations

At this point, one might ask where this notion of Job’s sin originates. A major source of this allegation is articulated by Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Over the course of their extensive and tenacious disputes with Job, the reader might overlook Scripture’s claim that “in all this Job did not sin” (1:22; 2:10) and believe, instead, Job’s accusers.

One such assumption of sin is Eliphaz’s plea to Job: “If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; you will remove iniquity far from your tents” (22:23, NKJV). Likewise, Bildad, urging Job to repent, advises, “If you would earnestly seek God, and make your supplication to the Almighty, if you

were pure and upright, surely now He would awake for you' ” (8:5, 6, NKJV). Finally, speaking of the inheritance of the wicked, Zophar ruthlessly reminds Job, that “the increase of his house will depart, and his goods will flow away in the day of His wrath ” (20:28, NKJV). These and other statements seem to favor the view that Job, indeed, fell short and sinned.

In contrast, John E. Hartley, author of the New International Commentary on the book of Job, proposes that Job did not sin when he complained against God.⁶ Hartley asserts that it was not “wrong for [Job] to swear an oath of innocence.”⁷ To the contrary, Hartley declares that “the integ-

Another Bible commentator, Norman C. Habel, supports Job's innocence. “[I]n all of Yahweh's speech, He nowhere enumerates Job's sin.”¹² Interestingly, the Lord does not once accuse Job of sin. When the reader considers Job's many speeches, filled with seemingly audacious and blasphemous accusations toward the Most High, the reader may be left wondering whether such behavior is acceptable. Habel responds to this query, suggesting that Job's bold and candid approach is acceptable to God only under the condition of ignorance. Because of Job's ignorance, and through his confession in 42:3, God's integrity remains preserved.

Thomas immediately notes that “even the pure angels, in the presence of the infinitely Holy One, seem to have some sense of imperfection; they cover their faces with their wings.”¹⁷

In sum, the aforementioned analysis reveals that, under certain conditions, one may approach the Almighty, brazen with doubt and shameless with uncertainty of His justice, without necessarily falling into sin. However, once the unknowing soul attains new light, once truth is revealed and understood as such, this same brazen and shameless behavior becomes reckless, wanton, and outside of the boundary of God's established environment of love.



... what Job shows us is that,
**when disaster strikes, we are at
 liberty to dialogue candidly with
 our Maker.**

rity of Job's faith shines brightly.”⁸ Hartley does concede that once Job encounters God, “the supplicant must surrender everything . . . including his just grievances.”⁹

James Strahan presents a similar view to Hartley's. When juxtaposing Job's sinlessness with the sinfulness of his colleagues, Strahan concludes: “God prefers the honest doubt of the earnest seeker after truth, to the zeal of the orthodox believer whose faith has never been tried.”¹⁰ Strahan likens Job's repentance to that of other pure and noble men, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, who, after receiving a vision of the glory of God, became “overwhelmed with a sense of their own unworthiness.”¹¹

And through God's condescension to a face-to-face encounter with Job, Job's integrity is vindicated.¹³ According to Habel, Job “confesses his ignorance, yet clearly he has gained new knowledge.”¹⁴ In other words, God speaks and Job gains new understanding of His character; Job then confesses his ignorance (42:3b, c). Through this two-part structure, Habel explains that Job's posture toward God was without sin.¹⁵

David Thomas, another Jobian scholar, concurs that Job's acknowledgment of his ignorance drives him to (1) be taught of God and (2) have a profound sorrow for his past conduct.¹⁶ Lest the reader confuse Job's confession for that of an admission of sin,

A closer look

An analysis of the texts affirms the point stated above. Most versions of the English Bible translate the two key verbs in Job 42:6, *'em'as* and *ni-ḥam-ti*, into the English words “retract” and “repent”: “Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.” This translation may lead the reader to conclude falsely that Job sinned. The following exegesis, however, will demonstrate that these Hebrew verbs should not be construed to denote that Job sinned.

The first term under consideration, *'em'as*, appears only two other times in the book of Job (9:21; 31:13) and only two other times in the entire Old Testament (Jer. 31:37; 33:26). In 9:21, Job responds to Bildad's

pompous pontifications, saying, “I despise [*’em-’as*] my life.” Here, as in 42:6, *’em-’as* is not the equivalent of sin. Instead, *’em-’as* is an expression of Job’s despair at his current state.

“Recant” being the proper rendering of *’em-’as* in 9:21 is unlikely, especially when considering Job’s impassioned allegations just a few verses later in 9:24. Scholars identify 9:24 as the “climax of Job’s anger,”¹⁸ where he declares, “The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. [God] covers the faces of its judges.” If Job’s act of questioning God’s justice was sinful and something for which he recanted in 9:21, it would not make sense for him to follow his recantation with his most vehement outburst, that of challenging God’s justice.

A third usage of *’em-’as* is found in 31:13. As in 9:21, *’em-’as* is translated here as “despised.” This can be translated as, “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves.” This hypothetical statement could hardly be seen as evidence of Job sinning.

As noted previously, *’em-’as* also appears twice in Jeremiah. Outside of Job, Jeremiah 31:37 and 33:26 are the only two places in all the Old Testament where this term is found. In these two verses, God Himself uses the word *’em-’as* in describing His own acts. In 31:37, God affirms the trustworthiness of His promise, asserting that He will not “cast off” (NIV translates “reject”) His seed. In 33:26, God asserts that His covenant is as permanent as day and night, and that He will not “reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant.”¹⁹ In these two verses, *’em-’as* is not associated with sin but rather with God’s unwillingness to forsake His promises.

The next Hebrew term under consideration is the verb *ni-ḥam-tî*, frequently translated as “repent.” The term *ni-ḥam-tî* appears in this form six times in the Old Testament outside of the book of Job (Gen. 6:7; 1 Sam. 15:11; Jer. 4:28; 31:19; 42:10; and Zech. 8:14). The Almighty speaks in all six instances of this verb. For example, in Genesis 6:7, God, in speaking of the Flood, declares,

“ ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land . . . for I am sorry [*ni-ḥam-tî*] that I have made them.’ ” This statement is not an admission from God that He sinned in creating humanity; rather, it conveys divine grief, heartache, and unhappiness at what humanity has become. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 15:11, God laments, saying, “ ‘I regret [*ni-ḥam-tî*] that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.’ ” Again, God does not say that He sinned in making Saul king; rather, He is sorrowful that Saul has gone astray.

A theme emerges in the final four uses of *ni-ḥam-tî*: the theme of God’s alteration of a previous decision or commitment to carry out a decision. In Jeremiah 4:28, God will not “change [*ni-ḥam-tî*] [His] mind” from bringing destruction to a backslidden Jerusalem. In Jeremiah 31:19, God says, “ ‘After I turned back, I repented [*ni-ḥam-tî*].’ ” Also, in Jeremiah 42:10, God was willing to “ ‘relent [*ni-ḥam-tî*] concerning the calamity’ ” that He had inflicted on His children. In other words, He was willing to turn from His original course of action. Finally, in Zechariah 8:14, the same theme of changing course appears, though in this instance, God says He will not change His mind, and that He will do good to Jerusalem.

From the following analysis of the verbs *’em-’as* and *ni-ḥam-tî*, there appear to be no grounds to conclude that Job sinned against God. In his commentary on Job, Hartley supports this view, noting that the term *ni-ḥam-tî* “implies the strongest resolve to change direction, but not an attitude of remorse.”¹⁹ Hartley says that Job’s self-confidence led him to defend his innocence vigorously, positioning him dangerously close to pride (i.e., being certain that he could judge God). Once Job became aware of this danger, however, he humbled himself, admitting that he had misstated his case.²⁰ And in this context, Job recants (*’em-’as*) and is sorrowful (*ni-ḥam-tî*) at the position he once held.

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Another commentator, Marvin H. Pope, concurs that Job now “refuses [and] rejects his former attitude”;²¹ but Pope does not equate this turnaround with sin. John C. Shelley agrees, opining that “it is clearly not a repentance in the sense of confessing one’s sins, as if Job had suddenly discovered a series of transgressions . . . rather, Job glimpses a new vision of God, the world, the self.”²² Finally, Andrew Prideaux proposes that Job not only avoided iniquity, but his relationship with God was actually strengthened through this candid and straightforward exchange.²³ Prideaux also offers a new translation of Job 42:6. Though Job was still suffering physically, he was relieved of his mourning and lamentation. In the new truth he had found, “Job could reject and turn away from dust and ashes.”²⁴

Conclusion

While Job 42:6 appears to contain an admission of iniquity from Job, this article has argued that Job did not sin. First, scholarship widely attests to the absence of sin in Job’s recantation and repentance. Second, an analysis of the

two key Hebrew verbs in 42:6, coupled with the observation that these verbs are used elsewhere by God in reference to Himself, provide strong evidence for the absence of sin in Job 42:6.

Job’s brazen and impudent behavior toward God has led many to read his actions as sinful; however, a closer look reveals a deeper understanding of God’s patience, tolerance, and love toward His children in their moments of great distress and ignorance. Thus, we may be comforted, knowing that candid and straightforward communication with God is not sinful, and that such intimate exchanges, in the context of genuine searching, draw all those who dare such vulnerability, closer to the One who is infinitely holy. ❧

1 Unless otherwise indicated all biblical references in this paper are to the *New American Standard Bible*.
 2 Clayton N. Jerrold, s.v. “Sin,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), 1224.
 3 Ibid.
 4 Anthony Damico and Martin D. Yaffe, *Thomas Aquinas, the Literal Exposition on Job, a Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 471.
 5 John C. Shelley, “Job 42:1–6: God’s Bet and Job’s Repentance,”

Review & Expositor 89, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 542.

6 John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988), 537.
 7 Ibid.
 8 Ibid.
 9 Ibid.
 10 James Strahan, *The Book of Job* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 351.
 11 Ibid., 348.
 12 Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job, a Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 579.
 13 Habel’s two-part structure of Job’s final speech, 587:
 Part I:
 A Acknowledgment (Job’s concession) — 42:2
 B Quotation (Yahweh’s challenge) — 3a
 C Announcement (Job’s confession) — 3b-c
 Part II:
 B¹ Quotation (God’s challenge) — 4
 A¹ Acknowledgment (Job’s experience) — 5
 C¹ Announcement (Job’s reversal) — 6
 14 Ibid.
 15 Ibid., 579.
 16 David Thomas, *The Book of Job, Expository and Homiletical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub., 1982), 469.
 17 Ibid.
 18 *Andrews Study Bible* (2010), note Job 9:24, 635.
 19 Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 537.
 20 Ibid., 536.
 21 Marvin H. Pope, *Job, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 348.
 22 Shelley, “Job 42:1–6,” 544.
 23 Andrew Prideaux, “The Repentance of Job in 42:1–6: Another Look at a Perplexing Text,” *Reformed Theological Review* 70, no. 1 (April 2011): 35.
 24 Ibid., 36.

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Addicted

Revival sparks various thoughts in the hearts of men and women, but one rarely thinks of revival in the context of a pastor’s personal life. Oh yes, for the congregation—but for the pastor? Are we not supposed to be revived already?

Pastor Daniel Ferraz shares his revival story: “It is easy, over time to take our relationship with Jesus for granted and to become slack in really keeping it alive. But my zeal for the Word of God was rekindled after nine months of study in preparation for an article I was asked to write. I rediscovered the radical transforming and addictive power of the Word of

God—what it was doing to me, why this was so—and how to understand and articulate this experience better.

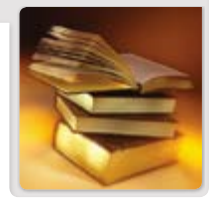
“As I studied the Bible with this newly established truth in my hands, God’s Word made more sense to me than ever before. My mind was illuminated by ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14; emphasis added). Now, with God’s help, I began to read whole books in the New Testament, slowly tracing and retracing the divinely inspired thoughts through the writings of Paul and others. The more I read, the more I could follow and understand where previously I had not understood the

majority of what I was reading. I became, quite literally, addicted.”

That is what we all need to become—addicted to God and His Word. When it happens, look out, your ministry will change!

—JIM AYERS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES





Lincoln's Battle With God

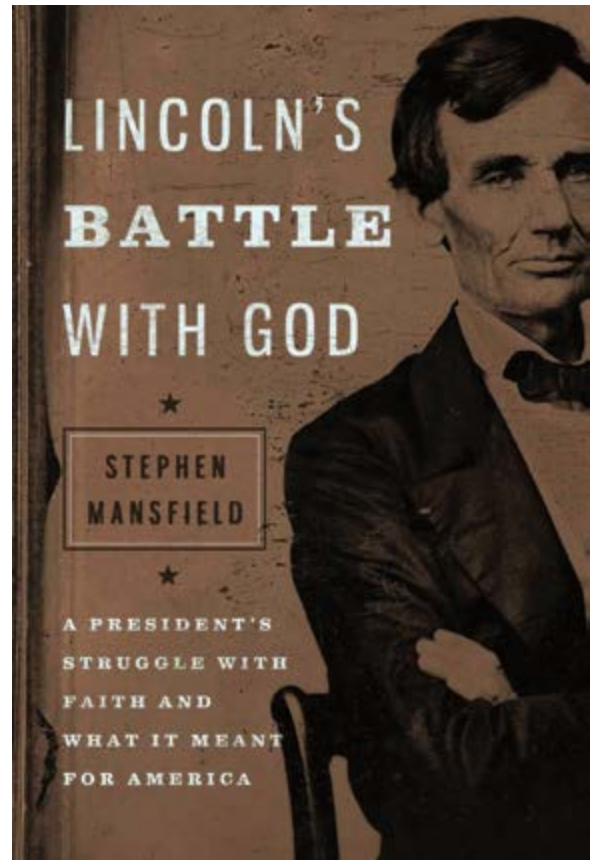
by Stephen Mansfield, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

Stephen Mansfield's *Lincoln's Battle With God* is divided into five chapters, followed by an epilogue titled "Purposes of the Almighty," and closes with "Thoughts on Lincoln, Religion, and Sources," plus an appendix and a selected bibliography.

Lincoln began his presidency, as his first inaugural address indicates, with the purpose of preserving the Union. Nevertheless, as the war was being prosecuted, his view changed. Lincoln came to believe that "God wills the contest" (162). In fact, Lincoln writes, "I have been controlled by some other power than my own will. . . . I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. . . . He [God] finds a way of letting me know [what to do]" (150). Lincoln states, "I made a solemn vow before God, that if General Lee was driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves" (165). When Lincoln met with Major General Daniel Edgar Sickles, Lieutenant Colonel Rusling wrote down what Lincoln told the general. "In the pinch of your campaign there, when everybody seemed panic-stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went into my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed to him mightily for victory at Gettysburg. I told him this was his war and our cause, his cause, but that we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. And I then and

there made a solemn vow to Almighty God that if he would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by him. And he did, and I will. And after that, I don't know how it was and I can't explain it, but soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul that things would go all right at Gettysburg, and this is why I had no fears about you" (169).


At Lincoln's second inaugural address, he indicated that it was God's judgment against slavery that brought on the war. Lincoln came to believe that "the war was an act of judgment of an offended God—an act of judgment on the nation as a whole" (167). Lincoln requested that Americans pray that the season of judgment pass quickly, "if God wills that it [the war] continue, until all the wealth piled up by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether' (Ps 19:9)" (185). Lincoln came to believe that God orchestrates



all things according to His will, that the "will of God prevails" (163).

The book also mentions the Fox sisters and the rise of spiritualism and Lincoln's brief encounter with it. However, his wife, Mary, apparently continued to follow spiritualism to the end of her life.

I found this book of great interest because I have been told a number of times and have also read that Lincoln was a confirmed atheist. Anyone who wants a more balanced view of Lincoln's journey of faith should read this book.

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a retired pastor living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. 

► Bible conference in East-Central Africa Division

Muhanga, Rwanda—The International Bible Conference for East-Central Africa Division (ECD) met on the campus of Gahogo Adventist Academy, December 8–11, 2013. More than 500 delegates representing 11 countries in the ECD including theologians, Bible teachers, pastors, administrators, and lay workers attended this important conference. The theme was “Pastoral Ministry and Its Challenges in ECD.”

he said, “As leaders our destiny is determined by our values, and these are based on our habits and actions. Leaders must be ready to inspire people and make sure that people move to another level of development. You also need to know that leadership is not about division but action. As leaders you must dream and take action.”

Facilitators included **Ganoune Diop**, the Adventist Church’s director of United Nations Relations and associate



Photo courtesy of NSD

► The work in mongolia celebrates 20 years

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia—Adventists in Mongolia celebrated the 20th anniversary of the first Adventist baptism in Mongolia in modern times during a ceremony in November 2013 at the Central Ulaanbaatar Adventist Church. The program featured music and testimonies from some of the first converts. Though Russian missionaries first launched work in Mongolia in the 1920s, World War II stopped the work until Adventist missionaries went to Mongolia in 1993.

► Adventist Church sides with Muslim woman in workplace religious freedom case

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—The Seventh-day Adventist Church, on December 11, 2013, filed an amicus, or “friend of the court,” brief in support of an American Muslim



Photo: Steve Bina

The conference provided an opportunity for interaction, fellowshiping, and experiencing a renewal and sense of belonging.

The Honorable **James Musoni**, minister for local governments in Rwanda, officially opened the conference as a guest of honor. The minister recognized the importance of pastoral leadership and the contribution this has in nurturing members and shaping citizens and the governments. In his speech,

director for Public Affairs and Religious Liberty; **Pat Gustin**, retired teacher and missionary trainer; **Willie E. Hucks II**, associate ministerial secretary for the General Conference and associate editor of *Ministry*; **Kwabena Donkor** and **Clinton Wahlen**, associate directors of the church’s Biblical Research Institute; **Paul Mukasa**, director of research and development at Ethiopia Adventist College; and **Andrew Mutero**, education director for the ECD. [Steve Bina, ECD]



woman who claims she was denied a job because her head covering violated company policy.

In 2008, Samantha Elauf wore a hijab when she applied for a sales position at an Abercrombie & Fitch store in Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States (US). After a manager confirmed that her headwear crossed store policy, she was deemed ineligible for hire without discussion of religious accommodation.

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which filed a lawsuit on Elauf's behalf, said the move defies Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The title obligates employers to take steps to "reasonably accommodate" a prospective employee's "religious observance or practice."

While a federal judge sided with the EEOC in 2011, a ruling by the US Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit upends that decision, claiming Elauf never told Abercrombie she needed a religious accommodation, even though she was wearing a hijab in the interview. And that, Adventist legal counselors say, places undue responsibility on the applicant to determine whether her religious beliefs or practices conflict with company policy.

"Placing the burden to inquire [about potential conflicts] upon the employer is not only the existing law, but makes sense because the employer is in the best position to know the work rules and anticipate a conflict," the amicus brief states.

Dwayne Leslie, director for Legislative Affairs for the Adventist world church, said the circuit court's ruling sets a troubling precedent.

"Under the Tenth Circuit's new standard, employers would be able to insulate themselves from the duty to accommodate via willful ignorance

[of the religious needs of employees]," Leslie wrote in a December 12 *Huffington Post* op-ed.

Religious clothing and the observance of Sabbath and other holy days are the most common areas of conflict in the workplace, church legal experts said. Hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes, and other head coverings frequently conflict with a company's "look" policy, while Sabbath observance can clash with scheduling.

This is especially a concern as the number of online job applications increase, said **Todd McFarland**, an associate general counsel for the Adventist world church's Office of General Counsel.

Such applications typically require a job seeker to indicate scheduling limitations but do not offer an opportunity to explain why. When applicants submit limitations, they are automatically shut out of the job.

"This [ruling] could have a significant impact, not just on Muslims in similar 'groom and garb' cases, but on all people of faith," McFarland said. "Any attack on religious rights in the workplace on any faith group is also an attack on the Adventist Church, its members, and their ability to keep both their jobs and their faith," he says.

The Adventist Church is joined by the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Legal Society, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the American Jewish Committee, and the Sikh Coalition. The joint

amicus brief supports the EEOC and Elauf's petition for rehearing en banc, or before the entire bench of judges, rather than a select panel.

"There is tremendous concern well beyond the Muslim community about the weakening of Title VII that will take place if this ruling is to stand," Leslie said.

Abercrombie & Fitch changed its policy on headwear three years ago. The Ohio-based company recently settled similar lawsuits in California, the Associated Press reported in October. An Abercrombie spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. *[Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN]*

▶ Marking 100 years in cyprus

Nicosia, Cyprus—Seventh-day Adventists in Nicosia, Cyprus, celebrated the centenary of the arrival of Adventism to the island on December 6, 2013. A Turkish refugee and his family first shared the Adventist message in Cyprus in 1913 through their comb-making business. Not until 1932 did the first official Adventist missionaries arrive in Cyprus.



Photo: tedNEWS



Fred Hardinge, DrPH, RD, is associate director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Debbie Beihl is a third-year medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States.

Practice what we preach

We¹ had recently conducted a vegetarian cooking class in our church. Many people enjoyed the samples, information, and fellowship. Several months later, my wife and I were shopping at a new supermarket that had just opened in town. We had come to see what products they carried and survey their prices.

Apparently, one of the cooking class attendees was shopping there also. She followed us afar off, observing what we placed in our cart. As we were standing in line at the checkout, she tapped my wife on the shoulder and made her presence known. They chatted for a few moments before she remarked, “I am so glad to see that you practice what you taught us in class!” We were both relieved and pleased with this observation.

A reminder

This is a poignant reminder to all of us who teach or preach that our choices are being observed and watched by others, sometimes when least expected.

According to the Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure, all patients with hypertension should be treated with lifestyle change, whether or not they need medications. However, this lifestyle counseling is not always provided or as effective as possible. Sometimes health-care providers are skeptical about patient compliance. What more can be done to help patients make lifestyle changes that will benefit them physically as

well as mentally and spiritually? Research suggests that the answer may be related to the health habits of the physician.

One thousand primary care physicians completed a voluntary, Web-based survey called DocStyles 2010. This survey was designed to provide insight into physicians’ attitudes and behaviors regarding a variety of health issues. The average age was 45.3 years, and 68 percent were male. Four percent smoked at least once a week, only 38.6 percent ate five or more cups of fruits or vegetables per day, and 27.4 percent exercised five or more days per week.²

Not surprisingly, those who exercised and did not smoke were significantly more likely to recommend the five lifestyle behaviors that are especially helpful in treating hypertension: eating a healthy diet, reducing salt intake, reaching a healthy weight, physical activity, and reducing alcohol intake.

Physicians and health-care professionals who practice a healthy lifestyle are more likely to promote this lifestyle to others. This applies not just to health-care professionals, for every person who lives the principles of healthful living will be more effective at sharing them with others.

PreacherStyles 2014

Let us imagine that a similar survey of 100 preachers called PreacherStyles 2014 were to be conducted. What would this survey reveal? What kind of evidence would it bear to our own consistency in life? Do pastors live up to their own teachings? Perhaps the

results would suggest a percentage of pastors are dishonest in relationships, spend time on pornography, or maybe spend untold hours watching sports and entertainment rather than participating in wholesome physical activity. You can guess what this kind of survey would reveal by filling in your own blanks.

Beyond our physical health, those of us who seek to teach and live the broader principles of biblical living (spiritual health) must be genuine in how we live. Even if no one were to observe our most secret behaviors or even survey us, we know we are being observed by heaven. The only way we can live truly transparent and consistent lives is through a genuine and rich relationship with Jesus. Then we can share Him effectively with others.

Paul, writing to the Hebrews, said, “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:22, 23, NASB). God calls us to be sincere—genuine and real—to live what we profess both physically and spiritually. After all, God only asks us to do what is in our best interest and will give us the most abundant, fulfilling life possible. He will do this in us as we allow Him.

¹ Dr. Hardinge and his wife.

² O. Hung, N. Keenan, and J. Fang, “Physicians’ Health Habits Are Associated With Lifestyle Counseling for Hypertensive Patients,” *American Journal of Hypertension* 26, no. 2 (Feb. 2013):201–208.

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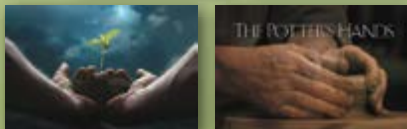


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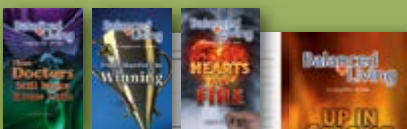
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