

and world evangelism—not just a mundane chore to fill their days.

Pete Hammond: In answer to the questions, *Is work God's dirty trick? Is it the long dark tunnel between Sundays?* The answer is an absolute *no*. It is not the first picture God gave of himself for a work week. He went to work for six straight days and we've forgotten that redeemed view of work.

Narrator: If clergy help the laity to recapture the view that work is part of our worship to God, and work can open doors to spread the gospel, then lay people will find more spiritual, mental, and physical fulfillment on the job. This newfound joy will be like water to a dry seed. It will transform the body of Christ from a fruitless to a fruitful state, one which produces light in the darkness and life in every nation.

THE MANDATE OF THE LAITY II

A Theology of the Laity

Lee Yih

Proverbs 30:24–28 (NASB) says there are four things that are small on earth, but they are exceedingly wise:

The ants are not a strong folk, but they prepare their food in the summer; the badgers are not mighty folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks; the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.

These four small but exceedingly wise things on earth perhaps also describe the Christian layperson, with his weaknesses and strengths.

The layperson by himself may seem insignificant, not able to accomplish much, but like the ant, he can steadily do his part and in the end a great task is accomplished.

The lay person may not be mighty or strong, but like the badger, he lives and moves about in a dangerous place—the world—which is enemy territory.

The layperson has no recognized leader or organization, but like the locust, he knows the goal and serves the plan of God.

The layperson is individually vulnerable, but like the lizard, there is no place where he is not found.

Given the enormity of the task, the dangers of the environment, the difficulties of staying with the task, and the logistical problems of evangelizing the world today, we need to look to something small like the ant, the badger, the locust, and the lizard. The thesis of William Garrison's paper is that the layperson, small but wise, is God's chosen instrument for the task of world evangelization in the next decade.

Although conventional wisdom says the layperson is insignificant and small, God's wisdom has always been to mystify the world in his choice of instruments. This is illustrated well in 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 (NASB):

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.

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When we examine church history, three major paradigms or stages are evident. They are the result of the churches' response to the cultural, sociological, and political milieu of its day. These three paradigms involve the ancient church, the state church, and the liberated church.

The Apostolic or Ancient Church

The first paradigm we observe is the apostolic, or ancient, church. The early church experienced heavy persecution, which only served to scatter the church. Thus, the gospel was spread to more than two hundred communities by the end of the third century.

It is not known who started the churches at Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Secular history did not record any well-known figures, leaders, or visionaries behind their incredible growth. One strong possibility is that it had something to do with the endless travel of people along the Roman network of roads.

However, those who understand the working of God, and how the church was truly inauspicious and ubiquitous, would say it had something to do with ordinary lay people carrying out the command of Paul to Timothy when he said,

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

This period is known as the Golden Age of the church, a time when the gospel spread dramatically like a prairie fire throughout the Roman empire in spite of heavy Jewish, as well as Roman, persecution.

This paradigm ends with the reign of Constantine, the first Emperor of Rome to become a Christian.

The Imperial or State Church

The conversion of Constantine, and the subsequent Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, dramatically changed the operating environment of the church. It changed from a group constantly facing the threat of martyrdom, into a self-confident institution ready to confront the world on its own terms. One hundred years later, Augustine's view of the Millennium as the time in which the church would conquer the world, provided the theological basis for the rise of the Imperial Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire.

During this period, the inauspicious church began to be auspicious and the ubiquitous church became defined, precise, and identifiable. The prominence and authority the church experienced caused it to change its mission away from evangelism and toward one of dominating and absorbing an entire empire. And the church began to look like the secular institutions of the day.

Even the Reformation in the sixteenth century did not much affect this self-view of the church. And it was not long before Protestants started looking like the Catholic Church they were trying to reform. To quote Howard Snyder: "The fact is that Protestantism has never developed a fully biblical doctrine of the church."

As the Protestant church grew strong enough so their survival was assured, the drift to the Augustinian model of the church became irresistible and the state church was created.

The Wesleyan Model of the Liberated Church

The revivals of John Wesley during the Industrial Revolution in mid-eighteenth century England signaled a shift to a third paradigm for the church. Wesley was denied access to the pulpits of the English churches, so he got on his horse, went to the fields of Bristol, and did open-air preaching. He developed special societies and when people were converted, they were placed into groups which employed methodical follow-up systems, thus, gaining the name of Methodist for his followers. It is said the revivals of Wesley had the greatest impact on society of any revivals in history.

Wesley went about the ministry without worrying about the institutional church. That is, he did not allow the goals of the institutional church to stop him from preaching the gospel. He was liberated from the persistent notion that the grace of God could only be channeled and controlled through institutions and their liturgies. He was actually a part of the church, but did not have a need to reform it. Instead, he channeled his efforts into creative and resourceful ways of participating in the Great Commission. Wesley was the forerunner of a church that would see leaders serve Christ and his body in nonsectarian ways never before seen in history.

Observations on the State of the Church of the Third Paradigm

The church of the third paradigm is creative, resourceful, pragmatic, and even liberated in its desire to fulfill the Great Commission in the face of a fast-paced and ever-changing society.

There are a great number of examples of this shift. We see it in the nineteenth century with the formation of organizations like the Clepham Sect, and in lay leaders like Wilberforce, Raikes, and Booth. We see it in the model for nonsectarian missions set up by a shoe cobbler named William Carey, a missionary to India. In the twentieth century, we have witnessed the proliferation of parachurch organizations. Howard Snyder acknowledged the church's new self-understanding when he told us fifteen years ago in Lausanne, "No one single expression of the church could ever be thought of as anything more than a 'parachurch.'" We even see it in the incredible rise of the charismatic movement during the last twenty years, a movement which has infused new application into the concept of the priesthood of the believer.

Ford Madison's committee has discovered more than one hundred lay affinity groups across the United States serving everything from doctors and lawyers to hard hats and truckers, as they organize for the purpose of promoting Christ within their professions. At a meeting of about thirty of these groups in Denver in 1985, I was impressed by the creative expressions of the laity as they sought to bring Christ to the marketplace.

These groups have mobilized the laity to witness for Christ to a degree never before realized. Thus, a strong point can be made that this third and most recent paradigm of the church relies heavily on the creative energies of an inauspicious laity. Although stated in a different context, the principle of James Engel and Wilbert Norton in their book, *What's Gone Wrong With the Harvest?* rings true:

The gospel communicator has the obligation to focus theological truth in such a way that it brings light upon each person's unique situation. This of course cannot be done only by pontificating in the pulpit or by occupying the pew. Witnessing for Christ requires contact with people.

There seems to be strong evidence that God is behind this paradigm shift, which,

according to J. Christy Wilson, is essentially returning us to the lay evangelism methods which prevailed during the apostolic era. For example, missionary researchers like David Barrett and others affiliated with the LCWE, say that by the year 2000, fully 83 percent of the world's non-Christian population will reside in 120 nations closed to traditional missionary methods. Since the Bible states that no national government can come into existence unless established by God, then it must be God who is orchestrating a major departure from traditional methods of evangelism. Thus, it seems that God is behind a shift that will of necessity feature a strong lay or tentmaker participation in these latter days.

A critical case in point today is mainland China. In the late 1940s, an estimated five million believers suddenly lost all of their vocational Christian workers as the Communist government expelled all foreign missionaries and imprisoned church pastors and leaders. The church in China became the object of an intense intentional effort to destroy it. Today, some well-respected estimates number the church in excess of fifty million, a tenfold increase. What happened? It had to have grown through the efforts of the ordinary layperson left behind, who was prepared to share the hope within him to comrades hungry for hope.

God is raising up a laity that refuses to be limited to the confines of an institutional church and whose ministry refuses to be counted, created, or controlled. The prominence of the laity is clearly the distinguishing mark of the third paradigm. With so many new groups on the scene and here to stay, the church must redefine its identity or enter into a crisis.

However, it is sad to say that the institutional church does not always respond well to this new and growing role for the layperson. To quote Dr. William Lawrence of Dallas Theological Seminary:

There is this very subtle mentality that exists everywhere, that for ministry to be legitimate you need to get it down to the church house. It's better there because that's where it belongs.

This thinking is an anachronism, because in this developing third paradigm for the church, ministry belongs in the marketplace.

There are now instances of parachurches growing prominent enough to also want to control the ministry. The institutional church, and institutional Christianity for that matter, can respond in one of three ways to the role of the laity in this new paradigm. They can either fight it, deny it, or help it.

If they choose to fight it, they risk opposing God himself, as Gamaliel warns in Acts chapter 5.

If they choose to deny it, they will worsen what is already called a worldwide "effectiveness crisis" in the church. In these cases, congregations sometimes plunge into theological squabbles or rally around some effort to Christianize society instead of fulfilling the Great Commission. Bear in mind that this paradigm is already two hundred years old.

If they choose to help, the institutional church must take on a new self view and mission. They need to become a *servant church*—to serve the people, and to equip and encourage them to do the work of the ministry that God is leading them into, rather than use the people to do the work of the programs the institution wants achieved. Thus, the only corporate mission of the church is to build itself up spiritually. Any organizational form it adopts is to facilitate that process.

Frogs Versus Lizards

Have you ever noticed how differently frogs and lizards acquire their food? The frog just sits and waits, and lets the food come to him. As soon as an insect gets close enough, all the frog has to do is stick out his tongue and get it.

On the other hand, if the lizard did what the frog does, it would soon starve. It cannot afford to sit and wait, but must go out into his world, know where his food can be found, and hunt.

The vocational Christian worker is like the frog. He goes off to seminary, gets a degree, goes on staff somewhere, and somehow people know he is in the business of meeting spiritual needs. Ministry comes to him and before long, he has his hands full. Many evangelists today are frogs in that when they come to town, with no effort on their part, an audience always assembles to hear them speak.

The layperson on the other hand, is a lizard. In order for him to have a ministry, he has to learn to hunt. If he were to put out a notice saying that he was coming to town, no one would care. Ministry does not come seeking him out. Instead, like the lizard, he must move around in the environment he lives in, assess his sphere of influence, sow broadly, build bridges, establish friendships, and then, when he has earned the right to be heard, be ready to give an account for the hope that is in him, with gentleness and reverence.

The ministry of the laity is as different from the vocational Christian worker's ministry as the lizard's food gathering techniques are different from the frog's. Frogs usually cannot teach the lizard ministry. They can get the lizard to act like a frog, however, and get him to teach Sunday school or even give a thirty-minute talk during an evangelistic outreach lunch. Unfortunately there are many sad lizards out there who think that to have a ministry, they must act like frogs. What a limited view of the ministry. The lizard needs to know how God can use him as the lizard!

In Amsterdam '86, Stephen Olford declared that the days of mass evangelism were over. Perhaps he meant the job of world evangelization is a lizard's job. He represents the church's contact point with the world as he lives and works in it. He understands it and is familiar with its ways. When he is differentiated by his faith, the world takes note. As Howard Hendricks says, "The world is not looking for perfection, just reality. When the vocational Christian worker is good it is because he is paid to be good, the layperson on the other hand, is good for nothing."

The lizard must be given a sense of ministry, and must be equipped and encouraged by the frog. One layman recently said to me, "I must work out the tension between raising my family, holding down a job, and participating in the Great Commission. Men and women like me must learn how to make it because there will never be enough vocational Christian workers to get the job done."

At first, I thought we needed to present these ideas about the importance of the laity in world evangelization in the form of a plea, the way that Ford Madison has been doing since Lausanne I in 1974. After seeing William Garrison's paradigm shifts and observing firsthand the layman in action both in the United States and Hong Kong, I realized what is needed here at Lausanne II is not so much a plea as a proclamation.

We are here to proclaim that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift that is featuring the priesthood of the ordinary believer in God's "end game strategy" to reach the world. Will you be a player or a spectator?