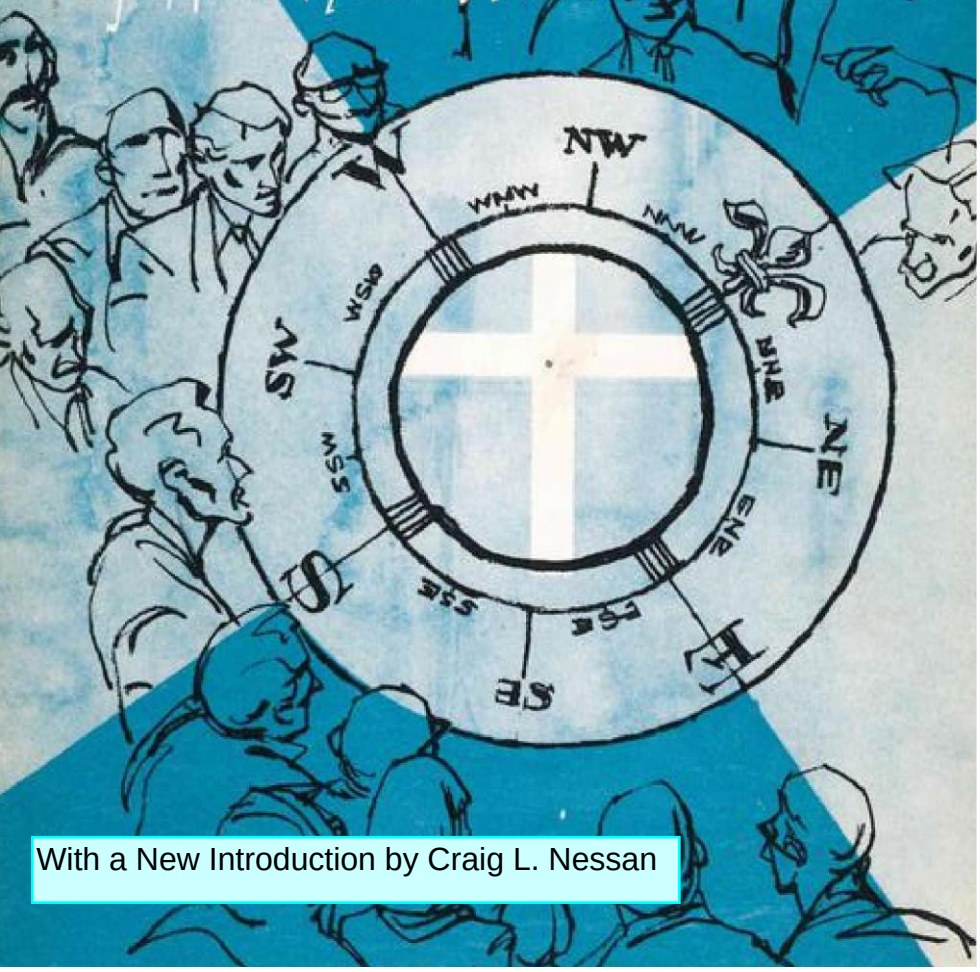


Salty Christians

by Hans-Ruedi Weber



With a New Introduction by Craig L. Nesson

Salty Christians

by Hans-Ruedi Weber

*Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute
The World Council of Churches*

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Introduction to the 2024 Edition of *Salty Christians* by Hans-Ruedi Weber

**Craig L. Nesson,
Wartburg Theological Seminary**

I am very pleased to provide an introduction to this new edition of *Salty Christians* by Hans-Ruedi Weber. Dr. Weber was one of the initiators in the 20th century of the renewal of lay ministry in the life of the ecumenical churches. When this study was first published in 1963, he served as the Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute for the World Council of Churches. Weber was one of the foremost advocates for making the ministry of what I prefer to call “the Christian people” (aka “laity”) the centerpiece of the church’s mission for the life of the world.

Upon discovering this Study Guide on the biblical foundations and vocation of the laity, I wondered that it remained so relevant for our time. The three chapters are: 1) At the Edge of the Church and the World, 2) A Peculiar People, and 3) Concrete Obedience. Biblical texts included in the study are Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:1-6, 1 Peter 2:9-12 and 3:14-15, Ephesians 4:7 and 4:11-16, and Acts 2:42-45.

For more on this movement in the 1950s and 60s, see Craig L. Nesson, “The Diaconate of All Believers: Theology, Formation, Practice,” *Religions* 2023, 14, 741.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060741>. Section 2.

Major themes covered include Our Origin and Call, A Missionary People, The Common Life of the Early Church, Work and Vocation, Worship and Work, and Holy Worldliness. The Study Guide concludes with instructions for small group leaders. While there is a dated mention of “Indian raids” and publication predated the use of inclusive language, these limitations need not preclude its use as a study resource now more than 60 years later.

I am extremely grateful to the widow of Hans-Ruedi Weber, Caroline Helena Weber, and his daughters, Barbara Aho-Weber and Saskia Weber Guisan, as holders of the copyright for their permission to republish the original version without modifications. I am also grateful to Lyn van Rooyan of the World Council of Churches for mediation in obtaining the permission and to the staff of the Reu Memorial Library at Wartburg Theological Seminary for preparing the digital version.

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Preface

The role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church has become one of the major concerns in contemporary Church history. This development was identified at the 1954 Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, which declared:

The real battles of faith today are being fought in factories, shops, offices, and farms, in political parties and government agencies, in countless homes, in the press, radio and television, in the relationship of nations. Very often it is said that the Church should "go into these spheres," but the fact is that the Church *is* already in these spheres in the persons of its laity.

Concerning this declaration, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches has published the following statement:

There is nothing new in this conception—for our Lord said, "Ye are the salt *of the earth* . . ."—but it is a truth which has been obscured over many periods of the Church's life.

The salt fulfills its function only if, after having been assembled and cleansed, it is scattered again to be dissolved. Likewise the

Church lives by a process of assembling and scattering. It is brought together from all peoples, occupations, and groups for worship and for other recognizable "organized activities." It is scattered as its members, and predominantly its lay members, disperse themselves in the life of the world. As salt fulfills its function only when scattered and dissolved so an indispensable part of the ministry of the Church is exercised when the Church is in its scattered phase. This process of withdrawal and return, of being assembled and being scattered, is not accidental but essential to the Church's life.

Christians learn, by several kinds of experience, to live responsibly as the Church in society:

- ▶ by group prayer, Bible study, and corporate worship;
- ▶ by engaging in ecumenical enterprises;
- ▶ by willingness to listen to other Christians and to those outside the Church;
- ▶ by making the life of the "gathered Church" increasingly relevant to the life of the Church in the world.

Salty Christians underlines the need for all these kinds of experience.

The body of this book is based on a mimeographed handbook for lay training which Mr. Weber wrote at the request of the East Asian Christian Conference. While the author was executive secretary of the Department on the Laity of the World Council of Churches, he used these materials in lay training courses, not only in many Asian countries, but also in Europe and Great Britain, in Latin America, Canada, and the United States.

At the request of many people and Church agencies, these materials are now published in book form. With the permission of the author the manuscript has been considerably altered, so that what were originally notes for leaders of lay training courses now form the three chapters of the book.

The Episcopal Church's Department of Christian Education considers it a privilege to present this book for use by discussion groups and individual readers. It is hoped that the book will be used by ecumenical groups, and that it will contribute to ecumenical understanding. To Mr. Weber's chapters have been added some suggestions for using them, and a short bibliography.

Discussion groups will find that this book throws light upon the following four convictions:

- ▶ the whole Church is called—and sent—to reveal God's love for the world and to reveal His presence in the world;
- ▶ the whole Church is called and sent to serve the world, not primarily by special "religious" tasks, but mainly by a style of life that affirms Christ's lordship over all parts of the social order;
- ▶ in the Church's ministry to the world, Christ's love and lordship can bring unity to the fragmented world;
- ▶ the Church can carry out its mission only when its members learn to be concerned about all men and to accept all men as Christ Himself accepts all who come to Him in baptism and the Holy Communion.

EMMA LOU BENIGNUS

Department of Christian Education
Protestant Episcopal Church

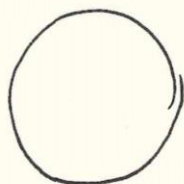
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CHAPTER I

At the Edge of the Church and the World

The Church today is failing to accomplish its primary task of penetrating and transforming the world. One reason for this failure is that too few Christians acknowledge that Christ, the Lord of the Church, is also the Lord of the world. The message of the Bible does not support the common conviction that the Church's only task is to look after the "religious department" of life. Yet that conviction is exerting an insidious influence on the thinking and practice of the twentieth-century Church.

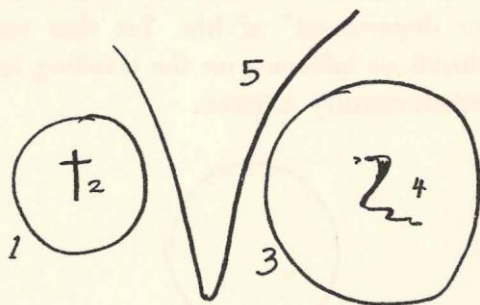


Take this circle as representing the world—the small world of the family, neighborhood, and work place, as well as the big world of the town, country, and continent. Churchmen are called to share Christ's concern for the whole world,

with all its harsh realities. God made it; He loves it; and because He loves it, He has set us in it.

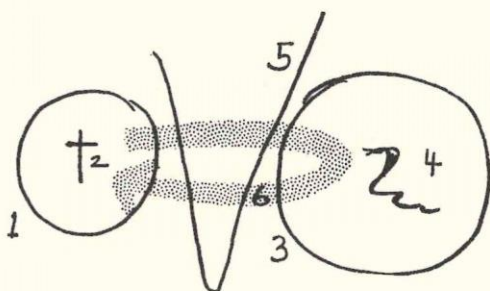
The world is God's first love, His first fiancée. Therefore the first covenant about which the Bible speaks is not the covenant with Abraham and Israel or the Church, but the covenant with Noah and the whole living creation. Also the last promise we have from God is not the promise of a renewed Church, but of a new heaven and a new earth. The whole history of Israel is embedded in this great love God has for the world. "For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16,17).

Yet, so often has the Church neglected its responsibility for the world, that we might think it preaches "God so loved *the Church*" only. The patterns of life and the moods governing our churches have made them like ghettos set off from the world.



The Church (1) lives as if Christ (2) were the center of the Church's life alone; it brands the world (3) as entirely bad, and the realm of the devil (4). As a result, a wide gulf (5) appears between the Church and the world, between

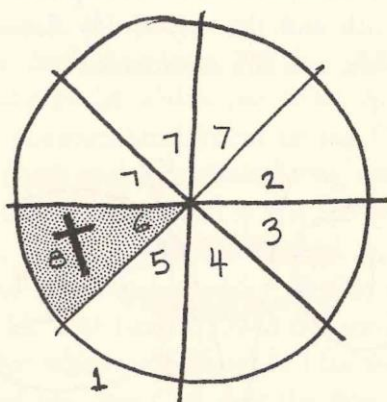
Sunday and work days, between worship and work, between our Christian faith and the day-to-day decisions of family life, vocational life, and life as citizens.



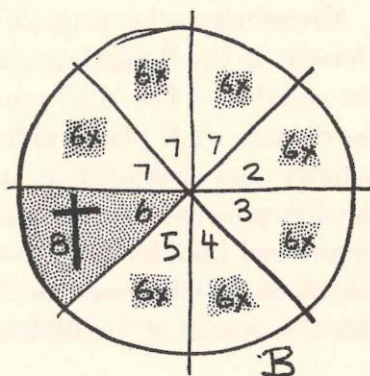
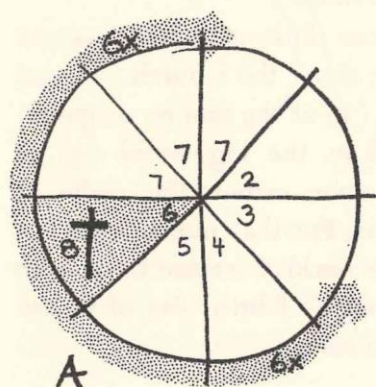
Because of the gulf, people acquire a distorted notion that evangelism is a sort of Indian raid (6) into enemy territory (3) where raiders collect scalps and quickly retreat to safety. Too often they bring back only scalps—the scalps of religious emotions—not the whole man with his body and intellect; his work and leisure time.

This separation of Church and world unfortunately fosters the delusion that the “good layman” is the man with a religious hobby, who spends much of his free time in the closed “religious” world of Church activities.

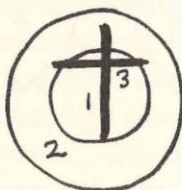
Nevertheless, the diagram does illustrate one important element of the Biblical message about the Church (1) and the world (3). The small world (3) of the family, neighborhood, and work place, as well as the big world (3) of country and continent, is, to some extent, the realm of devilish principalities and powers. For that reason, we must be rescued from bondage to the world if we are to be with Christ, to be Christians, to belong to Christ. But of course this is only part of the Biblical message.



The “sector view” of the Church and the world is also popular but unscriptural. According to this view, the life of society (1) is divided into sectors—political (2), cultural (3), economic (4), family (5), religious (6), and others (7). Because Christ (8) is regarded as Lord only of the “religious sector” of life, people believe that the Church is concerned only with “religious” questions, and *not* with the political, social, or economic issues of our time.



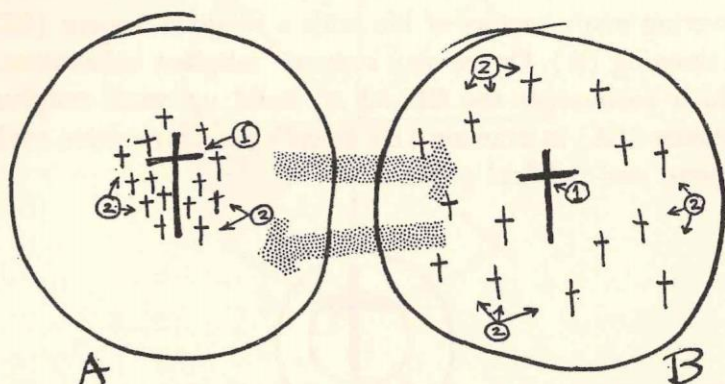
If we hold the false notion that the Church is interested only in narrowly “religious” matters, we may be satisfied if the Church’s influence is thinly spread abroad in the world, covering many sectors of life with a religious veneer (6X) in drawing (A). Or we may support “religious colonialism,” which encourages the Church to build up small religious colonies (6X) in drawing (B), in colleges, universities, trade unions, and political parties.



Actually, the Church (1) is at the heart of the world (2). Christ (3) is Lord and Servant of both the world and the Church. As Lord of the whole world He is “head over all things” (Eph. 1:22), and He is also head of His body, the Church (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18; Col. 2:19). Christians are truly in the world, and yet, because of their relationship with Christ, they are distinct from it.

Christ calls us, as members of the Church, to be the leaven that leavens the world.

The Church's Rhythm of Withdrawal from and Return to the World



Christ (1), who is at the center of the world (A) calls His followers (members of the Church) (2) to be with Him, forming the convened assembly of the citizens of the Kingdom. He calls His Church together for worship and common life, for corporate witness and service, in order to send it out into the world, into all spheres of experience.

In the world (B), Christ's followers are scattered. Again and again Christ (1), the great Sower, takes a handful of citizens of the Kingdom (2) in order to sow this good seed (2) in the field which is the world. There, within the natural groupings of society, where life goes on in all its complexity, Christians (2) have to minister, sometimes alone, sometimes two by two.

Unless we rediscover this Biblical rhythm of withdrawal and return, we shall never become the worshiping and ministering community the world so badly needs. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). The world always needs "salty Christians" for cooperative enterprises. In his own daily indi-

vidual relationships, every Christian is called to take part in the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Life is a series of "sets of relationships"—family relationships, the relationships a man has in his work, the relationships in the political community, and even the relationships of leisure time. A Christian might easily make responsible decisions in only one set of these relationships, but every person is involved in several sets of relationships at the same time. His loyalties and responsibilities in one may conflict directly with his responsibilities in the others.

Two Christian insurance agents felt the need to protest about dishonesty in the city government. Within a matter of weeks, they found their jobs were in jeopardy, and they were faced with the question, "Do our family responsibilities make it impossible for us to risk our jobs by protesting about the dirty politics in this town?" These men realized they had a triple responsibility to their families, their fellow citizens, and their employer. In addition, because they were Christians, they knew that they must also answer to God.

The Christian can find no short cut through such a predicament. He can be guided by no rule of thumb. A Christian is not helped on his journey through life by a detailed map, but by a compass—the life and way of Jesus Christ whose invitation simply is "Follow me." This is one reason that it is necessary for Christians in the world to be able to "return to the fold," to bring their lives to the altar for prayer and offering, and to meet with their fellows for encouragement, counsel, and training.

Every Christian needs to live in the rhythm of coming to the altar to be renewed by Christ and of returning to the world to do Christ's work. Worship, study, and fellowship, which are part of the life and program of the Church gathered, should be planned to meet the needs of the people

who are "called in" and who go out again as Christian witnesses.

As a result of the weakening effects of parochialism and denominationalism, Christians in the world, who greatly need each other, often do not even know one another as fellows in Christ because they "go to different churches." The day may come when Christians will gather in accord with their common tasks and localities, rather than in accord with their shades of doctrine.

Who Are the Laity?

By discovering the Biblical meaning of the word *laity*, we can better understand the true mission of the Church's laymen.

In common speech nowadays, a layman is one who is an unauthorized amateur. In the Church he stands over against the clergy, the "professional, full-time Christians." He is "only a layman," a part-time Christian, even though he may spend a good deal of time and money doing "church work."

This description of a layman is a far cry from the Biblical meaning of the word *laos*, which in both the Old and New Testaments is a key word meaning "the people"—all the people of God as distinguished from the peoples of other loyalties among whom they lived. This people differs in origin from the peoples of the world in being called into being by the direct action of God.

We can see the true role of the laity only when we rediscover the true nature of the Church as the people of God. In common usage, the word *people* generally means a collection of individuals. It is less frequently applied to one group, nation, or race—as in "the German people." It is always in this latter sense that the Bible speaks of the people

of God. It is easy to understand that the German people is one, since all its members share by birth in the same national heritage. It is less easy to recapture the early Christian conviction that the people of God is one people, despite the varied origins of the individuals who comprise this people. These diverse individuals become the one Body of Christ, not by accident of birth, but by accepting God's promise in baptism.

We need to rediscover the old Christian understanding that, by baptism, we are all incorporated into Christ's Body, the Church, in a mystical, sacramental, not merely metaphorical, sense. We are all ordained for participating corporately in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal ministry for the sake of this world. All Christians are called to become ministers of Christ's saving purpose. All baptized Christians, consequently, are the laity (members of the *laos*), including bishops, priests, deacons, theologians, and other professional church workers. Those who are set apart for a special function in the Church are therefore sometimes referred to as "the other laity" within the total laity.

Unfortunately clericalism has dominated churches for so long that most people now think of the laity as merely passive dependents of the clergy. We need to get back to a fresh vision of (1) the true ministry of *the whole people of God*, and (2) the true ministry of *those set apart* for a special function (the clergy). A high doctrine of the laity does not exclude, but rather demands, a new high doctrine of the clergy.

The Ministry of the Laity in the World

The phrase "the ministry of the laity" expresses the privilege and obligation of the whole Church to share in Christ's

ministry to the world. Faced with such a wide definition, one might ask whether there is any distinction between the ministry of the whole Church and the ministry of the laity. Actually the distinction between these two becomes fluid—and it should remain so. The only specification one can make is the following: the ministry of the laity views the whole being and work of the Church under a particular aspect, namely the aspect of the Church meeting the world, the Church participating in Christ's ministry *in and for the world*.

The goal is not to give the laity more prestige nor to use them to assist overworked ministers. Lay training is primarily preparing Christians for their ministry and missionary presence in the world.

To put it simply: the ministry of the laity is to be the Church in the world.

NOTE: Whether the reader is a member of a discussion group or not, he is urged to study the illustrations and questions that appear in the discussion guide in connection with each section of the book.

CHAPTER II

A Peculiar People

SECTION 1:

Our Origin and Call: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:1-6

The books of Genesis and Exodus reveal the truth about the origin and call of God's people—about our own call to be the *laos*, the people of God. Of course the origin of God's people lies in His design when He created heaven and earth. But we can best understand the origin and the responsibility of the *laos* if we begin with the call of Abraham and with the Covenant made on Mount Sinai.

Genesis 12:1-3

1. Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.
2. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
3. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you

I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves." [The RSV alternative rendering is: in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.]

Exodus 19:1-6

1. On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.
2. And when they set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain.
3. And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:
4. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.
5. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine,
6. and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. . . ."

A Pilgrim People

Abraham had to become a pilgrim in order to be God's man and the father of all believers. At the beginning of his pilgrimage, he was called upon three times to "go out from" his fatherland, his culture, and his family.

Like Abraham, the Israelites were a pilgrim people: they didn't settle down—they lived in tents. Journeying from Egypt, the Israelites (the people of God) came to Mount Sinai in the desert, the place of God's revelation. (In the Bible, the desert is frequently seen to be a place of prayer, a

place where men are wholly given over to the guidance and the grace of God.) The children of Israel had come from Egypt, "the land of slavery," and were heading for Canaan, "the land of promise."

As the "True Israel" (the spiritual descendants of Old Testament Israel), Christians are a pilgrim people ("aliens and exiles" in I Pet. 2:11). They are always journeying from a "land of slavery," which is the world dominated by evil forces ("principalities and powers"), and they are heading toward "the land of promise," which is the Kingdom of God. They can never settle down in this world, nor emigrate out of this world. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, American Standard Version), but we remain citizens of our native country (the physical world of time and space). Our situation is described in Jesus' prayer, "they are in the world . . . they are not of the world" (John 17:11,14).

The Mystery of Election

When the Israelites were migrating from Egypt to Canaan, there were glorious and world-famous peoples and cultures in other parts of the earth, like Egypt and China. The tribes of Israel were an unknown and economically underdeveloped part of the human race. Why on earth did God choose Israel and not any other people of the world?

It might be said that Israel was elected because of the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 12:2). But saying this only begs the question, because we don't know why God gave this promise to Abraham and to no one else. In fact, we know nothing about Abraham before his call: we aren't told whether he was good or bad, pious or faithless.

According to Deuteronomy 7:7: "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD

set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples." And in I Corinthians 1:26 St. Paul writes: "For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth."

The Uniqueness of God's People

Though no one really knows why God has chosen Israel and the Church, the Bible clearly indicates that this election makes Israel and the Church unique. God's chosen people are unique, not because of their goodness or piety or other qualities, but because of the Covenant (Exod. 19:5). Israel and the Church are God's covenant people.

What the Covenant means can perhaps be best understood from the marriage covenant. When I chose my wife (or did she choose me?), something mysterious happened. I can't claim that she is the best, cleverest, and most beautiful woman on earth. And surely I couldn't claim similar qualities for myself. Yet, in a mysterious way, she is the woman of my heart and irreplaceable for me. Therefore we took upon ourselves the risk of binding our lives together in a marriage covenant. In an even more mysterious way, the people of Israel and the Christians have become the loved ones of God. "It is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:8). The nature of the Covenant is further revealed in the Book of Hosea. By the Covenant, God took the horrible risk of linking Himself and His revelation with Israel and with us.

The Covenant does not imply that Christians are better than other people. They have not sought God, but He

brought them to Himself: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exod. 19:4). Their uniqueness lies exclusively in God's mysterious choice and Covenant. Nor does God's special relationship with Israel and the Church exclude continuing relations between God and other nations and religions: "You shall be my own possession among all peoples; *for all the earth is mine*" (Exod. 19:5).

The Relationship Between God and His People

The uniqueness of God's people determines their relationship with Him. The main mark of this relationship is expressed by the demand for obedience in Exodus 19:5 ("if you will obey my voice") and by the famous promise: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). This promise is reaffirmed in the New Testament: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9). This is the key text for the doctrine of the priesthood of *all* believers. It reveals the very heart of our calling: we are the priestly people of the Lord who is King, and we are placed in this world in order to bring all the needs, frustrations, and glories of the world before God, and in order to transmit God's judgment, promise, and blessing to the world. Israel was chosen and the Church exists, therefore, as an expression of God's love for this world.

The Relationship of God's People to the World

The uniqueness of God's people carries with it a relationship to the world which is best revealed in Genesis 12:3:

"I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse." Through Abraham and Israel and the Church, the world is forced to make a critical decision—will it bless or curse the people of God? It is dangerous to meet Abraham and those who stand in his following; by choosing to bless or curse them, the world is blessed or cursed. The Church has indeed an awesome critical function in society. However small its numbers and however weak its life, the Church can never be content with being a tolerated minority somewhere on the fringe of society in a religious ghetto. By their origin and call, Christians must be alert to what is going on around them. Do people and the events of life affirm God or deny Him?

"In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, footnote). The awesome possibility of damnation recurs throughout the Bible, but it is always made clear that blessing is God's real intent and design, and that the true business of God's people is to be a blessing for the world.

SECTION 2:

A Missionary People: I Peter 2:9,10,12 and 3:14,15

I Peter 2

9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

10. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. . . .

12. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

I Peter 3

14. But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

15. but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

The main part of what we call the First Epistle of Peter was probably an exhortation addressed to a group of newly baptized Christians in Asia Minor. Before one can participate in the life of the Church, one must be made a member of it by the event of baptism.

The "Sacramentum": A Military Oath

In the world-famous Roman armies, the decisive act of becoming a soldier was called the *sacramentum*, that is, the military oath. The Christian Church adopted this word for the decisive act of becoming a soldier of Christ: baptism, and especially the vows taken at baptism, were called the *sacramentum*.

It was long believed that heathens were called *pagani* (pagans) because *paganus* means "inhabitant of a village": most Christians were to be found in cities. But *paganus* also means "civilian" (one who is not a soldier). By becoming a Christian through the *sacramentum* (vows taken at baptism), we cease to be civilians, and we become soldiers actively engaged in Christ's battle for the world. The New

Testament and the early Church never admitted a distinction between active and passive members.

In churches all over the world, however, the great majority of those who have made the *sacramentum* (baptismal vows) do not actually join in Christ's struggle for the world. After taking "the military oath," many of them become deserters, conforming themselves to the world, and not being transformed by the renewal of their minds (Rom. 12:2). Others go on permanent leave, only returning occasionally for a military inspection. They lead a double life, following two different sets of ethics—one for their private, Sunday life, and one for their life in the workaday world. Still others always remain recruits in the barracks, becoming more and more refined in the use of the spiritual armor of God, but never leaving their Christian camp in order to fight for the reconciliation of the world. Under these circumstances, no wonder the battle soon begins in the barracks!

Who Were the Evangelists?

In the First Epistle of Peter, we get a glimpse of the way the Church spread during the first Christian centuries. In those days evangelism was radically different from our modern organized evangelization campaigns.

As T. W. Manson has written:

The Christianity that conquered the Roman Empire was not an affair of brilliant preachers addressing packed congregations. We have, so far as I know, nothing much in the way of brilliant preachers in the first three hundred years of the Church's life. There were one or two brilliant controversialists, but I suspect that they made more enemies than friends; and the greatest of them all, Origen, was probably over the heads of most people most of the time. The great preachers came after Constantine the Great; and before that Christianity had already done its work

and made its way right through the Empire from end to end. When we try to picture how it was done, we seem to see domestic servants teaching Christ in and through their domestic service, workers doing it through their work, small shopkeepers through their trade, and so on, rather than eloquent propagandists swaying mass meetings of interested inquirers.¹

The early Church won converts by the strange quality of the Christians' life, their outlook, their singleness of purpose, which were generated by their knowledge that their citizenship was in heaven. They knew that they were the people of God and therefore pilgrims, "aliens and exiles" among the peoples of the earth.

In the early Christian document called the letter to Diognetus, the unknown author describes followers of Christ in this manner:

For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. . . . Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land.²

"The people" (*laos*) is the key term in I Peter 2. Early Church members had a deep consciousness of being the *laos*, the people of God. Without understanding the *laos*-con-

¹ T. W. Manson, *Ministry and Priesthood: Christ's and Ours* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1959), page 21. Used by permission.

² From *Early Christian Fathers*, Vol. I, tr. ed., Cyril C. Richardson. Published 1953, The Westminster Press. By permission.

sciousness of the early Christians, nobody can understand the spontaneous mission of the early Church. The recovery of this *laos*-consciousness, with the rediscovery of the role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church, is the heart of Church renewal in our time.

A Spontaneously Missionary Church

According to I Peter 3:15, Christians do not begin evangelism by speaking, but the world begins by asking questions. The missionary problem is large today because the world no longer puts questions to the Church, while the Church usually gives right answers to questions that have not been asked. Much of our missionary proclamation is nothing more than declamation without response.

In the early centuries of the Church, the world asked questions because it was irritated or amazed by Christians' extraordinary community life and service to their fellow men. In his famous study of the early Church,³ Adolf Harnack calls his longest chapter "The Gospel of Love and Charity" and in it describes the early Christians' witness through love and service. He quotes many striking examples of their astonishing life as a community of people serving each other's needs. And the early Christian Tertullian, who lived at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, reminds us that the amazed declaration of non-Christians was "Look how they love one another." Early Christians were assured that converts "may be won without a word . . . when they see your reverent and chaste behavior" (I Pet. 3:1,2). Harnack concludes that the most effective missionary

³ Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Putnam, 1904), Vol. 1, pages 181-249.

work was done by nonprofessional missionaries, by martyrs and other believers, living as Christians in the pagan society of the Roman world.

The special quality of Christian community was more than human, and Christians' service was motivated by more than a "social gospel." Early Christian community life and behavior in the world was rooted in a burning hope for the Kingdom that was to come. This amazing kind of community and service could be brought forth only by a new vision of world history, and by that singleness of purpose which is oriented toward the final coming of the Kingdom of God. The greatest weakness in our missionary work today is the lack of this hope and vision. Today the strongest missionary impact radiates from those churches and sects that have a living hope and *laos*-consciousness.

First-century Christians understood the function of words as well as behavior. "Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account" (I Pet. 3:15): the Greek word in this sentence is *apologia*, "defense." Probably Peter here envisaged the special situation of a Christian on trial. The "apology," like a word of witness before a judge, could cause a life-or-death decision.

Fellowship, service, and proclamation strengthened the missionary life of the early Church. All three are still necessary. Christian *fellowship*, without service and proclamation, will soon degenerate into the camaraderie of a religious country club. Christian *service*, without fellowship and proclamation, will inevitably turn into patronizing humanitarian activities. *Proclamation*, without service and the fellowship of the Christian community, is like the sound of a string that has been detached from a violin. All three belong together as the threefold expression of the *laos*-consciousness of the servant people who follow their Servant Lord.

SECTION 3:

Growing into Maturity: Ephesians 4:7, 11-16

Ephesians 4

7. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . .

11. And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

12. for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

13. until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14. so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

15. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

16. from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

(It is well worth taking the trouble to compare different translations of these verses.)

According to J. B. Phillips' translation of this passage, by Christ's gifts "we arrive at real maturity—that measure of development which is meant by 'the fullness of Christ'. . . . We are meant . . . to grow up in every way into Christ, the head" (Eph. 4:13,15). Christ lets the Church share in His ministry; by sharing Christ's ministry in and to the world, we "arrive at maturity."

In order to equip His people for their task in the world,

God endows them all with gifts. Tragically, Christians all too often seem unaware of this endowment, or they attribute their blessings to other sources. Some people acknowledge that their abilities are God-given (especially when their accomplishments are acceptable to society), but they fail to recognize the divine source of the gifts of the Spirit—forgiveness, mercy, love, truth. Without this recognition, it is impossible for a person to grow in Christian maturity and to be a minister of Christ in the world.

Some people might be a little frightened by the word *saints* in verse 12. In the New Testament, this word doesn't refer to exceptionally pious people with halos around their heads. Rather, the saints were simply God's people—those who had become Christians by baptism.

Another word in verse 12 merits attention. The Revised Standard Version says "for the work of *ministry*," while the New English Bible says "for work in his [God's] *service*." The original Greek word *diakonia* can be translated either "ministry" or "service": when we speak about ministers in the Church, we are really speaking about servants.

A Fatal Comma

A highly significant comma appears after the word *saints* in many translations of Ephesians 4:11 and 12. The RSV, for instance, reads:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry. . . .

In this translation of the passage, the comma after "saints" seems to indicate that the saints (the people of God) are to be equipped, but that they do not all share in "the work

of ministry." That is, Christ gave gifts to apostles, prophets, and others who are set apart for "professional" work in the Church, so that they might accomplish two things: (1) "the equipment of the saints" and (2) "the work of ministry."

On this assumption, it would seem that Christ shares His ministry only with those who are ordained and with other full-time employees of the Church; it would seem that only they are "front-line soldiers," and that the Church stands or falls with them. And it would seem, consequently, that the laity's only task is to assist the clergy in their work in the "gathered" Church.

But in other widely respected translations the true meaning is brought out. In the New English Bible, for instance, the two verses are translated as follows:

And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service. . . .

This translation indicates that *all* God's people are to be equipped for God's service (ministry). In the original text of the New Testament, it clearly appears that "the saints" (all Christians) are equipped to share in "the ministry."

As John A. Mackay, writing of the RSV, says, "Here without linguistic authority, but with undoubted ecclesiological bias, the fatal comma has been retained." The real meaning, he continues, "appears clearly to be that the supreme objective of the gifted men must be to equip the 'saints' that they, in their turn, may engage in ministering. . . ."⁴

Too often the clergy undertake to fulfill by themselves the

⁴ John A. Mackay, *God's Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), page 149.

ministry of the Church. And too often the laity delegate their ministry to one man—the clergyman. This “one man show” is deeply unbiblical. Too many clergy and other Church workers fail to fulfill—or even to see—their main, specific function: the equipment of “saints” for the ministry.

Christ does not grant special gifts only to men and women who are full-time, lifetime employees of the Church. All the people of God share in Christ’s ministry in and to the world, on the front lines. But the work of front-line soldiers belongs especially to laymen, who spend most of their waking hours in social, political, economic, and cultural areas where the decisive battles of faith are being fought. The clergy, with other professional Church workers, have a particular responsibility—to nourish, equip, help, and sustain the laity for their ministry.

SECTION 4:

The Common Life of the Early Church: Acts 2:42–45

Acts 2

42. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
43. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
44. And all who believed were together and had all things in common;
45. and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.

Here is a picture of life in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem. Those first Christians had made their confession

of faith, acknowledging Christ to be the Lord. They had been baptized, their sins had been forgiven, and they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They had been incorporated into the common life of the newborn Church, in order to join in Christ's ministry to the world. In their ministry, they were to be "the salt of the earth."

But the individual Christian cannot carry on his ministry without joining the corporate life and worship of the Church. Indeed, Christians' ministry to the world must continually be made straight and strong through the worship that takes place when the Lord has assembled His Church.

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Convened Assembly of Christians

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the convened assembly of God's *laos* was called the *ekklesia*, the same word as was used to designate the assembly of citizens in Greek cities. The first Christians adopted this word *ekklesia* for the Church, the assembly of citizens of the Kingdom who had been called together by God. In Acts 2:42 we find the four distinguishing characteristics of this assembly of the saints:

"And they devoted themselves to
the apostles' teaching
and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread
and the prayers."

Note that where the Revised Standard Version has the verb *devoted*, J. B. Phillips has *continued steadily*; *persevered* is another translation.

They Persevered in the Apostles' Teaching

The Gospel must be taught within the Church, and it must also be proclaimed to the world. The New Testament makes a clear distinction between the *kerygma* (the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians) and the *didache* (the teaching of the Gospel to those who have already become members of the Church or who want to become members). While the *kerygma* (proclamation) is an essential part of the Church's total mission to the world, the *didache* (teaching) is an essential element in the life of the convened Church.

When we read the Book of Acts, we find only one "sermon" addressed to people who were already Christians (Acts 20: 18-35); all the others were addressed to non-Christians. Many churches today "continue steadily in the teaching of the apostles" without, at the same time, proclaiming the Gospel to the world. It would be hard to imagine the Church proclaiming the Gospel in the world without persevering in the apostles' teaching within the gathered church.

Both the *kerygma* and the *didache* were the work of the apostles and also of "the laity": St. Paul said that we should all "teach and admonish one another" (Col. 3:16).

They Persevered in Christian Fellowship

Fellowship (communion) was another distinguishing characteristic of the early Church. The New Testament word *koinonia* is usually translated "fellowship" or "communion." This word has three different meanings: (1) the faithful entered into *spiritual* fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as well as with the apostles and with one another. (2) The faithful shared their worldly goods in

material fellowship. (3) Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in *eucharistic* fellowship, the faithful most intimately participated in their common life with Christ.

Teaching in the assembled Church has its indispensable counterpart in the Church's proclamation to the world: similarly, fellowship in the assembled Church has its indispensable counterpart in the Church's ministry of loving service to the world.

Not all churches today achieve a real spiritual fellowship within the "convened assembly." In some churches the faithful persevere in fraternal communion with one another without loving their neighbors in the world outside the church. Sometimes, on the other hand, the faithful concentrate on service to the world, without persevering in brotherly communion with one another.

They Persevered in the Breaking of Bread

In the celebration of the Eucharist, and especially in the act of breaking the bread, the whole drama of salvation is crystallized. The sacramental action summarizes past, present, and future time. We "do this in remembrance" of a *past* event, the death and resurrection of Christ. In the breaking of the bread, we also encounter the *coming* Kingdom: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11:26). And in the same eucharistic act, we enter into communion with Christ *now*: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (I Cor. 10:16) Participation in this celebration continually leads the faithful to renewed apprehension of what they learn in "the apostles' teaching." It also leads the faithful to a renewed

apprehension of Christian fellowship. "Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf" (I Cor. 10:17). In Holy Communion the wholeness of the Church as the Body of Christ appears.

Just as the teaching of the apostles within the Church leads to proclamation of the Gospel outside the Church, and as the fellowship of the faithful leads to loving service in the world, so also the celebration of the Eucharist reminds us that the separation between the sacred and the secular is unchristian. (Our Lord took ordinary daily food as the elements of His body and blood.) Having participated in the Eucharist, we must struggle in our daily lives to bridge the gulf between the sacred and secular. We must show that, through Christ, God has reconciled to Himself all things on earth and in heaven (Col. 1:20).

They Persevered in Prayer

Prayer was another distinguishing characteristic of the early Church. This fact is repeatedly illustrated in the book of Acts: nothing important was undertaken without prayer. And all through Christian history, decisive renewals of the Church's life and mission have originated in—or have been linked with—a renewal of prayer life.

* * *

Our origin and call: ". . . If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant . . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:5,6). ". . . By you all the families of the earth will bless themselves" (Gen. 12:3).

A missionary people: ". . . Now you are God's people. . . . Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that . . . they may see your good deeds and glorify God . . ." (I Pet. 2:10, 12).

Growing into maturity: "... pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service. . . . so shall we fully grow up into Christ" (Ephesians 4:11,12,15, New English Bible).

The common life of the early Church: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

CHAPTER III

Concrete Obedience

SECTION 1:

Work and Vocation

Three masons were building a cathedral. When they were asked what they were doing, the first mason answered, "I am putting one stone on another in order to build a wall." The second said, "I am working so that I can purchase food and clothing for myself and my family." But the third mason said, "I am building a house of God so that people may come and worship and be joyful."

The story reveals three quite different attitudes toward life and work. We can live and work mechanically, putting one stone on the other, adding one day to the other; or we can live and work for ourselves—for the small world of our family and friends. But as Christians we have another dimension in our lives: while doing routine work, such as tilling the ground or washing dishes or being a doctor, we are called to help build a world in which people can worship God "and be joyful."

But the old story about the masons doesn't illustrate the complex realities of a world in the midst of rapid social change. It is hard to perceive the presence of God in the monotonous labor of many who work in factories. The work of medieval masons building a cathedral is radically different from the work of a clerk in a bureaucratic welfare state, or the hectic job of a business man in the midst of ruthless competition, or the exhausting labor of a young mother with many children in a crowded housing development.

We often speak too glibly about the possibility of leading a Christian life in the modern world; it is not easy to discover a vital link between our faith and our everyday life, between worship and work, between Sundays and weekdays.

How can we, in the midst of the hard facts of life in this world, rediscover the truth that our daily work is a Christian vocation? How can we be the kind of "salt" that will give a Christian flavor to life in the world around us?

SECTION 2:

Worship and Work

Power politics, nation-building, family life, and earning our daily bread are hard facts. We cannot escape from them into a "religious reservation" somewhere beyond our everyday life. In worship, we offer ourselves and the whole of creation to God in Jesus Christ: the glories, sins, needs, and frustrations of the "secular" world are to be brought before the Lord of all times and places.

Some churches are experimenting in giving laymen a share in leading worship. This participation is desirable, not because it provides recognition and status to the laity, but because it fosters true worship. During the intercessory prayers of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India, a child

sometimes intercedes for the children, because a child can best express the joys and anxieties of children before God and His congregation. Diversity of human experience calls for diversity in worship. The whole world can be represented only by the *whole* Church, gathered from its dispersion and worshipping before the throne of God.

If our work is offered to God in our worship, then our worship will decisively influence us in our work: our work will *become* worship, deriving its vitality and direction from God. Christian work is not then only equated with so-called "church work." Such "secular" occupations as the work of a policeman, a farmer, a business man, or a housewife are not less holy than church work or service in a Christian institution—if those that perform them, in all that they do and are, realize that they stand under God's will and mercy. When our "eyes of faith" have been opened in corporate worship, we can discover God's continuing action in the midst of the "secular" world: we can perceive our next step of obedience.

Some European congregations hold occasional services in which the needs and decisions of one particular vocation are brought before the congregation and before God. A service, for example, may be related to the work of business men. About six months before the service, the pastor calls together three or four business men in his parish. Together they plan the service and prepare a sermon. Finally, all the business men of the town are invited to attend the service, with the congregation.

During the service, a business man gives a concrete picture of the daily problems, decisions, hopes, and deceptions which a man in his position faces. He or the pastor preaches the sermon that they have prepared, based on a text related to that occupational situation. The rest of the service consists of specific intercessions: business men pray for their

customers, and customers pray for business men. That particular occupation, with the mutual responsibility of business men and customers, is brought under the light of Biblical revelation. A form of secular work is revealed as a Christian vocation.

With men of his church, Pastor Johann Christoph Blumhardt, a nineteenth-century German leader of the pietistic movement, used to study alternately the Bible and the newspaper, in order to read the Bible in the context of concrete events in their big and small worlds, and in order to observe the mighty acts of God in daily life and in present-day world history. Most Christians read newspapers more than they read the Bible, or they read both without seeing the connection between the day's news and Biblical revelation.

SECTION 3:

Lay Training

A Japanese Christian has described the activity of some laymen in his country as follows:

A number of earnest Christians help the minister to visit the sick, to lead in group work and so on. They come to church as often as four or five times in a week, after their working day is over. They are called "the hands of the minister." Some of these laymen come to think that they would like to go on in Christian training. Actually, the training program of the church in Japan today is geared entirely for this kind of people. They get their Bible study and theological training step by step. But the church does not train its members . . . to extend their faith into their daily work situation and among their fellow workers. This we must study.¹

¹ Pastor Hisashi Mitsui, "New Occasions Teach New Duties" in *The Japanese Christian Quarterly*, Volume XXIV, No. 1, January, 1958, page 19 ff.

This kind of laymen's service is common in churches all over the world. For most Christian leaders, "lay training" means preparing volunteer workers for special tasks in the inner life of the Church. But it is equally important that laymen receive training to be the Church in the world.

In postwar Europe, laymen's training has been developed significantly in such centers as the evangelical academies in Germany, the training centers in Holland, and laymen's colleges in England. Similar lay training is offered in a growing number of centers and institutes on all the continents. These training programs have been inspired by the great gulf that exists between the Church and the world, between our Christian faith and our daily life and work.

The training institutes gather three different kinds of groups: (1) professional groups, such as farmers, housewives, lawyers, teachers, trade union leaders, politicians, or journalists; (2) people in the same life situation, such as foreigners, the chronically ill, or mothers who work outside their homes; and (3) functional groups, such as community leaders or representatives from all levels of an industrial enterprise. A group of community leaders might include teachers, doctors, policemen, and members of a city council. An industrial group might include directors, office managers, foremen, social workers, trade union leaders, and workers.

These institutes hold courses which may last for three days or a week or two. Participants may not be committed Church members, and may even be non-Christians, but the program is set within a framework of Christian community life.

Direct evangelization is not the aim of these lay training projects. The institutes are designed to produce real conversation among members of a professional or functional group or in a particular life situation. A group's burning issues and problems are identified and analyzed by com-

petent speakers and in group discussion. These issues are also brought under the light of Biblical revelation. The leaders of the institutes are clergymen or laymen who are especially gifted and trained for this work of conversation, Bible study, and the theological interpretation of life's daily events. They help the group to discover what Christian obedience means in their particular profession, life situation, or function.

This sort of lay training can best be done by the churches together. Essentially the same challenges are faced by Christian parents, teachers, and lawyers, whether they are Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, or members of any other communion. And the same temptations, opportunities, and decisions are open to all Christians who are in the same occupation or life situation, but who come from different denominational backgrounds.

Denominational differences may be significant when God's people are convened for worship, or when they are engaged in a specifically denominational action, such as a diocesan project. But when God's people are scattered in the world of work and leisure, the real frontier lies between those who are obedient to God and those who are obedient to the powers that resist the Kingdom of our Lord. Helping Christians to be the Church in the world is a common task for all churches.

But Christians must also learn to help themselves. Swimming is not learned by sitting on the shore while one hears a lecture or reads a book or has a heart-to-heart conversation about how to swim. One learns to swim by getting into the water and trying to swim. Doing this, of course, involves the risk of drowning. Because some people will not take that chance, they never learn to swim. Likewise churchmen do no really learn to live as Christians in the world by listening to sermons or reading books or attending study courses in a

sheltered atmosphere. People learn to live as Christians by sharing Christ's work in the world, supported and guided by fellow Church members.

Only by taking the risk of trusting Jesus Christ can men ever discover how trustworthy He is. By daring to place their faith in Christ, rather than in the "gods" of our society, and by "holding firm in Him," men discover that He meant it when He told His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always." In a culture in which many people trust only that which is visible and tangible—only that which can be weighed and measured—it is easy to wonder about the foolishness of basing one's life on the promises of God. But in a man's relationship with his fellow men, God speaks to him and he responds to God: when a man discovers this truth, life's risks on behalf of men become exploits for God.

SECTION 4:

Holy Worldliness

How can we be "in the world" but not "of the world"? Christians are called to be "worldly" in the sense of living fully in this world, and at the same time to be "holy," having only one goal in life—the glory of God. "Holy worldliness" is the specifically Christian style of life.

Throughout the ages,² the nature of holiness has been revealed in the lives that men have led, rather than through pallid ideas. In Protestant Christianity one pattern of holiness has been that of John Bunyan (1628–1688) expressed in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. In the twentieth century, Dietrich

² The substance of this and the following paragraphs has already been published in an article in *Frontier*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1958, pages 19–24.

Bonhoeffer, with his *Letters and Papers from Prison*,³ has shown the way to another kind of holiness.

Both Bunyan and Bonhoeffer were genuine followers of Christ. Both became great through much suffering, and each worked out his pattern of holiness in prison. But apart from these resemblances, their lives and books are radically different.

Bunyan came from the working class and was the son of a poor tinker. He had scarcely any formal education, and at the age of sixteen he became a soldier. Almost his only reading was the Bible.

Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, came from a German middleclass family and was steeped in western culture. After a happy youth, with opportunities to travel to Rome, Spain, and the United States, he had a brilliant academic career. He accepted the responsibility of citizenship by becoming involved in political action. For this Bonhoeffer died on the gallows, a prisoner without rights in a German concentration camp.

Bunyan and Bonhoeffer had quite different attitudes toward the secular world around them. In the sixty books and pamphlets that Bunyan wrote, he made almost no reference to the exciting events that were taking place around him in seventeenth-century England. The title page of Bunyan's famous book states that it describes "The Pilgrims Progress from this world to that which is to come delivered under the similitude of a dream wherein is discovered the manner of his setting out, his dangerous journey, and safe arrival at the desired country." John Bunyan aimed at one thing: the liberation of man from his involvement in the evil world, in order to bring him into the presence of God. He was not

³ Published in America as *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison*, Macmillan.

interested in the social, political, and economic struggles of his time.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, was led by his commitment to Christ to increasing involvement in "secular" affairs. His *Letters and Papers from Prison* reflects a deep concern about contemporary events.

During the early years of his adult life, Bonhoeffer was a pacifist and a friend of Ghandi. But, during the Nazi regime, he engaged actively in the resistance movement. He was a member of the group that attempted to assassinate Hitler. Bunyan, on the other hand, began life as a soldier and became a pacifist. He grew more and more "religious"; leaving his "secular" occupation, he devoted himself increasingly to the work of the gathered Church, in pastoral care and preaching.

One day when Bunyan was on his way to preach in London, he was drenched in a thunderstorm and caught a severe cold; he went on to London and preached, despite a high fever, and soon after he died. Bonhoeffer, too, died just after conducting a worship service, but, unlike Bunyan, he died in the completely secular environment of a Nazi prison.

Bunyan tried to free men from worldly involvement with their fellow men, in order to guide them toward God as individual pilgrims. Bonhoeffer called men away from pious isolation toward that deep commitment to God that is expressed in accepting responsibility in the affairs of this world.

The day after the abortive attempt to assassinate Hitler, when Bonhoeffer knew he would be executed, he wrote:

During the last year or so I have come to appreciate the "worldliness" of Christianity as never before. The Christian is not a *homo religiosus*, but a man, pure and simple, just as Jesus was a man, compared with John the Baptist anyhow. I don't mean

the shallow this-worldliness of the enlightened, of the busy, the comfortable or the lascivious. It's something much more profound than that, something in which the knowledge of death and resurrection is present. I believe Luther lived a this-worldly life in this sense. . . . It is only by living completely in this world that one learns to believe. One must abandon every attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, a converted sinner, a churchman (the priestly type, so-called!), a righteous man or an unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one. This is what I mean by worldliness—taking life in one's stride, with all its duties and problems, its successes and failures, its experiences and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly in the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is *metanoia*, and that is what makes a man and a Christian. How can success make us arrogant or failure lead us astray, when we participate in the sufferings of God by living in this world?⁴

In this passage, Bonhoeffer uses the words *man* and *Christian* almost as synonyms. To become a Christian does not mean to attain a certain degree of piety, nor to become a moral superman. It simply means to become a true human being. A dedicated Roman Catholic woman said some time ago:

My husband and I would like to live the kind of holy life which brings us very close to Christ without separating us from men—to be saints whose daily life is just like that of ordinary people, but so truly human, so radiant with life and joy, so balanced, that one longs to be like them, and in trying to discover what makes them like that, one discovers Christ.⁵

True Christians are contagiously human.

Bonhoeffer wrote that Christian life is characterized by

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pages 168–169.

⁵ From the report "Vers Quel Type de Sainteté Allons-nous?" in *La Vie Spirituelle*, No. 304, February, 1946, page 276.

participation in the sufferings of God through living in this world. And Luther once said that, as Christians, we must every day anew "creep into the cross of our vocation" by being fully what we are—young or old, married or unmarried, a master or a servant. Our everyday life is our cross. By taking up this cross and by risking the pain of living wholly in this world, we become true Christians.

* * *

Our daily work can be our Christian vocation. We need to strengthen the vital, mutual link between worship and the whole of our daily life and work. Training laymen for being the Church in the world is as necessary as lay training for voluntary "church work." It has been said that every Christian needs a double conversion: conversion from the world to Christ, and conversion to service with Christ in the world—to "holy worldliness."

This understanding of the Christian life can lead us to become "the salt of the earth"—salty Christians, who share in Christ's ministry to the world, with all the people of God, from other communions and denominations.

A Guide for Discussion-Group Leaders

Prepared by the
Department of Christian Education
Protestant Episcopal Church

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

A Guide for Discussion-Group Leaders

Salty Christians is provocative reading for individuals, but its most effective use will probably be in small-group discussions. This guide is designed to encourage users to look at their own lives in the light of Mr. Weber's convictions about the people of God.

The guide does not pretend to offer complete instructions for each session. It is designed to stimulate thinking as you make your plans for leading a group. Use only the questions and illustrations that meet your requirements, and add any others that may be useful.

The number of sessions will depend on the time available to you. It would be unrealistic to spend equal time on each section of the text. Some sections are quite brief, and some are fairly lengthy; some will be accepted easily by the group, and others will raise many questions. So, plan accordingly.

The Leader's Preparation

1. Review the essentials of good group procedure. *You Can't Be Human Alone* by Margaret Kuhn (Seabury and others) is an excellent handbook.
2. Read *Salty Christians* through, preferably at one sit-

ting, to get the complete picture of Mr. Weber's presentation.

3. Consider buying some of the books mentioned in the list on page 62 ff. If these are on hand the group's study can be helped considerably.

4. Buy a copy of *Salty Christians* for each member of the group.

Leading the Discussion

Creative discussion is hampered
when only the leader speaks
when the leader engages in conversation with only one
or two members of the group
when a member's contribution is ignored
when each member is concerned only with what he wants
to say, and does not listen to others.

Creative discussion is fostered
when members of a group listen to each other, are willing
to try to understand what others say, and are willing to help
each other think through an idea.

The Group

1. The value of discussing *Salty Christians* will be enhanced if the group is interdenominational.

2. Group members should accept the discipline of regular attendance. Each session will build on previous ones, and irregular participation will hamper the group's progress.

3. Relevant sections of *Salty Christians* and recommended Bible passages should be read by each person before the session.

4. A real *sharing* of ideas is possible only in small groups.

If your group has more than twelve people in it, you should subdivide for discussion.

5. A steering committee can be useful in helping to evaluate and plan each session.

Chapter I: At the Edge of the Church and the World

Purpose: To understand the relationship between the Church and the world.

Suggestions for Procedure

If possible, ask the group members to read Chapter I before the first session. If this cannot be done, you should familiarize yourself with Mr. Weber's presentation of the relationship between the Church and the world and be prepared to present it to the group. Put the diagrams on newsprint or a blackboard.

Ask the group to give illustrations (from history or from contemporary life) to support the theories that

- a. the Church and the world are separate (pages 9-11);
- b. the Church is one of the sectors of the world (page 12).

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. Do you agree with Mr. Weber's view of the true relationship between the Church and the world? (pages 13-14) Why?

2. In view of your understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world, what do you think the role of the laity to be?

Chapter II: A Peculiar People

Section 1: Our Origin and Call

Purpose: To understand why God calls persons to Him and makes them into a people.

Suggestions for Procedure

Ask the group members to think about how they have felt when they have been part of a community (family, club, team, school, or some other group with a recognizable esprit de corps), as contrasted with how they have felt when "alone in a crowd." List some of the differences.

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. In the light of these differences, why do you suppose God brings together a body of people to reveal Him to the world?
2. What experiences in the Church make you feel you are caught up in the life of a *people*? What effect does this have on you as a person?
3. What experiences in the Church make you feel you are in the midst of a collection of isolated individuals? What effect does this have on you as a person?
4. What support do you find in the fact that you belong to God's "peculiar people"? What uneasiness does it cause you?

Section 2: A Missionary People

Purpose: To gain increased understanding of the ministry of the laity and the ministry of the clergy.

Suggestions for Procedure

Use this story:

Last spring the municipal recreation board of "Our Town" was concerned because many teenagers would be idle during the summer vacation. The board was forced to hold its program to a minimum because it received too little money from public taxes. To discuss this community problem, the board called a public meeting to which all citizens were invited.

One minister urged the members of his congregation to attend the meeting, and he offered to discuss with interested members the issues that were likely to arise. No one from that congregation attended the meeting. The next Sunday, when the minister commented on this fact, there was widespread resentment because many of the congregation felt it was *his* business to represent them at a public affair of this kind.

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. For what reasons might the minister have been justified in expecting people from the church to attend the meeting?

2. What are the views that the answers to question #1 imply about

a. the role of the laity?

b. the role of the clergy?

3. In your church, what can the clergy (or other professional staff members) do to help you live more fully as God's people in the world?

4. In your church, what can the laity do to help each other to live more fully as God's people in the world?

Section 3: Growing into Maturity

Purpose: To increase our ability to recognize God's action in the events of our lives.

Suggestions for Procedure

Use this story:

Mr. and Mrs. James Hansen and their son and daughter were to leave at five o'clock the next morning for a weekend fishing trip. They had reserved rooms at a lodge and had sent a down payment. As they were going to bed, with every-

thing packed for the early departure, the telephone rang. Jim's brother George, who lived a hundred miles away, wanted to come to see him the next day about an important matter that involved them both and that needed action on Monday. The Hansens invited George to join them on the trip, thinking that the men would have ample time to talk without upsetting the family weekend. George accepted, and the time of leaving was postponed from five to eight o'clock, to give him time to drive from his house to theirs. When George arrived, he said he didn't want to go with them; he wanted to talk to his brother, and then return to his own home. George and Jim had their talk, delaying the family's departure for another three hours.

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. If you were a member of the Hansen family, what would your feelings have been?
2. In what ways do you believe God may have been working in this situation?
3. In what ways do you think the people were responding to Him?

Note to the Leader

Group members may have difficulty answering these questions. They may be quite willing to agree with Mr. Weber's commentary on the Biblical passages describing the call and the ministry of the people of God, and they may think they accept his understanding of the ministry of the people of God. But unless they can describe God's action in the everyday events of men's lives, they may really be accepting one of the other views of the relationship between the Church and the world listed on pages 10-13. God works through people, in the ordinary events of life—in the good and in the evil. We grow toward real maturity, toward the fullness of

Christ, insofar as we learn to recognize and respond to Him in all of life. Describing God's action in the Hansen family will help people understand His action in their own lives and their responses to Him.

Section 4: The Common Life of the Early Church

Purpose: To explore the connection between a Christian's life *in* the Church and his life *as* the Church in the world.

Suggestions for Procedure

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. In what ways does the *corporate worship* of your church strengthen and support you in your ministry?
2. In what ways does the *teaching* of your church support and strengthen you in your ministry?
3. In what ways does *fellowship* with other members of your congregation support and strengthen you in your ministry?
4. How can the life of your church be made more relevant to the needs of your people as they witness to Christ in the world? What can you yourselves do to increase the relevance?

Note to the Leader

This is another "hard" subject. Parishes vary widely in their faithfulness, just as individuals do. The concern here should not be to praise or condemn a particular local church, but to enable this group of people to come to terms with their own responsibilities as part of the people of God and to take their next step toward Christian response. Avoid the extremes of saying, "This parish doesn't do anything" or "This parish is wonderful." Neither is true!

Chapter III: Concrete Obedience

Section 1: Work and Vocation *and*

Section 2: Worship and Work

Purpose: To explore the meaning of Christian ministry in daily work.

Suggestions for Procedure

These brief sections are so closely related to each other that they can be treated together.

Use this story:

A young pharmacist had recently opened his own new business and was working hard to succeed financially and to build a reputation for integrity. He bought a large supply of a certain highly recommended medicine. Within a few months, a superior product was put on the market; the pharmacist bought a quantity of it to meet the popular demand. Then he was faced with the question of what to do with the outdated stock: it was good, but it was no longer the best available. Discarding the original supply would have meant a financial loss the pharmacist could not afford.

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. What convictions might govern the young pharmacist's decision about what to do?
2. What support is available to him?
3. If he sells the outdated medicine, how can he "offer his work to God"?

Note to the Leader

The necessity for this kind of decision is all too familiar. Insist that members of the group be realistic as they try to examine the various aspects of the decision the young phar-

macist faces. A moralistic answer is probably not a helpful one. Whatever his decision, someone will get hurt.

Ask the group to answer this question: In what ways is it helpful to "explore the meaning of Christian ministry in our daily work" in interdenominational rather than denominational groups?

Section 3: Lay Training

Purpose: To explore the needs of group members for training as ministers in the world.

Suggestions for Procedure

You may have touched on this subject in Chapter II, Section 4. If you feel the group would profit from additional discussion, the following may be helpful.

Ask the group to list opportunities available to them for

- a. training for "church work" and
- b. training for the Church's "work in the world."

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. What additional training is needed? How can it be provided?
2. What values would training in an interdenominational group provide?

Section 4: Holy Worldliness

Purpose: To identify the faith your life really reveals.

Suggestions for Procedure

Use this story:

A man has just begun to work in a large real estate office. One of his co-workers told him how to get along in the organization: "In this office, promotions go to the men who

agree with the boss. If you want to progress here, dress the way he does, go to the same restaurants, play golf (his favorite sport), join his country club. When a question of policy or procedure arises, find out the boss's opinion and support it. Sometimes I don't really agree with him, but I learned long ago that bucking the system is a mistake."

Another employee joined the conversation: "He's right. If you try to push your own ideas, you'll suffer for it. You'll find you won't get salary increases, you'll be assigned the least interesting jobs, the boss will ignore you, and you'll be listed as 'uncooperative' on your rating report."

A third man added his opinion. "It's not so bad, really. Why not do things the way the boss says? You can think what you want; just don't say it! And as long as the promotions keep coming my way I'm not going to make him mad!"

Ask the group to answer one of these questions:

1. By what "faith" are the real estate men living? Or, In what "gods" are they putting their trust? Or, What is most important in their lives? (These are three different ways of looking at the same question. Actions reveal the god one worships, regardless of what one *says* one's faith is.)

Ask the group to answer these questions:

1. Three possible ways of responding to life's situations have been presented:

- a. Some of us, like Bunyan, withdraw from the conflict of the evil world and avoid the sinfulness of life as much as possible.

- b. Some of us, like Bonhoeffer, become involved in the "dirty" affairs of the world and try to improve conditions.

- c. Some of us, like the real estate men, "knuckle under" and get along with a bad situation.

In which of these ways do you most frequently respond?

2. What sort(s) of help do you need in order to be "salty Christians" in the world?
3. What plans need to be made now to procure that help?

Note to the Leader

In order to do justice to these questions and to make some realistic plans for lay training, you may want to spend two sessions in dealing with this final section of the discussion guide.

Suggested Reading

On the Laity

Laity, Bulletin of the Department on the Laity of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland. Semiannual.

Back issues are available. The Bulletin may be ordered from the World Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.

KRAEMER, HENDRIK, *A Theology of the Laity*. Westminster.

This is considered by many to be the basic book for Protestants. However, Kraemer's emphasis on the Church as mission and ministry overshadows his understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ.

COME, ARNOLD B., *Agents of Reconciliation*. Westminster.

Implications of *A Theology of the Laity* lucidly interpreted for the American scene. This book goes beyond the Kraemer volume in that the author has more radical suggestions about the dissolution of the church's traditional distinction of laity and clergy. He also has more to say about the relation be-

tween the church-directed ministries and the ministry to the world.

CONGAR, Y. M. J., *Lay People in the Church*. Newman.

This Roman Catholic author's work is probably the definitive book on the subject.

"Evanston Speaks." Report of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches. World Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.

See Section VI, "The Laity—The Christian in His Vocation."

"You, Your Church and Your Job." A discussion guide on "The Laity—The Christian in His Vocation." World Council of Churches, Division of Christian Life and Work.

Complete report of Section VI of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

GRIMES, HOWARD, *The Rebirth of the Laity*. Abingdon.

A concise statement of the Biblical setting and historical background of the laity movement; also a review of the patterns of Church renewal emerging in the world.

KELLEY, ALDEN D., *The People of God*. Seabury.

A study in the doctrine of the laity considered in relation to the Church, the world, and the ordained ministry as understood in Eastern, Roman, Reformed, and Anglican thought. The role of women in the mission of the Church is discussed.

HARKNESS, GEORGIA, *The Church and Its Laity*. Abingdon.

A study of the laity's responsibility and that of other ministries through which the Church is meant to evangelize the world.

"Signs of Renewal." World Council of Churches, Department on the Laity.

On the Dilemma of the Churches

WINTER, GIBSON, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*. Doubleday.

BERGER, PETER L., *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*. Doubleday.

HERBERG, WILL, *Protestant—Catholic—Jew*. Doubleday.

A sociological exposé of the chasm between Sunday and the rest of the week in American life.

Christianity and Work

- MILLER, ALEXANDER, *Christian Faith and My Job*. Association.
A Reflection Book.
CALHOUN, ROBERT L., *God and the Day's Work*. Association.
A Reflection Book.

Christianity and Politics

- MUEHL, WILLIAM, *Mixing Religion and Politics*. Association.
A Reflection Book.
MAURY, PHILIPPE, *Politics and Evangelism*. Doubleday.

Christianity and Family Life

- HOWE, REUEL L., *The Creative Years*. Seabury.
WINTER, GIBSON, *Love and Conflict: New Patterns in Family Life*.
Doubleday.

General

- BAYNE, STEPHEN F., JR., *Christian Living*. Seabury.
DAY, PETER, *Saints on Main Street*. Seabury.

Articles

- HOWE, REUEL, "Confirmation and the Adult." Reprint from *Christian Education FINDINGS*, June, 1962. May be ordered from the Department of Christian Education, Episcopal Church Center, 815 2nd Avenue, New York 17, New York.
WILBOR, PAUL, "In All Our Doings: A Layman Looks at His Job." Reprint from *Christian Education FINDINGS*, June, 1962. May be ordered as above.

Other Bibliographies

More extensive bibliographies are available from the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, both at 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York, and from most national church boards.

For All Groups

Studying Christian Reunion

OUR UNITY IN CHRIST: A BIBLE STUDY

By Suzanne de Dietrich. The unity that exists among Christians is pointed out in this study by an internationally known authority on the Bible. Through readings from Corinthians, Ephesians, and St. John's Gospel, the study focuses on the image of the Body of Christ and the nature of diversity within unity that is reflected in the many members of that Body.

SALTY CHRISTIANS

By Hans-Ruedi Weber. This unit is designed to help people know themselves as "the salt of the earth"—persons who share Christ's ministry to the world with those of all communions and denominations. Material for group leaders is included.

BAPTIZED INTO THE ONE CHURCH

By C. Kilmer Myers. The director of the interdenominational Urban Training Center in Chicago offers insights into the meaning of Baptism to help Christians gain a new sense of the oneness of the Church and a new perspective for active participation in Christ's ministry to the world. Material for group leaders is included.

THE MEANING OF THE QUADRILATERAL

By Charles D. Kean. The implications of the Episcopal Church's four-part statement of belief concerning union with other churches are carefully explored in this study unit. The topics are: The Holy Scriptures, The Creeds, The Sacraments, and The Historic Episcopate. Material for group leaders is included.

ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTERS IN CHRISTIAN UNITY:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION. By Charles D. Kean. A helpful description of the action toward church reunion taken in various areas and at different times, including the text of the Chicago and Lambeth Quadrilaterals and the Episcopal Church Statement of Faith and Order.