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THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY:
THE LUTHERAN WAY

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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May 2022

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To my parents, Sylvia and Melvin, who brought me to the waters of Holy Baptism and raised me in the Christian Faith; and to Rev. Robert Utecht, the pastor who gave me catechetical instruction, under whose tutelage I was steeped in the Small Catechism.

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Soli Deo Gloria.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BOC	Book of Concord
CA	<i>Confessio Augustana</i> (Augsburg Confession)
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American ed. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986
PP	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
Tr.	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
WA	Luther, Martin. <i>Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 65 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.

ABSTRACT

Mosemann, Brian, M. "Theology of the Laity: The Lutheran Way." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2022. 239pp.

The distinction between the laity and clergy has been a contributing cause of disunity within the church because the clergy and laity are often pitted against one another with one or the other being elevated to the detriment of the other. This problem has plagued the church from the middle ages until the present day. Since the definition of the term "laity" is vacuous, the laity are generally defined relative to the clergy, specifically in reference to their authority and duties. This results in a negative definition when the laity are defined as the opposite of the clergy. The laity may be defined by service or duties, someone who does not preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments; by status, someone who is not ordained and does not have a title such as "pastor;" by education, someone who is not theologically trained; by remuneration, someone who is not full-time and paid; and by lifestyle, someone who lives not a religious life (vocation) but a secular life outside the church. The laity are defined by who they are not.

The question still remains regarding who the laity are in their own right and not in contrast to the clergy. Some define the clergy in terms of service to the church while the laity are in service the world. Others define clergy with respect to status and while the laity are defined by their duties or service. Others define the laity as priests in a way that denies Christ's priesthood. Some define laity by making a distinction in public versus private speaking of the Gospel, and others confuse the issue with discussion regarding ordained ministers and lay ministers.

Instead of using the theological terms "clergy" or "priest" to define the laity, the use of the term "Christian" to define the laity resolves the confusion and conflict. It is Christ and his gifts in baptism that make Christians and thus define the identity and role of the Christian. This gives positive content to our understanding of the laity by means of Christ's gifts. To speak of the laity as Christians further unifies the church by recognizing that some Christians are called to exercise Christ's priestly office for the sake of the church.

Luther and the Lutheran Confessions give a positive and revitalizing definition to the laity by teaching that Christ's priestly office is exercised in his church through the proclamation of the Gospel to which Christians respond by offering sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, and by offering their lives as living sacrifices to God in church and society. This Lutheran approach navigates between the Baptist doctrine which defines the laity according to service, and the Roman Catholic doctrine which defines the laity according to a lesser status than the clergy before God. Lutheran doctrine teaches that all Christians have the status of being holy before God and that all Christians proclaim the promises of the Gospel and serve their neighbors in love according to their vocations or stations in life.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The theological understanding of the laity in the church has been a topic of concern during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Roman Catholic and Protestant theological discussions.¹ In particular, it has been an ongoing discussion in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) since its beginning² and is traced back to the Reformation, most notably to Martin Luther,³ if not all the way back to the church fathers.⁴ The intensity of the conversation regarding the laity has grown over the years because of questions surrounding the role of the church in society, especially as Christianity is pushed out of the public square toward the goal of secularism. What is the role of the church regarding a public defense in society about the rights of the church in society? Who are the laity, who supposedly are members both of the church and society, and what is their role as to speaking publicly and working through the channels of government in order to defend the religious rights of all Christians?

One source of confusion and misunderstanding regarding the laity is terminological. In present-day discussions, laity is defined in a variety of ways. The most common definition contrasts the laity with the clergy which results in a negative definition of the laity, in terms of

¹ See Deryck W. Lovegrove, ed., *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild, 1966).

² C. F. W. Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office: A Collection of Testimonies Regarding This Question from the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and from the Private Writings of Orthodox Teachers of the Same*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 9–137.

³ Peter J. Leithart, “Priesthood Of Believers,” *First Things*, <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2010/10/priesthood-of-believers>.

⁴ E. Glenn Hinson, “Pastoral Authority and the Priesthood of Believers from Cyprian to Calvin,” *Faith and Mission* 7, no. 1 (September 1, 1989): 6–23. See also James Leo Garrett, “The Pre-Cyprianic Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Christians.” In *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History*, ed. F. F. Church and T. George (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 45–61.

what the laity are not.

The term ‘laity’ can be confusing. For many the use of ‘lay’ carries a negative reference—‘only’ a lay person. The implication is that in the Church a lay person is unskilled, unknowledgeable and unqualified. It is often seen as a description of ‘what is not’ (that is, not an ordained person). Some stress that laity refers to ‘the whole people of God’ and suggest that a better word is simply ‘Christian’. Others wish to use ‘lay’ simply as a distinction from the ordained so that the laity refers to everybody except the ordained, Christians and non-Christians alike.⁵

One concern that may arise, as a result of this confusion, would be to write a theology of the laity that is compensatory by stating a positive definition of the laity at the expense of the clergy.⁶

Since the Bible does not use “laity” (*laikos*), one might ask if it is possible to write a theology of the laity.⁷ A theology of the laity need not be dependent on the biblical use of the term. However, care must be taken to avoid the danger of biblical eisegesis when arriving at a definition of “laity” which is not in contrast to the clergy.⁸

The Question under Discussion

When did the term “laity” come into use in theological writings? What does it mean? How are the laity defined? In the twentieth century the discussion regarding the laity has centered on the laity being “priests.” What does it mean that the laity are priests and how does that inform their role? How do we speak of the church—as clergy, as laity, or as clergy and laity?—How is this beneficial? What is the theology of the laity and how does that address the current discussions regarding the role of the laity in the Roman Catholic, Baptist, and LCMS churches?

⁵ Stephen Antony Dunbar Ferns, “Towards an Anglican Theology of Laity” (Master’s thesis, Durham University, 1993), 1–2. <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/5746/>.

⁶ R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 6.

⁷ For a discussion on the difficulties of an etymological based theology of the laity see Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 7–40. See also Peter Neuner, *Der Laie und das Gottesvolk* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1988), 25–41.

⁸ Thomas Hoebel, *Laity and Participation: A Theology of Being the Church* (New York: Lang, 2006), 27.

These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this dissertation. The context for the answers to these questions will be sought in the faithful confession of God's word within the Lutheran doctrinal tradition.

This study will seek to understand the definition of "laity" and the difficulties of the usage of this term in the twentieth century among Roman Catholic, Baptist, and LCMS doctrine. It is not uncommon for the meaning of a word to change over time so it is helpful to understand any changes that have taken place so that confusion or misunderstanding does not arise from a new meaning being imposed upon an older use of the term.⁹ If laity has changed meaning over the course of time it will be helpful to identify how it has changed and ascertain whether that change is beneficial and how it affects the role of the laity.

Considering the role of the laity, it is common for the concern regarding authority to arise.

Throughout the history of Christianity pastoral authority and the priesthood of believers have coexisted with now one and now the other ascendant. As pastoral authority has increased, the priesthood of the whole people of God has decreased; as the priesthood of the whole people has increased, pastoral authority has decreased.¹⁰

When this happens, the laity suffer the gamut from tyranny to anarchy with the result that the Gospel is obscured and for both clergy and laity the focus becomes about power rather than service, about our works instead of Christ's work.¹¹

In our day we are met on the one hand by the greatest extravagance of hierarchical pretensions and on the other by the most disorganizing laxity of sectarianism. We have infallibility proclaimed by the pope and virtual infallibility claimed for the

⁹ In any age there are those who purposely seek to change the meaning of words so as to further a specific agenda. See Armand J. Boehme, "Smokescreen Vocabulary," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (April 1977): 25-43.

¹⁰ Hinson, "Pastoral Authority," 6.

¹¹ Joel D. Lehenbauer, "The Priesthood of All Saints," *Missio Apostolica* 9, no. 1 (May 2001): 8. "Go wrong on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (Luther was convinced), and you will also go wrong on the doctrine of justification. Get the doctrine of justification right, and keep it right, and the right understanding of the spiritual priesthood will inevitably follow. The questions we are wrestling with today in this area may at times seem somewhat picky or trivial, but we dare never lose sight of what is really and finally at stake behind all of these "little debates"—ultimately, it is nothing less than the doctrine of justification itself."

people of a congregation. Under the pretense of just Church government we encounter the most absolute tyranny in the one case, and complete anarchy in the other.¹²

It is prudent, in writing a theology of the laity, to define the term “laity” realizing that there is an important difference between the theological meaning of the term handed down in the orthodox teachings of the church and the prevailing definition, which we find in, for example, Webster’s Dictionary. In early Alexandrian Christianity, “laity” were distinguished from the ordained, women, children, and possibly twice-married men.¹³ Whereas in Webster’s Dictionary, “laity” are all the members of a religion who are not ordained.¹⁴ In the Patristic and Medieval Periods, “laity,” distinguished from the ordained, referred to the Christians who were the nobility and not the common Christians.¹⁵

During the fourth through the eleventh centuries laity were joining the ranks of the various religious orders in order to avoid military service and paying taxes, and to seek immunity from secular jurisdiction.¹⁶ In order to curb these violations of the orders of the church, in the twelfth century, Gratian did away with the religious orders and decreed that there are only two kinds of

¹² Charles P. Krauth, “Church Polity. [Pt 1],” *Lutheran Church Review* 2 (January 1883): 308.

¹³ Attila Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina: evolution sociale et institutionnelle du christianisme alexandrin, II^e et III^e siecles* (New York: Lang, 2004), 186. Jakab is referencing Clement, *Strom.* III, 90, 1: “Moreover, he (St. Paul) allows him to be the husband of one wife, whether he be presbyter or deacon or layman.” “Unde etiam Apostolus: ‘Volo, inquit, juniores nubere, filios procreare, domui præesse, nullam dare occasionem adversario maledicti gratia. Jam enim quædam diverterunt post Satanam.’ Quin et unius quoque uxoris virum utique admittit; seu sit presbyter, seu diaconus, seu laicus, utens matrimonio citra reprehensionem: ‘Servabitur autem per filiorum procreationem.’”

¹⁴ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “laity” as “the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy,” 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/laity>. See also Alan Graebner, *Uncertain Saints: The Laity in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1900–1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975), ix. Graebner writes, “My working definition of the laity is most quickly stated negatively: the body of communicant members who are not ordained clergy, deaconesses, or parochial school teachers engaged in full-time professional church work.”

¹⁵ James Westfall Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*. (New York: Franklin, 1960), v. See also Jacques Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus: Series Latina* (Paris: Migne, 1845), 71:528–29. See also 75:79–80; 76:1311–14.

¹⁶ Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (New York: Paulist, 1990), 158–59, 190–91.

Christians, clergy and laity.¹⁷ Since clergy were understood to have an indelible character and thus have a higher or different status before God than the laity, Luther spoke against the distinction of clergy and laity during the Reformation because it divided the unity which all Christians have in Christ.¹⁸

A common thread in current discussions of the laity is the understanding of “laity” as “priests.” In the twentieth century, this is observed in Baptist, Roman Catholic, and LCMS theological writings. In Baptist theology, there is concern because the emphasis on the laity as priests is relatively new. It is also of concern that some members of the Southern Baptist Convention use the teaching of laity as priests in order to undermine the pastoral office or to justify that a Christian may believe whatever he chooses and still be considered a member in good standing of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁹ In Baptist theology, the role of the clergy is diminished in the sense that the laity, defined as the common priesthood, are all ministers who do the work of the church and the clergy are the equippers of the laity.

¹⁷ Emil Friedberg and Aemilius Ludwig Richter, eds., *Corpus juris canonici* (Graz: Akademische druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), 678. Gratian was a canon lawyer from Bologna during the mid-twelfth century. He is considered the father of canon law. See Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3, 138, 148–76.

¹⁸ Martin Luther. “The Misuse of the Mass,” in *Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 36, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 158; *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1889), 8:512.

¹⁹ “Resolutions,” Southern Baptist Convention. <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-the-priesthood-of-the-believer/>.

“The 1988 SBC resolution on ‘Priesthood of the Believer’ has provoked a firestorm of controversy. Among the many discussions in Baptist state papers, see V. Davis, ‘Southern Baptists and ‘Priesthood,’ *Florida Baptist Witness*, July 14, 1988, and T. George, ‘Priesthood of the Believers-Refocusing the Debate,’ *Florida Baptist Witness*, October 1988. See also W. B. Shurden, *Priesthood of Believers* (Nashville, TN: Convention, 1987),” in “The Priesthood of All Believers and the Quest for Theological Integrity,” Founders Ministries, http://www.founders.org/journal/fj03/article1_fr.html.

“strains in popular Protestantism, especially American Protestantism, have taken ‘priesthood of believers’ to mean that every believer has an absolute right of private judgment about morals and doctrine, the liberty to interpret the Bible with complete autonomy. ‘Priesthood of believers’ means that believers can do very well without attachment to any church, thank you very much. Each believer is a church unto himself. Renouncing Rome’s one Pope, Protestantism has created thousands.” Peter Leithart, “Priesthood of Believers.”

Roman Catholic theology, since the Second Vatican Council, teaches that although the priest (clergy) does have a distinct and unique role in celebrating the Mass, he does not have the only role. The laity have responsibility in many areas of life that previously were expected only of the clergy. Specifically, the laity are not only encouraged but also instructed to play a role in the offering of the Eucharist at the Mass²⁰ since they are priests through baptism and because of their participation in the three-fold office of Christ.²¹ The bishops at Vatican II did not want the laity to be viewed as merely passive nor to be considered a body of second-class Christians.²² However, the text of *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, reads, “The common priesthood of the faithful²³ and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, though they differ in essence and not simply in degree, are nevertheless interrelated: each in its own particular way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.”²⁴ Although the council strove to put forth a positive definition of the laity, the common priesthood still remained different in essence to the hierarchical priesthood. The clergy have a sacred power which the laity do not have in regard to their persons. The result is that the clergy are understood as true priests whereas the laity are viewed as priests only in a metaphorical or analogical sense. Thus the unity of Christians, laity

²⁰ David Orr, “Educating for the Priesthood of the Faithful,” *Worship* 83, no. 5 (September 2009): 431.

²¹ “Calvin was probably the first to use the threefold office to describe the nature and ministry of an institution, the Church, while the import of the threefold office for the whole people of God is reinforced in the Vatican II’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity and is used today in Roman Catholic rites of Christian initiation.” David Specht, “Theological Roots of the Three-Fold Model: The Three-Fold Office of Christ: A Framework for Many Occasions,” 2–3. <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/publications/seeingthingswhole.html>.

²² Melvin Michalski, *The Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood of the Baptized & the Ministerial Priesthood of the Ordained in Vatican II & in Subsequent Theology: Understanding “Essentia et non Gradu Tantum,”* *Lumen Gentium No. 10* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen University Press, 1996), 56.

²³ In *Lumen Gentium*, “faithful” designates the baptized. It refers not only to the laity but all baptized Christians including priests, bishops, and religious. Thus “faithful” and “laity” are not necessarily interchangeable terms. “People of God” refers to all the faithful.

²⁴ Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 857. “Sacerdotium autem commune fidelium et sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum, licet essentia et non gradu tantum different, ad invicem tamen ordinantur; unum enim et alterum suo peculiari modo de uno Christi sacerdotio participant.”

and clergy, is divided and the status of the laity before God remains uncertain.

The LCMS was not immune to the struggles regarding the laity which pervaded the Roman Catholic and Baptist teachings. In the early history of the Synod, the theological understanding of the laity was determined by the experience of the Saxon immigrants. The colonists or laity willingly subjected themselves to the clerical autocracy of Martin Stephan.²⁵ Once Stephan was deposed, some colonists understood the laity in a new light.²⁶ Carl Vehse and Franz Adolph Marbach²⁷ advocated that the clergy no longer had oversight of the laity but that the laity now had oversight of the clergy. This was the beginning of the struggle for the LCMS regarding the role of the laity. This struggle continued to grow and was manifest in synodical convention resolutions during the twentieth century.²⁸

During the Reformation, Luther taught against the use of the term “laity” because it does not describe what a Christian is and therefore it leads to a lack of understanding of what it means to be a Christian. In addition, he sought to abolish the clergy/laity distinction since it divides the unity of the Christian people.²⁹ Unfortunately, not Luther’s declaration but Gratian’s declaration of two kinds of Christians continued into the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, the

²⁵ Carl S Meyer, *Moving Frontiers, Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 134. Martin Stephan was pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Dresden, Germany during the early 19th century. He organized the Saxon emigration to the United States in the early 19th century.

²⁶ Carl Solomon Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947), 99.

²⁷ Carl Vehse was a lawyer and influential layman among the Saxon immigrants. See Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 95–96. After Vehse’s departure, Marbach, Vehse’s brother-in-law, became the spokesman for the laity in trying to resolve the concerns among the immigrants. See John C. Wohlrabe, Jr., “The Americanization of Walther’s Doctrine of the Church,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (January 1988): 5.

²⁸ *Proceedings of Synodical Convention and Reports* (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1989), 69. For a historical overview of the practice of lay ministry in the LCMS see David Luecke, “Lay Leadership Education in the LCMS Today,” *Issues in Christian Education* 38 (Spring 2004): 6–11. See also “Resolution 3–05B: To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended,” *Proceedings*, 1989, 69–73.

²⁹ “Temporal Authority,” in *LW* 45:106; *WA* 11:263. See also *WA* 8:512; *LW* 36:158.

Roman Catholic, Baptist, and LCMS denominations continued to use the clergy/laity distinction where “laity” was defined in contrast to the clergy.

“Laity” were defined in a “negative” sense regarding “who they were not” in contrast to the clergy. With the rise of the lay movement in the mid-twentieth century, there was a push to redefine laity with a “positive” meaning and no longer in contrast to the clergy. This laudable goal has been elusive because as long as the clergy/laity distinction continued to be used, along with it persisted the sixteenth-century struggle of the unity of the Christian people being divided since laity could not escape being contrasted in some way to clergy.

The Christian unity had been divided from before the time of Luther. The clergy were considered to have a holy status before God whereas the laity had a secular status. This led to the understanding that the clergy were the church.³⁰ Vatican II tried to restore the unity by emphasizing that church is not the clergy (hierarchy) but the people of God, who are all the baptized.³¹ This changed the understanding of church to include the laity which in the eyes of some opened the door for the possibility for a more active role for the laity. Although unity was emphasized in *Lumen Gentium* it did not remain for long because it was deemed that there was a

³⁰ “Together with other psalms, this one has always been sung in the church by the clergy, who claimed that they alone were the church and the holy, favored people of God.” “Psalm 101,” in *LW* 13:146. “The Papists have come out with a new article of faith, which says, ‘We clergy are the holy Christian Church,’ and they paint themselves seated in the ship and the other Christians swimming and drowning in the sea.’ (Luther has in mind a 1298 mosaic by Giotto, now painted over, that was mounted in the portico of Old St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. See the more detailed description of the image in *Answer to Duke George’s Accusation of Rebellion* (1533), *WA* 38:104 (*LW* 72); cf. *Church Postil* (1544), sermon for Trinity 18, October 15, 1536, Lenker 8:297 (*WA* 41:698); *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–45/1544–54), *LW* 2:152; *Table Talk* no. 4829, *WA* TR 4:537. See *WA* 30/3N:96 for citations of early modern reproductions of the image before it was covered.)” “Prefaces for the Sermons of Alexius Chrosner,” in *LW* 59:322–23.

³¹ James H. Kroeger, ed., *The Documents of Vatican Council II* (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines, 2011), 31. The Church is teachers and hearers. It is the assembly of believers that is bound to the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. To speak of church as the “people of God” is to obscure the teachers or the office, in which case it is no longer church. The same difficulty arises when speaking of the church as the “common priesthood” or “the priesthood of all believers” or “all believers;” See Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), 2:709.

need for the office in the structure of the church. In defending the role of the clergy, they once again divided the unity among Christians by establishing two priesthoods and stated that there was a difference in essence between the priesthood of the faithful and the hierarchical priesthood. This in turn, again led to the division of the people of God into clergy and laity.³² It also brought into usage among theologians the language of two churches; the church as *communio* (indicating all the people of God) and the church as hierarchical order (indicating the clergy).³³ This raised a concern which goes back to the teaching of the Council of Trent in that the clergy have an active role in the church and therefore the struggle, then, is to understand what role, if any, the laity have.

Baptists emphasized the unity of all Christians by emphasizing the “priesthood of the believer.” Every believer has access to God and is only accountable to God for what they believe. Every believer is also a priest and therefore the task of the laity is to do the work of the church. In other words, the task of every layperson is to minister. The result of this teaching in effect made everyone a minister and tasked the clergy with equipping the laity to carry out the mission of the church.³⁴

In addition to the struggle to define “laity” in contrast to clergy, “laity” also was being defined in contrast to a new category of Christians in the Baptist and LCMS churches which was similar to the Roman Catholic religious orders (nuns/monks). These “professional” or full-time/part-time church workers, such as school teachers or DCEs, are not ordained clergy but they are also not considered “laity.”

³² Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 49, 78.

³³ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 134.

³⁴ Fred A Grissom, “Lay Leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 20, no. 1 (January 1985): 26.

In order to give a helpful response to the discussions in the Roman Catholic, Baptist, and LCMS denominations, it is important to understand the biblical doctrine of the common priesthood as put forth by Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.³⁵ This will allow for a helpful evaluation of the teaching of the laity, as the common priesthood, as previously mentioned, which in turn will permit a much needed and guiding voice in the discussion of the definition and theology of the laity and their role in the church today. In addition, it will give clarity for a solid foundation for a Lutheran theology of the laity.

There are currently no comparative studies of the theology of the laity regarding the Roman Catholic, Baptist, or Lutheran denominational teachings. The current documents focus on the struggles within the individual denominations as they seek to define the laity not as to what they are not, but according to who they are and what they do. This study will make a contribution in the area of comparative studies regarding the laity.

The Thesis

The distinction between laity and clergy has been one of the contributing causes of disunity within the church, especially in the present day. The distinction between clergy and laity has at times resulted in them being pitted against each other with one or the other being elevated to the detriment of the other. This problem has plagued the church through the middle ages down to the

³⁵ Regarding the phrase “the priesthood of all believers,” Timothy Wengert writes, “There were no references to the phrase anywhere in Luther’s own writings—that is to say, *Das allgemeine Priestertum aller Gläubigen* (the common priesthood of all believers) in all of its Latin and German permutations, was nowhere to be found in Luther’s writings.” Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 1. “Priesthood of all believers” appears to come from Spener. Luther did use the phrases “a priestly kingdom” or “a royal priesthood” as found in 1 Peter 2. See Thomas M. Winger, “The Priesthood of All the Baptized: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation” (Master’s thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1992), 107–114. Nagel observes, “There is no higher, more spiritual, more inward level, as both the sacerdotalists and Pietists assert (Emser’s inner and Spener’s *Geistliches Priestertum*, which replaces Luther’s ‘the baptized’ with ‘the believers’),” Norman E. Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (October 1997): 286.

present day, as I will show with a discussion of both the Roman Catholic and Baptist traditions.

The reason the laity and clergy get pitted against each other lies in the vacuousness of the definition of the term “laity.” It is defined relative to the clergy and specifically with reference to the authority and functions of the clergy. More specifically, it is defined often negatively over and against clergy. That is to say, “laity” is defined as the opposite of clergy. This does not give a positive definition to who the laity are and how they fit within the church and its mission. Some have sought to define “laity” by ascribing to them tasks or duties of the clergy which in turn has at times diminished or downplayed the importance of the clergy (or the pastoral office).

How do we speak about clergy and laity without one being elevated over the other or one being emphasized at the expense of the other? How do we give each its due without denigrating the other? Any number of solutions have been proposed. Some would define clergy in terms of activities related to the church while the laity are active within the world (WCC). Others would define clergy with respect to status while the laity are defined by their function. Others would define the laity as priests in a way that denies Christ’s priesthood. Some might define it in terms of public versus private speaking of the Gospel. Others confuse the matter with talk about ordained ministers and lay ministers.

In order to answer the question, the Lutheran emphasis on maintaining tensions and paradoxes works well. Over and against these proposals, I propose in this dissertation that instead of using theological terms such as clergy or priest to define the laity, which in turn give rise to the confusion and conflict between them, that we speak of them simply as Christians. It is Christ and his gifts in baptism that make them Christian and thus define their identity and role. This gives positive content to our understanding of the laity and does so by means of Christ’s gifts. To speak of the laity simply as Christians would further unify the church by recognizing

that some Christians are called to exercise Christ's priestly office for the sake of the church.

Luther and the Lutheran Confessions give a positive and revitalizing definition and theology to the laity and their role in both church and society. They do so by teaching that Christ's priestly office is exercised in his church, the priesthood, through the proclamation of the Gospel to which the laity respond by offering sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, and by offering their lives as living sacrifices to God in church and society. Since all Christians are holy before God, these activities by the laity in church and society are not secular or "second class" to the clergy, but they are holy in the eyes of God. This Lutheran approach navigates between the Baptist doctrine which defines the laity according to service or duties, and the Roman Catholic doctrine which defines the laity according to a lesser status than the clergy before God. Baptist doctrine teaches that the laity are the ministers who do the work of the church because of the ministerial vocation of the priesthood of believers. Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that the laity serve in the secular realm since there are two priesthoods, the hierarchical priesthood which is sacred in nature and the common priesthood of the faithful which is secular in nature. Lutheran doctrine teaches that all Christians have a status of being holy before God and that all Christians proclaim the promises of the Gospel and serve their neighbors in love according to their vocations or stations in life.

The Birth of the Twentieth Century Lay Movement

The period of forty years from 1945–1985 is often referred to as the 'modern lay movement'³⁶ or the 'ministry of the laity era.' The emphasis was on the participation of the laity

³⁶ Ben Care, "The Rise & Fall of the Modern Laity Movement," The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, May 2011. http://www.licc.org.uk/uploaded_media/1365689098-Ben%20Care%20Lay%20Movements%20Paper%20%28May%2011%29.pdf.

to lend strength and vitality to the post-war church. Some had even termed this period the ‘Lay Renaissance’ or the ‘Second Reformation.’³⁷

The concern for the participation of the laity found its origins in the German church during the Second World War. It was in the darkness of the struggles of the church during the war and the subsequent questioning in the aftermath of the war that the concerns about the role of the laity were made concrete.³⁸ “[T]he War left in this respect a very precious legacy, namely to rethink and reconsider the significance and responsibility of the laity in the Church’s total expression of its being and life, and of its impact on the world.”³⁹

The German church had become complacent during the nineteenth century. The strong influence of Pietism caused Christians to sit by quietly while religion withdrew from the public sphere. Pietism drew Christians to focus on spiritual matters while ignoring social concerns.

The sickness of nineteenth-century Christendom was the persistent “idealism” of the churches. They remained pledged to “education,” when disciplined witness was needed. They depreciated the importance of intellectual discipline (theology) and spiritual discipline (liturgy). They persisted in verbalizing ideals which were not really commitments, in resolving high intentions which were not made a matter of witness. They ceased to take seriously the power struggle in human society, and their own relationship to it. They neglected the truth in the doctrines of sin and original sin, and therefore failed in their prophetic and pastoral functions. They internalized religion, exaggerated the importance of subjective sensation and sentiment and neglected the doctrine of election. They ceased to believe, in short, in the Word which was made flesh and which was raised bodily from the dead.⁴⁰

Franklin Littell⁴¹ gives three reasons why the laity became the central focus during the time

³⁷ David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

³⁸ Franklin H. Littell, *The German Phoenix: Men and Movements in the Church in Germany* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 102.

³⁹ Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 35.

⁴⁰ Littell, *German Phoenix*, 46–47.

⁴¹ Franklin Littell was an American Protestant scholar regarding the Holocaust. He advocated programs to improve relations between Christians and Jews. See Jack R. Fischel and Susan M. Ortmann, *The Holocaust and Its Religious Impact: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 290.

of the war. First, he notes that when the Nazis had closed down one church publication after another, the laity were left with the Bible as their only source of study material. While reading the Bible, they rediscovered the understanding of the church. Secondly there was recognition that the laity were on the front line and faced with life and death situations in a totalitarian state. Thirdly, churches, increasingly, were faced with a shortage of pastors and in these situations they needed to be active members not only in society but also in the church.⁴²

A dangerous depletion of the Churches of sufficient supply of their Ministry confronted many a congregation with the question of whether it could continue to function without the regular Ministry. In grappling with this question an affirmative answer was often found, including the discovery that this new experience revealed the many talents and gifts for the ministry of the Church in the widest sense, which had always in the ordinary routine of the Church remained buried.⁴³

In the Stuttgart declaration (1945), the Evangelical Church in Germany took responsibility for her failures and she could no longer isolate herself from political and social events of daily life. This prompted a significant involvement of the laity in the post-war reconstruction, and lay movements began to grow.⁴⁴

In the late 1930s to the early 1960s, there were three leaders who consistently emphasized the role “of the laity: J. H. Oldham, a theologically trained Anglican lay leader; Hendrik Kraemer, a Dutch missionary and scholar; and Hans-Ruedi Weber, a Swiss Reformed theologian.”⁴⁵ Of the three, only Weber was ordained. The hope of the three scholars was that lay ministry would be brought into the core of the ecumenical movement and into the mainstream churches by way of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Ecumenical

⁴² Littell, *German Phoenix*, 154.

⁴³ Kraemer, *Theology of the Laity*, 33–34.

⁴⁴ Littell, *German Phoenix*, 114.

⁴⁵ Miller, *God at Work*, 43.

Institute at Bossey.⁴⁶ Kraemer was a strong leader in a Dutch lay movement, which lasted from 1940 to 1950. In 1948, he became involved with the WCC, and later was appointed the first director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.⁴⁷

Kraemer set the groundwork for a new ecclesiology that placed the laity as the focus of the ecclesiology, which was reactionary to a hierarchical ecclesiology. His goal was trying to keep the focus from being only on the institutions and clergy, or from swinging only to the laity. He hoped to hold the two together.⁴⁸ Such a bond, however, is only created through a Christocentric ecclesiology but this focus was generally lacking.

It was at the second WCC Assembly (1954), that the issue of the laity was placed foremost on the agenda.

The time had come to make the ministry of the laity explicit, visible and active in the world. The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories, shops, offices, and farms, in political parties and government agencies, in countless homes, in the press, radio and television, the relationship of nations. Very often it is said that the church should “go into these spheres”; but the fact is, that the church is already in these spheres in the persons of its laity.⁴⁹

In 1955, the WCC established a department of the laity led by the Swiss Reformed theologian Hans-Ruedi Weber. Its goal was to provide a worldwide network of people and organizations that would promote the ecumenical emphasis on the laity. In the 1960s, a number of denominations set up staff positions to promote the role of the laity. Mainstream denominations, such as Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist,⁵⁰ were the most

⁴⁶ Miller, *God at Work*, 43–44.

⁴⁷ Care, *Rise & Fall*, 11.

⁴⁸ Care, *Rise & Fall*, 13–14.

⁴⁹ *Evanston Speaks*, (New York: World Council of Churches, 1955), 64–65, as cited by Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., “Theological and Biblical Perspectives on the Laity.” <http://www.jardigitalworks.com/mdl/stuempfle05.html>.

⁵⁰ Care, *Rise & Fall*, 15, 17. Ben Care mentions that seeds of the lay movement still remain and some may be sprouting in the Emergent movement. David Miller, in *God at Work*, p. 143, states that following the lay movement is a new movement called “Faith at Work.”

committed to this level of staff support. By 1971, the WCC department of laity had been disbanded. Weber believed that the laity would become active and that their service would flourish only by finding a way to reach the laity directly.⁵¹

In the 1960s, The World Council of Churches' Commission on the Laity sought to bring about a lay renewal in the church. One of its documents was *The Layman in Christian History*.⁵² The renewal was popularized in the writings of Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood⁵³ and Roman Catholic theologian Yves Congar.⁵⁴ It also found exegetical support in the writings of Lutheran theologian J. H. Elliott. Throughout the 1960s to the present there was a steady stream of books on the subject of lay renewal which continued through the 1980s since the issue was not resolved. For many of these authors the priesthood of believers became the key to lay ministry.⁵⁵

Outline of Chapters

Having provided this brief overview of discussion on the term “laity,” in Chapter Two we will provide more in-depth detail of the history of the usage of the term, from its earliest usage in the Egyptian Papyri throughout the Reformation, noting the changes in definition during the various time periods. Attention will be given to the twelfth-century declaration of Gratian, that there are two kinds of Christians, clergy and laity, since this dichotomy carried through to the twentieth century and influenced all the main-line Christian denominations.

⁵¹ Miller, *God at Work*, 45–48.

⁵² Stephen Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber, eds., *The Layman in Christian History; A Project of the Department on the Laity of the World Council of Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

⁵³ Elton Trueblood, *Your Other Vocation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952). Trueblood was a noted 20th-century American Quaker author and theologian, and former chaplain both to Harvard and Stanford universities.

⁵⁴ Yves Marie-Joseph Congar was a French Dominican friar, priest, and theologian. He is well-known for his influence at the Second Vatican Council. He was made a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in 1994. One of his most influential works was, *Lay People in the Church*.

⁵⁵ William L. Pitts, “The Priesthood of All Christians in the Baptist Heritage,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 30, no. 2 (1988): 39.

The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters will analyze the different approaches to the laity in the twentieth century by noting the different categories of status, service, education, remuneration, or lifestyle, within which the traditions of Roman Catholic, Baptist, and the LCMS consider the topic.

The Third Chapter analyzes the Roman Catholic doctrine of the laity which uses the category of status before God to distinguish between the clergy and the laity. The discussion regarding the laity came into the foreground with the documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Lumen Gentium*, and the writings of Yves Congar, particularly *Lay People in the Church*. Congar worked with the council to put forth the documents for Vatican II until he realized the distinction of status was being used to state that clergy had a sacred status but laity had a secular status. Congar then emphasized that clergy and laity were both included in “people of God,” therefore there is no distinction in status so he spoke of a distinction in service instead.

The Fourth Chapter analyzes the Baptist doctrine of the laity which uses the category of service to distinguish between the clergy and the laity. Baptist organizational structure emphasizes lay leadership. Their polity teaches that there is no distinction between clergy and laity since all Christians are stewards of the Gospel. Thus any Christian may hold a position of leadership. The authority of the clergy comes from Christ, but that authority is only given to the clergy through the laity. The clergy do ministerial service among the community of the laity by equipping the laity to be the ministers of the church and proclaim the Gospel to the world. Baptists stress that each Christian is his/her own priest and has no need of another so their work is to be the ministers of the church. In the twentieth century this teaching was begun by Edgar

Young Mullins,⁵⁶ *The Axioms of Religion*, and perpetuated by H. H. Hobbs,⁵⁷ *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers*, whose works will be examined.

The Fifth Chapter analyzes the LCMS doctrine of the of the laity. C. F. W. Walther⁵⁸ states that all Christians have the same office thus LCMS doctrine distinguishes between the clergy and the laity by the fact that the clergy perform the office publicly while the laity do so privately—not as lay activism within the world but in the context of furthering the mission of the church. Two of Walther’s works will be examined, *The Church and The Office of The Ministry* and *The Congregation’s Right To Choose Its Pastor*, along with a writing from Oscar Feucht,⁵⁹ *Everyone a Minister*. Walther and Feucht defined the church as “all believers” or “priests.” As such they emphasized the service of the laity.

At the end of each chapter and in the Sixth Chapter, the conclusion, I will offer a Lutheran theological analysis and engagement in response to the various denominational doctrines of the laity. The writings of Luther, of the Lutheran Orthodox Fathers, and the Lutheran Confessions, will give a revitalizing or positive definition to the laity and their role in both church and society. They do so by teaching the laity to focus not on priestly duties of Christ’s priestly office, but on spiritual sacrifices as a priest (priesthood) or Christian in their stations or vocations in life.

⁵⁶ Edgar Young Mullins was a Baptist minister and educator. He served as the fourth president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1899 until his death.

⁵⁷ Hobbs received his seminary training at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, where he received his PH.D. He is best remembered for his work as chairman of the committee which produced the 1963 version of *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Hobbs believed that it served to "anchor the moorings" in the face of liberalism and modernism. Hobbs had a strong commitment to soul competency.

⁵⁸ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was the first President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

⁵⁹ Oscar E. Feucht was the first Secretary of Adult Education of the LCMS in 1946.

CHAPTER TWO

THE USE OF LAIKOS

The Greek *laikos* (Latinized as *laicus*), from which the English word “lay” is derived, is not used in the Bible. According to the Greek lexicon, *laikos* means “pertaining to, or one who belongs to, the people (*laos*).”¹ In some theological circles, this has led to identifying “laity” as members of the “people of God.”² The reasoning behind this etymological derivation is that since “people of God” includes both clergy and laity there is no longer any distinction between the two, and theoretically the clergy/laity dichotomy in the church is dissolved.

Throughout the Middle Ages, “laity” was generally used as one of the two or three groups of social orders (clerics/laity; clerics/monks/laity). There was confusion and tension between these orders which was based on continence or marriage, and on relation to God and the world.³ Even though there is much overlap between the secular and ecclesiastical use of “laity,” this study will focus predominately on the ecclesiastical use of this term.

In the present day, depending on the particular context *laikos*, “lay,” may be defined by service or duties, someone who does not preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments; by status, someone who is not ordained and does not have a title such as “pastor” or “reverend;” by education, someone who is not theologically trained; by remuneration, someone who is not full-time and paid; and by lifestyle, someone who lives not a religious life (vocation) but a secular

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 581.

² Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church; A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1957), 3–4.

³ Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The Interpretation of Mary and Martha, the Ideal of the Imitation of Christ, the Orders of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272.

life outside the church.⁴ These definitions are viewed as negatives. The laity are defined by who they are not. The question still remains regarding who the laity are in their own right and not in contrast to the clergy.

In order to understand the background context of the current ecclesiastical use of “laity,” this study will examine the use of the term in its first known usage in Greek papyri, in the Biblical texts, in the Patristic Period, in the Medieval Period, and during the Reformation.

Egyptian Papyri

In non-canonical literature we find the term *laikos* in Greek papyri dating from the Ptolemaic period (the third century BC). In these papyri, *laos*, “people,” is used to describe, first, the Egyptian people, which did not include the immigrants, aliens, slaves, and strangers. Second, since the Egyptians had a sacerdotal class in contrast to the peasants, the artisans, the minor land-owners, and the merchants, *laos* describes the non-sacerdotal Egyptians.⁵ *Laikos* shares this two-fold meaning. Friedrich Preisigke,⁶ in his dictionary on Greek papyri writes, “Laikos, concerning Egyptian civilians (in contrast to royal officials, liege lords, government tenants, etc.).”⁷ In its primary use, only Egyptians are called *laikoi*. Foreigners, immigrants, and strangers in Egypt were under the royal officials but they were not Egyptian civilians or natives, therefore they were

⁴ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 24–25.

⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 21–22.

⁶ Friedrich Preisigke was born in Dessau, Germany. His admiration for classical literature and ancient history led him to listen to the lectures of great scholars of the time by whom he was introduced to the study of papyrology. In 1903 Preisigke graduated from the University of Halle. In 1913 was appointed professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Strasbourg. In June 1915 he was elected an extraordinary member of the Academy of Sciences in Heidelberg, and in 1918 founded the *Institut für Papyrologie* in the same city, which continues today to be Germany's leading center of papyrology.

⁷ Friedrich Preisigke and Emil Kiessling, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden: mit Einschluß der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder usw. aus Ägypten*, 2 Band, (Berlin: Selbstverlag der Erben, 1927). “Laikos den ägyptischen Zivilisten betreffend (im Ggs zum kgl Beamten, Lebensträger, Staatspächter usw).”

not *laikoi*. In its secondary use, *laikoi* is used in contrast to the Egyptian priestly and royal class.

Because one belongs to the *laos* one can be counted among the *laikoi*. It emphasizes the aspect of belonging to or being part of a specific group of people. The Jews under Sethos I and Ramesses II would not have been called *laikoi* since they were foreigners or immigrants in Egypt. Among the Egyptian people, the *laos*, there were also leaders. It is in this context that a distinction is made between subservient and authoritative roles such as *laikos* and *hegoumenoi* (leaders, such as a superior of a monastery).⁸

Biblical Texts

The origin and meaning of *laikos* within the Christian tradition is highly debated. In contrast to Yves Congar, Luigi Pizzolato⁹ believes that the Christian meaning of *laikos* cannot be based on the Judaeo-Christian usage of *laos* (people), as also does de la Potterie.¹⁰ Ignace de La Potterie acknowledges that *laikos* comes from *laos* philologically, but notes that the semantic import of *laikos* is not with *laos* but with the usage which distinguishes the *laikos* (unordained) from the priest (ordained).¹¹ In addition, Giovanni Magnani claims that the “so-called theology of

⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 22.

⁹ Luigi Franco Pizzolato is Professor Emeritus of Ancient Christian Literature at the Catholic University of Milan. He is a member of the University of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Bergamo, and director of the series *Studia Patristica Mediolanensia*.

¹⁰ Ignace de La Potterie, born in Waregem (Belgium) on June 24, 1914, and died on September 11, 2003, in Heverlee (Belgium) is a Belgian Jesuit priest who was a renowned theologian. A specialist in Johannine exegesis, he taught at the Bible Institute in Rome. After studying classical humanities (Latin and Greek) at the Collège Sainte-Barbe in Ghent, Ignace de La Potterie entered the novitiate of the Jesuits at Tronchiennes, near Ghent (September 23, 1932). He studied philosophy and theology at the Jesuit faculties in Louvain and was ordained a priest on August 24, 1945. From 1947 to 1949, he was enrolled in the Pontifical Biblical Institute and on June 17, 1949, obtained the license in Sacred Scripture. Back in Belgium, from 1950 to 1960, Father de La Potterie taught New Testament exegesis at the Jesuit theological faculty of Louvain. He then returned to Rome for a doctorate, completed in 1965. He began his teaching at the Biblical Institute already in 1961.

¹¹ Luigi Pizzolato, “Laicità e laici nel cristianesimo primitivo,” in *Laicità, problem e prospettive, Atti del XLVII corso di aggiornamento culturale dell’Università Cattolica* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1977), 57–63, <https://csl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001095609&site=ehost-live>, and I. de la Potterie, “L’Origine et le sens primitivo du mot ‘lai’,” *Nouvelle Revue*

the laity” is based on a specious argument that *laikos* is derived from *laos*. He argues that the early Christian usage of *laikos* is one of categorization and of contrast, not one of derivation and exemplification.¹²

Gratian supports the argument of Magnani, Pizzolato, and de la Potterie. Gratian speaks of two kinds of Christians, the clergy (*clerici*) and the laity (*laici*). After mentioning *laici*, he immediately states, “For *laos* means ‘people’” (*Laos enim est populus.*). *Populus*, regarding society, included both the higher orders or ruling classes (*patricii, patres, senatus*) and the lower orders or common people (*plebeians*). In the church the ruling class or higher orders were the clergy (*clerici*) and the non-ruling class or common Christians were *laici*, whether they are higher orders or lower orders in society.¹³

The scholar who searches the Bible for the term *laikos* and its meaning will quickly discover that there is no trace of the term. *Laikos* is unknown in the texts which proclaim the Gospel. In addition, the word *laikos* is not used in the Septuagint. “Lay” and “laity,” in the sense

Théologique, 80 (1958): 840–845. See also G. Wingren, “Der Begriff ‘Laie’,” in *Von Amt des Laien in Kirche und Theologie*, ed. H. Schröter and G. Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 3–16.

Peter Neuner argues that the usage of “laity” does not come from the term *laos* but from the adjective *laikos* which means “belonging to the people (“zum Volk gehörig”). See “Aspekte einer Theologie des Laien,” *Una Sancta* 43 (1988): 317. Neuner is a Roman Catholic priest and theologian. From 1972 to 1980 he served as assistant at the Institute for Ecumenical Theology of the University of Munich. From 1980 to 1985 he was Professor of Fundamental Theology in Passau and in 1985 he held the chair of the faculty of dogmatics at Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich. From 2000 until his retirement in 2006, he was director of the Ecumenical Research Institute at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Munich. For Peter Neuner the question of “what is a lay person” is the wrong question to ask. He states that the term “laity” should not be used. If the church has a correct theology of the people of God there is no need for a separate theology of the laity (“Wenn wir eine rechte Theologie des Volkes Gottes haben, so also die These, brauchen wir keine eigene Theologie des Laien”), “Aspekte einer Theologie des Laien,” *Una Sancta* 43, no. 4 (1988) 322–23.

¹² Giovanni Magnani, “Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?” In *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty-Five Years after (1962–1987)*, ed. René Latourelle, vol. 1 (New York: Paulist, 1988): 583–585. For a discussion on the difficulties of the etymology of *laikos* see Osborne, *Ministry*, 7–40. See also Neuner, *Der Laie und das Gottesvolk*, 25–41.

¹³ Friedberg, *Corpus juris canonici*, 678; see footnote 111. For more information regarding *plebs* and *populus* see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds., *Lewis and Short: A New Latin Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 1386.

of the non-ordained, is a later idea from a post-apostolic church so it is not helpful to impose it onto the scriptural texts.¹⁴

Three Jewish translators, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, made Greek translations of the Old Testament during the second century AD. There are three passages in which these translators use the term *laikos*: 1 Sam. 21:5 Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (Cf. 1 Samuel 21:6 Symmachus); Ezek. 48:15 Symmachus and Theodotion; and Ezek. 22:16 Theodotion.

The first passage reads: “And the priest answered David, ‘I have no common bread (LXX: *artoi bebeloi*) on hand, but there is holy bread (LXX: *artoi hagioi*)—if the young men have kept themselves from women’” (1 Sam. 21:5 ESV, 1 Sam. 21:4 in English). In this passage common bread is contrasted with holy bread. *Bebelos* is used in the Septuagint (LXX) but the three authors mentioned above use *laikos* instead. In verse six David tells the priest that he is on a common trip (LXX: *odos bebelos*) which means the rules against sexual intercourse do not apply. Since the rules do not apply, if David and his followers eat the holy bread they would not be in disobedience to the ceremonial laws. Symmachus translates common trip with *odos laike*. The fact that *laikos* is used for *bebelos* indicates that both words meant common or not holy in the Greek usage of the second century. However, this does not mean there was a demarcation between that which was holy and that which was secular. It is helpful to remember that for the Jews there was a religious or holy aspect about every facet of life. “Rather, one blesses God for the gift of ordinary bread precisely because it is, in its ordinariness, a gift of God and therefore it has a distinctive holiness about it.”¹⁵ The holy bread was set aside for the Lord’s use as opposed to the common bread.

¹⁴ Osborne, *Ministry*, 18, 21; and Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 3, 15.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 23–24.

The second passage reads: “The remainder, 5,000 cubits in breadth and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open country” (Ezek. 48:15 ESV).

Proteichisma is a Greek word meaning “common” in the Septuagint. Symmachus and Theodotian translate using *laikos* and Aquila with *bebelos*. The land is common or for ordinary use in contrast to the land that is used only for worship of Yahweh.¹⁶

The third passage reads: “They have made no distinction between the holy (LXX: *hagiu*) and the common (LXX: *bebelos*)” (Ezek. 22:26 ESV). Whereas the Septuagint uses *bebelos*, Theodotian translates with *laikos*. “Common” means that which is for man’s use. To take what pertains to God and put it at man’s disposal is to make it common.

Laikos would mean, then, what is common to both the divine and the human. Its opposite is that which belongs to God alone. In both situations, it should be noted, God is involved, and because God is involved, there is a holiness to both situations. In the Jewish mind, therefore, one cannot say that “*bebelos*,” “*laikos*” and “*proteichisma*” are purely secular terms, i.e. terms which do not involve holiness. This modern view of the sacred and the lay does not correspond to the theological insights of these Old Testament passages. As a result, the totally secular interpretation of *laikos* cannot be justified.¹⁷

The influence of these three Jewish translations is negligible among patristic writers. Origen uses the three Jewish translations in his *Hexapla*. Jerome, in his Latin translation of the Old Testament, uses *laicus* in the same places that the three Jewish translations used the Greek *laikos*. That is the extent of the Biblical data regarding the use of *laikos*.¹⁸

Early Patristic Period: Apostolic Church to AD 325

Laikos is used infrequently up to AD 220, however there is a rather sudden importance of

¹⁶ Osborne, *Ministry*, 24.

¹⁷ Osborne, *Ministry*, 24–25.

¹⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 25.

the use of this word by the Christian church at the beginning of the third century. In Greek literature there is one passage in Clement of Rome, three in Clement of Alexandria, and one passage in Origen which use the term. In Latin literature, there is the Latin translation of the letter of Clement that uses *laikos* (Latin: *laicus*) in one passage. Apart from that, it is only with Tertullian that we find the Latin term *laicus* used, somewhat sparsely. After AD 220 the term is used more frequently.¹⁹

Clement Of Rome

The Letter of Clement to the Corinthian Christians was well known in the early church. Ignatius of Antioch (*Rom.* 3:1) and the letter of Polycarp allude to it. In Hegesippus and Dionysius we are told that the church of Corinth cherished it. Irenaeus summarizes it and Clement of Alexandria quotes from it in his *Stromata*. In the late Byzantine period and middle ages, it was all but forgotten. In 1633 the librarian to Charles I published a copy of the letter at Oxford which began a renewal of scholarly interest and study of this letter. The letter most likely was written during the reign of Domitian (AD 81–96). Clement was an *episkopos/presbyteros* at Rome and it is in the name of all the *episkopoi/presbyteroi* at Rome that he sends this letter to the Christians at Corinth.²⁰

Clement advocates peace and order among the Corinthian Christians because there were some rash and self-willed people among them who had deposed one or more presbyters. A group of young men in the congregation wanted to carry out some activities that belonged to the duties of the office of the pastor. When the pastor did not acquiesce, they removed him from his office.

¹⁹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 122.

²⁰ Osborne, *Ministry*, 123.

Clement did not approve of the removal of the pastor from office without cause.²¹

Clement seeks to bring about order for the Corinthian Christians. He speaks of the cosmic order that is put in place by the Creator and he concludes with a demonstration of the discipline that should be practiced among them. In this context he describes the image of soldiers under the authority of their commanders. Then he speaks of the human body with all its various members, yet having one head. Next he cites a lengthy doxology drawing from many passages of Job. Finally, he turns to the divinely established church order and it is at this point in the letter that he mentions *laikos* twice.²²

Now the offerings and ministrations He commanded to be performed with care, and not to be done rashly or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons. And where and by whom He would have them performed, He Himself fixed by His supreme will: that all things being done with piety according to His good pleasure might be acceptable to His will. They therefore that make their offerings at the appointed seasons are acceptable and blessed: for while they follow the institutions of the Master they cannot go wrong. For unto the high-priest his proper services (*idiai leitourgiai*) have been assigned, and to the priests their proper office (*idios ho topos*) is appointed, and upon the levites their proper ministrations (*idiai diakoniai*) are laid. The layman (*ho laikos anthropos*) is bound by the layman's ordinances (*tois laikois prostagmasin*) (40.2–5).²³

The term *laikos* is not used in the rest of Clement's letter. Instead, he uses various terms such as "brotherhood," "brothers," "the elect," "those called and made holy," "the multitude," "a holy portion," and "the people" (*ho laos*, 1 Clem. 59.4; 64.1) when he describes Christians. The term he uses most frequently is "Christ's flock" and the flock has an elected leader who is the presbyter.²⁴

²¹ Albert B. Collver III, "Origin of the Term Laity," *Logia* 19, no. 4 (2010): 5–12.

²² Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 16.

²³ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I: S. Clement of Rome: Translations* (London: Macmillan, 1890), 2:292. Cf. The *Didascalia* translated from the Syriac. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English* (London: C.J. Clay, 1903), 17; "Philip said, 'The laymen shall obey the commands for laymen, being submissive to those who serve continually at the altar.'"

²⁴ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 16–17. See also Osborne, *Ministry*, 125.

In his letter, Clement is teaching the Corinthian Christians about their need for order. This need comes from God for “the offerings and ministrations He commanded to be performed with care, and not to be done rashly or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons. And where and by whom He would have them performed.”²⁵ Clement stresses that everyone should take regard for his own place or station in life, “his own rank.” After describing the divinely established order in Old Testament worship, he exhorts the Christians, “Let each of you, brethren, in his own order give thanks unto God, maintaining a good conscience, and not transgressing the appointed rule of his service, but acting with all seemliness.”²⁶ Each person should serve God in the rank or station in life where God has placed him. *Laikos* is used in the context of the liturgy and the liturgical offices. There are tasks given to each person to do, the high priest, the priest, the levite, and the layman.²⁷

In terms of biblical or Christian usage, Clement’s use of *laikos* is the first time in extant literature that the adjective *laikos* is used for a person. In the few instances that have been examined, *laikos* is used for things. Clement’s second usage of the term, “layman’s ordinances” (*tois laikois prostagmasin*) exemplifies the use with things. A Latin translation of Clement’s letter exists which was made in the second or third century and comes to us through an eleventh century manuscript. Clement’s phrase, “The layman (*ho laikos anthropos*) is bound by the layman’s ordinances (*tois laikois prostagmasin*),” is translated into Latin as *Plebeius homo laicis praeceptis datus est*. The first use of *laikos* in Clement’s letter is translated with the Latin *plebeius*, not with the Latin *laicus*, while Clement’s second use of *laikos* is translated with the

²⁵ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 292.

²⁶ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 292.

²⁷ Osborne, *Ministry*, 125. See also Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 18, 20–21.

Latinized Greek word *laicus*. “For the person, *plebeius* is used; for things, *laicus* is used.”²⁸ In the church, *plebeius* is one who does not belong to the ruling class of people.

In referencing this passage from Clement of Rome, Faivre states that “lay man” should not be applied to Christians, even by analogy. “Lay man” refers to people who are unaccomplished and who do not have “access to the higher spiritual knowledge.”²⁹ The lay person who is bound by lay precepts is for Clement the one who,

having not probed the depth of divine knowledge, remains bound to the profane precepts (rules for the flesh only valid until the time of the reform, according to the word of the epistle to the Hebrews, 9:10), while the one who through the revelation of the new covenant and the unique sacrifice of Christ’s atonement has attained a higher knowledge, is loosed from these lay precepts.³⁰

Faivre believes that Clement’s doctrine that a layman is bound by lay precepts, is a summary of a passage from Isaiah, “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men” (Isa. 29:13 ESV). Faivre interprets this passage as reducing the Jewish cultural prescriptions to “human prescriptions” in order to emphasize spiritual worship. Therefore, for Clement, the layman belongs to the people of Israel and the layman of this people is bound by the precepts peculiar to this people.

Faivre states that Clement’s use of “layman’s ordinances” (*laika prostagma*) comes from the synthesis of the two basic connotations of the term *prostagma*³¹ in the book of Ezekiel; the

²⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 125–27. See also Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 20–22.

²⁹ Alexandre Faivre, “Préceptes laïcs (λαϊκὰ προστάματα) et commandements humains (ἐμτάματα ἀνθρώπων). Les Fondements scripturaires de 1 Clément 40, 5.” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 75, no. 3 (2001): 288.

³⁰ Faivre, “Préceptes laïcs,” 290.

³¹ Faivre believes the “lay precepts” or “lay ordinances” in the letter of Clement of Rome are derived from Ezek. 20:19–26. The Septuagint gives the following translations of both *choq* and *chuqqah*: *prostagma* (order, command; injunction); *dikaioma* (regulation; requirement; commandment); and *nomimos* (lawful; conformable to law).

criterion of belonging to a people and the criterion of distinguishing between the sacred and the profane. He surmises that Clement takes the term *prostagma* and its usage from Ezekiel and adds to it the term *laikos* thereby creating “layman’s ordinances,” the first apophthegm or aphorism for “the layman.”³²

Unlike Faivre, Georges Blond,³³ Gregory Dix,³⁴ and Kenan Osborne seek the meaning of *laikos prostagmata* in the text of the letter of Clement. They agree that Clement is using *laika prostagmata* in the context of the eucharist. From the passage in Clement they draw upon two key words, *prosphoros* (sacrificial offerings) and *leitourgias* (liturgical rites/service). “Now the offerings (*prosphoros*) and ministrations (*leitourgias*) He commanded to be performed with care, and not to be done rashly or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons. And where and by whom He would have them performed, They therefore that make their offerings (*prosphoros*) at the appointed seasons are acceptable and blessed: for while they follow the institutions of the Master they cannot go wrong (40.2–3).”³⁵

Blond notes that Clement does not use the noun *eucharistia* but that the verb *eucharistein* occurs twice (38:2, 4). “Even if Clement does not use the terms that later became technical designations for the eucharist, the reality is present in the letter as far as the sacrificial aspect of the eucharist is concerned.”³⁶ Blond, drawing from chapters 40.1–5 and 41.1–2, points out that

³² Faivre, “Préceptes laïcs,” 290–95.

³³ Georges Blond was a prolific French writer. He wrote mostly history but also other topics including fiction.

³⁴ George Eglinton Alston Dix OSB, known as Gregory Dix, was an English priest of Nashdom Abbey, an Anglican Benedictine community. He was a liturgical scholar whose work had great influence on the reform of Anglican liturgy in the middle of the twentieth century.

³⁵ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 292. See Osborne, *Ministry*, 124–25.

³⁶ Willy Rordorf et. al., trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians* (New York: Pueblo, 1978), 25. Cf. Bryan Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day*, SCM Studies in Worship and Liturgy Series (London: SCM, 2013), 5:34; and Robert M. Grant commenting on *1 Clement* in Holt H. Graham, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary. II. First and Second Clement: Introduction and Commentary by Robert M. Grant* (New York: Nelson, 1965), 69.

Clement speaks of the eucharist as having replaced the Old Testament sacrifices; that it was instituted by Christ; and it is given to the clergy to administer—whose “essential function it is to offer sacrifices.”

Dix explains the *prosphora* (oblation) as the bread and wine, which are to be used in the eucharist, before they have been consecrated.³⁷ The part of the liturgy in which the elements were prepared for the eucharist is called the *Proskomidè* or Offertory. This title comes from the practice of Christians in the early church to offer bread and wine for the celebration of the eucharist. The bread and wine were called *prosphora* or oblation.³⁸ For Dix, the laity are those who bring the gifts of bread and wine to be used in the eucharist. Dix points out that Clement (44) states that it is the task of the “bishop’s office” to “offer the gifts” (*prospHEREIN ta dora*).³⁹

³⁷ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945), 110–11.

³⁸ Philip Schaff, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper, 1890), 2:496. Cf. Cross, F. L., and Livingstone, E.A., eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1347

³⁹ Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 111. Cf. W. E. Scudamore, *Laity*. In *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, ed. W. Smith and S. Cheetham (London: John Murray, 1875), 912–13; “There is evidence to shew that during the earlier part of our period the laity came up to the holy table to make their offerings and to communicate. Dionysius, the pope of Alexandria, A.D. 254, speaks of a layman as ‘going up to the table,’ and ‘standing at the table’ (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 9). Even women (*nisi in abscessu*) were, according to him, then permitted to ‘approach the holy of holies’ and to ‘draw near to the holy table’ (*Ep. ad Basilid.* can. 2). St. Chrysostom:—‘Let no Judas, no Simon, come up to the table’ (*Hom.* 50, in St. Matt. § 3). By the 19th canon of the council of Laodicea, about 365, it was ‘permitted to those only who were in holy orders to enter the place of the altar and to communicate there.’ This probably only sanctions a custom already becoming general. Theodosius the Great, at Milan in 390, took his offering up to the altar, but was not allowed to remain in the chancel for the communion (Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 18). In the East, however, he had been accustomed to stay and to communicate within the bema (*ib.*; comp. Sozom. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 24). His grandson Theodosius says of himself in 431, ‘We draw near the most holy altar only to offer the gifts, and having gone into the enclosed tabernacle of the sacred circles, at once leave it’ (*Concil. Labbe*, iii. 1237). For the East the rule was finally settled by the council in *Trullo*, A.D. 691. It forbade any of the laity to ‘enter within the sacred altar-place,’ except the emperor, ‘when he wished to offer gifts to the Creator’ (can. 69). Turning to the West we find the Council of Tours, A.D. 566, permitting ‘the holy of holies to be open to laymen and women for prayer and communion, as the custom is,’ but forbidding laymen to ‘stand by the altar, at which the sacred mysteries are celebrated, either on vigils or at masses’ (can. 4). This prohibition was confirmed by a council held at some uncertain place in France, about the year 744; but the permission is not also repeated (can. 6; *Capit. Reg. Franc.* i. 153). The whole of the canon of Tours, however, appears in the Capitularies of Charlemagne (vii. 279). In the earliest editions of the *Ordo Romanus*, the bishop is represented as ‘going down’ to receive the gifts of the people, and being ‘conducted back to the altar’ after receiving them (*Mus. Ital.* ii. 10, 74). This exhibits the custom at Rome in the 8th century. At that time the men and women were on different sides of the church, and the clergy went to their several places to communicate them (*ib.* 10, 50).”

The Greek terminology concerning the oblation (*prosphora*) is throughout the pre-Nicene period quite clear, and does not (as a rule) vary from one writer to another. The communicant ‘brings’ (*prosenegkein*) the *prosphora*; the deacon ‘presents’ it or ‘brings it up’ (*anapherein*); the bishop ‘offers’ (*prospherein*) it. The *prosphora* itself is at all points ‘the gifts of Thy holy church’, but the ‘liturgies’ of each order in connection with it are proper to each order and not interchangeable. It is the special eucharistic ‘liturgy’ of each order which distinguishes it and constitutes it a separate ‘order’ in the organic Body of Christ.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 111–12. Cf. Gibson, *Didascalia Apostolorum in English*, 47–48; “For the Levite and the High Priest is the Bishop. He is a servant of the Word of God and a Mediator, but to you a Teacher and your Father after God, who has begotten you by means of water....He governs in the place of the Almighty, but let him be honoured by you as God, because the Bishop sits for you in the place of Almighty God; but the Deacon stands in the place of the Christ; and ye should love him, but let the Deaconesses be honoured by you in the likeness of the Holy Ghost....For as it was not allowed for the stranger, that is to say for him who was not a Levite, to approach the Altar, nor to offer anything apart from the High Priest, thus do ye naught apart from the Bishop. For if any one do aught apart from the Bishop, he doeth it in vain, for it will not be counted to him as a work, because it is not fitting that anyone should do aught without the High Priest. Present, therefore, your offerings to the Bishop, either ye yourselves, or by means of the Deacons; and what he receives let him deal to you justly....” See also *Decretum Gratiani* (C. 7, c. 12, q. 1), Gratian wrote that the laity (*laici*) are allowed to take a wife and to place oblations upon the altar; Gratian, *Decretum Gratiani*, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, t. 187 (Parisii: Apud Garnier fratres, 1891). See Friedberg and Richter, *Corpus juris canonici*, 678.

Luther understood that *prosphora* (oblation) was more than a material sacrifice of bread and wine given to the Lord. *Prosphora* (oblation) was used not only for a sacrifice or gift offered in the temple to God (Acts 21:26; Heb. 10:5,8), but it was used by St. Paul to describe the Gentiles as an “offering (*prosphora*) to God” (Rom. 15:16) and Christ’s giving up of his life as an “offering (*prosphora*)” to God (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:10, 14), see Difransico, L., “Sacrifice,” In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, and R. Hurst, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014). There are only spiritual sacrifices in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:5) and they can only be offered by a spiritual person, that is a Christian who has the Spirit of Christ; (WA 12, 186). The Christian as priest offers himself, his own sinful flesh, to be sacrificed into death; (WA 17²:11). This is the sacrifice of thanksgiving confessed in the liturgy in the Offertory (Ps. 50:14 & Ps. 116, ESV “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High.”) and in the Preface to the Sacrament, V: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God/ R: It is right to give Him thanks and praise. As we praise and thank God for His work for us in Christ, we renounce our own works. This renunciation of work righteousness constitutes the Christian’s sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (WA 30¹:3; 7:567; 40¹:370; 3:191, 292, 648; 4:241). “Man cannot glorify God without sacrificing himself, the old man, so often represented by his reason. His offering of praise is hidden under the old man being sacrificed. From his earliest works Luther stressed this two-sidedness of the sacrifice of praise;” V. Vajta, *Luther on Worship: An Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 156–57. ““Here [1 Peter 2:5] he refers to the office of preaching which is the true office of sacrifice.... for by preaching the grace of God is praised, and that is to offer praise and thanksgiving....as says St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 [vs. 5].’ ‘He who thus preaches, teaches, and expounds, stabs the calf, the fleshly mind, and kills the old Adam.... The true priesthood is carried on where we offer the wicked nave, the lazy old donkey, to God,” (WA 17²:8). “We are all priests. It is the priest’s task to bring sacrifices to God. This he does through prayer, mediation, and worship. Let no one, however, assume the exercise of this function without a call,” (LW 17:415).

Clement Of Alexandria

A significant length of time had passed before the term *laikos* entered into common usage in religious language, whether in Greek or in Latin. Almost a century after Clement of Rome, we find the term used in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, who wrote for Greek readers, and in the writings of Tertullian, who wrote in Latin. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) uses the term *laikos* two times in his *Stromata*, and once in *Paedagogus*.⁴¹

In the first passage in the *Stromata*, he writes, “And indeed he entirely approves of the man who is husband of one wife, whether he be presbyter, deacon, or layman (*laikos*), if he conducts his marriage unblameably, (*Strom.* III, 12, 90, 1).”⁴² Clement supports marriage for the *presbyteros*, the *diakonos*, and the *laikos*. All three terms are used as categories in contrast to one another. There is no clergy/lay contrast in the text. Clement does not emphasize the ecclesiastical office but that marriage is given as a way of life for all three designations of Christians. However, these three groups are required to lead a monogamous life. The *presbyteros*, the *diakonos*, and the *laikos*, are permitted to marry only one wife. This usage of *laikos* excludes women, children, and twice-married men.⁴³

The fact that Clement states that the layman must be the husband of only one wife just as the presbyter or the deacon may be quite unexpected. In 1 Tim. 3: 2, 12, this requirement is made of the *episkopos* and deacons. The letter to Titus gives us a further explanation. St. Paul states that candidates for the office of presbyter are to be the “husband of one wife” (Titus 1:6 ESV). Since the layman may one day be a candidate for the office of presbyter it stands to reason that he too

⁴¹ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 54. See also Osborne, *Ministry*, 132.

⁴² J. E. L Oulton and Henry Chadwick, eds., “Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen with Introductions and Notes,” *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 2:398.

⁴³ David G. Hunter and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 390. See also Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina*, 186.

should be the husband of one wife. In this context, *laikos* is defined not as all Christians but as men who may be candidates for the office of presbyter.⁴⁴ Two centuries later, Jerome (c. 347–420) reiterates this point in his letters (123.6).

And even the layman (*laicus*) is bound by the law of the priest, for his conduct must be such as to admit of his election to the priesthood. If he has been twice married, he cannot be so elected. Therefore, as priests are chosen from the ranks of laymen (*laicis*), the layman (*laicus*) also is bound by the commandment, fulfilment of which is indispensable for the attainment of the priesthood.⁴⁵

In Clement's second passage, "The covering, then, the barrier of popular unbelief (*laikes apistias*), was stretched in front of the five pillars, keeping back those in the surrounding space, (*Strom. V, 6, 3, 3*),"⁴⁶ he expounds the three parts of the temple. There is the holy of holies which only the high priest enters, and the holy place which the priests may enter, and the court where the people gather. The court was separated from the holy place by a curtain which served as a barrier against common unfaithfulness or lay unbelief (*laikes apistias*). This is the only time that Clement uses *laikos* in the context of worship.⁴⁷ I. de la Potterie believes Clement's use of *laikos* in this text is a case of metonymy. He states that "lay disbelief" (*laikes apistias*) is really speaking of an unbelieving people and should be understood as *laos apistos*. Thus in this context *laikos* refers to non-believers as opposed to believers.⁴⁸

The third instance of *laikos* in Clement is in *Paedagogus*, "The lay task is assigned, both

⁴⁴ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 55, 71.

⁴⁵ Jerome, "The Letters of St. Jerome." In *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, & W. G. Martley (New York: Christian Literature, 1893), 6:232. See also Jerome, "Epistolae S Hieronymi," *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina*, 22:1050.

⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata, or Miscellanies." In *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, & A. C. Coxe, vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 452.

⁴⁷ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 54.

⁴⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 132.

what is right and what is required, (*Paedagogus* II, 10, 93, 2).⁴⁹ He uses *laikos* in the context of a degenerate lifestyle. The text is a bit uncertain since there are variants in the different manuscripts. Some scholars believe that *laikos* is used in a derogatory sense for what is considered “common.” Other scholars believe that Clement is contrasting *laikos* not with the clergy but with the aristocratic or elite class of society who would not engage in a degenerate lifestyle.⁵⁰

Origen

Origen (c. 185–253) uses the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion to create his *Hexapla*. Apart from this use of *laikos* which he reproduces from other authors, Origen uses the term in one passage in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*. At the time of Origen’s writing there were common names and duties for the ministry of the church which he called *kleros*⁵¹ or the “clergy class.” Even though there were different grades within the ordained ministry and Origen speaks of them often, it is significant to note that he used the term *laikos* only two times. He does not set the laity in opposition to the clergy so he does not present the church as a clergy/laity dichotomy.⁵²

Their offices will not profit them. Others have also discussed these matters before us, and since we do not reject their discussion, we are bringing it up publicly with gratitude, not as having found it ourselves, but as having received a good lesson. If

⁴⁹ O. Stählin and Ursula Treu, eds., *Protrepicus und Paedagogus, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller Der Ersten Jahrhunderte*. vol. 1 of Clemens Alexandrinus (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 213. English translation from Osborne, *Ministry*, 132.

⁵⁰ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 54. See also Osborne, *Ministry*, 133.

⁵¹ Cf. In his commentary on Ps. 82, Luther writes, “To be sure, the apostles did, at first, go into other men’s houses and preach there. But they had a command and were ordained and called and sent to preach the Gospel in all places; as Christ said (Mark 16:15): “Go into all the world and preach to all creatures.” Since then, however, no one has had this general apostolic command; but every bishop or pastor has had his definite diocese or parish. For this reason St. Peter (1 Pet. 5:3) calls them κλήρους, that is, ‘parts,’ indicating that to each of them a part of the people has been committed, as Paul writes to Titus also (Titus 1:5). No one else, no stranger shall undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent.” *LW* 13:64–65.

⁵² Osborne, *Ministry*, 134–36.

we attend to what is written, this word will help both you and us. Some of us suppose there to be by virtue of office some who preside over you such that some want to reach for this office. But know that the *office* does not altogether save. For even many presbyters will be damned; even many laity (*laikoi*) will be proven blessed. Since there are some in the *office* who do not live in a way that they profit and honor the *office*, because of this, say the commentators, it is written: *Their offices will not profit them*. For to *profit* is not the same as to assume a position among the presbyters, but to live in a way worthy of the position, as the word demands. The word also demands that both you and we live in a good way, but if it can be said that *the powerful will be tested in a powerful manner*, more is demanded of me than of the deacon, more from the deacon than from the laity (*laikon*), but from him who has undertaken the chief ecclesiastical office itself over all of us even more is demanded.⁵³

Even though Origen distinguishes between the order (*taxis*) of the baptized and the order of the ordained, he does not juxtapose these two orders. Neither does he equate the baptized with the laity but with the royal priesthood. He does not advocate a clergy/lay view of the church. The task of the laity during the time of Origen was to alleviate the priests and levites from all material concerns so that they were able to devote themselves to the service of the altar since this was deemed necessary for the salvation of the people.⁵⁴

Tertullian

Little is known about the life of Tertullian. He was born in AD 160 in Carthage and according to Jerome, he was a priest. In his writings, Tertullian makes a distinction between clergy and the Christian people (*plebs*). He does not use the terms “cleric” and “lay” frequently but he makes a distinction between those who are leaders in the church and those who are not.⁵⁵

Tertullian uses *laicus* in five texts. First we will consider the five texts and then examine Tertullian’s understanding of the laity in light of church leadership.

⁵³ Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah and 1 Kings 28*, ed. John Clark Smith (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 104–5.

⁵⁴ Osborne, *Ministry*, 136, 138; and Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 69.

⁵⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 139; and Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 45.

In *De baptismo* (c. 189–200), Tertullian makes the point that when there is no bishop, priest, or deacon, then the layman is to proclaim the word of God and baptize as necessary.

Of giving it, the chief priest (who is the bishop) has the right: in the next place, the presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop's authority, on account of the honour of the Church, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Beside these, even laymen (*laicis*) have the right; for what is equally received can be equally given. Unless bishops, or priests, or deacons, be on the spot, *other* disciples are called *i.e. to the work*. The word of the Lord ought not to be hidden by any: in like manner, too, baptism, which is equally God's property, can be administered by all. But how much more is the rule of reverence and modesty incumbent on laymen (*laicis*)—seeing that these *powers* belong to their superiors—lest they assume to themselves the *specific* function of the bishop!⁵⁶

In this passage, laymen are Christians other than the bishop, priest, or deacon. Little more than that can be surmised so it is unknown if laymen includes all non-ordained Christians or only a select group.

In *De exhortatione castitatis* (between 204 and 212), Tertullian speaks of presbyters, laics, and *plebs*.

Vain shall we be if we think that what is not lawful for priests is lawful for laics (*laicis*). Are not even we laics (*laici*) priests? It is written: "A kingdom also, and priests to His God and Father, hath He made us." It is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the laity (*plebem*). Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical Order, you offer, and baptize, and are priest, alone for yourself. But where three are, a church is, albeit they be laics (*laici*). For each individual lives by his own faith, nor is there exception of persons with God; since it is not hearers of the law who are justified by the LORD, but doers, according to what the apostle withal says. Therefore, if you have the *right* of a priest in your own person, in cases of necessity, it behooves you to have likewise the *discipline* of a priest whenever it may be necessary to have the right of a priest. If you are a digamist, do you baptize? If you are a digamist, do you offer? How much more capital (a crime) is it for a digamist laic (*laico*) to act as a priest, when the priest himself, if he turn digamist, is deprived of the power of acting the priest.... There is "one God, one faith," one discipline too. So truly is this the case, that unless the laics (*laici*) as well observe the rules which are to guide the choice of presbyters, how will there be presbyters at all, who are chosen to that office from among the laics (*laicis*)?

⁵⁶ Tertullian, "On Baptism." In *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 3:677.

Hence we are bound to contend that the command to abstain from second marriage relates *first* to the laic (*laicum*); so long as no other can be a presbyter than a laic (*laicus*), provided he have been *once for all* a husband.⁵⁷

Tertullian notes that *laics* are priests in that they belong to the royal priesthood, therefore where there are no presbyters the *laics*, in case of necessity, are to carry out the rights of a priest. *Laics* are not equated with the *plebs* but it appears that they are a group among the *plebs* since the church consists of both the Order and the *plebs*.⁵⁸ *Laics* are to have only one wife since presbyters are chosen from among them. In this passage, then, *laics* would not include women because *laics* are non-ordained men who have only been married to one wife. It is from the *laics* that a presbyter is chosen.

In *De fuga in persecutione* (212), Tertullian contrasts the laymen with the ordained. Other than that he gives little information with which to ascertain the meaning of the layman.

Thus ought every servant of God to feel and act, even one in an inferior place, that he may come to have a more important one, if he has made some upward step by his endurance of persecution. But when persons in authority themselves—I mean the very deacons, and presbyters, and bishops—take to flight, how will a layman (*laicus*) be able to see with what view it was said, Flee from city to city?⁵⁹

In *De monogamia* (217), Tertullian indicates that the laity are to be monogamous and that the clergy are drawn from the ranks of the laity.

If he wills us to iterate conjugal connections, how does he maintain that “our seed is called” in the but once married Isaac as its author? How does he make monogamy the base of his disposition of the whole Ecclesiastical Order, if this rule does not

⁵⁷ Tertullian, “On Exhortation to Chastity.” In *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall, The Ante-Nicene Fathers translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 4:54.

⁵⁸ Tertullian gives the example that if three people are gathered they are church, even if those three people are *laics*. Why *laics* and not *plebs*? One might surmise that Tertullian used *laics* because they were the educated among the *plebs* and as the educated they would know Latin and could carry out the Latin rites and liturgy which the vulgar or common Christians would not be able to do.

⁵⁹ Tertullian, “De Fuga in Persecutione.” In *Fathers of the Third Century*, 4:122.

antecedently hold good in the case of laics (*laicis*), from whose ranks the Ecclesiastical Order proceeds?⁶⁰

In *De praescriptione haereticorum* (200), Tertullian gives us scant information to understand the meaning of *laicus*. He uses it in contrast to the presbyter and the duties of that office.

Nowhere is promotion easier than in the camp of rebels, where the mere fact of being there is a foremost service. And so it comes to pass that today one man is their bishop, tomorrow another; today he is a deacon who tomorrow is a reader; today he is a presbyter who tomorrow is a layman (*laicus*). For even on laymen (*laicis*) do they impose the functions of priesthood.⁶¹

During Tertullian's life, Carthage was a flourishing city. Social orders were clearly established as is understood from the frequently used expressions such as *ordo et populus*, or *ordo et plebs*. The people who comprised the various orders were generally the social and political leaders of the community. The political structure had its *ordines* in contrast to the *plebs*. In the church, *episkopi*, *presbyteri*, and *diakoni* became an *ordo* and were called clergy (*kleros*) or the sacred order. The church also had its *ordo* in contrast to its *plebs*. Osborne states that the *plebs* in the church gradually came to be described by the term *laicus*.⁶² He believes this change was already taking place at the time of Tertullian. This change is evident after the decree of Gratian⁶³ in the twelfth century but the lack of evidence would make such a conclusion difficult to uphold before the decree of Gratian, especially at the time of Tertullian.

There are two instances in Tertullian's use of the term which speak against Osborne's statement. In the passage from *De exhortatione castitatis*, Tertullian uses the term *laicus* eight

⁶⁰ Tertullian, "On Monogamy." In *Fathers of the Third Century*, 68.

⁶¹ Tertullian, "The Prescription against Heretics." In *Latin Christianity*, 263.

⁶² Osborne, *Ministry*, 141–42; and Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 49–51.

⁶³ *Decretum Gratiani* (C. 7, c. 12, q. 1), Gratian wrote that there are two kinds of Christians—the clergy who serve in the divine office, prayer, and contemplation, and the laity (*laici*) who serve in the world. See Friedberg and Richter, eds., *Corpus juris canonici*, 678.

times. Yet when he contrasts the priests with the people he does not use the term *laicus* but *plebs*—“difference between the Order and the laity (*plebem*).” If *laicus* meant *plebs*, he could have easily used *laicus* but he did not. In addition, it was not from the *plebs* but from the ranks of the *laicus* that the clergy were chosen as Tertullian notes in *De monogamia*— “in the case of laics (*laicis*), from whose ranks the Ecclesiastical Order proceeds.” In this context Tertullian uses *laicus* to refer to a particular group of men, not to all Christians. Nowhere in his writings does he give the title *laicus* to women.⁶⁴

The Didascalia Apostolorum

The term *kleros*, clergy, does not appear in this document so the concern about the clergy/laity distinction in the early church is not supported by this document.⁶⁵ The term *laicus* is used multiple times in the *Didascalia*. Select passages have been chosen to define the term.

And in your congregations in the holy churches hold your assemblies with all decent order, and appoint the places for the brethren (*fratribus*) with care and gravity. And for the presbyters let there be assigned a place in the eastern part of the house; and let the bishop's throne be set in their midst, and let the presbyters sit with him. And again, let the lay men (*virii laici*) sit in another part of the house toward the east. For so it should be, that in the eastern part of the house the presbyters sit with the bishops, and next the lay men (*laicos*), and then the women that when you stand up to pray, the rulers may stand first, and after them the lay men (*virii laici*), and then the women also.⁶⁶

This first passage is in the context of worship. It states that the presbyters sit on the east side of the house and the bishop's throne is placed in the middle of the presbyters. Then it speaks of a definite place for the laymen and a definite place for the women to sit in worship so they are facing east. Each person was to stay in his or her own given place. The men, the women, and the

⁶⁴ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 51.

⁶⁵ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 101.

⁶⁶ R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), 56.

elderly were all seated separately. The youth would remain standing unless there was room then they were allowed to sit down. The term *laicus* is used for the men but not for the women,⁶⁷ children, or elderly. When instructions are given concerning women the author uses terms such as “women,” the feminine form of “Christian,” “Christian woman,” “widow,” or “women deacons.”⁶⁸

The bishop was the manager of the resources of the church. He was the *patronus* for all the Christians under his care. The term *laicus* is used for the men who gave tithes to the bishop. The laity, who gave the tithes and offerings to the bishop were Christian men who were the financial managers of their own households.⁶⁹

One reason why a woman was not numbered among the laity is because she was subject to her husband. Her husband was the head and she was the body as Christ is the head of the church. She participated in worship and the eucharist always with her separate or proper place. She was a member of all of the baptized people of God without being a lay Christian. Most often, in terms of provision of daily needs, if she was young she depended on her father, if she was married she relied on her husband, and if she was a widow she looked for provision from the bishop. Women were not included in either group—the laity or the clergy.⁷⁰

The second passage from the *Didascalia* supports the same conclusion as the first passage.

And to those who question them let them (the widows) make answer only in refutation of idols and concerning the unity of God. But concerning punishment and reward, and the kingdom of the name of Christ, and His dispensation, neither a

⁶⁷ Cf. Osborne, *Ministry*, 148. Osborne reads the passage with *laicus* applying both to the men and women.

⁶⁸ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 101.

⁶⁹ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 103. On p. 116, Faivre writes, “A heretical bishop, presbyter or deacon could be readmitted to the church if he came back and did penance, but only to the lay communion.”

Cyprian speaks of a bishop who had erred and was removed from office and was not even a layman. Regarding the bishop he states, “that Evaristus from being a bishop has now not remained even a layman.” (Letter 55, 11.1). Cyprian of Carthage. “The Epistles of Cyprian.” *Fathers of the Third Century*, 5:325.

⁷⁰ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 101–4.

widow nor a layman (*laicus*) ought to speak; for when they speak without the knowledge of doctrine, they will bring blasphemy upon the word. For our Lord likened the word of His tidings to mustard; but mustard, unless it be skillfully tempered, is bitter and sharp to those who use it. Wherefore our Lord said in the Gospel, to widows and to all the laity (*laicis*): *Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample upon them and turn against you and rend you* [Mt 7.6].⁷¹

There are several long passages in the *Didascalia* which describe the role of the widow.

Remarriage was not considered an option among third century Christians so a way was needed to provide means to widows so they would not be obligated to remarry for financial reasons. The widow, along with the orphans, poor, and strangers, was one of those for whom the bishop provided from the common treasury. In return the widow would devote her time to prayer for those who gave of their material goods to the bishop. The *Didascalia* clearly notes that widows and the laity are not to teach. Since they are mentioned separately it indicates that the widows are not the laity.

The third passage, which comes from chapter nine of the *Didascalia*, explains the duties of the laity.

But if anyone wish to honour the presbyters also, let him give them a double (portion), as to the deacons; for they ought to be honoured as the Apostles, and as the counsellors of the bishop, and as the crown of the Church; for they are the moderators and councillors of the Church. But if there be also a lector, let him too receive with the presbyters. To every order, therefore, let everyone of the laity (*laicis*) pay the honour which is befitting him, with gifts and presents and with the respect due to his worldly condition.⁷²

This chapter is addressed to the laity and states that they are to set aside their first fruits and tithes to give them to the Lord through the bishop. The laity possessed the material goods of the world and were to honor the bishop by giving him an honorarium. They were not to appear

⁷¹ Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 63.

⁷² Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 37.

before God empty-handed (Exod. 23:15).⁷³ The laity were to understand that their giving to the bishop in no way gave them power over the bishop.⁷⁴ Their reward is in heaven. On earth they honor the bishop with their gifts but they are not to judge the way in which the bishop administers the common treasury of goods.

For thou art commanded to give, but he to dispense. And thou shalt require no account of the bishop, nor observe him, how he dispenses and discharges his stewardship, or when he gives, or to whom, or where, or whether well or ill, or whether he gives fairly; for he has One who will require, even the Lord God, who delivered this stewardship into his hands and held him worthy of the priesthood of so great an office.⁷⁵

The *Didascalia* was concerned that the laity wanted to participate in the management of the church's finances or at least give advice on how the material possessions of the church are distributed.⁷⁶ The *Didascalia*'s view was not the one that endured, due to the fact that both bishops and deacons were tempted to misuse funds.

The term "brother" is used frequently throughout the *Didascalia*, as seen in the first passage above. It is used far more frequently than *laicus* and it refers to "all those who have been baptized, but not *episkopos*, presbyters or deacon."⁷⁷ As already noted, *laicus* was not used to refer to all the baptized. It does not include women, children, or elderly. Since the laity are those who possess the world's goods and are to give an honorarium to the bishop, the *laicus* are the men among the "brothers" who manage their household finances.

⁷³ Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 42.

⁷⁴ There is some speculation that this may have been the concern of Clement of Rome when he uses "layman" and "lay precepts."

⁷⁵ Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 42.

⁷⁶ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 89–91.

⁷⁷ Osborne, *Ministry*, 149.

High Patristic Period: AD 324 to 731

In the writings from this period, the same definition of *laikos/laicus* is given as during the early patristic period. Canon XLIV from the Synod of Laodicea (363–364) states that women were not permitted to approach the altar. The commentary of Zonaras⁷⁸ regarding this canon shows that women were not counted among the laity. “If it is prohibited to laymen (*laikois avdrasiv*) to enter the Sanctuary by the lxixth canon of the Sixth Synod [i.e. Quinisext], much more are women forbidden to do so who are unwillingly indeed, but yet truly, polluted by the monthly flux of blood.”⁷⁹

Gregory the Great instituted a sevenfold Litany, *septiformis Litania*, in order to strengthen the faith of the Christians in the face of pestilence. There were seven processions or “Litanies” each composed of a distinct order of persons. Each order went forth from a different church and all seven processions arrived together at a designated church where a service was conducted. Six of these orders of people were distinct from the seventh order, the laity. Not only clergy but also women, children, monks, nuns, and paupers are not included among the laity (*laici*).⁸⁰

Canon LXXVII of the Council in Trullo (c. 691/2) makes a distinction between laymen and other Christian men.

It is not right that those who are dedicated to religion, whether clerics or ascetics, should wash in the bath with women, nor should any Christian man or layman (*laikon*) do so. For this is severely condemned by the heathens. But if any one is

⁷⁸ John Zonaras was a twelfth-century Byzantine chronicler and theologian who lived in Constantinople and held high offices under the emperor. After the emperor died Zonaras became a monk and wrote books.

⁷⁹ G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, eds., *Syntagma ton theion kai hieron kanonon*, (Athens, Greece: G. Chartophylakos, 1852), 3:212. The English translation is from “The Canons of the Synod Held in the City of Laodicea, in Phrygia Pacatiana.” In *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, trans. H. R. Percival (New York: Scribner, 1900), 14:153.

⁸⁰ Migne, ed., *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus*, 75:528–29, see also 75:79–80, 76:1311–14. Cf. W. H. Karlslake, *The Litany of the English Church: Considered in Its History, Its Plan, and the Manner in Which It Is Intended to Be Used* (London: B. M. Pickering, 1876), 49–50; and J. Barmby, “The Book of Pastoral Rule, and Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great: Prefatory Note,” in *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, ed. P. Schaff & H. Wace, Vol. 12b (New York: Christian Literature, 1895), xvi–xvii.

caught in this thing, if he is a cleric let him be deposed; if a layman (*laikos*), let him be cut off.⁸¹

From early on in the history of the church, there was a clear distinction between clerics, monks, and laymen but it is not certain when each of these groups emerged as a distinct order.⁸² Canon LVIII of the Council of Trullo (692) suggests that at the time of this council there was an order of laymen.

None of those who are in the order of laymen (*laikois tetagmenwn*) may distribute the Divine Mysteries to himself if a bishop, presbyter, or deacon be present. But whoso shall dare to do such a thing, as acting contrary to what has been determined shall be cut off for a week and thenceforth let him learn not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.⁸³

There is a wide range of Christian writings during this period and there were a few key issues which affected the meaning and status of the laity.⁸⁴ Christians were struggling to find a way to exist within the Roman empire. With the edict of Constantine such a mode of co-existence was given but it was a mode of toleration. With Constantine's reign, a competition ensued between the Christians and the pagans in Roman society. When Christianity became the imperial church, under Theodosius the ecclesiastical leadership was pressing the imperial leadership not just for toleration but rather suppression of Graeco-Roman pagan religious practices. This caused turmoil in how the church leaders and imperial leaders interacted. The focus was on one church and one empire which influenced how the church was structured and it

⁸¹ G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, eds., *Syntagma ton theion*, 484. English translation from "The Canons of the Council in Trullo," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:399. This canon was a reiteration of Canon XXX from the Council of Laodicea (c. 364). During the twelfth century, Gratian in *Decretum* (P. 1, D. LXXXI, c. xxviii), removed the word *laikos/laicus* from the canon so it reads *omnino Christianum*. See Emil Friedberg and Richter, *Corpus juris canonici*, 288.

⁸² Constable, *Three Studies*, 268.

⁸³ G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, eds., *Syntagma ton theion*, 437. English translation from Schaff, "The Canons of the Council in Trullo," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, trans., Percival, 392.

⁸⁴ Osborne, *Ministry*, 163.

confessed its theological beliefs. This period ends with the death of Pope Gregory II, which marked the beginning of the separation of Rome, the new center of the Christian world, from the Byzantine empire.⁸⁵ The church leaders chose to follow a course whereby they formed a strong working relationship with imperial Roman government. The question was not whether or not they should do this but rather one of how cozy they should become.⁸⁶

Basil of Caesarea, during the fourth century, was concerned because the laymen were joining the ranks of clergy in droves in order to avoid being called up for military service or in order to be exempt from paying taxes on their wealth and property.⁸⁷ Abuse of clerical immunity from secular jurisdiction became common because the test of membership of the clergy was hard to apply so eventually literacy became the criterion. In 329 Constantine did not allow clergy to be recruited from the ranks of the *decuriones* who were wealthy persons who could contribute to public offices. This limited recruitment of the clergy to the lower middle class.⁸⁸

In the fourth century *senior laici* were wielding power within the local church structures. The *Codex canonum Africae ecclesiae* states that “in Catholic Churches, they took precedence over the *clerici*, coming immediately after the deacons.”⁸⁹

Their functions were both administrative and disciplinary. Among the former duties, they cooperated with the bishop in administering and safeguarding church property.... The *seniores* of Citra in Numidia and Apthunga in Byzacena seem to have formed an administrative council for their churches.... Apart from these duties

⁸⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 169–71.

⁸⁶ Osborne, *Ministry*, 181–82. See also Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 142, 157–58.

⁸⁷ The situation was not unlike that of the LCMS declaring teachers to be ministers of religion in order to grant them reprieve from military service and exemption from certain taxes. See *Proceedings*, 1953, 323–24.

⁸⁸ Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 158–59, 190–91.

⁸⁹ William Hugh Clifford Frend, “*Seniores Laici* and the Origins of the Church in North Africa,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 12, no. 2 (October 1961): 283.

were others of a judicial and disciplinary character, which allowed the *seniores* a check even on the conduct of their bishop.⁹⁰

The *seniores laici* signal a new distinction or category in church structure. Now there are both *laici* and *seniores laici* in the church. The *seniores laici* were in a privileged position. They were well educated and had aristocratic family ties, wealth, and governmental positions. Their nobility, wealth, governmental positions, and education opened the door for their positions in the administration of the church. Over time, however, this group faded away.⁹¹

The rise of monastic life within the Christian church had a tremendous effect on the life of some Christians. It gave rise to an “alternative church” or an alternative style of Christian life. The “religious,” as they were called, were in a special class of Christian training or discipleship which some referred to as a *tertium ordo*, or *tertium quid*. It was this category of *tertium quid* that clouded the distinction of the incipient dyadic notion of a *klerikos/laikos* church. The monks and nuns, were neither clerics nor laity but considered to be in a separate class.⁹²

Medieval Period: AD 700 to 1400

From AD 285–632 there was an upsurge in the use and value of the written word which is seen in the numerous legal documents of this time period. The change was fueled by ideological and practical developments: a centralized and larger bureaucratic Roman Empire; a Roman

⁹⁰ Frend, “Seniores Laici,” 284.

⁹¹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 184–85.

⁹² Osborne, *Ministry*, 233–34, 258. Cf. H. R. Percival, “The Canons of the 318 Holy Fathers Assembled in the City of Nice, in Bithynia,” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14: 40. Nicaea, Canon 19, “CONCERNING the Paulianists who have flown for refuge to the Catholic Church, it has been decreed that they must by all means be rebaptized; and if any of them who in past time have been numbered among their clergy should be found blameless and without reproach, let them be rebaptized and ordained by the Bishop of the Catholic Church; but if the examination should discover them to be unfit, they ought to be deposed. Likewise in the case of their deaconesses, and generally in the case of those who have been enrolled among their clergy, let the same form be observed. And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity [eas inter laicos deputari].”

education system that held literary knowledge and literary expression in high esteem as evidence of the right to rule; the dominance of the Christian religion; the switch from the scroll to the codex and from papyrus to parchment; new forms of script and page layout that aided reading especially for less experienced readers.⁹³ This set the stage for education during the medieval period.

Greek was the common language of the East. It was also used by the educated classes of Rome. However, Latin was adopted as the language of all the nations of the West and it became the common literary language of all Europe for fourteen centuries. In Africa, Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, anyone who could read at all read Latin.⁹⁴ Boys were taught the Latin alphabet so they could learn to read. This practice continued throughout the Middle Ages. Students received practice reading from Latin liturgical books such as the psalter. They were able to read and comprehend the Latin liturgy, Latin charters, and Latin literature such as chronicles and saints' lives.⁹⁵ The extent of the knowledge and use of the Latin language may be the measure of literacy during the Middle Ages. It was the laity who were the educated or literate, not the common people.

Among many problems in the history of medieval culture one of the most obscure is the question of how extensively and how deeply a knowledge of Latin obtained among the laity. By the laity, of course, is here meant the upper class of medieval society, or the noblesse; for the illiteracy of the common people is not open to question.⁹⁶

⁹³ Warren Brown et al., eds., *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66.

⁹⁴ Edward Lewes Cutts, "Jerome," in *Saint Jerome* (New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.), 166–67.

⁹⁵ Alfred Haverkamp and Karl Leyser, eds., *England and Germany in the High Middle Ages* (London: German Historical Institute, 1996), 41.

⁹⁶ Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity*, v. See also James R. Ginther, *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* (Louisville: John Knox, 2009), 115, "Though church leaders continued to use *laicus* to identify nonclerical and nonmonastic people, by the seventh century the term mainly referred to those who engaged in

Roman schools were in existence in Gaul until the early seventh century, however, already by the fourth century there was a serious decline in education, even among the nobility of Roman society. Libraries were neglected or destroyed by decay or dispersion. They were “shut forever like tombs.”⁹⁷ Eventually the task of education would be thrust upon the monasteries and cathedral schools. Even with this change in education, the laity were not completely ignorant of Latin as is often surmised. It is generally true that from the ninth to the twelfth century, education, specifically reading and writing, were becoming rare talents which were most commonly practiced among the clergy. However, there are a number of exceptions found among the nobility, that is, the laity.

In the ninth century more and more laymen did not feel any need to study Latin and obtain an education in the liberal arts. In addition, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find a school to attend even if they desired an education. The church was reluctant to admit men or women, who were not studying for a religious order, to its schools for fear that worldly ideas would infiltrate and hinder those in the convents and monasteries who were preparing for a religious life. This concern, however, did not stop the church from educating the laity and some of the common people also.⁹⁸ It was the cathedral schools more than the monastic schools which sought to educate the general populace. The focus of education was the liberal arts which brought about a revival of the *trivium*⁹⁹ and *quadrivium*.¹⁰⁰

warfare. In this sense, laity were the landowners and thus had some political power.” Cf. Constable, *Three Studies*, 314–15.

⁹⁷ Thompson, *Literacy of the Laity*, 1–2, 28.

⁹⁸ Thompson, *Literacy of the Laity*, 38.

⁹⁹ In the medieval university, the trivium was the lower division of the seven liberal arts, and comprised grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The upper division in the liberal arts was called the quadrivium and comprised Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.

¹⁰⁰ Osborne, *Ministry*, 296.

The monastery of Saint-Gall also admitted laymen into its school. We are told that Notker Balbulus (d. 912) educated boys who were to inherit their paternal estates, in other words, laymen, as well as those who were to enter the Church; and his successor, Tutilo, taught music to the sons of the nobility in a place designated by the abbot.¹⁰¹

Carolingian reforms took place from the late eighth century until the tenth century. Among other reforms, they brought about liturgical renewal for the church. Unlike in the east, the western church allowed only three languages to be used in the liturgical rites: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. With the decrease of Latin as a common language of study, the liturgies became less intelligible to the laity since the vernacular languages were not yet in use in the liturgical rites. The education which the laity received was first-rate, however fewer noble and aristocratic youth received an education. The general masses or common people became more illiterate which meant that participation in political and ecclesiastical structures was diminished. There was a separation between an ecclesiastical and aristocratic group who had learned Latin, and a general populace who spoke a variety of European dialects but not Latin.¹⁰²

As education continued to develop in the tenth and eleventh centuries the scope was broadened to include law, history, rhetoric, and dialectics. More people began to have access to education so learning was no longer reserved for only the monks and clergy, or the nobility.

However, there was not yet a general education of the masses:

But one can surely speak of a growing number of educated *laici*, and of an educated sector in the *plebs*. With education comes, however, a demand for position, status, and involvement in decision making.... Nonetheless, the rise of an educated lay stratum of society became, as the middle ages moved into the reformation period, a challenge to clerical authority.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Thompson, *Literacy of the Laity*, 39.

¹⁰² Osborne, *Ministry*, 305–7.

¹⁰³ Osborne, *Ministry*, 297.

In Germany, around AD 1230, more and more laymen were obtaining a liberal arts education. This may have been influenced by the fact that education was no longer solely dependent upon learning the Latin language because the vernacular was slowly becoming the language for education.¹⁰⁴

In the Medieval Period, the marriage between kingdom and priesthood continued in the west. At Rome, Leo III had a mosaic placed in the apse at Santa Susanna with the pope (Leo) on the right and the king (Charles the Great) on the left. The understanding was that not only is the authority of the pope from God but the authority of the king is also from God. This led to concerns regarding supremacy. The position of the king was no longer seen as that of a lay person but as a unique imperial person who presided over both kingdom and church.¹⁰⁵

This struggle for supremacy brought about the investiture controversy. Investiture was the formal acknowledgment of a bishop's (or abbot's) election by a secular authority. This ritual began in the ninth century as part of the consecration ceremony. The candidate was presented to the king and received a crosier (and a ring which was added during the eleventh century). Then the archbishop would preside at the rite of consecration. The investiture was a public proclamation that the king would protect the bishop whom he had chosen. Bishops and abbots, before being selected for office were often part of the laity, the ruling nobility. The eldest son would inherit the title to the throne so younger siblings often were given positions of authority in the church. This was quite common, especially if the family established a proprietary church or abbey on their estate.¹⁰⁶

Investiture was the formal way in which the materials of a diocese were transferred to the

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, *Literacy of the Laity*, 97–98.

¹⁰⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 286–89.

¹⁰⁶ Ginther, *Westminster Handbook*, 97.

bishop's household from the temporary control of the imperial crown. This became a difficulty when the Roman Emperor, Henry III, intervened in the papal elections in the 1040s in order that the Roman noble families would not take the papal throne again. Gregory the Great worked to end the practice of investiture in Rome. In 1059 a church council in Rome declared that the nobility would no longer select the popes and it created the College of Cardinals as a body of electors which consisted entirely of church officials. The church was able to remove the emperor from electing the bishop on the basis that investiture was simony which meant that the emperor was purchasing favor with the bishop-elect or the bishop-elect himself was purchasing his office from the emperor. The conflict over investiture lasted for almost seventy years until finally an agreement was reached between the imperial and papal crowns with the Concordat of Worms in 1122.¹⁰⁷ It eliminated lay investiture but left room for the laity (nobility) to have unofficial but significant influence in the selection process of bishops.

The birth of the Renaissance, which sparked new enthusiasm for classical literature, learning, and art, along with the economic revolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries produced the "urban proletariat," which was the forerunner of the humanist and the citizen (*civis*). This intellectual and financial freedom widened the gap between the clergy and other Christians. New teachings were promulgated by common Christians which were quickly condemned as heresies by the church. Two main groups during this time were the Waldensians and the Cathari.¹⁰⁸

The Waldenses encouraged Christians to read the Bible in the vernacular. This gave cause for the hierarchy of the church to forbid common Christians to read the Bible in the vernacular

¹⁰⁷ Ginther, *Westminster Handbook*, 97, 168.

¹⁰⁸ J. Gilchrist, "Laity in the Middle Ages." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2003.
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3407706396/laity-middle-ages.html>.

lest they misunderstand the text and promote heresies. The Synod of Toulouse in 1229 did not allow common Christians to possess any copies of the books of the Bible except the Psalter. The Synod of Tarragona in 1234 ordered that all vernacular versions of the Bible were to be brought to the bishop and burned. The Synod of Tarragona in 1317 did now allow the Beghards, Beguines, and tertiaries of the Franciscan order to possess theological books in the vernacular. Pope Alexander III, in 1400, condemned all translations of the Bible into the vulgar or common language. Ferdinand and Isabella (1474–1516) forbade the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the possession of vernacular versions of the Bible. The third Synod of Oxford (1408) prohibited both the translation of the Bible into English and the reading of an English Bible. In Germany, Charles IV issued an edict in 1369 against translating and reading of the Bible in the German language. Berthold, the archbishop of Mainz, in 1485 and 1486, put forth an edict prohibiting the publishing of any religious books in German because the German language was not able to correctly convey religious ideas without the ideas being profaned.¹⁰⁹

The medieval church provided welfare services such as hospitals, aide to the poor, pilgrims, and travelers, and education. After 1300, in light of the economic and social changes, the church was slow in responding to the materialization of the new concept of *civis*, citizen, which overshadowed *laicus* in the societal use of the terms. The common people went from being subjects of a monarch or nobleman to being citizens of a city. Cities had their own law, courts, and officials. Citizens were subject to the city's law and participated in choosing the city officials. Cities were defensive entities, and the citizens were "economically competent to bear

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Macauley Jackson, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, eds., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 2:85. See also John Cumming, *Apocalyptic Sketches: Or, Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (London: Hall, 1852), 14.

arms, to equip and train themselves.”¹¹⁰ One aspect in how the church was slow in responding to this concept was that the church was lax in providing education for the general populace. This does not mean that the laity were uneducated. The laity were sometimes considered illiterate only in the sense that they did not know Latin. From the twelfth century onward, laymen were educated in Roman law schools and universities. They flourished and were prominent figures in society.¹¹¹

After 1350, reading and writing gradually increased throughout the Middle Ages. During the late Middle Ages, business became more complicated and intricate and administration became more differentiated so there was increased demand for the written word and written figures for administrative use. The church looked with contempt on illiteracy since Christianity is a religion of the book, the Holy Scriptures. During the Reformation, Martin Luther continued to encourage reading and writing with the teaching of *Sola Scriptura*.¹¹²

Luther was not one to jettison Latin from the curriculum of the schools. Under his supervision, the schoolboys continued to learn Latin.¹¹³ It was of benefit to all students but especially those who would someday be ordained as Lutheran pastors. Luther also understood that Latin was not a common language anymore. Since the common Christians spoke German, it

¹¹⁰ Max Weber, “Citizenship in Ancient and Medieval Cities,” in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 44.

¹¹¹ Gilchrist, “Laity in the Middle Ages.”

¹¹² Haverkamp and Vollrath, eds., *England and Germany*, 87–88.

¹¹³ Cf. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483–1521*, trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 40; “Classical Latin and Greek would win the day against barbarism. Marschalk’s activity undoubtedly strengthened the position in Erfurt of Latin, Greek and Hebrew philology. The city had already become a sort of outpost of humanism in northern Germany;”

Cf. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*, trans. James L. Schaaf, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 138–40. “Unfortunately, little is known about the condition of Wittenberg schools in 1522 and 1523. According to a later report, the boys’ school had been closed during the Wittenberg disturbances, because Karlstadt no longer thought much of academic learning, ascribing theological competence to the laity.”

was most helpful for them to learn the Bible if they could read it in the vernacular.

This is what we do to train the schoolboys in the Bible. Every day of the week they chant a few Psalms in Latin before the lesson, as has been customary at Matins hitherto. For as we stated above, we want to keep the youth well versed in the Latin Bible. After the Psalms, two or three boys in turn read a chapter from the Latin New Testament, depending on the length. Another boy then reads the same chapter in German to familiarize them with it and for the benefit of any layman who might be present and listening. Thereupon they proceed with an antiphon to the German lesson mentioned above. After the lesson the whole congregation sings a German hymn, the Lord's Prayer is said silently, and the pastor or chaplain reads a collect and closes with the *Benedicamus Domino* as usual.¹¹⁴

Luther was dealing with a changing society. Fewer people were learning Latin but more people were well-educated in the vernacular. In addition, the meaning of the term *laicus* was changing.

The change in the meaning of *laicus* began in the twelfth century, when a jurist known as Gratian compiled the canon law into a legal textbook which became known as the *Decretum Gratiani* or the *Concordia discordantium canonum*.¹¹⁵ Gratian's description of the laity raises the issue facing Christians during the Gregorian reforms. The concern was in regard to the appropriate venues available to Christians to arrive at perfection in their life with God. In the early Middle Ages Christians, even married couples, could convert and live their lives for God whereby they followed a monastic profession either at home or in a community. Some Christians adopted the penitential life which was required of public sinners whereby they wore the penitential habit, retreated from public life, and abstained from secular trades.¹¹⁶

During the fifth through the seventh centuries conversion to cenobitic monasticism¹¹⁷ was

¹¹⁴ "The German Mass and Order of Service," in *LW* 53:69. See also, H. H. Kramm, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 19–20.

¹¹⁵ The *Decretum Gratiani* comprises the first part of a collection of six legal texts. Together these texts became known as the *Corpus juris canonici*. This was the Code of Canon Law for the canonists of the Roman Catholic Church until 1918 when it was replaced by a revised Code of Canon Law.

¹¹⁶ Duane J. Osheim, "Conversion, *Conversi*, and the Christian Life in Late Medieval Tuscany," *Speculum* 58, no. 2 (April 1983): 368–69.

¹¹⁷ A monastic tradition that emphasizes community life.

loosely defined. The terms *poenitentes*, *conversi*, and *religiosi virsi* were used interchangeably and often confused. The status of the penitents was questioned by the church councils and synods because there was concern about the opportunities for abuse.¹¹⁸ The special status of being a penitent or *conversi* was attractive to the pious Christians so they continued to convert to this Third Order or religious order. However, the concern of the church continued to grow because of the isolated penitents living at home or the *conversi* meeting without clerical supervision were violating the church's norms for order.¹¹⁹

In order to curb the violations of the order of the church, Gratian, in the *Decretum Gratiani* (C. 7, c. 12, q. 1), wrote that there are two kinds of Christians. There are the clergy whose lives are given in service to the divine office, prayer, and contemplation, and the laity (*laici*) whose lives are given in service in the world.¹²⁰ His goal was to protect the freedom of the church and

¹¹⁸ Osheim, "Conversion, *Conversi*, and the Christian Life," 370–71; "In northern Italy and especially in Tuscany there were significant material and spiritual advantages to be gained from conversion. At a time when communal governments increasingly claimed the right to regulate and tax their citizens and subjects, *conversus* status as an exempt cleric brought obvious benefits. In Piedmont and in the Bolognese countryside, *conversi* were viewed as little more than tax evaders. Tuscan chroniclers regularly complained about false clerics, the noble *frati guarenti*, and Third Order Mendicants who used claims of clerical immunities to shield themselves from communal courts, financial exactions, and military service. They often lived with their families, practiced trades, and disposed of their material possessions, the only obvious evidence of their conversion being a distinctive habit. The material gains were neatly balanced by a series of spiritual benefits. *Conversi* had earned a religious habit and the right, the important right, of burial in that habit. They were sometimes included in the necrologies and prayers of the monks. Like monks, they could claim to have embarked on a road that would lead to a special *imitatio Christi*. And finally they were members of a religious community, but freed from the rigors of the demanding system of monastic worship."

¹¹⁹ Osheim, "Conversion, *Conversi*, and the Christian Life," 369–71. "Before the mid-eleventh century a monastic *conversus* was one who had entered the community as an adult, often lacking the education necessary for participation in the monastery's liturgical life. The choicest positions in the monastery often were reserved for the *oblati*, monks who had been given to the monastery as children and educated in monastic traditions. *Conversi* served as they could, by singing Psalms or carrying lanterns for the abbot as he went to night offices."

¹²⁰ Friedberg and Richter, *Corpus juris canonici*, 678; "Duo sunt genera Christianorum. Est autem genus unum, quod mancipatum diuino officio, et deditum contemplationi et orationi, ab omni strepita temporalium cessare conuenit, ut sunt clerici, et Deo deuoti, uidelicet conuersi. Κληρος enim grece latine sors. Inde huiusmodi homines uocantur clerici, id est sorte electi. Omnes enim Deus in suos elegit. Hi namque sunt reges, id est se et alios regentes in uirtutibus, et ita in Deo regnum habent. Et hoc designat corona in capite. Hanc coronam habent ab institutione Romanae ecclesiae in signo regni, quod in Christo expectatur. Rasio uero capitis est temporalium omnium depositio. Illi enim uictu et uestitu contenti nullam inter se proprietatem habentes, debent habere omnia communia. §. I. Aliud uero est genus Christianorum, ut sunt laici, λαός enim est populus. His licet temporalia possidere, sed non nisi ad

also preserve the ordering of society. He argued that the distinctions between the estates of the laity and clergy were not new inventions but could be traced back to St. Jerome. Gratian spoke mainly of the duties of the clergy and had little to say regarding the responsibilities of the laity. The clergy were to devote themselves to salvation by imitating Christ. Laity were certainly able to gain salvation, but their duties were to get married, till the earth, pronounce judgment on disputes in court and give witness in court, and give offerings and tithes to the Lord.¹²¹ The distinctions made by Gratian were constantly blurred and the rights and privileges which belonged to the clerical orders were persistently imitated by the laity.

Following Gratian's decree of two kinds of Christians, the Council of Constance, in 1415, used the same distinction when it forbade Christians from receiving the sacrament under both kinds. "Although this sacrament was received by the faithful under both kinds in the early church, nevertheless later it was received under both kinds only by those confecting it, and by the laity [*laicis*] only under the form of bread." Again, it stated that "no priest ... may communicate the people [*populum*] under the forms of both bread and wine."¹²² "Laity" is used interchangeably with "people" in the decree regarding the sacrament. Laity refers not to the nobility alone but to all Christians who are not priests. Almost 20 years later the Council of Basel repeated the same prohibition.¹²³ Shortly thereafter, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) reiterated the same decree using the same distinction between clergy and laity.

usum. Nichil enim miserius est quam propter nummum Deum contempnere. His concessum est uxorem ducere, terram colere, inter uirum et uirum iudicare, causas agere, oblationes super altaria ponere, decimas reddere, et ita saluari poterunt, si uicia tamen benefaciendo euitauerint."

¹²¹ Osheim, "Conversion, Conversi, and the Christian Life," 368–69. Yves Congar believes that Gratian's definition of the laity is a concession to human weakness (His licet.... His concessum est) and that the laity, because they are involved in temporal things, are denied an active role in sacred things; see Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 12.

¹²² Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:419.

¹²³ Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 2:373–74.

1 — If anyone says that all Christ’s faithful should receive both forms of the most holy sacrament of the eucharist by command of God or as necessary to salvation: let him be anathema.

2 — If anyone says the holy catholic church was not led by proper causes and reasons to communicate laity, and even clergy who are not consecrating, in the one form of bread alone, and has erred in the matter: let him be anathema.¹²⁴

This decree uses “laity” (*laicos*) and “Christ’s faithful” (*singulos christifideles*) as interchangeable terms. Laity represents more than the class of Christian nobility. It stands for all Christians who are not clerics.

At the time of Trent, tonsure marked the entry into the “clerical state,” even though tonsure was not an ordination, with the result that those who were ordained and those who were clerics were not coterminous. In the sixteenth century, the term “lay” was not used technically as the opposite of “ordained.” It was used as the opposite of cleric.¹²⁵

Reformation Period

Luther’s Writings

Luther was not ignorant of the changing meaning of *laicus* as he artfully navigated the discussions. For him the focus was not on the laity but on the Gospel and how it informed the meaning of “laity.” When appropriate for his readers or hearers, Luther continued to use “laity” (*laicus/laie*) to mean nobility. In this use, the laity were often in contrast to the common folk or common people.

In 1521, Luther wrote the *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*. This was Luther’s response to the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine*. The bull condemned forty-one theses from Luther’s writings as being false, offensive, dangerous or subversive of the church’s teaching. Luther was told to recant or face excommunication. Instead of recanting, he proceeded to defend the

¹²⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 727.

¹²⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 42.

condemned theses. In this document, Luther contrasts the clergy with the laity and the common folk.

In Old Testament times also, the spiritual understanding of the law was retained among some of the common people, though it was lost by the high priests and the learned who ought to have preserved it. Thus Jeremiah says [Jer. 5:4f.] that he has found less understanding and justice among the leaders than among the laity (*layen*) and the common folk (*gemeynem volck*). Likewise today, poor peasants and children understand Christ better than pope, bishops, and doctors.¹²⁶

Theologian John Faber, in 1521, wrote against the teachings of Luther. Instead of Luther responding, it was Justus Jonas who penned a reply, especially since he was a newlywed and he was appalled by Faber's defense of the celibacy of the priesthood. Because of Faber, Luther was compelled to study 1 Cor. 7 regarding celibacy and marriage. In 1523, he wrote *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7*. In this document, he makes a distinction between the laity and all Christians. Luther notes that Paul's words were spoken to all Christians, not to the Christian nobility alone.

Paul says here: "I do not command chastity but leave it to your choosing.... All I say is that the unmarried state is a free and fine thing. He who wants to and can do so, let him accept it." Here you see that no snare is to be laid in these matters, nor is anyone to be forced to chastity by commands or vows. It is also certain that Paul addressed these words to all Christians (*allen Christen*) in Corinth and not only to the laity (*Leyen*).¹²⁷

The Diet of Augsburg commenced in 1530. Luther was in refuge at Coburg Castle but was in communication with the representatives at Augsburg. The discussion did not go well so negotiations had been stopped. The Roman Catholics wrote the *Confutatio Pontificia* in response to the *Augsburg Confession*. The dissidents were given six months to accept it. Luther feared that at the end of the sixth month the emperor would use force to bring the evangelicals into submission. In this light, Luther wrote a treatise, *Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His Dear*

¹²⁶ "Defense and Explanation of All the Articles," in *LW* 32:5, 10. WA 7:315.

¹²⁷ "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7," in *LW* 28:ix, 53–54. WA 12:139.

German People, in 1531. He warns the temporal authorities not to collaborate because their authority does not extend over spiritual matters. Luther speaks of the empty confutation which the opponents produced which could easily be refuted by any woman, child, layman, or peasant. Luther uses “laity” to refer to the nobility and distinguishes them from women, children and peasants.

Our people and many godly hearts rejoiced greatly and were wonderfully strengthened when they heard that the opponents with the utmost might and skill they could muster at the time could produce no more than this empty confutation, which—God be praised—a woman, a child, a layman (*leye*), a peasant is now able to refute, buttressed with good arguments from the Scriptures and from truth.¹²⁸

In the German Mass of 1526, Luther suggested that the preaching service on Saturdays be devoted to sermons on St. John’s Gospel. Luther had opportunity to put this into practice. Johannes Bugenhagen, the parish pastor in Wittenberg was called away to help reform the church in Denmark so Luther was given the task of parish and pastoral care in Wittenberg. In his *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, written in 1537, Luther notes that Nicodemus was a layman, meaning he was a nobleman or one of the aristocracy, not one of the common people.

Nicodemus was not one of the chief priests or one of the other priests; he was a pious and influential layman (*leie*), an aristocrat or nobleman among the people, comparable to our counts and knights of today. John says that he was one of the aristocracy, a ruler in the civil government. For the burgomasters were the peers of the princes; therefore the Gospel speaks of them as “rulers” of the people.¹²⁹

Fifteen years after the diet of Nürnberg, Luther saw no hope for reform of the church. An armistice had been signed between the Protestants and Roman Catholics in 1532 with another request for a general council. In 1538, the emperor formed the “Holy League” against the Lutheran Smalcaldic League. This was the impetus for Luther to publish the *Legation of Pope*

¹²⁸ “Dr. Martin Luther’s Warning to His Dear German People,” in *LW* 47:5–6, 22–23. WA 30 III:286.

¹²⁹ “The Gospel of St. John,” in *LW* 22:ix, 276. WA 47:2.

Adrian VI, Sent to the Diet of Nürnberg, in 1538, which spoke of the folly of trusting in papal promises of reform. This document precipitated the *Preface of Dr. Martin Luther [to the German Edition]*, in which Luther continues to demonstrate the foolishness of trusting the papal promises. In doing so, he contrasts the laity, or nobility, with the clergy and the common people.

I still recall the imperial diet at Augsburg in 1518 (twenty years ago now), when Pope Leo and his chamberlain, Clement VII,⁶⁴ devised this roguish scheme for draining all of Germany by means of annates and other ways of swallowing up money, as this little book reports, and then pretended, with unprecedented, shameless lies, that they wanted to make a collection against the Turks; thus the clergy (*geistlichen*) were to give a tenth of their property, the rich laity (*Leien*) should give a twentieth, and the common people (*geringen*) a fiftieth; they thought the German beasts would overlook that reckoning.¹³⁰

The use of “laity” meaning nobility continued throughout Luther’s lifetime. To complicate matters, this was not the only meaning of “laity” which was used during this time period. Luther, as was appropriate for his readers or hearers, also used “laity” as “common Christians” or “ordinary Christians.” The terms “common” and “ordinary” indicate all Christians who are not clerics, which followed the practice from Gratian’s decree.

Luther wrote his *Church Postil* during his refuge at Wartburg. While at Wartburg, he translated the New Testament into German so the people could read the Bible in the vernacular. In addition, he wrote the *Church Postil* to provide homiletical help to the pastors in the exposition of the Gospel. In *The Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, Matthew 2[:1–12]*, written in 1521–22, Luther explains that “laity” has come to mean the secular class or common people.

Paul says that people will come in the last days, which have been with us for many years already; those days will be dangerous, since few will be saved because of the corrupters who with human doctrines and their own babble destroy faith and strangle souls. We should not understand the apostle as speaking of the simple people

¹³⁰ “Preface, Marginal Glosses, and Afterword to Legation of Pope Adrian VI, Sent to the Diet of Nürnberg in 1522: 1538,” in *LW* 60:187–88, 198–99. WA 50:362.

(*gemeynen menschen*) whom we now refer to as the secular class or laity (*leyen*). On the contrary, his words are clear and force us to apply them to the persons with tonsure and cap, the ecclesiastical estate.¹³¹

Luther was concerned about the atrocities of the private mass. He wrote against them in *The Abrogation of the Private Mass* in 1521 and again in 1530 in his *Exhortation to all Clergy Assembled at Augsburg*. In 1533 he addressed them a third time when he wrote *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests*. In this document he teaches that the laity are the ordinary Christians who have been unable to receive both kinds in the Lord's Supper.

Thus they have not only robbed the laity (*Leyen*) of half of the sacrament and even while they were committing such a robbery, have nevertheless celebrated mass, as if it were no sin, but they also have robbed themselves along with others.... The church or ordinary Christians (*gemeine Christen*) who have been unable to receive both kinds are indeed to be excused as the ones who have been betrayed and led astray by the Antichrist who has allowed only one kind to be given them.¹³²

In *A Letter of Dr. Martin Luther Concerning His Book on the Private Mass*, written in 1534, Luther clarifies and confirms the teaching of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. He was dispelling any suspicions that he was adhering to a Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper. In addressing the abuse of the mass, he equates "laity" with "ordinary Christian."

"Mass," however, refers to what the priest does alone at the altar, to which no ordinary Christian (*gemeiner Christ*) or layman (*Leye*) adds anything. For they indeed know that no layman (*Leye*) or ordinary Christian (*gemeiner Christ*) can celebrate mass and they will not allow it. Nor do they allow it to be or to be called a mass when a layman (*Leye*) receives the sacrament; but they (masters of all gods and of the sacrament) alone celebrate mass; all other Christians (*ander Christen*) simply receive the sacrament and do not celebrate mass.¹³³

Luther's *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, written in 1537, stems from his parish and pastoral care in Wittenberg while Johannes Bugenhagen was away in Denmark. In one of his

¹³¹ "The Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, Matthew 2[1-12]," in *LW* 52:ix-x, 212. WA 10 I.1:635.

¹³² "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests," in *LW* 38:144, 205-7. WA 38:244-45.

¹³³ "A Letter of Dr. Martin Luther Concerning His Book on the Private Mass," in *LW* 38:117-18, 226. WA 38:266-67.

sermons, he mentions that the common Christians are called “laity.” His use of the phrase “so-called laity” indicates that he prefers “Christian” instead of “laity” which was in common use.

For if it is true that common Christians (*gemeinen Christen*), the so-called laity (*welche sie Leien heissen*), who have holy Baptism and faith in Christ, cannot be saved by their Baptism and the blood of Christ but, in addition, must purchase the merits and share in the works of the monks, then what purpose does Christ serve with His blood and His Baptism? Or how does this differ from teaching: “Christ, with His suffering, death, and merits, is insufficient for man’s salvation.”¹³⁴

In 1540 Luther went to Dessau to serve as a sponsor at the baptism of Prince Bernard VII of Anhalt. While he was there he preached the *First Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt*. In this sermon he addressed John the Baptist’s call to repentance and the baptism of Christ. He insisted that repentance is not dealing with penitential works but with a confession of sinfulness and that Christ stood in the water as a sinner in the place of sinful humanity, not in regards to his own person. While addressing the lack of repentance on the part of those in religious orders, he uses “laity” to refer to “common Christians.”

The reason is that until now they have enjoyed the reputation and honor (like the Pharisees among the Jews) of being holy people who lived in the spiritual estate, an estate of perfection, in which they could amass so many good works and merits that they would never need all of them for themselves and could share the remainder with the common Christians [*gemeinen Christen*] (whom they called “laymen” [*Leien*] and “secular people”) and thereby merit heaven for them as well. For they claimed that the laity occupied an ill-favored estate in which they could not serve God because they were so burdened with the care of their households and with other business.¹³⁵

Even though Luther continued to use “laity” to mean either the “nobility” or the “common Christians,” as was appropriate for his hearers, he preferred to use the term “Christian” instead of “laity.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ “First Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt Matthew 3:1–17 (1540),” in *LW* 24:ix, 326. WA 46:25.

¹³⁵ “First Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt Matthew 3:1–17,” in *LW* 58:33–34, 40–41. WA 49:117.

¹³⁶ “The Misuse of the Mass,” in *LW* 36:158–59; WA 8:503. See also “The Sermon on the Mount,” in *LW* 21:285–87; “Two Sermons at Weimar, 1522,” in *LW* 51:111–12.

The Lutheran Confessions

Laicus/Laie is used in the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Formula of Concord (both the Epitome and the Solid Declaration), the Smalcald Articles, and the Large Catechism. The Lutheran Confessions mirror Luther's use of "laity." In the Confessions, "laity" is sometimes used to refer to non-ordained or ordinary/common Christians, and at other times to the nobility in contrast to the common Christians.

Controversy had arisen among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession, so the Formula of Concord was written, in a detailed exposition called the Solid Declaration and in a brief and concise presentation called the Epitome, in order to explain the articles in controversy and to reconcile the divided groups in a Christian manner under the direction of God's Word.¹³⁷

The Formula of Concord (Ep, Intro., par. 5) uses "laity" to refer to non-ordained or common Christians. The matters of controversy of which they speak did not pertain to the clergy only but to the salvation of all Christians.

And because these matters also concern the laity and the salvation of their souls, we pledge ourselves also to the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as both catechisms are found in Luther's printed works, as a Bible of the Laity, in which everything is summarized that is treated in detail in Holy Scripture and that is necessary for a Christian to know for salvation.¹³⁸

The above quote has a quasi-chiastic structure. The first half speaks of the laity

¹³⁷ Ep, Intro, 5 in Robert Kolb, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 481–85.

¹³⁸ Ep, Intro., 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 487. D. Lietzmann, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 768.

Latin: "Et quia haec religionis causa etiam ad laicos, quos vocant, spectat eorumque perpetua salus agitur, profiteamur publice nos etiam amplecti Minorem et Maiorem D. Lutheri Catechismos, ut in tomis Lutheri sunt inserti, quod eos quasi laicorum biblia esse censeamus, in quibus omnia illa breviter comprehenduntur, quae in sacra scriptura fusius tractantur et quorum cognitio homini Christiano ad aeternam salutem est necessaria."

German: "Und weil solche Sachen auch den gemeinen Laien und deselben Seelen Seligkeit betreffen, bekennen wir uns auch zu den kleinen und großen Catechismo Doktor Luthers, wie solche beide Catechismi in den Tomis Lutheri verfaßet, als zu der Laien Bibel, dorin alles begriffen, was in Heiliger Schrift weitläufigt gehandelt und einem Christenmenschen zu seiner Seligkeit zu wissen vonnöten ist."

(*laicos/Laien*), the concern for their salvation, and the need to hold fast the catechisms which are the “Bible of the Laity.” The last half reverses the order; for the “Bible of the Laity” which is the summary of Scripture is necessary for a Christian (*homini Christiano/Christenmenschen*) to know for salvation. The structure shows that “laity” and Christian are used interchangeably in this passage.

Since the Epitome is a summary of the Solid Declaration, we find the same passage in the Solid Declaration (“Concerning the Binding Summary,” par. 8). It is striking to note that “laity” is not used in this passage with the same meaning as was noted in the passage from the Epitome. Nor is Christian used in a chiasmic structure to explain “laity.”

Sixth, since these highly significant matters also concern the common people, the laity (who, for the sake of their salvation, must distinguish between pure and false teaching), we also pledge ourselves unanimously to the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they were written by him and incorporated into his collected works, because they have been unanimously approved and accepted by all the churches of the Augsburg Confession and are officially used in the churches, schools, and homes, and because these Catechisms summarize Christian teaching from God’s Word for the simple laity in the most correct and simple, yet sufficiently explicit fashion.¹³⁹

Regarding the first use of “laity” in this passage, the English translation reflects the modern-day parlance regarding “laity,” although the German and Latin versions use “laity” in the medieval sense meaning nobility. Whereas the English translation uses “laity” in apposition to common

¹³⁹ SD, intro., 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 528. *Bekennnisschriften*, 768.

Latin: “VI. Postremo, quando negotium religionis etiam ad salutem vulgi et laicorum (quos vocant) pertinet, et illis etiam, ratione salutis, necessarium est, ut sinceram doctrinam a falsa discernant: amplectimur etiam Minorem et Maiorem D. Lutheri Catechismos, eos dicimus, quales illi ab ipso scripti et tomis eius inserti sunt. Omnes enim ecclesiae Augustanae Confessionis hos Catechismos approbarunt atque receperunt, ita ut passim in ecclesiis et scholis publice et in privatis etiam aedibus propositi fuerint. Et pia doctrina, e verbo Dei desumpta, in iis quam maxime perspicue et simplicissime in usum rudiorum et laicorum est comprehensa et dilucide declarata.”

German: “6. Und dann zum sechsten, weil diese hochwichtigen Sachen auch den gemeinen Mann und Laien belangen, welche ihrer Seligkeit zugutem dennoch als Christen zwischen reiner und falscher Lehr unterscheiden müssen: bekennen wir uns auch einhellig zu dem kleinen und großen Katechismo Doktor Luthers, wie solche von ihm geschrieben und sein tomis einverleibt worden, weil dieselbige von allen der Augsburgischen Confession verwandten Kirchen einhellig approbiert, angenommen und öffentlich in Kirchen, Schulen und Häusern gebraucht worden sein, und weil auch in derselbigen die christliche Lehr aus Gottes Wort für die einfältigen Laien auf das richtigste und einfältigste begriffen und gleichergestalt notdürftiglich erklärt worden.”

people the German translation distinguishes between common people and “laity” (*den gemeinen Mann und Laien*) as does also the Latin (*vulgi et laicorum*), indicating that the laity are the nobility.

Regarding the second use of “laity” in this passage, the Latin version is consistent with its first use as it again distinguishes between common people and “laity” (*rudiorum et laicorum*) even though it uses a different term for common people.¹⁴⁰ The German, however, is not consistent. It distinguished between common people and “laity” (*den gemeinen Mann und Laien*) in the first use but in the second use it uses only one term, simple-minded “laity” (*einältigen Laien*). The two terms were combined into one; *gemeinen Mann und Laien* becomes *einältigen Laien*, to encompass all Christians who are not ordained. The German *einältigen Laien* is translated into Latin as *rudiorum et laicorum*. This simply shows that the word “laity” was used in two different ways at this time as it was in a state of transition.

Another example of “Christian” being used to explain “laity” appears in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (par.67). The Lutherans explain that when bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to ordain pastors, the church retains the right to call and ordain pastors because they have the right to administer the Gospel.

Therefore, where the true church is, there must also be the right of choosing and ordaining ministers, just as in an emergency even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another. So Augustine tells the story of two Christians in a boat, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen) and then the latter, having been baptized, absolved the former.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Latin synonyms for common people are *rusticus*, *illiteratus*, *idiotus*, and *vulgus*. *Rusticus* refers to country people, those who are rustic, simple, rough, or coarse. *Inlitteratus (ill)* refers to the unlettered, unlearned, illiterate, uneducated, those without culture, the inelegant. *Idiotus* refers to the uneducated, ignorant, inexperienced, unskilled, outsider, one who is not public but keeps to his own—private. *Vulgus* refers to the great mass, the multitude, the people, the crowd, the vulgar, the populace. See Lewis and Short, eds., *Lewis and Short*.

¹⁴¹ Tr. 60–72 in Kolb and Wengert, 340–41; *Bekenntnisschriften*, 491.

Latin: “Ubi est igitur vera ecclesia, ibi necesse est esse jus eligendi et ordinandi ministros: sicut in casu

In this passage, the Lutherans state that in an emergency even a layperson (*laicus/Laie*) grants absolution and becomes a pastor of another. To illustrate and explain this they cite Augustine's story of two Christians (*christianis/Christen*); they are not called "laypersons" but "Christians," one who baptizes the second and the second one who absolves the first. In this context the Lutherans indicate that a "layperson" is a "Christian," which is the term they prefer to use.

Summary and Conclusion

The English word "lay" is derived from the Greek *laikos*, Latinized as *laicus*. The Greek lexicon defines it as "one who belongs to the people (*laos*)." Equating *laikos* with the people of God stems from the desire to eradicate the clergy/laity distinction in the church. The rationale is that since the clergy and the laity together constitute the people of God, there can be no distinction among the two.

Laikos is generally defined in contrast to the clergy which gives it a "negative" meaning as to who the laity are not. Since the Biblical texts do not use *laikos* they are of no assistance for those who seek a definition of the term. *Laikos* gained an importance in use by the church fathers beginning with the third century.

In the Patristic Period, *laikos* referred to men who were monogamous and from whose ranks the clergy were chosen. It did not refer to all the baptized since it did not include women, children, or elderly, or even all males. The laity were those men who managed their household finances from which they gave an honorarium to the bishop. In the Medieval Ages, the laity were

necessitatis absolvit etiam laicus et fit minister ac pastor alterius; sicut narrat Augustinus historiam de duobus christianis in navi, quorum alter baptizaverit κατηχοῦμενον et is baptizatus deinde absolverit alterum."

German: "Darum folget, wo eine rechte Kirche ist, daß da auch die Macht sei, Kirchendiener zu wählen und ordiniern, wie dann in der Not auch ein schlechter Laie einen andern absolviern und sein Pfarrer werden kann, wie S. Augustin ein Historien schreibt, daß zwene Christen in einem Schiffe beisammen gewesen, der einer den andern getauft und darnach von ihm absolviert sei."

the nobility who were educated or literate, meaning they spoke Latin and understood the church rites and liturgy, as opposed to the common people who were illiterate.

In the Medieval Ages, the laity sought to join religious orders for temporal and spiritual benefits. Temporally, they could avoid military service, certain taxes, and secular jurisdiction. Spiritually, they could claim to have embarked on a path toward the *imitatio Christi*, which would move them out of the secular realm into the sacred realm with the clergy. In order to curb the influx into religious orders, in the twelfth century Gratian made a decree that there are only two kinds of Christians, clergy and laity. This changed the meaning of “laity” from Christian nobility, which was in contrast to common Christians, to all Christians who were not clerics.

During the Reformation Luther used “laity” to refer either to the Christian nobility or to all Christians who were not clerics depending on his audience and the definition to which they were accustomed. The Lutheran Confessions followed in Luther’s footsteps regarding the use of “laity.” They used “laity” to refer either to the nobility or to common Christians as was appropriate in the context. However, as Luther stressed the use of “Christian” instead of “laity,” so too the Lutheran Confessions preferred “Christian” instead of “laity” since it describes who the laity are in Christ.

The usage of the clergy/laity dichotomy carried all the way through to the twentieth century, however with much ambiguity in its meaning. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) there has been a resurgence in the discussion of this dichotomy with emphasis on the theology and role of the laity. The following three chapters will analyze the different approaches to the theology of the laity in the twentieth century by noting the different categories of status, service or duties, education or training, remuneration, or lifestyle, within which the traditions of Roman Catholic, Baptist, and the LCMS, respectively, consider the topic.

CHAPTER THREE

ROMAN CATHOLIC LAITY

For two and a half centuries after the reforms of the Council of Trent, the Roman church drifted deeper into isolationism, becoming more triumphalistic and fearful of contamination by anything secular. In the nineteenth century, the European political developments challenged the power and authority of the church. “The struggle with French liberal Catholics, the ‘Syllabus of Errors,’ Vatican I itself, the definition of papal infallibility, and the attempt to institutionalize Thomist philosophy all in their different ways relate to the peculiar blend of fear and aggression that characterizes the church of the nineteenth century.”¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century Pope Pius X spoke against what was labeled “the Modernist Crisis.” There was a “new theology” or “neo-modernist theology” emerging in France and Germany and it was considered suspect by the church. It was apologetic, pastoral and devoted to *ressourcement* which is a return to the classical sources of the tradition. Even though there was an effort to quell it, this “new theology” drew attention to the importance of good historical scholarship. One of its leading theologians was the French Dominican Yves Congar who ardently strove to give theological emphasis to the laity. Contrary to the teaching of the church at the time of the Reformation, Congar believed that clergy alone do not make up the church.² He sought to change the fact that the laity had no significance in the church’s structure

¹ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 18.

² “Together with other psalms, this one has always been sung in the church by the clergy, who claimed that they alone were the church and the holy, favored people of God.” “Psalm 101” in *LW* 13:146. “If one cites God’s Word against them, they are able to say, ‘We are incapable of error, we are the holy Church, and so it must be regarded as a holy thing, free from all errors and irreproachable,’” “Preface to Alexius Chrosner, *Sermon on the Holy Christian Church* 1531,” in *LW* 59:322–23. “They have done the same thing with the name ‘church’ by asserting that the pope and the bishops are the church,” “Psalm 110” in *LW* 13:313–14. “It is all about ‘externals’ that glorify the clergy as though ‘laity were not the Church nor of God.’” Philip Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions*:

and he wanted to address their status. However, his early writings allowed for the continued distinction of the status, before God, of the clergy as being sacred and the status of the laity as being temporal or secular.

In his later writings, Congar wrote against reducing the laity's status and role to being a reference to the world or to temporal things. "Still less have we ever admitted the absurdly oversimplified formula, 'spiritual things appertain to the priest, temporal things to the layman.'" ³ "Under his influence the fathers of the Second Vatican Council also addressed the role of the laity and came to the same conclusions Congar had reached in 1953."⁴ It was concluded that the particular distinguishing theological aspect of the laity is their "secularity." The Council did not address the status of the laity but did speak of them with the term "people of God" and addressed the apostolate or mission of the laity. ⁵ However, since the conclusion was that the laity still find their role or service to God in the temporal or secular realm, it implies the status of the laity is secular and not sacred.⁶ Vatican II concluded that there is a difference in status between the clergy and the laity. Interestingly, Congar, at first, does not try to draw the discussion away from

Luther's Theology of the Cross as Theologico-Social Critique, ed. K. C. Hanson, C. M. Collier, and D. C. Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 150. "We have thus recaptured two names from these church robbers; they are no more either 'church' or 'priests' than all other Christians," "Dr. Luther's Retraction of The Error Forced Upon Him By The Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar In Meissen," in *LW* 39:238.

³ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 3–4.

⁴ Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads: How the Laity Can Save the Church* (New York: Continuum International, 2007), 31. See also Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 3.

⁵ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 45, 51; "Two of his [Congar] greatest works, *True and False Reform in the Church* and *Lay People in the Church*, published in the early 1950s, were followed shortly by his silencing by the Holy See, a ban that was not really lifted until in 1959 Pope John XXIII called him to serve on the preparatory commission for the Second Vatican Council. A number of the council documents, above all the chapter from *Lumen Gentium* on the laity, were drafted by teams in which Congar was prominent, and naturally reflect much of his thought (and that of Philips)."

⁶ "Let us begin by attacking the first wall. It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office," "To the Christian Nobility," in *LW* 44:127–36.

status but to redefine the status of the laity. Later, he shifts his focus from status to service.

Yves Congar

Yves Congar (1904–1995) was a Dominican theologian who was born in France in 1904. He produced nearly 2,000 books and articles over his scholarly career. Having been raised in the aftermath of the modernist crisis, he was attracted to the resurgence in the study of the work of Aquinas from a historical perspective. He was a pioneer of *ressourcement*, a recovery of scripture and the church fathers that fueled new insights in biblical studies, liturgy, ecumenism and ecclesiology. Two of his greatest writings were published in the 1950s, *True and False Reform in the Church* and *Lay People in the Church*. He was silenced by the Holy See, but the ban was lifted in 1959 when he was called by Pope John XXIII to serve on the preparatory commission for the Second Vatican Council. A number of documents from the Council, especially the chapter on the laity from *Lumen Gentium*, were written by committees in which Congar played a prominent role, so they naturally reflect much of his teaching.⁷

Lay People in the Church

Congar criticized the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the doctrine of ecclesiology. He believed it was “constituted especially, and sometimes exclusively, as a ‘hierarchology,’ a theory of hierarchical functions of mediation.”⁸ He was convinced that his generation had discovered in the doctrine of ecclesiology a “laicology.”⁹ In 1946 he suggested

⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 49–50; See also Karl Cardinal Lehmann, “Cardinal Yves Congar: A Man of The Church,” in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 161–64.

⁸ Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 88.

⁹ Yves Congar and François Varillon, *Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l’église* (Paris: Éditions du Vitrail, 1947), 8. The term “laicology” was coined by Paul Dabin in *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans les Livres saints* (Paris:

that a “laicology” could counterbalance the “hierarchology” in the ecclesiology of the church. By 1948, his focus shifted from “laicology” to a “theology of the laity.” This was not simply a change in terminology. His concern was that a “laicology” would leave the doctrine of ecclesiology unchanged. The church is the clergy because they work in the sacred and the laity are not considered in ecclesiology because they work in the secular. He hoped that a focus on a “theology of the laity” would bring about a change in the doctrine of ecclesiology since the laity are called to the apostolate and serve the Lord in their vocations.¹⁰

Congar stressed that *laikos* (laity) comes from *laos* (people of God) and thus the word for “lay” is connected with a word that for Jews and also Christians, during the first four centuries, meant the sacred people in opposition to people who were not consecrated. Having stated this, he immediately notes that other scholars, I. de La Potterie in particular, have articulated that although *laikos* comes from *laos* philologically, its semantic significance is not with *laos* as the people of God but with the usage which distinguishes the *laikos* from the priest—as one who is not ordained from one who is.¹¹

Acknowledging that the term “laity” is defined as one who is not a priest or in a religious order, Congar is calling into question the use of the term “laity.” Since the New Testament uses the term “brother” for Christians, Congar proposes that the church speak of Christians as “brothers” or the “faithful.” His point is that the particular vocabulary that is used is a conscious choice which dictates the direction of the doctrine of ecclesiology. For Congar, there “can be

Bloud & Gay, 1941).

¹⁰ Beal Rose, *Mystery of the Church, People of God: Yves Congar’s Total Ecclesiology as a Path to Vatican II* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 86–90. Since Yves Congar changed his focus in 1948 from “laicology” toward a “theology of the laity” the later editions of his books were revised.

¹¹ Yves Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 3–4. Regarding the etymology of *laikos* see Neuner, *Der Laie und das Gottesvolk*, 25–41.

only one sound and sufficient theology of the laity, and that is a ‘total ecclesiology.’”¹²

In *Lay People in the Church*, Congar examines the complexity of the role of the laity, distilling it down to the fact that the laity are secular. While the clergy serve God in the church the laity serve God in the world. Congar does not understand this as a rigid distinction with only the clergy ordered to heavenly things and only the laity ordered to earthly things. Instead, it is a matter of degree. Congar puts forth two main thoughts regarding the laity. First, that “as members of the people of God, lay persons are, like clerics and monks, by their state and directly, ordered to heavenly things.”¹³ Second, that “the layman ... is one for whom, through the very work which God has entrusted to him, the substance of things in themselves is real and interesting.”¹⁴ Having ordered the laity to the earthly realm, he immediately qualifies his statement: “[A] lay person is one for whom things exist, for whom their truth is not as it were swallowed up and destroyed by a higher reference. For to him or her, Christianly speaking, that which is to be referred to the Absolute is the very reality of the elements of this world whose outward form passes away.”¹⁵

For Congar, the secularity of the laity was an important aspect of understanding the definition of the laity in a positive sense. However, without careful explanation, this definition could easily be mistaken to mean that the church and the world were separate realms, that the clergy worked within the church and the laity in the world. In other words, the clergy dealt with the sacred, the things of God, and the laity dealt with the secular, the things of this world.¹⁶ Even

¹² Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, xvi, 4.

¹³ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 17–18.

¹⁴ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 19.

¹⁵ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 24.

¹⁶ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 31–32.

if the definition of the laity is not understood in this strict sense, the definition still maintains a distinction between the clergy and the laity which divides the unity of the body of Christ and leads toward a definition of church which focuses solely on the clergy.

The two common definitions of “laity” against which Congar was reacting were the monastic and canonical. The monastic view deemed that the laity existed only by concession because of the weakness of their flesh. The canonical view defined the laity negatively in contrast to the clergy.¹⁷ Seeking to remove this “same old stumbling-block,” Congar derives “laity” (*laikos*) from the Old Testament word for “people,” which translates into the Greek as *laos* which designates “the people of God.”¹⁸ He hopes to draw the focus away from the state of life, or status, as that which defines the clergy, monks, and laity and focus on service, or ministries, instead. This would dissolve the idea of the clergy serving in the church and the laity serving in the world.

The laity serve not only in the temporal sphere but also have a part in the sacred sphere. Congar does not speak of the laity *being* holy but of the laity *doing* sacred things, as do the clergy. Even though Congar emphasizes that “laity” are the people of God, i.e., all Christians, he then divides Christians into clergy and laity. The whole people of God has a structure which is the hierarchical priesthood set among them.¹⁹

Master Vacarius replied to his former fellow-pupil Speroni (who gave to the twelfth-century so many of the theses of the sixteenth-century Reformers with surprising closeness) that laity and clergy are united in the faith and that the distinction between them in no way compromises the unity of the Church. But for the mind of the middle ages this unity in the faith had a depth and realism that we can no longer easily appreciate.²⁰

¹⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 12, 17–18.

¹⁸ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 3–4, 25.

¹⁹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 11–17, 25.

²⁰ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 13.

This division creates manifold difficulties for Congar as he struggles to explain the difference between the priesthood of the faithful (laity) and the hierarchical priesthood (clergy). He is seeking to define the laity in a way that does not reduce “the lay person’s proper quality to being a reference to the world or to temporal things.”²¹

Congar defends against a definition of the church as only the community of the faithful constituted by faith and charity where each individual is responsible for witness and to carry out the mission of the church. In this scenario, the hierarchy is viewed only as a service and not as an authority established by God. The people of God, or the Body of Christ, is given her structure or hierarchical priesthood at the moment of its constitution, not after. Regarding the lay order or service, the lay order has no “original significance in the Church’s structure.”²²

The church lives between Christ’s Pascha and Parousia. This gives a place to both the laity and the clergy in the church. Jesus is both the Temple and the Kingdom and the laity are to become Temple and Kingdom in him. “[H]e has to become so also in us, though not without our having personally *done* that which he *gives* us the ability to do.”²³

As regards the Parousia, we, on the basis of what we have received, have to bring to God through Christ the modest riches of creation and of our free co-operation, or, if you will, the produce of the talents God has given us, ‘the interest on his outlay.’
Here is the lay state contributing actively to the building up of the Temple.

From this Congar defines the church in two ways. First, the church, as Body of Christ, is where Christ lives and acts among his people. Second, the church, as institution, is the “visible form of his action.” From his division of all Christians into clergy and laity, Congar now divides the church into the church as communion which is the laity, and the church as institution which is

²¹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 24, 108.

²² Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 26.

²³ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 109.

the clergy. Corresponding to these two co-existent aspects of the church are two participations in Christ's offices of priest, king and prophet. The laity and the clergy each participate in Christ's offices in different ways.

In the Church as communion these functions exist as form or dignity of life qualifying all her members as such. In the Church as institution and means of grace, the three functions qualify certain members only, giving them a charge or ministry for the benefit of all the others, and they then exist as powers, active means for promoting the life of the body.²⁴

Congar believes that Protestants deny the structure of the church or the hierarchy. The hierarchy and sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church are seen simply by Protestants as human mediations which obscure the mediation of Christ. This he states is a profound misunderstanding of the hierarchy in the church. The Protestant reformers are so zealous that salvation depends only on the act of God that they have joined the church immediately and vertically to Christ. By doing so, they have overlooked the fact that everything comes from "the *acta et passa Christi in carne*, from the Incarnation and the Calvary of history, through a continuity of 'sacraments' in which the mediation of the man Jesus is prolonged."²⁵

Congar states that Protestant theology defines the "church" as all Christians, those who are the "object of God's grace-giving act." The earthly gatherings are man-made assemblies with a ministry that is delegated by the "community of the faithful." Against this understanding, Congar stresses the hierarchical priesthood through which grace and truth come to Christians. The hierarchical priesthood does not obscure the mediation of Jesus but rather it "realizes it." This priesthood is the manifestation that all comes to us from on high. It is the extension of Christ's mediation. Unlike Protestant theology, when the hierarchical priesthood is administering the

²⁴ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 111.

²⁵ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 113-14.

sacraments “they are acting as ministers and delegates, not of the faithful, but of Jesus Christ.”

The Church is hierarchically royal, sacerdotal and prophetic in order that she may transmit the life that is in Christ to men: the faithful, incorporated in him, live spiritually by a life that is kingly, priestly and prophetic. That is how the respective parts of the clergy and the laity are distributed, or preferably, of the hierarchy and the faithful people, it being understood that hierarchical persons are firstly and always remain, simply as persons, among the faithful. The two simultaneous truths, a clear inequality on account of function and a radical equality as members of the one body, living the same Christian life, are thus brought together and reconciled.²⁶

Congar is concerned that this teaching might make it appear that the laity are only passive.

They receive the gifts of God through the hierarchy and thus their function in the church is solely the object of ministry. To put this concern to rest he explains that the laity in their state in life each bring something to God’s temple in order to help build it up. Christ’s saving powers are manifest through the life of the laity in the world. This allows the laity to “bring back to God all the richness of his creation, of which Christ is the first-born and the king.”²⁷ Thus the church is “made from above and from below.” From above, God is the source of holiness which constitutes a sacred and saving order. From below, the church is formed from history and the world, “whose contributions, redeemed, restored, cleansed, have to return to God in Christ, their royal first-fruits.” The kingly, priestly and prophetic mediation of Christ is exerted through a twofold mediation by men. The hierarchy exercises the mediation of the means of grace between Christ and the faithful for their formation. The faithful people exercise a mediation of life between the faithful and the world. This is also a means of grace in its order, since the world is drawn to Christ in and through the faithful.

The order of sacrifice and priesthood belongs to Jesus Christ alone and the church participates in his priesthood. The priesthood of Christ is communicated to all Christians through

²⁶ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 115.

²⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 116–17.

baptism. Christ is the temple and the faithful are temples with him. He alone is priest and the faithful are priests with him through the sacrament of baptism. To be a holy priesthood is to make spiritual offerings. This is the same as “building the sanctuary wherein God dwells and is honored.” In the Old Testament the priesthood offered up material sacrifices in a material temple. In the New Testament the priesthood is spiritual and builds up a spiritual temple in the faith of the faithful people, “wherein the living man himself freely offers himself in sacrifice.” The sacrifices of the priesthood of the faithful are a holy life, “an apostolic life of religion, prayer, dedication, charity, compassion.” The sacrifices of this priesthood do not belong to the order of sacramental worship or the church’s public worship. The worship and priesthood of the faithful belong to the order of Christian life and are not defined as liturgical.²⁸

In so far as the question of the priesthood of the faithful was afterwards considered in relation to properly sacramental worship, and especially to the eucharistic celebration, people were led to stress its reference and organic subordination to the hierarchical and properly liturgical priesthood if the bounds of truth were to be observed. This was done by the Catholic apologists who opposed Luther.... Others, however, have joined with the present writer in carefully maintaining the definition of this idea in its own order, that of the acts of a holy, Christian life.²⁹

Regarding a right relationship with God, the sacrifice must be the totality of one’s life in doing and having. It is also the work of one’s lifetime and can only be carried out literally by offering up one’s life through death.³⁰

The spiritual worship of the priesthood of the faithful is the offering of a good life. However, to confine the sacrifices of the priesthood of the faithful to the offering of the Christian life to God is to limit the Christian priesthood which is so much more. There is a moral priesthood which is exercised by the lives and deeds of Christians through a priestly soul or spirit

²⁸ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 128, 131, 133, 135–36.

²⁹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 136–37.

³⁰ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 156.

of religion. There is an inward priesthood of prayer and ascetical life. There is a sacramental priesthood which is associated both with the holy or righteous life and baptismal consecration which allows the participation in the eucharistic sacrifice of the faithful. The origin of the priesthood of the faithful stems from baptism.³¹

The church's worship is Christ's worship in and through the church. Some members receive and others give. Some members perfect themselves and some perfect others.

St Thomas sets the sacramental characters of baptism, confirmation and order as participations in Christ's priesthood. For 'the whole rite of the Christian religion springs from Christ's priesthood' (q. 63, a. 3) or from 'the worship of Christ's priesthood' (q. 63, a. 6, ad 1), that is, the worship that appertains to Christ as priest. St Thomas is very realistic in the way he sees Christ as head of mankind and, in respect of those who give him their faith, head of a priestly body.³²

There are two titles to participation in Christ's priesthood through which the body of Christ, along with her head, celebrates New Testament worship. One title is connected with the consecration by baptism, and the other with the consecration by holy orders. The priestly power of Christian worship which comes through holy orders is the exalted rank by which "some members of the body are ministers of the *Unus sacerdos* for the others."³³

For Congar there are two titles, or modalities, or priestly qualities by which Christians participate in Christ's priesthood. There is the priesthood of the faithful given through baptism and there is the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood given through the sacrament of orders. The priesthood of the faithful is given spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ. "[T]hese gifts are new and original participations in Christ's priestly power through the power of baptismal consecration or righteous life." The hierarchical priesthood is not a function instituted

³¹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 138.

³² Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 143.

³³ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 144–45.

by men for the sake of good order but it is divinely instituted and entails the power to consecrate the eucharist, to forgive sins, to administer the sacraments, and to teach and rule. For this priesthood, sacramental ordination confers a character that can neither be lost nor taken away.³⁴

Although this special character given through sacramental ordination is the teaching of the church's tradition, Congar raises a question of historical continuity. If a priest is a "sacrificer," then in Christianity only Christ is deserving of this title since he alone offered up his own life to God. "The ministers of the eucharist were not acting as 'sacrificers' because, in celebrating the efficacious memorial as the Lord had given his Apostles power and commandment to do, they were simply making Christ's one sacrifice actual and present to the faithful."³⁵

The real Christian idea was that there is only one high priest, Christ, priest in Heaven for evermore; that all the faithful have a real priestly quality, being incorporated in Christ by the sacramental consecration of baptism and by a living faith; and that for the Church's benefit bishops and presbyters (and deacons) have a ministry of Christ's priestly actions, most particularly of the eucharistic memorial, a ministry to which they are consecrated by a sacrament, whereby they receive a third participation in the priesthood of Christ.³⁶

Some define the priesthood by its mediatorial aspect but biblically it is also bound up with sacrifice. Others define priesthood by the office or the competency of offering sacrifice. Another approach to priesthood is consecration which stems from the French school of theology.³⁷ The bond between mediator, sacrifice, and priest is found in the priesthood of Christ. Congar states that Scripture and sound theology led him to define priesthood as:

the quality which enables a man to come before God to gain his grace, and therefore fellowship with him, by offering up a sacrifice acceptable to him. Such a definition allows a place to values which, while not a strictly essential part of it, may have their

³⁴ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 147–48.

³⁵ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 149–50.

³⁶ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 150–51.

³⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 153–54.

place as an adjunct—consecration, for instance—or as a condition qualifying a priesthood that has a social or public bearing—instituted, mediatory.³⁸

This definition allows for Congar to speak of three priesthoods, that of the faithful consecrated in baptism, that of the hierarchy consecrated in the sacraments of orders, and that of Christ.

Eventually he summarizes priesthood as the sacrificial office and defines it as: “Every work done with the aim of uniting us with God in a holy fellowship.”³⁹

Since the priesthood is connected to sacrifice, “the kinds of priesthood are distinguished according to the kinds of sacrifice.” All the kinds of Christian sacrifice or priesthood are connected with worship. The foremost of sacrifices or priestoods is that of Jesus Christ through which all other sacrifices are pleasing to God. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was instituted as a sacrament “to be men’s worship and food always and everywhere.” It is in this sacrament where the kinds of priesthood come together into one.⁴⁰

In 1964, Congar continued to struggle with his earlier definition of the laity since it could easily be misunderstood to mean that there was a separation of the church and the world and the clergy did their work in the church and the laity did their work in the world. He was concerned this would maintain the subordination that the laity had been subjected to for almost fifteen hundred years. He was critical of himself for making a strong distinction between the laity and the clergy and for defining the laity in contrast to the clergy. For him, the laity should express the default mode of being Christian and the clergy should be explained *in contrast to them*.⁴¹ Congar set aside his own definition of the laity in favor of the one by Karl Rahner:

³⁸ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 154–55. Congar states that even though this definition is the same as Calvin’s that is not a good reason to abandon it.

³⁹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 155.

⁴⁰ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 158, 161.

⁴¹ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 31–32.

[Rahner] says that the lay Christian is one whose Christian existence and responsibilities are determined by his native involvement in the life and organization of the world. This way of putting it, which agrees with our own idea, certainly seems preferable to our way; it avoids the possibility of such an interpretation as the one referred to above. In my formula, the temporal reality appears to affect the *matter* of what is done for God, thus giving a wrong impression of making the lay man a man of this world. In Rahner's formula, the temporal reality only provides the *conditions* of Christian activity, activity which (in our opinion) can be intrinsically spiritual.⁴²

The starting point for Congar regarding the laity is their baptismal membership in the people of God.⁴³

There are particular forms of exercise of the Church's mission, but there is no particular mission differentiating the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. The latter also refers the temporal to God in Christ, and the lay faithful in their own way carry out the Church's evangelizing mission, the communication of the good news of salvation.⁴⁴

Congar taught that the hierarchical structure is set within the people of God without dividing its mission into specialized parts.

Congar eventually reached the conclusion that the condition of the laity is defined by service and not by status. He acknowledged that it is true that the laity live and carry out daily tasks in the world as opposed to the monk. "According to the monastic view, lay people only exist by favour of a concession; according to the canonical view, they are negative creatures." There is no need, he states, to understand the distinction between the laity and the clergy (in the canonical view) as a distinction between people who serve in a secular realm and people who serve in a sacred realm. The laity and the clergy both carry out sacred duties. Since the laity are members of the people of God, they are, like the clergy, "ordered to heavenly things." The laity are Christians who do God's work in and through the work of the world. Congar wants a

⁴² Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 25.

⁴³ Jean Pierre Jossua, *Yves Congar: Theology in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: Priory, 1968), 116.

⁴⁴ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 25.

definition of the laity that is anthropological and not only canonical.⁴⁵

In the 1965 revision of his book, Congar acknowledges that his definition of the laity led to misunderstandings. He was concerned about the one-sidedness of two different directions of understanding the church. “[W]hile some tended to see the Church actualized in a priesthood without people, others came to see it as a people without a priesthood.”⁴⁶ The Roman church was the former and the Reformers, such as Luther, were the latter. Congar believes that when the Roman church identifies the church with the hierarchy it is one-sided but it is not heretical because it has never been to the exclusion of the community. Whereas when Protestantism identifies the church with the people it is heretical because it denies the structure of the church which changes its essence.

We have just seen that one-sidedness in favor of the institution has never been anything but a matter of emphasis, touching the life of the Church; if it threatens anything, it is not her being but her fullness.... If, however, some element of her structure be compromised, her very existence is endangered. That is why, supposing (*dato, non concessio*) the two forms of one-sidedness to be equally unbalanced, they have not at all the same importance, or therefore, the same seriousness.⁴⁷

In a strange twist, while Vatican II was incorporating his ideas of the secularity of the laity into their discussions and writings, Congar himself changed his theological ideas and incorporated them into the second edition of his book *Lay People in the Church*⁴⁸ and into a series of essays written for French theological journals. He was critical of his own theological distinction between the laity and the clergy. Not only did he believe he emphasized this

⁴⁵ Congar, *Lay People*, 1957, 17–19, 24.

⁴⁶ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church; A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater, rev. ed. (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1965), 15.

⁴⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, 1965, 47–50.

⁴⁸ Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1954). English translation, *Lay People in the Church; A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), was first published in 1957, reprinted in 1959 and 1962, and revised with addenda in 1965.

distinction too forcefully but he believed it was counter-productive for his purposes to have defined the laity relative to the clergy.

In other words, Congar thought he had fallen into the trap of thinking of the clergy as what we today might call “the default mode” of being Christian, with the consequence that laypeople’s ways of being Christian were understood as a variation on this default status. Indeed, he said very clearly that in his view the time had been reached at which it was necessary to understand the clergy relative to the laity.⁴⁹

Congar’s new emphasis was to express the laity as the default mode of being Christian and define the clergy relative to them. One difficulty in referring to the laity as Christians who are called to service or to ministry is that this does not distinguish the laity from the clergy. The same problem still exists of explaining how the laity are called to ministry in ways that differ from how the clergy are called, without the call seeming to be a lesser call.⁵⁰

Congar recognizes that Karl Rahner’s definition of “laity” is more helpful than his own since it makes it clear that the world “only provides the conditions of Christian activity,” while his own definition “appears to affect the *matter* of what is done for God.”⁵¹ Rahner’s definition does not relegate the laity to the secular realm, nor does it emphasize the distinction between the clergy and the laity. The laity should not be defined by way of life, such as a monk who lives apart from the world, but by service or competence.⁵² Congar supports the Vatican Council’s use of the phrase “people of God” to describe the laity since it indicates the community in which the hierarchical priesthood is located. “There are particular forms of exercise of the Church’s mission, but there is no particular mission differentiating the faithful and the ministerial

⁴⁹ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 32.

⁵⁰ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 29.

⁵¹ Congar, *Lay People*, 1965, 25.

⁵² Congar, *Lay People*, 1965, 16–17.

priesthood.”⁵³ The clergy point the world to God and the laity are part of the evangelizing mission of the church.

Early Congar understands that the laity are baptized Christians. Each Christian is gifted by the Holy Spirit and given responsibility to carry out the mission of the church through the particular gifts each individual possesses. Some of the laity may work within the community of the faithful but the majority will find their service in the world. Later Congar encouraged the thought that all the baptized are ministers in different ways. Some serve within the body of the faithful where they are called to preside at Eucharist, preach, teach, etc., while others serve outside the body of the faithful. Later Congar understands Christians to be on a spectrum with no essential difference between what one kind of minister does and what another kind of minister does. Early Congar understands the laity to be defined in contrast to the clergy. Later Congar believes there are no longer any clergy or laity but only the people of God.⁵⁴

Prior to 1950 Congar understood the role of the ministerial priesthood (clergy) to be mediatorial. As his thought changes, he minimizes and eventually removes the mediatory role. He states that the two priestoods, the ministerial (clergy) and the faithful (laity), both participate in Christ’s mediation. The role of the ministerial priesthood is to activate the priestly qualities of the priesthood of the faithful (laity). Thus the ministerial priesthood is simply a representation within the church or a service within the community. Congar’s progression or evolution of thought can be summarized as going from the Church—Ministerial Priesthood—Priesthood of the Faithful sequence of his earlier days to the Church—Priesthood of the Faithful—Ministerial

⁵³ Congar, *Lay People*, 1965, 25.

⁵⁴ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 34–35.

Priesthood sequence in his later writings.⁵⁵

Congar speaks of the sacrificial and prophetic roles of the laity. Even though the sacrificial role applies to the clergy or ministerial priesthood, the main role of the priesthood of the faithful, or the laity is sacrificial. The laity determine their situation in the world and give glory to God by their work in the world. They consecrate themselves and the world around them to God. This is accomplished by their willingness to love and serve God in thought, word, and deed. By this act of loyalty, love, and gratitude, they make creation return to the Lord, the Creator.⁵⁶

Every Christian act has a sacramental structure which is the same as that of the sacrifice of the mass. It is a means through which God allows a Christian to share in His divine life. However, the sacramental movement in each act is only completed when it is incorporated into Christ's sacrifice in the offering of the mass. Thus the sacrificial roles of the priest and the laity are complementary. The priest alone offers the mass but the mass would have no meaning without the Christian community incorporated into the sacrifice of Christ.⁵⁷

As for the prophetic role of the laity, Congar notes that the laity are endowed with various charisms of the Spirit. In catechetical work, or in proclaiming the Gospel, and in social and charitable work, the clergy should listen to the laity and thus listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit wherever He speaks. The laity have been given gifts and charisms by the Holy Spirit and they often have greater experience than the clergy in daily life in the world.⁵⁸

Congar ultimately concluded that the distinction between the clergy and the laity should no longer be used. The discussion should focus on "different ministries," rather than positions in a

⁵⁵ Richard Beauchesne, *Laity and Ministry in Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.: Evolution, Evaluation, and Ecumenical Perspectives*, (PhD diss., Boston University, 1975), v.

⁵⁶ Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World: Three Addresses* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960), 68.

⁵⁷ Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, 68–69.

⁵⁸ Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, 84–85.

hierarchical relationship. Some ministries are recognized by the church in ordination and some ministries are bestowed by the Spirit of God among all baptized Christians. The ministry for the laity is two-fold. First, authorized by their baptism, the laity live the “ministry of word and good example” in their everyday lives in the world. Second, authorized by the church, under ecclesiastical supervision, ecclesial lay ministers proclaim the Gospel to the secular world.

So long as we stay with the lay/clergy divide, lay ecclesial ministers must be seen as a kind of monster, or as a temporary expedient for a shortage of priests (the so-called apostolate of the second string). But once we grasp the idea of different ministries, of ordained and non-ordained ministries on a spectrum, we find lay ecclesial ministers as a permanent and valid phenomenon in their own right distinctly less difficult to envisage.⁵⁹

In Congar’s view, the laity exercise multiple roles. Their secularity consists of carrying out the evangelizing mission of the church to the world. At the same time, the laity, by virtue of their baptism, exercise sacramental and apostolic roles within the church. They are not passive spectators at worship but they play an active role in the eucharistic worship. In worship, they offer the world back to God and through ecclesial lay ministry they participate in the work of the hierarchical or ministerial ministry.⁶⁰

Congar spoke of the church from an ecclesial mutuality view instead of the hierarchy/laity or the ecclesiastical domination/submission view. The language he used was “ministries” and “community” by which he meant ministries at the service of the Christian priestly community. The relation of the ministerial priesthood (clergy) to the priesthood of the faithful (laity) consists in a facilitating function. The clergy enable the people of God to exercise their priestly quality.⁶¹

The ordained or ministerial priesthood educates and strengthens faith in the lives of the

⁵⁹ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 32.

⁶⁰ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 52–53.

⁶¹ Richard J. Beauchesne, “Worship as Life, Priesthood and Sacrifice in Yves Congar,” *Église et Théologie*, 21, no. 1 (1990): 94–96.

people of God. Their lives, lived daily in service to God, constitute the spiritual sacrifice of Christians of which the ministerial priesthood is itself a part. Priests are ordained to direct and guide the priestly service of the people of God whereby they offer their living selves as the spiritual sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1).⁶² The Christian sacrifice is connected to the Eucharist. The content of the sacrifice is the lives of Christians forming the body of Christ of which the Eucharist is the realizing sign. The laity unite themselves with Christ as Victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass.⁶³

Congar reacts to the traditional view that the distinction between the clergy and the laity is one of status. His view is that the distinction between the clergy and laity is one of service or ministry. By emphasizing service he seeks to avoid the distinction that the clergy are sacred and the laity are secular. The clergy are not elevated but serve in the midst of the people of God and the laity share with the clergy in the mission of the church. For Congar, the laity should not be contrasted with the clergy but rather the laity should be defined first and clergy should be in contrast to the laity. Unfortunately, this view does not resolve the concerns regarding the distinction between the clergy and the laity or between the two priesthoods. To define the clergy in contrast to the laity is to commit the same error but in the opposite direction. Neither the clergy nor the laity should be defined in contrast to the other but both are defined as to who they are in Christ by way of his gifts, and their service is defined by way of the vocations they have been given.

⁶² Congar, *Priest and Layman* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 94–95, 99, 106–7.

⁶³ Congar, *Sainte Église: Etudes et Approches Ecclesiologiques* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 249. See also, MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar*, 100–101.

The Second Vatican Council

From the time of Gratian onward in the Roman or Latin Church, there was an attempt to understand the church in a dichotomized lay/cleric structure. This understanding has found expression both in the Code of Canon Law of 1917 and the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983. Canon 107 from 1917 reads: “By divine institution there are in the Church *clerics* distinct from *the laity*, although not all clerics are of divine institution; both clerics and laity may be *religious*.”⁶⁴ The corresponding canon (207/1) in the 1983 Code of Canon Law was revised in a much more cautious way. It reads: “Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers, who are called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful, who are also called laity.” The 1983 Code of Canon Law, canon 207, par.1, defines the laity only in contrast to the clergy. It does not mention the religious orders.⁶⁵

The language or phraseology of the 1917 code is kept in the 1983 code. However, a different distinction is made. The 1917 code states that the division of lay/cleric is of divine institution. In the 1983 revised code, the lay/cleric division is no longer stated as being of divine institution but the sacred ministries in the church are divinely instituted.⁶⁶ This change was brought about through the influence of the Second Vatican Council.

Congar seemingly had more influence on the Second Vatican Council than any other single theologian. In the twenty-five years before the council he wrote on “ecumenism, tradition,

⁶⁴ *Codex iuris canonici* (1917), Can. 107. “Ex divina institutione sunt in Ecclesia *clerici a laicis* distincti, licet non omnes clerici sint divinae institutionis; utriusque autem possunt esse *religiosi*.” http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0813/_P8.HTM. *Codex iuris canonici* (1983), Canon 207, par. 1, “Ex divina institutione, inter christifideles sunt in Ecclesia ministri sacri, qui in iure et clerici vocantur; ceteri autem et laici nuncupantur;” http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/latin/documents/cic_liberII_lt.html#TITULUS_I. English translations of the 1917 and 1983 canons are cited in Osborne, *Ministry*, 41–42, 44.

⁶⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 44. See also *Codex iuris canonici*, Canon 207, par. 1, “Ex divina institutione, inter christifideles sunt in Ecclesia ministri sacri, qui in iure et clerici vocantur; ceteri autem et laici nuncupantur.”

⁶⁶ Osborne, *Ministry*, 47.

reform in the church, pneumatology, and the theology of the laity.” He was silenced by Rome for a time and sent into exile into England. During the 1950s he was allowed to publish a seminal work, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*.⁶⁷ Having been received back into the good graces of the church by Pope John XXIII, he was asked to work on preparations for Vatican II. His influence on the chapter on the laity from *Lumen Gentium* by the Council is significant. Congar was intent on addressing a theological doctrine of the laity, but the Second Vatican Council avoided this question and addressed the mission of the laity.⁶⁸ In the end, “the council’s words on the laity skirted the question of their theological status and concentrated on their apostolate.”⁶⁹ As Vatican II ended in 1965, the church had formally recognized the equality of the laity with the clergy by virtue of their baptism and their responsibilities for the mission of the church.⁷⁰ However, under Congar’s influence the Second Vatican Council, in addressing the role of the laity, arrived at the same conclusion Congar had written in 1953, that the laity are characterized by their secular nature.⁷¹

The Second Vatican Council met from 1962–1965. Prior to Vatican II, Catholic ecclesiology focused more on the role of the clergy than on the role of the laity. The role of the clergy was defined in relation to the Eucharist. During this Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology was focusing on the pneumatological nature of the church. This brought forth an appreciation for the gifts of the Spirit which are given to all Christians. This brought a focus to

⁶⁷ English translation is Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 1957.

⁶⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 45, 51.

⁶⁹ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 32, 35, 45, 49.

⁷⁰ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 33.

⁷¹ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 31.

the role of the laity in the mission of the church.⁷²

Lumen Gentium

The most important document from Vatican II regarding the discussion of the laity is *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. The focus of this document is how God's people are related within the church. *Lumen Gentium* wove together two approaches in order to satisfy two constituencies. The first group had an approach from a traditional view and sought a structure that began with the hierarchical nature of the church as the highest point of discussion and then proceeded with each level, with the laity at the bottom of the structure. The second group, which was a more theologically contemporary approach, sought a document that began with scriptural imagery, treating the character of the church thematically instead of structurally. It sought to stress holiness, community, and universality.⁷³

The phrase "priesthood of all believers" was not used in *Lumen Gentium* because of its association with the anti-hierarchy sentiments of the Reformation. "Universal Priesthood" also was not used in the document since it was argued that only Christ's priesthood was universal. Vatican II finally agreed upon the phrase "common priesthood" as the way of describing the priesthood that is shared by all baptized Christians.⁷⁴

The council, in *Lumen Gentium*, defines the laity as follows:

The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic,

⁷² Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009) 23.

⁷³ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 88.

⁷⁴ Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 24.

and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.⁷⁵

Many Roman Catholics are elated by this definition because they believed that the Second Vatican Council rescued the laity from the negative status of being defined as “not clergy.” It defined the laity in a positive light as the faithful people of God who share in the salvific mission of the church. The laity not only belong to the church but they are the presence of the church in the world and they “derive their life and fruitfulness from Christ.”⁷⁶ The hope of many Roman Catholics was that this definition would free the laity from being defined negatively in contrast to the clergy. The laity are people of God who have a role in the mission of the church. They are not only members of the church but they have an active role to bring God to the world and the world to God.⁷⁷

According to *Lumen Gentium*, the laity are defined by the fact that they have been baptized into Christ and they share in his threefold office; however, they are considered neither clergy nor of the religious orders. Since the clergy and those in the religious orders also have been baptized into Christ and share in his threefold office, what distinguishes or defines the laity is their contrast with the clergy and those in religious orders. The *Lumen Gentium* clarifies the role of the laity by stating, “What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature.”⁷⁸

Since the common priesthood of the faithful (laity) and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood (clergy) differ in essence and not simply in degree,⁷⁹ the laity are distinguished by

⁷⁵ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 79.

⁷⁶ Collins Adutwum, “The Mission of the Laity as Priest, Prophet and King,” *Seat of Wisdom*, no. 7 (Summer 2013): 43–44.

⁷⁷ Adutwum, “Mission of the Laity,” 43–44.

⁷⁸ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 79.

⁷⁹ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 857.

their secular nature, indicating that the clergy are distinguished by their sacred nature. *Lumen Gentium* No. 10 speaks of the sacred power of the priest. “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”⁸⁰ This difference in essence between the priesthoods raises the contention that only the clergy are priests in the literal sense of the word, leaving the priesthood of the faithful to be metaphorical or analogical in nature.⁸¹ This promulgates the teaching of the Council of Trent.

In order to try to close the gap between the priesthoods, the council went on to say that the ordained priest acts in union with all the faithful. He does not act in place of the community but in the name of the community since the faithful, by virtue of their priesthood, “join in the offering of the Eucharist.” “[T]hey offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It.”⁸² In addition they exercise their priesthood by receiving the sacraments, offering prayers and thanksgiving, living a holy life, self-denial and charity. The Eucharistic sacrifice is not accomplished by the priest alone but also through the action and prayer of all the Christians, under the leadership of the priest.⁸³

The Second Vatican Council acknowledged the importance of the common priesthood (laity) unlike the Roman Catholic counter-reformation theology which tended to deny it. Vatican II drew a distinction between the communal priesthood of the baptized and the hierarchical priesthood by stating that there was a difference in essence and not only in degree. The council never answered the complexities of this distinction but turned their attention to what the laity

⁸⁰ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35.

⁸¹ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 12.

⁸² Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35–36.

⁸³ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 6.

do.⁸⁴ This left an important unanswered question which drew the attention of a number of theologians who sought to address this conundrum. They left unanswered the definition and theology of the laity.

At the 1971 Synod of Bishops, the difference between the priesthood of the faithful and the hierarchical priesthood was discussed. Some bishops wanted a clear definition of Vatican II's "essential difference" between the two priesthoods, as used in *Lumen Gentium* No. 10,⁸⁵ in order to adequately express the sacred character of the hierarchical priesthood. Other bishops believed that emphasizing the distinction between the two priesthoods was a clear definition of Vatican II's viewpoint on communal and ministerial priesthoods.⁸⁶ Hierarchical priesthood (clergy) is often used to emphasize the sacred character of the clergy. Ministerial priesthood (clergy) is often used to emphasize the active or communal role of the laity since the Minister (clergy) is considered a servant as are all the laity considered servants. Ministers and laity simply have different tasks in serving.

These two divergent views reflect two different theologies of the clergy. The first view (hierarchical), which stems from the Council of Trent, emphasizes the sacral activity of the priest (clergy), such as celebrating the Eucharist and hearing confessions. The second view (Ministerial), which flows from Vatican II, emphasizes the ministerial aspect, that the priest (clergy) is one who primarily preaches the Word and builds up the Christian community through the witness of faith.⁸⁷ The concern of some theologians regarding Vatican II's emphasis on the communal priesthood was that it obscured the role of the clergy. Many ministries or tasks once

⁸⁴ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 69, 72.

⁸⁵ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 78–79.

⁸⁶ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 72–74.

⁸⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 225–28.

reserved to the clergy were being performed by the laity.

The Synod concluded that the hierarchical priesthood (clergy) is distinct from the communal priesthood (laity) in essence and not only in degree since the clergy symbolize Christ. They preside or act in the person of Christ at the eucharistic sacrifice and render Christ sacramentally present among the Christians. The “priestly character” of the clergy is symbolic in that it signifies that Christ is one with the church and present among the Christians. The priesthood of the faithful or the communal priesthood signifies that the church is a communion in the Spirit.⁸⁸ The emphasis of the hierarchical priesthood is seen as Christological whereas the emphasis of the communal priesthood is viewed as Pneumatological. The Spirit gives every Christian charisms which they use in their different ministries.

Pope John Paul II admonished bishops that diminishing the clergy does not result in the laity being given their due place in the church. Neither does the multiplication of ministries in the church mean that the clergy can be replaced. For some theologians, to see opposition between the clergy and the laity is to fail to understand the Sacrament of Orders. The clergy are priests by virtue of their ordination. The prerogative of the clergy is to act in the person of Christ, the Head (*in persona Christi capitis*). They take the place of Christ and perform duties which the laity cannot perform. The laity are priests not in and of themselves but by virtue of their communal priesthood by which they offer themselves to God.⁸⁹

Because of the disagreements concerning *Lumen Gentium* No. 10’s assertion that the two priesthoods differ in essence and not only in degree, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith addressed the doctrine of the minister of the eucharist.

⁸⁸ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 69, 72.

⁸⁹ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 73–74, 76.

In teaching that the priestly or hierarchical ministry differs essentially and not only in degree from the common priesthood of the faithful, the Second Vatican Council expressed the certainty of faith that only Bishops and Priests can confect the Eucharistic Mystery. Although all the faithful indeed share in the one and the same priesthood of Christ and participate in the offering of the Eucharist, it is only the ministerial priest who, in virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, can confect the Eucharistic sacrifice in the person of Christ and offer it in the name of all Christian people.⁹⁰

For the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the essential difference between the priesthood of all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood is the power of the clergy to confect the eucharist and to preside at the eucharist in the person of Christ. In the Sacrament of Orders a new power is bestowed which was not given in the sacrament of baptism. This power grants the clergy a unique sharing in the priesthood of Christ in which they are able to carry out certain duties or tasks which other Christians are not able to do.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Catholic Church and Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Questions Concerning the Minister of the Eucharist* (Washington, DC: Office of Public Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1983), No. 3.

⁹¹ There are myriad Roman Catholic theologians that address the concern regarding the difference between the two priesthoods. Those who emphasize the hierarchical priesthood and maintain the sacred power of the person of the priest generally stress the Christological aspect of this priesthood. In doing so they want to preserve the distinction between the two priesthoods, especially the sacred power of the priests which gives them a sacred status before God which the laity do not have. Those who emphasize the communal priesthood/priesthood of the faithful and maintain the charisms given to each Christian for ministry stress the Pneumatological aspect of this priesthood. They seek to eradicate or diminish the distinction between the two priesthoods by focusing on charisms and service. The clergy and laity both have charism which they use in different ministries. Thus there is no difference in status between clergy and laity but only one of ministries.

The responses of all the theologians to the essential difference between the two priesthoods spoken of in *Lumen Gentium* No. 10 of Vatican II, have not resolved the concern. At issue is the meaning of the essential difference between the two priesthoods. A difference in essence emphasizes the hierarchical priesthood and the church as hierarchical order, making a clear distinction between the two priesthoods. The difference in essence means there is a difference in status between the two priesthoods. The clergy have a sacred status before God, given at ordination, which the laity are not given. A difference in degree between the priesthoods means that there is no difference in status but only in their service. In *Lumen Gentium* this is emphasized by speaking of the church as *communio*. The concern is that the difference in degree blurs the lines of distinction between the two priesthoods and diminishes the hierarchical priesthood. For some theologians, the distinction in essence is seen as going back to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, whereas the distinction in degree is seen as moving forward from the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council.

When the priesthood of the faithful is viewed principally from the viewpoint of hierarchical priesthood then there is a dilemma. Either the priesthood of the faithful is metaphorical in which case it is lesser than the hierarchical priesthood, or it is not metaphorical, in which case it is difficult to distinguish it from the hierarchical priesthood.

These responses share an Achilles heel. They all presuppose the false dichotomy of two priesthoods as articulated by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*. To proclaim two priesthoods is to run counter to the one priesthood

The council was seeking to encourage the laity to take a more active role in the church. One way the council did this was by articulating the priestly dignity of all the baptized. The council related all Christians to the mission of the church and the consecration of Christ himself. Differentiation within this consecration and mission was indicated with the laity participating in the threefold office of Christ. In this way, all Christians are given a share in the one priesthood of Christ. The ordained priesthood is also given a share in the priesthood of Christ but its priesthood differs in degree and kind from that of the laity.⁹²

A second way of encouraging the laity to take an active role was shown in the ordering of the chapters in *Lumen Gentium*. In order to emphasize the commonality of all the faithful, the section on the whole people of God is treated separately from the laity. The section on the whole

spoken of in 1 Pet. 2. In addition, if there are two priesthoods, then the clergy hold two priesthoods, one by virtue of their baptism and one by virtue of ordination. To confess two priesthoods exemplifies the division of the unity among the Christian people.

As long as two priesthoods are promulgated, the disagreement as to the distinction in essence and degree will continue. Neither distinction is helpful. The distinction in essence divides the unity among Christians and relegates the laity to a lesser status than the clergy. The distinction in degree seeks to restore the unity among Christians but is seen as diminishing the office of the ordained. Since clergy and laity have the same status it is difficult to understand the difference between the priesthoods.

Both distinctions focus on the person: the difference in essence focuses on the person in the office because the ordained receives a special power by the Spirit in ordination to exercise tasks which other Christians cannot do; the difference in degree focuses on each person of the laity because every Christian is given charismata for ministry by the Spirit in baptism. These distinctions are no longer pertinent when the focus is on Christ working through his priestly office. There is only one priesthood, that of Jesus Christ. Christians are priests because they share in his priesthood. Ordained clergy do not hold another priesthood but they exercise Christ's priestly office. This dissolves any discussion regarding two priesthoods since there is only one priesthood.

The theologians who analyzed Congar's theology of the laity and are supportive of it, are exacting in identifying Congar's main points. They discuss Congar's emphasis on the variety of forms of priesthood and the mutuality of the clergy and laity; the service view instead of the status view of the hierarchical priesthood; the focus on the relation of the priest to the community instead of to Christ; his view of ministries in relation to community; and his priority of the priesthood of the faithful over the ministerial priesthood. They point out that Congar's later teaching emphasized the opposite of the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the two priesthoods. Even though they clearly identify Congar's viewpoint, they are accepting of it and not critical of it except to say that he did not go far enough with his conclusions in granting authority to the laity. Congar does not resolve the difficulty concerning the clergy/laity distinction or the issue of two priesthoods. He reacts to the traditional view which gives sacred status to the clergy by focusing on the charisms or ministries given to all Christians. This does not address the concern of two priesthoods or how the role of the laity is distinct from the clergy.

⁹² David N. Power, "Priesthood Revisited: Mission and Ministries in the Royal Priesthood," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 90–91.

people of God was placed first, followed by the sections on the hierarchy and the laity. This emphasized the unity of the people of God before it addressed the differences among the people of God.⁹³

The emphasis of the council, regarding the laity, is that the laity have a role in building up the church as they work in conjunction with the clergy. The understanding of the laity as a passive flock is no longer promulgated. There is still a distinction between the kinds of responsibilities that are proper to the clergy and to the laity, but there is a strong sense that the “apostolic role of both is vital to the well-being of the church.”⁹⁴

Lumen Gentium uses several biblical images to illustrate the importance of the unity of the people of God. They are described as the body of Christ with Christ being the head; the new Israel; a holy priesthood; and a kingdom of priests.⁹⁵ Another way the unity of the people of God is emphasized is by the assertion that all Christians share in the prophetic office of Christ. The Holy Spirit grants charisms to Christians by which they give witness to God and thereby carry out the duties of this office. Not only the prophetic office, but also the priestly and kingly offices are common to all Christians.⁹⁶

The laity exercise their priestly duties by consecrating the world to God, uniting their activities or spiritual offerings to the eucharistic sacrifice. They exercise their prophetic duties by using the faith given them at baptism which allows them to receive the Word of God, study it, and apply it in their daily lives. Using their charism given to them in baptism is also fulfilling their prophetic duties. Their royal duties are fulfilled by bringing God to the world by exercising

⁹³ Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 24.

⁹⁴ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 89.

⁹⁵ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 28–33.

⁹⁶ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 28–40.

their secular competencies.⁹⁷

The laity are defined by the fact that they have been baptized into Christ and they share in his threefold office. However, since the same can be said of the clergy and those in the religious orders, what distinguishes or defines the laity is their contrast with the clergy and those in religious orders. Thus, laity are distinguished by their secular nature and that they cannot effect the sacraments.⁹⁸

Giving credence to the fact that the laity are distinguished by their secular nature, while the clergy are distinguished by their sacred nature, is the fact that the council speaks of the sacred power of the priest.⁹⁹ “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”¹⁰⁰ This difference between the priesthoods raises the contention that only the clergy are priests. Therefore the laity are priests only in a metaphorical sense.¹⁰¹

In order to show more unity between the priesthoods, the council also emphasized the difference in degree. The acts of the ordained priest are done in union with all Christians. Since the common priesthood joins in offering the eucharist, the ordained priest does not act alone or in the place of the community. He is acting in the name of the common priesthood along with them. The role of the laity is to “offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it.”¹⁰² The eucharistic sacrifice is accomplished by the actions of the priest and also through the action and

⁹⁷ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 41, 67, 72.

⁹⁸ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 79.

⁹⁹ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35.

¹⁰¹ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 12.

¹⁰² Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35–36.

prayer of all the Christians. In addition the priesthood of the laity entails receiving the sacraments, offering prayers, living a holy life, and doing deeds of charity.¹⁰³

Even though *Lumen Gentium* posits that “everything that has been said of the people of God is addressed equally to laity, religious, and clergy,”¹⁰⁴ Vatican II does not have an egalitarian doctrine of the church. There are many commonalities among all Christians but it is clear that definite differences also exist. For example, the council teaches that the charisms are of two types. One type is the charisms that are granted freely to Christians as the Holy Spirit wills. A second type is the charisms of office that Christians receive through ordination. This differentiation of charism is exemplified in the Eucharist where only those with the charism of office can preside. The fact that all Christians are part of the common priesthood does not exclude the ordained priesthood because of the distinction of charisms.¹⁰⁵

Lumen Gentium contains two texts that shed light on this crucial discussion. The first text comes from the section on the people of God and reminds the reader that the whole community, the people of God, does not undermine the hierarchy or ordained priesthood. “The common priesthood of the faithful¹⁰⁶ and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, though they differ in essence and not simply in degree, are nevertheless interrelated: each in its own particular way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.” Apart from associating Christ’s priesthood with the church’s sacramental ministry and the eucharistic sacrifice, the council gave no precise definition

¹⁰³ Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 65.

¹⁰⁵ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 50–54; see Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ In *Lumen Gentium*, “faithful” designates the baptized. It refers not only to the laity but all baptized Christians including priests, bishops, and religious. Thus “faithful” and “laity” are not necessarily interchangeable terms. “People of God” refers to all the faithful.

of Christ's own priesthood.¹⁰⁷

Vatican II used the term "essence" here and in other documents but the council did not define the word.¹⁰⁸ This text indicates a distinction among the people of God since there are two distinct priesthoods, although each priesthood shares in the priesthood of Christ. It would seem the distinction of essence between the priesthoods is one of status and the distinction of degree is one of service.¹⁰⁹

The second text from *Lumen Gentium*, stresses the commonality among the people of God. It states that because the people of God participate in Christ's prophetic office,

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.¹¹⁰

This statement reversed the order of Vatican I. The norm generally was to state first the infallibility of the teaching office and then acknowledge the faith of the people which was passively received from this office. Vatican II inverted this order by stating first the faith of the people of God. This faith is not derived from the office but remains under the direction of the office. This puts a significant emphasis on the people of God and the commonality of those who

¹⁰⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 857. "Sacerdotium autem commune fidelium et sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum, licet essentia et non gradu tantum different, ad invicem tamen ordinantur; unum enim et alterum suo peculiari modo de uno Christi sacerdotio participant."

¹⁰⁸ Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 341.

¹⁰⁹ Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 25–26. See also Peter J. Drilling, "Common and Ministerial Priesthood," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (6/1987): 81–99.

¹¹⁰ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 43.

are baptized.¹¹¹

Vatican II interprets the ordained priesthood Christologically. The clergy are to act in the person of Christ, the Head (*in persona Christi capitis*). They take the place of Christ and perform functions which the laity cannot perform.¹¹² The council also interpreted the common priesthood Christologically when it taught that all the baptized share in the threefold office of Christ.¹¹³ This was a significant and new application of the threefold office of Christ which previously had been limited to the clergy. The council speaks of the participation of all the baptized in the threefold office as an indication of their participation in the mission of the church.

According to the council, the people of God are consecrated in baptism as a “kingdom of priests.” By virtue of their baptism, all Christians have the same duties to pray, to praise God, to offer themselves as a sacrifice, to bear witness to Christ, and to proclaim Christ.¹¹⁴ Through baptism and confirmation, all Christians are given the Holy Spirit and thus they are duty bound to proclaim the faith in word and deed. In addition, they are to take part in the eucharistic sacrifice where all Christians “offer the Divine Victim to God and themselves along with It,” and thus each have their own role in the liturgy.¹¹⁵

Since all Christians are baptized and have a common faith, they share a common dignity, a common grace, and a “common vocation to perfection.” In Christ and in his church “there is ... no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex.”¹¹⁶ Even though the church is described as hierarchical, the people of God is a community of equality before God by virtue

¹¹¹ Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 27–28.

¹¹² Michalski, *Relationship Between the Universal Priesthood*, 73–74, 76.

¹¹³ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 82.

¹¹⁴ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 40.

¹¹⁶ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 80.

of a common baptism.¹¹⁷

Although the two priesthods share in the one priesthood of Christ, the priesthood of the laity is not derived from the ordained priesthood. The council was clear on this when it stated that the two priesthods differed in “essence and not only in degree.” The priestly role of the laity overlaps with the role of the ordained priesthood. When the council enumerates, in *Lumen Gentium* No. 10, the role of the laity, by the fact that they are a common priesthood, the duties mentioned certainly pertain also to the ordained priesthood. Some of the duties mentioned are “the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation, and active charity.” The priesthood of the laity is not “lay ministry” or a “vocation” to which some laity are called and others are not, whereby they assist the internal ministries of the church or engage in formal apostolic activity in the world. The priesthood of the laity is a common responsibility of all the laity by virtue of their baptism.¹¹⁸

The priesthood of the laity, as is the ordained priesthood, is focused on mediation. The role of the common priesthood is to bring God to the world and bring the world to God. The council states that the vocation of the laity is “to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth.”¹¹⁹ All the mediations or works of the laity in the world, if “accomplished in the Spirit,” become sacrifices which are offered to God in the eucharistic sacrifice. In doing so, “the laity consecrate the world itself to God.”¹²⁰

Lumen Gentium not only discusses the works of the laity in bringing the world before God

¹¹⁷ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 90.

¹¹⁸ Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 90–91.

¹¹⁹ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 87.

¹²⁰ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 93.

through the worship of the church and bringing God's love to the world through faithful living in the world, it also mentions particular ministries in the church in which laity may serve. The council writes that the laity can be called to "more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy," and that the laity also possess "the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices within a view to a spiritual end."¹²¹

Lumen Gentium is not specific about these special roles but it seems to be speaking of those roles which over time have accrued to the ordained that do not belong essentially to their priesthood such as financial control over a parish, a teacher in a parochial school, coordinators of social events, and music ministers.¹²²

Summary and Conclusion

According to Vatican II and Congar the door has been opened for two paths to follow regarding the role of the laity. The first, which is put forth in Congar's early writings and in the documents of Vatican II, teaches that the laity are all baptized Christians who are given the Spirit and are responsible for the mission of the church which is to be carried out through the particular gifts that each individual is given. Each Christian is active in faith and participates with the clergy under the teaching authority of the bishops. Some of the laity may work in the church but most will serve in the world. The second path, found in the later writings of Congar, understands the laity as all baptized Christians who are all ministers in different ways. Some serve among the body of Christians and preside at the Eucharist or preach, etc., and others serve outside the body of Christians and serve in the world.¹²³

¹²¹ Kroeger, *Documents of Vatican Council II*, 87.

¹²² Lakeland, *Liberation of the Laity*, 91-92.

¹²³ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 34.

The first path maintains the distinction between laity and clergy while the second path understands all Christians on a spectrum with no essential difference between what each kind of minister does. The first path maintains the distinction between the clergy and the laity and defines the laity in contrast to the clergy. The second path strives to eliminate the distinction between the clergy and the laity by speaking of different ministries and of everyone as the *laos*, or people of God. The second path concludes that since all Christians are equal in baptism therefore all Christians can do the same works.¹²⁴

Congar speaks of the hierarchical priesthood since that is the structure of the church and therefore he uses the clergy/laity distinction. In doing so, he struggles mightily with the one-sidedness of the definition of the church. As he tries to explain the priesthood of the faithful he runs the risk of defining the church as people with no ordained priesthood or clergy. As he tries to explain the hierarchical priesthood he runs the danger of defining the church as an ordained priesthood with no people. The clergy/laity distinction is not resolved so it permeates his theology and he ends up with two priesthoods and two churches.

Congar defines the laity in an intra-ecclesial way which flows from the Christian's baptismal membership in the people of God. Through baptism the Christian is prepared to take his responsibility in the church as a full member. It is the distinction of complementary vocations within the same community which differentiates the laity and the clergy in a way to be determined in each particular area of the life of the church.

Congar also defines the laity in regards to an interest for the world. They are inserted into the world to consecrate it for God. The missionary activity of the laity indicates their proper role as members of the mission of the church and the role of the hierarchy with its special

¹²⁴ Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 35.

responsibility for the mission of the church. In the world, the laity are missionaries by the witness of their words and lives. This duty of the apostolate is natural to the laity. They do not need to receive an ordination from on high because it comes to them in their baptism as their ordinary quality as Christians. This apostolate of the laity does not require any other dependence in regard to the hierarchy than the general dependence of all Christian life whereby the Christian is dependent on the clergy regarding matters of faith, sacramental life, and Christian conduct.

Vatican II emphasized the church as the people of God. In doing so, the laity are encouraged to participate in the mission of the church and in its liturgy or worship. They are no longer viewed as being passive but are expected to be full participants. The clergy are to act in solidarity with the laity since both priesthods, that of the clergy and that of the laity, share in the one priesthood of Christ.

Since some theological ideas were not explicated as well as they might have been, subsequent interpretation of the council's exposition of the laity was free to go in two different directions. The more traditional direction stressed the importance of the distinctions between the roles of the clergy and laity with the clergy serving in the church and the laity serving in the world. This tends to separate the church and world and leave the laity with a passive role in the church. The more contemporary direction expanded on the implications of *Lumen Gentium* with a view toward a new day in which both the clergy and the laity together are active and responsible for the life and the mission of the church.

In *Lumen Gentium* No. 10, the council has raised an issue regarding the common priesthood and the hierarchical priesthood. A difference in essence emphasizes the hierarchical priesthood and the church as hierarchical order. This marks a clear distinction between the priesthods. A difference in degree emphasizes the priesthood of the faithful and the church as a

communion or community, and it seeks to bridge the gap between the two priesthoods. The distinction in essence is understood as the traditional teaching of the church, whereas the distinction in degree is viewed as a new teaching which springs from the responses to Vatican II which moves the church forward.

If the distinction between the priesthoods is one of essence whereby the hierarchical priesthood has a unique status, then the reality of the common priesthood is called into question. Either the common priesthood is metaphorical or at the least is a lesser priesthood than the hierarchical priesthood. If the common priesthood is not metaphorical, the struggle is how to distinguish it from the hierarchical priesthood.

To confess two priesthoods is to divide the unity among all Christians. As long as two priesthoods are articulated there will always be a struggle as to how to distinguish between them while holding to the unity of all baptized Christians. The confession of two priesthoods is contrary to the one priesthood spoken of in 1 Pet. 2. If there are two priesthoods, then the clergy hold two, one by virtue of their baptism and one by virtue of ordination.

As long as two priesthoods are confessed, the disagreement as to the distinction between them will continue. Neither distinction, of essence or of degree, is helpful. By making a distinction in essence, the unity among Christians is divided and the clergy become superior to the laity. On the other hand, the distinction in degree, although it aims at restoring the unity among Christians, minimizes the office of the clergy and makes the laity superior to the clergy. In both cases the focus is on the person. The distinction in essence teaches that the ordained receives gifts from the Spirit in ordination by which he can exercise tasks which other Christians cannot do. The distinction in degree teaches that every Christian is given gifts for ministry by the Spirit in baptism. Ultimately, this obscures the priesthood of Christ and how all Christians

participate in his priesthood.

CHAPTER FOUR

BAPTIST LAITY

The previous chapter analyzed the Roman Catholic approach to defining “laity” whereby Vatican II utilized the category of status. This chapter will study the Baptist understanding of the “laity” as they use the category of service or duties. Baptists are accustomed to using paradox or even contradictions in their theological teachings. The authority of Scripture is emphasized but it is interpreted with a pietistic spirituality which is more concerned with personal biblical experience than with biblical uniformity. Confessions of faith or creeds are used for doctrinal uniformity but they are subordinate to the individual conscience which is accountable to God alone. Such conundrums are also present in the Baptist teaching regarding the laity.¹

Lay leadership is a main premise in Baptist organizational structure. Baptist polity teaches that there is no distinction between the clergy and the laity. Both the laity and the clergy are considered caretakers or stewards of the Lord’s gifts. Therefore, both are given the same opportunities to hold positions of leadership.²

Baptist churches are a community of the laity where each believer is considered called by God to serve others. Yet, Baptists have understood the need for ordained clergy to carry out ministerial duties in service to the community of believers. It is often a struggle to navigate the concern over who has the authority, the laity or the clergy, when the issue arises.³ Since the laity are allowed to perform all ecclesiastical duties with the permission of the congregation, final

¹ Bill J. Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” *Review and Expositor* 84, no. 4 (September 1987): 633.

² Grissom, “Lay Leadership,” 26.

³ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 633.

authority in the affairs of each congregation rests with the laity.⁴

In Baptist churches, every member has an equal voice in the church. There is a recognition that the authority of the clergy comes from Christ, but that authority is only given to the clergy through the laity. In light of this, Baptists have held in tension the struggle for authority between the universal calling of all believers and the particular call of the pastor.⁵

Our answer is not a ‘servanthood of the laity’ as a nice addition to round out a hired professional staff; instead, what we are trying to say here is that the lay people must become *the ministry of the church in the world*. It is yours! This forces us to re-define everything! It is not that you as laymen are to pitch in and help out; it’s that you are the only hope we have and this forces us to re-define everything! This is ministry.⁶

The laity are not merely to attend church on Sundays, but they are Christians who proclaim the Gospel in every area of their lives. They are and carry out the ministry of the church.

On the one hand, there is no distinction between laity and clergy, yet there is a recognized need for clergy to do ministerial service among the community of the laity. The meaning of “laity” gets clouded when laymen are called preachers, particularly by the phrase “lay preachers.”⁷ Unpaid laymen were Baptist preachers on the frontier. Early Baptist practice sanctioned lay preachers by licensing them.⁸ If the laity are defined in contrast to the clergy how can a layman be clergy and still be a layman? One is left asking, “Which are they, laity or clergy?” If they are both, then they are neither.

Franklin Littell, a church historian, writes, “It has sometimes wrongly been said that the Anabaptists, Baptists, Quakers, Mennonites, Brethren and like groups have no true doctrine of

⁴ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 636.

⁵ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 639, 644.

⁶ Carlyle Marney, *Priests to Each Other* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1974), 8, 10.

⁷ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 638.

⁸ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 638.

ordination and frequently no clergy at all. A more perceptive oversimplification would be to say *not that they have no clergy but that they have no laity.*”⁹ In the Baptist church, to be a layperson is to be a minister. Some of them serve as ministers by carrying out all the ecclesiastical duties as long as they have the authorization of the congregation. Others serve as ministers in evangelism and outreach in their various stations in life.¹⁰

In the 1960s and 70s, Baptists were calling for a renewal of the laity as ministers and co-workers with the clergy. Works such as Elton Trueblood’s *Company of the Committed*, Keith Miller’s *A Taste of New Wine*, Findley Edge’s *The Greening of the Church*, and David Haney’s *The Lord and His Laity*, and Carlyle Marney’s *Priests to Each Other*, strongly encouraged the laity to reclaim their calling as priests and ministers.¹¹

The laity are to proclaim the Gospel in every area of their lives. Marney in a militant manner defined the lay renewal as “an anti-preacher movement” and he insisted that the laity would need to take back the power because the clergy would not relinquish it on their own. He believes that the laity should not be the servants to the clergy but that they should take the power from the clergy for they are the ones who do the ministry of the church in the world.¹²

In the mid 1970s and into the 80s, other ideas were developing which influenced the Baptist understanding of the laity. These are often summarized as the “clergification” of the church, or the increasing power and influence of ordained professionals in the church. This was caused by several developments. First, since the congregation is the final authority in the Baptist

⁹ Franklin Littell, “The Radical Reformation,” in *The Layman in Christian History, A Project of the Department on the Laity of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Stephen Charles Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 263.

¹⁰ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 636, 639. See also Grissom, “Lay Leadership,” 26.

¹¹ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 643.

¹² Marney, *Priests to Each Other*, 8, 10.

church, clergy have long known the power struggles and conflicts between the clergy and the laity. This has sometimes led to the clergy claiming authority for their office by divine mandate instead of by congregational approval. Increasingly, Baptists view the call of the clergy as a divine mandate which is confirmed by the congregation through ordination. This makes the call unique in itself without the approval of the congregation.¹³

Second, the ministries within congregations have increased and these positions are being filled more and more by professionals in order to serve specialized duties. This seems to imply that ministerial leadership is best accomplished by specially trained professionals who are paid to do specific or specialized duties. This has implications for the understanding of the definition and role of the laity. It fosters the view that instead of the professional minister motivating the laity to be active in ministry the laity are clients who hire a professional minister to complete special services for the laity.¹⁴

In addition, the status of those who work in the church as religious workers is unclear. They are not laity by the normal definition because they are working full time in the church as religious professionals. Yet they are not clergy by the standard definition because they are not doing the ministerial functions connected with a congregation.

[Denominationalism] created the office of “denominational worker,” an employee of the denomination who produced and administered programs but was not related directly to the traditional ministerial functions evident in local congregations. Denominational workers, lay and clergy, nonetheless served as religious professionals and were neither fish nor fowl. As employees of the denomination they were not “pure” laity, but neither were they preachers or ministers in the traditional sense. Increasingly, this has meant that denominational professionals had limited authority in shaping, even addressing, controversies and policies.¹⁵

¹³ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 644.

¹⁴ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 644.

¹⁵ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 645.

Another aspect of ministerial professionalism is the denominational worker. This worker is an employee of the denomination who is not directly related to the ministerial duties in a local congregation. Denominational workers, whether they are laity or clergy, serve as religious professional workers and as such are neither laity nor clergy in the traditional sense.¹⁶ Their status is unclear. Since they are working full time in the church as religious professionals, they are not considered laity by the standard definition. Neither are they considered clergy by the standard definition because they are not exercising the ministerial duties of a congregation.¹⁷

To help resolve this conundrum with reference to laity serving on boards of the Southern Baptist Convention, the bylaws were changed. No longer was there a distinction made between the “ordained” and the “lay” persons, rather the distinction was between those who are pastors or full-time employees of churches or denominational entities and those who are not.¹⁸ This means that the term ‘laity’ is now used in distinction not only with the clergy but also those who are full-time church or denominational employees. The Southern Baptist churches now recognize three distinctions among Christians: clergy, full-time church or denominational employees, and laity.

Third, there is one particular model for ministry that is gaining widespread popularity in the Baptist church. This model is that the pastoral office has ultimate authority. The pastor, biblically speaking, is the model for ministry and authority in the congregation. He represents Christ in the congregation and is accountable only to God. Church growth analyses confirms that this autocratic model produces significant numerical advancements for many congregations. The

¹⁶ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 645.

¹⁷ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 645.

¹⁸ Grissom, “Lay Leadership,” 30. See also James D Williams, “The Future of Lay Ministries in the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 29, no. 3 (July 1994): 55–56.

reason for this is because this model reflects the business model of a chief executive officer or chairman of a board under whose powerful guidance the group is lead to statistical and financial success.¹⁹

Under such clerical authoritarianism, some mega-churches have thrived and other congregations experience turmoil and even division. This model needs to be evaluated in light of the Baptist teaching of the ministerial vocation of the priesthood of believers, whereby the laity have ultimate authority. The “clergification” of the church undermines the role of the laity and will lead to a clerical elite who claim all authority over the laity. This result is more compatible with the hierarchical teaching of Roman Catholicism than with the Baptist tradition of the ministry of the laity.²⁰

In reaction to the “clergification” of the church is a strong call for the laity to be the ministers doing the work of the church. The understanding is that the priesthood of believers are a people called to a mission and a ministry. “In the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and God’s call to ministry we find the key to understanding the plan which God ordained to accomplish his redemptive plan in the world. Namely He is calling a *people* to be the ministers through whom he may work His work of redemption in the world. Here is the key. This means that *the primary responsibility for God’s ministry in the world is the responsibility of the laity and not the clergy.*”²¹

The responsibility for completing the God-given mission or tasks of the church rests upon the laity and not upon the professional church workers. This is a revolutionary idea since many people in the Baptist Church believe the primary responsibility for completing God’s work is the

¹⁹ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 645.

²⁰ Leonard, “Southern Baptists and the Laity,” 645.

²¹ Findley Edge, *The Greening of the Church* (Waco, TX: Word, 1977), 39.

task of the clergy.²² In 1985 the Southern Baptist Convention Inter-Agency Council Coordinating Committee sponsored a symposium on the ministry of the laity. The Foundation Paper that was delivered at the symposium defined “laity” as “all the people of God without the distinctions of professional or vocational ministers.... Within this community of ministers, some ministers have the functional role of equipping the other ministers for service.”²³ The definition of the laity as the whole people of God is a new definition in the Southern Baptist churches. The long-standing teaching regarding the laity in Baptist churches does make a distinction between the clergy and the laity, although it is a distinction based on service or duties rather than status.

For some in the Baptist Church, the Baptist Church is at a crucial point in time as to whether she will work through the struggle of living out the teaching that the laity are the ministers. For Baptists, the teaching of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer is where the church confronts the cross and it is expressed in the ministry of each and every believer. The understanding is that if this teaching is taken to heart the whole life of the church will be transformed. On the other hand, to ignore or reject this teaching will result in a watered-down Gospel and a crippled church, since it is the task of the laity to proclaim the Gospel. Therefore it is important to understand the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and put it into practice in each congregation.²⁴

In Baptist doctrine, the priesthood of the believer includes the understanding that each

²² John Stott, *One People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 51.

²³ “The Ministry of the Laity: A Foundation Paper,” Southern Baptist Convention, SBC Coordinating Committee (Nashville, TN: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1986), 5. On page 9, the reader is admonished that “Most pastors and vocational ministers have not been trained for the equipping ministry. They do not know how to instruct laity already equipped for ministry, and they do not know how to deal with laity who do not want to face their responsibility for ministry.” See also Paul A. Basden, ed., *Has Our Theology Changed? Southern Baptist Thought Since 1845* (Nashville, TN: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1994).

²⁴ Ken Smith, “The Local Baptist Congregation and the Laity,” *Review and Expositor* 85, no. 4 (September 1988): 653.

Christian is a priest, a minister, and thus accountable to God for the work of the ministry. Each congregation is to be structured with this understanding in mind so that this teaching is not only confessed but also put into practice. It does little to put this teaching into practice when it is written in the church bulletin that all the Christians are the ministers, and yet the Christians still believe that the clergy are called to do the work of the ministry while the laity are there for support. If the ministry of the believer is God's plan to accomplish his purpose in the world then Baptists have no choice but to obey it. For Baptists, everything that is done in the church hinges on this biblical doctrine since it is God's plan. Therefore the church should agree to do whatever is necessary to bring this teaching to fruition in each congregation.²⁵ There is an imperative need for the ministry of every believer for through each believer the Gospel could be proclaimed into all the world. That means all Christians have equal right to the privileges of membership. The pastor is the equipper of the believers and "is the key to making this biblical concept work."²⁶

In 1963, Southern Baptists put forth the following statement at a convention regarding the priesthood of the believer: "Baptists emphasize the soul's competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer. However, this emphasis should not be interpreted to mean that there is an absence of certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified."²⁷ Although this statement upholds the priesthood of the believer, it appears to limit the priestly functions by not allowing for any believer to believe or confess anything they desire. "Definite doctrines" are mentioned which

²⁵ Smith, "Local Baptist Congregation," 654, 657. See also Grissom, "Lay Leadership," 34.

²⁶ Williams, "Future of Lay Ministries," 56–57. The priesthood of believers is "a concept fundamental to an understanding of the religion of Christ," W. Barry Garrett, "Priesthood of Believers," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Norman Wade Cox (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1958): 2:1113.

²⁷ *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1963), 6.

Baptists cherish, and the phrase, “closely identified” presumes a level of consistency regarding such doctrines.

At the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention a resolution was submitted which indicates there was controversy over the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer:

WHEREAS, None of the five major writing systematic theologians in Southern Baptist history have given more than passing reference to the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer in their systematic theologies;
and WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message preamble refers to the priesthood of the believer, but provides no definition or content to the term;
and WHEREAS, The high profile emphasis on the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer in Southern Baptist life is a recent historical development;
and WHEREAS, The priesthood of the believer is a term which is subject to both misunderstanding and abuse;
and WHEREAS, The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist;
and WHEREAS, The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer can be used to justify the undermining of pastoral authority in the local church.
Be it therefore RESOLVED, That the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in San Antonio, Texas, June 14–16, 1988, affirm its belief in the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of the believer (1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 1:6); and
Be it further RESOLVED, That we affirm that this doctrine in no way gives license to misinterpret, explain away, demythologize, or extrapolate out elements of the supernatural from the Bible;
and Be it further RESOLVED, That the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility, and authority of the pastor which is seen in the command to the local church in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account;"
and Be finally RESOLVED, That we affirm the truth that elders, or pastors, are called of God to lead the local church (Acts 20:28)²⁸

During the 1988 convention, at the pastor’s conference, Wallie Amos Criswell²⁹ preached his famous “skunk” sermon. He addressed both liberals and moderates with the following

²⁸ Walter B. Shurden and Randy Shepley, *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1996), 237.

²⁹ W. A. Criswell (1909–2002) was an American pastor and author. He served two terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1968–1970). He served as senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas for five decades and is regarded as a key figure in the late 1970s “Conservative Resurgence” within the Southern Baptist Convention.

statement, “A skunk by any other name still stinks.... We have taken the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and made it to cover every damnable heresy you can imagine.”³⁰

According to Nancy Ammerman,³¹ the moderates at the convention saw the resolution “as an indirect condemnation of Convention programs on lay leadership, but it was also seen as a forthright statement of the fundamentalists’ belief that pastors really are to ‘rule’ their local churches.”³² The moderates responded to the resolution in the following way:

The afternoon after it was passed a group marched from the convention center to the Alamo, singing, ‘We Shall Overcome.’ They saw the morning’s resolution as an endorsement of patriarchal pastoral dominance no less oppressive than slavery or the segregation many of them had helped to protest two decades before. When they reached the Alamo, they symbolically tore their copies of the resolution to bits, while singing Martin Luther’s Reformation Hymn, ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God.’ They could hardly believe that a Baptist body had just chosen to interpret ‘priesthood of the believer’ to mean obeying the pastor. Such a view seemed to the moderates to fly in the face on one of Baptists’ most cherished principles.³³

The resolution did not define the priesthood of the believer. Instead, it acknowledged what the priesthood of the believer does not mean rather than what it does mean. Although the 1988 resolution did not define the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, the website for the convention offers a vague clarification through a position statement:

We affirm the priesthood of all believers. Laypersons have the same right as ordained ministers to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ's name. That is why the Convention requires strong lay involvement on its boards. This doctrine is first and foremost a matter of responsibility and servanthood, not privilege and license. It is of course, a perversion of this doctrine to say that all views are valid,

³⁰ Shurden, *Going for the Jugular*, 233.

³¹ Nancy Ammerman is an American professor of sociology of religion at Boston University School of Theology. In 1984, she joined the faculty of Emory University. Her book *Baptist Battles*, won the 1992 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. In 1995, Ammerman left Emory University to teach at Hartford Seminary. Since 2003, she has been at Boston University.

³² Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 88.

³³ Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 88–89.

that you can believe anything and still be a Baptist or that the pastor has no unique leadership role.³⁴

The Baptist focus of the laity as ministers comes from the understanding of the laity as priests. In Baptist theology, the priesthood of all Christians functions as an “amorphous given” which is applied in different ways at different times.³⁵ To be a priest is to minister. Each Christian is responsible for serving others. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Baptists placed individualistic interpretations on the priesthood of all Christians.³⁶ Through the work begun by Edgar Young Mullins³⁷ and perpetuated by H. H. Hobbs the individualism persisted into the twentieth century.³⁸ E. Y. Mullins is considered the most significant Southern Baptist theologian of the early twentieth century. Herschel H. Hobbs, who continued Mullins’ idea concerning soul competency and the individualism of the priesthood of all Christians, is likely the most influential Southern Baptist theologian during the last half of the twentieth century.³⁹

Edgar Young Mullins

Al Mohler⁴⁰ writes, “More than any other individual, E. Y. Mullins shaped the Southern

³⁴ “Priesthood,” Southern Baptist Convention Position Statements, http://www.cfbfc.org/Southern_Baptist_Convention_Position_Statements/.

³⁵ Pitts, “Priesthood of All Christians,” 34–35.

³⁶ James Leo Garrett, “Recovering My Priesthood,” *Home Missions* (February 1965): 34.

³⁷ Edgar Young Mullins was a Baptist minister and educator. He served as the fourth president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1899 until his death.

³⁸ Pitts, “Priesthood of All Christians,” 37.

³⁹ Mark Rogers, “A Dangerous Idea? Martin Luther, E. Y. Mullins, and the Priesthood of All Believers,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 72, no. 1 (March 2010): 119.

⁴⁰ Albert Mohler is an American historical theologian and the ninth president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He has been described by influential publications such as *Time* and *Christianity Today* as one of America’s most influential evangelical leaders.

Baptist mind during the first half of the twentieth century.”⁴¹ Harold Bloom⁴² refers to Mullins as “the most neglected of major American theologians ... the Calvin or Luther or Wesley of the Southern Baptists.”⁴³ Edgar Young Mullins was born in Mississippi in 1860 and moved with his family to Texas when he was eight years old. Mullins graduated with the first undergraduate class at Texas A&M. It wasn’t until after graduation that he was converted at a revival meeting and was baptized by his father, a minister-teacher. He entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in 1881 and was set upon doing mission work. His plans changed for health reasons and after seminary he pastored three churches, in Kentucky, Baltimore, and Boston.

After several years as a parish pastor, he was called to serve as president of SBTS (1899–1928) after a major controversy over Baptist ecclesiology. He was a catalyst for peace in the Southern Baptist Convention and under his leadership SBTS thrived in terms of growth in students and financial resources. He started the theological journal *The Review and Expositor* and published several influential books. In addition, he served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1921–24) and of the Baptist World Alliance (1928). Through his books, sermons, and denominational leadership and writings, he became one of the most influential Baptists of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

Theologically, Mullins adapted the categories of evangelical piety to experiential religion,

⁴¹ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, and Timothy and Denise George; (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 20. Mullins’ *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* was published in Philadelphia by Griffith & Rowland Press in 1908 and has been reprinted many times.

⁴² Harold Bloom was a professor at Yale for five decades and a prolific and eminent literary critic. In his final years he turned his attention to religious texts. In *The Book of J* (1990), for example, he focused on the strata of the Old Testament that scholars attribute to the “J” writer or Yahwist. In his book, Bloom confessed that “my Orthodox Judaic childhood lingers in me as an awe of Yahweh.” The book shows how much Bloom’s theory of literary influence owes to his sense of the New Testament’s relationship to the Hebrew Bible.

⁴³ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Chu Hartley, 2006), 199.

⁴⁴ J. Terry Young, “Baptists and the Priesthood of Believers,” *The Theological Educator*, 53 (Spring 1996): 24–25. See also Rogers, “A Dangerous Idea,” 127.

drawing from the teachings of Kant and Schleiermacher.⁴⁵ Mullins was the first theologian among Southern Baptists to make Christian experience the organizing principle in expounding the doctrines of the faith.⁴⁶ Christian experience is the operative principle in his theology, the source from which all theological interpretation is derived.⁴⁷ Jesus is the ultimate authority for theology and the Scriptures are the only authoritative source of information about him. However, unless, Christ and the Scriptures are “vitalized by experience” they offer no value for theological discussion.⁴⁸

As did Descartes, Mullins used the image of axioms in Euclidean geometry to put forth the axioms of the Christian religion. He used these self-evident ideas as a foundation to show that Christian theology is grounded. The interpretive key to Christian experience, Mullins believed,

⁴⁵ Bloom, *American Religion*, 210–17. See also Timothy George, “Systematic Theology at Southern Seminary,” *Review and Expositor* 82, no. 1 (February 1985): 36; “Mullins was well aware of post-Enlightenment developments in European theology, and sought to incorporate the positive elements of these trends into his own system. He frankly acknowledged his indebtedness to Schleiermacher for pointing him in a new direction: ‘Schleiermacher, at the beginning of the century, had already anticipated the need for a change in the method of dealing with religious truth.’ . . . Mullins was also acquainted with the work of Albrecht Ritschl. He regarded it as a ‘notable landmark’ in the history of theology, despite its ‘fatal weaknesses.’ Mullins’ strong emphasis upon the kingdom of God and upon the social and ethical dimensions of Christianity reflects an affinity with Ritschl.” See also, Timothy George, “Systematic Theology at Southern Seminary;” and p. 38; “Mullins’ interest in experiential theology led him to follow avidly the advances in the emerging science of psychology.”

⁴⁶ George, “Systematic Theology at Southern Seminary,” 36. “As early as 1904 he had added the ‘Theology of Religious Experience’ to the syllabus of the advanced course in theology. . . . Mullins’ general course in Systematic Theology also gradually conformed to the new pattern, as the following catalog (1929–1930) course description indicates:

The aim of this course is to lead the student to arrange the doctrines of Christianity around some central and unifying principle, to the end that he may acquire a grasp of the Christian religion in its comprehensive scope and unitary nature. The central theme adopted is Christian experience, which meets all the requirements of theology and philosophy.”

⁴⁷ Fisher Humphreys, “E. Y. Mullins,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990), 339. See also Curtis W. Freeman, “Can Baptist Theology Be Revised?” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 290–91.

⁴⁸ E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion* (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 3. See also E. Y. Mullins, “The Contribution of Baptists to the Interpretation of Christianity,” *Review & Expositor* 20, no. 4 (1923): 383–95.

was the axiom of soul competency.⁴⁹

Mullins gave exhaustive treatment to the doctrine of soul competency, or the priesthood of the believer. He stated, “The sufficient statement of the historical significance of the Baptists is this: The competency of the soul in religion.”⁵⁰ He believed soul competency, which he also called priesthood of the believer and sometimes religious liberty, was a basic truth and thus it needed no proof because it was obvious to any intelligent person.⁵¹

The Axioms of Religion

The priesthood of believers was one of Mullin’s most significant contributions to Baptist doctrine. *The Axioms of Religions* (1908) is his most helpful work on the subject and also his most popular work.⁵² “It probably has done more than any other single volume to define Baptist identity in the twentieth century.”⁵³ Mullins, in *The Axioms*, based the doctrine of the priesthood of believers on the soul’s competency in religion.⁵⁴ This meant that each Christian has equal right to direct access to God without any human mediator. All Christians are equally competent therefore no person would be dependent on another person for help in approaching God. The priesthood of believers “is but the expression of the soul’s competency.” With this view in mind, Mullins objected to any system of church government, sacraments, or the priesthood that would hinder the soul’s immediate experience with God. “Observe then that the idea of the competency

⁴⁹ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1908) 53–56.

⁵⁰ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 53.

⁵¹ Young, “Baptists and the Priesthood,” 24. See also J. Terry Young, “Baptists and the Priesthood of Believers,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 133–34.

⁵² Rogers, “A Dangerous Idea,” 128.

⁵³ Humphreys, “E. Y. Mullins,” 335.

⁵⁴ Mullins coined the term “soul competency.” See E. Y. Mullins, “Why I am a Baptist,” in *Twelve Modern Apostles and their Creeds*, ed. G. K. Chesterton et al. (New York: Books for Libraries, 1968), 89–109.

of the soul in religion excludes at once all human interference, such as episcopacy and infant baptism, and every form of religion by proxy. Religion is a personal matter between the soul and God.”⁵⁵

Mullins argued that soul competency was a given from Scripture. It was a common basic understanding and thus it needed no proof. Moreover, all Baptist distinctives logically flowed from that fact that each Christian is competent, or accountable under God, to carry out all matters of religious life. Soul competency led in a logical way to democratic church government, the priesthood of believers, the right of private judgment, and the separation of church and state.

The right of direct access to God is inherent in salvation by grace through faith. For Mullins, the lost sinner has the ability to approach God without any personal merit or the service of any church, priest, or potentate. If the sinner remains lost it is by his own choice. However if he is saved, it is by “God’s grace through the channel of a personal faith in and commitment to God in Christ.”⁵⁶

Mullins contrasted the Baptist teaching of soul competency against Roman Catholic doctrine and the teachings of Protestant denominations in order to showcase the unique aspects of this Baptist distinctive. For Mullins, Roman Catholicism “is inconsistent with the Christianity of Christ. If there is any one thing that stands out above others in crystal clearness in the New Testament it is Christ’s doctrine of the soul’s capacity, right, and privilege to approach God directly and transact with him in religion.”⁵⁷ Mullins’ main disagreement with Roman Catholic teaching revolved around what he called the unbiblical roles of the Catholic priest and the equally unbiblical sacramental practices. These teachings and practices negate the teaching of

⁵⁵ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 65–66.

⁵⁶ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 98.

⁵⁷ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 62–63.

soul competency because soul competency exists only so far as the Roman Catholic church allows.

For Mullins, many Protestant denominations also deny the teaching of soul competency. However, their denial is not as obvious as Roman Catholic teaching because it appears in inconsistencies in their teaching and practices. He believes that any church that practices infant baptism or episcopacy is not following the biblical model. Mullins argued, “These bodies [those who practice infant baptism or episcopacy] in fact represent a dualist Christianity.”⁵⁸

For example, Mullins sees the Presbyterian church allowing people for membership in two ways. First, an infant is baptized and included into membership based on the strength of the baptism and the parents’ status. Second, an individual, who has not been baptized, makes a profession of faith relating their experience of being justified by faith. The individual is then received, baptized, and given membership in a church. Mullins maintains that these two actions represent an obvious contradiction. In one case a church member was admitted on the basis of another (an infant on the strength of the parents), and on the second case, a church member was admitted on the basis of genuine salvation. Mullins states that this contradiction denies soul competency to one and allows it for another.⁵⁹ Baptists, in Mullins’ view, do not deny soul competency, as Roman Catholicism does, nor contradict it with inconsistencies, as many Protestant denominations do. Baptists teach that each individual possesses the right of direct access to God.

Even though Mullins maintained the fact that religion was a personal experience between the individual person and God, without interference from bishops, priests, creedal enforcement,

⁵⁸ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 62–63.

⁵⁹ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 62–63.

or government power, he was not advocating an anarchist position where each individual is free to do whatever he wanted to do.⁶⁰ He believed that the doctrine of soul competency along with Baptist theological tenets of the faith promoted Christ better than any other theological system. For Mullins, since the competency of the Christian “is derived from the indwelling Christ, man’s capacity for self-government in religion is nothing more than the authority of Christ exerted in and through the inner life of believers, with the understanding always, of course, that He regulates that inner life in accordance with His revealed Word.”⁶¹ Jesus sets all Christians free from all illegitimate forms of authority by exerting his lordship whereby he makes all believers equally competent priests.⁶²

Mullins believed that God gives every believer the skills and abilities to be priest for himself or herself. All believers “have equal access to the Father’s table, the Father’s ear, and the Father’s heart.”⁶³ He was adamant about the right of each person to have direct access to God for himself, and thus, to have an equal voice in the church. Christians are redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and born of Divine power and grace. Since God speaks directly to each person, even the humblest believer serves as a channel of divine wisdom. “God’s grace flows freely and directly to all who have faith and respond to His call. God has not limited the gift of His grace to any particular human channel. No group of men has any monopoly of God’s grace, to withhold or bestow it upon their own conditions. God’s grace is direct.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 65–66.

⁶¹ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 65–66.

⁶² E. Y. Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1913), 317.

⁶³ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 92.

⁶⁴ E. Y. Mullins, “The Baptist Conception of Religious Liberty,” in *The Life of Baptists in the World*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1985), 59. This was a sermon preached by Mullins to the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Stockholm, 1923.

The fact that soul competency is Christ-centered means, for Mullins, that it is the basis for a democratic church government. Mullins does not mean that democracy is mere majority rule, rather “democracy in church government is simply Christ Himself animating His own body through His Spirit. The decisions of the local congregation on ecclesiastical matters are the ‘consensus of the competent.’”⁶⁵

Baptist congregations are composed of priests fitted for service. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers in Baptist ecclesiology leads to congregational government. Because church membership consists of believers who have been given a new spiritual life through regeneration and because of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work, believer priests have the responsibility to seek God’s direction for the local congregations. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers logically leads to congregational church governance.⁶⁶ Congregational government best exemplifies the biblical model because it “takes seriously the principle of the priesthood and spiritual competency of all believers.”⁶⁷ Congregational governance affirms that God works through His believer priests to accomplish His purposes. The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer affirms congregational governance because each believer priest has the ability to understand God’s word because all believers have the Holy Spirit working within them. Thus the Holy Spirit assists believers in biblical interpretation.⁶⁸

The doctrine of the priesthood of the believer also affirms the teaching of “every-member” ministry.⁶⁹ The privileges of being a priest include the right to read and interpret the Scriptures

⁶⁵ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 66.

⁶⁶ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 92–93.

⁶⁷ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1096.

⁶⁸ Gerald Cowan, “Congregationalism and Its Limits,” *Theology for Ministry*, 1 (November 2006): 12–13.

⁶⁹ Mark Dever, “The Priesthood of All Believers: Rediscovering Every-Member Ministry,” in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 111.

for oneself by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the right to pray directly to God through Jesus Christ, and the right to confess one's sins to God directly without the help of any human mediator. Mullins believes these rights are inherent in the doctrine of soul competency.⁷⁰ Because of these rights, all believers or priests are to minister, that is, to share the Gospel with all people and to be good stewards of both life and possessions. The Gospel is given to Christ's church. Each Christian is given the responsibility to proclaim it to others so that they might believe. Mullins teaches that the Great Commission in Matt. 28 was given not only to the apostles, thus evangelism is "every Christian's job."⁷¹

Herschel H. Hobbs

Herschel H. Hobbs was one of the most influential leaders in Southern Baptist life in the twentieth century. He served as Southern Baptist Convention president in 1963. His role as chairman of the 1963 "Baptist Faith and Message" committee combined with his ongoing efforts to articulate Southern Baptist doctrine for almost four decades have earned him the title "Mr. Southern Baptist."⁷²

Hobbs grew up in a Baptist church in Alabama. At Ensley Baptist Church in Birmingham, he met Frances Jackson, the daughter of a bi-vocational preacher, who eventually became his wife. Shortly after his marriage, Hobbs made a public commitment to full-time vocational ministry and attended Howard College. After college graduation, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky where he enrolled in the Th.M. program at the southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he studied New Testament under W. Hersey Davis and A. T. Robertson, and went on to

⁷⁰ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 88.

⁷¹ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 104.

⁷² David S. Dockery, "The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 62.

complete his Ph.D. under Davis. Although Hobbs did not study with E. Y. Mullins, his theology was significantly shaped by Mullin's work, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*. Hobbs gained his understanding of Baptist distinctives from Mullin's work, *The Axioms of Religion*, which he revised and republished in 1978.⁷³ Hobbs appropriated Mullins' teaching regarding soul competency, which was Mullins' concept for identifying "the historical significance of the Baptists."⁷⁴ Hobbs used soul competency as the foundational principle of Baptists in formulating the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message,⁷⁵ in his revision of Mullins' *The Axioms of Religion*,⁷⁶ and in his treatment of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.⁷⁷

Hobbs served churches in Louisiana and Alabama, but he did not have a significant role in Southern Baptist life until he was pastor at First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City in 1949. He served on numerous boards and held offices in state conventions, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and the Baptist World Alliance. He served as president of the SBC Pastor's Conference and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Through his service in these offices and his eighteen years of preaching on "The Baptist Hour," a weekly radio program, Hobbs became a major denominational spokesperson for Southern Baptists. His most prominent service was as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1961–63). During this time he chaired the committee that revised "The Baptist Faith and Message," which was adopted by the Convention in 1963. He retired from the pastorate of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City in

⁷³ Dockery, "Life and Legacy," 62–63.

⁷⁴ Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 1997, 44, 53; Herschel Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville, TN: Convention, 1971), 7–10.

⁷⁵ Hobbs, *Baptist Faith and Message*, 8–10.

⁷⁶ Hobbs, Herschel H., and E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1978), 47–53.

⁷⁷ Herschel Hobbs, *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 1–4.

1972 at the age of 65 but he continued to serve Southern Baptists for two more decades until his death in 1995.⁷⁸

In his two works that put forth the distinctives of Baptist theology: *The Axioms of Religion* (1978) and *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers* (1990), Hobbs maintained that the distinctives of Baptist life are not the doctrine of salvation, a regenerate church membership, believer's baptism, the Lord's Supper, or church-state matters as important as they are (all of which were affirmed by Hobbs), but the competency of the soul and the priesthood of every believer.⁷⁹

According to Hobbs, the priesthood of the believer encompasses both privileges and responsibilities. The privileges include: (1) direct access to God; (2) confession of our sins directly to God; and (3) the right to read and interpret the Scriptures as led by the Holy Spirit. The responsibilities include: (1) holiness; (2) love; (3) Bible Study; and (4) witness.⁸⁰

Hobbs stressed individualism in regard to the priesthood and thus he de-emphasized the corporate aspect of the church and worship. The church for Hobbs was a fellowship of individual believers gathered together for service, evangelism, and missions.⁸¹ Baptist churches, he taught, are autonomous fellowships who exercise their independence through voluntary cooperation.

His abilities as preacher, teacher, author, denominational statesman, and pastor-theologian put Hobbs in a unique role as a leader. His role as mediator and his conciliatory style were used to forge a broad consensus that carried Southern Baptists through the 1960s and 70s. It was even used to hold divergent groups together through the 80s and 90s. The consensus broke down in

⁷⁸ Dockery, "Life and Legacy," 63–64.

⁷⁹ Dockery, "Life and Legacy," 71.

⁸⁰ Hobbs, *Axioms of Religion*, 77–78, 102–4; see also Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 17–28.

⁸¹ Hobbs, *Baptist Faith and Message*, 80–82.

the last two decades of the 20th century. This was the result of the fact that the “centrists” did not take the concerns of the “conservatives” seriously regarding the creeping “liberalism” in Southern Baptist life.⁸²

You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers

Herschel Hobbs’ teaching regarding the priesthood of the believer and soul competency is an echo of what Mullins taught. Hobbs states that the priesthood of believers means that each believer in Christ is a priest. However, before he articulates what that means, he adamantly states that a broader concept must be explored first, which is the source of the priesthood of believers. All of the great principles or distinctives taught by the Baptists such as salvation by grace through faith, believer’s baptism, regenerated church membership, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of the believer, and separation of church and state, are all corollaries to a prior truth. They are not distinctives in their own right but they are derived from the distinctive of soul competency. Soul competency means that every person is competent to stand before God without any need for a human mediator.⁸³

God reveals himself to people, but people are given the capacity for choice, therefore they are responsible for the choices they make. People are responsible to God and not to other people. This does not mean that people can believe anything they choose and still claim to be a Christian or a Baptist. Soul competency is both exclusive and inclusive. Excluded is any human interference between the individual soul and God. Since religion is a personal matter between the individual and God, for the soul to be responsible, it must be free. On the other hand, soul

⁸² Herschel Hobbs, *My Faith and Message: An Autobiography* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 252.

⁸³ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 1.

competency is inclusive. Included is salvation by grace through faith without the need of a human mediator or institution. Also included in soul competency is the priesthood of believers, which includes both privilege and responsibility. Hobbs' disagrees with Martin Luther's teaching that every Christian is a priest to one another. He believes Luther's teaching denies soul competency because it ignores the idea that every Christian has free access to God and therefore does not need another human to be a priest for them.⁸⁴

The teaching of Hobbs is unclear as to whether Christians participate in Christ's priesthood or whether they have their own priesthood. He leaves the door open for the latter interpretation with the language he uses. He speaks of the priesthood of believers having its "roots" in Christ's Priesthood. In addition, he states that the priesthood of Christians "grows out of" Christ's Priesthood.⁸⁵

"Grace is free but it makes its demands,"⁸⁶ or as Jesus taught, those who follow Him need to count the cost. For Hobbs, counting the cost means considering both the privileges and responsibilities regarding the teaching of the priesthood of the believer. Each believer has a personal saving experience with God in Christ, which is what gives them direct access to God. Flowing from this direct access are additional privileges for the believer. One privilege is praying directly to God. Christians may pray for one another but no one else can pray in the stead of another. Christians do not need a priest to pray for them in order for God to hear their requests. Another privilege is confessing one's sins directly to God. Christians do not need to confess their sins to a priest or anyone else in order to receive God's forgiveness. Another privilege that flows from the priesthood of the believer is the right of each Christian to read and

⁸⁴ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 2–3, 14.

⁸⁵ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 10–11.

⁸⁶ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 17.

interpret Scripture as they are led by the Holy Spirit. Thus a Christian does not need another person to interpret Scripture for them; to do so would deny the direct access to God which each Christian has.⁸⁷

All priests bear responsibilities commensurate with the privileges received. Hobbs strongly emphasizes that the character and lifestyle of Christians ought to be of the highest caliber. The responsibilities are related to who they are and what they do. Priests must be holy. To be holy means that they are set apart for service to God. In order to be priests of God each Christian must live in keeping with God's holy, righteous nature. "If we are to serve Christ, we must be Christlike, and we are holy because we have been set apart for God's service. And to be effective in that role, we must be Godlike. The basic asset in Christian service is character. No matter how gifted we are, if our character is suspect, our talents carry little weight or meaning."⁸⁸ The lifestyle of Christians should balance with their calling as Christians.

For Hobbs, the lives of priests are characterized by love. God is love and love moved him to give his only Son. It was love that led Jesus to the cross for Christians, and it was this love that Jesus said Christians ought to have for one another. It does not matter how talented Christians are or how zealous they are to use those talents for the Lord if they do not have love. Without love they are nothing.⁸⁹

The priesthood of the believer involves not only who Christians are but also what they do. Christianity is not a spectator sport. Christians must be involved in the arena and not simply sitting in the stands. "Earlier I expressed my strong feelings against Christians being separated into clergy and laity. The word 'clergy' is not in the Bible. The word 'laity' comes from the

⁸⁷ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 17–20.

⁸⁸ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 22.

⁸⁹ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 24.

Greek word *laos*, meaning people. All believers in Christ are the people of God, and as such, we are all to be busy for God.”⁹⁰

Each priest, or believer, not only has the privilege of reading and interpreting the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but they have the responsibility of studying the Scriptures so that they may properly interpret them. Many Christians lose their opportunity to give effective witness for God because they are not adequately prepared by having studied the Scriptures to properly interpret them. Each Christian is responsible for their own interpretation of Scripture but the standard by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ. If any interpretation goes contrary to Jesus and His teaching it is wrong.⁹¹

It is also the responsibility of each priest to minister to fellow believers and share the Gospel with nonbelievers. After all, in Peter’s description of the royal priesthood, he stated that priests are to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9 ESV).⁹² Hobbs takes issue with Martin Luther in this regard because Hobbs believes Luther sought to regulate the preaching ministry of Christian priests since Luther taught that the ministry of the Word was the primary task of the church and also the fact that Luther excluded women, children, and persons without competence from exercising an official ministry in the church.⁹³

Regarding the role of the priesthood of the believer, Hobbs is concerned that people will stress the privileges and not the responsibilities. He equates responsibilities with “ministry.” The “ministry” is the mission in life for Christians. He laments the fact that often people associate

⁹⁰ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 25.

⁹¹ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 26–28.

⁹² Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 28.

⁹³ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 14–15.

“ministry” with the ordained clergy. For Hobbs, this ignores the fact that all believers are called to serve the Lord even though they may serve in another vocation. Ministering is the task of all Christians. Jesus is the model for ministry for all Christians. They are to pattern their lives after the life of Jesus since He came not to be served but to serve, even to the point of dying for their sins.⁹⁴

Citing Eph. 4:12, Hobbs explains how each priest is equipped for ministry. Pastors and teachers were the leaders in the individual churches in the New Testament. They were the ones who nurtured the Christians so that the saints (Christians) would be equipped for ministry and thus the body of Christ would be built up. All priests are called to nurture and equip each other for witness to the Gospel. It is not the job of just the pastor but it is the task of all Christians working together in harmony.⁹⁵

Regarding the areas of ministry, Hobbs considers both the place and the type of ministry. He emphasizes that each believer priest must have the Holy Spirit to minister. He cites the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to show that the apostles needed the Spirit’s power because if they attempted to minister in their own strength they would have failed. In addition, Hobbs cites John 20:22, where Jesus breathed on the apostles and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. He states that since the apostles already had an indwelling of the Holy Spirit that Jesus breathed on them to fill them with the Holy Spirit. After Jesus gave them the Spirit, he told them

⁹⁴ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 56–59.

⁹⁵ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 60–61. Compare with Luther’s translation of Eph. 4:12, “Luther no longer understands *die heyligen* (the saints) as ‘all Christians,’ but rather those who have been chosen from among all the saints to be ordained to the office of the ministry. The some *heyligen* (saints) who were given grace to be apostles, and the some *heyligen* who were given grace to be prophets, etc., from verse eleven, are the *heyligen* (saints) in verse twelve who have been *geschickt* (well prepared) for the Lord’s *ampt* (office). For Luther, those in verse eleven are the saints who are equipped for the work of the office (διακονία); see Brian Mosemann, “Whose Ministry Is it?: Luther’s Translation Of Ephesians 4:12,” in *Dona Gratis Donata: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Jon D. Vieker, Bart Day, and Albert B. Collver III (Manchester, MO: Nagel Festschrift Committee, 2015), 55.

to minister in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Hobbs acknowledges that it is not realistic that everyone can go everywhere to minister. Christians are to give witness to Christ in word and deed wherever they are and where they cannot go, they are to help send others to serve.⁹⁶

In addition to the geographical areas of ministry, there are the types of ministry. Hobbs understands all work of the Lord to be spiritual so he begins with the Great Commission in Matt. 28:18–20. He stresses the point that the commission to go and teach and baptize was not given only to the apostles but to all Christians in general. For Hobbs, evangelism is complete when the evangelized become evangelists. Another type of ministry which Hobbs addresses is the social area. The witness of Christians to the Gospel has social implications. All Christians are to minister to those in need both within and outside the church. Hobbs believes the obligation of each priest was spelled out by Jesus when He said Christians are to feed the hungry, provide clothing to those in need, and visit those who are sick or in prison (Matt. 25:31–46). Failure to minister to the hungry, the thirsty, and the poor is failure to serve the Lord.⁹⁷

Since the teachings of Hobbs, regarding the distinctives of soul competency and the priesthood of the believer, mirror the teachings of Mullins, the teachings of both will be addressed together in the following paragraphs. Mullins pushed the limits of coherence and credibility as he made use of the philosophies and psychologies of his day. It was his conviction of the inner witness of the Spirit that made all the rest of his theology possible. It was this central conviction by which he tried to avoid a lifeless rationalism or an ecclesiastical authoritarianism as he sought to cultivate a personal, life-giving relationship with God. However, because he

⁹⁶ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 66–67.

⁹⁷ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 69–72, 118.

denied the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit works, in all his teachings but particularly in soul competency, he undermined all certainty of God delivering His gifts. A Christian can no longer point with certainty to what God has done through the means by which he has promised and has delivered his gifts, rather, a Christian can only point inward, which leads either to a false security or a deep despair as to whether the Lord's gifts have been received.

Mullins and Hobbs in Contrast with Luther and the Lutheran Fathers

This same concern of uncertainty carries over to the teaching of Mullins and Hobbs regarding the royal priesthood. The Baptists misunderstand and misapply Luther's teaching regarding this doctrine. Mullins described priests as "fitted for service" and Hobbs stated that priests are to minister to others. Priests are to be evangelists. For Baptists, the emphasis or focus of the priesthood of the believer is on doing the priestly duties of Christ's priestly office (the pastoral office) without having a call to the office. Those duties are to teach, sacrifice, and pray—that is, to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments.⁹⁸ In Luther's exposition of the royal priesthood, he states that one does not exercise the duties of the Christ's priestly office unless he is called to that office. The duties of each priest are to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5, Rom. 12:1). "Such [sacrifices] are: praying (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:4); thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15); doing good to the poor (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16); mortifying the old man (Rom. 12:1); martyrdom received for Christ's sake (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; etc.). All the devout can offer such sacrifices as spiritual priests."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:332; *WA* 41:210.

⁹⁹ Johann Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, ed., Benjamin T. G. Mayes and Heath R. Curtis, trans., R. J. Dinda, Theological Commonsplaces (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 26/1:91. See also Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans., Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), 29.

In his exposition of Ps. 110, Luther explicates the High Priesthood of Christ. Christ is the one and only High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Thus Christ's priestly office is eternal, just as Christ, the Priest, typified by Melchizedek, is eternal as a Person. In addition, the story of Melchizedek shows that he was not a priest of the Law, as were Aaron and his descendants, but Melchizedek was to bless Abraham and all his descendants in announcing and promising him God's grace, salvation and blessedness. Both of these points reveal the priestly office of Christ.¹⁰⁰

Christ did not give away or transfer his priestly office to anyone. To say Christ transferred his priestly office is to confess that Christ is no longer needed and that He has nothing to do with Christians. This idea is contrary to the verse which states that Christ is a Priest forever (Ps. 110:4). Since Christ did not abdicate or transfer His priestly office to anyone else he is and remains the High Priest before God where he teaches, sacrifices, and prays for Christians.¹⁰¹

Contrary to Mullins and Hobbs, the priesthood of believers is not a separate priesthood which grows out of Christ's priesthood. Christ is the only one who brings sinners to God through his priestly office and shares his office with Christians. Therefore Christians share in Christ's office and not a separate office or separate priesthood which grows out of Christ's priesthood. There are not two priesthoods but one for there is one priest, Jesus Christ. All who are saved by the power of his priestly office also share in his priestly office, thus every baptized Christian is called a priest. The name "priest" is the common possession of believers just as much as the name "Christian." To reiterate, it is only Christ who brings sinners to God and it is only done through his priestly office.¹⁰²

"The notion that every Christian is a priest, and that no Christian needs a priest, comes

¹⁰⁰ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:315.

¹⁰¹ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:329–30.

¹⁰² "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:330–31; 36:112–13; "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:20–21.

perilously close to being nonsensical.”¹⁰³ Whereas Mullins and Hobbs advocated for each Christian to be a priest for himself or herself, for Luther, “a priest is a person whom God has ordained and commanded to mediate between God and men.”¹⁰⁴ A priest is sent by God to speak God’s Word to sinners, and he also presents himself to God to sacrifice and pray for sinners. A priest is ordained for the sake of sinners. “Their cause is his. It is his task to stand between God and sinners in order to reconcile them and to plead as the sinners’ advocate.”¹⁰⁵ The office of a priest is to bring people to God to be holy and acceptable. The priestly office has three duties: to preach the Gospel, to sacrifice, and to pray. Luther states that all three of the duties are abundantly referred to in God’s Word.¹⁰⁶

The priestly office belongs to Christ and is derived from him since the content of its message is about him. Luther explains how Christ fulfilled all three duties of his priestly office. First, he is the one who proclaimed forgiveness of sins in his name. It is for his sake that God’s grace and forgiveness is bestowed. He established the office of the preaching of the Gospel and commanded the apostles to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world. Second, Christ is the high priest who reconciled us unto the Father and obtained for us forgiveness of sins through the shedding of his own blood on the cross. He gave himself as the sacrifice or ransom whereby he has mediated between God’s wrath and our sin. Third, Christ prayed to God the Father in our behalf. By means of his intercessory prayer, Christ won for us and delivered to us forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life. He continues to exercise this office as our mediator before

¹⁰³ Brian A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 95–97.

¹⁰⁴ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:315.

¹⁰⁵ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:321.

¹⁰⁶ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:315–17; “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30:53, 56, 64; “Lectures on Genesis,” in *LW* 2:19, 232–33; “The Freedom of a Christian,” in *LW* 31:355.

the Father.¹⁰⁷

In his church, Christ rules as Priest through the office of holy ministry and through the power of the Holy Spirit to communicate to his people eternal and divine gifts. In other words, the office of holy ministry is Christ's priestly office, through which Christ continues to teach, sacrifice,¹⁰⁸ and pray for Christians.

It is plain to see that pure doctrine, faith, and the worship of God, the means whereby the church and Christendom are truly governed and preserved, are exclusively the result of Christ's activity. The alternative is truly miserable: people become utterly forgetful of this Priest and see or choose their own priestly functions and sacrifice instead, with the eventual result that they become totally filled with abomination, idolatry, and blasphemy against Christ. Every time this Priest is ignored, human reason and wisdom are unable to reach beyond the level of doing penance for sin. Men seek grace and salvation by their own works, by their strict and ascetic lives, or by the merits of other people who pray and sacrifice for them.¹⁰⁹

In his work, *Concerning the Ministry*, Luther listed seven duties of a priest: "to teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and to judge of all doctrine and spirits."¹¹⁰ Luther refers to these as the common rights of Christians because all Christians are priests. Since they are common rights, no individual may arrogate to himself alone what belongs to all. One

¹⁰⁷ "Psalm 110" in *LW* 13:315–20; "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:55; "Genesis," in *LW* 5:196–97. See also "Isaiah," in *LW* 17:414–15.

¹⁰⁸ Christ was priest and sacrifice so also Christians are priest and sacrifice. "That explains why Luther called the sermon a sacrifice of praise, for it is the task of the ministry to crucify the old man and raise the new man to the glory of God." Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 158–59. See also "Galatians," in *LW* 26:245: "To bless, then, is to preach and teach the Word of the Gospel, to confess Christ, and to propagate the knowledge of Him among others. This is the priestly office and the continuing sacrifice of the church in the New Testament—the church which distributes this blessing by preaching, by administering the sacraments, by granting absolution, by giving comfort, and by using the Word of grace that Abraham had and that was his blessing." *WA* 17^{ll}, 8: "Here [1 Peter 2:5] he refers to the office of preaching which is the true office of sacrifice [Psalm 50:23]" *WA* 12, 208; "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:54–55: "Christ is the Priest, and we are all priests. Just as He sacrificed His body, so we, too, must sacrifice ourselves. Here everything foreshadowed by the external sacrifices as they took place in the Old Testament is now fulfilled. Briefly stated, all this means that the Gospel is preached. He who preaches the Gospel practices and does all this. He slaughters the calf, namely, the carnal mind; he strangles the old Adam."

¹⁰⁹ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:324, 328.

¹¹⁰ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:21.

must be called to the office of holy ministry, or to Christ's priestly office, in order carry out these priestly duties.¹¹¹

Luther makes the same point in his exposition of Ps. 110. Even though all Christians are priests it does not mean that all Christians can preach, teach, and rule. One must be called into the office of holy ministry, Christ's priestly office, in order to do these priestly duties.

But you may ask: "Wherein does this priesthood of Christians consist, and what are their priestly works?" The answer is as follows: The very same that were mentioned before: teaching, sacrificing, and praying. But you must know this, as I have also stated before, that Christ is the only High Priest. Before we attempt to do such priestly works, we must have the benefit of His priestly office; yes, we must possess it. The doctrine and preaching by which we are saved comes from Him; for He brought it from heaven. He alone has made the complete sacrifice for us all by which we are reconciled to God. Therefore He is also the only one who stands in the immediate presence of God to make intercessions for us all, and without this Mediator no prayer is acceptable to God.¹¹²

The office of holy ministry cannot be exercised or carried out by all the members of the congregation or it would lead to confusion and chaos. If all are teachers then there are no hearers. If all are shepherds then there are no sheep. In addition, it is not proper or fitting that each household baptize and celebrate the sacrament on its own. Preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments are duties that do not pertain to the priesthood as such but these are priestly duties that belong to Christ's priestly office, the office of holy ministry, which is exercised for the benefit of or in service to all those who are priests.¹¹³

Contrary to Mullins and Hobbs, who stated that to be a priest is to serve or to evangelize, to

¹¹¹ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:21–22, 34; "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39:237; "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:65, 316–317; "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:55. See "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," in *LW* 23:228: "The first requisite is the call. It would be better to not have been born than to undertake something without a call."

¹¹² "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:332–33; "The Freedom of a Christian," in *LW* 31:356.

¹¹³ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:334, "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39:237.

be a priest means that all Christians have the same rights and power regarding the Gospel and the sacraments. In other words, to be a priest means that each priest has the right and authority to exercise Christ's priestly office, the office of holy ministry, however, they may do so only if Christ has called them into his office. Thus priests only do the priestly works of Christ's priestly office in Christ's stead if it is at Christ's command. "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.)"¹¹⁴

It is the common rights [to teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and to judge of all doctrine and spirits] of Christians that we have been speaking. For since we have proved all of these things to be the common property of all Christians, no one individual can arise by his own authority and arrogate to himself alone what belongs to all. Lay hold then of this right and exercise it, where there is no one else who has the same rights. But the community rights demand that one, or as many as the community chooses, shall be chosen or approved who, in the name of all with these rights, shall perform these functions publicly. Otherwise, there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order, as the Apostle teaches [1 Cor. 14:40]. For it is one thing to exercise a right publicly; another to use it in time of emergency. Publicly one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church. In time of emergency each may use it as he deems best.¹¹⁵

In soul competency, Mullins and Hobbs deny that the Lord works through means to deliver his grace. Salvation by grace comes to a Christian directly through his faith without a need for a

¹¹⁴ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:116; "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:55; "To the Christian Nobility," in *LW* 44:129; "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39:311.

¹¹⁵ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:34; "To the Christian Nobility," in *LW* 44:128. See "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39:233: "I, Martin Luther ... in all my writings I never wanted more than that all Christians should be priests; yet not all should be consecrated by bishops, not all should preach, celebrate mass, and exercise the priestly office unless they have been appointed and called to do so. This was my final intention."

mediator or institution. This begs the question of how the Christian received faith and whether one is saved through faith or by faith. Not only do Mullins and Hobbs deny the means of grace, but they also deny the instrumentality of the office of holy ministry, through which the means of grace are administered. They state that Christians do not need a human mediator because they have direct access to God. There is no need for the office of holy ministry because every Christian has access to God and can pray directly to God. They unwittingly deny Christ's priestly office, the office of holy ministry, and thus they deny that Christ is their mediator through his office. Luther said, "He [Christ] is also the only one who stands in the immediate presence of God to make intercessions for us all, and without this Mediator no prayer is acceptable to God."¹¹⁶ The result is that the priestly duties of Christ's priestly office are disconnected from his office. They are given to any priest to do, particularly the preaching of the Gospel as the task of missions or evangelism.

Since every Christian may exercise the ecclesiastical duties, according to Mullins and Hobbs, it would be chaos if all tried to carry out those tasks at the same time. As a consequence, pastors exist for the sake of good order. In addition, pastors are equippers to prepare the laity or priests for ministry. Ministry is understood first and foremost as missions or evangelism. Every Christian is to proclaim the Gospel to the neighbor. A key passage for Hobbs in this regard is Matt. 28:18–20.¹¹⁷ Ministry also includes praying for others and interpreting Scripture. All three of these duties, Luther spoke of as priestly duties of Christ's priestly office. Since Christ's office is denied, those duties are no longer seen as Christ's priestly duties whereby he continues mediation for us before the Father. The duties become works that each priest does to serve the

¹¹⁶ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:332–33; "The Freedom of a Christian," in *LW* 31:356.

¹¹⁷ Matt. 28:18–20 is the key passage in the Rite of Ordination in the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 162.

neighbor, supposedly at the command of the Lord. Mullins and Hobbs emphasize both the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) and the giving of the Holy Spirit (John 20:19–23) as the Lord’s command for all Christians to preach the Gospel.

Luther stated repeatedly that the priestly duties belong to Christ’s priestly office, the office of holy ministry, and one carries out those priestly duties only if they have a call from the Lord to his office. Even though all Christians are priests they do not have a general call to the office of holy ministry, that is, to carry out the priestly duties. They are priests who are to offer spiritual sacrifices. “All Christians are priests—not that all should function without difference in the ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments, without a special call, but that they should offer spiritual sacrifices. Ro 12:1; Heb 13:15–16.”¹¹⁸

Mullins and Hobbs stress the importance that each priest needs to have the Holy Spirit in order to read and interpret Scripture, and in order to minister to the neighbor. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit works through the word of God for the benefit of the priest, yet Mullins and Hobbs state that the Holy Spirit works through the priest to interpret the word of God. Each priest has the Holy Spirit whereby they can then interpret Scripture. As evidence, Mullins and Hobbs cite the Gospel according to John, when Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:19–23 ESV), as a key passage for the importance of having the Holy Spirit. The understanding of Mullins and Hobbs is that the apostles already had an indwelling of the Holy Spirit so the purpose of Jesus was to fill the apostles with the Holy Spirit.

¹¹⁸ Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 29; “*Yet All Christians Have a General Call to Proclaim the Virtues of God, 1 Ptr 2:9, and Especially Family Heads, to Instruct Their Households, Dt 6:7; 1 Co 14:35*. It is true that all Christians have a general call to proclaim the Gospel of God, Ro 10:9, to speak the Word of God among themselves, Eph 5:19; to admonish each other from the Word of God, Cl 3:16; to reprove, Eph 5:11 [and] Mt 19:15; [and] to comfort, 1 Th 4:18. And family heads are enjoined [to do] this with the special command that they give their households the instruction of the Lord. Eph 6:4. But the public ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general, as we have already shown, 1 Co 12:28; Eph 4:12. For a special or particular call is required for this, Ro 10:15.”

Mullins and Hobbs do not mention how the Lord fills Christians with the Holy Spirit since he does not breathe on each individual Christian. Since the Holy Spirit may leave a Christian, there is no certainty that any Christian has the Holy Spirit. A person could claim to have the Holy Spirit but there is no way to know. One can only go according to their confession but they may be deceiving others. This means no one can know with certainty if a Christian has the Spirit in order to read and interpret Scripture or to evangelize their neighbor.

Luther addresses this issue, of having the Holy Spirit with certainty, in his exposition of John 20:19–23. He expounds this text and teaches that Jesus does not give the Holy Spirit to the apostles for their person or for their salvation for they already have the Holy Spirit in that way. Jesus speaks about that elsewhere, such as in John 14. In John 20, Jesus gives the apostles the Holy Spirit for their office since he does not say “Receive the Holy Spirit, then you will be saved,” but rather, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them...” (John 20:22–23 ESV). Jesus does this so that “one might recognize and honor the power to release and to bind sins and the preaching office as the office of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁹ Jesus makes the apostles certain of the Holy Spirit for their office. A person may have the Holy Spirit in two ways, for his person or for his office. In regard to the person, the Holy Spirit is not with the person at all times. An example of this is when David commits adultery with Bathsheba and kills her husband Uriah. However, regarding the office of holy ministry, the Holy Spirit is with the office at all times because the preaching office and the word of the Gospel and of the sacraments are the arrangement and work of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit’s arrangement of the office and the word of the Gospel are maintained then the Holy Spirit is there.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ “Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16–20, 1529,” in WA 28:467–69.

¹²⁰ “Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16–20, 1529,” in WA 28:467–68.

To forgive sins belongs to the Holy Spirit alone, and no one can forgive sins unless he has the Holy Spirit. For the office of forgiving sins does not belong to any person but to Christ and his Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit had not been given to the preaching office and if the word of God and the office would stand on the worthiness of men, then all would be uncertain; word, baptism, keys, etc. If someone were baptized today, then he would have to be baptized again tomorrow because he could not be certain if the baptizer was pious, believing and holy. Christ does not only establish the preaching office through his command, but he also gives the Holy Spirit to the preaching office, so that when we hear the gospel, are baptized and absolved from sins, we may be certain that the Holy Spirit has proclaimed the gospel to us, baptized and absolved us.¹²¹

Luther states that this is why it is of highest necessity that one receive a call to the office. One may boast about the Holy Spirit that drives them, the great faithfulness in their hearts, and their sincere compassion, but unless they have been called to the office or sent by the Lord they are apostles of the devil. Any preaching that takes place without the commandment of God is “merely the teaching of the devil no matter how it glistens.”¹²² Jesus said that the Father had sent him and now he sends the apostles. Both the pastor and the hearers ought to be certain that the person of the pastor has been called by Christ to his office so that they may be certain that

¹²¹ “Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16–20, 1529,” in WA 28:469–72.

¹²² “Concerning the Ministry,” in *LW* 40:387. See also “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John,” in *LW* 23:227–28, “Secondly, a preacher must be sure that he is teaching and preaching God’s Word and that he is not dealing in doctrines of man or of the devil. All is well when a preacher is certain that he is preaching God’s Word and when he is convinced at the same time that he has a call to do this. The trouble is that men violate and disregard these two points, the office and the Word. This is demonstrated by the example of the fanatics, who make much ado about the Holy Spirit. But they appear on the scene of their own accord; no one asked them to come. They sneak in, befoul everything, and say that they were called by the Holy Spirit. Called indeed, but by the devil! I will tolerate no preacher in office, even if he worked miracles, unless he is persuaded that he is preaching the true doctrine and Word, and that he has a definite office and knows that he is sent.

Both of these points must go together. Even though a person has an office and a call—such as the pope and the bishops, who are invested with a spiritual office the same as I and every pastor and minister—that is not enough; for they must assuredly have God’s Word also. Conversely, even though a person possesses God’s Word, is a learned man, and knows that he has God’s Word, he must still keep silence and not encroach upon the office and preach. Unless he is called, it is not sufficient to have the Word. Such a person must hold his peace and not preach until he has a call.”

through the office the Holy Spirit is working; preaching the Gospel, baptizing, forgiving sins, etc.¹²³

The Lutheran fathers emphasized this point in the Augsburg Confession, Art. V, when they state that God instituted the office which administers the means of grace, through which means God gives the Spirit who creates faith. They also condemn those who teach that the Spirit is obtained through one's own works and not through the external word of the Gospel.¹²⁴ "Nobody produces fruit by means of the Word unless he is called to teach without wishing for it. For One is our Teacher, Jesus Christ (Matt. 23:10). He alone, through His called servants, teaches and produces fruit. But the man who teaches without being called does so to his own harm and that of his hearers, because Christ is not with him."¹²⁵

Summary and Conclusion

In Baptist doctrine, "laity" are all the people of God. This excludes any distinctions of professional or vocational ministers. The laity are ministers which means each believer is called by God to serve others in order to carry out the mission of the church. Within this community of

¹²³ "Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16–20, 1529," in WA 28: 472–76. This teaching is echoed in the Lutheran liturgy with the versicle and response: V: The Lord be with you. R: And with your Spirit. Saint Paul puts forth the same teaching in 2 Timothy 4:22, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all." This is a double salutation—one to Timothy or to the teacher regarding his office, and one to the hearers. See also Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 35–36.

¹²⁴ CA V:1–4 in Kolb and Wengert, 40. See also Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes*, ed., J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 140; "For Paul is expressly speaking about the external Word or of the ministry that proclaims the Word of the Gospel when he says, 'The Word is near you, in your mouth' [Rom. 10:8]."

¹²⁵ "Lectures on Galatians 1519," in LW 27:167. Compare Carl A. Gaertner, "The Means of Grace in an Effective Church Program," in *The Abiding Word: An Anthology of Doctrinal Essays for The Years 1954–1955* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), 3:402–3; "The power of Gospel preaching is entirely the power of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily we think of the Gospel being preached by our called ministers and missionaries. At the same time we should be thankful that when our Christian people speak this message to their families or to their neighbors or to their business associate or to a chance acquaintance, it has this same converting power of the Holy Spirit as when it is proclaimed from one of our pulpits. This power is present when people take their Bible and read it, and it is present when some wandering sinner may pick up a dirty piece of paper on which is written John 3:16. In whatever manner the message of the Gospel is brought to the attention of sinners there will be present this gracious power of God's Holy Spirit."

ministers, some ministers have the role of equipping the other ministers for service, particularly for evangelism.

Based on the teachings of soul competency and the priesthood of the believer, grace is understood to be given by God directly to those who have faith based on his call. God's grace is not limited to any particular human channel so the sinner has the ability to approach God without any personal merit or the service of any church, priest, or authority. Therefore each Christian has direct access to God without any human mediator so they do not need a priest to pray for them in order for God to hear their prayers. The result is that each Christian is his or her own priest. This creates a conundrum: every Christian is a priest, yet no one needs a priest, or human mediator.

Since each layperson is a priest, they have the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves, to pray directly to God through Jesus Christ, and confess their sins directly to God without the help of any human mediator. They may do so because they have the Holy Spirit working within them. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that allows each Christian to interpret Scripture for one's self and to minister, especially to evangelize, their neighbor. Since the Spirit may leave the Christian, there is no certainty that they have the Spirit working within them to interpret Scripture, pray directly to God, or confess their sins to God, or evangelize their neighbor.

Baptists understand that the priesthood of believers is not a participation in the priesthood of Christ but rather that it grows out of Christ's priesthood.¹²⁶ Therefore it is inferior to Christ's priesthood since his priesthood is eternal and their priesthood is created; also his sacrifice is propitiatory and eternal while the sacrifices of the priesthood of the believer are spiritual and

¹²⁶ For Baptists, if Christians, as priests, do not share in Christ's priestly office, how then can they have the right and authority to carry out the priestly duties of Christ's office, that is the pastoral or preaching office?

temporal.

In the discussion regarding whether the distinction between the clergy and the laity is one of status or service, Vatican II emphasized status, whereas Baptist theology emphasizes service, although there is a disagreement as to whether it is an individualistic or communal service. Mullins and Hobbs stressed individualistic service based on soul competency and the priesthood of the believer. Every priest is accountable only to God and has direct access to God which eliminates any need for a mediator.

In this individualistic service there is no recognition of Christ's priestly office where Christ continues his work of teaching, sacrificing, and praying for Christians. Since all that is perceived is the person of the pastor, a human mediator, and not Christ's office with Christ mediating for his people, the office is removed and the priestly duties are uncoupled from the office. Unwittingly this removes Christ as the high priest and mediator before God. As a result, Christ's priestly office, the pastoral office, through which he continues to mediate for all Christians is displaced. The clergy are relegated to being equippers of the laity who do the ministry of the church which entails exercising the priestly duties without Christ's priestly office.

This leaves Christians in doubt regarding the certainty of the work of the Spirit. Since Christ gave the Spirit to his office through which the Spirit works to create faith through the means of grace that are administered through his office, to remove the office is to create uncertainty as to where and when the Spirit is working.

For Baptists, the laity are all priests. However, they neglect the task of offering spiritual sacrifices as Scripture indicates, "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5 ESV), and "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of

God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1 ESV). Instead they displace Christ’s priestly office, uncouple the priestly duties from his office, and give those duties to all priests to exercise.

CHAPTER FIVE

LCMS LAITY

The Roman Catholic doctrine distinguishes between the clergy and the laity on the basis of status before God, whereas the Baptist doctrine distinguishes on the basis of service. The LCMS teaching, at the time of C.F.W. Walther,¹ states that all Christians have the same office and thus it distinguishes between the clergy and the laity by the fact that the clergy perform the office publicly while the laity do so privately.² However, this was not the only understanding of the clergy/laity dichotomy.

From the beginning of the Synod, the LCMS was operating with a distinction among Christians—clergy and laity.³ A cursory search through *Lehre Und Wehre* and *Der Lutheraner*

¹ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was the first President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

² C.F.W. Walther, *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*, ed. Wilbert Rosin, trans. Fred Kramer (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1987), 124–26. Translation of: *Das Gemeindewahlrecht*, originally published serially in v. 17 of *Der Lutheraner*, Sept. 1860–Aug. 1861.

³ There is an abundance of information relating to the laity in the LCMS synodical publications but it is not categorized or designated as such. The Synod's official publication in English, the *Lutheran Witness*, has helpful information. It is most valuable early in the 1900s, between the world wars, and in the sixties. The official German publication, *Der Lutheraner*, is helpful from the turn of the century into the mid-twenties and for stray facts of ideas that were not published in the *Lutheran Witness*. It is most useful from 1860–61 when Walther writes his essay, *Gemeindewahlrecht (The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor)*. *Lehre und Wehre*, which was published predominately for pastors, proved not as helpful. The *Theological Quarterly* (begun 1896) and its successor, the *Theological Monthly* (after 1920), were insightful regarding social attitudes regarding the church and the laity. The *Concordia Theological Monthly* (successor to the *Theological Monthly* in 1930) did not yield much information. The records of the triennial synodical conventions since 1900 proved a valuable source for this study. They include the preconvention *Reports and Memorials (Eingaben* in the German edition) retitled *Workbook* in 1965, and the *Proceedings (Verhandlungen* in the German edition). The essays at district conventions assist with the trends of thought but there is no guide for their use. A number of essays presented by Dr. C.F.W. Walther, first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, at various church conventions during the years 1857–1886 were translated and published in C.F.W. Walther, *Essays For The Church*, vols I, II 1857–1879 (St. Louis, Concordia, 1992). Several of Walther's essays which are of importance to the topic are: Vol. I, "Calling a Pastor," "The True Visible Church;" Vol. II, "Early Authorities I, II, III." The minutes of the Lutheran Laymen's League up to 1929 are at Concordia Historical Institute and available to scholars. Also available are John Theodore Mueller's "The Story of the Lutheran Laymen's League." It was completed in 1948 but is not so much a history as a chronology of events and a biographical dictionary of leaders and staff members. In addition, there is Donald A. Prahlow's dissertation, "The History of The Lutheran Laymen's League, 1917–1967" (PhD diss., St. Louis University, 1972), which is an institutional history, somewhat narrowly conceived.

Some historical writings to note are Carl S Meyer, *Moving Frontiers, Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964); Carl Solomon Munding, *Government in the*

shows that the terms “laity” and “clergy” are used throughout the early history of the Synod.⁴

One difficulty when writing about the laity in the LCMS is the lack of uniformity. What has led to the lack of uniformity, in part, was a lack of a definition of the laity.

Even when some highly Americanized congregations were moving into prosperous suburbs, traveling pastors were calling together desperately poor, inexperienced German immigrants for the first time in the cramped quarters of a crude shack in Montana or Saskatchewan. Later, attacks on the clergy for not permitting more lay initiative bewildered some pastors who were only too well acquainted with the stolid passivity of their own local congregations. And more recently, demands made by some laity that traditional positions be reevaluated clashed with warnings from other alarmed laymen against deserting the true faith.⁵

In the LCMS, lay involvement in church functions and organizations which was prevalent

Missouri Synod; the Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947); and Alan Graebner, *Uncertain Saints: The Laity in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1900–1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975). These writings give the historical information regarding the laity and their role in the history of the LCMS to 1970.

An author of theological writings which are pertinent is C.F.W. Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office: A Collection of Testimonies Regarding This Question from the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and from the Private Writings of Orthodox Teachers of the Same*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), and *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*. These works are extremely helpful for a theological understanding of the laity and their role in the early history of the LCMS. Even though Walther lived at the end of the nineteenth century his position as president of the Synod and his writings greatly influenced the teaching of the LCMS regarding the laity and set the foundation for authors who followed. Matthew C. Harrison has given us more information from Walther in his tome, *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011). Authors who built upon Walther's teaching regarding the laity are Richard R. Caemmerer, *The Church in the World* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), John Hall Elliott, *Doxology: God's People Called to Celebrate His Glory: A Biblical Study of 1 Peter in 10 Parts* (Lutheran Laymen's League, 1966), and Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974). In addition to these authors there is the writing from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, *Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers: A Manual for the Enlistment and Training of Laity for Kingdom Work*. (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, 1952).

⁴ William Frederick Arndt, “The Story of Lehre und Wehre,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 26, no. 12 (1955): 885–92. The first paper or journal published by the Synod was *Der Lutheraner*, which C.F.W. Walther, supported by several other pastors, founded in 1844. When the Missouri Synod was founded, it adopted this paper as its official organ. Before long there was need of a more technical or scholarly journal. At the convention in Cleveland in 1853, it was resolved that such a publication should appear monthly. “Besides *Der Lutheraner*, which, as in the past, appears every 14 days and whose style is to be made still more popular so that the average reader can understand it without difficulty, a monthly journal is to be issued for preachers and such members of the laity as are able to benefit from articles written in a more scholarly style.” Walther was entrusted with the editorship of the theological journal [*Lehre und Wehre*], and at first continued to retain the position of editor of *Der Lutheraner*.

⁵ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, x.

in the second half of the twentieth century did not exist in 1900. The New World created opportunities, particularly in American Protestantism, for the laity to take an active role in the church brought about by the freedom of disestablishment or the voluntary nature of the church. In addition, as the laity participated in a variety of extra-denominational organizations, their social life along with the “theological egalitarianism of revivalism and the social equalitarianism of democracy” aided in the development and expansion of the role of the laity. Since there was no definition of the laity, confusion abounded, and in this quagmire Christians muddled along as to the role of the laity.⁶ As a consequence, the definition of the laity tended to follow the role of the laity. The result was more questions than answers.

The LCMS encountered the changing definition and role of the laity in American Protestantism. This influence was at tension with Lutheran ecclesiology. From the start, Lutheran theology with its sacramental emphasis held in high regard the ordained ministry. This tended to curb the outside influence of an active role of the laity within the church. In addition, German immigration helped to stem the rising tide of influence regarding the role of the laity within the Synod. The governments of the German states provided for the financial needs of the pastor and the maintenance of the church property. The German citizen had little to no decision-making role in the church just as he did in the state. Since the state and the clergy made the decisions in the church, this led to an acquiescence that the church consisted of the clergy (and the state) and not the laity. German immigrants found the American conditions of voluntarism and the separation of church and state foreign to their way of living. When they arrived in the New World, they were not automatically numbered among the Lutherans. They needed to join a church and

⁶ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 4.

demonstrate their commitment through financial resources for salaries and buildings.⁷

The LCMS has its roots in several groups of German immigrants that traveled to America separately but held in common a confession of orthodox Lutheranism. One group of immigrants was a colony of Saxons under the pastoral leadership of Martin Stephan which traveled from Dresden and settled in Perry County, Missouri. Another group, composed of missionaries and colonists, was sent by Pastor Wilhelm Loehe for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and serving the German immigrant population.⁸

The role of the laity in the union of these groups was greatly influenced by the experience of the Saxon immigrants. The colonists had submitted themselves to the clerical autocracy of Martin Stephan,⁹ only to charge him with financial and sexual licentiousness. The view of many colonists went from venerating the clergy to venerating the laity and being suspect of the authority of the pastoral office. Carl Vehse and his brother-in-law, Franz Marbach, two lawyers, put forth a position that emphasized the common priesthood. Vehse stated that, “as spiritual priests, laymen had the right to judge all doctrine and to supervise all the activities of the clergy.”¹⁰ Once Stephan was deposed, Vehse and Marbach advocated that the clergy no longer had oversight of the laity but that the laity now had oversight of the clergy.¹¹ As for which group

⁷ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 4–5. See also Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 26, 29–31.

⁸ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 6. A detailed analysis of the Stephanite Emigration from Saxony to the United States is set forth in Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839–1841* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953).

⁹ “We have been instructed by [Stephan] in many things, and from this instruction an abiding conviction has resulted in us that an episcopal form of polity, in accord with the Word of God, with the Old Apostolic Church, and with our Symbolical Writings, is indispensable. Such a form of polity, in which a greater or smaller number of clergymen are subordinated to a bishop in the government of the Church and form a council with him and under his leadership, is therefore our joint, fervent, and earnest desire.” From Stephan’s Investiture (January 14, 1839), cited in Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 134.

¹⁰ Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 99.

¹¹ Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 99.

has the oversight is a struggle that continues to the present day.

Although C.F.W. Walther acknowledges a distinction between the laity and the clergy he is very assiduous in avoiding the term “clergy.” In *The Church & The Office of The Ministry*, “clergy” appears only seven times and that is only in the quotations of the private writings of the teachers of the church, never in Walther’s own words. In thesis ten on the Office, Walther speaks of both the laymen (*die Laien*) and the preachers (*Predigern*) or those who hold the ministry of the Word (*Predigtamt*) indicating that although the ministry of the Word or the public preaching office has the right to judge doctrine, this does not mean that this right was taken away from the laity, rather it is their most sacred duty.¹²

For Walther, the term “clergy” is entrenched with the Roman Catholic teaching that clergy are a special state [*Stand*] different from that of all Christians. Thus he does not use the term “clergy” but speaks of the public ministry (*öffentliche Predigtamt*) and emphasizes that it is an office of service (*Amt des Dienstes*).¹³ Instead of contrasting the clergy and the laity, Walther emphasizes their oneness or what they have in common. He stresses that the pastor exercises in public office the rights of the spiritual priesthood (*geistlichen Priesterthums*), or of every believing Christian.¹⁴ Walther responds to the Roman Catholic teaching of the clergy being a special state by emphasizing the rights and powers of the spiritual priesthood. He understands that the spiritual priesthood means that every Christian is a priest.

After Martin Stephen was deposed, it opened the door for an emphasis on the laity.¹⁵ Walther sought to draw together a doctrine of the church which navigated between elevating the

¹² Walther, *Church & the Office*, 331.

¹³ Walther, *Church & the Office*, 188, 262.

¹⁴ Walther, *Church & the Office*, 262.

¹⁵ Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 99.

clergy or reacting against them. In doing so, he admittedly was influenced by the new emphasis on the laity by Vehse and Marbach.¹⁶ With this new emphasis there was opportunity for more participation in the church by the laity.

Walther drew the doctrine of the church, including the ordained ministry, from the Lutheran Confessions and the writings of Luther and other teachers of the church. From this, he put forth a church polity that was free from the rule of the state.¹⁷ Walther acknowledged that he was influenced by Vehse's emphasis on the royal priesthood as he sought a middle ground between the two extremes of focusing only on the clergy or reacting against them.¹⁸ In the face of

¹⁶ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 6–8, 12. See also Timothy Maschke, "Inspired, Informed, Involved: The Role of the Laity in C.F.W. Walther's Writings," *Concordia Theological Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 47–65.

¹⁷ See Walther, *Church & The Office of The Ministry*, 3–147; see also C.F.W. Walther, *The True Visible Church; And, the Form of a Christian Congregation*, trans. John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005). In debates held in Altenburg, Missouri, on April 15 and 20, 1841, Walther presented his theses on the church and the holy ministry. These theses, slightly modified, were adopted at the synodical convention in 1851 and they became the basis for his book, *The Church & The Office of The Ministry*. Cf. Samuel H. Nafzger, "The LCMS on the Lay Performance of Pastoral Functions," *Issues in Christian Education* 38 (Spring 2004): 24, 26.

"Missouri Synod polity came out of a compromise with a 'rabid' lay party which, in the judgment of Munding, 'stood for an extreme congregationalism with heavy emphasis on the individual. Like the Anabaptists, they took certain isolated quotations from Luther's writings of the early 1520s, tore them out of their life situations, and tried to construct a new church polity' (Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 107). After years of opposing this, Walther compromised with them. 'In this extreme exigency Walther made a virtue of necessity and adopted a realistic course. He accepted principles of church government which his lay opponents had gathered from the writings of Luther [these were all from the early Luther as was noted above]. To these he added from Luther certain provisions which safeguarded the dignity of the ministerial office: his transfer theory, the doctrine of the divinity of the call, the absolute authority of the Word of God, and the permanence of tenure' (Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, 213). This polity emphasizes what neither Luther (later in life) nor our Confessions emphasize, the priesthood of all believers. The Confessions only refer to the priesthood of all believers once, and there it is used as a synonym for church (Tr, 69). In fact the Apology specifically states that it is the Reformers' greatest wish to maintain the old church polity: In 'Of Ecclesiastical Order' we read, 'concerning this subject we have frequently testified in this assembly that it is our greatest wish to maintain church-polity and the grades in the Church [old church-regulations and the government of bishops], even though they have been made by human authority [provided the bishops allow our doctrine and receive our priests]' (Ap XIV: 24–25)," Paul R. Harris, "Angels Unaware," *Logia* 3, no. 1 (Epiphany 1994): 39.

¹⁸ Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 99. A significant change had occurred in Walther's confession of the doctrine of the church. From the beginning he had confessed an episcopal form of polity in which he understood the church as centered on the office of the ordained (clergy) which he deemed "indispensable." Later in his theses on the church, in 1841, he understood the church as centered on all believers or the common multitude. He defines the church only as all believers. For Walther the office of the pastor is divinely instituted but it does not belong to the essence but only the constitution of the church. "It is important to understand this because of those who desire to make the pastoral office a means of grace and coordinate it with the Word and Sacraments, as they assert that it is absolutely necessary for anyone to obtain salvation, so that no one without the ministry of an ordained parish pastor

laicism and what some deemed as cavalier treatment of the clergy by many American Protestant denominations, the royal priesthood was given the central focus within the doctrine of the church even though at the same time the divine institution of the ordained ministry was upheld.

Walther's conclusions were not the confession of either J. K. W. Löhe or J. A. A. Grabau so the discussion regarding the doctrine of the church and the ordained ministry continued among them.¹⁹

Having the central focus of the doctrine of the church on the royal priesthood now allowed for more participation of the laity in the church. However, since the laity were predominately German immigrants who brought with them the expectations of the old country, lay participation did not increase. The pastor was often received with respect given him as an educated German. The clergy and teachers were the only well-educated professionals among the colonies of Saxon Lutherans. The people they served were mainly farmers, craftsmen, and tradesmen and this

can either come to faith or obtain absolution of his sins." His confession of the church is shaped by the fact that he is adamantly against any hint of Romanizing, or special class of clergy, or "indelible character." See Walther, *Church & The Office*, xviii, 9, 151, 170.

Walther, in *Church & The Office*, 181, states that the church is bound to the preaching office [*Predigtamt*] (Walther is speaking specifically about the *Pfarramt*—see Thesis 1 and 2 on the Office where he qualifies *Predigtamt* with *Pfarramt*. For Walther each Christian has the *Predigtamt* and exercises it privately, however the public exercise of the *Predigtamt* he refers to as the *Pfarramt*. See Walther, "The Congregations Right," 125–127. In making the statement, "the church is bound to the preaching office," he defines the church as the common multitude or hearers only and the office is excluded from the definition of the church. This is also evident in the title of his book, *Kirche und Amt*. (Walther uses *Amt* in the title because of his understanding that the *Predigtamt* is given to all Christians to exercise. He does the same in the "Office of the Keys" in the *Small Catechism*.) The Lutheran fathers defined church as including her office. The church is the assembly bound to the office [*ministerium Evangelii*] thereby the church is both teachers and hearers. "For since the foundation of the church is the doctrine of Christ taught by the prophets and apostles, Eph. 2:20, the doctrine concerning Christ cannot be taught and cannot be proclaimed in the church unless there are teachers, Rom. 10:14." See Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 686, 696, 698, 701–2, 711, 713.

¹⁹ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 6–8, 12. Regarding the discussion between Walther and Löhe, Sasse writes, "On both sides there was an overemphasis on one aspect of Biblical truths which in the New Testament belong together. This happened because each party took one side of the New Testament passages as the important one, under which the other had to be subordinated.... The office of the holy ministry is not lord over the congregation (2 Cor 1:24); the congregation is not lord over the office of the holy ministry (Gal 1). Both are under Him who alone is Lord; in Him they are one." Herman Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 79, 83.

continued for the next fifty years. In addition, the pastor tended to gather the people together and it was he, along with the German language, who kept them bound together. This was the case almost until World War I. “Here, in a strange land, religion was both a tie with the fathers and a hope for the future. The religious rites of passage—baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage, and burial—took on added value, especially when observed in old, familiar language. And, because of his central role in such ceremonies, the German-speaking pastor held high status among immigrants.”²⁰

In the district and synodical conventions the laity had an equal voice to the clergy constitutionally. However, the laity were known for their silence as they followed the lead of the clergy. Still, the German immigration obscured the focus of the activity of the laity which the synodical constitution had granted decades earlier. One exception to this was the organization of the women’s auxiliary, *Frauenvereine*, in the 1850s. The women met in the homes of members and participated in sewing projects, support of seminary students, and charitable deeds.²¹ In 1919, the deaconess association was founded to provide an avenue for women to serve in a professional role within the Synod. At the time, all deaconesses were nurses and their emphasis was not only on service but on religious community as well. The association was housed at Fort Wayne, Indiana and eventually was moved to Valparaiso University in 1943.²²

The synodical leaders, early on, denounced a lay missionary movement that was arising in other denominations. “Let the church ask the men to come. If the men will not do it, they will not come if some organization within the Church asks them.”²³ Facilities in the church building for

²⁰ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 8–10.

²¹ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 16–17.

²² Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 390.

²³ *Luther Witness* 18 (1900), 134.

recreation and fellowship were perceived by some as a bribe to keep members from joining extra-denominational organizations so that their theological beliefs would not be influenced by the culture or that they may not be drawn away from the church.²⁴

Around the time of World War I, the laity in the Synod took on new roles. Many young adults were involved in Sunday school teaching and the men of the Synod formed the Lutheran Laymen's League which focused mainly on assisting with the synodical finances. In 1942 the Lutheran Women's Missionary League was established which mirrored the Lutheran Laymen's League. Lutheran charitable institutions were the first to receive support from the laity followed by the Synod's colleges. The activities of the laity continued to grow into the early 1920s but then dissipated by the time of the Depression. Other organizations which formed during this time were the National Lutheran Education Association for higher education for the laity, and the American Luther League for education and publicity.²⁵

The original role of the laity was taking care of church finances but now a new role was emerging. The layman "had progressed from the inert ingredient in the church to financial manager to general pastoral assistant."²⁶ Exactly how the laity would help the pastor beyond taking care of the church property and finances was developing in the 1920s and 1930s as the Synod shifted its missionary focus from German immigrants to Americans at large. By 1945, the laity became actively involved in theological concerns. One reason was that in the 1940s the main concern of financial issues was replaced by the question of church union. This was a divisive issue for the clergy which drew the laity into the discussion as one layman stated, "When pastors do not agree among themselves, we laymen must think for ourselves, and act

²⁴ C.F.W. Walther, ed., *Der Lutheraner* 65 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1909), 231.

²⁵ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 31, 39–40.

²⁶ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 97.

accordingly.”²⁷

After World War II, there was an influx in Synod of adult converts so there was a pressing need for adult education. In 1946, Oscar E. Feucht was the Synod’s first Secretary of Adult Education. “As a young pastor, he had drawn from the experience of other American denominations in establishing Bible classes in the various congregations he served.”²⁸ He believed the time was ripe to draw the laity into active roles since they were better educated now than in previous years. In addition, they had more leisure time and were retiring at an earlier age.

In a report to the Educational Conference in 1951, Feucht indicated that the Bible Institute of America was one of the most productive agencies for equipping the laity for full-time or part-time work in the church. The Bible Institute was a special school to provide leadership training for Christian workers in the congregation. The first Bible Institute in the Synod was founded in 1946 in St. Louis. Within six years it grew to thirty-six institutes. The training took place in a variety of formats such as week-end courses, summer courses, or two-week courses, etc.²⁹

The first public statement that the Synod was taking steps to train the laity for full-time church work was a resolution at the triennial convention of the Synod in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1950. The resolution reads in part:

Resolved, A. That our congregations throughout Synod launch out upon an intensive effort for the enlistment and training of the laity for every phase of the Church’s work, and that our laity as such be alerted and encouraged to discharge its priestly functions; and be it further.... *Resolved, C.* That Synod, through its departments of Parish Education, Home Missions, and Stewardship aid our congregations in carrying out such a program by means of special training institutes, short-term schools, and Bible institutes, to be held in strategic centers; and, that the secretaries of these departments initiate the program; and be it further.... *Resolved, G.* That Synod

²⁷ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 105.

²⁸ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 162.

²⁹ *Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers: A Manual for the Enlistment and Training of Laity for Kingdom Work*. (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, 1953), 106.

express its joy over the fact that an ever-increasing number of lay people are manifesting an interest in serving the Church on a full-time basis, and that it stand ready to offer guidance to these people and use them whenever possible.³⁰

On the basis of this resolution, the Synod established a Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity.

In 1953 in Houston, at the triennial convention, for the second time a proposal for a training school for full-time lay church workers was received and it was referred to the Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity. Since the Bible Institutes in the Synod were deemed successful, especially in St. Louis and Chicago, at the synodical convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1956, the administrative board of the St. Louis Lutheran Bible Institute submitted a memorial for the establishment of a lay training school (full-time Bible Institute) to prepare full-time or part-time church workers to assist the clergy. The Synod directed the president to appoint a Planning Commission to study the matter of enlisting and training the laity for full-time or part-time service in the church. This led to a resolution at the synodical convention in San Francisco, California in 1959, giving approval for the establishment of a two-year training institute for the laity.³¹

The birth of the Lutheran Lay Training Institute was in September, 1961, on the campus of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The institute was established with the purpose of preparing men and women, twenty years or older, to serve as lay parish workers in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The institute graduated its first class of twenty in 1963. In 1964 more

³⁰ *Proceedings*, 1950, 487.

³¹ *Proceedings*, 1956, 273–76. *Proceedings*, 1959, 287–305. The chairman of the Planning Commission for a Full-time Bible Institute was Dr. Oscar E. Feucht (Board for Parish Education). See *Proceedings*, 1959, 313–315. See also *Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers*. On page five, the synodical publication defines the church as a “force to be trained for active work.” “To a church body which traces its history back to the Reformation, it should seem only natural that you speak of the congregation as a force to be trained, for the Reformation placed great emphasis upon *the priesthood of all believers*.”

than half the people the Synod sent into the foreign mission field were laymen.³²

In 1971 the name of the program was changed to Lay Minister in order to reflect the duties of its graduates. Lay men were licensed to serve in all areas of the ministry of the Word including the distinctive duties of the pastoral office. Lay women were licensed to serve in all areas of the ministry of the Word, except for those duties distinctive to the office of the pastor.

The Bylaws of the LCMS read:

A. Male lay ministers are licensed, not ordained, to serve in all areas of the ministry of the Word when authorized by a local congregation and supervised by an ordained pastor.

b. Women engaged in this area of the church's work are licensed to serve in such areas of the ministry of the Word as are authorized by a local congregation and supervised by an ordained pastor, except in those functions distinctive to the pastoral office.³³

By 1972 the institute ended and the program was integrated into the curriculum of Concordia College, Milwaukee.³⁴ By 1975 there was a synodical resolution granting male licensed lay ministers authority to serve as clergy in the ministry of the Word.³⁵ Previously, in 1953, a synodical resolution granted male parochial school teachers the same authority.³⁶

³² Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 164–65. See John Boubel, *Lay Ministry Handbook*, (unpublished paper, 1985), 3-5.

³³ *Handbook*, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1975. Bylaws IV. H., 114. The 1971 synodical convention created a Board for Lay Ministers (Res. 6–10). Bylaws were submitted to the 1973 convention for action but no action was taken on the proposals until the 1975 convention.

³⁴ John Boubel, *Lay Ministry Handbook*, 3–5. The program of studies was called Lay Ministry and it was part of the curriculum at what is currently known as Concordia University, Mequon, WI. The graduates of this program are prepared for service like faithful Aaron who held up the arms of the prophet (Exod. 17:11). In the year 2020, the title was changed by Synod to Director of Church Ministries (DCM).

³⁵ *Handbook*, 1975, 114.

³⁶ *Proceedings*, 1953, 323–24. At the 2000 Evangelism Executive/Chairperson Conference in Texas, in March 2000, Joel Lehenbauer (executive director of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations) gave an address in which he equated the laity with the priesthood of all believers. "I would like to focus on the role of the saints, the laity, in the life and worship and service of Christ's church. In other words, I'd like to talk about what we Lutherans call the doctrine of 'the priesthood of all believers.'" He equated the laity with the priesthood of believers and yet he speaks of two offices, the office of the universal priesthood and the office of the pastor, which gives echoes of the Roman Catholic teaching of two priesthoods. If the laity is equated with the priesthood of

Little distinction was made between the work of the ordained minister and the work of the licensed lay minister. About one-third of the graduates of the Lay Minister program served in the role of a pastor in word and sacrament ministry.³⁷ “The publicity for the various lay-worker training programs held up for emulation a clericalized layman, someone in the full-time employ of the church—a layman only in the sense of not being ordained.”³⁸ There was no distinction between the role of a licensed layman and a pastor, however in definition the distinction was between non-ordained and ordained. Public speakers acknowledged no incongruity when giving a presentation on the royal priesthood and concluded that the ordained give the routine and mechanical duties of the clergy to the laity. Some believed that making use of the laity was better than no use and completing tasks in an efficient manner was better than tasks left undone. However, this approach did little for the exploration and understanding of the laity as the royal priesthood. “Lutherans eliminated questions about the laity by eliminating the laity. Laymen were made amateur clergy.”³⁹

The understanding of laity began with the contrast to the clergy, then the equation of the laity with the royal priesthood and the church was introduced. More recently a third usage has come into focus. This usage is clearly seen in the 2013 *Handbook* of the LCMS when it speaks of training “ministers of religion—ordained, ministers of religion—commissioned, and laity for

believers, where does this leave the person of the pastor since he also is a member of the priesthood of believers? Lehenbauer’s intention is to use the doctrine of the priesthood of believers to give practical implications for the service and witness of the laity in various aspects of the church’s life and work and worship. See Lehenbauer, “The Priesthood,” 4–6.

³⁷ David Sellnow, “Lay Ministers In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: A History and Analysis From A WELS Perspective” (Unpublished paper, 1986), 9.

³⁸ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 165. See Eldor A. Cassens, “The Christian as a Worker in God’s Kingdom,” *Proceedings* (Southeastern District, LCMS, 1948), 18. See also, *Lutheran Witness* 69 (1950), 212.

³⁹ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 166. This was the prevalent thinking of this period and it was summarized by Carl W. Berner, *Spiritual Power for Your Congregation: A Guide to Lay Activity in the Kingdom* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956).

service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.”⁴⁰ Laity is in contrast not only to the ordained but also to the commissioned ministers. The category of commissioned ministers has echoes of a “religious order” somewhat akin to the Medieval Ages (clergy, religious orders, laity) which has clouded the meaning of “laity” even more but it shows the difficulties with using the distinction of clergy and laity.⁴¹

This was not the first time in the history of Synod that those who held an office in the church, other than the pastor, were tasked with executing specific duties of the public ministry. As the Synod expanded its education of the laity through the use of parochial schools there were pleas for more teachers. This brought into question the use of women teachers in the schools.⁴² In the early history of Synod, most calls required the pastor to teach as well as preach until a schoolteacher could be called to that parish. Once a teacher was called, the pastor became the superintendent of the school since his responsibility was to supervise the doctrine in both the church and the school. Pastors continued as teachers into the twentieth century. In 1920 one quarter of the two thousand teachers in the Synod were pastors.⁴³ It was not until the 1930s and 1940s that women teachers were common in the classrooms.⁴⁴ Because of the service of women teachers and the concerns regarding the selective service acts of the country regarding military service, there was a need to clarify the status of the teacher in the polity of the Synod. In order to

⁴⁰ *Handbook* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013), 205.

⁴¹ For further examples see *Handbook* (2013), 14–15, 19–21, 48, 103–5, 109–110, 121, 132–33, 135, 137–140, 142, 144, 150, 156, 164, 171, 183, 186, 196, 199, 200.

⁴² Walther was not an advocate of women teachers from the viewpoint that school teachers were generally pastors. See C.F.W Walther, *Essays for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 2:307.

⁴³ Stephen A. Schmidt, *Powerless Pedagogues: An Interpretive Essay on the History of the Lutheran Teacher in the Missouri Synod* (River Forest, IL: Lutheran Education Association, 1972), 32, 39. The title is revealing in that the focus is on power or the lack thereof.

⁴⁴ J. C. W. Lindemann, “Die Lehrthätigkeit der Frauen innerhalb der Christenheit,” *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt*, 7 (March 1872), 77–78. See also George Stoeckhardt, “Von dem Beruf der Lehrerinnen an christlichen Gemeindeschulen,” *Lehre und Wehre*, 63 (March 1897), 65–74.

do so, the Synod drew upon the teachings of C. F. W. Walther.

C.F.W. Walther

Walther was born a pastor's son in Saxony, part of modern-day Germany. Out of a strong religious commitment he immigrated to the United States in 1838 and sacrificed his homeland, his health, and nearly his life for the freedom to speak, believe, and live freely. He started two important publications, and was author of many books and periodical articles. Not only did he serve four Saxon Lutheran congregations in St. Louis but he also served as the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In 1855, he turned down an honorary doctorate from the University of Gottingen, but in 1877 he accepted a Doctor of Theology degree from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. In 1887, he died from a serious illness and was buried at Concordia Cemetery where a mausoleum was later built in his honor.⁴⁵

Walther and other Saxon immigrants settled in the United States under the leadership of Martin Stephan who was considered the “bishop of the new settlement.” Stephan was accused of financial and sexual misconduct and was expelled from the group which left Walther as one of the respected clergymen remaining and soon he was thrust into leadership positions. During his forty years of work in the LCMS, Walther founded a log cabin college in 1839 in Altenburg, MO which eventually became Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Walther was president of this college and held that position for the remainder of his life. In 1847 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was founded and Walther served as its first president. He held this position from 1847 to 1850 and again from 1864 to 1878. He founded several Lutheran periodicals, including *Der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre* and wrote a number of theological books. Perhaps his most

⁴⁵ C. F. W. Walther, “C.F.W. (Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm) Walther (1811–1887) Papers, c.1828–1887.” <https://concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/?s=walther+papers&submit=> .

well-known work is *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. When Martin Stephan was deposed and Walther became a leader among his community, the pastors and laity were asking the question as to whether their group was still “church” since they had no bishop. Walther engaged an attorney in a public debate, known as the Altenburg Debate, and convinced the Saxon immigrants that they could certainly consider themselves to be church.⁴⁶

In two of his works, *The Church and The Office of The Ministry* and *The Congregation’s Right To Choose Its Pastor*, Walther defined the church for those whom he served. In doing so, he spoke of the church as “all believers” or “priests” and he described how Christians are made priests, the various tasks they are given, and the offices they hold.

The Church and The Office of The Ministry

In the 1950s Walther’s teaching, regarding the church and her office, were instrumental in defining the status of the schoolteacher in the polity of the Synod, particularly regarding the selective service acts of the country regarding military service. From the beginning of Synod, the office of schoolteacher was viewed as a helping office to the pastoral office. Walther taught that the “preaching office [*Predigtamt*]⁴⁷ is the highest office in the Church, from which flow all other offices in the Church.”⁴⁸ He believed that God established only one office in the church and

⁴⁶ Walther, “C.F.W. (Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm) Walther (1811-1887) Papers, c.1828-1887.” See also, C.F.W. Walther, *Christian Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Altenburg Thesis” (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000). <http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=A&word=ALTENBURGTHESES>.

⁴⁷ For Walther, the *Predigtamt* is not the office of the pastor, but an office given to every Christian. When the *Predigtamt* is exercised publicly, Walther refers to it as the *Pfarramt*, or pastoral office. See Walther, *Congregation’s Right*. 124–26. On page 136, Walther states, “For although Pastor Grabau does not ascribe the power of the ministerial office [*Predigtamtsgewalt*] to the pope alone, he nevertheless, like the pope, denies it to believing Christians, and ascribes it solely to bishops or pastors, and therein goes even farther than the pope, in that instead of the one bishop of Rome he makes all pastors popes.”

⁴⁸ Walther, *Church & the Office*, 284–86. See C.F.W. Walther, *Walther’s Pastorale, That Is, American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. John M. Drickamer (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, 1995), 258, 272; “The Laymen’s Movement in the Light of God’s Word,” trans. J. T. Mueller, in *What is Christianity? and Other Essays* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1933), 114, 119; “Von dem Beruf der Lehrerinnen an Christlichen Gemeindeschulen,” *Lehre*

every other office in the church exercises a part of the one office [*Predigtamt*]. All duties of the preaching office [*Predigtamt*] are commanded by God, however, according to Walther, the church is free to take certain duties of the preaching office which are not of the essence of the office and assign those duties to other offices in the church. The people who hold these offices are helpers to the pastor and hold a helping office. Walther states that the apostolic office of deacon (Acts 6) who cared for alms, the lay elders who do not labor in word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17), those who govern (Rom. 12:8),⁴⁹ schoolteachers who have to teach the Word of God, distributors of alms, sextons, and precentors at public worship are all part of the one office which means they carry out duties of the one office that are not of the essence of the office, and thus they are helping offices to the one office established by Christ.⁵⁰

Walther uses the example in Acts 6 regarding deacons to support his teaching of helping offices. He believes that deacons did not hold the pastoral office [*des heiligen Predigtamtes*] or

und Wehre, 43, no.3, 66; "Ueber das evangelische Verhalten eines christlich gesinnten Gemeineschullehrers, theils gegen seine Schulkinder, theils gegen die Gemeinde, theils gegen den Pastor," *Lehre und Wehre*, 9, no.1, 12.

⁴⁹ The Lutheran fathers understood that the offices of deacon (Acts 6), elders (1 Tim. 5:17), and the ruling authorities (Rom. 12:8) were all clergy or ordained pastors. See "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7," in *LW* 28:320, 348; 30:160; 12:294; Johann Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part Two*, ed. B.T.G. Mayes and H.R. Curtis, trans. R.J. Dinda, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 26/2:27–50; see also Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 682–96, 700, 714; and Kolb and Wengert, 64, 308, 408, "For the church has the mandate to appoint ministers [*de constituendis ministris/Prediger und Diakonos bestellen*] which ought to please us greatly because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it," p. 220. See also Charles Porterfield Krauth, "Thetical Statement of the Doctrine Concerning the Ministry of the Gospel," *Lutheran and Missionary* Vol. 14, no. 12 (Dec. 31, 1874): 1.

⁵⁰ Walther, *Church & the Office of The Ministry*, 284–86, and C.F.W. Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung eines lutherischen Diakonus," *Der Lutheraner*, Jan. 1, 1867, v. 23, n.9, 65–66. Talk of lay elders [*Laienälteste*] appears in the 1850 Convention Proceedings. In 1858, Walther wrote a series of articles on lay elders which were published in *Lehre und Wehre*. See also Walther, *Walther's Pastorale*, 254–55. For a helpful treatment of Walther's teaching regarding Lay Elders see Albert B. Collver III, "Lay Elders: A Brief Overview of Their Origin in the Missouri Synod: Implications for Elders Today," *Concordia Journal* 32, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 38–53. Cf. Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: XXVI/1 On the Ministry Part One*, ed. Benjamin T. G Mayes, trans. Richard J Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011); and Charles P. Krauth, "The Doctrine of the Ministry Thetically Stated (Third Article)," *Lutheran and Missionary*, Vol. 14, no. 15 (Jan. 21, 1875): 1; "XVII. "LAY" OR "RULING ELDERS" (1 Tim. V. 17.). 1. The New Testament speaks of but ONE official, distinctive class of Christian elders or Presbyters: it gives no hint of official distinctions within this class. All Presbyters are identified with Bishops, and are constantly spoken of as one body, and as having a common ordination both to rule and teach." See Charles Porterfield Krauth, "Thetical Statement of the Doctrine of the Ministry (Second Article)," *Lutheran and Missionary*, Vol. 14, no. 13 (Jan. 7, 1875): 1.

one office instituted in Scripture but that they had a different office which carried out non-essential duties of the one office and therefore the office of deacon in Scripture is a helping office. He cites Chemnitz' *Examination of the Council of Trent* as proof. Chemnitz teaches that there are many duties of the office of the church [*Kirchenamt/ministerium Ecclesiae*] and when believers are numerous then it is helpful for the church to arrange for the duties of the preaching office [*Predigtamts*] to be carried out by different grades [*Stufen*] of ministers of the church [*Kirchendienern*]. This is done so that each person has a particular position in which to serve the congregation through certain duties of the preaching office [*Predigtamts*].⁵¹

Chemnitz speaks of different orders, grades, or ranks of ordained clergy but Walther misinterprets Chemnitz. For Chemnitz, there is no such thing as bearing a part of an office. Either one has the office or he does not. Chemnitz speaks of different grades or ranks of ministers which all have the one divinely instituted office [*Predigtamt*]. All the pastors have the same office but some may carry out only specific duties of the office. No person is given a part

⁵¹ Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung," 66–68. Walther, in this article in *Der Lutheran* cites 1 Tim. 5:17 as evidence that elders who do not labor in Word and Sacrament are like the deacons in Acts 6 and do not hold the one office but a helping office that carries out some of the duties of the one office [*Predigtamt*]. This teaching is contrary to the teachings of the Lutheran fathers; see footnotes thirty-six and thirty-seven. The elders who do not labor in Word and Sacrament are ruling elders (ordained clergy), yet Walther deems them lay elders. This was how the office of "lay elder" was born in the LCMS and why it is "understood" that lay elders in congregations carry out duties of the one office [*Predigtamt*] even though they do not hold the pastoral office; cf. Walther's defense of the institution of Lay Elders as an ancient institution of the church in "Ueber Laienaelteste oder Gemeindevorsteher," *Lehre und Wehre*, Feb. – Apr. 1858, v. 4.

Cf. Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council*, 2:682–83; "The fact of the matter is this: Because many duties belong to the ministry of the church [*ministerium Ecclesiae*] which cannot all conveniently be performed by one person or by a few, when the believers are very numerous—in order, therefore, that all things may be done in an orderly way, decently, and for edification, these duties of the ministry began, as the assembly of the church grew great, to be distributed among certain ranks of ministers which they afterward called *taxeis* (ranks) or *tagmata* (orders), so that each might have, as it were, a certain designated station in which he might serve the church in certain duties of the ministry. Thus in the beginning the apostles took care of the ministry of the Word and the sacraments and at the same time also of the distribution and dispensation of alms. Afterward, however, as the number of disciples increased, they entrusted that part of the ministry which has to do with alms to others, whom they called deacons.... Therefore the ranks or orders were distinguished, not by empty titles but according to certain duties that belonged to the ministry of the church. The bishop taught the Word of God and had charge of the church's discipline. The presbyters taught and administered the sacraments. The deacons were in charge of the treasuries of the church, in order from them to provide sustenance for the poor and in particular for the ministers of the church."

of an office or a duty of another office. Each pastor is given the whole office and may exercise all or some of the duties of that office according to his call. The titles of the different ranks or orders, of the one office, indicate which duties the office holders are given to carry out since they all hold the one divinely instituted office.

Walther interprets Chemnitz to mean that the church is free to establish, not ranks or grades, but offices in the church, that are not divinely instituted, and give those offices duties that belong to the one divinely instituted office.

The so-called Deacons and Lay Elders of the apostles' time were, as was already suggested, in no way preachers [*Prediger*] and overseers of souls. They were rather only their helpers for functions of the preaching office [*Predigtamtes*] which do not make up the essence of the office. Indeed, their functions too were commanded by God. But that these should be carried out only by particular people in an office is not based on God's express command. Their office as a special and separate office from the preaching office [*Predigtamt*] was also not a divine order and institution but rather an office ordered by the church (*kirchlicher Ordnung*).⁵²

According to Walther, because a person in a helping office is not installed into the divine office established by Christ, they may be dismissed from their office or the office may be dissolved since it was not divinely established, but to dismiss a person from the divinely instituted office is to dismiss one from being the voice of Christ since it is Christ's priestly office.⁵³

⁵² Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung," 66.

⁵³ Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung," 67–68. There is only one divinely instituted office in Scripture. In order to hold or exercise this office, which is Christ's priestly office, one must have a special call to the office. See Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 29. "It is true that all Christians have a general call to proclaim the Gospel of God, Ro 10:9, to speak the Word of God among themselves, Eph 5:19; to admonish each other from the Word of God, Cl 3:16; to reprove, Eph 5:11 [and] Mt 19:15; [and] to comfort, 1 Th 4:18. And family heads are enjoined [to do] this with the special command that they give their households the instruction of the Lord. Eph 6:4. But the public ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general, as we have already shown, 1 Co 12:28; Eph 4:12. For a special or particular call is required for this, Ro 10:15."

All Christians have a general call to proclaim the Word of God, however one needs a special or particular call to carry out the public ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. The Lord established the office of the public ministry of the Word and Sacraments and he uses the church as his instrument to call someone into his office, thus it is referred to as a "divine call." The LCMS establishes offices in the church, alongside the divinely instituted office, and the church extends a "divine call" or special call to those who hold those offices. Giving these officeholders a "divine call" or special call creates a conundrum as it indicates that the office is a divinely instituted office. If it is a divinely instituted office then the church is not free to determine if they have that office or not. If the church is free

For Walther, it is a different circumstance when there is more than one person in a congregation that has been installed into the office of the Word [*Amt des Wortes*]. All who are given the office of the Word have the same divine office established by Christ and thus the same spiritual and ecclesiastical authority. Walther cites Luther to show that there is no distinction between these offices but the persons who hold these offices may as a matter of human order divide certain duties of the office among themselves.

If the office of teaching [*docendi verbi officium*] be entrusted to anyone, then everything accomplished by the Word in the church is entrusted, that is, the office of baptizing, consecrating, binding, loosing, praying, and judging doctrine. Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel [*euangelisandi officium*] is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other functions [*officiis*], which are built upon it, such as the offices of teachers, prophets, governing [the church], speaking with tongues, the gifts of healing and helping, as Paul directs in 1 Cor. 12[:28].⁵⁴

Walther takes issue with Grabau for dismissing a Lutheran deacon because a Lutheran deacon, unlike the apostolic deacon, according to Walther, has been given the office of the Word. The duty of preaching God's Word publicly is of the essence of the preaching office. This means that the office of Lutheran deacon is not a helping office as is the apostolic deacon or lay elder but it is the one office which Christ established in his church. Therefore a Lutheran deacon is nothing other than "what Scripture calls a pastor, Presbyter (elder), or Bishop."⁵⁵

In Walther's understanding, the schoolteacher has not been given the office of the Word,

not to have an office, that is established by the church, then it indicates that the office is not divinely instituted and thus it does not have a "divine call" or special call to the office. Since these offices were established by the church and not divinely instituted in Scripture, it is interesting to note that when the office holders are installed into their offices the passages that are read from Scripture are passages that pertain to the establishment of the one divinely instituted office; see *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, Commission on Worship, The Lutheran—Church Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 330–32. "In such a call—one that takes place through men—we may and should see a *divine* call if those who extend the call are authorized by God to do so," Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 348.

⁵⁴ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:36; cited in Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung" 67–68.

⁵⁵ Walther, "Etwas über die Verjagung," 67–68.

rather he holds a helping office. Walther refers to Christian day school teachers as servants of the church (*Kirchendienern*), and he writes that, “The preacher should never forget that the school teacher is also a servant of the church and administers an auxiliary (*Hilfsamt*) office branched off from his [the pastor’s] office.”⁵⁶

Hence the highest office is that of the preaching office [*Predigtamt*], with which all other offices are also conferred at the same time. Every other public office in the church is part of the same, or a helping office [*Hilfsamt*] that stands at the side of the preaching office, whether it be the office of elder ([possessors of which] do not labor in the Word and doctrine [1 Timothy 5:17]) or the ruling office [*Regieramt*] (Romans 12:8) or the deaconate (the office of service in a narrow sense) or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration. Therefore, the offices of [Christian day] schoolteachers who have to teach the Word of God in their schools, distributors of alms, sextons, precentors at public worship, and others are all to be regarded as churchly, holy offices, which bear a part of the one church office, stand at the side (for they take over a part of the one church office) and stand beside the preaching office [*Predigtamt*].⁵⁷

Walther emphasized that the preaching office, or pastoral office—since it is exercised publicly, is the highest office in the church and all other offices flow from it.⁵⁸ In contrast to Walther’s teaching, that the office of school teacher flows from the *Predigtamt*, the Large Catechism in its discussion of the Fourth Commandment derives the authority of the schoolmaster from the authority of the parents.⁵⁹ J.C.W. Lindemann was a supporter of women teachers and an instructor at the teachers seminary at Addison, Illinois, who did not agree that the office of the school teacher exercises a part of the preaching office. Lindemann had submitted an article to *Der Lutheraner* which Walther sent back to him to be amended because Lindemann

⁵⁶ Walther, *Walther’s Pastorale*, 272. See also Walther, *The Form*, 90.

⁵⁷ Walther, *Church & the Office*, 286. Walther is not making a distinction between an office that bears a part of the preaching office and an office that is a helping office to the preaching office. For Walther, these are one and the same—all other offices in the church are helping offices which means that they exercise a non-essential duty of the preaching office.

⁵⁸ Walther, *Church & the Office*, 284.

⁵⁹ LC I.141 in Kolb and Wengert, 405.

had derived the office of the teacher from the parental office. Walther was firm in his belief that it flowed from the *Predigtamt*. He believed that teachers have a churchly office,⁶⁰ not a parental office, and that they are helpers to the pastor for the teacher's office is a branch of the pastoral office. According to Walther, the great majority of the Synod disagreed with Lindemann so Walther gently encouraged Lindemann to rethink his position and instructed him not to polemicize against the view that the office of the teacher is part of the preaching office. In addition, he asked Lindemann not to quit his position but continue on at the college.⁶¹

E. W. Kähler's⁶² 1874 theses,⁶³ adopted by the pastors' conference of Columbus, Ohio, distinguished between "essential" and "non-essential" duties of the *Predigtamt*. The theses were published in *Lehre und Wehre* with Walther's editorial endorsement. They read in part:

The rights conveyed with the office of the Word (in the narrow sense)⁶⁴ are: the authority to preach the Gospel and to distribute the sacraments, and the authority of

⁶⁰ This might be to the fact that early in the history of the Synod, school teachers were often pastors who were asked to teach since they were the "most educated" in the community.

⁶¹ C.F.W Walther, *Walther Speaks to the Church; Selected Letters*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1973), 56–57. See also Walther, *The True Visible Church*, 90–91; and A. C Stellhorn, *Schools of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 210–15.

⁶² Walther wrote a letter of response in May 1872 to E. W. Kähler, a theology student from Steeden in Nassau, Germany, who wanted to study at the seminary in St. Louis. Kähler served as a pastor in Ohio. He is known for the theses he presented at a pastors conference in 1874 regarding the essential and non-essential duties of the *Predigtamt*. A few years after presenting the theses, Kähler became Walther's secretary and editorial assistant. For information regarding Kähler and Walther, see Carl S. Meyer, *From Log Cabin to Luther Tower* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 66. See also, *Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten. Anno Domini 1875* (St. Louis: Drukerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1875), 86.

⁶³ The theses were presented originally as a lecture to the Columbus Pastoral Conference of the Ohio Synod at their gathering in Lancaster, Ohio, on March 3,4, 1874. It was first published in *Lehre und Wehre*, the official theological journal of the Missouri Synod (vol. 20, nos. 9, 11, 12). See also Cameron A. MacKenzie, "Helping Offices in the Church," in "The Office of the Holy Ministry," ed. John R. Fehrmann and Daniel Preus, Papers presented at Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Itasca, IL, Lutheran Standard, 1996, 85.

⁶⁴ For Kahler and Walther, *Predigtamt* or *Amt des Wortes* in the narrow sense (concrete) refers to the pastoral office or *Pfarramt*. For Walther *Amt* or *Predigtamt* is not limited to an office or position held by an incumbent. It refers to a task or action, which is the broad or wide sense (abstract) of the terms. "I hope these comments on language will convince the kind reader or strengthen him in the conviction that great caution is necessary in coming to conclusions concerning the doctrine of the Lutheran church on the ministry as found in the Confessions when looking at our individual symbols in which the words *Amt* [office], *Predigtamt* [preaching office], and *Schlilsselamt* [office of the keys], etc., are found. And I will add (I hope it will convince him) that the presumption must be that

where the “office” occurs in such texts, it is being used in the simple sense of a “commissioned work” [aufgetragenen Tuns] without any other additional meaning because this alone is the essential idea of office in the use of the German language as we have proven above,” “Von dem gegenwärtigen Streit in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in Preußen,” *Lehre und Wehre* 7 (1861): 295–96.

In his translation of Eph. 4:12, Luther switched from *dienst* (service) to *ampt* (office), whereas modern Germans have switched from *ampt* to *dienst* for the phrase “for the work of ministry[*amt*].”); See Mosemann, “Whose Ministry Is It?, 55.

“First proposed in 1931 by a lone German Lutheran scholar, Wilhelm Brandt, who was chaplain to an institute of deaconesses, and shortly afterward widely propagated as a result of its inclusion in Beyer’s article on the *diakon-* words in Kittel’s German *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Brandt’s description of *diakonia* as lowly and costly love of one’s neighbor soon began to edge out the concept of office in theological reflections on ministry. His translation of *diakonia* as ‘Dienst/service’ facilitated this process.

Prior to this development, *diakonia* had always been translated into English as ‘ministry.’ As the Germans began switching from Luther’s *Amt* to a modern-day *Dienst*, writers in English and translators of the Bible in the second half of the twentieth century began switching from the word *ministry* to the word *service* to give clearer expression to their understanding of what the New Testament writers intended by *diakonia*. Such switches were theologically significant. Whereas the English *ministry* and *service* can operate as synonyms in certain contexts, in German the words *Amt* and *Dienst* were set up as antonyms. *Amt* is for the leader’s office and embraces the leader’s responsibilities and prerogatives, while *Dienst* is a role or function within anyone’s reach.” John N. Collins, *Diakonia Studies: Critical Issues in Ministry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 191–92.

Walther also states that *Predigtamt* in Augsburg Confession, Article V, is not concerned with ministry in the concrete or the *Pfarramt*, but rather in the abstract. “This statement, of course, does not speak of the preaching office *in concreto* or of the pastoral office but of the office *in abstracto*, of which [Johann] Ludwig Hartmann, among others, rightly reminds us in his pastoral theology: ‘The ministry [*ministerium*] [of the Word] may be treated in two ways: (1) in an **abstract way** inasmuch as the state [*Stand*] itself and the office itself is subject to Christian consideration, as **Article V of the Augsburg Confession** treats it; (2) in a **concrete way**, or in view of the persons who are found in this holy office, as **Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession** treats it.’ (*Pastorale evangelicum* [Nürnberg, 1697], 4:25). . . . It is important to understand this because of those who desire to make the **pastoral office** a means of grace and coordinate it with the Word and Sacraments, as they assert that it is absolutely necessary for anyone to obtain salvation, so that no one without the ministry of an ordained parish pastor can either come to faith or obtain absolution of his sins. But our church teaches this only of the oral or enfleshed [*leiblichen*] Word in opposition to the alleged inner word an every [other] form of enthusiasm [*Enthusiasterei*]. Nevertheless, our fundamental [Augsburg] Confession in Article V no doubt intends to attest also the divine institution of the pastoral office, even if only indirectly, as commentaries of our orthodox theologians in their comments on this article clearly show;” Walther, *Church & the Office of the Ministry*, 169-170. It is important to note that in the last sentence of the quote, Walther acknowledges that all the orthodox theologians understand the Augsburg Confession, Art. V, to be concrete—that is, speaking of the pastoral office and not abstract as Walther does.

“In this passage of the Apology it was remarked in passing that one can also recognize very clearly what those of old frequently understood by office of the ministry [*Predigtamt*], namely, that they often took “office of the ministry” as entirely synonymous with “gospel.” The Apology does not have Grabau’s understanding according to which the office of the ministry [*Predigtamt*] is always equivalent to the office of pastor [*Pfarramt*]. . . . No, when our old teachers ascribe such great things to the office of the ministry, they thereby mean nothing else than the service of the Word [*den Dienst des Wortes*] in whatever way [*Weise*] it may come to us.” C.F.W. Walther, “The True Visible Church,” in *Essays for the Church*, 102.

“Of course, when the Buffalo Synod speaks of the holy ministry, it does not understand the office as such, or the communicated Gospel, but always the parish ministry, or the ministry insofar as pastors occupy it. And when the Buffalo people say also this: ‘The congregation does not have the keys immediately, but mediately—in the Word of God’—this antithesis is clear nonsense. It is the same as if one were to say: I have the power to dispense my money, not immediately, but mediately—in my money. The symbolical books of our church, on the contrary, set up the exact opposite of that Buffalo antithesis, and say: ‘Even as the promise of the Gospel is certain, and without means, that is, immediately belongs to the entire church, because the keys are nothing else than the ministry, through which this promise—is communicated.’” Walther, *The Congregation’s Right*, 32.

“It has already been mentioned once that when the Buffaloes speak of the h. ministry, they always mean the

spiritual judgment....When the congregation confers an essential part of the ministry [*Predigtamt*], then it *virtualiter* [virtually, in effect] confers the whole of it, only with the provision to attend to the designated part alone....There are, however, services which are indeed necessary in the church for her governance and therefore belong to the ministry [*Predigtamt*] in the wider sense, which however do not necessarily involve the bearing of the office in the narrow sense; therefore such auxiliary services may be rendered also by such as do not thereby become entitled also to exercise the office of the Word and the sacraments....We know now that someone who has to attend to an essential part of the office of the Word can do that only because the whole office of the Word has been conferred upon him; he thus really occupies the ministry [*Predigtamt*].... The offices of councillors [*Vorsteher*], elders, almoners, schoolteacher, sextons, and cantors in our congregations are therefore all to be regarded as holy, churchly offices.... But they by no means involve the bearing of the ministry [*Predigtamt*] in the narrow sense.⁶⁵

There were detractors of the teaching that the schoolteacher is a helping office making it subordinate to the pastor. C.A.T. Selle⁶⁶ believed that the office of the schoolteacher, in teaching the Word of God, exercised an essential duty of the office of the pastor.⁶⁷ In order for the schoolteacher to teach the Word of God, he must have a call and also the office in totality or a

pastors, by no means only the Word of God, which is in use! They rather consider this Word of God so powerless without a pastor, that they e.g. write in the second Synodalbrief: ‘They (the Missourians) erroneously assert on the basis of Hebr. 4:12, that the Word of God in the Lord’s Supper has the power, also without the ministry, to make the sacrament.’” Walther, *The Congregation’s Right*, 48.

⁶⁵ E. W. Kaehler, “Hat die Gemeinde das Recht, ordentlicher Weise einen wesentlichen Theil des ehilgen Predigtamtes irgent einem Laien temporär zu übertragen?” *Lehre und Wehre*, 20, 9, 11, 12 [Sept., Nov., Dec. 1874]: 261, 331, 334, 336), cited in Kurt E Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (Fort Wayne, IN: International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 144. See also, E.W. Kaehler “Does a Congregation Ordinarily Have the Right Temporarily to Commit an Essential Part of the Holy Preaching Office to a Layman?” *Logia* 6, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 1997): 37–43.

⁶⁶ Christian August Thomas Selle was born in 1819 in Gelting, Schleswig, Germany. On September 2, 1837, after serving as a teacher in Germany, Selle came to the United States and landed in Baltimore, Maryland. Selle became pastor at a church in West Newton, Pennsylvania (as a member of the Ohio Synod). His knowledge of Lutheran doctrine was sparse but he came into contact with Dr. Sihler and Pastor Wyneken and they instructed him in Lutheran doctrine. As a consequence he left the Ohio Synod. In 1846 he became pastor of a congregation in Chicago. It was at this church, a year later, that representatives met and formed The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (formerly known as the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States). In 1861, Seele accepted a call as second professor at the Teacher’s Seminary, which was located at Fort Wayne, Indiana and then moved to Addison, Illinois in 1864. He assisted in editing the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Schulblatt* (Evangelical Lutheran School Journal), a monthly magazine for teachers, and he served as vice-president of the orphan’s home in Addison. See Christian Encyclopedia, “Selle, Christian August Thomas” (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000). <http://encyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=S&word=SELLE.CHRISTIANAUGUSTTHOMAS>.

⁶⁷ C. A. T. Selle, “Das Amt des Pastors’ als Schulaufseher” *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt* 4 (January 1869) no. 5.

special branch of the public preaching office. Thus, the schoolteacher administers an essential part of the public preaching office.

In this line of thinking, the *Predigtamt* (in the abstract sense, meaning the Word of God and not the pastor) is the highest office in the church and all offices, including the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*), flow from the *Predigtamt*. The pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) publicly exercises all the essential duties of the *Predigtamt*. Since the office of schoolteacher does not flow from the pastoral office but from the *Predigtamt*, the office of schoolteacher, when teaching the Word of God, is understood to exercise an essential duty of the *Predigtamt* (the office of the Word).

In 1948 the Board of Education reported that “the office of the teacher, like that of the pastor, is a branch of the general ministry, or of the one office, which Christ instituted.”⁶⁸ In 1949, August C. Stellhorn, Secretary of Schools for the Missouri Synod, delivered an essay to the Educational Conference at Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska in which he stated that the *Predigtamt* includes not only pastors but also parochial teachers.⁶⁹ The discussion culminated in a resolution at the synodical convention in 1953.

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod define the status of the parochial school teacher as follows:

1. The regularly called parochial school teacher, who has been duly elected and called for full-time service in the church to perform specific functions of the public ministry, is a

⁶⁸ See “The Status of the Lutheran Male Teacher,” November 1948, Board of Parish Education Files, III.I-T,0549, Box 52, File 5, 8, St. Louis, Concordia Historical Institute.

⁶⁹ A.C. Stellhorn, “The Lutheran Teacher’s Position in the Ministry of the Congregation,” Board of Parish Education of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, July 7–8, 1949. See also A. C. Stellhorn, *Schools of the Lutheran Church*, 465; on page 461 Stellhorn writes, “It is clear from Holy Scripture that the Lord has established the public ministry, but it is also clear that this ministry embraces more than the pastorate. It includes the offices of all those who have been called or appointed by the church to carry out the spiritual functions of the church in its behalf—pastors, professors, teachers, and administrators;” and A. C. Mueller, *The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 80. Mueller states that “*Predigtamt* is here general for the office or ministry of all who teach the word.”

In 1948-1951 there was much discussion in Synod regarding whether the *Pfarramt* is the one divinely instituted office or whether the *Predigtamt*, in the abstract, is the one divinely instituted office with the *Pfarramt* being a branch of that office. See H. G. Brueggemann, “The Public Ministry in the Apostolic Age,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 22, no. 2 (1951): 81–109. See also Elmer J. Moeller, “Concerning the Ministry of the Church,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 22, no. 6 (1951): 385–416.

“minister of Christian education” and therefore is properly classified under the official categories used by our Government—“ministers of the Gospel” and “ministers of religion.” These designations are also properly applied to those who are officially appointed to similar positions.

Such a call is a divine call since it embraces a function of the public ministry of the Word, is issued by the congregation, and is concerned primarily with the teaching of God’s Word. Accordingly the regularly called parochial school teacher belongs to the clergy of the Church.

2. The properly appointed woman teacher in a Lutheran school is also a participant in the public ministry of the Word and should be respected as such. She should have qualifications similar to those of the regular male teacher.... Hers is a sacred calling, differing in its scope from the call of the male teacher or pastor, since she is subject to the restrictions imposed upon the members of her sex by Scripture (1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:11, 12). Her calling may also differ in tenure, since she is free to withdraw from her professional responsibilities to enter the estate of matrimony.⁷⁰

In 1964, Arnold C. Mueller⁷¹ expressed disagreement with Walther. For Walther, the *Predigtamt* is the highest office in the church. Since the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) exercises publicly all the essential duties of the *Predigtamt*, the pastoral office “must of necessity be the highest in the Church.”⁷² Mueller did not believe that the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) is the highest office in the church. He taught that the *Predigtamt* is the highest office and that all offices, including the *Pfarramt*, are equal branches of the highest office.

Walther’s Thesis 8 on the ministry has caused confusion because it leads most readers to think of the pastorate as the highest office. The term ‘highest office’ as used in the Apology does not mean the pastorate but the office or ministry of all who teach or preach the Word, for the contrast is between *church ceremonies*, which are secondary, and *preaching or teaching*, which is primary. The term ‘highest office’ our confessors drew from Luther, who stressed the proclamation of the word and condemned the practice of very nearly supplanting the preaching of the Word with ceremonies. All functions of the ministry are embraced in the ministry of teaching and preaching, but this does not mean that all functions of the ministry derive from

⁷⁰ *Proceedings*, 1953, 323–324. See also Daniel S. Johnson, “The Ministry and the Schoolmaster: The Relation and Distinction between the Offices of Pastor and Teacher in the Missouri Synod,” *Logia*, 6, no. 3 (Holy Trinity, 1997): 13–22.

⁷¹ Arnold C. Mueller (1891–1980) served as pastor in Ontario, Canada, Pennsylvania and Indiana. He served as a member of the LCMS’ Central District Mission Board from 1929–1932 and the LCMS’ Sunday school editor from 1933–1966. One of his prominent works was *The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher: A Study to Determine the Position of the Lutheran Parish School Teacher Within the Public Ministry of the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964).

⁷² Walther, *Church & The Office*, 284–85.

the pastorate. The pastorate is not the ministry itself, but, like the position of the teacher, it is one of the forms which the ministry assumes. The term *Predigtamt* (office of the ministry) came to be used synonymously with the term *Pfarramt* (pastorate) because the pastor is commissioned above all things to use the Word in preaching, teaching, administering the sacraments, and in other ways. Walther had a high respect for the position of the Christian teacher, for he called it a 'sacred position' and 'a part of the one office of the church.' Walther's term 'auxiliary office' (position) should be avoided because it suggests that the position of the teacher is subordinate to that of pastor, whereas the ministry of teaching and the ministry of preaching (pastorate) are equal branches or forms of one divinely instituted office of the ministry.⁷³

Since the prominent thought was that the teaching office and the pastoral office were both seen as flowing from the *Predigtamt*, in 1965, the synodical convention directed the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to study the matter of ordaining teachers. In its 1973 report the commission stated that they found no reason why teachers could not be ordained "to perform that function of the Ministry to which they are called." The ordination to the office of teaching the Word could be approved by Synod because it was different than the ordination of women to the pastoral office. The Synod did not act on the recommendation of the CTCR.⁷⁴

In situations where a congregation was temporarily without a pastor, or where the pastor was ill, the teacher could assume the duties of the pastor.⁷⁵ For the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), this was not sufficient to classify teachers as ministers. In 1983 the Synod needed to clarify the status of teachers in response to an IRS ruling that individuals (ordained and commissioned) needed to be "in ministry" in order to be classified as a "minister of the Gospel" under tax law. To address the concern of the IRS, the Synod passed a resolution that male

⁷³ Mueller, *Ministry of The Lutheran Teacher*, 100. See also August Pieper, "Die Lehre von der Kirche und ihre Kennzeichen," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 9, no.2 (1944), 86; and "Die Lehre vom heiligen Predigtamt," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 9, no. 3, (1944), 149.

⁷⁴ Samuel F. Nafzger, "The CTCR Report on 'The Ministry,'" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April 1983): 98-99.

⁷⁵ Fred L. Kuhlmann, *Supplemental Brief on the Appeal of the Ruling in the Eggen Case*, Board for Parish Education Files, III.1-T.0549, Box 52, File 5, p. 20, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis. See also, Mueller, *Ministry of The Lutheran Teacher*, 145; Stellhorn, *Schools of the Lutheran Church*, 467.

teachers are “ministers of religion.”⁷⁶

The Congregation’s Right To Choose Its Pastor

Citing Luther, Walther writes that all Christians are given the means of grace and have the duty and right to use them. However, this does not mean that all Christians are pastors. Rather the pastor administers the means of grace publicly and the common Christian administers them privately. “Therefore the office itself, which the pastor, and which every true Christian has, is entirely the same, only the manner of exercising and using it is different.”⁷⁷ For Walther, all Christians exercise the *Predigtamt* (or *Amt des Wortes/ministerium Verbi*) privately. The pastor exercises the *Predigtamt* (or *Amt des Wortes/ministerium Verbi*) publicly which is called the *Pfarramt* or the public *Predigtamt*. Walther never appealed to Melancthon as a layman as a reason for the laity to exercise the means of grace. Even though Walther taught that all Christians held the *Predigtamt* and are to exercise it privately, he understood that Melancthon was not a layman.⁷⁸

Luther does not teach that all Christians individually have the means of grace and are to exercise them. When Walther refers to Luther, the context is that Luther is writing against the

⁷⁶ *Proceedings* (1983), Res. 5–09A, “To Classify Ministers of Religion,” 178–80. “RESOLVED, that only those duly ordained pastors and duly commissioned male teachers who are listed on the Synod’s official membership rosters shall be regarded by the Synod as qualifying as “ministers of the church” or similar titles for purposes of United States income taxes, social security (FICA and self-employment taxes), unemployment taxes and selective service.”

⁷⁷ Walther, *Congregation’s Right*, 124–26. Translation of: *Das Gemeindewahlrecht*, originally published serially in v. 17 of *Der Lutheraner*, Sept. 1860–Aug. 1861. On p. 136, Walther states, “For although Pastor Grabau does not ascribe the power of the ministerial office [*Predigtamtsgewalt*] to the pope alone, he nevertheless, like the pope, denies it to believing Christians, and ascribes it solely to bishops or pastors, and therein goes even farther than the pope, in that instead of the one bishop of Rome he makes all pastors popes.” See also Walther, *Church & the Office*, 151, 264. Cf. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:439; “Ministry in the wide sense signifies every type of proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments, whether performed by all Christians, to whom the Gospel or the means of grace are given and commanded originally and immediately or by the chosen public servants at the behest of the Christians.”

⁷⁸ See Appendix One for discussion regarding Melancthon being a pastor and not a layman.

Roman Catholic understanding of a “special priesthood” through ordination. Luther emphasizes that the task of the *Predigtamt*, of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, is carried out by a common Christian, not someone with an indelible character, who is called to that office. The duties of the office are the common right of each Christian but each Christian may not exercise those duties of the office unless they have been called to the office. “It is of the common rights of Christians that we have been speaking. For since we have proved all of these things to be the common property of all Christians, no one individual can arise by his own authority and arrogate to himself alone what belongs to all.”⁷⁹

If each Christian already has the office, as Walther insists, then there would be no need to arrogate it to themselves as Luther mentions.

“That is, in the New Testament all Christians that worship God shall be sacred, consecrated, and fit for the priestly office, so that henceforth there will be no difference between the consecrated and the unconsecrated, because they all have been consecrated with the Spirit of Christ.... This means: They shall be priests and sacred through and through; and even though they are not in the office and service, they are nevertheless consecrated to them.”⁸⁰

“You also lie that I have made all laymen bishops, priests, and spiritual in such a way that they may exercise the office without a call. But, as godly as you are, you conceal the fact that I added that no one should undertake this office without a call unless it be an extreme emergency,”⁸¹

Walther was confronted with Luther’s exposition of Ps. 110 which states that the pastor and other Christians do not have the same office. For “having been born a priest through

⁷⁹ “Concerning the Ministry,” in *LW* 40:34.

⁸⁰ “Zechariah 1517,” *LW* 20:346–47.

⁸¹ “Dr. Luther’s Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen,” in *LW* 39:174.

Baptism, a man thereupon receives the office [*Ampf*]; and this is what makes a difference between him and other Christians.”⁸² Walther believes Luther is speaking of the public preaching office that the pastor exercises (*Pfarramt* or *Predigtamt in concreto*) and not the “office on the whole,” or Word of God (*Predigtamt in abstracto* or *Amt des Wortes*) which all Christians exercise.⁸³ Walther chastises the Buffalo Synod for not making this distinction. “Of course when the Buffalo Synod speaks of the holy ministry [*Predigtamt*], it does not understand the office as such [*Amt überhaupt*], or the communicated Gospel [*mitgetheilte Evangelium*], but always the parish ministry [*Pfarramt*], or the ministry [*Predigtamt*] insofar as pastors [*Pastoren*] occupy it.” Again, he writes, “It has already been mentioned once that when the Buffaloes speak of the holy ministry [*Predigtamt*], they always mean the pastors [*Pastoren*], by no means only the Word of God, which is in use!”⁸⁴

In his treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, Luther writes,

Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by

⁸² “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:332. WA 41:210. See also “To the Christian Nobility,” in *LW* 44:127.

⁸³ Walther, *Congregation’s Right*, 127–32. See also Walther, *Church & the Office*, 169; Cf. J. M. Rohne, *Norwegian American Lutheranism up to 1872* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 174–78, “The Office of the Ministry is therefore not to be regarded as a private privilege, which alone belongs to the minister of the Gospel, but is a common privilege belonging to all the members of the Church.... it is apparent that every Christian not only has the office of the ministry, but that he also, if he at all wishes to be a Christian, must perform its duties.”

⁸⁴ Walther, *Congregation’s Right*, 32, 48. The Lutheran Fathers chose the word *Predigtamt* in order to defend against the errors both of Rome and of the Enthusiasts. Against Rome, who centered the church on the person of the priest with the “indelible character,” *Predigtamt* served to focus on the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Rome had bound the church to the pope or the bishops. Lutherans confessed that the church is the assembly bound to the preaching of the Gospel and the correct use of the sacraments. Cf. F. Bente, ed., *Concordia Triglotta: the Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 506; Tr., par. 11, in Kolb and Wengert, 331: “V. 1 Kor. 3, 6 macht Paulus alle Kirchendiener gleich und lehrt, daß die Kirche mehr sei denn die Diener.”)

Against the Enthusiasts who think the Holy Spirit comes to human beings through their own works, Lutherans confessed that the Holy Spirit comes to human beings through the external Word or the ministry that proclaims the Word of the Gospel. In both instances, it is the Gospel that is the central focus but that Gospel comes through the divinely established office—the *Predigtamt*, which is Christ’s Priestly Office. See Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 685–86, 693–96, 698, 702, 704–5; see also *CA* V:41 in Kolb and Wengert, 48.

the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.)⁸⁵

For Luther, the preaching office belongs to all Christians in common so no one ought to exercise it (publicly or privately) unless he is called to it. In contrast, Walther teaches that the preaching office is given not to all in common but to each Christian individually. Each Christian is to exercise it privately, whereas the public exercise of the preaching office is only done by one who is called to the office.⁸⁶

In addition to the laity being bearers of helping offices to the pastor which carry out non-essential duties of the pastoral office, or the laity and pastors holding offices which are equal branches of the highest office (*Predigtamt*), another train of thought regarding the laity had been fermenting in the Synod. The Synod did not renounce the doctrine of vocation—that a Christian serves God in the stations of everyday life, but they dealt with it in a cursory or casual manner so that it was not perceived as a helpful way of explaining the duties of the laity. The understanding from early in the twentieth century that the church should be separate from the world was still prevalent. This meant that jobs, secular clubs, labor unions, and political parties were competitors for the time of the laity rather than stations where the laity are active and serve God.⁸⁷

The 1960s brought about a change in how the Synod viewed the interaction between the

⁸⁵ “The Misuse of the Mass,” in *LW* 36:116. See also Marquart, *Church and Her Fellowship*, 118.

⁸⁶ Walther, *Congregation's Right*, 127–132. See Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:439; “The term ‘ministry’ [*Predigtamt*] is used both in Scripture and by the Church in a general, or wider, and in a special, or narrower, sense. In the wider sense it embraces every form of preaching the Gospel or administering the means of grace, whether by Christians in general, as originally entrusted with the means of grace and commissioned to apply them, or by chosen public servants (*ministri ecclesiae*) in the name and at the command of Christians.”

Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 699; “Nor does the general calling which all receive in Baptism suffice to give a person the office of the ministry [*ministerium*], but there is required a special call, as has been shown in the preceding, testimonies, cf. James 3:1.”

⁸⁷ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 166.

church and the world and how the church would address social concerns with members of society. In society, there was a strong trend for addressing social issues and in the church there were the strong influences of the ecumenical movement, Vatican II, and various Protestant proposals for the church to engage societal concerns, all of which brought about changing attitudes in the Synod toward the world. In 1962, Synod delegates authorized a synodical Commission on Social Action to draft guidelines on how the church should address social concerns. At the 1965 synodical convention, Martin L. Kretzmann⁸⁸ presented a synodically commissioned report on ways of structuring the church for missions which reflected the reformulation of the definition of the laity as the embodiment of the church in the world and the agent of the church's mission.⁸⁹

The 1965 Mission Affirmations were a source of contention in the Synod. After overtures were submitted at several synodical conventions (1967, 1971 1973) regarding the "improper interpretation and use" and "serious ambiguity" of the affirmations, The Commission On Theology And Church Relations was tasked to address the concerns in a report in order to clarify the mission affirmations. In clarifying they continued the emphasis on the laity as the agents of the church's mission.

We affirm also that every Christian is a missionary through Holy Baptism.... We, in accord with the affirmations, deplore any kind of clericalism that "views a congregation primarily as God's instrument to sustain the ordained ministry," thus undervaluing the variety of gifts which the Holy Spirit has given His people to serve

⁸⁸ Martin Luther Kretzmann (1906–2000) spent thirty years as a missionary in India. In 1963 the Board of Directors of the LCMS authorized a mission self-study and asked Kretzmann to conduct the study. After two years, his work was presented in six Mission Affirmations to Synod at Detroit in July 1965 and they were adopted. Kretzmann served on the Board for Missions beginning in 1966. In 1972 he served in the Commission on Mission and Ministry in the Church. See Herbert T. Mayer, "Structure and Mission," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 42, no. 10 (1972): 643–44.

⁸⁹ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 174.

the body of Christ. We deplore the laicism that chafes under the shepherding by which a loving God seeks to equip His children for His mission.⁹⁰

Already in 1949, Richard R. Caemmerer spoke against the subordination of the laity to the clergy in evangelistic work.⁹¹ He had already addressed this topic in the 1930s but his audience was unreceptive even throughout the 50s. In the 60s, the winds had shifted in the Synod and Caemmerer found a receptive audience as he used Eph. 4:11–13 to teach that the laity were not the assistants to the ordained but vice versa. The role of the pastor is to equip the laymen to do the work of the church since the laymen are the church.⁹²

Caemmerer was concerned that the laity are involved in the church but their motivation is not the Gospel. They take care of the finances, socialize, invite other people to join, and take care of the payroll. These activities serve as a change of pace and escape from the routine of the job and family but the intentions for doing these activities are not the “impulses of Jesus Christ,” rather they are driven by the same interests which they have in any social or civic group. As a consequence, the laymen cease to be the church. A second concern for him is that the activities of the church are limited to the paid church workers so the laity begin to think that the work of the church is done by professional workers and the task of the laity is to financially support those workers. Thus, for Caemmerer, when this happens the church ceases to be the laity.⁹³

⁹⁰ “The Mission of the Christian Church in the World: A Review of the 1965 Mission Affirmations,” Commission On Theology And Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1974.

⁹¹ Richard R. Caemmerer, *The Church in the World* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 81, 96. See his column, “We Look at the World,” begun in 1942 in the *Lutheran Witness*. Caemmerer served as professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis from 1940–1974. Similar comments are made by John Strietelmeier, *Lutheran Witness* 71 (May 27, 1952), 4–5, and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Lutheran Witness* 70 (1951), 126–27. See also Martin Marty, “The Church in the World,” in *The Lively Function of the Gospel: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Caemmerer on Completion of 25 Years as Professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis*, ed. Robert Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), 133–48.

⁹² Richard R. Caemmerer, *Feeding and Leading* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 38.

⁹³ Richard R. Caemmerer, “The Church Is Laymen,” *Lutheran Witness* (June 3, 1947), 177.

Caemmerer's solution to defining the laity is to emphasize that all Christians are priests. As priests they are connected with God and are able to give witness to God to people who do not know him. Their daily task is to "hand on the life of Christ" to their neighbor. Their job is "putting Christ into people and making Him grow there."⁹⁴ Since the laymen are the church, the pastor is to equip them to carry out the mission of the church.

In contrast to Caemmerer, Elliott believed that the priesthood of believers was being used to emphasize the involvement of laity in the church and Elliott saw this as hindering the work of the laity in their stations in daily life. In reaction to the work of Yves Congar,⁹⁵ Hendrik Kraemer,⁹⁶ and Cyril Eastwood,⁹⁷ he addressed the definition of the laity through the study of 1 Peter. His work dismissed on exegetical grounds the long-standing and "widespread theory" regarding the "royal or universal priesthood of all believers" which he perceived was stifling the laity. For Elliott, 1 Peter did not teach a royal priesthood, as in each Christian is a priest, but rather that there is a collective priesthood or community. He taught that 1 Peter presents the laity as a "celebrating community" or "covenant community" which is bound together in service to and in the world.⁹⁸

Elliott was concerned regarding the prevailing thought in Synod, that Luther taught that the duties of the priesthood are the same as the duties of the pastoral office—the proclamation of the

⁹⁴ Caemmerer, "Church Is Laymen," 177.

⁹⁵ Congar, *Lay People*, 1965.

⁹⁶ Kraemer, *Theology of the Laity*, 1958.

⁹⁷ C. Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers; an Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962).

⁹⁸ John Hall Elliott, "Death of a Slogan : From Royal Priests to Celebrating Community," *Una Sancta* 25, no. 3 (January 1, 1968): 18–31. John Hall Elliott, *Doxology: God's People Called to Celebrate His Glory: A Biblical Study of 1 Peter in 10 Parts* (Lutheran Laymen's League, 1966). Elliott served as assistant professor of exegetical theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1963–1967.

Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.⁹⁹ Elliott speaks contrary to the idea that the role of the pastor and of the priesthood are the same. He believes this is a misunderstanding of the priesthood which hinders the role of the priesthood. As a result he advocates for the death of the slogan “royal priesthood.”

The history of the development and use of this notion of the universal priesthood, at least in its post-reformation phase, is for the most part, a history of Christians turning in upon themselves, exulting in their individual rights and privileges, extolling the equality of sheep and shepherd, and disregarding all too frequently their common responsibility toward the world from which they envisioned themselves separated.”¹⁰⁰

Elliott teaches that the text of 1 Peter, has nothing to do with the notion of kings and priests and that baptism is not the “coronation to kingship” and the “ordination to priesthood.” Instead, the text focuses upon election and holiness and the proclamation of God’s saving deeds as a witness to the world. For Elliott, the “doctrine of the universal priesthood generally has been of concern to a Church which has turned in upon itself.”¹⁰¹

Following in Caemmerer’s footsteps, Elliot advances the idea that the church is the laymen and they are to do the church’s work. Whereas Caemmerer taught that the laity serve in the church, Elliot believes the laity serve in the world. He described the church as a “community charged with celebrating God’s presence in the midst of the world.”¹⁰² Christians are called into a holy community for the purpose of glorifying God in the world. Their responsibility in their daily living is to proclaim God’s saving deeds as a witness to the world.

By 1969, disagreements within the Synod remained on three issues: “the doctrine of the

⁹⁹ Elliott, “Death of a Slogan,” 19–20.

¹⁰⁰ Elliott, “Death of a Slogan,” 19–20.

¹⁰¹ Elliott, “Death of a Slogan,” 24–25.

¹⁰² Elliott, “Death of a Slogan,” 30. See also Elliott, *Doxology*, ” 24, 26–27.

Word; the nature of the mission of the people of God; and the quest for fellowship.”¹⁰³ The discussion regarding the laity and their duties was dissipating, even though the issues were not resolved. Concern about the laity and their duties was perceived as not being as important when the understanding of Biblical authority was at stake.¹⁰⁴

Oscar Feucht

Oscar Feucht served as pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church (Kansas City, Missouri), from 1925 to 1945. In 1946 he was appointed Secretary of Adult Education for the Missouri Synod Board of Parish Education. In the 1970s he stoked the fire regarding the definition and duties of the laity with his popular book, *Everyone a Minister*.

Everyone a Minister

After World War II, many adult converts were joining the Synod and this created a need for instruction in the faith. Feucht served as the Synod’s Secretary of Adult Education so he sought to establish Bible Institutes to equip the laity for work in the church. His efforts culminated in the organization of the Lutheran Lay Training Institute, in 1961, at Concordia College, Milwaukee.¹⁰⁵

During the turmoil of the early 1970s regarding Biblical authority, Oscar Feucht sought to rekindle the discussion regarding the laity and their role. In 1974 he published a book, *Everyone a Minister*, in which he defined the church as a “ministerium of all who have Christ in their

¹⁰³ Herbert T. Mayer, “Editorial: The Task Ahead,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (1969): 527.

¹⁰⁴ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 206.

¹⁰⁵ Graebner, *Uncertain Saints*, 162, 164–65. See Boubel, “Lay Ministry Handbook,” 3–5.

hearts.”¹⁰⁶ Feucht was influenced by Cyril Eastwood,¹⁰⁷ Hendrik Kraemer,¹⁰⁸ and many leaders from various denominations, and he notes that their core principle was “the priesthood of every believer” when articulating the laity as the ministers of the mission of the church.¹⁰⁹ He cites William Dallmann¹¹⁰ as evidence that all Christians are ministers. All Christians are priests and therefore all Christians are the clergy of God. The duty of the pastor is to train the laity to be the clergy of the church’s mission to the world. “The Old Testament distinction between priest and people, clergymen and laymen, is at an end. Christ, our High Priest, has made all Christians priests before God. All Christians are God’s clergy, and there is no special clerical order in the church. The ministry is an office, not an order, much less a threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons.”¹¹¹

Feucht picks up the torch from Caemmerer and draws upon Eph. 4:11–12 to demonstrate that the church is the laity and they are to carry out the mission of the church. As such the pastor becomes the trainer or equipper of the laity enabling them to do the work of the church.

Pastors and Christian teachers are supplied to equip all of God’s people for their ministry in whatever station they are in life and in all areas of life. Ephesians 4:11–12 gives us a basic directive. Today’s English Version puts it well: “It was He [Christ] who ‘gave gifts to men’; He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, to build up the body of Christ.” In plain English, this means the pastor’s role is not merely to “keep” people with Christ

¹⁰⁶ Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 8. On p. 83 he defines the church as “all of God’s people in ministry sharing the Gospel with people of all nations.... All of God’s people belong to the New Testament ‘ministerium.’ The word ‘minister’ is usually equated with ‘clergy.’ It is *not* so in the Bible. In Scripture it is closely linked to the Greek word *diakonia*, this may be translated ‘service’ or ‘ministry.’ And it is by no means restricted to what a pastor does in a church building.”

¹⁰⁷ Eastwood, *Priesthood of All Believers*.

¹⁰⁸ Kraemer, *Theology of the Laity*.

¹⁰⁹ Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 25–40.

¹¹⁰ William Dallman, “Justification by Faith,” in *Four Hundred Years: Commemorative Essays on the Reformation of Dr. Martin Luther and Its Blessed Results*, ed. W.H.T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia, 1917), 291.

¹¹¹ Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 34, 64.

but to “develop” them for Christ’s service in the church and in the world. Whether he knows it or not, a pastor is the “head” of a “seminary,” a training school for workers....The term pastor-director is perhaps most suitable. The New Testament emphasizes the servant role. Above all he is to be an enabler, and equipper of God’s people for their ministry wherever they are in life, in the church and in the world.”¹¹²

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the language of “everyone a minister” has been engulfed by the language of “everyone a missionary” or “missional” language.¹¹³ The language of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry,” is being replaced with “equipping the laity to be in mission.” Every Christian has a mission. The focus of the church or the specific task of the pastor is to train the laity to be the agents or missionaries for the church’s mission to the world.

In 1983 the Synod in convention adopted a three-category classification of full-time church workers: Minister of Religion, Ordained; Minister of Religion, Commissioned; and Certified Professional Church Worker, Lay. In the resolution that was passed, one “*Resolved*” states, “That the Synod declare emphatically that both ‘Ministers of Religion, Ordained’ and ‘Ministers of Religion, Commissioned’ are regarded fully by the Synod as ministers of religion, entitled to be regarded as such by all, in recognition of the fact, that even though the functions between and

¹¹² Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 96–97. Charles Arand has a helpful summary of this change in the role of the pastor. “Much of this was due to a renewed emphasis on the importance of mobilizing the priesthood of the baptized for that mission of the church. In the process, pastors came to be seen less as “curers of souls” or mouthpieces for God and more as counselors, managers, coaches, leaders, administrators, spiritual guides, and the like.” Charles P. Arand, “The Ministry of the Church in Light of the Two Kinds of Righteousness,” *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 344. The Lutheran Fathers understood Eph. 4:12 as speaking not of all Christians but of the persons who hold the pastoral office. “All believers are spiritual priests; yet they are not all straightway teachers or prophets since not all have been equipped with the gift of prophecy, nor have they been called to the ministry of the church. Eph. 4:11[–12]: “He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as teachers and shepherds for the work of the ministry;” Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, 91. See also Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 392; and Tr., par. 67, in Kolb and Wengert, 341. For Luther’s translation of Eph. 4:12, see Mosemann, “Whose Ministry Is it?” 48–59.

¹¹³ See Larry C. Merino and Jeanne M. Burger, *Everyone a Missionary: Discovering Your Place in God’s Mission* (Precedent, 2007). See also, Marvin Bergman, ed., “Missional Lutheran Education,” *Issues in Christian Education* Vol. 43, No. 2 (Spring 2010), 3–28; *Proceedings*, 2004, Resolution 1–01A: “To Affirm Mission 21st Century Response to Great Commission,” 119; *Proceedings*, 2004, Resolution 1–02: “To Promote ‘Mission Outpost’ Attitude,” 120; Resolution 5–09: “To Affirm District Programs that Equip Laity for Ministry,” 143.

within these two categories may differ, all these functions contribute vitally to discharging the office of the public ministry.”¹¹⁴

At that time, the Bylaws of the Synod provided for the licensing of certain laymen “for special Word and Sacrament ministry, under the supervision of ordained pastors.”¹¹⁵ A Lay Worker Study Committee was appointed and given the task by the President of the Synod to study the scriptural and ecclesiastical rationale for lay ministry.¹¹⁶ The committee reported to the 1989 synodical convention which adopted the recommendations of the committee. This meant that a licensed lay deacon could perform pastoral duties when no ordained pastor was available. The understanding of the committee was that a pastor may delegate duties of the pastoral office to “other ordained or commissioned ministers, consecrated lay workers, or lay leaders.”¹¹⁷

The 1992 synodical convention reversed the direction of the 1989 decision by providing for the “ordination for certain laymen involved in word and sacrament ministry,”¹¹⁸ and the 1995 Synodical Convention adopted a procedure for such ordinations.¹¹⁹ At the 2001 synodical convention there was another reversal of direction when a resolution was adopted to return to the

¹¹⁴ *Proceedings*, 1983 Res. 5–09A: “To Classify Ministers of Religion,” 178–80.

¹¹⁵ *Handbook*, 1983 Bylaw 6.97 f.

¹¹⁶ *Proceedings*, 1989, 69. For a historical overview of the practice of lay ministry in the LCMS see Luecke, “Lay Leadership Education in the LCMS Today,” 6–11.

¹¹⁷ *Proceedings*, 1989, “Resolution 3–05B: To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended.” The report of the Lay Worker Study Committee is found in *Proceedings*, 1989, 69–73. See also, “Alive in Christ—the Ministry of the Laity,” in *Proceedings*, 1986, 93-95. *Proceedings*, 1989, 71; “Under his [the pastor] spiritual supervision, various functions normally carried out by the one who holds the office of public ministry may be delegated to and carried out by other ordained or commissioned ministers, consecrated lay workers, or lay leaders.”

¹¹⁸ *Proceedings*, 1992, “Resolution 3–08: To Provide for Ordination of Certain Laymen Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry.”

¹¹⁹ *Proceedings*, 1995, “Resolution 3–07A: To Establish the Procedure by Which Laymen licensed to Perform Functions of the Pastoral Office Be Called and Ordained into the Ministerium of the LCMS,” 121. One of the “Resolved” says: “That any layman who is licensed to perform pastoral functions under the guidelines of said Res. 3–05B be required (if he wishes to continue preaching and leading in public worship) to apply for admission into the pastoral ministry of the Synod in accordance with the following process....”

position of the 1989 synodical convention on the basis that the 1995 resolution did not work. The 2016 synodical convention made another change. Any lay deacons who carry out the tasks of ordained ministers should seek a path to ordination.¹²⁰ In addition, the 2001 synodical convention had adopted a resolution to phase out the classification of non-rostered church workers called “Certified Church Workers, Lay” or “Consecrated Lay Workers.” Only two categories of classification for the church workers in the LCMS remained, ordained and commissioned.¹²¹ Currently, the Directory of Church Workers of the LCMS lists several categories of commissioned church workers. They are Director of Christian Education, Director of Christian Outreach, Deaconess, Director of Family Life Ministry, Director of Parish Music, Lay Minister, Parish Assistant, and Teacher.¹²²

Luther and the Term “Christian”

Luther teaches that Christ is the Priest, has the one and only priestly office, and has fulfilled all three duties of his priestly office: to preach, to sacrifice, and to pray. Christ continues to exercise his priestly office before God as the Mediator and Advocate of sinners.¹²³ There is only one priestly office which belongs to Christ. The duties of the office are Christ’s priestly duties.

In contrast to these, Christ truly fulfills the office of a priest by proving in action and in power that He gives in reality all those things which those pictures symbolized and foreshadowed. By His Word and preaching He proclaims God’s grace and promises

¹²⁰ *Proceedings*, 2016, Resolution 13–02A “To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry”

¹²¹ *Proceedings*, 2001, “Resolution 3–08B: To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations,” 121, 139. One of the “Resolved” reads: “That the Synod authorize its districts to continue training lay deacons as directed by the spirit of the 1989 Wichita Res. 3–05B in which trained lay ministers serve under the supervision of an ordained pastor.” Another “Resolved” reads: “That this convention rescind 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3–07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete a seminary program for ordination).”

¹²² LCMS Church Worker Directory, http://locator.lcms.org/nworkers_fm/worker.asp.

¹²³ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:318–20; *WA* 41:184–90.

us the forgiveness of our sins. Thereby He bestows upon us the true priestly benediction. Furthermore, He has made the true priestly sacrifice for us, which has the power of reconciling God and of removing our sin from us. He also represents us before God with His intercessions in our behalf, so that we may continue in this reconciliation and grace and be preserved in it.

Christ's priestly office is the true and precious comfort for us poor and sinful people, as well as for all other burdened hearts. By this we see and hear that His kingdom on earth is not made up of superlative saints who are completely free from sin or perfectly holy. It is the function of the most exalted office which He exercises before God to deal with those who have weaknesses, frailties, and sins, and who therefore possess a shy, burdened, and disturbed conscience. He will not reject them or deal with them severely, measure for measure, with the threats and terrors of wrath and damnation. On the contrary, He seeks to attract and invite them in the most friendly, gentle, and pleasant manner to come to Him.¹²⁴

When the pope argues that he alone has the priestly office, Luther explains that it is a lie and blasphemy to teach that Christ has given away or transferred his priestly office as if Christ were no longer needed. The pope's argument contradicts Scripture, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:17 ESV). Christ is and remains the Priest or Mediator before God, whereby he preaches to us, sacrifices for us, and prays for us. He did not discard, abdicate, or transfer his priestly office to anyone else. "But He is the only one and He must be the only one, who brings us to God by His priestly office and shares the office with us. Just as we are all comforted and saved by the power of His priestly office, so all who are saved share in it, not merely St. Peter and the apostles, or the pope and the bishops."¹²⁵ In the Christian Church Christ rules as Priest through his priestly office, the holy ministry [*Predigtamt*], and the power of the Holy Spirit in order to give sinners his eternal and divine gifts, such as forgiveness of sins and eternal righteousness.¹²⁶

When Luther refers to the laity as priests, he means that all Christians have the same rights

¹²⁴ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:321; *WA* 41:191–92.

¹²⁵ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:330; *WA* 41:206–7.

¹²⁶ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:324; *WA* 41:195.

and power regarding the Gospel and the sacraments.¹²⁷ In his exposition of Ps. 110, Luther explicates the High Priesthood of Christ. He states that the duties of Christ's priestly office, the holy ministry [*Predigtamt*], are to teach, sacrifice, and pray—that is, to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. In other words, to be a priest means that each Christian has the right and authority to exercise Christ's priestly office, the holy ministry (*Predigtamt*). However, Luther is adamant that before a Christian attempts to do such priestly duties he must have the benefit of Christ's priestly office, that is, he must possess Christ's office by being called to Christ's priestly office.¹²⁸

Where there are no other Christians around who have the same rights, or in an emergency, a Christian may arrogate the office to himself and exercise Christ's priestly duties.¹²⁹ When a Christian arrogates the office unto himself, he is exercising the duties of Christ's priestly office and thus is exercising the pastoral office (the holy ministry). Therefore there is no such thing as a lay baptism or lay absolution. "Therefore, where the true church is, there must also be the right of choosing and ordaining ministers, just as in an emergency even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another. So Augustine tells the story of two Christians in a boat, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen) and then the latter, having been baptized,

¹²⁷ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:116, 324–32; *WA* 41:195–210; See also "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:55; "To the Christian Nobility," in *LW* 44:129; "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39:311.

¹²⁸ "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:332; *WA* 41:210. See "Dr. Luther's Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen," in *LW* 39, 233: "I, Martin Luther....in all my writings I never wanted more than that all Christians should be priests; yet not all should be consecrated by bishops, not all should preach, celebrate mass, and exercise the priestly office unless they have been appointed and called to do so. This was my final intention."

¹²⁹ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:334, 390–91; "To the Christian Nobility," in *LW* 44:128; see also "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7," in *LW* 28:277; 36:152. "It is, however, true that the Holy Spirit has excepted women, children, and incompetent people from this function, but chooses (except in emergencies) only competent males to fill this office....There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 [8], 'He received gifts among men.'" "On the Councils and the Church," in *LW* 41:154. Luther teaches that in an emergency any Christian may fill the office.

absolved the former.”¹³⁰

Writing against Roman Catholicism, Luther uses the example of baptism to explain that all Christians are priests which means that they may all exercise the preaching office or pastoral office (Christ’s priestly office) in an emergency.

The second function, to baptize, they themselves [papalists] have by usage allowed in cases of necessity even to ordinary women, so that it is hardly regarded any more as a sacramental function. Whether they wish or not we deduce from their own logic that all Christians, and they alone, even women, are priests, without tonsure and episcopal ‘character.’ For in baptizing we proffer the life-giving Word of God, which renews souls and redeems from death and sins. To baptize is incomparably greater than to consecrate bread and wine, for it is the greatest office in the church—the proclamation of the Word of God. So when women baptize, they exercise the function of priesthood [*sacerdotibus*] legitimately, and do it not as a private act, but as a part of the public ministry of the church [*publico et Ecclesiastico ministerio*] which belongs only to the priesthood [*sacerdotem*].¹³¹

Christ’s priestly office is of utmost importance even in an emergency, because it is through Christ’s office, or the Spirit with Christ’s office, by which God is working and thus Christians may be certain they are receiving God’s gifts. “Thus baptism is not a work that we offer to God, but one in which God, through a minister who functions in his place, baptizes us, and offers and presents the forgiveness of sins.”¹³²

¹³⁰ Tr., “Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops,” par. 67–68, in Kolb and Wengert, 341.

¹³¹ “Concerning the Ministry,” in *LW* 40:23; *WA* 12:181. It should be noted that the church has always had women pastors. Women are not called into the office (1 Cor. 14) but in an emergency, or when there are no Christians present, or where there are no men present among the Christians, women have exercised Christ’s priestly office or the pastoral office. “Therefore they are all priests. All may proclaim God’s Word, except that, as St. Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 14:34, women should not speak in the congregation. They should let the men preach, because God commands them to be obedient to their husbands. God does not interfere with the arrangement. But He makes no distinction in the matter of authority. If, however, only women were present and no men, as in nunneries, then one of the women might be authorized to preach,” “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30:55. See also Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, 271.

¹³² Ap XXIV.16–23 in Kolb and Wengert, 260–61. See also “The Gospel of St. John,” in *LW* 22:505; “Lectures on Titus,” in *LW* 29:82. “For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism does not belong to us but to Christ, that the gospel does not belong to us but to Christ, that the office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the sacrament [of the Lord’s Supper] does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, do not belong to us but to Christ. In summary, the offices and sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for he has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and he does not lie or deceive us. Therefore, we cannot make anything else out of it but must act

Luther explains that when a layman, not in an emergency, performs priestly tasks without being called and ordained, he does not thereby become a pastor but deceives himself and others. “If a layman should perform all the outward functions of a priest, celebrating Mass, confirming, absolving, administering the sacraments, dedicating altars, churches, vestments, vessels, etc., it is certain that these actions in all respects would be similar to those of a true priest, in fact, they might be performed more reverently and properly than the real ones. But because he has not been consecrated and ordained and sanctified, he performs nothing at all, but is only playing church and deceiving himself and his followers.”¹³³

Luther states that the priestly duties, preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, do not belong to the station of priest but to the holy ministry.¹³⁴ He states that the priestly duties are the common rights of Christians. Since they are common rights, no one individual may arrogate to himself what belongs to all. A Christian may exercise the rights or duties of Christ’s priestly office when they are called to His office. Where there is no one else who has the same rights or in time of emergency, they take Christ’s office unto themselves and

according to his command and hold to it. However, if we alter it or improve on it, then it is invalid and Christ is no longer present, nor is his ordinance;” “The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests,” in *LW* 38:200. “This ought especially to be taught, that confession is not made to man but to Christ. Likewise it isn’t man who absolves but Christ. But few understand this. Today I replied to the Bohemians, who insist that God alone remits sins and are offended by my little book on the keys. Wherefore one should teach that men make confession to Christ, and Christ absolves through the mouth of the minister, for the minister’s mouth is the mouth of Christ and the minister’s ear is the ear of Christ. It’s to the Word and the command that one should pay attention, not to the person. Christ sits there, Christ listens, Christ answers, not a man;” “No. 5176: It is Christ who Absolves, Not the Minister, Between August 7 and 24, 1540,” in *LW* 54:394.

“Because God Himself deals with us in the church through the ministry as through the ordinary means and instrument. For it is He Himself that speaks, exhorts, absolves, baptizes, etc. in the ministry and through the ministry. Lk 1:70; Heb 1:1; Jn 1:23 (God crying through the Baptist); 2 Co 2:10, 17; 5:20; 13:3. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the minister as well as the church have sure proofs that God wants to use this very person for this His ordinary means and instrument, namely the ministry. Now, a legitimate or regular call provides these proofs; for in this way every minister of the Word can apply to himself the statements of Scripture [in] 2 Co 5:19; Is 59:21; Mt 10:20; Lk 10:16; 1 Th 4:8,” Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 29.

¹³³ “First Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt Matthew 3:1–17 (1540),” in *LW* 24:234; *WA* 56:248.

¹³⁴ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:334; *WA* 41:214; “...Solches ist aber nicht der Priester Stand an im selbs, Sonder ein gemein, offentlich Ampt fur die, so da all Priester, das ist: Christen sind.”

exercise His priestly duties.¹³⁵

At the time of the Reformation, Lutherans emphasized the royal priesthood to address Roman Catholicism which claimed to have a peculiar priesthood. Lutherans explained that Roman Catholicism had a Christian priesthood since they had no other priesthood than that which the laity possessed. As a consequence, Lutherans were constantly accused of making every Christian into a priest (clergy). Lutherans vociferously defended against that accusation by indicating that although each Christian is a priest and has the right and authority to exercise Christ's priestly office they may not do so without a call. "All we who believe are indeed spiritual priests, but we are not all teachers. 1 Co 12:29–30; Eph 4:11–12. And Peter explains himself: All Christians are priests—not that all should function without difference in the ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments, without a special call, but that they should offer spiritual sacrifices. Ro 12:1; Heb 13:15–16."¹³⁶

This contention between Lutherans and Roman Catholics became very irksome for Melancthon. Gerrish writes, "At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 Philip Melancthon advised against discussion of the priesthood of all believers, relegating it to the 'odious and unessential articles which are commonly debated in the schools.'" ¹³⁷ Gerrish explains that the *Augsburg*

¹³⁵ "Concerning the Ministry," in *LW* 40:34; *WA* 12:189. When the royal priesthood is equated with the church, the proprium of the church tends to be lost, which is Christ's priestly office. The church consists of teachers and hearers, or shepherd and sheep, Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 698. By definition, the church includes pastors, so to say that the "church is superior to its ministers" is nonsensical, thus also with the title of Walther's book, *Kirche und Amt*; see Tr., par. 8–11, Kolb and Wengert, 331. "Lectures on Titus," in *LW* 29:16, "Christians all have a priesthood, but they do not all have the priestly function." Norman Nagel writes, "What Dr. Luther says against the Roman priests is not to get rid of them in order to put 'the priesthood of all believers' in their place. That would be to replace one piece of popery with another. What was wrong with popery was not that it was popery, but that it infringed the one and only atoning sacrifice for sin done by Christ alone, and so done once, for all, sure, complete. To suggest something other or more is to rob Christ of his having done it all. This is confessed and defended by a *satis est*." Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood," 281.

¹³⁶ Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 29. See also Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, 91–92.

¹³⁷ B. A. Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther," *Church History* 34, no. 4 (December, 1965): 404–6.

Confession had already been finished and read by the time Melancthon gave this judgment on the priesthood of believers, and yet this doctrine was passed over in silence.

Luther refers to the baptized as “priests” when he addresses the priestly duties of Christ’s priestly office, the holy ministry.¹³⁸ When Luther speaks of the “spiritual sacrifices” he refers to the baptized sometimes as “priests” but predominately as “Christians.”¹³⁹ Luther wanted the baptized to be called priests, and he wanted the term “priest” to be used as commonly of the baptized as the term “Christian.”¹⁴⁰ However since the term “priest” was already in use in the Roman Catholic church to refer to the clergy, when Luther used “priest” to refer to the baptized who offer spiritual sacrifices, the Roman Catholic clergy accused him of making every Christian a physical or churchly priest (clergy). Luther denied this accusation and explained that the Roman Catholic clergy were misunderstanding the word priest.

It would please me very much if this word “priest” were used as commonly as the term “Christians” is applied to us. For priests, the baptized, and Christians are all one and the same. For just as I should not put up with it when those who have been anointed and tonsured want to have exclusive right to the terms “Christians” and “baptized,” so I should also not put up with it when they alone want to be called priests. Yet they have monopolized this title. Thus they have called “the church” what the pope, together with his pointed hats, decrees. But Scripture turns this around. Therefore note this well, in order that you may know how to differentiate between those whom God calls priests and those who call themselves priests. For it must be our aim to restore the little word “priests” to the common use which the little word “Christians” enjoys. For to be a priest does not belong in the category of an external office; it is exclusively the kind of office that has dealings before God.... Therefore when St. Peter says here: “You are a royal priesthood,” this is tantamount to saying: “You are Christians.” If you want to know what kind of title and what kind of power

¹³⁸ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:316–20; *WA* 41:184–90.

¹³⁹ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:333–34; *WA* 41:211–14.

¹⁴⁰ “He also bestows the title upon all Christians. As they are called God’s children and heirs for His sake, so they are called priests after Him. Every baptized Christian is, and ought to be, called a priest, just as much as St. Peter or St. Paul. St. Peter was a priest because he believed in Christ. I am a priest for the same reason. Thus we all, as I have said before, have become priest’s children through Baptism. Therefore it should be understood that the name ‘priest’ ought to be the common possession of believers just as much as the name ‘Christian’ or ‘child of God,’ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:330–31.

and praise Christians have, you see here that they are kings and priests and a chosen race.¹⁴¹

If you ask how this can be I will tell you: in all my writings I never wanted more than that all Christians should be priests; yet not all should be consecrated by bishops, not all should preach, celebrate mass, and exercise the priestly office unless they have been appointed and called to do so. This was my final intention. But Emser overshoots the mark and insists most powerfully and unequivocally, with his cutting “living” understanding, that all Christians must also be physical priests, consecrated by bishops, allowed to preach, to celebrate mass, and to exercise all priestly offices without further order or call.¹⁴²

In order to explain what a New Testament priest is, Luther called “priests” by the term “Christian.”

For a priest, especially in the New Testament, was not made but was born. He was created, not ordained. He was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and Spirit in the washing of regeneration [John 3:6f.; Titus 3:5f.]. Indeed, all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians. Worthy of anathema is any assertion that a priest is anything else than a Christian. For such an assertion has no support in the Word of God and is based only on human opinions, on ancient usage, or on the opinions of the majority, any one of which is ineffectual to establish an article of faith without sacrilege and offense, as I have sufficiently shown elsewhere.¹⁴³

This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests. But you may ask: “Wherein does this priesthood of Christians consist, and what are their priestly works?”¹⁴⁴

When speaking of sacrifices, Luther uses the term “Christian” and reiterates that Christians

¹⁴¹ “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30:63–64. “Christians are all priests, as 1 Peter 2:5, 9 says. Jer. 31:34 says: ‘They shall all know Me,’ and Is. 54:13 says: ‘All your sons shall be taught by the Lord.’ It is the office of the priests to teach, to pray, and to sacrifice. The first of these is well known; the second is taught in the statement ‘Whatever you ask, etc.’ (John 14:13); the third is taught in Heb. 13:5 and in Rom. 12:1. But not all are elders, that is, ministers, as he has commanded Titus. First he gives Titus the general commission to appoint elders. Then he prescribes what kind of men they ought to be. Christians all have a priesthood, but they do not all have the priestly function....Therefore it should be noted that it was Paul’s ordinance that he should select ‘elders’ (in the plural) in each city, and they are called bishops and elders,” “Lectures on Titus,” in *LW* 29:16.

¹⁴² “Dr. Luther’s Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen,” in *LW* 39:233–34.

¹⁴³ “Concerning the Ministry,” in *LW* 40:19. See also “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:329.

¹⁴⁴ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:331–32.

do not offer priestly sacrifice for the purpose of receiving forgiveness. Christians sacrifice in order to give honor and glory to God, which are the spiritual sacrifices of which St. Paul speaks.

St. Paul speaks of such sacrifices in Romans 12:1: “I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” ...Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament.... Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed in behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians.¹⁴⁵

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9 ESV), is often quoted to encourage Christians to proclaim the Gospel to others. It is laudable to state that Christians are to proclaim the Gospel to their neighbor but the use of this passage to support that is misguided. All Christians are to speak the Gospel to their neighbor, however 1 Pet. 2:9 is speaking of the priestly duties, specifically the preaching of the Gospel which comes through Christ’s priestly office,¹⁴⁶ as Luther, and the Orthodox Lutheran Fathers, such as Gerhard and Chemnitz, taught.

(6) Nor is there any strength in their objection that Peter adds that the devout are “a royal priesthood, to declare the virtues of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.” You see, a distinction must be made: There is the general mandate and call that all the devout receive in their investiture of Christianity, by which they are required to render due praises to God, by whom they were called into the fellowship of the church; to confess Him by word and deed; to instruct their own households privately in true devotion (Deut. 6:20); to make sure that “the word of Christ dwells richly among them as they teach and remind each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); to comfort one another with the Word of God (1 Thess. 4:18); etc. And then there is the specific call by which the ministry of Word and Sacraments—which is to be administered in the public assembly of the church—is entrusted to certain persons who are fit for it, by the

¹⁴⁵ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:333–34.

¹⁴⁶ “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30:64–65; “Concerning the Ministry,” in *LW* 40:21–22; “Dr. Luther’s Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen,” in *LW* 39:236–37. See Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood,” 289.

public consent of the church. This call is not common to all Christians, as is clear from 1 Cor. 12:29; Eph. 4:11; James 3:1.¹⁴⁷

Yet All Christians Have a General Call to Proclaim the Virtues of God, 1 Ptr 2:9....

It is true that all Christians have a general call to proclaim the Gospel of God, Ro 10:9, to speak the Word of God among themselves, Eph 5:19; to admonish each other from the Word of God, Cl 3:16; to reprove, Eph 5:11 [and] Mt 19:15; [and] to comfort, 1 Th 4:18. And family heads are enjoined [to do] this with the special command that they give their households the instruction of the Lord. Eph 6:4. But the public ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general, as we have already shown, 1 Co 12:28; Eph 4:12. For a special or particular call is required for this, Ro 10:15.¹⁴⁸

Since priests do not exercise the priestly duties of Christ's priestly office unless they have been called to his office, what do priests do? They offer spiritual sacrifices: "you yourselves...are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices..." (1 Pet. 2:5 ESV), and as Scripture teaches Christians, "by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1 ESV).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, 91–92.

¹⁴⁸ Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 29. See also "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:332.

¹⁴⁹ "The point of reference for the idea of sacrifice in Luther's theology is the priesthood of all believers. Sacrifice is an element of faith. Luther never forgot this fact, even in his most violent polemics against the Roman perversion of sacrifice. But as sacrifice is a function of faith, it cannot be without faith. Luther rejected the Roman theology of the mass for the very reason that it was a conception of sacrifice apart from faith (*ex opere operato*). To him, the mass was a sacrifice only insofar as it was "used" by faith. This is the significance of the sacrifice of Christ (and consequently also of the sacrifice of Christians). "Though the body and blood of Christ was seen like any other material thing, it was not seen as a sacrifice, nor as something he was offering.... Christ sacrificed himself to God in his own heart, of which nobody knew. That is why his physical body and blood are a spiritual sacrifice. Likewise we Christians sacrifice our bodies (Rom. 12:1), yet it is, as Paul himself says, a reasonable service, for we do it in the spirit where God alone can see." It is not the officiant who renders sacrifice, for the sacrifice concerns not man in his official capacity (*Amtsperson*) but man as a believer (Christ-person), that is, the receiving congregation.

What is the sacrifice that is related to faith? Luther points to the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of prayer, of the body. He thought of man in all his relationships. His picture of sacrifice is expressive of the total claim of faith.

Sacrifice is associated with death, "for what is to be sacrificed has to be killed." The Christian as a priest offers himself. The victim to be sacrificed is he himself, or, to be more correct, the "old man," the "old Adam" within. In this priestly service, man concurs with the office of the law, for as the law was given to uncover sin and to condemn it in the flesh, so the Christian as a priest surrenders his own sinful nature into death.

This sacrifice, when brought by faith, makes him conformable to Christ, for Christ himself submitted to the curse of sin and death and shared man's life and death under the law. But his very humiliation and death resulted in victory. By the same token there shines the star of life and hope over the sacrifice of the believer, for it is in union

(2) They are called “spiritual priests” not with respect to ecclesiastical office, since Theophilus Nicolaides (*Defens. tract. de miss. minist.*, ch. 1, p. 139) himself acknowledges that “whenever the word ‘priest’ is read in regard to Christian people, it belongs to both hearers and teachers.” He adds that this can be proved to be seen from the actual circumstances of each passage.

(3) Instead, they are called “spiritual priests” with respect to the spiritual sacrifices they should offer to God, as Peter himself explains, [1 Pet. 2:]5: “You are a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Such [sacrifices] are: praying (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:4); thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15); doing good to the poor (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16); mortifying the old man (Rom. 12:1); martyrdom received for Christ’s sake (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; etc.). All the devout can offer such sacrifices as spiritual priests. Augustine, on Psalm 94: “If we are God’s temple, God’s altar is our soul. What is God’s sacrifice? We place a sacrifice on the altar when we praise God.” Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, bk. 20, ch. 10: “We are called ‘priests’ because we are members of the one Priest.”

(4) Although the preaching of the Gospel also pertains to spiritual sacrifices (Mal. 1:11; Rom. 15:16), nevertheless from the title “spiritual priests” as it is attributed to all the devout one cannot infer that this spiritual sacrifice—namely, the preaching of the Gospel undertaken in the public assembly of the church—pertains to all. Indeed, the title is taken from the other spiritual sacrifices, which all can offer, but not from this one, which is by no means common to all.¹⁵⁰

As Christ is both Priest and Sacrifice, Christians are both priest and sacrifice. The Christian

with Christ that he suffers the condemnation of the law.

Thus Luther’s concept of mortification must not be confused with ascetic exercises. These, far from excluding unbelief and work righteousness, may easily be the expression of a completely egocentric religion. This would be the exact opposite of sacrifice. True sacrifice does not consist in man’s presenting anything to God. It is effected through Christ. It is the judgment passed on man with all that he may wish to present to God.

Indeed the old man must be killed and crucified with Christ. Sacrifice as dying with Christ is an expression of that strange work of God by which he grants life through death. Since even as a Christian, man must die in order to live, nothing is found in him which could motivate the new life from God. Yet the latter is hidden under death, for the death which the Christian suffers is a death with him who not only died, but rose and became the sin of sin, the hell of hell, and the death of death. The new life of the Christian is beyond himself; it is the life of the Spirit. The Spirit alone forms the link between the spiritual use of the law and the gospel. God’s love, his proper work, makes it possible for man to die and so to “live in Christ.”

This twofold aspect connects the Christian sacrifice with baptism. His priesthood rests on his baptism, and his baptism in turn is realized by his sacrifice—the death of the old Adam and the daily birth of the new man. Worship is the means by which the Spirit continues this fellowship and conformity with Christ.

Thus sacrifice cannot be identified with any particular liturgical act, not even with the prayers. It rests on the believer’s fellowship with Christ and as such it is hidden. It is related to that inner righteousness which may be expressed in externals, yet can never be deduced from them. For good works are always ambiguous; they may or may not flow from faith in God. While the sacrifice of the Christian priesthood may be realized in certain liturgical acts, it cannot be identified with them.” Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 151–54.

¹⁵⁰ Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry, Part One*, 91. See also John Warwick Montgomery, *Chytraeus on Sacrifice: A Reformation Treatise in Biblical Theology* (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2000), 88.

offers the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of prayer, and of the body. The Christian offers himself or surrenders his own sinful nature into death.¹⁵¹ “But as sacrifice is a function of faith, it cannot be without faith.... True sacrifice does not consist in man’s presenting anything to God. It is effected through Christ. It is the judgment passed on man with all that he may wish to present to God.”¹⁵²

Luther understood the liturgy or the Divine Service to express the Christian teaching of spiritual sacrifice. The liturgy is where Christians “offer up themselves and all that they have to God.”¹⁵³ For Luther, worship is not confined to the liturgy in the sanctuary but includes the Christian life in service and self-giving to the needs of the neighbor.¹⁵⁴

The communion of saints exists not only in receiving the gifts of God, but in the sacrifice of love which believers bring for each other. Baptism is realized as the old Adam is drowned and destroyed in the tasks, trials, and sacrifices of daily life. Worship has its immediate bearing on the Christian’s attitude in the hurly-burly of the workaday world. And we see again the familiar features of Luther’s picture of sacrifice—the death of the old and the rising of the new man—in his thoughts on the effect of our worship on daily life, though he started more often from the idea of the communion of saints than from that of sacrifice.¹⁵⁵

During the course of the controversies with the papists and the Enthusiasts, the use of “sacrifice,” in regard to “spiritual sacrifices,” receded for Luther as this teaching developed into the theology of the Christian “calling.” The teaching regarding “spiritual sacrifices” is certainly implied in the theology of the calling even though the term “sacrifice” is not used in this context.

¹⁵¹ “Epistle auf den Sonntag nach Epiphania: Rom. 12:1ff.,” in WA 17²:8, 11. See also Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 152–53.

¹⁵² Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 151–54.

¹⁵³ “Treatise on the New Testament,” in *LW* 35:97; WA 6:368.

¹⁵⁴ “Die Sammlung Khummer,” in WA TR 4:511; “Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague,” in *LW* 43: 115–118.; WA 23:341–43. See Nagel, “Luther and the Priesthood,” 281, “What is confessed in the Small Catechism’s Table of Duties (better *Haustafel*), and in the whole Doctrine of Vocation, is done without mention of priests. Yet it is priestly as toward the Lord—priestly because of the sacrifice of the lives of the baptized to the Lord as they serve their neighbor in his need, there where the Lord puts himself to receive our service.”

¹⁵⁵ Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 168.

“The work of the Christian in his calling becomes a function of his priesthood, his bodily sacrifice.”¹⁵⁶

Luther speaks against the use of the dichotomy “clergy/laity” because it divides the unity of the Christian people. Christians are one in Christ. They have “one Christ, one Baptism, one faith, one Spirit, one Word, one God.”¹⁵⁷ It is Christ who makes them Christian, not any work that they do. If those who serve as the clergy set themselves apart as the church while the laymen are considered secular, they destroy the unity in faith. They devise new ways of serving God which destroys Christian love and unity. The unity is severed since the church and the Word of God are destroyed which tears the hearts and minds of Christians from the unity in Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁸

It is enough now that we know that a Christian people is undivided, without any distinctions of sects or persons, a people among whom there is to be no layman, no cleric, no monk, no nun—no differences at all, all being married or celibate as each one pleases. There is also no essential difference between bishops, elders, and priests on the one hand and laymen on the other, nothing to distinguish them from other Christians except that the one has a different office which is entrusted to him, namely, to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; just as a mayor or judge is distinguished from other citizens by nothing except that the governing of the city is entrusted to him. The same persons who have introduced such sects among the Christian people and divided them into clergy and laity so that some are tonsured and some are not, and the tonsured are partly monks and partly priests, and the monks are even divided among themselves according to a variety of garbs and diets; the same persons who invented these things have severed and cut to pieces the unity of the Christian people.¹⁵⁹

For Luther, there was no distinction in status¹⁶⁰ among Christians for all Christians are holy before God because they have been baptized into Christ. The distinction between Christians is an

¹⁵⁶ Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 168. See “Dr. Luther’s Retraction of the Error Forced Upon Him by the Most Highly Learned Priest of God, Sir Jerome Emser, Vicar in Meissen,” in *LW* 39:235.

¹⁵⁷ “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30:171; *WA* 14:39. See also “Treatise on the New Testament,” in *LW* 35:80; *WA* 6:359.

¹⁵⁸ “Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter,” in *LW* 30: 213; *WA* 14:89.

¹⁵⁹ “The Misuse of the Mass,” in *LW* 36:158–59; *WA* 8:508.

¹⁶⁰ “Zechariah 1517,” in *LW* 20:345–46.

external distinction regarding office and work.¹⁶¹

This is said of the priestly office, which is the common property of all Christians. However, we deal with a different matter when we speak of those who have an office in the Christian Church, such as minister, preacher, pastor, or curate....Such people are to be chosen by the church only for the sake of the office. They are to be separated from the common mass of Christians in the same way as in secular government, where certain people of the citizenry or municipality are chosen and appointed as officials. One does not become a citizen by being elected burgomaster or judge, but one is elected to the office because one already possesses citizenship and is a member of the citizenry. A burgomaster, therefore, brings his citizenship with him into his office....The same thing is true of any other calling or office, e.g., father, mother, teacher, government. The office does not make the man; but a man must have the necessary qualifications, either by birth or training, before he fills the office. It is in accordance with God's creation that we must first be born as human beings, men or women; thereafter He assigns to each his office or position as He will. This is the way it is in Christendom, too. Before anyone becomes a preacher or a bishop, he must first be a Christian, a born priest. No pope or any other man can make him a priest. But having been born a priest through Baptism, a man thereupon receives the office; and this is what makes a difference between him and other Christians.¹⁶²

As far as being a Christian or bearing the Christian name, one Christian is no different from another because they all have the same treasure and possession since there is only one Christ, one faith, one baptism. It is in the "outward sphere" or in the activities of Christians where the various distinctions among Christians appear, "not as Christians nor as to what makes them Christians, but as to the fruit." Every Christian "has his own task or fruit. So throughout the outward sphere there are differences, while in the inward sphere they are all Christians and identical."¹⁶³

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do. Therefore, just as those who are now called "spiritual," that is, priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the word of God and the sacraments,

¹⁶¹ "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," in *LW* 30:54–55.

¹⁶² "Psalm 110," in *LW* 13:331–32.

¹⁶³ "The Sermon on the Mount," in *LW* 21:285–87.

which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities. They bear the sword and rod in their hand to punish the wicked and protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [1 Cor. 12:14–26].¹⁶⁴

As Christians live their daily lives according to their vocations or stations in life, they are to teach, admonish and comfort with the Word of God. Each Christian offers spiritual sacrifices according to the work of his office. Even though not all Christians have a call to the pastoral office, every Christian has the duty to teach and admonish his neighbor with the Word of God as is appropriate. Parents are to do this for their children and the whole household. Christians citizens do this for one another.

But you may ask: “Wherein does this priesthood of Christians consist, and what are their priestly works?” The answer is as follows: The very same that were mentioned before: teaching, sacrificing, and praying. But you must know this, as I have also stated before, that Christ is the only High Priest. Before we attempt to do such priestly works, we must have the benefit of His priestly office; yes, we must possess it...But after we have become Christians through this Priest and His priestly office, incorporated in Him by Baptism through faith, then each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and the power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from Him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord’s Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God’s Word and publicly to confess it.¹⁶⁵

Luther does not want to use the terms “clergy/laity” since they were used to divide the status of the Christians into holy (clergy) and secular (laity) before God. In contrast Luther

¹⁶⁴ “To the Christian Nobility,” in *LW* 44:129–30.

¹⁶⁵ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:332–34.

emphasized the unity of all Christians since they are all holy before God, being baptized into the One High Priest, Jesus Christ. For Luther, “laity” did not teach who or what a Christian is. He tried to reassert the use of the term “priest” for all Christians but since the meaning of this word was entrenched in the Roman Catholic Church referring to the clergy, Luther was falsely accused of making every Christian into a physical or churchly priest (clergy). Thus he used “Christian” for all the baptized. In baptism, Christians get their name, identity, calling and work from Christ and His gifts. Baptized into Christ, they share in His priesthood, so Christians, in their various vocations and stations in life, offer spiritual sacrifices and instruct and admonish one another with the word of God. In their status before God, Christians are all holy. In their calling and work (fruit), each Christian is unique.

In the present day, Lutherans continue to use the terms “clergy” and “laity” although they do not understand the clergy to be church and the laity to be secular. However, the use of the terms continues to create a division in the unity of Christians. Laity is defined in contrast to the clergy as to what they are not; they do not preach, they do not administer the sacrament, etc. Thus “laity” remains a vacuous term. It does not teach what or who a Christian is. It does not point to Christ. If the use of “priest” could be reasserted to teach Christians their identity, calling, and work in Christ through His gifts, that would be helpful. Modern Christians may experience the same struggles Luther had when trying to recapture the use of “priest” for all Christians. Thus along with Luther, it may be most beneficial that Christians should emphasize the use of “Christian” for the unity of Christians in Christ, and their uniqueness in their vocations and stations in life in their service to their neighbor.

Luther articulates that “Christian” explains who and what a Christian is by pointing to Christ. “Now you know that we have all been baptized and are called Christians. Accordingly,

we should endeavor to know what it means to be a Christian man and have the name of Christian, and also what one must do to be one.... Thus you must prove your name as a Christian by faith and nothing else, that is, so as to believe that Christ's righteousness is yours, that his life, death, and everything that Christ is, is yours, given to you."¹⁶⁶

In addition, Luther writes,

In the first place, I ask that men make no reference to my name; let them call themselves Christians, not Lutherans. What is Luther? After all, the teaching is not mine [John 7:16]. Neither was I crucified for anyone [1 Cor. 1:13]. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3, would not allow the Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I—poor stinking maggot-fodder³⁸ that I am—come to have men call the children of Christ by my wretched name? Not so, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names and call ourselves Christians, after him whose teaching we hold. The papists deservedly have a party name, because they are not content with the teaching and name of Christ, but want to be papist as well. Let them be papist then, since the pope is their master. I neither am nor want to be anyone's master. I hold, together with the universal church, the one universal teaching of Christ, who is our only master [Matt. 23:8]."¹⁶⁷

If the Lutheran church desires for its members to offer spiritual sacrifices and instruct and admonish one another with the Word of God, they would do well to continue to teach Christians who they are in Christ through His holy gifts, and what it means to be a Christian in terms of worship and calling.¹⁶⁸

Summary and Conclusion

What are commissioned church workers in the LCMS? Some would say neither fish nor fowl. Consider the office of teacher, for example, there is much confusion. "In some respects,

¹⁶⁶ "Two Sermons at Weimar, 1522," in *LW* 51:111–12; *WA* 10^{III}:347.

¹⁶⁷ "Temporal Authority," in *LW* 45:70–71; *WA* 8:683–84.

¹⁶⁸ Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood," 280; "We are living sacrifices whose lives are poured out in sacrifice to him where he has put himself to receive the sacrifice of our lives, that is our neighbor in his need."

In Scripture the term "Christian" is always used as a noun. Often the definition is muddled, convoluted, and vacated when "Christian" is used as an adjective, such as describing music, a book or bookstore, or station/vocation such as a "Christian" plumber.

teachers were almost clergy, yet almost laity. In other respects, they were neither clergy nor laity.”¹⁶⁹ The confusion centers around whether Walther was understood as defining the teaching office as “part of the ministry of the Word” (*Predigtamt*), or as “an auxiliary office (*Hilfsamt*) that supports the ministry” (*Predigtamt*). The logic being that if teachers are “part of the ministry of the Word” (*Predigtamt*), then they either exercise the same office as the pastor or at least an essential duty of the pastoral office, and thus they are not subordinate to the pastoral office. If on the other hand, they are an auxiliary, or helping office (*Hilfsamt*), then they do not exercise the same office as the pastor nor duties of the pastoral office but they are subordinate to the pastoral office.

This is a false dichotomy for Walther. He states that the teaching office is a helping office which means it bears a non-essential part of the preaching office (*Predigtamt*). Walther’s language, that all offices in the church flow from the highest office, the *Predigtamt*, comes from a misreading of Martin Chemnitz. Luther and Chemnitz do not speak of someone bearing a part of an office or exercising a duty of another office. If one has not been given the office they do not exercise the duties of that office. If one has been given the office then it is their responsibility to carry out the duties of the office and they do not have authority to delegate those duties to someone else. If one has been given the office then one exercises all or some of the duties of the office according to his call.

Walther would agree that one does not exercise any duties of an office without having been given the office. What leads to the quandary is that Walther teaches that each Christian

¹⁶⁹ Mary E Hilgendorf, “C.F.W. Walther and Education in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1997), 254–55, 259. See also Walther, *Church & The Office*, 285–86. How is one to understand the commissioned offices in the LCMS when several synodical resolutions have stated that some of the commissioned offices, namely teachers and lay ministers, are clergy but it has not declared such about the other commissioned offices?

individually has been given the *Predigtamt*. The pastor exercises it publicly and all other Christians exercise it privately. When there is an office in the church, other than the pastoral office, it is a public office since it is in the church and thus the bearer of that office is now exercising a duty of the *Predigtamt* publicly—which before he only did privately. Thus Walther writes:

Even as a person by what he does—what a writer, a porter, a teacher, a song leader etc., must do—becomes a writer, a porter, a teacher, a song leader, etc., so also a person becomes a pastor by doing what a pastor must do; if he does it in a lawful manner, he is a lawful pastor; if he does it in an unlawful manner, he is an unlawful pastor, but in the last analysis he still becomes a pastor, for—he administers his office, which is what makes a person a pastor.¹⁷⁰

For Walther, since all Christians have the *Predigtamt*, when Christians are exercising public offices in the church, it is necessary to distinguish between essential and non-essential duties of the public preaching office (*Predigtamt*) so that it clear as to whether they are exercising the one divinely instituted office, the public *Predigtamt* (or *Pfarramt*), or whether they are exercising an office that is a helping office (*Hilfsamt*).

Walther's teaching, that all Christians individually have the preaching office (*Predigtamt*), serves as the leaven both for those who teach that the bearers of the commissioned offices in the LCMS may serve as clergy, and for those who teach that everyone is a minister or missionary. When the discussion is focused on all Christians having the *Predigtamt*, then discussion is centered on how each Christian is to exercise the *Predigtamt*. The discussion centers on the false dichotomy of whether the laity are to exercise the *Predigtamt* publicly—as in all who hold office in the church may serve as clergy or all who hold office in the church carry out non-essential

¹⁷⁰ Walther, *Congregation's Right*, 128.

duties of the pastoral office, or privately—as in everyone a minister/missionary.¹⁷¹

The discussion regarding the role of the laity began in the early history of the Synod within the doctrine of the church, as demonstrated not only in the writing but already in the title of Walther's *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*.¹⁷² Without the church there would be no laity, for the church “is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.”¹⁷³ The clergy are not the whole church in and of themselves¹⁷⁴ and the common multitude or laity are not the whole church in and of themselves. The church is both teachers and hearers (clergy/laity).¹⁷⁵

Pastors alone do not make up the church. For, as Aristotle says in regard to a city, “A city does not consist of a doctor and a doctor or of farmer and a farmer, but of a

¹⁷¹ See also Walther, *Church & the Office*, 151–66. The Book of Concord does not speak of the *öffentliche Predigtamt*. Walther's use of *öffentliche Predigtamt* comes into English terminology as “The Public Ministry,” or “The Office of the Public Ministry,” or “The Public Preaching Office,” etc. For Walther, since all Christians have the *Predigtamt*, he needs to distinguish between the pastor and the common Christians. When the *Predigtamt* is exercised by the pastor it is public and hence the *öffentliche Predigtamt*. In regards to the Augsburg Confession, Art. V, Walther writes, “This statement, of course, does not speak of the preaching office *in concreto* or of the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) but of the office *in abstracto*, of which [Johann Ludwig Hartmann, among others, rightly reminds us in his pastoral theology: ‘The ministry [*ministerium*] [of the Word] may be treated in two ways: (1) in an **abstract way** inasmuch as the state [Stand] itself and the office itself is subject to Christian consideration, as **Article V of the Augsburg Confession** treats it; (2) in a **concrete way**, or in view of the persons who are found in this holy office, as **Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession** treats it’ (*Pastoral evangelicum* [Nürnberg, 1697], 4:25);” Walther, *Church & the Office*, 169.

¹⁷² Walther, *Church & the Office*, 9–137. The title of the book betrays Walther's understanding of church since the definition of church includes the Holy Ministry. Cf. Maschke, “Inspired, Informed, Involved,” 47–65.

¹⁷³ CA VII:1–4 in Kolb and Wengert, 42.

¹⁷⁴ “1 Kor. 3 macht Paulus alle Kirchendiener gleich und lehrt, daß die Kirche mehr sei den die Diener.” *Concordia Triglotta*, 506. “1. Corinth. Tertio Paulus exaequat ministros et docet ecclesiam esse supra ministros,” and “1. Corinth. 3. Machet Paulus alle Kirchendiener gleich und lehret, daß die Kirchen mehr sei dann die Diener,” Lietzmann, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 474.

Cf. “In 1 Corinthians 3[:4-8*, 21-22*] Paul regards all ministers as equals and teaches that the church is superior to its ministers.” Tr., par.11, Kolb, and Wengert, 331; and “In 1 Cor. 3 Paul makes all ministers equal and teaches that the church is more than the ministers... [*daß die Kirche mehr sei, den die Diener...*],” Walther, *Church and Ministry: Witness Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church On The Question Of The Church And The Ministry* (St. Louis: MO, Concordia, 1987), 51; and Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 314, “In 1 Cor. 3:6, 21 Paul makes all ministers equal and teaches that the church is greater than the ministers [*daß die Kirche mehr sei den die Diener (supra ministros)*];” also Walther, *Church & The Office of The Ministry*, 38; “In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul makes all ministers [*Kirchendiener*] equal and teaches that the Church is more than the ministers [*Diener*]...;” and p. 311, “In 1 Corinthians 3[6, 21], Paul makes all ministers of the Church equal and teaches **that the Church is greater than the ministers (supra ministros)**.”

¹⁷⁵ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 701–2.

doctor and a farmer.” Likewise, the church also does not consist of pastor and pastor or hearer and hearer, but of teachers and learners. Therefore the voice of the church does not bind us to the bishops alone, as if they have the power to devise new dogmas by their own free choice which the rest of the assembly is compelled to accept without hesitation. But the voice of the church shows to us the whole assembly, hearers with the teacher.¹⁷⁶

As long as the term “laity” continues to be used, discussion will continue most likely with the result of confusion regarding what a “layman” is. Since the term “laity” is used instead of “Christian” and there is no positive definition of “laity,” the discussion will continue regarding what the laity can do regarding the *Predigtamt*, which may lend itself to define laity—not in contrast to the clergy but in terms of emulating them. If the term “priest” is used instead of “laity,” then it would be beneficial to teach that priests offer spiritual sacrifices (and all that entails in the daily life of the Christian), and that a priest exercises the priestly duties of Christ’s priestly office only if he has been called into Christ’s priestly office, lest priests exercise the priestly duties apart from Christ’s priestly office. If the term “Christian” is used, then it also would be beneficial to teach what it means that a Christian is a priest. These discussions are important so that Christ is not displaced as the Priest who makes the baptized to be Christians. As was Christ, Christians are temple, priest, and sacrifice. For Christians to understand this, and thus understand what it means to be a Christian, would be beneficial in living their daily lives in their calling and service.

¹⁷⁶ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 713.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Since the Biblical texts do not use *laikos* they are of no assistance for those who seek a definition of the term. The term “laity” is derived from the Greek *laikos*, Latinized as *laicus*. It is defined in the Greek lexicon as “one who belongs to the people (*laos*).” Some Christians equate *laikos* with “the people of God” in order to dissolve the clergy/laity dichotomy in the church. The understanding is that since clergy and laity together constitute “the people of God,” there can no longer be a distinction among them.

By the third century, *Laikos* gained prominence in the writings of the church fathers. In the Patristic Period, *laikos* referred to men who managed their household finances through which they supported the bishop. They were monogamous and from their ranks the clergy were chosen. *Laikos* did not refer to all the baptized as it did not include women, children, or elderly, or even all males.

In the Medieval Ages, the laity consisted of the nobility. They were educated and thus literate. As such, they spoke Latin and understood the church rites and liturgy, in contrast to the common people who were uneducated. During this time period, laity sought to join religious orders for temporal and spiritual benefits. This would not only move them out of the secular realm into the sacred realm along with the clergy but it would also grant them certain temporal benefits which included avoiding military service, certain taxes, and secular jurisdiction. During the twelfth century, in order to halt the abuse of the religious orders, Gratian decreed that there are only two kinds of Christians, clergy and laity. The meaning of “laity” no longer meant Christian nobility, in contrast to common Christians, but it now referred to all Christians who were not clerics. Thus began the struggle of the clergy/laity dichotomy.

During the Reformation Luther used *laikos* to refer either to the Christian nobility or to all Christians who were not clerics depending on which definition was most helpful for the sake of the Gospel for his hearers at that time. The Lutheran Confessions followed in Luther's footsteps regarding the use of laity. Often, both Luther and the Lutheran Confessions used the term "Christian" instead of "laity" since it describes who the laity are in Christ—their identity and work.

Laikos is often defined in contrast to the clergy as to who the laity are not. In the present day, "laity" may be defined by function, they do not preach the Gospel or administer the sacraments; by status, they are not ordained; by education, they do not have a theological degree; by remuneration, they are not full-time, paid workers; and by lifestyle, they do not have an ecclesiastical but secular vocation.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) there has been a resurgence in the discussion of the definition and role of the laity. Different Christian denominations have wrestled with the doctrine of the laity using different categories to consider the topic. Roman Catholics have examined laity through the category of status and Baptists through the category of service/duties. The LCMS taught that all Christians have the same office (*Predigtamt*) and thus the distinction between them is that the clergy exercise the office publicly while the laity exercise it privately.

Because all Christians are priests, Baptist doctrine teaches that the laity all have the ministerial vocation of the priesthood of believers. Thus the laity are the ministers who do the work of the church. This defines the laity according to service or duties. Since there are two priesthoods in Roman Catholic doctrine, the hierarchical priesthood which is sacred and the common priesthood, which is secular, the laity serve in the secular realm and thus they are defined by status. By teaching that Christ's priestly office is exercised in his church, through the

proclamation of the Gospel (through the pastoral office) to which the laity respond by offering sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, and by offering their lives as living sacrifices to God in church and society, the Lutheran Confessions give a positive and revitalizing definition to the laity and their role in both church and society. They define the laity not according to status or according to service but according to Christ and the gifts they receive from Him. Baptized into Christ, Christians are given their identity, status, calling, and service through His gifts. Hence the Lutheran Confessions predominately use the term “Christian” instead of “laity.”

The Second Vatican Council emphasized that the church is the people of God and not the clergy only. This encouraged the laity to participate in the mission of the church and in its liturgy. The priest has a distinct role in celebrating the Mass but the laity are instructed to play a role in offering the Eucharist at the Mass because they are priests through baptism. The laity are to offer the world back to God and through ecclesial lay ministry they participate in the work of the hierarchical ministry. The priests are to act in solidarity with the laity since both the common priesthood of the faithful and the hierarchical priesthood, though they differ in essence, are interrelated and each share in the one priesthood of Christ each in their own particular way. This line of reasoning was put forth in Congar’s early writings and in the documents of Vatican II. The laity are all baptized Christians and have the Holy Spirit so they are responsible for the mission of the church and are active in faith and participate with the clergy under the teaching authority of the bishops.

Although the council strove to define the laity with a positive definition, the common priesthood remained different in essence to the hierarchical priesthood. The clergy have a sacred power which the laity do not have in regard to their persons. Thus the clergy are understood as priests in the true sense of the term whereas the laity are viewed as priests only in a metaphorical

sense. Vatican II continued to define the laity according to their status before God.

In his later writings, Congar reacts to defining the laity by status and shifts to defining the laity by service. He argues that the laity are all baptized Christians who are all ministers in different ways. Some serve among the Christians and preside at the Eucharist and preach whereas others serve outside the body of Christians and serve in the world. All Christians are equal in baptism and thus all Christians can do the same works.

Congar speaks of the two priesthoods since that is the terminology given him by Vatican II. However, as he explains the hierarchical priesthood he runs the danger of defining the church as an ordained priesthood with no people which he reacts against. On the other hand, as he tries to explain the common priesthood of the faithful he ends up defining the church as the people of God with no ordained priesthood or clergy. He ends up with two priesthoods and two churches and the focus on Christ as the High Priest who works through the Holy Ministry (Christ's priestly office) giving out His gifts in His church is lost.

Vatican II stated that there is a difference in essence between the hierarchical priesthood and the common priesthood. This emphasizes the hierarchical priesthood and the church as hierarchical order. Some theologians reacting to Vatican II, stressed a difference in degree between the two priesthoods which emphasized the common priesthood and the church as communion or community and seeks to merge the two priesthoods. If the distinction between the priesthoods is one of essence and the hierarchical priesthood has a unique status, then there is a question about the reality of the common priesthood. Either the common priesthood is only metaphorical or at the least it is a lesser priesthood than the hierarchical priesthood. If the common priesthood is not metaphorical then it becomes a struggle as to how to distinguish it from the hierarchical priesthood.

The difficulty with two priesthoods is that it divides the unity of all baptized Christians who are all one in Christ and priests in Christ. First Peter 2 speaks of one priesthood in Christ so to confess two priesthoods runs contrary and divides the unity that all Christians have being one in Christ. In addition, if there are two priesthoods, then the priests (clergy) would hold two, one by virtue of their baptism and one by virtue of their ordination.

Along with the confession of two priesthoods will always come disagreement as to the distinction between them. Neither distinction, of essence or of degree, is helpful. The distinction in essence puts the focus on the person of the clergy by giving them a sacred status which other Christians do not have thereby dividing the unity of all baptized Christians. The distinction in degree, which seeks to restore the unity among Christians, puts the focus on each individual Christian and the gifts they have been given, thereby obscuring the Office of Christ which the clergy have been given.

With the distinction in essence the ordained receives gifts from the Spirit in ordination by which he has a different status than other Christians and can exercise tasks which other Christians cannot do. With the distinction in degree, each Christians is given gifts for service by the Spirit in baptism. This denigrates the Office of Christ and how all Christians participate in Christ's priesthood. These distinctions are no longer pertinent when the focus is on Christ working through his priestly office. There is only one priesthood, that of Jesus Christ and Christians are priests because they share in his priesthood. The ordained (clergy) do not hold another priesthood but they exercise Christ's priestly office.

The discussion in Baptist theology is similar to the Roman Catholic discussion regarding the theology of the laity. The Second Vatican Council stated that the distinction between clergy and laity is one of status with Congar later pressing for a distinction of service. Baptist theology

emphasizes service. In Baptist doctrine, “laity” is defined as “all the people of God.” Each Christian is called by God to serve others in order to carry out the mission of the church. Within the church, some ministers have the role of equipping other ministers for service.

Mullins and Hobbs stressed the point of individualistic service based on soul competency. Grace is given by God directly to those who have faith based on his call. Since God’s grace is not delivered through any particular human channel, the sinner has the ability to approach God without any personal merit or the service of any church, priest, or other authority. Each Christian has direct access to God without any human mediator so they do not need a priest to pray for them. Every Christian is accountable only to God so they need no mediator. The result is that each Christian is his or her own priest. The problem with this teaching is that when every Christian is a priest, no one needs a priest, or human mediator. This removes Christ as the high priest and mediator before God since everyone is their own priest. Thus, Christ’s priestly office, the pastoral office, through which he mediates for all Christians, is displaced.

For Baptists, the priesthood of believers is not a participation in the priesthood of Christ but rather the priesthood of believers grows out of Christ’s priesthood. Thus it is inferior to Christ’s priesthood for His priesthood is eternal and their priesthood is created. In addition, Christ’s sacrifice is propitiatory and eternal whereas the sacrifices of the priesthood of the believer are spiritual and temporal. The conclusion is that Christians, as priests, do not share in Christ’s priestly office, and thus do not have the right nor authority to carry out the priestly duties of Christ’s office.

In this emphasis on service regarding the laity, there is no recognition of Christ’s priestly office through which Christ continues to teach, sacrifice and pray for Christians. Only the person of the pastor, a human mediator, is recognized and not Christ’s office with Christ mediating for

his people. Thus Christ's office is abolished and the priestly duties are uncoupled from it. This removes Christ as the high priest and mediator before God. The clergy are relegated to being equippers of the laity who do the ministry of the church which encompasses exercising the priestly duties of Christ's office without having Christ's office.

Baptist doctrine teaches that each layperson is a priest and therefore may read Scripture for themselves, pray to God, and confess their sins directly to God, without a mediator because they have the Holy Spirit working within them. However, since the Spirit may leave a Christian, they have no certainty that the Spirit is working in them. Thus not having Christ's office leaves Christians in doubt regarding the certainty of the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ gave His Spirit to his office through which the Spirit works to create faith through the means of grace that are administered through his office. When Christ's office is removed it creates uncertainty as to where and when the Spirit is working. Thus in the Lutheran liturgy it speaks with certainty that the pastoral office is Christ's office ("I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word...and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ..."),¹ and that the Spirit is given to the pastoral office who works through the means of grace (V: "The Lord be with you." R: "And with thy spirit.")² Thus even if the person of the pastor is not a Christian the promises of Christ, that he is there in his office and his Spirit is working through his office hold true.

In the LCMS, the current emphasis regarding the distinction between clergy and laity is focused on service. However, that was not the case with C.F.W. Walther. In essence, for

¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 185.

² The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book*, 189, 194, 201; John 20:22.

Walther, there were no laity. This was so because all Christians have been given the *Predigtamt*. The pastor exercises the *Predigtamt* publicly which Walther calls the public *Predigtamt* or the *Pfarramt*. All other Christians exercise the *Predigtamt* privately. Since all Christians have the *Predigtamt*, when Christians are exercising public offices in the church, it then becomes necessary to distinguish between essential and non-essential duties of the *Predigtamt* so that it is clear as to whether they are exercising the one divinely instituted office, the public *Predigtamt* (*Pfarramt*), which is doing essential duties of the *Predigtamt*, or whether they are exercising a helping office (*Hilfsamt*) which is doing non-essential duties of the *Predigtamt*.

Walther's teaching, that all Christians individually have the *Predigtamt*, serves as the basis in the LCMS both for those who teach that the bearers of the commissioned offices in the LCMS are clergy, and for those who teach that everyone is a minister. Since the discussion revolves around all Christians having the *Predigtamt*, then the focus is on how each Christian is to exercise the *Predigtamt*. It leads to the false dichotomy of whether the laity are to exercise the *Predigtamt* publicly when they hold offices in the church since all offices in the church carry out non-essential duties of the pastoral office, or whether the laity are to exercise the *Predigtamt* privately, as in everyone a minister/missionary. It is a false dichotomy as Luther instructs us that no one exercises the duties of the *Predigtamt*, which is Christ's priestly office, unless they are called to His office.

Feucht's teaching of "Everyone a Minister" has taken strong roots in the current climate of the LCMS. Feucht does not emphasize, as does Walther, that all Christians have the *Predigtamt*, but that all Christians are priests. As priests they are to serve and carry out the priestly duties. Therefore the emphasis regarding the distinction between clergy and laity is on service. The church is the laity and they are to carry out the mission of the church. The pastor is the equipper

or trainer to enable the laity to do the work of the church. The understanding is that all Christians as members of the royal priesthood should exercise the priestly duties of preaching, sacrificing and praying, with no regard for Christ's priestly office. As with the Baptists, here also. Christ's office is abolished and the priestly duties are uncoupled from it. This removes Christ as the high priest and mediator before God. The clergy are relegated to being equippers of the laity who do the ministry of the church which encompasses exercising the priestly duties of Christ's office without having Christ's office.

In contrast to this teaching, Luther explains that Christ is the Priest, that he has the one and only priestly office, and that he has fulfilled all three duties of the priestly office; to preach, sacrifice, and to pray and that Christ continues to exercise his priestly office before God as the mediator of sinners. There is only one priestly office and it belongs to Christ. Christ has neither given away or transferred his priestly office but it remains his and the duties of the office are Christ's priestly duties. Christ is the only one who brings us to God by His priestly office. Thus in the Christian Church, Christ rules as Priest through his priestly office, the holy ministry (*Predigtamt*). There Christ continues to carry out his priestly duties through his office, the holy ministry (*Predigtamt*), by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

Luther refers to the baptized as "priests," but when he is misunderstood and falsely accused of making every Christian a pastor (clergy), instead of "priest," he used the term "Christian." He emphasizes that Christians offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5), and that to call one a "Christian" means that they are a "priest." He understood the liturgy in the Divine Service to express the Christian teaching of spiritual sacrifice. For Luther, worship is not confined to the liturgy in the Divine Service but includes the Christian life in service and self-giving to the needs of the neighbor.

Thus the use of the terms “clergy” and “laity” are not helpful because they divide the unity of the Christian people, which they have in Christ. It is Christ who makes them Christian, not their works. The term “laity” remains a vacuous term. It does not teach us who or what a Christian is. It does not point us to Christ. It is helpful for the sake of the Gospel if Christians emphasize their unity in Christ by using the term “Christian” instead of “laity.”

A theology of the laity for the Lutheran tradition, is a theology that does not use the term “laity” but rather confesses that all who are baptized into Christ are Christians. The term “Christian” shows that the Christian people is undivided, without any distinctions of persons or status before God. The distinction among Christians is external. It is the office and work of each Christian which makes them distinct and unique, just as mayor of the city is distinguished from other citizens by nothing other than that the governing of the city is entrusted to him.

“Christian” explains who and what a Christian is by pointing to Christ and his gifts. By using “Christian,” one confesses that Christ’s righteousness is theirs, that his life, death, and everything that Christ is, has been given to them. Christians call one another “Christian,” after him whose teaching they hold. Christ is the high priest who carries out his priestly duties through his priestly office whereby Christians who receive his gifts bear his name. The term “Christian” points not to status or service but to Christ and his gifts through which Christians receive their status, and calling and service, before God.

APPENDIX ONE

Melanchthon: A Pastor, Not A Layman

Nineteenth-century and twentieth-century historians and theologians state that Melanchthon was not ordained¹ which is accurate but some of them purport from this premise the non sequitur that Melanchthon was a layman.

To say that Philip Melanchthon was a layman, which he was, demands careful explanation.... he often wrote and occasionally signed ordination certificates, and he was depicted in a painting by Lucas Cranach (which still graces the altar of Wittenberg's Saint Mary's church) baptizing a baby. Melanchthon also preached...in early-morning (6 a.m.) Latin lectures....The sermons from 1541–1544 were assembled for publication.²

Melanchthon was not ordained. The Roman Catholic bishops refused to ordain Lutheran-minded candidates for the ministry.³ In addition, Lutherans declined the ordination of the Papists because of the anointing along with the indelible character that Papists thought made one a priest.⁴ The consecration or chrism was vastly different from ordination or a call to the Christian office of preaching. Ordination is not necessary by reason of a particular divine precept. It is the call that places one into office.

We say that the rite of ordination should by no means be omitted; rather, outside a case of necessity, it should always be used in establishing the ecclesiastical ministry.... Nevertheless we deny that ordination is necessary by reason of a particular divine precept, which cannot be demonstrated; or by reason of the sort of effect that the Papists attribute to it, as if it impressed an indelible character or conferred gifts required for the ministry just by working the work [*ex opere operato*],

¹ James William Richard, *Philip Melanchthon: The Protestant Preceptor of Germany 1497-1560* (New York: G. P. Putnam), 58, 82.

² Timothy J. Wengert, "The Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon" in *Philip Melanchthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy*, ed. Robert Kolb, Nicole Kuroepka, Irene Dingle, and Timothy J. Wengert (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 60. See also, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Melanchthon the Confessor," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31, no. 9 (September 1960): 541–46.

³ "Ein Sermon auf das Evangelium Matth. 9 vom Reich Christi, welches stehet in Vergebung der Sünden usw. (1525)," in WA 15:720; See also Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council*, 2:712–14.

⁴ "Sermon for the Wednesday after St. Luke's Day, [Matthew 28:16–20]," *LW* 57:208–9.

about which no promise can be provided from the words of Christ and of the apostles; or by reason of an absolute and simple necessity, as if a man legitimately called by a church could not perform the ministry before being ordained and consecrated, not even at a time when the rite of ordination cannot be had, such as in time of siege, plague, etc., for nothing can be set forth from the Scriptures about such an absolute necessity.⁵

Because there are some who preach without a call to the office, there ought to be a public witness of the church that one has a call to the office in order to preach. The rite of ordination is nothing other than such a public testimony by which the call is declared “in the sight of God and in His name, to be lawful and divine.”⁶

Even though Melanchthon was not ordained he had a call and thus he held the pastoral office or *Predigtamt*. He had received many calls and declined them over his tenure at the University.⁷ Luther encourages Melanchthon to preach because he is called as a priest (pastor) and thus by virtue of his office he is not a layman.

For if we have broken all laws of men and cast off their yokes, what difference would it make to us that Philip is not anointed or tonsured but married? Nevertheless he is truly a priest and actually does the work of a priest, unless it is not the office of a priest to teach the Word of God.... Philip is called by God and performs the ministry of the Word [*agatque verbi ministrum*], as no one can deny.... I would by all means work on the city council and the people so that they would ask Philip to lecture to them privately in German on the Gospels as he has begun to lecture in Latin, so that little by little he would become a German-speaking bishop [*vernacula Episcopus*], as he has already become a Latin-speaking bishop.... May Christ compensate for my absence and silence with Melanchthon’s preaching and voice [*illius praedicatione & sono*] to the confusion of Satan and his apostles.⁸

[Spalatin] should push the idea of our Philip lecturing [*recitaret*] to the people in German on the Gospels.... Thus it would gradually come about that [in Wittenberg] the gospel would be preached [*praedicandi*] in the old manner. You have a fitting answer if someone wants to object that a layman [*laico*] should not preach

⁵ Gerhard, *On the Ministry, Part One*, 209–10.

⁶ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 2:704–5. For the benefits and blessings of ordination for both the person of the pastor and for the members of the congregation see Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 36.

⁷ Richard, *Philip Melanchthon*, 224–25.

⁸ “To George Spalatin, Wartburg, September 9, 1521,” in *LW* 48:308; *WA Br* 2:388–89.

[*dicendum*] the gospel in a corner; answer that [Melanchthon] is doing it under the auspices of the University, and *ex officio*.⁹

Melanchthon, who held the pastoral office, wrote ordination certificates, was depicted in the Lucas Cranach painting over the altar of Wittenberg baptizing a baby, preached sermons,¹⁰ and he was depicted alongside Luther administering Holy Communion in an etching on an old copper plate.¹¹

Since Melanchthon held the pastoral office, the titles given to the clergy were applied to Melanchthon. The examples are myriad in the writings of Melanchthon. For example, when Melanchthon was seriously ill, the professors at the University of Wittenberg wrote a paper to the students, excusing their non-attendance to the usual duties of the day on account of Melanchthon's dangerous situation with which they deeply sympathized. In the paper, the professors addressed Melanchthon as "Reverend Father" and "Lord"—*Reverendi Praeceptoris et Patris nostri Domini Philippi*, titles which were given to the clergy.¹²

⁹ "To George Spalatin, Wartburg, September 9, 1521," *LW* 48:311; *WA Br* 2:390. See also, Joseph Stump, *Life of Philip Melanchthon* (Reading, PA: Pilger, 1897), 39–40. Cf. "Melanchthon, however, was not an ordained priest. Nevertheless, in September Luther sought to have Melanchthon authorized to preach. Lucas Cranach and the goldsmith Christian Düring were to make the necessary application to the Wittenberg city council. As a teacher of the Word, Melanchthon, despite his married status and his lack of ordination, was qualified to be a priest now that the previous requirements were no longer being observed. He could hardly reject an appointment as preacher that came from the congregation. At the same time, this would be an exemplary way of demonstrating the priesthood of all believers, which Luther had just expounded in the postil." Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 25.

¹⁰ Wengert, "Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon," 62–65. See also "No. 5047: Preaching Should Be Simple, Not Erudite, Between May 21 and June 11, 1540," in *LW* 54:382–84; "To Mrs. Martin Luther [Eisleben,] February 6, 1546," in *LW* 50:300; "To Elector Frederick, Wittenberg, March 23, 1524," in *LW* 49:74–76; G. Wilson, *Philip Melanchthon, 1497–1560* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1897), 124–125.

¹¹ Paul Zeller Strodach, *A Manual on Worship: Venite Adoremus*, Revised Ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1964), 152.

¹² F. A. Cox, *The Life of Philip Melanchthon, Comprising an Account of the Most Important Transactions of the Reformation* (London: Gale, Curtis and Fenner, 1815), 571–562. *Domini* goes into German as *Herr* (*Pfarr-Herr*); Johann Georg Wachter, *Glossarium Germanicum, continens origins & antiquitates totius linguae Germanicae, et omnium pene vocabulorum, vigentium et desitorum* (Lipsiae: Gleditsch, 1737), 718. When *Domini* is used as an honorific term for the clergy in the *Concordia Triglotta* it is translated as "Reverend;" F. Bente, ed., *Concordia Triglotta: the Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 502–3.

The conclusion that Melancthon must be a layman because he was not ordained comes from a misunderstanding of ordination. The twentieth-century Lutheran theologians gravitated toward “absolute ordination.” This means that a person is ordained to the pastoral office for life:

The act cannot be repeated, even if the person’s opportunities for exercising ministry are withdrawn. If subsequently the person is again appointed to the ministry, he or she will not be re-ordained. The person thus retains the office into which he or she has been ordained, even if the office is not exercised or the person is employed outside the church.¹³

This thought is still common in the LCMS in the present day. It is observed when a pastor retires from his call and then he continues to “play” pastor in the same congregation or other congregations by seemingly “exercising the duties of the office” even though he no longer is called to the office. The understanding is that it is ordination that places one into the office and thus once ordained, always ordained.

The Lutheran Fathers taught that it is the call¹⁴ that places someone into the office and ordination is the ratification of the call:¹⁵

For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.¹⁶

For the Lutheran Fathers, since ordination was the ratification of the call it was repeated with each call:

¹³ Geoffrey Bromiley, “Ordination.” In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 3:845.

¹⁴ *CA*, XVI:1–5, in Kolb and Wengert, 48.

¹⁵ *Tr.*, 1–70, in Kolb and Wengert, 330–43.

¹⁶ “Psalm 110,” in *LW* 13:332. See also “The Misuse of the Mass,” in *LW* 36:117.

In what manner is love poured into them by the laying on of hands? Augustine answers: “What else is the laying on of hands but a prayer over the man? Therefore it is not, like Baptism, unrepeatable.” And Gratian says about this statement of Augustine, quest. 1, ch. 1, *Arrianos*: “From the fact that he commands the laying on of hands to be repeated, it is shown that it is not a sacrament.”¹⁷

Chemnitz writes, “Thus Paul, although called immediately, still is sent to Ananias, who was to lay hands on [him], that it might be evident to the church concerning [his] call, Acts 9:17; and later, Acts 13:3, when he was to be sent among the gentiles, he was made a regular teacher of the gentiles, again by the laying on of hands.”¹⁸

Lutheran practice at the time of the Reformation equated ordination and installation. Thus in early Lutheran practice, ordination was repeated with each call. Bugenhagen is a good example of this practice as he installs/ordains each candidate for office with each call they receive.¹⁹ Gerhard states, “Examination was also usually held only with those who are being ordained to the ministry for the first time.”²⁰

¹⁷ Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council*, 2:211.

¹⁸ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 704–5.

¹⁹ Todd W. Nichol and Marc Kolden, *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 145.

²⁰ Gerhard, *On the Ministry, Part One*, 209–10, 244–46.

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Current Memberships in Academic Societies

None