1. TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

This book makes an outrageous proposal. Should the laity be abolished? Can it me? As Yves Congar once said, there will always be laypersons in their place in the church: kneeling before the altar, sitting under the pulpit and having their hand in their purse. Throughout almost all of its history the church has been composed of two categories of people: those who give ministry and those who receive it. Lay people are the object not the subject of ministry. They receive it, pay for it, promote it and perhaps even aspire to it. But they never quite become ministers for reasons that are deep in the church’s soul: theological reasons that will be explored in this book, structural and cultural reasons that have been explored in my previous books on the subject. In spite of the fact that the clergy-lay division in the church finds no basis in the New Testament it tenaciously persists.

Indeed most efforts at recovering the New Testament vision of every member ministry are half-measures. They focus on the Christian in the church—lay preachers, lay pastoral care-givers and lay worship leaders. What is so desperately needed is a comprehensive biblical foundation for the Christian’s life in the world as well as the church, a theology for home makers, nurses...


and doctors, plumbers, stock-brokers, politicians and farmers. Recovering this, as Gibbs and Morton said decades ago, would be like discovering a new continent or finding a new element. But maintaining this will be like keeping an airplane in the air. We can look out the window and say the engines are tired and need a rest. But the plane can only be kept in the air and "beat" gravity by keeping the engines going full throttle. Only a sustained renewal of the church will do.

From where did this fleshly predisposition come? How did the church ever become captive to clericalism and ordinary Christians become marginalized? These are questions we will be exploring. But we will do so theologically, not as a matter of church technique. This book focuses on "how come?" rather than "how to." It is a theology of the laity in the true sense of that word: the whole people of God, without clergy and "laity," summoned and equipped by God for the life of the world.

**Theology for, by and of the Laity**

An important distinction must be made at the outset. A theology for the laity is theology translated for "ordinary" Christians untrained in academic theology. It communicates how the great truths of the faith impinge on their lives. Sometimes this amounts to "watered down" theology--putting the cookie jar on a lower shelf. But at its best, a theology for the laity is what theology is all about: the continuous and dynamic task of translating the everlasting word of God into the situations where people live and work.

Theology, as the Puritan William Perkins once said, "is the science of living blessedly forever".\(^4\) It is for life. Theology is a form of translation by which the timeless word of God is brought into tension with the contemporary situation. As Clark Pinnock notes, it must be both "conservative and contemporary",\(^5\) conserving the timeless truths of Scripture and relating them to life in the here and now, like two foci of an ellipse. Richard Mouw says we need to develop a theology of and for the laity that is a non-elitist theology. I think a non-elitist theology of and for the laity has to develop a real theology for waiters and waitresses and florists, and for people who work in clothing stores, and people who work in grocery stores at the check-out lanes and in the lettuce rooms,


\(^5\) A Lecture at Regent College, Vancouver.
and for housewives.\textsuperscript{6}

But can this be done well unless it is done by and with the people themselves—a theology \textit{by} the laity?

In fact theology by the laity is already proliferated in films and books, as well as private conversations: vernacular theology, spur-of-the-moment theology, off-the-cuff theology and indigenous theology. My nine-year-old granddaughter replied to her friend who solemnly announced, "there is no God and no heaven," by saying, "Then what is the point of dying if there is no heaven!" She was doing theology. Thus "every Christian ought to be a theologian in the sense that each will want to reflect on the content of the saving message and think through what it implies for life and thought" (Pinnock)\textsuperscript{7}

This book, however, is not primarily a theology \textit{for} or \textit{by} the laity (though I am technically a non-ordained teacher). It is a theology \textit{of} the laity. It is a theological description of the dignity and duty of the people of God as a whole, including clerics, pastors and bishops, the whole church. As we will soon see, the word "lay people" (\textit{laikoi}) is really an unbiblical description which ought to be eliminated from our vocabulary. "Lay people", in its proper New Testament sense (\textit{laos}), is a term of great honour denoting the enormous privilege and mission of the whole people of God. Once we were "not a people", but now in Christ, we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people \textit{[laos]} belonging to God" (1 Pet 2:9), echoing the vocation of Israel in Exodus 19:6.

Unfortunately theology and ministry have been "done" from the clerical paradigm. Theology is what the professional academic does. And this formal academic theology seems abstracted from life, a matter lamented by Lesslie Newbigin.

The withdrawal of theology from the world of secular affairs is made all the more complete by the work of biblical scholars whose endlessly fascinating exercises have made it appear to the lay Christian that no one untrained in their methods can really understand anything the Bible says. We are in a situation analogous to one about which the great Reformers complained....\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{6} Quoted in Anne Rowthorn, The Liberation of the Laity (Wilton Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1986), 48.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8} Lesslie Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 142-143.
The result of this sad state of affairs is that writing a theology of the laity is normally a compensatory thing—trying to right the wrong balance, trying to lift up non-clergy lay persons, usually at the expense of clergy lay persons. The bearing is "anti-clerical" making the work of the pastor even more ambiguous than it already is.

One of the first to write such as compensatory theology in modern times was Yves Congar, a person who substantially influenced Vatican II. Congar said, rightly, "at bottom there can be only one sound and sufficient theology of the laity, and that is a 'total ecclesiology.'"9 Where Congar's theology leads, though, is toward an ecclesiology in which distinction and ranking is inevitable. The fundamental assumption he brings to his groundbreaking study is that the church is not only the community that God brought into being; the church is also the totality of the means by which the Lord brings humankind into fellowship with himself.10 The hierarchy is essential because the church is both communion with God and the means of attaining that communion.11 Thus he ends up proposing a complementary relationship of clergy and laity, through which alone the pleroma (fullness) of the church can be experienced.12

Shortly after Congar first wrote his "study", Hendrik Kraemer penned A Theology of the Laity. This too has the bearing of a compensatory strategy and fails to provide, what Congar sees as so necessary, a total ecclesiology—one people loving and serving God

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9 Congar, op. cit., xvi.

10 "Whilst Protestantism was making the Church a people without a priesthood and Catholic apologists were replying by establishing the rightfulness of priesthood and institution, the Church in more than one place was finding herself reduced to a state of a priestly system without a Christian people. Thus it was that of the Church's two aspects which Catholic tradition requires to be held together—that in which the Church is an institution that precedes and makes its members, and that in which she is the community made by its members—the theological treatises practically ignored that one according to which a role of the laity could be a priori conceivable." Congar, op. cit., 47.

11 Ibid., 110. The hierarchy and people are like husband and wife—a "couple". Ibid., 284.

12 St John Chrysostom uses the term pleroma for the relationship of the faithful with their bishop. Ibid., 285.

This volume builds on and is indebted to the previously mentioned works. But it also draws on the rich experience and often perceptive reflections of both faculty colleagues, friends and students at Regent College. This will be apparent in many references and notes at the bottom of each page. It is a people

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13 Kraemer has several strengths. (1) He correct Congar in noting that in Scripture women are not only in "the saints" but are truly minister/servants; (2) he rightly insists that the traditional trilogy of "prophet, priest and king do not adequately sum up Christ's purpose and ministry--insisting that diakonos/servant does this better; (3) he clearly notes the problem of layperson as object of ministry rather than subject; (3) he develops helpfully the idea that the church is ministry and mission, not merely having these as elected and occasional activities; (4) he implicitly suggests that the traditional marks of the church (the word of God preached and the administration of the sacraments) are not sufficient to identify the true church, if mission and ministry to the world is lacking. But Kraemer has several deficiencies: (1) he roots his ecclesiology exclusively in the service of Christ so that the church is a christocratic community, substantially neglecting the Father and the Spirit, a fully trinitarian foundation for peoplehood ("a total ecclesiology"); (2) in his passion to get the people of God engaged with the world Kraemer resolves the essence of the church as "projection" through service/mission in the world, neglecting the central biblical truth that the purpose of the church is derivative of the purpose of all creation to worship and bring glory to God, something which is not restricted to worship services in the institutional church on Sunday mornings.

14 I am particularly grateful for the contributions (and in some cases manuscript critique) of Stella Griffin, David Gaskel, David Taylor, Mark Wessel, David Falk, Steven Daly, Gerry Schoberg, Don Flow, Don Anderson, Klaus Bochmuehl, Gordon Fee, Charles Ringma, James Houston, William Dumbrell, James Packer, Stanley Grenz, Robert Banks.
project. Some of this theological work has been literally hammered out during my carpentry and business years, as well as complemented and challenged by indigenous theologies of churches in the developing world among whom my wife and I serve each year. It is only "together with all the saints" (Eph 3:18) that we can know how wide, long, high and deep is the love of Christ. And love, as we shall see, is the essence of the ministry and mission of the people of God—no more and no less. Theology is the science of living the life of love blessedly forever.

We start with the biblical description of the people of God, a people without laity or clergy. Then we explore how this people is summoned and equipped by God in vocation, work and ministry. Finally, we consider what it means for this people to be given for the life of the world as prophets, priests and kings, as a missionary people grappling with the powers.

I pray that these thoughts will help pastors to equip the saints (Eph 4:11-12), college professors who need a text book that engages ordinary Christians with the high calling of Christ, and thoughtful followers of Christ who want to make sense of their lives as they try to balance what feels like three full-time jobs: church ministry, daily work and family. The book can be used as a basis of study in small groups or classes using the guide at the end of each chapter. As will become immediately apparent, this book is my story.

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2254 words
NOTE: all words italicized are shown in bold
In the spring of 1975 I became a layperson. I was trained in a seminary, ordained and served with my wife in various churches and parachurch movements. But that spring I resigned from the leadership of a wonderful church, put on my nail belt and began working as a carpenter, doing business while planting a church among street people in the city of Vancouver. Understandably my pastor colleagues were confused. Months later the following conversation took place.

"Is this the day I get the axe?" I leaned over the restaurant table and smiled warmly, almost playfully, as I asked this "to be or not to be" question. Sitting across the table, Andrew Hendricks felt a tinge of embarrassment to be in this conversation at all. He also noticed that I was not as comfortable as my playful remark had suggested. Perhaps, he thought, an official recognition by the denomination means more to me than I revealed. "You know," Andrew replied, "as a denominational representative I am meeting with you to communicate an official concern. Sixteen months ago you left the ministry and took up a job doing house renovations. So we are considering revoking your license and ordination. I have been sent to tell you what is "in the works". Unless you come back into the ministry the action will be take place six months from now." But as he said this, Andrew found himself being plunged into a crisis of conscience in which the policy of his church and Scripture seemed to be in irreconcilable opposition.

"Does that mean I am about to be defrocked?" I asked. "Not defrocked. Just delisted. You see, we really can't keep someone on our list who is not in the active pastoral ministry." Andrew said this in an appropriately official way, but he ached inside at the complexity of this situation. He knew that I was still doing the Lord's work in the church, on the job and at home.

"Andrew, I pray more now than I did when I was a pastor. I feel I am an agent of the kingdom of God in our business. The church we are planting is also ministry, but not more holy than anything else I do, including the time I spend with my wife and children." My answer touched a nerve.

"But you were called to the ministry? What about your ordination?"
"The pastoral ministry must never be considered a career" I replied.

"If everyone in the church thought this way we would lose the separated, supported ministry. Does that not trouble you?"

"What troubles me more," I replied, "is that the present practice of ordination leads to a two-tiered ministry system: real ministry for the full-time professional, and part-time ministry squeezed into their discretionary hours for the rest of God's people."

Andrew responded, "Eventually this could lead to every Christian being ordained. What would then become of the ministry?" Andrew knew that I could not dispatch nineteen centuries of church tradition with a few sentences. "You, my dear friend, have a decision to make. You can keep your credential but you must leave your work and return to the ministry."

"Andrew, I never left it. Perhaps it is you and the church that also have a decision to make." Andrew received this cordially but as he made his way home he found himself deeply troubled. So did I.15

George Bernard Shaw once said that "All professions are conspiracies against the laity."16 But there is a problem with this cynical remark when it is applied to the church. It is utterly pointless to launch a conspiracy against something that no longer exists. The New Testament does not bear witness to two peoples: the professional clergy (those who are superior, gifted and powerful, and the laity (those who are inferior, untrained and powerless). Rather there is one people: the laity, the Greek word being laos. And laos includes the leaders. Moreover the leaders, like the led, are first and foremost members of the laity and share the exquisite honour of being included in the people of God (1 Pet 2:9-10).

To recover a biblical perspective on the people of God we may need to abolish both the words "laity" and "clergy" (as commonly used). We may also need to reinvent language to express the dignity and duty of the ordinary Christian. In preparation for this we must first examine the status quo, then the biblical data.

15 This expanded conversation is a collage of more than one conversation that took place and the name is disguised.

We will reflect theologically on the identity and vocation of the people of God, and finally consider what this all means.

THE ELUSIVE "LAY PERSON"

What a slippery term we have to define. Depending on the context "lay" is defined by function (does not administer the Word and sacraments), by status (does not have a "Rev"), by location (serves primarily in the world), by education (is not theologically trained), by remuneration (is not full-time and paid), and by lifestyle (is not religious but occupied with secular life)—usually in terms of negatives! Generally lay people are considered to be assistants to the pastor rather than the other way around. For example, Georgia Harkness cites a survey taken among twelve thousand members of the Methodist denomination in the United States in which she offered four options to select:

Lay persons are:
(i) members of the people of God called to a total ministry of witness and service in the world;
(ii) those who are ministered to by the clergy who are the true church;
(iii) people in part-time Christian service;
(iv) non-ordained Christians whose function is to help the clergy do the work of the church.

She notes that 59.9 per cent checked the fourth option.17

With scientific precision the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner defines lay persons both negatively and positively. Lay persons are understood negatively: as those who are not in the hierarchy of the church, without proper hierarchical powers either legal or liturgical—thus eliminating the few so-called "lay" popes from the category, and, second, as people distinguished from those in the religious life, monks and nuns who have taken the vows of the Evangelical Counsels. Positively, Rahner defines lay persons as those remain in the world and have specific tasks in society that determine their 'status' in the church, and (positively again) lay persons in the church are called, adopted, commissioned and blessed persons fully functioning as co-operators of the grace of God in and through the church's life because of their baptism and confirmation.18


Protestants fare little better in spite of the rich heritage of the Reformation and its clarion call to the "priesthood of all believers." In place of the two-fold alternatives to laity in the Catholic communion, based on function (the priesthood) and life (the religious--monks and nuns), Protestants define "lay" as non-ordained, unpaid and untrained. Even Morton and Gibbs' layman type B who functions as a voluntary clergy person (the "ideal" church member who lives for and in the church), is still a layperson. The parachurch movements that are proliferating everywhere are, in one sense, an amazing spread of kingdom ministry by ordinary Christians but one can hardly claim that parachurch staff are laity since they are professional religionists, remunerated for their service and, to a large extent, theologically trained, even though they usually lack formal ordination.

So Protestants have their own hierarchies: the cross-cultural missionary at the top, followed by parish priests and pastors, then youth workers and parachurch ministers (including seminary professors). Below the clergy-lay divide (and in descending order of religious value) are people-helping professionals (e.g. teachers, doctors and nurses), home makers, tradespeople, business people, politicians and marginally valuable occupations (such as law and stock brokering). Can such distinctions be eliminated? Should they be?

When you enter the church today there are two "peoples"--laity, who receive the ministry, and "clergy" who give it. But when we enter the world of the New Testament we find only one people, the true laos of God, with leaders among the people.

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20 Ironically, recent articles from the World Council of Churches lament not only the loss of the Department of the Laity in 1971 but real laypersons in the mainline churches as traditional forms of congregational life disintegrate under the pressure of postmodernity. In contrast to this Konrad Raiser notes, "The increasing number of evangelical, fundamentalist and charismatic groups and new religious movements are largely supported by 'lay people' in the classical sense, but the Christian base communities and the movements critical of society or of the churches which have sprung up around the churches--not least the women's movement--are also essentially the result of lay initiatives." "Laity in the Ecumenical Movement: Redefining the Profile," The Ecumenical Review, Vol 45, No 4 (October 1993): 375-383.
A People without "Laity"

New Testament authors rejected two down-putting "laity" words available to describe the people of God under the newly reconstituted covenant. The first was the Greek word laikos--"belonging to the common people." It is not used at all in the New Testament. Clement of Rome at the end of the first century was the first to use it for Christians. He used "layman" (laikos) in his epistle to the Corinthians to describe the place of laity in worship when the presbyters were being deprived of their functions. Alexandre Faivre notes both the military comparison

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22 I regret the unfortunate mistake in Liberating the Laity, page 21, where this word is used to describe the whole people of God.

23 "Thus all things are to be done religiously, acceptable to His good pleasure, dependent on His will. Those, therefore, that make their offerings at the prescribed times are acceptable and blessed; for, since they comply with the ordinances of the Master, they do not sin. Special functions are assigned to the high priest; a special office is imposed upon the priests; and special ministrations fall to the Levites. The layman is bound by the rules laid down for the laity. Each of us, brethren, must in his
commander-in-chief—and the allusion to the Old Testament cultic hierarchy, two obvious sources of the clergy-lay distinction that would be later institutionalized in the church. This first use of "layman" by a Christian passed largely unnoticed and it was not until much later, with Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian that the term emerged again. Remarkably Tertullian affirmed that "where there are three gathered together, even though they are lay persons, there is the church." But in responding to heresy Tertullian noted that the heretics "at one time put novices in office; at another time, men who are bound to some secular employment. . . . For even on laymen do they impose the functions of priesthood." The term does not appear either in the writings of Justin Martyr (150 A.D.—for whom the title "Christian" was

own place [his emphasis] endeavour to please God with a good conscience, reverently taking care not to deviate from the established rule of service." Clement of Rome (1 Clement 40:5). Remarkably the only occasion where "lay people" is used in the NIV (2 Chron 35:5,7) refers to this exact situation: the people of God that were not of the priestly tribe of Levi. In fact this English translation skews the meaning of the original pejoratively and should be translated "the rest of the people."


25 In "An Exhortation to Chastity," in the context of affirming a monogamous priesthood, Tertullian writes: "Well, then, you will say, it follows that all whom the Apostle does not mention in this law are free. It would be folly to imagine that lay people may do what priests may not. For are not we lay people also priests? It is written: He hath made us also a kingdom, and priests to God and His father. It is ecclesiastical authority which distinguishes clergy and laity, this and the dignity which sets a man apart by reason of membership in the hierarchy. Hence, where there is no such hierarchy, you yourself offer sacrifice, you baptize, and you are your own priests. Obviously, where there are three gathered together, even though they are lay persons, there is the church" (On Chastity, 7).

26 "An Exhortation to Chastity," 7 (Ibid., p. 53). Tertullian also maintained that in the absence of a bishop, presbyter or deacon, a lay person could administer baptism: "even laymen [and excluding women] 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." "On the Power of Conferring Baptism," 17:2 (p. 677).

sufficient—or Irenaeus (180 A.D.).

The second word in the Greek language for "laity" is idiotes, root of the English word "idiot." It means "layperson in contrast to an expert or specialist." This pejorative word is much closer to Bernard Shaw's "laity." But this term is never used by an inspired apostle to describe Christians! In Acts 4:13 members of the Jewish Sanhedrin expressed their amazement at the powerful preaching of these "unschooled, ordinary men" (in this case the idiotai were Peter and John). The word is also used in 1 Corinthians 14:23 to describe the person from outside the church who comes into a Christian meeting totally uninitiated and cannot understand what is going on. Here idiotes refers to people who are not yet Christians. So neither of the two available negative words—laikos and idiotes—is used to describe ordinary Christians. Instead two other words are employed.

The Laos of God

The Greek word laos originally meant "the crowd" and "the people as a nation." It was eventually employed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) as the universal designation for "the people of God" translating the Hebrew 'am. In Acts 15:14 James at the apostolic council makes the deliberate connection of the Old Testament national Israel with the newly reconstituted people of God in Christ: "Simon has described for us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people [laon] for himself." Strathmann notes, "This was for Jewish ears an astounding and even a revolutionary saying, though the way had been prepared for it in Old Testament prophecy." This word may be properly translated "laity" but to do so we would need to reinvent the word. It does not mean "untrained" or "ordinary" but "the people of God"—a truly extraordinary people.

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28 Faivre, op. cit., 26-35.
29 Ibid., 35-40.
While we observe in the church today two classes of people separated by education, ordination and intonation, we discover in the New Testament one ministering people with leaders, also members of the laos, serving them to equip the people for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). The people of God (laos) is one people composed (miraculously) of Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, bond and free—all being together the chosen inheritance of God. The New Testament uses many other terms to describe a people undifferentiated into clergy and laity:

* "the church" (ecclesia, a term which describes the gathered people, translating the Old Testament qahal),
* "saints" (hoi agioi, a corporate term describing God's newly reformed eschatological end-time community),
* "the chosen ones" (eklektos, emphasizing God's sovereign choice of a people for his own possession and his service),
* "the royal priesthood", a term taken directly from Exodus 19:6 and used in 1 Peter 2:9-11 for the church as God's kingly and priestly community,
* "the household of God" (1 Tim 3:5, 15),
* "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16, and not the New Israel),
* "the body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:12-26),
* "the temple of God" (Eph 2:21-22),
* "God's commonwealth" (a polis in exile, Phil 3:20-21; Eph 2:19).

We should note that these terms are all corporate. The church is not a collection of saints (a bouquet of Christians) but the body of Christ. Further, as Gordon Fee notes, there is a remarkable continuity with the people of God under the Old

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34 See Fee, op. cit., 3-13. Some of the following thoughts are developed in this fine article.

35 1 Thess 1:1.


Covenant with respect to peoplehood, but a remarkable discontinuity with the Old Testament with regard to leadership. Simply put, there were clergypersons under the Old Covenant but, under the New, these functions are abolished, or rather universalized in the laos of God. The reason has to do with the lordship of Christ. This is apparent from the New Testament use of the word "clergy."

THE ELUSIVE "CLERGY PERSON"

In common speech "clergy" is a term used to describe a religious official, a member of a religious order, or a pastoral leader of a church or denomination. Four dimensions seem to be implicit in the contemporary concept of clergy: (1) the vicarious function — service is rendered representatively not only on behalf of, but instead of the people; (2) the ontological difference usually associated with absolute ordination — namely, that a person becomes a priest or religious in virtue of ordination and not in virtue of character; and therefore cannot resign from ministry; (3) the sacramental function whereby since Cyprian (200–258 AD) the term sacerdos is used routinely for the bishop "leaning heavily on the image of the priesthood in the Hebrew Scriptures"; and (4) the professional status which implies a quasi-unique function with social significance, specialized functions which are interchangeable and with the assumption that a well-trained professional can do it better than an amateur or volunteer. One unacceptable definition of clergy is that these are leaders who earn their living by the Gospel or who engage in religious service for remuneration. But we look in vain in the New Testament for such distinctions.

A Church Full of Clergy

Remarkably the Greek word kleros, the word from which our English "clergy" is derived, is used to describe aspects of being the whole people of God. The term originally means a "lot", "share,"

38 Fee, op. cit., 6.
or "portion assigned to someone," and was used in the Old Testament for the inheritance in the promised land. This term gets transferred to the New Testament from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Peter and John use this word when they tell Simon Magus he has "no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right with God" (Acts 8:21, cf Deut 12:12). But here is the new thing in Christ. The Old Testament "inheritance" is now shared by all believers. Jesus says to Saul/Paul: "I am sending you to [the Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (emphasis mine, Acts 26:17-18, cf Col 1:12; Eph 1:11; Gal 3:29).

In no situation do the apostles use this term to describe appointment to an ecclesiastical office, as was the case much later. With the exception of Ignatius of Antioch (who used kleros to describe the martyr) the term was not used for "clergy" until the third century. Simultaneously the term "laity" reappears. As Alexandre Faivre shows, laypersons can only exist when they have an opposite against which they can define themselves and, until the second century, there simply was no such opposite!

The church in the New Testament has no "lay people" in the usual sense of that word, and is full of "clergy" in the true sense of that word. So Alexandre Faivre says: One searches the New Testament in vain for a theology of the laity. Neither laymen nor priests can be found in it, at least in the sense in which we understand those words today. The inheritance was a joint inheritance, shared equally between all the heirs.

The New Testament opens up a world of universal giftedness, universal empowerment of the people of God through the gift of the

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42 See W. Foerster, "kleros" in Kittel, ed (TDNT), op. cit., Vol 3, 759ff.

43 Dean Fleming notes that the case of Judas in Acts 1:17, who was allotted his share (kleros) in the apostolic ministry, the emphasis is on Judas' defection and replacement as the fulfilment of God's plan foretold in Scripture rather than his appointment to and defection from an ecclesiastical office. See Dean Fleming, "The Clergy/Laity Dichotomy: A New Testament Exegetical and Theological Analysis," The Asia Journal of Theology, Vol 8, No. 2 (October 1994):232-250.

44 Faivre, op. cit., 23.

45 Faivre, op., cit., 7-8.
Holy Spirit, universal ministry, and the universal experience of the call of God by all the people of God.

**Old Testament Sources**

In contrast, especially the first five books of the Old Testament immerse us in a world in which the temple and the priest are central, as witnessed by the prominence of the Book of Leviticus. There is continuity between the testaments in peoplehood but radical discontinuity in leadership as shown in this chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Covenant</th>
<th>New Covenant</th>
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<tr>
<td>limited Word ministry (Jer 31:34)</td>
<td>universal Word ministry (Acts 2:18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>externally motivated ministry (2 Cor 3:3 &quot;on tablets of stone&quot;)</td>
<td>internally motivated ministry (&quot;on...the human heart&quot;) 2 Cor 3:3</td>
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<td>involves temporary and fading inspiration (2 Cor 3:13)</td>
<td>permanent and continuous transformation (3:18)</td>
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<td>priestly caste and tribe</td>
<td>universal priesthood (2 Pet 2:9-11)</td>
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<td>sacerdotal mediation of priests</td>
<td>total-life priesthood</td>
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<tr>
<td>occasional and exceptional spiritual giftedness (Exod 31:3)</td>
<td>universal spiritual giftedness (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique and special &quot;calls&quot; to service (1 Sam 3)</td>
<td>universal call to service and ministry (Eph 4:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>limited ordination (Lev 8,21)</td>
<td>universal &quot;ordination&quot; to the ministry by baptism (1 Cor 12:13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>occasional gift of wisdom- the wise man/woman (1 Kgs 3:16-28)</td>
<td>wisdom available to all (James 3:13-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special representatives of the rule of God in judges, prophets, priests and kings</td>
<td>universal experience of the power, sovereignty and rule of Christ (the Kingdom of God) by all believers (Mk 1:15; Eph 1:19-22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural separation (Circumcision, diet, etc.)</td>
<td>apostolic ambassadors (&quot;all things to all men&quot;) 2 Cor 5:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several movements within Old Testament history, all presented negatively by Scripture, appear to condemn acts of self-liberation by the laity.\textsuperscript{46} There are, however, other strands of revelation that suggest something quite different: non-clerical ministry within the Old Testament.

* In Exodus 19:6 God charges the whole people to become a "kingdom of priests". At least one modern Jewish scholar has asked whether the installation of Aaron and his sons as priests (Exod 28) was perhaps an accommodation to the proven need of the people for a visible sanctuary and therefore a priesthood, since it comes after the golden calf incident. That appears to be the case with the monarchy (Jdgs 8:23; 1 Sam 8:6-9). Reuven Kimelman argues that the reality of being away from the Temple during the exile and the ultimate fall of Jerusalem, provided the Jewish community with the social and theological opportunity to "appropriate the original divine charge to become a kingdom of priests."\textsuperscript{47} The rabbis did not attempt to make the Jewish community into a democracy (thereby levelling the clergy) but rather to raise all the people to become priests and rabbis together--the clericalization of the laity. Perhaps, argues Kimelman, the priesthood "resulted from the failure of the people to respond adequately to God's revelation".\textsuperscript{48} In any event the idea of a priest-people predated the formation of a priesthood within the priest-people. This Jewish vision of every member ministry was still something less than the vision of the New Testament.

* Further, Moses prays that "all the Lord's people were

\textsuperscript{46} Korah's rebellion (Num 16:1-50), Nahab and Abihu's unauthorized sacrificial ministry (Lev 10:1-3), Miriam and Aaron's revolt against Moses' leadership (Num 12:1-15), Saul's hasty sacrifice without waiting for Samuel (1 Sam 13:2-15), and King Uzziah's improper sacrifice in the temple (2 Chron 26:16-21). Other similar incidents are found but these are representative of what appears to be a clerical notion of leadership and priesthood in the Old Testament.


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 41.
prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them," when Joshua complains that two "unordained" men, Eldad and Medad, are prophesying in the camp (Num 11:26-30). We can reverently join Moses in his prayer. The only Old Testament person of whom it is definitively stated that he was "filled with the Spirit of God" is a craftsman - Bezalel (Exod 31:1-5). Add to this the fact that the Nazarite vow (Num 6:1ff) represented one opportunity under the Old Covenant for ordinary people to dedicate themselves to live fully for God.

* Many of Israel's leaders emerged from the people: David was a shepherd chosen to become king (1 Sam 16:1-13); Nehemiah was a pagan king's cupbearer (Neh 1:1-2:9); Esther was a poor orphaned girl who became a queen in Exile; Daniel was a young man chosen for special education in the court of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1). Many of Israel's prophets were "laymen" and not associated with sacerdotal ministry: Amos, a dresser of fig trees (Amos 7:10-15); Ezekiel, a former priest who became a "lay" prophet in Exile.

* Much of what we call "ministry" occurred in the normal contexts of life: Jacob in his relationship with his family (Gen 33:4-11); Hosea in his marriage to Gomer; Daniel through his service in a foreign court; Joseph while in prison and in Pharaoh's court in Egypt; Job in praying for his family (Job 1:5) and his friends (42:10); the Preacher in his reflection and contemplation on his life work (Ecc 2:17-23).

* Joel envisions the day when God will pour his Spirit on all flesh, on men and women, so that all the people of God will prophesy and bear the Word of God (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-18). Finally, Isaiah envisions the day when, after the Exile, all the people will again be called "priests of the Lord" and "servants of the Lord" (Isa 61:6). Speaking to this Reuven Kimelman suggests "the experience of the exile enables the community to perceive the contingent nature of the priesthood. While not outrightly negating it, they embark on a path leading to its eventual obsolescence."49

Is there universal (people) ministry in the Old Testament? Yes. The 'am (people of God) is one ministering people. The 'am never signified mere spectators. It was ordinary people who killed the sacrificial animal and cut it in pieces (Lev 1-7). The directions for worship in the Pentateuch are universal: they apply to the whole people and not merely the religious elite. Even children and aliens in the land are expected to participate in the ceremonial life of the nation (Num 9:14).50

49 Ibid., 42.

embraced not merely cultic activity but the whole of life from birth to death, permitting no dichotomy of sacred and secular. This truth, said the prophets, would one day become apparent: "On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty. . . " (Zech 14:20-21). Ultimately the blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3) was a covenant obligation laid on the people as a whole.

Implicit Old Testament Clericalism

Notwithstanding this break with the religious nations around, Israel had clergy in the sense that some leaders were required (either by God or the people) to assume a vicarious function. For example, Moses is required to listen to God instead of the people: "Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey" (Deut 5:23-27). Indeed Moses' mediatorial ministry is to be continued by the prophets to be raised up after him (Deut 18:15).

A caveat should be entered here. Moses had a unique role in the history of salvation and some of the apparent pro-clerical stories are not vindications of a clerical caste but of Moses as an appointed leader. Korah's rebellion (Num 16:1-50), and Miriam and Aaron's revolt (Num 12:1-15) are revolts against Moses' leadership not attempts to liberate a subjugated "laity". Further, in acknowledging an implicit Old Testament clericalism, it must be noted that the functions of the priests were exclusive. Aaron was the first priest (Exod 28; Lev 8) and only his descendants were to serve as his successors.51

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51 Nonetheless the original Old Testament vision of a priestpeople was not entirely lost in the centuries of Old Testament clericalism until Christ broke down the clergy-lay distinction once and for all.

* In one sense the Levites were representative rather than vicarious. "In them every firstborn, whether Ephraimite, Benjaminite or member of any other tribe, worked in the service of the priest. Each was there through representation." Elmer Dyck, "Laos and Leadership Under the Old Testament," (unpublished paper, Regent College, Vancouver, 1989), 1.

* Further there were some exceptions to this rule of Aaronic descent for the priesthood. Samuel was not a descendent of Aaron (1 Sam 1, but see 1 Chron 6:33-4) and yet functioned as a leading priest. So also Micah, an Ephraimite (Judg 17:5), Eleazar a
The overwhelming impression left by the Old Testament is not of a priests and passive people receiving the benefits of such vicarious ministry, but rather a covenantal ministering people quite different from the surrounding nations. If, as William Dumbrell argues, the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation can best be understood as an expression of a single covenant, then we will not fully understand or experience the full benefits of being in Christ without grasping what Christ fulfils, namely the former covenant. Early defence of the separated clergy often appealed to the priest-people distinction in the Old Testament. Indeed, the argument is still used. But in many ways Christian churches have not even appropriated the many significant contributions to whole-people ministry embodied in the older covenant. These include viewing Adam and Eve as priests of creation and prototypes for the human vocation, experiencing corporateness and peoplehood and not merely making ministry an individual activity, envisioning the servant of the Lord as the paradigm for ministry by the laos of God, seeing sabbath (the three-fold rest of God, humankind and creation) as the goal of the salvation story, and finally undertaking covenant as the relational basis of vocation, work and ministry.

The Fulfilled Old Testament

Benjamite (1 Sam 7:1) and Ira of Manasseh (11 Sam 20:26).

* No leader of Israel, however surprised at being called of God, could maintain a valid ministry on the basis of an ontological difference because of that call. Kings were anointed and therefore uniquely set aside by God and for God's service. But the anointing did not leave an indelible mark on the character and spirituality of the person so anointed. Saul's case of losing spiritual reality but maintaining the office of king, is among the most poignant examples in the Old Testament.

* The functions of judge, prophet, elder or king (at least for the Northern Kingdom) were not restricted to any tribe and often were undertaken by surprised candidates.

* While some prophets aligned themselves with people of power (to some extent, Jeremiah with King Josiah, and Isaiah, with King Hezekiah), most who joined professional guilds charged with the task of advising kings to maintain their status quo and personal well-being, were judged by the canonical prophets to be false prophets. "The true prophet was never a professional in that sense." Dyck, op. cit., 12.

In sum, under the Old Testament the entire people were called to belong to God, to be God's people and to serve God's purposes (Exod 19:6). But within that people only a few—prophets, priests and princes—experienced a special call to give leadership to God's people, to speak God's word and to minister on behalf of God (e.g. Isa 6:8). Old Testament saints looked forward to the day when a new covenant would be inaugurated, a covenant through which God's law would be written on the hearts of all the people (not just in a document), in which "they will all know [God] from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer 31:34), and by which God's Spirit would "move [people] to follow [God's] decrees and be careful to keep [God's] laws" (Ezek 36:27).

The apostles firmly believed that the promised day came with the coming of God's son Jesus and the outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21). Three great theological realities brought about the transformation of the Old Testament laos into a newly reconstituted people in which all minister: the lordship of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church for ethical living and ministry (1 Cor 12:13) and the dawning of the End by which believers "already" live "in the heavenlies"—the way things will eventually become (Eph 1:4) as they wait for Christ's second coming.\(^53\) For this reason the apostles used the Greek word kleros (clergy) to describe a wholly new reality: the dignity, calling and privilege of every member of the family of God.

**NEW TESTAMENT LEADERS**

While the New Testament has no place for clergy as a separate category of believer, the Scripture has many references to leaders within God's laos. There is a rich diversity of leadership words in the New Testament. In Romans 12:8 the word for leadership is a verb, not a noun, proistemi (the one who goes before); in 1 Corinthians 12:28 leadership is a function, kybernesis (administrators); in Philippians 1:1 the word for leadership is a term for a minor responsibility, episkopoi (overseers; see also Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1); in 1 Timothy 3:8 the word represents a position of lower status, diakonos (servant); in Titus 1:5 the word is a descriptive term, presbyteroi (elders, or older, wiser people); and in Ephesians 4:11 the word is a metaphor, not a title, poimenes (pastors or shepherds). Conspicuously missing from the list of leadership words is "priest" (hiereus), a word which until the end of the second century was reserved for Christ and the whole believing community.\(^54\)


\(^54\) Remarkably Congar notes, with the one exception, Clement, "Corinthians" xl, 5 (circa 95), that philologically the Reformers
Function or Office?

Edward Schillebeeckx describes the healthy tension between function and office:
Ministry without charisma becomes starved and threatens to turn into a power institution; charisma without any institutionalization threatens to be volatilized into fanaticism and pure subjectivity, quickly becoming the plaything of opposing forces, to the detriment of the apostolic communities.55

Nowhere is there justified what Congar calls "two simultaneous truths, a clear inequality on account of function and a radical equality as members of one body."56 Rather there are multiple models of leadership for the people of God, each suited to the occasion and context, including elders, presbyters, bishops/overseers, deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, apostles, prophets and pastor-teachers.57 These servants of the laos are called to equip the saints (the body as a whole) for the work of

were right, though he insists that the term "priest" is simply a syncopation of the Greek presbuteros, elder, op. cit., 133.


56 Congar, op. cit., 115.

57 Congar argues from this diversity that it is all to be contained in the one Catholic church rather than in the rich diversity of expressions of the people of God in history and interculturally: "It has often been remarked (and not by Anglicans and Protestants only) that the early Church comprised a monarchical aspect, in the authority of the Apostles, of apostolic men or of bishops; an aristocratic aspect in the role of elders and of councils; and a 'popular' aspect, in the part taken by all the faithful in the assemblies. To put these different aspects into opposition with one another, and even separate them, to erect one or another into the principle of the Church's constitution, as various heresies have done, bringing about episcopalianism, presbyterianism, congregationalism, this is to misunderstand the living organizational reality of the total Church. In life it is lived, the hierarchical principle (determinant for structure) combines with the communal principle (which calls for all to be associated together according to their order) for a work which is the work not of the hierarchs but of the Church." op. cit., p. 282.
the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). They function, by and large, not in a solo or monarchical manner but in plurality (Acts 13:1; 1 Tim 4:14). 58 They are members and ministers of the laos serving the whole. They are not vicarious servants, not ontologically different; they do not perform a sacramental function in isolation (until later in history) and do not form a professional class. 59 Congar's thesis that the New Testament "presupposes the hierarchical priesthood" 60 is entirely unfounded; it "reads into" the New Testament a later development.

It is frequently argued that Paul's charismatic (Spirit-filled) view of leadership yielded to fixed offices in the later Pastoral Epistles and thus provides the biblical justification for a clergy-lay split. 61 But the primary distinction between leaders in the New Testament, as Gordon Fee points out, is not between charismatic and official but between itinerant and resident leaders:

Unless Rev 2-3 provides an exception, there is no evidence in the New Testament of a single leader at the local level who was not at the same time an itinerant. . . . Apart from the authority of the apostles over the churches they had founded, there seems to be very little interest in the question of "authority" at the local level. To be sure, the people are directed to respect, and submit to, those who laboured among them and served

58 For a more complete examination of the theology and spirituality of leadership (from which some of these thoughts are drawn) see my "Leadership. Church," in Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens, The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 568-575.

59 In the chapter on Vocation I will show how the call of God to Paul was an exceptional and unrepeatable call and does not form a model for the "call" to the professional ministry.

60 Congar, op. cit., 213.

61 In his fine article Dean Fleming counters this argument along several lines: (1) when official roles are named the charismatic character of the leadership service is never far from view (e.g. in 1 Tim 3:5); (2) the flexibility of terminology for leaders shows that function takes precedence over office; (3) mention of overseers and deacons in the Pauline church of Philippi (Phil 1:1 calls into question whether offices were relegated to a later post-Pauline, institutional period; (4) leadership in the New Testament is usually a collective. Fleming, op. cit., 240-242. See also Fung, op. cit., 16-39.
them in the Lord (1 Cor 16:16; Heb 13:17). But the interest is not in their authority as such, but in their roles as those who care for the others. The concern for governance and roles within church structures emerges at a later time. Nevertheless the twofold questions of laity and women in ministry are almost always tied to this question in contemporary debate. The great urgency always is, Who's in charge around here? which is precisely what puts that debate outside the New Testament concerns.62

The Church as Ministering People

The church as a whole is the true ministerium, a community of prophets, priests and princes/princesses serving God through Jesus in the power of the Spirit seven days a week. All are clergy in the sense of being appointed by God to service and dignified as God's inheritance. All have a share in the power and blessing of the age of the Spirit. All are laity in the sense of having their identity rooted in the people of God. All give ministry. All receive ministry. That is the constitution of the church. But when we step into the modern church we see something quite different.

Few business people, for example, think of themselves as full-time ministers in the marketplace. Fewer still are encouraged in this by their churches. Hardly any one gets commissioned to their service in the world except foreign missionaries.63 Christians in the first century would have found such a state of affairs anachronistic—a throw-back to the situation before Christ came when only a few in Israel knew the Lord, when only one tribe was named as priests, when only a select few heard the call of God on their lives. Nothing but a Copernican revolution of head, heart and hand can change this heretical state of affairs.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/STUDY

1. Read the whole of Paul's letter to the Ephesians as a letter

62 Fee, op. cit., 10.

addressed to the people as a whole rather than to you personally and individually. Record your discoveries.

2. Do you own version of the survey undertaken by Georgia Harkness noted above without prejudicing people's responses by indicating what you hope the outcome will be.

3. Discuss this comment by William Diehl, former executive of Bethlehem Steel.

...In the almost thirty years of my professional career, my church has never once suggested that there be any type of accounting of my on-the-job ministry to others. My church has never once offered to improve those skills which could make me a better minister, nor has it ever asked if I needed any kind of support in what I was doing. There has never been an enquiry into the types of ethical decisions I must face, or whether I seek to communicate the faith to my co-workers. I have never been in a congregation where there was any type of public affirmation of a ministry in my career. In short, I must conclude that my church doesn't have the least interest whether or how I minister in my daily work.64

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64 William Diehl, Christianity and Real Life (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), V-VI.
It is safe to say that unbalanced notions about either clergy or laity are due to unbalanced notions of the Church. Indeed, to be more precise, too low a view of laity is due to too high a view of clergy, and too high a view of clergy is due to too low a view of the Church.

John Stott

At bottom there can only be one sound and sufficient theology of laity, and that is a 'total ecclesiology'. . . it will also be an anthropology, and even a theology of creation in its relation to Christology.

Yves Congar

Abolishing the laity and recovering the dignity of the whole people of God in theory as well as practice is a tall order indeed. But why attempt it at all?


66 Congar, op.cit., xvi-xvii.
Some may regard this approach as merely pragmatic: there is too much work for one person to do in the church and "liberating the laity" will enlist more workers for church work. Others will view the abolition of the laity as a mere spin-off of the great democratic forces at work in the world today--forces that have brought down the Berlin Wall and must inevitably destroy the wall that divides clergy and laity. While pastors in the developing world are still, by and large, held in high esteem, the situation is different in the developed West. There, pastors are often bypassed in favour of psychiatrists and psychological counsellors when real help is sought, church consultants when expert advice is needed in church management, marriage "chapels" when weddings are to be conducted, and funeral "homes" when there is a death. In a postmodern culture we are developing a generation of post-church Christians who have no apparent need of the institutional church.

Relationships are everything. Institutions are demonic. Pastors are unnecessary. So why try to abolish the clergy if it is on the way out anyway?

It is widely acknowledged that pastors are facing an identity crisis, a crisis which may be deepened by the pastor-as-equipper emphasis now being promoted by many, including myself.\textsuperscript{67} Simply

\textsuperscript{67} We will take up later the vexed question of the interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-12 to mean that pastor-teachers are to equip the saints (who will do) the work of the ministry, a matter challenged by recent revisionist exegetes and those trying
put, if there is no single activity which is the exclusive prerogative of the pastor including equipping is there anything left? John Stott calls this aclericalism.\(^68\) At least those in a sacramental tradition can cling to their officiating role at baptisms and the eucharist.\(^69\)

Being "unnecessary" may be a gift. It enables one to become truly countercultural, to go deep with God and to become a true pastor—nurturing people in the faith, directing people Godward so they are dependent on the Head of the church,\(^70\) envisioning a God-sized ministry for the whole people of God, identifying giftedness and empowering the people to love and serve God fully.

The real reason for being passionate about the recovery of

\(^68\) Stott, op. cit., 41.

\(^69\) John Stott, after citing with approval Article XXIII of the Church of England: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same," comments that this is a question of order not of doctrine, though not satisfactorily to this reader since the ordering of church life—something Luther stressed—need not exclude duly appointed members of the church from officiating. See Luther's statement in chapter four quoted from "The Right and Power of a Congregation or Community to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved from Scripture."

\(^70\) Significantly no church leader in Scripture is ever called "head," a title reserved for Jesus (Eph 4:15, 5:23).
the whole people of God as the Lord's true ministerium and God's chosen missionary is not mere expediency; it is biblical. The church is unlike any other human organization. It is unique. It is a divine (though still human) creation. Therefore a theological approach that brings Scripture constantly into tension with the realities of the age, like two foci of an ellipse, is the most needed thing to liberate the whole people of God for service in the church and the world. But first some distinctions must be made.

ONE PEOPLE OR TWO?

Clericalism is the domination of the "ordinary" people by those ordained, trained and invested with privilege and power. In one sense clericalism was inevitable as the church tried to maintain its inspired uniqueness against all the pressures of church and world to specialize and centralize.\textsuperscript{71} Clericalism is not only expressed in dominance through knowledge, position or exclusive right (as in sacramental ministry). It often gets expressed as disdain for the laity as unreliable, incompetent and unavailable. Increasingly in a high tech fast-paced society churches are hiring professionals for everything from child care to financial management. Such disdain is expressed in the words of Sir John Lawrence, "What does the layman really want? He wants a building

\textsuperscript{71} Stott, op. cit., 35.
which looks like a church; a clergyman dressed in the way he approves; services of the kind he's been used to, and to be left alone."

Anticlericalism is the opposite. This too is marked by the questions of power, authority, competence and disdaining attitudes but now the centre has sifted to the non-clergy laos. Some groups reject pastoral leadership outright and take turns at the pulpit—at least all the men do—in what has been called "the world's greatest amateur hour." The gift of pastor-teacher to the church (Eph 4:11-12) is neglected. John Stott notes, however, that there is an implicit anticlericalism in the New Testament itself. Paul denounces the exaggerated deference shown to some leaders: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.'" (1 Cor 1:12). To this Paul answers, "What, after all, is Apollos?" (3:5). No biblical Christian should give in to extreme anticlericalism as it is the will of God that the church should have leadership and gifted apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers (Eph 4:11).

Co-existence of clergy and laity is a more common phenomenon:

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72 Quoted in Stott, op. cit., 36.

73 I acknowledge my indebtedness to John Stott's fine treatment of these options.
clergy and laity each have their place and function in a complementary way. This is by far the dominant view of the Roman Catholic Church, even since Vatican II,\textsuperscript{74} the Eastern Church (though with a stronger emphasis on community) and most Protestant churches. But the co-existence involves two peoples separated by education, ordination, function and even culture. This becomes most evident in pastors’ conferences, in seminaries and in "lay" conferences—now no longer in vogue—that perpetuate a distinction that is a practical heresy, namely that there are two peoples. Such gatherings of separated peoples are dangerous to say the least, as they often foster laity-bashing (or laity "handling") and clergy-bashing.

**Community** (this is John Stott’s term) is the only biblical way of describing the relationship of leaders and the rest of the people. Each member contributes to others in a diversity of functions that contributes to a rich social unity like the loving unity through diversity found in the Triune God in whose image the church, the *laos tou theos*, is created.

**Metaphors of the People of God**

Over and again the New Testament uses metaphors to describe the reality that the church has her life in God. God is the

\textsuperscript{74} See Stott, op. cit., 44-45.
Vinedresser (the vine), the Shepherd (sheep/flock), the Father (household/family), the Builder (temple/building) and the Head (the body of Christ). Especially in the last metaphor (the body of Christ) there is nothing to suggest that Christ has delegated his authority to certain church members who have responsibility for the ministry of others. The Head does not tell the hand to tell the foot what to do. The Head is connected to the whole body and to each member. It is the body of Christ, not the corpse of Christ or a body of Christians. God is the ultimate equipper.  

Not only do these metaphors describe the vertical but also the horizontal life of the people of God. We are branches of the same vine, sheep of the same flock, brothers and sisters in the same family, stones linked in the same building and, in the most developed metaphor, members together of the same body. Paul coins a set of new words joining the prefix sun (together) with other words to describe the interdependence of the members of the people of God with Christ and one another, words which in the original are one word. There are no individual Christians.

\[\text{75 See Stevens, Liberating the Laity, op. cit., 36.}\]

\[\text{76 We are "made...alive with Christ" (Eph 2:5), "seated...with him in the heavenly realms" (2:6); "fellow citizens with God's people" (2:19), "joined together" (2:21); "being built together" (2:22); "heirs together," "members together," "sharers together" (3:6); and, reaching a climax, "joined and held together by every supporting ligament" (4:16).}\]
Add to this the great theological themes of the people of God in the New Testament, especially the new humanity. In Ephesians 2 Paul speaks of both an abolition and a creation.\(^77\) What was abolished was "the law with its commandments and regulations"—the use of law to obtain acceptance with God and as a way of demarking exclusionary membership in Israel. This was abolished in the flesh of Christ on the cross thereby destroying the "dividing wall of hostility" (2:14) that separates Jews and Gentiles, men and women, free people and slaves.\(^78\) What was created was a new humanity (2:15) that transcends distinctions but does not obliterate them. "For through [Christ] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (2:16). If Christ has broken down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentiles—surely an awesome miracle (3:4-6)—then it would be anathema to erect again a wall between one part of the body and another. Yet this is what has happened.

**THE EMERGENCE OF CLERGY**

While the first century was marked by a people without clergy or

\(^77\) Stott, op. cit., 24.

\(^78\) The work of Christ and the Spirit has several dimensions: bringing near (separated people, Eph 2:13), making the two one (2:14), destroying the barrier (2:14), abolishing the legal/performance way of righteousness (2:15), creating a new humanity (2:15), preaching and making peace (2:15,17), reconciling both to God (2:16), putting hostility to death (2:16), giving mutual access to the Father (2:18).
laity, in the second and third centuries a radical clergy-lay distinction arose largely from three influences: imitation of the secular structures of the Greek-Roman world not unlike the professional-lay distinctions in the modern world, the transference of the Old Testament priesthood model to the leadership of the church, and popular piety which elevated the Lord's Supper to a mystery which required priestly administration. Political and theological pressures in the church also made a contribution. The founding apostles were now memories. The unsuccessful Jewish rebellion of 66-70 AD occasioned both the scattering of Christians and an exclusivist reaction in Judaism. Congregations experienced confusion over doctrine, foreshadowing the debates over Gnosticism that would take place in the late second century.

The Church Fathers

In face of heresy threats (Docetism, Gnosticism and Judaizing) Ignatius of Antioch (50-110 A.D.) appealed for the necessity of having a single bishop as the focus of unity. In the works of

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79 The laos of the Greek city-state were distinguished from their leaders, the kleros or magistrates. See also Luke 23:13 doe a parallel distinction.

Tertullian (197-200 A.D.) we are given a structure for the church in which the laity are identified with the plebs or ordinary people to be distinguished from the priestly or ecclesiastical order of bishops, presbyters and deacons. But his conception of laity was the privileged and endowed people from whom the hierarchy emerge. Women, however, did not have the rights of the laity! Clement of Alexandria also uses laikos for ordinary believers. He envisioned deacons and presbyters as mere imitations and steps toward the heavenly episcopos. Origen, himself as layperson (and not a presbyter), discovered how difficult it now was for a "lay" teacher to bring a homily in the presence of bishops. Origen himself gave the priest power to purify laypersons at the penitential level. Commenting on this development Faivre says:

From this time onward, the layman's function was to release the priest and levite from all his material concerns,

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81 "Thence, therefore, among us the prescript is more fully and more carefully laid down, that they who are chosen into the sacerdotal order must be men of one marriage." Tertullian in "On Exhortation to Chastity," 7 (p. 54)

82 Faivre, op. cit., 46.

83 Faivre, op. cit., 51.

84 Faivre, op. cit., 58-59.

85 "Therefore, with the permission of God, and secondly of the bishops, and thirdly of the presbyters and the people, I will again give my opinion in the matter [prayer]. . . . A bishop stands over all. . . . Origen, "Dialogue with Heraclides," 4:22-5:7, in (pp. 60-61).
thus enabling him to devote himself exclusively to the service of the alter, a task that was necessary for everyone's salvation.  

Priests within the Priesthood

In the third century the Syrian Didascalia Apostolorum in the East devoted five chapters to the office of bishop claiming that bishops were priests and prophets, and princes and leaders and kings, and mediators between God and his faithful, and receivers of the word, and preachers and proclaimers thereof, and knowers of the Scriptures and of the utterances of God, and witnesses of his will, who bears the sins of all, and are to give answer for all.

Meanwhile in the West, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (249 A.D.) made

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86 Faivre, op. cit., 69. Not surprisingly in The Apostolic Tradition even the widow, appointed/ordained to serve in prayer, "does not offer the oblation (prophora) nor has she a [liturgical] ministry (leitourgia). But ordination (cheirotonia) is for the clergy (kleros) on account of their [liturgical] ministry (leitourgia). But the widow (cheira) is appointed for prayer, and this is [a function] of all [Christians]. "Of Widows," The Apostolic Tradition, xi:1-5 (in???, p. 20-21).

it clear that a member of the clergy is not a layman. Using the analogy of the Levites he argued that while all Christians should avoid becoming overly involved in the world, clergy must not, in order to attend properly to the ministry of the altar.\textsuperscript{88} Cyprian was convinced that a bishop was accountable to God alone.\textsuperscript{89} Cyprian modelled his church order on the civil orders of the rulers of the city of Carthage.\textsuperscript{90} Cyprian argued that anyone who separates from the bishop separates from the church. In less than two centuries we have moved from a community priesthood, to a separated clergy that vicariously represents both the priestly and the kingly rule of the people in Christ.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{88} Faivre, op. cit., 106-107.

\textsuperscript{89} Rademacher, op. cit., 565.

\textsuperscript{90} * He makes a clear distinction between the ordo of bishops and the laity.
 * He sacralizes the priesthood according to the Old Testament model of sacrifice priesthood.
 * He establishes a monolithic episcopate which is the same for all of Africa.
 * He links ministry to sacrifice, again in the image of the Temple priesthood.
 * He shapes the church as a clearly defined institution of salvation.
 * He models the bishops in the image of Roman senators, thus excluding women.
 * He consolidates the ruling powers of bishops through numerous episcopal conclaves. Ibid., 59.

\textsuperscript{91} Surveying the evidence of the first four centuries, Richard A. Norris concludes that the development of the priesthood was a complex affair, a curious fusion of roles that can be summed up in being a shepherd or ruler of the people through (1) supervising the community's worldly affairs; (2) presiding over the liturgy as a high priest; (3) teaching the community, op. cit., 31.
Undoubtedly a strong factor in this drift into clericalism was growing popular piety, if not superstition, surrounding the Lord's Supper which increasingly came to be viewed as a repetition of the sacrifice of Jesus. To perform the sacrifice the officiant needed unique credentials. The New Testament says absolutely nothing about who should officiate at that communal meal, concentrating as it does on the importance of discerning the relational life of the community (1 Cor 11:29) rather than the religious character of the officiant. How far the church drifted!

The Mystique of the Ministry

The golden tongued orator, John Chrysostom, said, "when you see the Lord sacrificed and lying before you, and the high priest standing over the sacrifice and praying, and all who partake being tinctured with that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men and still standing on earth?" In his famous treatise on the priesthood, Chrysostom eliminates all women from the priesthood of the church, and most men. But when one is required to preside over the church, and to be entrusted with the care of so many souls, the whole female

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sex must retire before the magnitude of the task, and the majority of men also; and we must bring forward those who to a large extent surpass all others, and soar as much above them in excellence of spirit as Saul overtopped the whole Hebrew nation in bodily stature . . . but let the distinction between the pastor and his charge be as great as that between rational men and irrational creatures, not to say even greater, inasmuch as the risk is concerned with things of greater importance.\textsuperscript{93}

When the priest celebrates the Eucharist, Chrysostom said, "art thou not . . . straightway translated to heaven and casting out every carnal thought from the soul, does thou not with disembodied spirit and pure reasons contemplate the things which are in heaven?"\textsuperscript{94} One identifies within this quote the extent to which Neoplatonism had infected the church with its heretical appeal for a disembodied spirituality, a spirituality from which the Western church has not yet fully repented.

Of considerable note is the difference between the Eastern Church (Orthodox) and the Western Church (Roman) on the nature of the hierarchy, a matter which Yves Congar explores in a footnote. The West emphasized the hierarchical principle of clergy

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 46.
leadership (evidenced in the priesthood, papal power and Mariolatry) while the East stressed the communal principle (evidenced in married priests, councils and greater mutuality). At the root of this difference is the Eastern dependence on the Cappadocian Fathers who developed a fully trinitarian approach to church life with the interdependence, intercommunion and interpenetration of Father, Son and Spirit (perichoresis, to be explored shortly) and their conviction that the Holy Spirit is given communally from God and in God, a matter behind the celebrated filioque controversy that split East and West.\(^95\)

**Progressive Clericalization**

From the fourth to the sixteenth centuries the clergy-lay distinction deepened.\(^96\) Laity were those on the bottom of the

\(^{95}\) Congar (p. 457, fn 1) comments on the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a theology of the laity, and the difference between West and East in this: "In the one, [the West] the emphasis is put on the fact that all comes from one alone and on the dependence of the body on its head for the life that animates it; in the other, [Orthodox] the emphasis is on the life distributed throughout the body by the Holy Spirit, who is seen as an autonomous reality in relation to the Word. It is clear that a theology of the laity calls for a theology of the Holy Spirit, both of which would simply be a revelation of profound and authentic traditional elements."

\(^{96}\) In an unpublished paper, James Houston warms against the biases we bring to "reading history" on this matter, including reading back into the patristic period of fait accompli of the Constantinian church, ignoring the great movements of the Spirit bringing renewal, such as the Beguines, and interpreting history from the perspective of top-down leadership rather than grassroots people. "The Amateur Status of the Christian Life:
clerical ladder. Constantine after his conversion (312 A.D.) appointed bishops as civil magistrates throughout the Empire, organized the church into dioceses along the pattern of Roman regional districts, and consistently used "clerical" and "clerics" as a privileged class. Under the Gregorian reform (1057-1123 A.D.) the ministry of the entire Western Church was shaped by Roman Law. So in the period prior to the Reformation:

* The bishop of Rome came to be regarded as the head of the Church on earth.
* The language of worship had ceased to be the language of the people.
* The clergy dressed differently and were prepared for ministry in an enculturating seminary.
* Ordination became an absolute act so that congregation were no longer needed for the celebration of eucharist.
* Clergy became celibate and thus removed from the normal experiences of the laity.
* The cup was removed from the laity in the eucharist.

In due course the clergy-lay distinction became institutionalized in religious orders, priestly ordination and the seminary

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97 Rademacher, op. cit., 60.
system. Even the Protestant Reformation with its call to recover "the priesthood of all believers" did not succeed in reinstating laity as one dignified serving people.

The Incomplete Protestant Reformation

Why the full implications of the Reformation were not realized in the non-Catholic community is a fascinating and important question. Some factors are:

* The Reformation was more concerned about soteriology (salvation) than ecclesiology. The priesthood of all believers was interpreted according to its effect on individual salvation, but with regard to the collective Christian experience it was "business as usual."  

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Catholic scholars show that the Council of Trent defined ministry against the backdrop of Luther's radical message (1517 A.D.) that all believers are equally priests. Following Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, the Council reaffirmed the existence of an indelible mark, imprinted on the soul of a priest at his ordination, thus emphasizing the being of ministry instead of the doing of ministry. It increased the "grades" of ministries and established seminaries to train young men destined for the priesthood to be kept free from the pleasures of the world. It is the judgement of some Catholic scholars that even Vatican II did not discontinue the levels of ministry and this has perpetuated the clergy-lay problem. The laity are confined to the secular arena and are defined by place rather than by baptism or discipleship. Ibid., 73, 79.

A remarkable exception to this was Luther's "third service" for which he regretfully could not find any volunteers.
* **The preacher replaces the priest.** The sermon became the central act of Protestant worship (the Protestant "Christ-event"). This gave the preacher-expositor the same clerical standing as the Catholic officiant at the Mass. The scholarship implicit in such a ministry ultimately involved taking the Bible out of the hands of the lay person again and putting it into the hands of the biblical scholar. In the evolution of Western society from 500-1500 A.D. laypersons had lost access to top culture and learned traditions. As early as the eighth century the language of scholarship and worship had ceased to be the language of the people.100

* **Inadequate structures for renewal.** The Reformation did not provide an ecclesiology comparable to its rediscovered soteriology. The Protestant Reformation spawned denominations that took seriously the ministry of all believers: Quakers (with no clergy); Moravians (with lay missionaries); Puritans (primarily lay-centered); Baptists and Anabaptists (whose preachers were usually laypersons); Disciples of Christ and Methodists (all lay oriented). But even denominations stemming from the so-called "radical reformation" now have "gravitated" to the old clergy-**lay** distinction.

100 Rowthorn, op. cit., 32.
* The Catholic seminary system was eventually adopted. While important exceptions exist (and still do), the seminary system became the universal model for equipping a generation of pastors thus guaranteeing their enculturation into a clerical culture. Theological education remains, by and large, the exclusive preoccupation of those intending a career in the clergy.\(^{101}\)

* Kingdom ministry has been almost totally eclipsed by church ministry. Ministry is viewed as advancing the church rather than the Kingdom. The letters are the primary guide; the gospels have been eclipsed.

* Ordination is still retained almost universally for the full-time supported church worker; no adequate recognition of lay ministries in society exists. Most denominations still regard ordination as conferring a priestly character rather than recognizing Christian character and call. No denomination ordains

\(^{101}\) Anthony Russell, in *The Clerical Profession* traces the development of theological colleges in England in the mid-nineteenth century in a way that approximated the training offered other professionals so that, in addition to the theological training provided by Oxford and Cambridge for the privileged few, cathedrals established colleges in their closes. Then in 1854 Bishop Samuel Wilberforce established the first college to have a common life based on the Catholic seminaries and European monasteries (p.46). Regent College (Vancouver) was founded with the vision of providing theological education for the whole people of God.
people to societal careers and missions.  

* Calvin's 'secret call' to the ministry of the Word perpetuates a two-level call to the ministry: a general call to all and a special call to the few. Even in denominations claiming to proceed from the radical reformation, ordination councils still require a testimony of the secret call to ministry.  

* An adequate lay spirituality has hardly ever been taught and promoted. While the Reformation rejected the two-level spirituality of the monastery and the common Christian, Protestant spirituality has mostly focused either on charismatic and "mystical" experiences or the deeper life of outstanding Christian leaders, rather than exploring the holiness of the ordinary Christian in the totality of his or her life: eating, sleeping, working, buying and selling, playing and dying.  

The church has never, in the West, become free of Greek dualism which relegates bodily life to a lower level.  

* Neither a theology of the laity nor by the laity was written. The story of ministry and theology itself has almost

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103 It was this vision that inspired The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity.
always been written by clergypersons for clergypersons. Parallel to this is the written history of the church: from the perspective of the clergy and councils rather than the laity.

The same cultural and social forces at work in the first sixteen centuries (secular management models; professional-lay analogies; the tendency to deal with outside threats by increasing central government) are still at work in the modern world. The church must continuously fight the "fleshly" predisposition to clergy-laity. Each generation must enter the renewal of ministry in Christ. Commenting on the present situation, Elton Trueblood says:

Our opportunity for a big step lies in opening the ministry of the ordinary Christian in much the same manner that our ancestors opened Bible reading to the ordinary Christian. To do this means, in one sense, the inauguration of a new Reformation while in another it means the logical completion of the earlier Reformation in which the implications of the position taken were neither fully understood nor loyally followed.\(^{104}\)

**Getting Behind the Division**

The apostle Paul was faced in his own day with something roughly parallel to clericalism, namely performance of the law as a means of gaining righteousness and defining membership. Paul's approach to the problem gives us an important clue. Paul went behind discussions of the law to rediscover something that preceded the law and gave it meaning—namely, the promise (Gal 3:15-18). In a biblical theology of the laity we must get behind the clergy-lay problem that has plagued the church since the third century and find out what God originally intended for his people.105 Only in this way can we avoid a compensatory theology and transcend rather than merely oppose, clericalism. To do this we must explore, first, the meaning of the Trinity and, second, the original intention of God for his creatures on earth. We must take up each of these two matters in turn.

THE PEOPLE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

A fully trinitarian approach is needed since the identity and ministry of the laos is shaped by the God whose people we are.106 God has called out "a laos for himself" (Acts 15:14) or as the KJV puts it, "a people for his name." The identity of the laos comes from the Trinity—a people in communion with God—and the vocation

105 Some of this discussion I owe to a conversation with Ray S. Anderson of Fuller Theological Seminary.

106 Much of the following was first published in Crux, Vol XXXI, No 2 (June 1995):5-14.
of the **laos** also comes from communion with God. In this way both the being and the doing, both the identity and the vocation of the **laos** will be considered.

**Trinitarian Identity and Vocation**

The ministry of the **laos** is not generated exclusively by the people, whether from duty or gratitude. All ministry is God's ministry and God continues his own ministry through his people.\(^{107}\) This ministry begins not when we "join the church" to help God do his work but when we join God (Jn 1:12) and have "fellowship with the Father and with his Son" (1 Jn 1:3). **Laos** ministry is participation in the in-going ministry of God (relationally among God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and simultaneously participation in the out-going (sending) ministry of God. On this latter point Jesus prayed in the high priestly prayer, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). On the first (the in-going) God is "lover, the beloved and the love itself," as Jurgen Moltmann puts it reflecting on a phrase from Augustine.\(^{108}\) On the second, God is sender, sent and the sending.

So there was ministry before there was a world, that ministry


taking place within God himself (Jn 17:5,24). This pre-creation ministry was neither curative nor redemptive. There was nothing broken or fallen to restore even though "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8) is an evocative hint of God's redemptive willingness. God's ministry is creative and unitive (17:21-23) and not only curative and redemptive, thus constituting a broader definition of service and relationship than is normally ascribed to the term "ministry." Like their God the people of God have ministry that is both restorative and creative, both curative and unitive—thus challenging the common evangelical preoccupation with the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) as the exclusive definition of ministry, as important as that mandate is.

To this rich understanding of peoplehood and ministry each of the three persons of the Godhead contributes. The Father creates, providentially sustains, and forms a covenantal framework for all existence. The Son incarnates, transfigures and redeems. The Spirit empowers and fills with God's own presence. But each shares in the others—coinheres, interpenetrates, cooperates—so that it is theologically inappropriate to stereotype the ministry of any one. But that is exactly what is done.

The One and the Three

Christians tend to "play favourites" when it comes to describing
peoplehood and ministry. For order, providence, and sustaining the structures of society we appeal to the Father. The Son is associated with redemption and winning the lost. The Holy Spirit is the favourite of those seeking renewal, empowering charisms and direct religious experience. Churches and denominations tend to form around one of the Three: Father-denominations emphasize reverent worship and stewardship. Son-denominations stress discipleship and evangelism thus furthering the work of the Kingdom of God. Spirit-denominations promote gifts and graces. The implications of this specialist approach for peoplehood, vocation and leadership in the church can be expressed in the following diagram:

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<tr>
<th>PEOPLEHOOD</th>
<th>VOCATION</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
<td>Covenant</td>
<td>Creational</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
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<td>SON</td>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>Christocratic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Service (continuing</td>
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<td>works of Jesus)</td>
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For example, Kraemer reduces the church to a Christocratic community, this neglecting the full participation of Father and Son.
A rich and full doctrine of the Trinity avoids such stereotypical designations. God is more than the sum of the three. God is not God apart from the way the Father, Son and Holy Spirit give and receive from each other what they essentially are.

"One God"--the primary confession of Islam--is ironically the Christian's deepest praise. We affirm that God is more one because he is three, not in spite of God's three-ness. Within the limitations of rational discourse, and recognizing that if we could fit God into our puny minds he would be too small a God to worship, we respectfully confess that the unity of the Holy Trinity is neither a homogenized unity that blurs the distinctions nor a collective. As is often noted in the history of theological reflection the Orthodox church started with the diversity and made the unity of God a matter of doxology while the Western church started with an abstract notion of unity and struggled to grasp rationally the possibility of diversity. The net result of this latter effort is that God appears to be one in spite of being Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A biblical approach reverently affirms the opposite. God is one because he is three.
Unity Through Diversity

In the same way Paul affirmed that diversity and unity thrive together in the people who bear God's name. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul contradicted the Corinthian preoccupation with one Spirit-manifestation--tongues--as the litmus test of true spirituality. Instead Paul affirmed that diversity is what the body is about.\textsuperscript{110}

The \textit{laos} does not have a "mashed potato" unity as is sometimes alleged but a rich social unity in which each member becomes more himself or herself through experiencing an out-of oneself (ek-static) community life. Unity is not the means to the end--a practical necessity to get the church's work done. Unity is the end, the goal, the ministry itself.\textsuperscript{111} Three biblical metaphors expound this: the body of Christ, the family of God and the covenant community.\textsuperscript{112}

To be \textit{laos} then is not merely to be a bouquet of Christians or a cluster of saints.\textsuperscript{113} To be \textit{laos} means simultaneously to be

\textsuperscript{110} See Gordon D. Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 569-625.

\textsuperscript{111} Eph 1:10; 4:13; John 17:22; Col 1:17,20.


\textsuperscript{113} Of great significance is the fact that "saints" (e.g. Eph 4:12) is always a corporate term in Scripture, not merely a number
communal and personal. In the long history of trinitarian reflection this supreme idea of the personal and interpersonal within God forms the true basis for the identity and vocation of the God-imaging people. One insight in particular is illuminating.

**Perichoresis**

The Cappadocian fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus--4th c.) taught that the essence of God is relational, that God exists in a plurality of distinct persons united in communion. They avoided the twin dangers of collectivism and individualism by speaking of perichoresis (reciprocity, interchange, giving and receiving without blurring). Perichoresis involves a relatedness that is both static and dynamic. As Edwin Hui notes:

The three persons of the Trinity (are) "being in one another"--drawn to the other, contained in the other, interpenetrating each other by drawing life from and pouring life to each other--as the communion of love.\(^{114}\)

\(^{114}\) Edwin Hui, Notes from "Trinity and the Christian Life," Regent College, Vancouver.
Colin Gunton speaks of "reciprocity, interpenetration and interanimation" since he finds the Latin derivative, "co-inherence" less satisfactory suggesting as it does a more static conception. The heart of the matter is the sociality of the Triune God, an elegant truth sometimes expressed through the metaphor of family: three Persons, one family. The net effect of this recovery of perichoretic reflection is doxological reflection on the Triune God under the category of community rather than individuality. Commenting on John Damascene's doctrine of perichoresis Jurgen Moltmann (umlaut on u) put the matter this way: "The doctrine of the perichoresis links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to the unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness."

**Trinitarian Peoplehood**

The implications of this for peoplehood are substantial. Being *laos* means that members of Christ coinhere, interanimate, and pour

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116 Jurgen Moltmann suggests that the analogy is not arbitrary since the divine image is person with person—which is exactly what family is about. Indeed Gregory of Nazianzus saw Adam, Eve and Seth as an earthly parable because they were consubstantial persons. Moltmann, op. cit., 199.

117 Ibid., 175.
life into one another without coalescence or merger. It means belonging communally without being communistic or being a collective. Moreover, and pertinent to the clergy-lay dilemma, being a perichoretic people means being a community without hierarchy. The community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit finds its earthly reflection as Moltmann says, "not in the autocracy of a single ruler but in the democratic community of free people, not in the lordship of man over the woman but in their equal mutuality, not in an ecclesiastical hierarchy but in a fellowship church."\(^{118}\)

Indeed when trinitarian theology was adopted without perichoresis, as came to be the case even in the Eastern church (though less markedly so), there developed a thoroughly hierarchical approach to church life. A perichoretic community can have leadership and rich diversity without hierarchy;\(^ {119}\) it can be a community without superiors and subordinates; it can be a church without laity or clergy—in the usual sense of these terms. Four conclusions may be drawn from this.

\(^{118}\) Ibid., viii.

\(^{119}\) Perichoresis means that the submission of the Son to the Father is not subordination but the quality of the way the Son relates to the Father. No hierarchy is implied. In line with Athanathius we affirm the monarchy is in God and not just the Father, and that arche in the Father does not mean hierarchy. Edwin Hui, "perichoresis," unpublished lecture in "The Trinity and the Christian Life," Regent College, 1994.
Implications

First, there is no such thing as an individual layperson. If, as I have proposed above, we live out the Christian life interdependently, "the individual Christian" is an oxymoron. Consistent with the Old Testament, the "saints" in Paul's letters is really a unit. As Ernest Best says, "it is this unit which is just as much in Christ as the individual believer."\(^{120}\) Believers are held together in what can be conceived as a corporate, inclusive personality. It is biblically inconceivable for a person to be a believer in Christ and not a member of his community. And the body of Christ is not the local congregation but the whole church.\(^{121}\) So for Paul "there is no such thing as a solitary Christian" and "it is impossible to conceive of a Christian who is not a member of the Church, which is related to Christ as in him and as his body . . . . Individual Christians consequently do not exist.\(^{122}\)

This is remarkably in harmony with the message given to John Wesley by a "serious man" before Wesley was converted to Christ:

Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that


\(^{121}\) Ibid., 113.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 193, 190.
you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.\textsuperscript{123}

The believer's identity is corporate as well as individual. In Christ we can say, "I am us!" Within the granular individualism of Western Culture, the basic unit of the church is the individual member. But for Paul the basic unit of the church is the church!

**Second, there is no hierarchy of ministries.** In his seminal work on the theology of the laity Hendrik Kraemer says, "All members of the ecclesia have in principle the same calling, responsibility and dignity, have their part in the apostolic and ministerial nature and calling of the church."\textsuperscript{124} Incarnating our loving submission to Christ's lordship in every arena of life precludes saying that certain tasks are in themselves holy and others are secular. William Tyndale, the English Reformer, was considered heretical and executed for teaching, among other things, that there is not work better than another to please God; to pour water, to wash dishes, to be a souter (cobbler), or an apostle, all are one; to wash dishes and to preach are

\textsuperscript{123} Quoted in Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 148.

all one, as touching the deed, to please God.¹²⁵

Third, supported Christian ministry is not the vocation of vocations but one way of responding to the single call that comes to all (Eph 4:1). Most expositions about ministry are magnetically attracted to the supreme place of the ordained professional minister as the minister-par-excellence. It is small wonder that laypersons aspiring to ministry attempt to become amateur clergypersons or paraclergy. There is some reason for this. Work in the church seems strategically more important than work in the world because the church is the prototype community and the outcropping of the Kingdom of God. But work in the church is only important in view of what its members will do and be in society. Church leadership must be evaluated not in terms of its priestly character but on whether the saints are equipped for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

Finally, all members of the laos of God belong to one another, minister to one another, need one another and contribute to the rich unity and ministry of the whole. The church is not composed of those who minister and those who are ministered "unto." Even Paul wrote to the Romans that he was coming "that

you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Rom 1:12). To speak of one person, or one group in the church as "the" minister is a tragic denial of the new creation crafted in Christ. Sometimes the question is asked, "Who is ministering to the pastor?" The answer should be, "The rest of the people."

"Only a layperson" is a phrase that must never be found on our lips. It is irreverent and demeaning. It denies that God has adopted, called, empowered, and gifted us to receive the incredible privilege of being co-lovers of God, lovers of one another and those who share God's love for the world. This is our identity—a molecular social identity. The Duke of Windsor, recalling his upbringing in the royal house of King George V, claimed that every day his father would say, "Never forget who you are." Better yet, is never to forget whose we are. We are not laikoi or idiotses. We are laos and kleros. Laity, in the popular sense no longer exists in Christ. It is useless to mount a conspiracy against it by promoting professionalism in ministry.

It is equally ludicrous to liberate such a laity. Why try to liberate what is no longer alive? That people—segmented into higher and lower, subject and object of ministry, ministers and "their" people—no longer exists except as a tragic anachronism. Instead, there is the laos of the Triune God. We get our identity
and our vocation from being the people of the Triune God. And the ministry of that people is to love and be loved. It is so sublimely simple that we could miss its reverent beauty and its life-giving potential.

FOR FURTHER STUDY/DISCUSSION

1. Read and discuss the following case which will conclude first part and introduce the next chapter. Use the notes following:126

DREAM JOB

Jim Thompson walked out of his apartment into the cool night air. In less than 48 hours he was booked to take a night train from Cambridge to Edinburgh where he would undergo a day-long interview for a junior post in theology. At the end of the day he would probably be offered the job (since his mentors in the post-doc programme assured him he was the top candidate); he would need to respond immediately--that same day! It was his dream job. Jim and his wife Cheryl had lived in Edinburgh for three years while he did his PhD. He loved the country. He also had no desire to return to his U.S college from which he was on leave and which was embroiled in political issues which Jim thought might "do him in"

126 Note: This case is adapted from one published in Case Studies??????????. Used with permission.
if he returned. But it was not an easy decision for Cheryl.

Cheryl had been trying for months to secure a British nurses' licence. She had her R.N. in the States but discovered that she could not transfer this credential to the U.K. without a full year of experience in the hospital. She would have to do a three year program in England or, as an alternative, return to the States for a year to gain the necessary transferable experience.

Jim made it clear that neither of these options fit his interview plans. Complicating matters was Cheryl's inability to have children after seven years of marriage. Jim could not imagine adopting a child. So Cheryl made it clear on no uncertain terms that, if she could not raise a family, her calling was to be a nurse, every bit as legitimate as teaching theology.

Jim had not previously faced such a crisis in his marriage. When they first started dating he held the traditional view that the husband was called to make the major decisions and wives were called to follow. But in more recent years they had a more egalitarian approach, emphasizing calm conversation and mutual give and take. What should he do--now that Cheryl was resisting Jim's personal vision and dream, especially when this new assignment would allow him to be an evangelistic voice in a pluralistic university setting.
Their parents said they would be supportive whatever they decided. John Gordon, a trusted friend in Cambridge articulated what Cheryl would have said years ago but no longer believed: "God calls the husband to be the head of the family; if he is obedient to God's call, his wife will be edified." But Rita Mussett, another local Christian friend took a different approach: "God never calls husband and wife in opposite directions. If you pray together, talk together and are both obediently seeking God's will, you will come to an agreement. Until that happens it would be a grave mistake to take any action."

But for Jim time was running out. If only he could have a clear sign from God! "God why are you doing this to me?" he asked. But the silence was deafening.

DISCUSSION GUIDE for using "Dream Job" in a small group:

(1) Introduction: What feelings have you had when your desire to do something vocationally ran counter to the desires of someone close to you (family, parents or spouse)?
(2) Read the case.
(3) Vote in the group to see which way Jim should go.
(4) Role play in small groups of seven (15 minutes):

1 person to role play Jim Thompson meeting with small group
in his church

3 people to be members of the small group
1 person to reflect on the marriage issues
1 person to reflect on the view of ministry and vocation

which each of the following had: Jim Thompson, Cheryl, Parents, John Gordon, Rita Mussett

1 person to reflect on the biblical resources (texts, theological principles) available to help Jim make a decision
(5) Feedback of the two designated persons to "reflect" to larger group
(6) Share learnings

2. Discuss the following quote from Yves Congar in the light of one people.

At a time when the active role of the laity is being found again, it is not without significance that the relationship of clergy and laity is often expressed by the word 'couple.' We hold, then, that there is an analogy between what the Bible shows to be the law of God's work and what the Bible also shows to be the Church's concrete regime. Hierarchy and people are like husband and wife (or the children) in a family. 'The head of the woman is the man...he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man' (1 Corinthians xi,3,7); but the woman too sways the man
and takes in his decisions in her own way. . ." Congar,
op. cit., 284.

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CALLING IN A POST-VOCATIONAL ERA

My father is a seller of fish. We children know the business too having worked from childhood in the Great South Bay Fish Market, Patchoque, Long Island, New York, helping our father like a quiver full of arrows. It is a small store and it smells like fish. I remember a Thursday afternoon long ago when my Dad was selling a large carp to a prosperous woman and it was a battle to convince her. "Is it fresh?" It fairly bristled with freshness, had just come in, but the game was part of the sale. They had gone over it anatomically together: the eyes were bright, the gills were in good colour, the flesh was firm, the belly was even spare and solid, the tail showed not much waste, the price was right....Finally by Dad held up the fish behind the counter, "Beautiful, beautiful! Shall I clean it up?" And as she grudgingly assented, ruefully admiring the way the bargain had been struck, she said, "My, you certainly didn't miss your calling."
Unwittingly she spoke the truth. My father is in full-time service for the Lord, prophet, priests and king in the fish business....When I watch my Dad's hands--big beefy hands with broad stubby fingers, each twice the thickness of mine, they could never play a piano--when I watch those hands delicately split the back of a mackerel...when I know those hands peddled fish from the handlebars of a bicycles in the grim 1930s...twinkling at work without complaint, past temptations, always in faith consecratedly cutting up fish before the face of the Lord--when I see that I know God's grace can come down to a man's hand and the flash of a scabby fish knife.  

Calvin Seerveld's moving story contains a deep Christian truth. Our ordinary occupations find their true meaning in something larger than personal fulfilment. They are callings taken up in what the apostle Paul calls "my purpose" (2 Tim 3:10). But the story, taken by itself, contains a dangerous half-truth: the idea that vocation equals occupation. As we shall see, the Christian doctrine of vocation--so central to the theology of the whole people of God--starts with being called to Someone before we are called to do something. And it is not something we choose, 

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like a career. We are chosen. The Latin root of the word "vocation," *vocatio* and *voco*, means simply to be called or to have a calling. We might do well to eliminate the word "vocation" for a while and substitute "calling" which invites the question, "Who called?" The loss of vocation in the modern and post-modern world is further indicated by the fact that almost the only people who speak of being "called of God" are "full-time" missionaries and pastors.

We live in a post-vocational age.\(^{128}\) Without an theology of vocation we lapse into debilitating alternatives: fatalism (doing what is required by "the forces" and "the powers"); luck (which denies purposefulness in life and reduces our life to a bundle of accidents); karma (which ties performance to future rewards); nihilism (which denies that there is any good end to which the travail of history might lead) and, the most common alternative today, self-actualization (in which we invent the meaning and purpose of our lives, making us magicians). In contrast the biblical doctrine of vocation gives the whole of our lives finds meaning in relation to the sweet summons of a good God. In this chapter we will explore the human, the Christian, and the personal vocation.

THE HUMAN VOCATION

In most discussions of vocation two biblical mandates are cited: the Creation Mandate and the Great Commission.

Two Mandates or One?

The Creation Mandate (Gen 1:27-30), sometimes called the Cultural Mandate, means we are called to have dominion over the earth as expressed in our civic responsibilities like earthkeeping and engineering.\(^\text{129}\) The Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), sometimes called the New Creation Mandate means that Christians are called to witness to Christ to the ends of the earth. One concerns creation, the other salvation. Denominations line up in their preference for one or the other with mainline denominations and European churches, by and large,\(^\text{130}\) stressing the former and evangelical churches emphasizing the latter. Separating these two

\(^{129}\) See Paul Marshall, Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today (Basingstoke, UK: Marshalls, 1984), 20-38. In this brilliant and comprehensive exposition of the creation mandate Marshall shows how Christian service is as wide as creation itself. He proposes that "we must see these two mandates [the creation and the gospel] as essentially two aspects of the same thing—that we are servants and followers of God through Jesus Christ in whatever we think or feel or do in any and every area of God's creation" (p. 20).

\(^{130}\) See Klaus Bochmuehl's comparison of European and North American churches in this context, in "Recovering Vocation Today," Crux, Vol XXIV, No. 3 (September 1988), 32-33.
mandates has been tragic.\textsuperscript{131} When so separated mission becomes disconnected from life and becomes a "discretionary-time" activity. Further, social action and evangelism become separated and prioritized.\textsuperscript{132} The Christian life is essentially unbalanced and fragmented when God intends it to be unified.\textsuperscript{133} A better way involves viewing the human vocation in terms of a covenant encompassing both creation and redemption.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{131} The record of the church's service in the world is truly inspiring. See E.H. Oliver, The Social Achievements of the Christian Church (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1930).

\textsuperscript{132} See G. E. Ladd on righteousness and justification in A Theology of the New Testament (???place PUB DATE), 480-490.


\textsuperscript{134} Elsewhere I have developed some of the dimensions of covenant theology as it applies to marriage, but here in relation to the vocation of humankind. See Married for Good (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 15-53. The essence of the covenant is contained in the two-pronged formula, "You will be my people and I will be your God" (Jer 30:22; Exod 19:8; Deut 10:12-22; Ezek 11:20). They are a marriage pair. The Hebrew word for covenant, berith, is also used for the constitution or agreement between the monarch and the people (2 Sam 3:21; 5:3; 1 Chron 11:3). It stated not only a relationship but the performance expectations implicit in the treaty or agreement. It provided what amounted to a limited constitutional monarchy, making Israel unique in the ancient world. David Atkinson defines covenant as an "agreement between two parties based on promise, which includes these four elements: first, an undertaking of committed faithfulness made by one part to the other (or by each to the other); secondly, the acceptance of that undertaking by the other party; thirdly, public knowledge of such undertaking and its acceptance; and fourthly, the growth of a personal relationship based on and expressive of such a commitment." David Atkinson, To Have and to Hold: The Marriage Covenant and the Discipline of Divorce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 70. The most comprehensive treatment of this is found in Walther Eichrodt,
The Covenant Mandate

Living under covenant is larger than simply saying that the purpose of the gospel of Jesus is to restore us to the creation mandate. It is that, but much more. Exploring the relationship of covenant and creation in Genesis 6:18 and 9:8-17 William J. Dumbrell concludes that there is only one divine covenant which starts with Genesis 1:1 and ends with the renewal of all things in Revelation 21:5. The very fact of creation involved God's entering into


Theologically the covenant God made with his creation and people had (1) a relational foundation, encompassed by the formula, "you are my people; I am your God;" (2) obligations which were two-fold: blessing God and living faithfully the lifestyle of God's covenant people as prescribed in the Ten Commandments, and (3) the blessing of the covenant (the family, the land and the blessing of the nations. While the blessings were conditional on obedience, the covenant itself was essentially unconditional. In this chapter we are exploring the obligations of the covenant in a three-fold way. For a consideration of the conditionality of the covenant see Jungwoo Kim, "The Riddle of Conditionality within the Unconditional Covenant: A Solution," Chapter five in "Psalm 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution to the Presence of Law within the Unconditional Covenant," Doctoral Thesis submitted to the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989.
relationships with the world. . . . The world and man are part of one total divine construct and we cannot entertain the salvation of man in isolation from the world which he has affected.\textsuperscript{136}

The first two chapters of Genesis are foundational for our understanding of the human vocation. There is more than dominion involved in being human. In fact there are three full time occupations for every God-imaging human being.

**Communion with God**

The first work of Adam and Eve is described rather than prescribed. Implicit in their humanity is the commission to dwell in communion with God. The man and the woman experienced the uninterrupted presence of God in a relationship of loving awe. The text suggests that the garden was not raw wilderness but a sanctuary-garden, a place of real meeting with God.\textsuperscript{137} No activity was intended to take them away from their center, though like all relationships there were seasons of special intimacy, as suggested by God's walking in the garden in the cool of the day looking for his creatures' fellowship (Gen. 3:8). The practice of


the presence of God is not the exclusive vocation of professional ministers and cloistered monks but every Christian's calling.

This is the personal covenant with God. What is missing in the simple proposition that the gospel restores human beings to the creation mandate is the fact that God has made us for himself, to enjoy the loving communion of the Triune God. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The human vocation is perichoretic—it is an abiding in God and having God abide in us. Corporate worship is critical to sustaining a sense of peoplehood as it constantly reminds us who we are and Whose we are. Abraham Heschell has beautifully asserted that the practice of surrendered gratitude as expressed in the doxology is the last full measure of humanness in which the creature of God is turned fully toward the creator who stays by the creation.\(^{138}\)

As an alternative to communion, the Enemy invited Adam and Eve to doubt the goodness of God (Gen 3.1), to cease practising continuous thanksgiving (Rom 1:21-22) and to turn their attention away from God. When he succeeded, Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator, rejected their creatureliness, and sought what William Dumbrell calls "absolute moral autonomy, a prerogative which the

Bible reserves for God alone." God continues to seek the presence of man and woman (Gen. 3:9) but they play hide and seek until God graciously finds them in Christ and restores communion.

That God wants communion with humankind and continuously calls people into communion is revealed in the entire Bible. In Leviticus 26:11 God says, "I will put my dwelling place among you. . . I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people" (thus repeating the covenant "formula"--my people, your God). The covenant is essentially relational, not a performance contract. The essence of our experience of the New Covenant through the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:38) is not ecstatic experiences of God, but covenantal belonging: you are my people--I am your God (Rev 21:3). The New Testament images of temple, people, body, bride, household, colony of heaven confirm that dwelling with God in persistent gratitude, and knowing ourselves to be known by God (Psa 139; Gal 4:9) is the heart of it.

The Bible ends with a glorious vision of perfect communion. Central to the vision of Revelation 21-22 is simply that we "know as we are known" (1 Cor 13:12). Our primary "work" in the new heaven and earth will be worship, the grateful appreciation of God himself (Rev 4-5), thus fulfilling the personal dimension of God's covenant. There will be no temple "because the Lord God Almighty

\[139\] Dumbrell, op., cit., 38.
and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev 21:22). The consummation of this divine-human marriage is summarized by the announcement, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them." Then, fulfilling the communion dimension of the covenant, John repeats the covenant formula, "They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (21:3). Our Christian experience now as we look towards this consummation is not marriage to Christ (Rev 19:7), as some Christian mystics have suggested, but betrothal, the Jewish form of presexual marriage (2 Cor 11:2).

**Community-Building**

If the call to communion has been neglected through a narrow emphasis on the Creation Mandate, so has the call to build the human community on earth. This is the social covenant. God's first negative statement in the Bible is that "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). God judges man's solitariness. So God makes a "helper suitable for him" (2:18). God makes humankind innately social and inevitably sexual. The image of God is essentially relational and pro-creational.

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
God blessed them and said to them,  
"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it"  
(Gen 1:27-28).

Adam and Eve were called to live in grateful awareness of the  
cohumanity of life, male and female being the image of God  
together and not alone (Gen 1:26-28), each sex evoking the other's  
sexuality, and together enabling humanity to be a mysterious  
expression of God's own love (Eph 5:32). As designed by God, male  
and female are equal partners and heirs of the grace of life,  
complementary and side by side, rather than senior and assistant.

The family becomes God's prototype community on earth and is  
part of every person's vocational calling, whether one remains  
single or gets married. People-making (Gen. 1:28) gives Adam and  
Eve the further privilege of making people in their own image  
(Gen. 5.3) as God made them in his. With the birth of Seth and  
Seth's son, people "began to call on the name of the Lord" (Gen  
4:26) thus becoming truly the people of God. Single people, while  
not creating a new generation are included in the call to  
cohumanity and can express fecundity in other ways (Isa 56:4-7).

So humankind's duty and destiny is to build community, to  
express neighbourliness, to celebrate cohumanity--in a word, to  
love. We dare not relegate this to discretionary time activities.
For example, it would be dangerous for me to think of myself as a part-time husband or a part-time grandfather. Some will earn their salary in community-building by being town-planners or family counsellors, just as others will earn it by evangelism or carpentry. The way one earns one's living turns out to be incidental. The truth is that vocation demands our all. The call of God that comes to every believer (Eph. 4:1) embraces all of life: work, family, neighbourhood, politics, and congregation.

The whole story of salvation in the Bible is presented to us in the grammar of covenant: mutual belonging. The individual is not lost in this but rather found in community. Personages such as Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are "presented as already sharing in the experience of their descendants; their life is like a resume of that of their posterity" (Gelin).\textsuperscript{140} Six of the Ten Commandments deal with communal relationships.\textsuperscript{141} Jesus summarized the law in terms of loving God and neighbour. Western "individualized" Christians have much to learn from Asian brothers and sisters in achieving a balance between the individual and the community.\textsuperscript{142} It is, once again, perichoretic; we have our being

\textsuperscript{140} Albert Gelin, The Concept of Man in the Bible, David Murphy, trans. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 63. CHECK REFERENCE.


in communion.

As we will see in the chapter on mission our calling is build the human community on earth (the matter under consideration here) and building the community of faith (which will be considered under the Christian Vocation).

Sin shattered the social aspect the covenant. The relationship of Adam and Eve became politicized. The "curse" (Gen 3:16) means the man will "rule" the woman and the woman will desire to overmaster the man (the word for "desire" in 3:16 is the desire to overpower as is found in the use of "desire" in Genesis 4:7). Tragically some Christians think that rule and revolt between the sexes is God's design.

Instead of family there is social alienation and individualism. Self-consciousness was born in sin. Their "selves" were naked and they felt shame (Gen 3:7). The first spiritual death in the human family (death to God) was socially experienced (death to true self and the other). Instead of co-creating life, human beings now take life and, tragically, the first physical death in the human family was a murder (Gen. 4:8).

Only in Christ does the curse get reversed. Instead of rule
and revolt between the sexes there is mutual submission (Eph 5:21, 22, 25, 33). Instead of social alienation there is call to build community in two senses, first to be neighbourly (Luke 10:25-37), and second, to build the true family of God in the church (Mark 3:33-35).  

The ultimate hope contained in the last book of the Bible is a new heaven and new earth, combining both perfect city, the New Jerusalem, and the perfect garden, in which the people of God dwell. Heaven is a great interracial, international, intercultural happening, from "every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev 7:9). Even the powers will be restored. All dimensions of social unity will be restored according to God's design, including the "principalities and powers" that provide structure to communal life, is suggested by statements like Rev 21:24: "The nations will walk by (the light of the Lamb), and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into (the city)". We live somewhere between Eden and the New Jerusalem.

Co-Creativity  

143 Gal. 6:10; Eph 2:19; 4:11-16.  
144 See chapter 9.  
145 I leave aside the consideration of whether "co-creativity" is an appropriate term to describe the participation of humankind in God's ongoing care and development of his own creation. Lines of inquiry include considering the commonality of words used both
The third part of the covenant mandate is commonly called the Creation Mandate. The call to have "dominion" or "rule" (Gen 1:28-30) is the **creational** vocation of humankind. We are using the term co-creativity\(^ {146} \) to describe this because, as Loren Wilkinson says, "God invites [us] to participate with him in shaping the world."\(^ {147} \) In doing this we become co-creators or sub-

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\(^ {146} \) Dorothy L. Sayers' use of the word "create" for human action based on the doctrine of the image of God has dangers of human arrogance and indispensability, dangers which she acknowledges in her play, "The Zeal of Thy House," in *Religious Drama 1*, Peter Smith, ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

\(^ {147} \) Loren Wilkinson, "Art as Creation or Art as Work," in *With Heart, Mind and Strength: The Best of Crux 1979-1989*, Donald M.
creators as we make discoveries and inventions "following the clues left by God." Another term to describe our unique relation to creation is regents, earthly rulers representing a heavenly King. The regency of humankind includes the full range of creational tasks and all kinds of "world-making": cultural, material, political, aesthetic, artistic, musical, mechanical, and relational.

They were to "keep" creation (Gen 2:15) as God "keeps us." This is one important way of understanding the "image of God" (Gen 1:27). "Image" probably refers to the whole person in his or her function in the world. As Dumbrell says, "By creation, man is then the visible representative in the created world of the invisible God." Unfortunately this "dominion" is, as proponents

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149 Loren Wilkinson notes that this is the same Hebrew word as is found in the Aaronic blessing: "May the Lord bless you and keep you...." "The New Story of Creation: A Trinitarian Perspective," Crux Vol XXXX, No 4 (December 1994), 34.

150 Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation, op. cit., 34.
of the New Story of creation charge—all too easily marked by oppressive rule. But, as Loren Wilkinson argues, "the deepest truth of the Old Story of Christian orthodoxy is that the divine nature is most fully seen not in lordly transcendence, but in the agony of incarnation and crucifixion." Like God, like people. The triune God is essentially "being in communion." Contrary to the charge of advocates of the New Story of Creation who critique the Old Story of orthodoxy, God is not a distant patriarchal engineer but, as Loren Wilkinson says, an immanent-and-transcendent triune God that is "a passionately involved personal being...[who] upholds each thing in its distinctness--but things have their distinctness only through their relationships." So to be in the image of God means that humankind is not a cold and distant lord over creation but an involved and relational participating steward.

Where sin entered, the man and woman lost their stewardship. Instead of being regents of the creation which bears God's signature, the man and woman begin to manipulate their environment to satisfy their own greed, or contrarily, to worship the created

\[151\] Wilkinson, op. cit., 35. See also John D. Zizioulas, "Preserving God's Creation: Three Lectures on Theology and Ecology," Kings College Review, XII, XIV, ???.

\[152\] Loren Wilkinson, "The New Story of Creation" op. cit., 34.

\[153\] In chapter seven we will explore more completely what it means to be kings and queens under God.
order (Rom 1:25). Pollution, sinful distributions of the world's resources, evil social systems, perverse art and aesthetics deepen the alienation, symbolized by the building of a fallen city (Gen 4:17), a symbol of human arrogance.

All human effort is tainted. Creativity is paralysed. Work is cursed, not merely the tilling of the soil which now will be by the sweat of the brow (Gen 3:17), but also community building, justice work, love-work, peace-making and even so-called Christian work or ministry. Human beings try to find their identity in themselves, in their community, or in their own efforts, rather than in relation to God.

By restoring us to himself through the new covenant, Christ not only restores communion and community-building but co-creativity. The curse of work (Gen 3:16) may be substantially though not completely undone. Through their various civil occupations men and women make God's world work (Gen 2:5,15) and address the problems of pollution, food distribution, injustice, disease, and the proliferation of violence and weaponry. In so doing they are fulfilling a calling. In the short run this work may seem unsuccessful, but in the long run this work will be gloriously enduring as the believer cooperates with what Christ wants to do in renewing all creation.
The prophetic literature of the Old Testament indicates that the new heavens and the new earth, when they are consummated, will include work: "They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. . . . my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands" (Isa 66:21-22). Paul Marshall notes that the evocative image of beating their "swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Mic 4:3) suggests not only the destruction of implements of war but the creation of new tools for work.\(^\text{154}\)

The drama, music, beauty, movement, orderliness, sounds and sights of the New Jerusalem are powerful hints that heaven will mean not only a restored creation, but restored creativity. The bride of Christ is an adorned bride (Rev 21:2). The tree of life, once graciously barricaded is now the center of true re-creation: "On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse" (22:2-3).

The end of the cosmos will both be partly the result of human creativity as well as something new which God will do, a cosmic Easter for the universe. As Ted Peters says, "The New Testament

promises us that God will yet do something new for the cosmos on
the model of what God has already done for Jesus on Easter,
namely, establish a new creation.”\textsuperscript{155} The scientific debate
between creation out of nothing (\textit{creatio ex nihilo}) versus
continuing creation (\textit{creatio continua}) needs to be resolved by
holding both. God has done and will do a new thing. At the same
time God allows us to continue to function as sub-creators in an
unfolding creation until he will, once again, do that new thing.

Taken as a whole the covenant mandate gives us a
comprehensive vision for the human vocation as expressed in the
following chart.

\textsuperscript{155} Ted Peters, "On Creating the Cosmos," in Robert J. Russell,
William R. Stoeger, S.J., and George V. Coyne, S.J. eds. Physics,
Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding (Vatican
City State: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 292. In the second
century Epistle of Barnabas, a phrase is used that suggests an
ultimate sabbath. Speaking for God, Barnabas says, "The present
sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in
which I will give rest to all things and make the \textbf{beginning of an
eighth day, that is the beginning of another world}. Wherefore we
also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also
rose from the dead, and was made manifest and ascended into
heaven." Barnabas 15:8-9, in The Apostolic Fathers, Kirsopp Lake,
395-397, emphasis mine.
THE COVENANT MANDATE

CREATION ONE               CREATION TWO

DESIGN                   THE FALL             SUBSTANTIAL       FINAL
                        SALVATION           SALVATION

COMMUNION               grateful    bitterness access full
WITH GOD                awareness   alienation adoption communion

COMMUNITY-            relationality    homicide   neighbouring garden city
BUILDING              holy sexuality broken church bride of
                        family            sexuality redeemed Christ
                        alienation       sexuality

CO-CREATIVITY

world-making    earth-       redeemed       beauty
stewardship     raping       work           fulfilled
                manipulation  sub-      creativity
                        creativity       work and
                                sabbath
The new heaven and the new earth, presented prophetically as God's ultimate sabbath rest (Heb 4:1-11) is communion, community and co-creativity. One way of speaking of this final vision is sabbath (Heb 4:1-11) which is not only a day of rest but full and final salvation. Significantly in the Syrian Peshida, reflecting the Aramaic spoken by the Lord, Jesus is reported to say, "Come to me...and I will rest you...for I am restful...and you will find rest for yourselves" (Matt 11:28-29). But the rest Jesus brings is not only personal peace but complete <i>shalom</i> for the universe. Sabbath rest is the three-fold rest of God, humankind and creation. This is the ultimate goal of God's saving and consummating work and therefore our true destiny.156

All human beings are called to the human vocation. But what is the relationship of the human vocation to the specific vocation

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of Christians?

CHRISTIAN VOCATION

We turn now to the specific summons God makes to his own people as a called people (Acts 25:14). ¹⁵⁷

"Call" in the Old Testament ¹⁵⁸

The word Qara means "call out," a summons that implies sovereignty through naming. Naming, however, in Hebrew was not merely attaching "a verbal handle," but "to be called something was to be

¹⁵⁷ K.L. Schmidt, "ekklesia" in G. Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), Vol 3, 487-491. This is the root meaning of the word used most frequently for "church," the word ekklesia. This word is derived from klesis (calling) and means "an assembly duly summoned." In the same way that laos is usually found with the genitive, "the people of God" (tou theo), ecclesia is found with a defining modifier, "the church or churches of God". "The church of God" can be used for a single congregation or for several, for the church at large or the church expressed in even a house fellowship. But the emphasis is always on the gathering by the initiative of God. Even in Matthew 18:20, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" the emphasis is not on a self-chosen fellowship but a summoned congregation. So the whole church is a people with a calling and all of the members of the ecclesia have a calling both corporately and individually.

something."\(^{159}\) When God called Israel, they became his people. Tragically, Israel was called but sometimes did not respond (Isa 65:12). In the last days God will even summon pagan nations (Isa 55:5).

The "call" is an inviting summons, as in the case of Moses (Exod 3:4) and Israel: "When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos 11:1-2). In the later chapters of Isaiah "call" language is used in its highest sense for the Servant whom God calls in righteousness (Isa 42:6) for service as a type of those called from the beginning of humanity (Isa 41:2,4). "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles" (42:6). The use of "call" language for the commissioning of patriarchs (Moses, Abraham), judges (Gideon), and prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos) is worthy of detailed study.\(^{160}\) Such research reveals that in each case God's call was to a function, a specified task, rather than to an office.

In summary, "call" language in the Old Testament is used primarily for the people of God who are summoned to participate in God's grand purpose for the world. It is a call to salvation, a

\(^{159}\) Marshall, op. cit., 12.

call to holiness and a call to service. When applied to individuals "call" language relates to that salvation purpose rather than the means of identifying and credentialling leaders. This use of "call" extends into the Greek (LXX) translation of the Old Testament.¹⁶¹ Within Judaism, however, "only the men of Qumran seems to have had a special sense of call."¹⁶² So, as we enter the New Testament, we encounter a new thing: not only is the people as a whole called but each believer is called.

"Call" in the New Testament

The Greek words καλεω (to call, summon forth) and κλησις (calling, vocation) are used prolifically in the New Testament. This is in sharp contrast to the surrounding culture where in classical Greek καλεω and κλησις are only seldom used of divine call, usually in conjunction with the mystery religions.¹⁶³

In the Gospels, Jesus used "call" to describe his invitation to repent, turn to him, and live for the Kingdom of God: "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Falk, op. cit., 71.
¹⁶³ Coenen, op. cit., 271.
Specifically "call" is used for the summons Jesus issued to the twelve to be with him and to be sent out (Mark 3:14; Matt 4:21; 10:1). It is easy to misunderstand these call narratives as a change in vocation similar to what may happen today when a person leaves a "secular" occupation to go into "the" ministry. That is not the Gospel-writer's purpose.\(^{165}\) The first followers are prototype disciples. The call of the disciples, recorded thirty years after the event, was necessarily transformed into a metaphor with timeless relevance. While in one sense the discipleship of the Twelve was unique, all Christians are now called to be disciples.\(^{166}\)

K.L. Schmidt notes "The fact that God is the kalon [the one who calls] and that Christians are the keklenmoi [the called ones], with no qualifying addition, makes it clear that in the New Testament kalein [to be called] is a technical term for the process of salvation."\(^{167}\) Thus one can distinguish between the "external" call (which is the good news announced) and the "internal" call (the effectual call which secures a response).\(^{168}\)

\(^{165}\) Falk, op. cit., 92.

\(^{166}\) Falk, op. cit., 145.

\(^{167}\) Schmidt, "kaleo," in Kittel (TDNT), op. cit., 3:489.

\(^{168}\) Paul Helm puts it this way: "It is the activity of God who makes a person receptive and responsive to the truth which he hears. The inward 'call' is not more information, it is the clearing and renewing of the mind of the one who hears so that he understands the good news. . . it is the renewing of the will in
This appears to be part of the meaning of "many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14). In the same way Peter uses "call" to describe the initiative of God in our salvation ("as many as the Lord our God shall call", Acts 2:39). So does Paul.

"Call" in Paul's Letters

The apostle Paul uses "call" language in an especially rich way and has been profoundly influential in the church. He uses "call" in four ways: (1) salvation in Christ, (2) living in a Christian way, (3) the interface of Christian discipleship and our life situation, and (4) Paul's own experience of anointing as an apostle of Christ.

First, Paul uses call language to express the invitation of God to experience salvation. In Christ all are called "to belong to Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:6), "to be saints" (1:7) "according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28), "into fellowship with his son" (1 Cor 1:9), "to be holy" (1 Cor 1:2), "heavenward" (Phil 3:14), to salvation (2 Thess 2:14), to eternal life (1 Tim 6:12), and to hope (Eph 1:18). So we must live a life "worthy of the calling [we] we have received [literally, 'to which you have been called']" (Eph 4:1).

Second, Paul also uses call language to describe the summons order that the response of faith and obedience may be made as the good news is announced." Paul Helm, The Callings: The Gospel in the World (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 3-4.
of God to holy corporate living. In Paul's letters the people of God is not a self-elected community but a called people.\textsuperscript{169} Almost all of the statements quoted above have a corporate context rather than individual. We are "called to live in peace" (1 Cor 7:15; Col 3:15), "called to be free (Gal 5:13), "called to one hope when you were called" (Eph 4:4), called "to live a holy life" (1 Thess 4:7; 2 Tim 1:9). We read these as exhortations to individual Christians but they were written to communities for holy corporate living. Ephesians 4:1 is remarkable in this way. Paul introduces the second half of Ephesians by pleading with this community to walk worthy of their vocation on the basis of their identity in Christ (chaps 1-3). Christian vocation derives from Christian identity not the other way around. Then Paul spells out the arenas of vocational expression: church (4:1-16), marriage (5:21-33), parenting (6:1-4), workplace (6:5-9), and society (6:10-18). It is a comprehensive call and should never be reduced simply to one's occupation. The Lutheran scholar, Oscar Feuchts is, I believe scripturally correct in suggesting the multiple contexts of Christian calling, as represented in this drawing.

\textbf{DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN VOCATION}

\begin{center}
\textbf{CONGREGATION (in ministry)}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{169} Rom 8:30; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:24,26; 1 Thess 2:12; 5:24.
Third, in one place it seems that Paul uses call language for the "place in life" or "station" we occupy (slave, free, married, single, etc). Though such life situations get taken up in God's call (1 Cor 7:17, 24) and are transformed by it, the call of God comes to us in these situations (1 Cor 7:20) and is much more than occupation, marital status or social position. Because of the importance of this verse in Puritan expositions of the "particular" calling we will consider it more completely in the section on personal vocation. In the same context we will consider Paul's fourth use of "call" to describe his own anointing as an apostle ("called to be an apostle" Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:15).
In other New Testament writings there is a similar use of "call" to what we have encountered in the Gospels and the letters of Paul.\textsuperscript{170} In two places "call" is used for the leading of God to a specific ministry: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2, cf Acts 16:10). These are obviously exceptional, though God may call individuals in a direct supernatural way. It is, however, questionable whether one can make a doctrine of calling to a specific ministry from such scanty references. What can be affirmed from the New Testament is the desire of God to lead each believer.

Summarizing the entire New Testament witness, "call" is used for the invitation to salvation through discipleship to Christ, the summons to a holy corporate and personal living, and the call to serve. All are called. All are called together. All are called for the totality of everyday life.

**Belonging, Being and Doing**

The call of God is three-fold. First there is the call to belong to God. Thus persons without identities or "names", who are homeless waifs in the universe, become children of God and members of the family of God. "Once you were not a people, but now you

\begin{footnote}{Heb 3:1; 9:15; 1 Pet 1:15; 2:9; 2:21; 2 Pet 1:3; Jude 1; Rev 19:9.}\end{footnote}
are the people of God" (1 Pet 2:10). This is the call to discipleship. Second, there is the call to be God's people, a holy people that exist for the praise of his glory in all aspects of life in the church and world. This is expressed in sanctification; it is the call to holiness. Third, there is the call to do God's work, to enter into God's service to fulfil his purposes in both the church and the world. This involves gifts, talents, ministries, occupations, roles, work and mission— the call to service.

Being Christian and the Covenant Mandate

The Christian vocation summons us to be fully human beings, not angels preparing for an immaterial heaven. Christian vocation restores the human vocation and more. So the call to belong to God restores communion. The call to be God's people restores community-building, though now with a double focus: the human community (family, neighbourhood, city and nation), and also the community of faith (the church). And the call to do God's work

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171 Hos 11:1-2; Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Acts 2:39; Rom 1:6,7; 8:28; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:24,26; 7:17,20; Eph 1:18; Eph 4:1; Phil 3:14; 1 Thess 2:12, 14; 5:24; 1 Tim 6:12.

172 1 Cor 1:9; 7:15; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:4; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 4:7; 2 Tim 1:9.

173 Isa 41:2,4; 42:6; Mark 3:14; Matt 4:21; Eph 4:1; Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9-10. For a development of these three dimensions see Klaus Bochmuehl, "Recovering Vocation Today," op. cit., 25-35.
recovers co-creativity, though now (again) with a double focus: making God's world work in all the ways we serve as regents on earth, and, in addition, to witness to the gospel since the goal of the Christian vocation is that people will have fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.\(^{174}\) All of this is encompassed in the vocation to love, making amateurs out of all of us.

Meditations on the triune God take us inevitably to the profound revelation of John seventeen. In that chapter Christ reflects on the love the Father had for him even before the creation of the world (17:24) and prays that the Father's love may be in the disciples (17:26) while disciples and Master, disciple and disciple, and Son and Father all mutually indwell one another (17:22-23, 26). This gives new and deeper meaning to the well-worn text, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). Love is not merely an attribute of God but love is who God is and what God does. That is what was affirmed by Jurgen Moltmann's reflection on a line by Augustine in the words quoted above, proclaiming that God is "lover, the beloved and the love itself."\(^{175}\) This was also expressed by the trinitarian theologian John Duns Scotus (c. 1265–


\(^{175}\) Moltmann is quoting these words from Augustine: "Thou seest the Trinity when Thou seest love... For the lover, the beloved and the love are three." Moltmann, op. cit., 58.
1308) when he affirmed that creation and redemption flow out of the love within God himself. The world was made by love, runs on love and will end with an glorious eternal love-in. In the same way love is the being and the doing of the laos.

We should recover the amateur status of the Christian in terms of the three full-time love-works of God's people. What Christ produces by his glorious redemption is not a new generation of angels but truly human beings and the beginnings of a renewed creation. In other words, the dignity of being laos is nothing more or less than becoming as substantially as possible in this life the people God originally intended his first human family to be. Adam and Eve\(^{176}\) are the prototype amateurs--those who work and serve for love. They are also the prototype Christians.

They needed no commandment to love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves (Matt. 22:34-40). That law was written on their hearts, as natural to them as breathing. Within that single love vocation they were given three full-time expressions--all of them for love: communion, community-building and co-creativity.

\(^{176}\) Not surprisingly the trinitarian theologian Gregory of Nazianzus viewed Adam, Eve and Seth (the first to call on the name of the Lord) as the earthly parable of the divine Trinity. Moltmann, op. cit., 199.
Communion, community-building and co-creativity--this expresses the vocation and ministry of the laos of God. How is our sense of vocation enriched by a trinitarian understanding of God? First, we experience communion by becoming co-lovers of God. By the miracle of adoption we are drawn into the love-life within God himself. This is the heart of "loving God" and the essence of spirituality. Second, through community-building we become lovers of one another. To live perichoretically means to reject individualism and to live with a molecular identity--loving neighbour, family and friend. Many do not think of this as "ministry," "service" or "priesthood" but it is. It is holy ministry to play with one's children or to listen to a friend. Indeed a theology of the whole people of God must inform us of the theology and spirituality of our everyday relationships.\(^{177}\)

Third, co-creativity draws us into God's love for the world (Jn 3:16). The purpose of creation is the glorification of God.\(^{178}\)

Creation is expressive of God's character, an overflow of the love within God himself. The world was "created to be transfigured

\(^{177}\) Moltmann expresses this beautifully. [The unity of the triune God] only corresponds to a human fellowship of people without privileges and without subordinances. The perichoretic at-one-ness of the triune God corresponds to the experience of the community of Christ, the community which the Spirit unites through respect, affection and love. . . ." pp 157-158.

\(^{178}\) See Ibid., 209.
and glorified through the Spirit at the end." Incarnation is the highest expression of nature and not only what God did to redeem the world. So a biblical theology of the whole people of God is not only a rescue effort but is a realignment with God's ultimate purpose for the world: a transfigured creation. What is truly astounding is that humankind has, through the Spirit's irruption in our lives, the privilege of participating in the creative work of God.

It remains now to consider the personal vocation. God calls corporately; does God call individually?

**PERSONAL VOCATION**

My late colleague, Klaus Bochmuehl, offers a useful metaphor to show the relationship of the human, Christian and personal vocations. A wedding cake has a large base (the human vocation), a smaller layer built upon it (the Christian vocation) and a still smaller layer at the top (the personal vocation). They are interrelated, each building on the other. The Christian is not exempt from the human vocation (including earth-keeping) but there is another dimension of the call of God as shown in "call" language in both testaments. And finally each of us is a called

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But that call is some combination of the human and Christian vocations that is unique to our own person and life path.

The Personal Vocation in Scripture

Earlier I noted that in one place it seems that Paul uses call language for the "place in life" or "station" we occupy (slave, free, married, single, etc). This is the text the Reformers, and particularly the Puritans made much of, too much in fact. "Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him" (1 Cor 7:17, emphasis mine). Luther translated *klesis* as *Beruf* (meaning
'station') and from this, along with Calvin, developed the idea of a "worldly calling."

An accurate exegesis of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:17 must take into account the context: issues of bond, free, married, single, circumcised, uncircumcised. Further one must consider the overrealized eschatology at work in Corinth, namely that in this age of end-times Spirit, tongues, "the language of heaven" was the ultimate spiritual gift. Earthly realities like marriage no longer mattered. In the Corinthian church people were leaving their life situation (even their marriages) as though this change had religious significance. Paul's word in 7:17 and 7:24 that they are to abide in the situation "to which they were called" and in 7:20 that "each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him" (emphasis mine, but note the change) means this. Though such life situations get taken up in God's call (1 Cor 7:17, 24) and are transformed by it, the call of God comes to us in these situations (1 Cor 7:20) and is much more than occupation, marital status or social position.

Paul Marshall is right in saying that unless Paul has coined a new word he is here using klesis in a way found nowhere else in the New Testament. "This means that the Bible does not contain a notion of vocation or calling in one of the senses in which these
terms were used in Reformation theology."\textsuperscript{180} At most, calling means that God is providentially involved in our lives so we are not a collection of accidents; but calling--even personal calling--is much more than our situation. As Klaus Bochmuehl has noted, the reduction of calling to station in life had the spiritual effect of inhibiting spiritual mobility and reducing the willingness of people to be sent in cross-cultural missionary service, a factor still at work in many mainline churches.\textsuperscript{181}

\textbf{The Magisterial Reformers}

It is crucial to realize that the Reformers were developing a

\textsuperscript{180} Marshall, op. cit., 14.

\textsuperscript{181} In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee presses the following interpretation: The concept of call is a way of describing Christian conversion. That call comes to a person in a given social setting. This is the clear emphasis of all the verbs in the passage, especially as it is associated with various social options (v. 18, 21, 22). These two realities are pressed theologically in various ways by Paul. (a) God's call to Christ that comes in Christ renders the settings themselves irrelevant (vv. 18-19, 22). (b) Because of this, change is not necessary; indeed one may live out the Christian life in whatever setting that call took place. (c) On the other hand, precisely because these settings are irrelevant, if change does take place, that too is irrelevant. One is not to seek change as though it had religious significance, which it does not. (d) Although he comes very close to seeing the setting in which one is called as "calling" itself, he never quite makes that jump. At most "calling" refers to the circumstances in which the calling took place. This does not mean that a person is locked forever in a particular situation. "Rather, Paul means that by calling a person within a given situation, that situation itself is taken up in the call and thus sanctified to him or her." Fee, \textit{First Corinthians}, op. cit., 309-310.
theology of calling against the backdrop of medieval monasticism through which persons elected a superior way. They were striving for a perfection beyond the Ten Commandments and so chose to obey the "evangelical counsels" of poverty, chastity and obedience. They did not speak of the monastic life as "vocation" because this was not the summons of God but the self-chosen election of certain Christians.\textsuperscript{182} To this both Luther and Calvin reacted vigorously, even to the extent of saying that the one place one could not live the Christian life was in the monastery.

Luther was eloquent on the tragic results of this two-level view of vocation:

Monastic vows rest on the false assumption that there is a special calling, a vocation, to which superior Christians are invited to observe the counsels of perfection while ordinary Christians fulfil only the commands; but there simply is no special religious vocation since the call of God comes to each at the common tasks.\textsuperscript{183}

Luther railed against the attempt of people to find a superior way

\textsuperscript{182} See Bochmuehl, "Recovering Vocation Today," op. cit., 29.

\textsuperscript{183} Quoted in Roland Bainton, \textit{Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther} (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 156.
beyond keeping the Ten Commandments and, along with others, Luther kept pointing to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus: "Search not for things beyond your ability, but the things that God has commanded you. For you have already been commanded more than you can manage" (3:21ff). Christian perfection is to be found in normal daily tasks.

How is it possible that you are not called? You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, or boy or girl, or servant. Picture before you the humblest estate.... Yea, if you had five heads and ten hands, even then you would be too weak for your task, so that you would never dare think of making a pilgrimage or doing any kind of saintly work.\(^{184}\)

What is obvious from this is that for Luther one's call is not a specific trade or occupation but one's position in society, one's "station in life." If you were born a woman that determined your calling as a housewife and mother. Even the shepherds, after they worshipped the Christ child, returned to their flocks because that was the shepherd's station. Anna the widow in the temple was

also doing what widows should do. To leave you station would turn society upside down like "walking on one's ears, veiling one's feet, and putting shoes on one's head." Calvin took a similar view in the *Institutes* adding the additional emphasis on predestination, that God has sovereignly assigned these places.

At the same time as Luther and Calvin were railing against monks and monasteries, they were fighting on another front, the anabaptists, among whom were found the early Swiss Brethren and the Mennonites. The Reformers saw these movements as otherworldly, as Christians huddling together in groups of believers and forming a new monasticism. These groups down-played the civic vocation and the Ten Commandments. They stressed the Sermon on the Mount and the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Calvin charged them with inventing "revelations of the Spirit for themselves" instead of relying exclusively on the exposition of Scripture. So both Luther and Calvin emphasized this-worldliness in vocation, but it is not hard to see how this began the slippery slide towards the secularization of callings.

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186 "The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. . . [He] has appointed duties to every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress he limits, he has named these various kinds of living 'callings'." John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (???), III.10.6, quoted in Bochmuehl, "Recovering," 31.

The idea that the service to God should have only to do with a church altar, singing, reading, sacrifice, and the like is without doubt but the worst trick of the devil. How could the devil have led us more effectively astray than by the narrow conception that service to God takes place only in church and by works done therein. . . . The whole world could abound with services to the Lord, Gottesdienste—not only in churches but also in the home, kitchen, workshop, field.188

The History of the Particular Call

The Puritans (16th and 17th century) were the first to develop systematically the distinction between the "general call" (by which we are called effectually to become Christians) and the "particular call" (by which we take up a sphere of service in direct response to the summons of God).189 The "particular call"

188 Quoted in Oscar E. Feucht, Everyone a Minister (St. Louis: Concordia. 1979), 80.

is that to which the woman in Calvin Seerveld's story was alluding: "My you certainly haven't missed your calling!" Is this biblical?

The Puritans stressed that Christianity proposed a definite emphasis on work in this world. This was not merely a chosen activity but the summons of God—a calling. Callings or vocations were part of God's order, a means of serving God and sustaining God's world through supporting oneself, one's family and one's commonwealth. William Perkins taught that as soon as one discovered faith in Christ he should be taught to discover his calling. He notes that Adam as soon as he was created, even in his integrity, has a personal calling assigned to him by God, which was to dress and keep the garden... And therefore all who descend from Adam must needs have some calling to walk in, either public, or private, whether it be in the church, or commonwealth, or family.190

There was some ambiguity among the Puritans, however, as to the exact meaning of the particular calling, with one or another of the following historical trends being emphasized, a process

masterfully traced by Paul Marshall in *A Kind of Life Imposed on Man*. First, as we have seen, there was in the New Testament no specific doctrine of calling to a particular task. But soon, drawing on Greek dualism, the church fathers developed a doctrine of two ways, the higher (like Mary) and the lower (like Martha). Augustine used the terms *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life) and *vita activa* (active life) for these. By the medieval period calling for the common people simply equalled station in life. The rich man in his castle, The poor man at his gate, He made them high and lowly, And ordered their estate.\(^1\)

But those who were truly called elected to go into the monastery or priesthood, for which holy purpose the rest of the saints worked to support.

Then came Luther and his bold innovative translation of 1 Corinthians 7:17 as *Beruf*, a word normally used to describe the calling of someone to the clerical state. Luther took this word and applied it to all worthy occupations, extending calling to the whole people of God and focusing it in terms of estate, so fusing estate, office and duty.\(^2\)

What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it

\(^{191}\) Quoted in Helm, op. cit., 47.

\(^{192}\) Marshall, op. cit., 23.
up in heaven for our Lord God. ... We should accustom ourselves to think of our position and work as sacred and well-pleasing to God, not on account of the position and work, but on account of the word and faith from which the obedience and the work flow.\textsuperscript{193}

In fact Luther did distinguish between calling and situation by emphasizing that calling was the duty of serving God by faith (a work of faith)\textsuperscript{194} and according to the Word \textbf{in} one's situation.\textsuperscript{195}

This is apparent in the following quotation:

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool--though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith--my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God with all his angels and creatures is smiling--not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith.\textsuperscript{196}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[194] See Luther's "Treatise on Good Works".
\item[195] This is carefully exegeted in M. Kolden, "Luther on Vocation," \textit{Word and World} Vol 3, No 4 (Fall 1983): 382-390.
\end{footnotes}
Calvin, in contrast to Luther, used "calling" mainly to describe the call to salvation or the call into the ministry. But he also used "calling" to describe the work itself that one does (and not merely the faith called forth in the work, as with Luther). Calvin also considered that a Christian might change a calling with proper reason.\(^{197}\)

Building on Calvin, Perkins emphasized calling as the particular duties which God requires of us in our estates—a state of life or lifestyle, though Perkins himself often spoke of callings as though they were simply occupations, some of which were not lawful callings. It seems Perkins fused the two ideas of duties and occupations.\(^{198}\) In time the Puritan movement lost the synthesis achieved by Perkins,\(^{199}\) a synthesis that reflects the biblical balance of calling to salvation. In the Bible calling is expressed and realized in the concrete everyday contexts of our

\(^{198}\) Ibid., 41.

\(^{199}\) Marshall summarizes: "It appears that the Puritans were drawing unconsciously on several different source as they tried to relate to changing social orderings. They drew on an earlier English view of callings as God-given estates which were sites for duty, and also on the Lutheran view of calling as a manner of life to be lived in such estates. They took the traditional view of abiding in one's station, but they also sought to help those who could choose employments and not just accept a given status. They saw all calling as equal in the sight of god, but also thought that, as social roles, some callings were better than others. . . . They took the Calvinist notion of effectual calling and then hinted at it also as a duty to God." Ibid., 45.
life, contexts (family, nation, city, etc.) that can hardly be called "circumstances" even though the Bible falls short of describing these contexts as "callings."

Is There a Personal Calling for Everyone?

While the New Testament does not give formal evidence for the particular calling so avidly promoted by the Puritans, it does give us several theological perspectives.

First, there is the effectual call of Christ to become a disciple. As mentioned before this is the primary way in which all believers experience calling. For some, as for the apostle Paul this is instantly transformative; for others it is a long process. One person wakes in the morning to see that the sun has risen; another waits through dusk and dawn to see its gradual emergence.

Second, there is the providential call. As Paul Helm says, "It was no accident that Lydia was a seller of purple cloth, or that Aquila and Priscilla were tent makers, or that Paul himself was a learned Pharisee." Our lives are not a bundle of accidents. So Scripture describes many people being drawn by God into a particular form of service without a supernatural call:

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200 Helm, op. cit., 49.
Joseph, Esther, Bezalel and Ohaliab, Aquila and Priscilla, being examples. Discerning the providential hand of God in our lives, birth, family, education, personality, opportunities, is part of discovering our personal vocation.

Third, there is the charismatic call. I am using charisma here in the sense of gifts and graces provided by God through the Spirit. Klaus Bochmuehl suggests a fully trinitarian approach to callings. The Father gives us the cultural mandate to subdue and develop the earth. The Son calls us to discipleship and summons us with the Great Commission. The Spirit equips us for a task: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).\textsuperscript{201} While Spirit gifts\textsuperscript{202} are primarily given to build up and edify the body of Christ it seems that the hard and fast distinction between "natural" (though God-given) talents and so-called "spiritual gifts" is really untenable, especially in the light of Romans 12 where Paul alludes to an "extra" anointing provided by the Spirit: "if it is in contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously" (Rom 12:6-8). Talents too are gifts of God for which we are accountable (Matt 25:14-30).\textsuperscript{203} Elizabeth O'Connor says, "We ask

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\item[201] Bochmuehl, "Recovering Vocation Today," op. cit., 28.
\item[203] Calvin radically reinterpreted this parable. Before his time the talents of gold were spiritual gifts and graces bestowed on Christians. But Calvin took a revolutionary approach by
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
to know the will of God without guessing that his will is written into our very beings." But there is more to living as called people than expressing our giftedness and talents within the divinely ordained circumstances of our lives.

Fourth, there is the heart call. The Spirit not only equips but constrains. The Spirit not only provides the ability but creates a desire for a particular service. While it is extraordinary for people to have a direct, verbal "call" (as in Acts 16:10), it is entirely ordinary for God to create a desire in our hearts to do the very thing needed, whether in the church or the world. Business people are called in this sense, as are engineers, home makers, crafts persons, pastors and missionaries.

Greg Ogden outlines three dimensions of the individual experience of the call: (1) we experience an inner oughtness; (2) it is bigger than ourselves; (3) it brings great satisfaction and joy.

Gordon Cosby would add the sense, "that you were born to this."

So Fredrick Buechner advises:

interpreting the parable in terms of one's calling and helped shape the modern meaning of talents. Marshall, op. cit., 25.


205 Miroslav Volf counters the Reformation idea of work as vocation with this emphasis in Work in the Spirit.

206 Ogden, op. cit., 209.

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness; touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are kept moments, and life itself is a grace. 208

Is There a Special Call to the Professional Ministry?

There is one other instance of a personal summons in Scripture to a particular work. As mentioned above, Paul uses "call" to describe his own anointing as an apostle ("called to be an apostle" Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:15). But he never offers his experience of a personal commission as a model for the general or special call to be experienced by other believers. David Falk shows that Paul's call is both conversion and commissioning. 209 The conversion "call" he shares with all other believers through history. The commission "call" is unrepeatable. It is not a paradigm for the "call" of church leaders today. "Luke's three accounts of Paul's Damascus road experience fail to ratify the ecclesiastical practice of a 'call to the ministry'." 210 Even when

208 Frederick Buechner, Now & Then (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 87.

209 Falk, op. cit., 133.

210 Falk, op. cit., 145.
addressing Timothy--a perfect opportunity to use "call" language for a special call to pastoral leadership--Paul uses call language only with respect to Timothy's salvation.

Some theologians speak of a general call to all believers, and a secondary call to a few within the church who are summoned to give leadership, modelled on the example of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles. For example Richard Niebuhr defines the call to the ministry as "that inner persuasion or experience by which a person feels himself directly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of the ministry". Such language is very problematic. That God might give an

211 Ogden, op. cit., 18-25.

212 H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 64. Niebuhr suggests that the call to the ministry involves "these four elements: (1) the call to be a Christian which is variously described as the call to discipleship of Jesus Christ, to hearing and doing the Word of God, to repentance and faith, et cetera; (2) the secret call, namely, that inner persuasion or experience whereby a person feels himself secretly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of the ministry; (3) the providential call, which is that invitation and command to assume the work of the ministry which comes through the equipment of a person with the talents necessary for the exercise of the office and through the divine guidance of his life by all its circumstances; (4) the ecclesiastical call, that is, the summons and invitation extended to a man [sic] by some community or institution of the Church to engage in the work of the ministry" (p. 64).

213 In 1912 Yale Lectures, John H. Jowett stressed that every preacher should testify to a unique divine call, "a solemn communication of the divine will, a mysterious feeling of commission, which leaves a man no alternative, but which sets him on the road of this vocation bearing the ambassage of a servant and instrument of the eternal God." John H. Jowett, The Preacher:
extraordinary supernatural summons is surely possible, and has occasionally happened. To require this is to go beyond Scripture.

The demand by ecclesiastical bodies that a potential pastor have a specific "call to the ministry" as a prerequisite for pastoral office, while the rest of the people of God need no such call to exercise their gifts in the church, is not sustainable by the biblical witness. The historical expression of the "inner" or "secret" call was expounded by Calvin largely because of concern for proper order in the church, to prevent "noisy and troublesome men from rashly tak[ing] upon themselves to teach or to rule".\(^{214}\)

I pass over that secret call, of which each minister is conscious before God, and which does not have the church as witness. But there is the witness of our heart that we receive the proferred office not with ambition or avarice, not with any other selfish desire,

His Life and Work (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 13. Another example is Herbert W. Chilstrom writing in a pastoral theology journal: "We can begin with what one might call 'the irresistible call to preach the gospel.' The term 'irresistible' is chosen deliberately because it underscores the fact that the call does not originate in us any more than our call in baptism to be a Christian. It is a call from without, a call that comes uninvited, a call that forces itself from it (for God grants us freedom to do so). But it is a call which persists from the God whose Spirit not only creates faith in every believer, but also calls certain persons to the ministry of the Word and sacrament. Herbert W. Chilstrom, "The Pastoral Calling from the Perspective of a Bishop," \(\text{WW1 (1981): 331-337.}\) Might it not be that this divine imperative is simply the compulsion of the Spirit, now poured out on the whole people of God, to bear God's Word thus instituting the prophethood of all believers (Acts 2:17), a "call" which comes to all but is heard uniquely by each?

\(^{214}\) Institutes, II, 1062.
but with a sincere fear of God and desire to build up the church. That is indeed necessary for each one of us (as I have said) if we would have our ministry approved by God.  

Luther did allow for the call that came from the church to exercise ministry on the behalf of others through the office of pastor. . . . when he is in a place where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than the fact that he is a Christian, inwardly called and anointed by God; he is bound by the duty of brotherly love to preach to the erring heathens or non-Christians and to teach them the Gospel, even though no one call him to this work . . . when the Christian is in a place where there are Christians, who have the same power and right as he, he should not thrust himself forward, but should rather let himself be called and drawn forth to preach and teach in the stead and by the commission of the rest.  

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215 Institutes.II. 1063.

216 Martin Luther, "The Right and Power of a Congregation or Community to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved from Scripture," in A.T.W. Steinhaueser, trans., Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Castle Press, 1931), IV, 80.
Elsewhere Luther makes a distinction between the immediate call directly from God (which is what the apostles experienced) and one mediated by the church (which is the normal way to become a church leader).

God calls in two ways, either by means or without means. Today He calls all of us into the ministry of the Word by a mediated call, that is, one that comes through means, namely through man. But the apostles were called immediately by Christ Himself, as the prophets in the Old Testament had been called by God Himself. Afterwards the apostles called their disciples, as Paul called Timothy, Titus, etc. These men called bishops, as in Titus 1:5ff.; and the bishops called their successors down to our own time, and so on to the end of the world. This is the mediated call since it is done by man.²¹⁷

In twentieth century pastoral theology, John Calvin's theology of calling has won out and Luther has lost out. By and large we have missed the main thrust of the New Testament and reverted to a pre-Christian view of clergy and laity: a general call to the people and a special call to the elite few.

So how should people be called into leadership in the people of God? In addition to the effectual, providential, charismatic, and heart calls, there should be, in the case of church leaders, an ecclesiastical call.

The ecclesiastical call means quite simply that a person's suitability for church leadership needs to be discerned by the church in two ways, first in gifting, and second, in character (see 1 Tim 3.1-13; Titus 1:5-9). While a special existential "call" may be given by God in some cases, the primary biblical bases upon which a person may enter pastoral leadership is character—a good reputation, practical ethical behaviour, and God-given gifts of leadership (1 Peter 5:1-10). There is no ontological difference between leaders and people. The call to leadership in the church comes from the church!

It is this last call that is most conspicuously and most dangerously lacking in the church today with the result that many people head off to seminary on the basis of their heart call and, on graduation, offer themselves as self-appointed ministers for hire. Within evangelical Christianity there is a "guidance-mania"—the fear of not being "in the centre of God's will." With a poor sense of God's purpose and a low sense of the civil vocation Christians today tend to focus on personal ministry and evangelism as the only true expressions of the called life. At
least the Puritans extended the call of God to all believers.

As a direct call is not needed for church leadership, so there is no need to be "called" through an existential compelling experience to an occupation in society. God gives motivation and gift. God guides. Work, family, civil vocation and neighbouring are encompassed in our total response to God's saving and transforming call in Jesus. Misunderstanding on this point has been promoted by the overemphasis of the Puritans on 1 Corinthians 7:17. So vocational guidance is not discerning our "call" but, in the context of our call to discipleship, holiness and service, discerning the guidance of God in our lives and learning how to live in every dimension to please God.

**Living as Called People.**

One of the most significant contributions of the Puritans,

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218 The later Puritan interpretation (especially those who came later than Perkins) has the advantage of universalizing vocation among the people of God but it (1) minimizes the corporate, people of God, aspect of vocation, (2) makes too much of the specific place one occupies in society as though the place itself was the calling, and (3) focuses on task/doing to the exclusion of being. Nevertheless one should regard the various contexts of life--marriage/single, workplace, neighbourhood, society--as taken up into the call of God and therefore expressed in terms of holiness and service rather than arenas chosen for personal self-fulfilment.

however, was on the spirituality of calling—how to live as a called person. William Perkins offers several valuable perspectives on living vocationally: entering one's calling in a Christian way, continuing in one's calling with holiness, persisting in one's calling in spite of obstacles, and retiring from one's calling at God's command and for God's glory. On the first, Perkins advises discerning our gifts and the leading of God so that one is sure God has led even though there are hardships and difficulties. If one finds later that he or she has entered a calling for the wrong reasons (such as marriage or a church ministry) he advises with consummate wisdom not to forsake the calling but to repent of the wrong motives and so to continue with a clear conscience.

On the second (continuing with holiness) Perkins advises, positively, seeking God's pleasure in all things and, negatively, shunning the vices of one's calling, specifically covetousness and injustice. Judas, the Sons of Zebedee and Cain are examples of people whose callings were destroyed by covetousness. Therefore, Perkins advises, we must labour to see our particular situation as a providence of God no matter how difficult, we must resolve that God is our portion (Psa 16:6), and resolve to seek no more in this world than we actually need.

Persistence in one's calling (the third dimension) requires
removing the impediment to constancy: ambition (like that of Adam and Eve), envy—"the pining away of the heart when we see others placed in better callings and conditions than ourselves"\textsuperscript{220} and impatience. Perkins uses an illustration that predates anaesthetics: we are to continue in our calling just as a surgeon continues to cut his patient even though the patient is screaming!

Finally Perkins advises setting aside our callings daily for refreshing recreation, weekly for sabbath, and finally when through disablement or death at the time of God's choosing we must set aside our calling permanently. A solemn but redemptive emphasis—conspicuously lacking in contemporary vocational counselling today—is Perkins' emphasis on the last judgment. We must, he says, give account of our calling on the last day of judgment. Every person will be presented before God and the works he or she has done will be manifested. "How then can we give a good account of ourselves before God on that day? We must calculate our blessings, weigh all that is defective and then cleave to the surety of Christ, his death being all the satisfaction God needs".\textsuperscript{221} This last point is a solemn reminder that we are called not primarily to somewhere or something but Someone.

\textbf{FOR FURTHER STUDY/DISCUSSION}

\textsuperscript{220} Perkins (1626), op. cit., 773D.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 779D.
1. Consider the opening story from Calvin Seerveld in the light of the biblical teaching on calling. What feelings did the story awaken? What questions? How does Scripture speak to these?


3. Explore the balance of individual and community in contemporary culture in the light of biblical truth.

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