

Feed My Sheep
An Anglican Defense of Lay Presidency


by


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Introduction

The Diocese of Alaska is the largest diocese in The Episcopal Church (TEC) by geographical size. The 6,072 members of its 48 constituent congregations are spread out over an area larger than the total combined size of California, Texas, Montana, and Oregon.¹ It also exemplifies the theological and practical incongruities of the modern priesthood and a reason to re-examine what makes a priest a priest and the priesthood the priesthood.

The last sixty years have seen dramatic changes in both American and world Christianity.² For Episcopalians, the adoption of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer not only validated the ordination of women – a stunning break with centuries of Christian practice in both the Eastern and Western churches – but also embedded the ideals of the Liturgical Reform movement in the church’s collective life, perhaps no more so than the re-orientation of worship and devotion from Morning Prayer and the preached word to the Eucharist. Alongside this, ministry itself was redefined as the baptism-anchored collective ministry of all the baptized, the priesthood of all believers, from the domain of the ordained alone.

The contextual fluidity has not limited itself to theology. The church in the United States now confronts an increasingly secular society transformed by the civil rights, women’s liberation, and LGBTQ+ civil rights movements and the advent of the Digital Age. Not only has church attendance dropped across every denominational line and in every demographic, but the

¹ In 2017, the Diocese of Alaska’s diocesan convention approved a holistic overhaul of their canons, removing any distinction in power or privilege between “parishes” and “missions” and renaming all such assemblies “congregations”. This is the naming convention I will use in this thesis.

² As another note on diction, Church will be used here to indicate the Church Universal, the mystical and eschatological body of Christ; “church” will refer both to individual congregations as well as specific institutions, particularly The Episcopal Church. Additionally, though I write from the context of the United States of America, it should be emphatically noted that The Episcopal Church extends across 4 continents and 16 countries beyond the United States. Though we share in the collective institution, I cannot speak with the same authority to these contexts as I can to my own and do not claim to.

rise of militantly political, right-wing Christianity has seen a growing *anti-church* backlash among the youngest generations especially.

The collective impact of these changes – and in many ways the success of the church’s liturgical reform – has led to or exacerbated several pastoral, practical, and theological problems related to priests and the priesthood. The renewed centrality of Holy Communion further renewed the centrality of the priest in the devotional life of the church just as cultural forces have diminished the abilities of congregations to access priests due to financial constraints as well as due to a reduction in the overall number of priests. Ironically, all of this occurred during the time that the ministry of the laity was being extolled. In the Diocese of Alaska, as of 2018, only 29.2% of congregations had regular access to a clergy person³ while only five full-time clergy positions existed, three in one single congregation and all in the state’s two largest cities.

The pastoral and practical problems that result are plain to see. Smaller congregations become liturgically second-class to larger congregations with priests. Indeed, the capacity to maintain an ordained priest is the *de facto* if inaccurate definition of a “successful” congregation. As Dean of Southcentral Alaska, I recall multiple occasions on visits to the smaller congregations in my deanery that a congregant has said that they feel “left out” or “unfulfilled” or believe their congregation to be dying because they cannot support a priest or celebrate the Eucharist regularly.

For priests, the burden of vocation has arguably become worse. In a calling already known for its capacity to break marriages, wear down mental and physical health, and burn out its practitioners, the last thing needed was to send a message through liturgy that they were of central importance to the worshipping community. As noted, the current model of priesthood has

³ This number includes ordained deacons who, by canon, cannot celebrate the Eucharist, thereby overstating Eucharistic access.

also met its economic match in contemporary society. Alaska's struggles with financing vocations appear even in wealthy and well-resourced dioceses like New York and Virginia.

At this point, one could argue that the issues noted are not issues of the priesthood but of the institutional and economic models as they are practiced. Without a doubt, there is truth in that, a truth that the church has also been too slow to admit or address. However, as an issue, the model of priesthood pales next to the acute theological dissonance between what we practice and what we preach. The church preaches that the diaconate is a full and equal order while in fact it is seen and treated as a stepping stone to the priesthood. The church holds that the liturgy is the product of the whole assembly, yet if the priest is absent, even if the rubrics of the liturgy are followed by the assembly, the sacrament is invalid. The church's teaching on ordination – that by some sacred mystery the ordained undergoes an “ontological change” that enables their sacramental function – runs smack into its teaching of the equalizing force of baptism and even its pastoral practice. The lay person who can baptize in emergencies cannot do so in calmer times because this is a “priestly function” similar to preaching, leading worship, and providing pastoral care – all of which have now been fully thrown open to the laity through licensed (lay) ministries. Opening up the celebration of the Eucharist to laypeople not only follows logically from the church's own witness, but would also resolve the theological incoherence and open up avenues to alleviate the pastoral and practical problems previously discussed.

Yet, despite this, lay presidency is fiercely opposed if it is even discussed. This is not surprising: the priesthood and the Eucharist are so tightly fused that even the ordination of women, fiercely opposed as a rupture from centuries of Christian practice, appears less of an existential challenge. But it is a pure tautology that a radical change is automatically incorrect because of its radicality. If this were the case, there would be no Christianity.

Opponents might also claim that such an argument is inherently anti-clerical and that it would endanger ecumenical endeavors should it be pursued. To the first, as noted above, part of this argument comes from a pastoral concern *for* the clergy, not animus towards them. As to the objection on ecumenical grounds, this is a fair point and must be kept in mind. That said, global Anglicanism itself has yielded the episcopate – the feature that gave The Episcopal Church its name in the 18th century – as the *bene esse* of apostolicity instead of the *esse* thereof. There is no reason *a priori* to believe that accepting much less entertaining an argument for lay presidency would damage ecumenical dialogue; it could even have positive effects on it.

I argue that the Anglican tradition can both support and justify lay presidency. Anglicans tend to self-describe their theology around the Scripture-Tradition-Reason triad, so I will use it proceed through this argument. To begin with, I will exegete the main books of the Bible dealing with the priesthood in both the Old and New Testaments: Leviticus, Hebrews, and the Pastoral Epistles.⁴ Moving into Tradition, we will explore the historical development of the priesthood, how and why it took the shape it did, and the identity of the priest within that concept, focusing especially on the period from the first century to the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, which fixed the shape of the priesthood as it is understood and still practiced today.⁵ Finally, we will explore the nexus of ontology, pneumatology, and sacramentology in which the priesthood sits and, using the insights of our exegeses and historical analysis, square the theological circle and firmly clarify the Anglican defense of lay presidency.

⁴ The five books and letters, though by no means exhaustive on the subject, are the most thoroughly encompassing on matters of priesthood and priestly office.

⁵ This should not mask or undervalue the challenges of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation's response it, particularly as encapsulated in the Council of Trent (1545-1563). However, the priesthood survived even the sea change brought on by Calvinist and similar Reform ecclesiology and polity.

Chapter 1: Scripture

From antiquity through today, Christians have considered every word of Scripture to be divinely inspired. God, in making allowances for human limitations, including those of language, layered, buried, and encoded Their inspiration within Scripture; it is by definition inexhaustible.⁶ For Protestants especially, Scripture is constitutive of the Church⁷ and so must be addressed to understand anything concerning the Church. As importantly, Scripture provides the first steps in understanding priesthood – and sacraments – both theologically and historically. As an exhaustive review of all Scripture passages dealing directly or indirectly with priesthood is not feasible in this space, we will focus on five key to understanding priesthood in both its theological and ecclesial functions. As the original “priest’s manual,” Leviticus stands as the logical starting point.⁸

1.1 Leviticus

Leviticus does not make for gripping reading. With a vast portion of its 27 chapters detailing proper sacrificial order, law codes, and punishment, Leviticus has slid to the edge of our liturgical life. Only two Sundays in the Revised Common Lectionary prescribe sections of Leviticus for the Old Testament reading and, to varying lengths, both of these cover a portion of chapter 19 extensively cited in the New Testament. Nevertheless, in conjunction with portions of Exodus and Numbers, Leviticus provides the most holistic view of ancient Israelite priesthood. The first and critical aspect of this priesthood is its divine chosen-ness. Interestingly, the priests “receive the only grants of centralized leadership authority in the Pentateuch,”⁹ namely over the

⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. by R. P. H Green, Oxford Early Christian Texts, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Book II.

⁷ ELCA, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997), 2, 3.3A, 7-8.

⁸ All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are from the NRSV translation.

⁹ James W. Watts, *Leviticus 1-10*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2013), 108.

Levites who become the LORD's portion of the people (Number 8:5-26, 18:2-7). Though scholars debate the dating of the book¹⁰, the primary purpose is clearer: legitimize the Aaronite priesthood.¹¹ Exodus 29:9¹² explicitly states that the priesthood "shall be theirs [Aaron and his descendants'] by a perpetual ordinance." In the first ordination mentioned in the Bible, Moses declares to the congregation that "This [ordination] is what the LORD has commanded to be done" (Lev. 8:5). In fact, the actions in Leviticus 8 parallel point for point the commands of Exodus 29 such that one can read this ordination as the fulfillment of the command.¹³ Leviticus 16 and Numbers 16-17 continue this rhetorical thrust.

Priesthood thus unambiguously originates and functions within the context of divine call and direction. Ordination also has an ontological focus: the detailed washings, sacrifices, and week-long separation very firmly transition the person from mundane to holy.¹⁴ The word translated as ordained – מלאכה – derives from a root meaning "to fill" and may have the double meaning of both consecrating priests (a "filling" with an office) and authorizing their partaking in the temple revenues and sacrifices since they could not work, bound as they were to the tabernacle.¹⁵ Notably, the priesthood was hereditary; the divine call was limited to one family. Above all else, the priests functioned in one space, the tabernacle, as holy intermediaries between the LORD and the people Israel, performing or assisting in the performance of various sacrifices and, for the high priest on Yom Kippur, making atonement for the whole people. The

¹⁰ Watts, *Leviticus 1-10*, 40-47, 110; Balentine further notes that Hebrew texts of Leviticus have been very well preserved and consistent. Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 2002), 2.

¹¹ Watts, *Leviticus*, 107-109.

¹² See also Ex. 28:1, 40:14-15, and Num. 25:11-13.

¹³ Ming Him Ko, *Leviticus: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary*, Asia Bible Commentary Series, (Carlisle, U.K.: Langham Global Library, 2018), 76

¹⁴ Ko, *Leviticus*, 81.

¹⁵ Jacob Milgrom, "Leviticus," *The Harper-Collins Study Bible (NRSV), Including Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books*, Revised Edition, ed. Harold W. Attridge (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 161, n. on 8:1-36.

LORD also explicitly commanded them to “teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them through Moses” (10:11), explicitly the difference between holy and clean and common and unclean.

The priesthood was also exceedingly concerned with ritual purity. So all-consuming and preeminent is holiness and ritual cleanliness that the priests and Levites courted death for violating the LORD’s commands, failing in their duties, or otherwise polluting the holy places.¹⁶ The “world of Leviticus is a graded one, with holiness, or the lack thereof, characterizing meaning in every aspect of life,”¹⁷ which further underscored the priesthood’s spatial and societal distance. Yet, Leviticus itself somewhat diminishes this separateness. While the Priestly Code (roughly Lev. 1-16) constricts holiness to the sanctuary and to the priests and Nazirites, the balance of the book (broadly Lev. 17-27), known as the Holiness Code and source to a large number of problematic passages for contemporary Christians, extends spatial holiness to the entire Holy Land and to all adult Israelites *and* resident aliens. Even the concepts of pollution and purification change between these sections, from more ritualistic transgressions to non-ritualistic, covenantal blemishes, which ritual cannot fix.¹⁸ In a way, the Holiness Code reduces, if slightly, the distinctiveness of the priests and emphasizes the role of covenant as the distinguishing feature of priesthood rather than sacralization, which should prompt questions about the ontological shift of ordination.

The rootedness of divine call in the theology priesthood as well as the interlocking of ontological change and communal function of the priests are key concepts to recall. However, the theology of the Aaronite priesthood presents challenges in application. For one, the

¹⁶ See Lev. 10:3.

¹⁷ Mayjee Philip, *Leviticus in Hebrews: A Transtextual Analysis of the Tabernacle Theme in the Letter to the Hebrews*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 25.

¹⁸ Milgrom, “Leviticus”, 151.

priesthood is hereditary. More critically, whatever the tension between the Priestly and Holiness Codes, the locus was on place, especially the temple. The (Second) Temple in which these priests served has been in ruins for 1,952 years. Christianity and rabbinic Judaism both emerged from the ashes of Titus' destruction and have re-interpreted or interpreted away in various ways and with various levels of fervor most of the subject material of the text. Fortunately, the New Testament contains a lengthy letter that, among so much else, reinterprets Leviticus and reveals its insights in light of Jesus Christ and so its place in Christian priesthood.

1.2 The Epistle to the Hebrews

Though no longer attributed to St. Paul, the epistle to the Hebrew still holds a special place in Christian thinking. Dating the letter has proven quite difficult. A consensus has built around a date in the 60's, roughly contemporaneous with the writing of the Gospel of Mark. As far as the purpose of the letter, despite its serving as a fascinating kind of Christian apologetic work, "[it] is evident, after only two chapters, that the writer...is a pastor, writing a word of encouragement" to a community that has "endured suffering, public abuse, persecution, imprisonment, and the confiscation of property"¹⁹ and likely saw more on the horizon.²⁰ It is hard to do justice to the epistle to the Hebrews. Especially in light of its pastoral sensibilities, Hebrews stands out as one of the most scripturally and theologically dense writings of the New Testament with one of the most ambiguous forms and genres.²¹ One simply cannot discuss Christian priesthood without this letter's christological reinterpretation of the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system.

¹⁹ Fred B Craddock, "Hebrews." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 12 (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 43, 42.

²⁰ Mary Healy, *Hebrews*, CCSS (Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerAcademic, 2016), 23.

²¹ Because the epistle has so many features typical of sermons, some commentators refer to the author as "Preacher".

This reinterpretation begins most firmly in 2:5-18, which introduces Jesus as “pioneer” (ἀρχηγὸν) and high priest (ἀρχιερεὺς). The former word appears only four times in the NT, two of which are in Hebrews, while the latter as applied in any ways beyond the Temple’s high priests is unique to Hebrews. While ἀρχηγὸν can be rendered “founder,” “author” or “leader” among many others, the NRSV’s rendering as “pioneer”²² or Gench’s as “trailblazer” most clearly elucidate the hope and way of salvation, that Jesus “brings the rest of humanity to [that] same position.”²³ He is “the one who in himself creates the path for his followers.”²⁴ Beyond high priest, two other Levitical references are made: τελειῶσαι (to make perfect, v. 10), which refers in the LXX to the consecration of a Levitical priest²⁵, and ἰλάσκεσθαι, which alludes to the rites of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:15) where a blood sacrifice would be offered to remove human sins by the mercy of God.²⁶ Jesus offers the expiatory sacrifice and, arguably, is also that sacrifice.²⁷

These two senses of Christ as both pioneer (arch-leader) and high priest (arch-priest) overlap throughout Hebrews supplemented by similar titles (e.g., forerunner or πρόδρομος in 6:20). They combine to make one point: Christ has according to the foreknowledge of God²⁸ supplanted the Aaronite priesthood and all the sacrifices by his own obedience, death, and resurrection. Christ has made the sacrifice that forever atones for us, his followers, but also leads those who believe into the very presence of God. “The designation ‘pioneer and perfecter of

²² Craddock, “Hebrews”, 39.

²³ Frances Taylor Gench, *Hebrews and James* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 25.

²⁴ Craddock, “Hebrews”, 39.

²⁵ Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation Commentaries (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1997), 41-42; Craddock, “Hebrews”, 39; R. J. McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2013), 31.

²⁶ Craddock, “Hebrews”, 41-42; Healy, *Hebrews*, 67-68.

²⁷ Healy, *Hebrews*, 62.

²⁸ David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews*, Studies in Biblical Literature, v. 21, (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 203-236, esp. 224 on the use of Ps. 110:1, 4.

faith' [in Heb. 12:2] ...conveys the essential thought of the whole sermon...[Christ] is the one who initiates faith and takes it to its fulfillment."²⁹ The core of the writer's argument is developed in 5:1-10 and 7:1-10:18 describing Christ's better call, priesthood, covenant, and sacrifice.³⁰

Hebrews fundamentally collapsed the entire Levitical system into Jesus Christ who thus superseded it. The logical conclusion of Christ's perfect sacrifice as pioneer-priest went further than that. Christ leads believers behind the inner curtain into God's very presence.³¹ These assertions would have gob smacked the first audience; "the end result of following Christ right into the presence of God would have caused them serious heart searching."³² By belief in Jesus and baptism into Christ's Body the Church, we join Christ's sacrifice and therein also join Christ's priesthood as a priesthood of all believers – an interpretation running back as far as Justin Martyr in the second century.³³

1.3 The Pastoral Epistles: 1-2 Timothy & Titus

While Hebrews re-interprets Leviticus and its priesthood through the death and resurrection of Christ, it does not say much if anything about the institution of the church, much less Christian ecclesiastical offices. The source of these offices can be found elsewhere in the New Testament, specifically in the Pastoral Epistles (PE) of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Unsurprisingly to anyone who has spent time with the Bible, the details are not consistent

²⁹ McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 134.

³⁰ Anderson, *King-Priest*, 218. Long, *Hebrews*, 80-111. The strength of Hebrews' supersessionist ideas can be seen in Heb. 8:4-6. The Preacher admits that Jesus would not have qualified as a priest because he was from a different clan and lineage, but then proceeds to replace that priesthood and that idea of priesthood by saying that "Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry...he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises."

³¹ E.g., Heb. 4:14, 9:24, 10:19.

³² McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 123; see also 115-116.

³³ McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 120. This is contested, as McKelvey notes, though such contests do not seem to account for baptismal theology.

between the letters.³⁴ The definitions of the offices – overseer (*episkopos*, whence bishop), elder (*presbyteros*, whence priest), and assistant (*diakonos*, whence deacon) – are all extremely fluid, even overlapping.³⁵ Today these offices are linked by a hierarchical *cursus honorum*, but here, any indication of a formal relationship, much less a hierarchical one, is ambiguous at best if it existed at all.³⁶ As if to drive the point home, Timothy is called “deacon” yet also has the power of “ordination,”³⁷ reserved today solely for the episcopate. The letter to Titus lacks Titus’ title though he is also likely a deacon (given his assisting Paul and the similarity of his charge to Timothy’s). Yet he too has legitimate authority to appoint both elders/priests and overseers/bishops!³⁸

Furthermore, these texts emphasize the teaching roles of the offices, but mention no liturgical functions of any office – critical to present-day understanding and theological defense of Holy Orders and to the functional development of these offices. In fact, the New Testament nowhere “describes the ritual celebration of the Eucharist or indicates who presides at its celebration; nor does the New Testament ever use the word ‘priest’ to refer to those who exercise office.”³⁹ The word priest itself is interesting in these purportedly Pauline letters. Unlike here

³⁴ Though the PE speak more than any other part of Scripture on the Christian offices, they do not exhaust the potential texts for interpretation as has been noted. Genesis, Acts, 1 Corinthians, 2 Peter, and Revelation, to name a few, are all frequently cited.

³⁵ Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 12, Daniel J. Harrington, ed., (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 73-75, 197-198; William G. Witt, *Icons of Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Theology for Women’s Ordination*, (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2020), 317-319. Even within the New Testament, these three offices (such as they are) are not the only such offices mentioned. Others include widows, prophets, and apostles. More interestingly, the only person explicitly named as a member of any of the three main offices is a woman: Phoebe, a deacon (Rom. 16:1).

³⁶ Fiore, *Pastoral Epistles*, 73-75, 197, 201. He notes (74-5) that a monarchical bishop seems to originate in Ignatius of Antioch rather than in the NT or other early teaching (e.g., the *Didache*). Indeed, the Egyptian church also developed a far less hierarchical episcopal office than the Antiochene church.

³⁷ 1 Tim. 4:6 and 1 Tim. 5:22 respectively.

³⁸ Titus 1:5.

³⁹ Witt, *Icons*, 317. I assume that by “priest,” he means the Greek *hiereus*, which denotes a Greek or Roman pagan cultic officer with sacrificial responsibilities, as he does explicitly mention the office of *presbyteros*. See also Fiore, *Pastoral Epistles*, 74.

where the word rendered priest is *presbyteros*, in both Hebrews and Leviticus (LXX) the word is *hiereus*. In first-century Greece as earlier, the latter is associated with sacrifice, with temples, with mystery-separateness. The title of *presbyteros* is almost *anti*-liturgical.

Most importantly, the letters posit no separation between the “laity” and the “clergy” any more than would exist between church wardens and church members today. Historically, the key takeaway is that a growing missionary community, the Church, has taken steps at further institutionalization, building leaders, and developing inchoate if ill-defined offices as a functional yet prayerful response to specific challenges and needs. Exegetically, this investigation of the PE seriously questions liturgical, sacramental, or ecclesiological arguments for the status quo priesthood on the basis of Scripture. Even if one could parse out what information these texts do provide, a purely Scriptural defense of holy orders runs into problems of clarity and sufficiency.⁴⁰

1.4 Conclusions

Scripture on its own cannot support the expansive views of ordination and holy orders that would separate “priestly” ministry from “non-priestly,” including in regards to celebration of the Eucharist. In light of Hebrews’ collapsing of the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system into Christ, it is practically indefensible. Interestingly, in lieu of a dichotomous distinction in ministry, Scripture indicates two senses of priesthood with the latter explicitly linked to Christian priesthood: hieratic – *being* a priest, being set apart by divine will, what Leviticus referred to as ordination – versus presbyteral – performing priestly *functions* within the context of the community of the faithful. Despite that distinction, both aspects infuse the concept of the

⁴⁰ Claims of having a “straightforward” literalist interpretation on the subject of offices or really any detail of polity are misguided if not disingenuous. On the hermeneutical issue, especially for Protestants, see Witt, *Icons*, ch. 4 (41-50).

Christian priesthood today. The question now is what happened in between first-century Crete and the twenty-first century to transform the institutional church, its offices, and its officers so thoroughly.

Chapter 2: History

Over the course of nearly fourteen centuries, the office of priest and conception of the priesthood transformed dramatically from an amorphous communal leadership position in the Greek house churches to the central sacramental office of the Latin Christian church. The society in which priests and the priesthood dwelt underwent no less astounding a transformation. This next section will trace that development over time in four slightly overlapping chronological periods: the pre-Constantinian era (c.30-313), the Imperial period (313-476), the Early Middle Ages and Carolingian era (5th-mid-10th centuries), and the High Middle Ages (mid-10th-13th centuries).

This subset of Christian history was selected due to its sheer dynamism. This period covers the church's adolescence, easily the most formative and fluid period of the church's development and as such the most fruitful for an investigation of the evolution of priest and priesthood. The analysis of this period ends approximately with the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 because that council more-or-less firmly established the contours of both priestly identity and priesthood as we, for the most part, still recognize them today.⁴¹

2.1 The Theological Link between History and Tradition

Unlike other Protestant traditions, Anglicanism acknowledges Tradition alongside Scripture, if subordinate to it, as a theological resource. Yet, modern conceptions of history, like the rise of biblical criticism, are not inherently theistic. In fact, modernism has used both history and criticism to disparage not just theology but religion itself. History is not Tradition even if Tradition is historical. Yet, Scripture itself illustrates that God works Her will and mission within

⁴¹ This should not mask or undervalue the challenges of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation's response it, particularly as encapsulated in the Council of Trent (1545-1563). However, as noted, the priesthood survived even the sea change of Calvinist and similar Reform ecclesiology and polity.

the bounds of spacetime. As an incarnational and eschatological faith, moreover, historical time is an area of divine revelation and divine fulfillment. In defending lay presidency, history needs to unpack and interrogate Tradition as discernment ruminates on revelation. The question, then, is how.

In the tome of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Cardinal Newman proposes a connection between revelation and historical time. For one, Newman notes that no doctrine comes into the world in a completed, unchanging form, but that “ideas are in the writer and reader of the revelation, not the inspired text itself”, giving as an example that the New Testament does not exhaust the number of interpretations “a divine message will assume when submitted to a multitude of minds.”⁴² Newman begins before this, though, to outline characteristics of ideas and subsequently of kinds of ideas. Among these characteristics are that “no one aspect [is] deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea” and that real ideas are inherently relational. Development itself is “the germination and maturation of some truth...on a large mental field”, though with the condition that whatever accretes to the original idea must really belong to it.⁴³

The theological import of all of this is that Christianity entered the world as idea and not institution, but also as “a revelation, which comes to us as a revelation, as a whole, objectively, and with a profession of infallibility”.⁴⁴ The Church, then, becomes the authoritative guide to understanding the revelation in lived history, creating a repository of tradition both doctrinal and practical. History becomes theological, in a sense, when it deals with the unpacking of divine revelation in human time.

⁴² John Henry Newman, *Conscience, Consensus, and the Development of Doctrine*, 1st ed., commentary and notes by James Gaffney, (New York: Image Books, 1992), 87 (II.1.2).

⁴³ Newman, *Development of Doctrine*, 72-75 (I.1.4-7).

⁴⁴ Newman, *Development of Doctrine*, 102-104 (II.2.3-6).

Influenced by Newman's work though far less magisterial in content were the French Catholic *nouveaux théologiens*, who "were convinced that a recovery of history was essential for the Church in order to retain and restore vitality to ecclesial life."⁴⁵ One of these, Louis Charlier, "insist[ed] that one should look at the revealed deposit"⁴⁶...not just from a 'conceptual' angle, but also from a 'real' (or experiential) point of view." He thought the Church was a continuation of the Incarnation, which as a result meant that "doctrine was wedded to historical developments. Through these historical developments, God enabled his Church to participate in the very reality of his own eternal life."⁴⁷ Henri de Lubac likewise rejected development as purely (theo)logical conclusions, but argued for a broader notion, which importantly meant that "development did not always and necessarily mean progress"⁴⁸ – a problem in Newman's work where such a possibility had been "assumed out" – likely as a result of his assertion of Rome's infallibility. For him, essentially, history as theology was "a 'cashing in' of the fullness of the treasury of the Christological mystery."⁴⁹

Yves Congar, passionate ecumenist that he was, conceived of a view of history and revelation, which self-consciously connected Scripture and Tradition in the life of the Church – or, more specifically, in the *time* of the Church. "Congar posited...the following: 'The fact of a certain progress in the understanding of faith is based both on the nature of revelation itself and on the distinct character of the "time of the Church," which is a community of people on the way."⁵⁰ The Church has a place in cosmic [God's] time through the work of Christ and in

⁴⁵ Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 191.

⁴⁶ This appears in context to mean the revelation of Jesus in his life and in Scripture.

⁴⁷ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 217-218.

⁴⁸ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 220.

⁴⁹ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 223.

⁵⁰ Yves Congar, *La Foi et la théologie*, (Tournai : Desclée, 1962), 99, in Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 224.

human history by the divine mission of the Spirit in bringing it to fulfillment.”⁵¹ Though Congar refused to embrace the Protestant position of Scripture as the Word of God itself, it was this sacramental Time of the Church in which the full deposit of faith and revelation found in Scripture and Tradition could be lived out and, in reflecting on this lived faith, grow.

Critically, then, Scripture and Tradition must be balanced. The priesthood and holy orders are part of that tradition, but so is the full totality of the experience and development of those orders. For Anglicanism, Scripture is the living Word of God, not a living sacrament, and so it is more fundamental than historical development. Yet, Congar’s high view of Tradition ensures that the lived history of the churches rightfully interprets Scripture alongside the individual. The following historical overview of the development of the Christian priesthood will serve more than simply illustrating the highly contingent nature of the priesthood as it evolved over two millennia. It will serve as the conversation partner with Scripture and reason to elucidate the non-contingent aspects of Christian priesthood and, in so doing, lay the foundation for lay presidency of the Eucharist – and, hopefully, of a purer sense of ordained ministry as we have received it today.⁵²

2.2 From the Apostolic Age to the Edict of Milan

During the three centuries following the resurrection of Christ, the church continued to spread throughout and beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, moving into barbarian lands in Dacia, tentatively into Ireland, south into Ethiopia, and east into Armenia, the Sassanid Empire, and even onto India and China. In many ways, it is a bit anachronistic to speak of

⁵¹ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie.*, 225.

⁵² Though it would go to far to say that this history is objective, it does intend to withhold any value judgment on the developments in history. The goal here, then, is not a critical assessment, but a broad field for reflection.

“church” but rather churches, considering the geographic breadth and diffuseness of the young faith communities.

The institutional structures of these Christian communities continued to evolve as the faith grew and came under attack in a multitude of persecutions of varying intensities. These persecutions contributed to one extremely determinative legacy: they wound up increasing the prestige and centrality of the bishop because the bishop, as an identifiable community leader, was a favorite target for martyrdom by authorities seeking to demoralize or scatter the subversive communities.⁵³ The effect this had on the priesthood underscores a dynamic, which began early in the church’s history, namely, that the priesthood was defined and in many ways developed in relation to the episcopate in a way that even the diaconate did not.⁵⁴

One particular episcopal martyrdom helped secure and spread a high view of the bishop as a symbol of the unity of the church and, thus, the top of the hierarchy. Ignatius of Antioch was condemned to death by the Roman Empire in the context of a dispute over episcopal supremacy over the presbyterate and diaconate. To great effect, he used the occasion of his conveyance to Rome to reframe his death sentence into an impending martyrdom, which succeeded in establishing – after his death – just such a hierarchy.⁵⁵ Crucially, as Ignatius wrote to other communities and passed through other cities, he spread his ideas and language of episcopacy. This language was highly novel, but since it and his procession powerfully refuted Docetism, against which many of these leaders, notably including Polycarp of Smyrna, struggled mightily,

⁵³ Karl Shuve, *The Song of Songs and the Fashioning of Identity in Early Latin Christianity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies series, eds. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 25.

⁵⁴ James F. Puglisi, *The Process of Admission to Ordained Ministry: A Comparative Study – Epistemological Principles and Roman Catholic Rites*, Michael S. Driscoll and Mary Misrahi, trans., 3 vols, Volume 1, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 178.

⁵⁵ Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, (T & T Clark Theology. London: Continuum, 2007), 44-45.

it was readily adapted.⁵⁶ Later, another Smyrnaean would bring this high view of the episcopate along with it the idea of the episcopal apostolic succession to the Latin West: Irenaeus of Lyons.

In the liturgical practice of these early churches, baptism, Eucharist, and chrismation were bound tightly together in one ceremony with the main event like an *agape* meal.⁵⁷ Far more importantly, in sharp contrast to contemporary Catholic and Protestant use, the language and the practice of liturgy were decidedly non-sacrificial. Even the use of sacrificial language by Justin Martyr was metaphorical, a rhetorical device to make the Christian thanksgiving meal and praises intelligible to an ancient Roman audience whose religious life was wound tightly around animal sacrifice.⁵⁸ “This eucharist is a thing radically other than the sacrifices of the pagans or of the Jerusalem cult, for it is simply receiving Jesus at a meal.”⁵⁹

2.3 Imperial Christianity: From Constantine to the Fall of Rome

The fourth century would see two major changes for Christianity in the West: the first, legalization of the faith; the second, the series of crises that cumulatively collapsed the Roman state in the West. In a span of not even twenty years, Christianity went from enduring the bloodiest and most systematic persecution of its history to being the public faith of the emperor and preferred religion of the realm. This occurred in the context forged by Diocletian’s reforms, which massively expanded the Roman administrative apparatus – and taxation with it – and transformed the relationship between Rome and the provinces. The eternal city had already lost some of its luster. “The empire could no longer be understood in terms of the dominance of

⁵⁶ Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 149-158.

⁵⁷ Eastern Christianity never lost the connection between these three. See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary Greek Theologians, no. 4., (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 216.

⁵⁸ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998), 143-149.

⁵⁹ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 151.

Rome over the provinces, or of the Mediterranean core over...[the] hinterlands.”⁶⁰ As regionalism became the order of the day in almost every aspect of Roman life, the tendency in religion, pagan and Christian alike, conversely was universality.⁶¹ Christianity had a new advantage in this universalizing project, one that it would use to become the dominant faith in Roman society: imperial backing. Though Constantine did not seek a full-scale purge of paganism, he vastly increased the wealth, prestige, and architectural prominence of his religion, and by extension, its popularity. The church’s growth was meteoric.

However, imperial faith brought not only imperial largesse and imperial power, but also imperial interest. As the “loose agglomeration of local Christian groupings that made up the pre-Constantinian church was integrated into the infrastructure of the empire, internal differences... became increasingly apparent. The church council called by Constantine at Nicaea in 325...was a result of the emperor’s concern to iron out these divisions.”⁶² One can imagine the same impulse in the 382 Council of Constantinople where the Nicene Creed was refined into its (more or less) final form and in the various councils that took the-then-*de facto* standardized New Testament canon and definitively fixed it.

Imperial entanglements ended with the church becoming an integral part of the Roman state and a mirror image of Roman society. Of all ecclesiastical offices, the transformation of the episcopate was the most profound, with the priesthood a close second as expected. Bishops effectively became leaders of their urban communities and established themselves as both secular interlocutors between their cities and the emperor and spiritual interlocutors between their flocks and the universal Church and ultimately God. An episcopal hierarchical structure

⁶⁰ Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough, and the Book*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 20; see also 36.

⁶¹ Innes, *Western Europe*, 40.

⁶² Innes, *Western Europe*, 47.

parallel to the Roman state's organizational framework emerged starting with individual bishops (curial), then archbishops (provincial), and finally, in the most prominent sees, patriarchs (praetorian).⁶³

These changes in the episcopate would produce another important change post-legalization that would become the *sine qua non* for the history of the priesthood to the present day: priests secured presiding rights at the Eucharist independent of the bishop.⁶⁴ Essentially, the city bishop could not keep up with weekly Masses for their now supersized flocks, much less once popular piety resulted in daily masses and as the number of churches in each city blossomed. However, though they may account for the conferral of Roman imperial privileges to priests⁶⁵, these presiding rights alone neither immediately transformed the office of priest as evidenced by the first few centuries after the “fall” of Rome nor was the process path-dependent.

Mammon never lost its allure; and in a society marked by patronage networks coupled with a wealthy church cozied up to power and exempted from state obligations and taxes, the priesthood and episcopate became attractive options for the wealthy, the social climbers, the “villa aristocrats” who recast the institutions in their image, for example, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Martin of Tours.⁶⁶ Here lay the foundations for the *cursus honorum* and, in many ways, the structure and operation of the church in the “post-Roman” West.⁶⁷

⁶³ Innes, *Western Europe*, 42-47.

⁶⁴ Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families, and Careers in Northwestern Europe, c.800-c.1200*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 42. Bede also notes several questions of St. Augustine of Canterbury to Pope St. Gregory the Great about when priests could celebrate communion (Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Judith McClure and Roger Collins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Bk. I, Ch. 27).

⁶⁵ Interestingly, the diaconate does not seem to have shared these privileges. Considering that episcopal and presbyteral privileges equated with those of high-level Roman officials, this may already indicate a formal subordination to both of these orders. However, one should tread carefully into making the diaconate a mere launchpad to the priesthood. As we will see, deacons did not automatically become priests and may not have even wanted to.

⁶⁶ Innes, *Western Europe*, 34-36, 44-45, 290-291; on Cyprian as an earlier example, see Shuve, *Identity*, 24-25.

⁶⁷ The continuity and adaptation of language, cultural and sociopolitical patterns, and practices from the fall of the Western Empire and their shaping of Western Europe through and even beyond Carolingian times is stunning.

Simultaneously, growing regionalism and increasing ruralization in the Latin empire redoubled the intimate connections between local churchmen and local potentates. Between a drive for uniformity and drive for dominance via secular power, the church ironically also became a destructive and inquisitional force stamping out pagan practice and “heresy” and cutting down with Thrasybulan vigor anyone – especially the ambiguous and extra-ecclesial ascetics and ascetical communities – who became prominent enough to challenge the “official” order.

2.4 The Early Middle Ages: From Gregory the Great to Charlemagne

By 476, the expulsion of Romulus Augustulus and the fall of the Western Empire⁶⁸, the priesthood achieved several key features in its development: subordination to the bishop in a hierarchical ordering⁶⁹, a firm connection to a local place, an elitist flavoring, and a clear connection to the organs of secular rule. By the fifth century, a rough outline of a typical priest had begun to develop. Yet, it would go too far to say that a coherent priestly identity had developed much less to assume that even ordination itself was well-defined. Christianity’s universalizing impulse still had to reckon with the increasing regionalism and fragmentation of late antiquity that continued in the West until the rise of the Carolingian Empire. During this time, three broad areas of development fueled growth, definition, and prominence of the priesthood: the relationship between priest and place, their education and role as pastoral caregivers, and, most importantly, changes in Eucharistic theology and in popular Eucharistic devotion.

⁶⁸ It was not until the mid-sixth century that anyone wrote or recognized a “Fall of Rome,” much less a fall precipitated by rampaging barbarians. The empire in the west disintegrated by a combination of recurrent Roman political crises, which sucked resources and resulted in the removal into Italy of the last vestiges of the regular Roman army with local elites negotiating their new realities organically. Barbarian groups who were settled in the Empire were frequently both quite Romanized and well embedded in Roman state structures. See Innes, *Western Europe*, 120-130. It may be more accurate to say that the empire evolved rather than fell.

⁶⁹ It was the bishops who sat in the councils and formed high officialdom in the Empire, not the priests.

As a caveat, discerning the evolution of the priesthood and priestly identity runs into three fundamental problems with sources: first and simplest, sources for the period from 476 to the late eighth century are few, due in large part to the collapse of public education and literacy with it. This particular issue afflicts historical analysis of any aspect of this period. Second, terminology and its meaning for priests and facets of their identity were porous and blurry, a situation not assisted by the frequently poorly defined boundaries between clergy and monks, particularly in Britain and Ireland.⁷⁰ Third, even with a clear source, the perspective, location (social or otherwise), and agenda can diminish its insight, especially when it comes to priests who did not leave nearly the imprint in the source material as bishops, monastic houses, and higher church officials did.⁷¹ Relatedly, with a paucity of sources, it can be hard to generalize from the sources and the specific people or events therein described, limiting some of their value. To varying extents, questions of change and identity are difficult to answer with any sense of real certainty.

2.4.1 *In situ*: Priesthood and Place

One characteristic of the priesthood had remained constant since the Apostolic Age: Priests were local. Not only were they drawn from local families, but they were also quite likely to have been educated locally, at least in part⁷², to have been resident locally whether in a

⁷⁰ As Christianity moved into places like Ireland with no prior Roman presence, even the episcopate turned into a fluid situation. Questions still remain about how – or if – St. Patrick became a bishop (see Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400-1050*, (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 26-28) while in St. Columba's monasteries (like Iona), bishops were sometimes abbots and occasionally were even monks subordinate to an abbot (Innes, *Western Europe*, 342). Bede illustrates both the fluidity of terms and the porous line between clergy/episcopacy and monasticism. St. Augustine of Canterbury was a monk made archbishop yet who continued to live a monastic life. There were priests, pastors, clerks, and clergy in minor orders with uncertain points of reference – and, interestingly, sanction for Augustine to consecrate a bishop by himself in extreme circumstances! (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk I. Chs. 22-30, esp. Ch. 27). See Hannah Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, ed. Robert J. Bast, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2019), 52-57.

⁷¹ Carine van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord: Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, vol. 6, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 171-173.

⁷² van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 175-177. Barrow, *Clergy*, 178-180.

community or in their own abode, and to have ministered not just in the diocese in which they were consecrated, but the very town from which they had come.⁷³ Geographic mobility, particularly before the ninth century and well into the High Middle Ages, was very much the exception.⁷⁴ Priests were born, raised, educated, and ordained in one diocese and spent their lives serving one church in that diocese, requiring express episcopal permission to change churches or to move between dioceses.⁷⁵

Bishops and deacons, by contrast, were decidedly more mobile. Bishops made pastoral visits in their dioceses (some of which were enormous) and could also be called to church councils and to royal or, after the consolidation of Carolingian rule, imperial courts. Deacons, as bishops' assistants, not unsurprisingly traveled with their bishop as well as serving as emissaries, administrators, and judges for bishops, archbishops, and even the Pope. Service in the diaconate or archidiaconate (most, but not all, of whom were ordained deacons) moreover placed a cleric very well to become a bishop and even Pope.⁷⁶ Small wonder that it was not unheard of for deacons to avoid ordination to the priesthood, going so far as to consider it a demotion, occasionally to the consternation of those up the ecclesiastical chain.⁷⁷

Staying closer to home, however, did have some benefits. Familial influences and patronage networks, as in late antiquity, also influenced the career paths of priests and other

⁷³ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 178-179.

⁷⁴ Barrow, *Clergy*, 51 on priests' attachment to a specific altar. In some parts of Germany, the priest had to promise that he would remain *statis* (in one place) before he would be ordained, see van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 180.

⁷⁵ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 175, 179-182. See though, 175 n.11: despite regulations from multiple councils, this seems to have been frequently if not blatantly ignored. One example is a poor priest trying to flee his area due to fear of Viking attacks.

⁷⁶ Barrow, *Clergy*, 49-51; Macy notes several instances of bishops consecrated who never were ordained priests and that Pope Gregory VII was the first deacon elected Pope who bothered to be ordained a priest. Four twelfth century popes (including the monarchic and highly influential Innocent III) were also deacons who marched through the balance of the orders within 24 hours, see Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25.

⁷⁷ Barrow, *Clergy*, 43, 49, 52, 68.

clergy. Priests could also be what we today would call “bivocational” i.e., they could earn income from other extra-ecclesial employment as well as from inheritance.⁷⁸ In a society where vocation as much as property passed from father to son, it was not uncommon for holy orders to also follow this pattern; and, surprisingly, not unheard of for ordained priests to marry and to have sons or daughters, even as the Gregorian reformers of the eleventh century pushed hard to impose celibacy.⁷⁹ In Brittany, even the odd bird, priesthood as the family business was the norm; and priests themselves were the local potentates.⁸⁰

Not only did familial networks influence and assist clerical careers, but unlike monks, secular clergy had frequent contact with their families and, as uncles especially, helped to advance their nephews’ careers or their nieces’ prospects.⁸¹ This localism resulted in priests’ being dependent on the goodwill of the local population and, in many cases, their patrons.⁸² If they lost it, they could lose their position either officially by episcopal deposition or unofficially by popular – and physical – expulsion. However, given their local networks, including among fellow priests in a diocese, relatively higher social status, and presence in the community, a priest

⁷⁸ Barrow, *Clergy*, 269-270; van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 174. Because of the dearth of sources, it is hard to say how much income priests usually earned from other professions (or how often they obeyed the decrees that put some professions off limits). See also van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 187-188 for potential conflicts between liege lords and bishops for control of priests’ energies.

⁷⁹ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Union in the Middle Ages*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 140-141. Barrow, *Clergy*, 29-30, 135-137, 144-145. For a specific example, see Barrow, *Clergy*, 193 on Henry of Huntingdon.

⁸⁰ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 177, 199-200. The normative nature of the practice in Brittany marked its uniqueness. However, clerical dynasticism was by no means confined to that Celtic outcrop. See Barrow in n. 25 for other examples in Britain and Ireland.

⁸¹ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 177-178; see Barrow, *Clergy*, ch.4 (115-157), 338.

⁸² Patrons embraced a wide circle of potential supporters, not just lay lords or royalty, but also monastic foundations, other clergy, and bishops. The tug-of-war between lay rulers and landowners on the one hand and bishops on the other over church property and control ensnared the priests as well. However, priests themselves could own churches, the *Eigenkirchen* in Germany being the most well documented (see van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 165-168, 197; Barrow, *Clergy*, 311-312).

could avail himself of positive public opinion and connections to resist even episcopal interventions.⁸³

Even priestly orders were defined by place in two senses. Ordination – “the appointment or consecration of a person to a particular charge or function”⁸⁴ – was in the early Middle Ages both geographical and contextual. A priest was ordained for a specific congregation or other church to serve there. The ordination liturgies in use in the more rural Gallican church compared with the Verona Sacramentary in urban Rome reveal the importance of place through their adaptations to their unique contexts.⁸⁵ In terms of ordination, “the question of who had the power to perform rituals was less important than whom the community had chosen as their ministers.”⁸⁶ This can explain why movement between churches and dioceses was so rare – and frowned upon. It also fits in with the prevailing theologies of baptism and Eucharist in the first millennium. “Baptism was the Carolingian shibboleth” such that no less a luminary than Theodulf of Orléans described the anointment of the newly baptized as anointment into “the kingdom and *priesthood* of the church.”⁸⁷

Unsurprisingly, *ordinatio* – the main word used for what we today call ordination – had a very broad meaning and application in antiquity all the way through into the eleventh century and was used interchangeably with *consecratio* and *benedictio*.⁸⁸ Especially interesting, the word not only applied to deacons and priests as it does today, but encompassed kings, abbots, abbesses, elections of popes, nominations of archdeacons, institution of monks to lead parishes, virgins entering religious life, doorkeepers, lectors, exorcists, acolytes, subdeacons, deaconesses,

⁸³ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 184, 200-211.

⁸⁴ Macy, *Hidden History*, 29, 31.

⁸⁵ Puglisi, *Roman Catholic Rites*, 101-105, 115-122, 137-141.

⁸⁶ Macy, *Hidden History*, 41. This was certainly the case in modern France, see Puglisi, *Roman Catholic Rites*, 130-133.

⁸⁷ Matis, *Song of Songs*, 118-120, emphasis added.

⁸⁸ Macy, *Hidden History*, 27-28.

and civil servants.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the term indicated not just the specific ritual but, more broadly, the entire time of formation as well as appointment and selection.

Where the orders into which one was ordained were explicitly clerical, the number of these orders varied considerably for centuries, sometimes as few as 6 and as many as 9. The boundary between minor and major orders also varied specifically on where one felt the order of subdeacon belonged.⁹⁰ The desire for a septiformity of offices, expressed both on the Continent and the British Isles, eventually led to a more or less stable ordering based on the seven-fold order the Roman church solidified somewhere in the middle of the third century. Amalarius of Metz in 823 in his *Liber officialis* finally fixed this order – though the subdeacon was subsequently upgraded to a major order in the eleventh century.⁹¹ In practice, however, only four offices truly functioned: acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and priest. That these offices had Eucharistic functions should not be surprising as it was the sacrament of the Eucharist that had the “most effect in determining the roles of the various orders.”⁹²

2.4.2 *Doctor et pastor*: Education and Pastoral Care

Before elaborating on the Eucharist’s role in shaping the priesthood, the education of priests and their role in pastoral care needs consideration. Christianity began its life as an urban religion. However, from the fifth century onward, the West became increasingly ruralized to the point that some cities were functionally deserted. As a result, and in addition to the church’s evangelization and construction projects, lay landowners constructed chapels and minor churches

⁸⁹ Macy, *Hidden History*, 27-29, 30, 33-41. Barrow, *Clergy*, 3. The “ordination” of the kings and queens of France continued in the practice of the *sacre*. The word does not translate into English well because this rite was never observed at the coronations of English monarchs.

⁹⁰ Macy, *Hidden History*, 26.

⁹¹ Barrow, *Clergy*, 36-39, 47. Barrow and Macy, however, disagree to the degree to which these orders were a progression or independent of each other. They do agree, however, that no expectation existed of progression through all the orders in one’s career and both acknowledge instances of priests not having been deacons and deacons ascending directly to the episcopate.

⁹² Barrow, *Clergy*, 42, 45.

on their lands, next to their households, and in villages under their control. Due to this and as the practice and desire for private masses increased, demand for capable priests skyrocketed, increasing their prestige.⁹³ By the end of the sixth century, the need for pastoral care became so great that it prompted St. Gregory the Great to write the *Liber regulae pastoralis* or Book of Pastoral Rule, which spread rapidly across the West and the East. As if to underline the plasticity of terminology, Gregory used several terms for “spiritual director,” including terms applied to priests like *sacerdos*. *Pastor* would consequently become a term more and more associated with parish priests.⁹⁴ Eventually, they were the ones expected to provide pastoral care, only further enmeshing themselves in the lives of their communities.⁹⁵

Clergy were also educated, a not trivial detail as public education dissolved in the convulsions of the fifth and sixth centuries after which time churches and monasteries began to fill the void.⁹⁶ Their education set them apart to such an extent that literacy was considered one of the three defining features of the clergy – on a par with ordination itself!⁹⁷ Many future priests began their education as child oblates to a monastery or episcopal household. Increasingly, the locus of education began to move to the growing number of local schools, cathedral schools, and *scholae cantorum* such that the practice of child oblation for education rapidly decreased in the

⁹³ Lay patronage of church construction would cause constant friction with bishops who did what they could to keep these institutions under ecclesial control. Barrow, *Clergy*, 43, 52, 316-320, 329-332; van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 165, 194; Innes, *Western Europe*, 293.

⁹⁴ Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press "Popular Patristics" Series, no. 34., (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 9-25.

⁹⁵ Matis, *Song of Songs*, 52-54. Barrow, *Clergy*, 112-113, 310, 316. As always, the situation in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland differed from the situation on the Continent. Not only did nucleated settlement occur later in all these places, but the heavy overlap of monastic and clerical communities and ministry meant that monastic foundations and houses – whether by clergy living there or ordained monks – remained the hubs of provision of education, pastoral care, and sacramental service for much longer. See Barrow, *Clergy*, 181, 183, 314.

⁹⁶ Barrow, *Clergy*, 177. In areas with no prior Roman urbanization or where cities had been abandoned or reduced to husks of their former selves, monastic foundations had to take on education for both themselves and the surrounding areas and retained a great deal more influence than in the former Roman heartlands.

⁹⁷ Barrow, *Clergy*, 170; see also, ch.2 (27-70).

tenth century and was stamped out by the twelfth.⁹⁸ The elementary curriculum remained remarkably stable across most of this time period: learning to read, memorizing the Psalter, learning to chant, and studying the classical liberal arts (the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic and the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy).⁹⁹ Priests also served as teachers, not only locally in training future priests or educating more well-to-do lay people as noted previously, but also as the first teachers and headmasters of the cathedral schools themselves.

The education of priests instantly made them a noticeable elite – albeit one so anchored to their altar that exercising any kind of political influence beyond their local sphere became much more challenging, especially as compared with archdeacons, for example. The limited geographic nature of their vocation and the continuance of relatively fragmented governance continued to inhibit the development of a cohesive identity of priesthood such that it did not exist by the beginning of the eighth century any more than it had at the end of fifth.¹⁰⁰ This changed during the reign of Charlemagne as the new emperor set about an ambitious project of secular and ecclesiastical reform and standardization across his immense realm.¹⁰¹ Priests came to prominence during the reform period because, courtesy of their fixedness in a circumscribed locality, they became key agents in the transmission and implementation of these reform efforts down at the grassroots level across the empire.¹⁰² This “parochialism” would not only increase priests’ importance in governance and administration (tasks more typically assumed by the

⁹⁸ Barrow, *Clergy*, 27, 47, 185-187, 194; van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 174-178.

⁹⁹ Barrow, *Clergy*, 217-220.

¹⁰⁰ It should be remembered as well that, despite the focus here on Latin Europe, West and East were still in (at least nominal) communion and that the same questions of priesthood would be circulating in the East, albeit under very different circumstances.

¹⁰¹ The influence of Charlemagne’s policies extended beyond the Empire itself by virtue of relationship between senior clergy in England (such as Oda of Canterbury) and to some extent Ireland and Spain (the latter mostly due to the fact that portions of northeast Hispania near the Pyrenees came under Carolingian control in the eighth century).

¹⁰² See, for instance, van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 209.

diaconate and the episcopate) but, as will be shown, their sacramental and theological preeminence.

As part of Charlemagne's reform, the most prominent Carolingian reformers and scholars – patronized from all areas of the empire – set about a project of intentionally promoting a common concept of priesthood among other aspects of their ecclesiastical correction. Bearing in mind all of the caveats of generalization and reality in this period, the increasingly clear articulation of a priestly ideal with the authority of the first powerful, stable, central government in almost four centuries marked a substantial turning point in the development of the priesthood, as the whole project would for a unique, self-identifying Latin Christianity.¹⁰³

Education – and the tasks of pastoral care, teaching, and preaching – became the fundamental components of this priestly identity and one of the foundations for its construction.¹⁰⁴ Terminology still remained fluid, but one word began to emerge to encapsulate both the group identity of the core court reformers as well as the priests more generally whose actions they wished to regulate and standardize: *doctor*.¹⁰⁵ One rather ironic medium for the elucidation of the identity and mission of the *doctores* was biblical exegesis of the highly erotic and God-less Song of Songs.¹⁰⁶ The Bridegroom (Christ) and the Bride (the Church) plus every other detail of the text spelled out, through interpretation, the ideals of the Carolingian church, particularly its unity (and one might add regularity) in diversity. Scripture, particularly this book, would serve as the backbone for a priestly ideal if not a nascent identity.

¹⁰³ Innes, *Western Europe*, 456-457.

¹⁰⁴ Barrow notes that education increasingly became the way for clergy to mark their life cycles, not ordination (*Clergy*, 65). See also, Matis, *Song of Songs*, 45-46, 49, 50-51. Barrow, *Clergy*, 225-226 also notes Bede's particular zeal for this task.

¹⁰⁵ Matis, *Song of Songs*, 42-56.

¹⁰⁶ See Matis, *Song of Songs* and Shuve, *Identity* on the breadth and depth of these efforts

2.4.3 *Sacerdos: Priesthood and Eucharist*

Place, education, and pastoral roles all greatly impacted the development and prominence of the priesthood, but the Eucharist – evolutions in its theology, intensification of lay eucharistic devotion, the priest’s role in celebrating the sacrament locally – would effect the greatest transformation of the priesthood in its history. The key factor was the eucharistic-centered devotion of the laity. It is hard to understate the intensity of eucharistic piety, fanned as it was by Cluny and its networks of monasteries. Such was the fervor of the average Christian that eucharistic devotion began to move outside of Mass.¹⁰⁷ Juliana of Liege’s quest for a feast solely for the elements of the Eucharist resulted in a successful popular pressure campaign on the papacy such that Pope Urban IV – under the advice of no less than St. Thomas Aquinas – proclaimed the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264.

Developments in Eucharistic theology, particularly an extreme realistic conception of the Real Presence, only intensified this piety.¹⁰⁸ Naturally, the presiders at the Eucharistic liturgy gained in popular esteem and importance. Outside of episcopal sees and political centers, bishops remained geographically distant and otherwise preoccupied with administrative and political duties. Deacons simply ceased to be a real presence on the local level, consolidated as they tended to be in cathedral communities. Priests, being the one order fairly firmly fixed in every community, inevitably filled in the liturgical void of busy bishops, taking on their sacramental and worship-related roles more completely. They alone remained as the regular communal presence with the power to celebrate and consecrate the Eucharist for the vast supermajority of Christians. The priesthood thus became inseparable from the mysteries of the Eucharist and the

¹⁰⁷ See Nathan Mitchell OSB, *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1982), 116-120 for an overview of the potential liturgical drivers of such piety.

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 73-80, 107, 136-140. Canon 1 of the Fourth Lateran Council officially defined the mechanics of transubstantiation and defined it as the church’s official teaching on the real presence.

priest a critical actor in lay piety. Unsurprisingly, “The tendency of the later [ordination] rites...led to greater emphasis on the sacerdotal function..., so much so that the other dimensions of the ministry (prophecy, governing, collegiality) would remain in the shadows.”¹⁰⁹ Some have argued, moreover, that perception of the holy if not divine nature of the sacrament resulted in a conscious effort by reformers to remove the cup completely from the laity, restricting it solely to clergy and altar ministers, and even to limit any physical contact the laity had with either element.¹¹⁰ This may overstate the case, particularly as an edict from the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) requiring all Christians to partake of the Eucharist at least once per year, and if only once, on Easter, indicates that the laity were more likely refusing to partake out of personal piety rather than being prevented from doing so.

One of the side-effects of this apotheosis of the presbyterium was the sacramental diminishment of the episcopate and its eventual “de-ordering”. In no way does this say they lost powers much less privileges or stopped officiating masses altogether – far from it. Rather, their energies became increasingly tied to administrative and juridical concerns, secular and ecclesial, especially starting in the fifth century when the bishops frequently filled the vacuum left in the dissolution of the Roman administrative apparatus. They advised and were patronized by rulers who, though they had prerogatives of appointment, more often yielded to the wishes of the current officeholders, fellow bishops, or local power brokers.¹¹¹ Increasingly, the office also produced many of the missionaries to non-Christian peoples on Rome’s frontier and then

¹⁰⁹ Puglisi, *Roman Catholic Rites*, 186.

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 86-96, esp. 86, 90-92.

¹¹¹ Innes, *Western Europe*, 278-279, 457, 465-466, 468. As central secular power grew stronger, it grew more independent and confident in exerting exclusive control over these appointments, touching off major controversies in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries especially. Bishops, archbishops, and the papacy fought back against these rulers with some degree of success: Henry II and John Lackland of England backed down (the latter, indeed, was bent to the will of Innocent III) and Emperor Henry IV was excommunicated by Gregory VII and walked to Canossa to seek forgiveness, forging a colloquialism still alive in parts of Europe today. Granted, on gaining absolution, he then invaded Italy and drove the Pope out, which demonstrates the unresolved nature of this controversy.

Aachen's: the Alemanni, Saxons, Britons, Irish, Scandinavians, and Slavs to name a few.¹¹²

Ordination rites from the Carolingian era show that bishops stopped being ordained into an *ordo* but consecrated into a *dignitas*; *sacerdos* almost exclusively referred to priests; and *offerre* (to offer [sacrifices]) moved to the fifth of seven roles while becoming the first role for priests.¹¹³

Yet, despite this very high sacramentalism, the “priest who presided at the Eucharist was understood to represent the whole church when he acted as the liturgical leader of the local church.”¹¹⁴ It would take until the thirteenth century for any concept of *in persona Christi*, of the priest as an independent actor, to develop much less grow into the theological position we recognize today.

2.5 The Gregorian Reform and Fourth Lateran

The expansion of educational opportunities culminating in the development of universities, starting in Bologna in 1088 and spreading by the thirteenth century into modern Portugal, France, England, and Spain (and soon thereafter into the modern Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, and Germany) increased priests' capability for movement and made priests an even more valuable commodity to local and regnal rulers and the burgeoning mercantile and trade classes.¹¹⁵ Yet what began with the language of teaching and example of the Carolingian reformers gestated into a conception the separateness and the superiority of the clergy to the laity. To some degree, education had already begun this process: priests spoke, read, and wrote in Latin while the vernacular languages had steadily changed such that Latin became

¹¹² Bede's example of St. Augustine of Canterbury comes first to mind, but he is not alone. Adalbert, bishop of Prague, Boniface, archbishop of Mainz, Patrick, “bishop” of Ireland, Willibrord, archbishop of Utrecht. Priests, deacons, monks, and others (especially Christian women married to non-Christian potentates) also engaged in mission and likely facilitated episcopal projects. See Wood, *Missionary Life*.

¹¹³ Puglisi, *Roman Catholic Rites*, 186-190.

¹¹⁴ Witt, *Icons*, 203.

¹¹⁵ Barrow, *Clergy*, 49, 192-194. Clergy in minor orders most frequently sought out these employment opportunities; however, as noted previously, clergy even into the thirteenth century could obtain income from non-ecclesial employment.

incomprehensible and distant – and this where the local languages were Latin to begin with.¹¹⁶ Yet, without a doubt, the campaign by first Carolingian and then Gregorian reformers to separate the clergy as a distinct class, and one eventually superior and distant from the laity was in part driven by increased attention to the Eucharist and parallel concern about the status (and purity) of the celebrant.¹¹⁷

Despite their campaigns, Carolingian reformers were actually less concerned with enforcing or promoting these distinctions-in-kind though Carolingian liturgical developments did show that some degree of distance was already forming.¹¹⁸ The monastically-inclined and frequently Augustinian Gregorian reformers of the late tenth and eleventh centuries, however, made this bifurcation the defining goal of their reform efforts as they endeavored to remake the clergy in their image.¹¹⁹ Their efforts to impose celibacy and separation failed to take root during the tenth and eleventh centuries while efforts to take over priests' functions such as provision of pastoral care failed miserably.¹²⁰ In spite of this, pressure in favor of the reforms grew until many of the reformers' demands became official church policy following the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).¹²¹ Despite if not because of monastic polemics against them and despite their opponents' ultimate victory, the secular priesthood emerged with a clearer and firmer identity defined against ascetics and layfolk alike.¹²²

The Eucharistic developments of the Early Middle Ages continued apace. Starting in the ninth century, the Eucharist “was becoming a rite performed by the clergy, as opposed to an

¹¹⁶ Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 90; Barrow, *Clergy*, 217.

¹¹⁷ Karras, *Unmarriages*, 116, 119

¹¹⁸ Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 86-90

¹¹⁹ Barrow, *Clergy*, 3-7, 116. Karras, *Unmarriages*, 116-117. Barrow further notes that Gregorian reformers also remade episcopal elections to exclude the laity, though in practice it was patronage and not the system as exists in The Episcopal Church today, which may also explain its targeting by the reformers (273).

¹²⁰ Barrow, *Clergy*, 108, 110-113.

¹²¹ Barrow, *Clergy*, 7, 138.

¹²² Barrow, *Clergy*, 114.

action celebrated by the entire community.”¹²³ Lay eucharistic piety not only augmented the already high status of the Eucharist, but also drove the redefinition of priestly identity with celebration of the sacraments, above all the Eucharist central to it. Developments in eucharistic theology and ideas from the feudal system and newly (re)discovered texts of Roman law only intensified this piety and its effects. It was not long before, in the hands of the Gregorian reformers, that these dynamics would be brought to bear on the theology of orders and ordination.¹²⁴

The concept of *ordo* changed in two ways: the *cursus honorum*, a term first appearing in 1063 and modeled off of the practice in ancient Rome, of deacon-priest-bishop to define the relationship of those orders and of the sacerdotal office was fixed; and the meaning of *ordo* shifted from a way of life to an administrative unit.¹²⁵ The definition of ordination profoundly changed, moving from a functional paradigm to an ontological one “dominated by reference to the Eucharist, by the power of consecrating it.” The ordinand was somehow changed, imbued with a special grace, a personally possessed, indelible power rather than a particular function in a particular place.¹²⁶ These changes were ratified in the Third and Fourth Lateran Councils (1179 and 1215, respectively) and severed the connection between priestly identity and a particular place. Priests were now priests for the whole church and they began to absorb all of the roles, however vaguely sacramental, to their near exclusive use. The now-celibate priesthood was now definitional sacramental. The implications of these changes are worth citing at length:

The central role of the priest as administrator of the sacrament became essential to ordination only with its redefinition. ... The most important function reserved to the priest ... was the power to celebrate the Mass.

¹²³ Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 87-88.

¹²⁴ Notably, Gregory VII himself as well as some prominent reformers (like Peter Damian) continued to use ordination in the then-traditional sense (see Macy, *Hidden History*, 31).

¹²⁵ Macy, *Hidden History*, 25, 32.

¹²⁶ Macy, *Hidden History*, 29-33.

The new exclusionary definition of ordination was specifically defined by the function of the priest...to preside at the Eucharist. The role of the priest as special mediator of God's grace rested most importantly on his ability to confect the presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist. Just as important, therefore, as the redefinition of ordination in accomplishing a definitive change in the understanding of Christian ministry would be the theological teaching that only a properly ordained priest could make the risen Christ present in the Eucharist.¹²⁷

The importance of the ultimate success of the Gregorian Reform not only transformed the priesthood into the shape, which for better or for worse, we recognize. "As a result of the Gregorian Reform, from the twelfth century onwards there [was] an increasing emphasis on human and historical activities, on secondary causality, and on hierarchical juridical power in the Church."¹²⁸ Congar further connected this transfer of focus with a "weakening of the connection between Scripture and Tradition[that] had made it possible to envisage a potential rivalry between the two" – such a rivalry became reality and ultimately erupted during the Reformation in the sixteenth century.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Macy, *Hidden History*, 41-42.

¹²⁸ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 231. Zizioulas also saw in the emphasis on juridical meaning as damaging, see Zizioulas, *Being*, 20, 163-164.

¹²⁹ Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*, 232-233.

Chapter 3: Reason

These discussions of the Scriptural basis and historical development of Christian priesthood show that opposition to lay presidency rests on far shakier Scriptural grounds and far greater historical contingency than is normally recognized. By the twelfth century, Christian priesthood had broken with its Scriptural past. Yet these discussions have also clarified an important issue: the conflation of the hieratic and the presbyteral priesthoods, *being* a priest ontologically and *functioning* as a priest. Before any talk of polity, ecumenism, or pastoral response, we need to address the foundational question of ontology and its relationships with and the relationship between the Church, the sacraments, and ordination.¹³⁰

3.1 The Question of Being: The Holy Spirit and the Church

Being begins with God the three-in-one whether more emphasis is placed on the account of creation in Genesis 1-2 or John 1. Although this paper does not possess the room here to fully expound the nature of the Trinity much less the differences in Eastern and Western theologies of the nature of God's being and personhood, it suffices to say that being and communion, existence and relationship, are intimately bound in the nature of God and thus of creation.¹³¹ Nothing is without the will of God.¹³² John Zizioulas' work *Being as Communion* addresses several of the fundamental relationships critical to these questions of ontology and ecclesiology. He says of the eucharist, "When it is understood in its correct and primitive sense...the eucharist is first of all an assembly (*synaxis*), a community, a network of relations, in which man "subsists" in a manner different from the biological as a member of a body which transcends

¹³⁰ Zizioulas notes that this issue of ontology vs. function is an issue absent from Orthodox Christianity. Zizioulas, *Being*, 163 n.78.

¹³¹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 18; Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 250.

¹³² Not just that the Will of God is supreme, but God's freedom by God's being is absolutely free. Zizioulas, *Being*, 17-19.

every exclusiveness of a biological or social kind.”¹³³ He further states that “the eucharist was not the act of a pre-existing Church; it was an event *constitutive* of the being of the Church, enabling the Church to *be*. The eucharist *constituted* the Church’s being.”¹³⁴ It “is... unthinkable ...without an event of *communion*.”¹³⁵ However, Zizioulas adds to this the critical place in this existence of the Holy Spirit in the Church’s reality. The “Body of Christ, both in the Christological (incarnational) and in the ecclesiological sense, became a historical reality *through the Holy Spirit*”; the catholicity of her reality “*depends constantly* upon the Holy Spirit.”¹³⁶ Zizioulas’ pneumatological emphasis balances a noticeable lack of the same in current Eastern and Western ecclesiology, the latter of which has especially emphasized the Son, and not illogically the eucharist and priesthood with it, to the exclusion of all else. This christological emphasis has obscured the fact that Being is fundamentally pneumatological. We cannot speak of ontology of or in the Church without the Holy Spirit.

Yet, he seems to have stopped short of taking the full sacramental implications of this pneumatological focus to their logical conclusion. Though noting that Christ institutes both eucharist and baptism, he nonetheless places eucharist before baptism in his ecclesiology, most prominently in naming the Church the “eucharistic community”¹³⁷ as opposed to the “baptized community,” which arguably is more accurate in light of pneumatology. And yet, somewhat contradictorily, he states that “the demand of the person for absolute freedom involves a ‘new birth,’ a birth ‘from on high,’ a *baptism*”; in “hypostasizing” the person, baptism and not eucharist brings us into true communion with God¹³⁸ and thus is truly constitutive of the

¹³³ Zizioulas, *Being*, 60, see also 18-21.

¹³⁴ Zizioulas, *Being*, 21, see also 141, 161.

¹³⁵ Zizioulas, *Being*, 22.

¹³⁶ Zizioulas, *Being*, 160-161.

¹³⁷ Zizioulas, *Being*, 47-65, 158-169.

¹³⁸ Zizioulas, *Being*, 18-19.

Church.¹³⁹ If “[the Church] is catholic first of all because she is the Body of Christ,” then there is no fellowship with, no communion with, no *being* that Body without baptism.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, he does not fundamentally question holy orders, indeed, he incorporates the person of the bishop into his theology. If history has shown us anything, eucharistic theology constituted orders almost as much as the apostolic community.

Scripture and Tradition further testify that baptism in the Holy Spirit rather than eucharist is the *esse* of the being of the Church. In Jesus’ own ministry, font – or river in his case – preceded table – the Last Supper.¹⁴¹ Hebrews defines “instruction about baptisms” as one of the basic teachings about Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). Scripture testifies that without baptism, the Church does not exist, meaning no other sacrament, including the Eucharist, can exist. In the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), Jesus commands the apostles to baptize all nations, indicating its primacy in constituting the Church. The clearest testimony to baptism being both fundamental to Christian discipleship *and* an explicit ontological change comes in John’s Gospel. When Nicodemus asks Jesus “Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born? Jesus answer[s], ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit’” (Jn. 3:4-6). Notably, even the Aaronite high priesthood was inaugurated first with ritual purification by washing in water, not sacrifices (Lev. 8:6).

Even in the books of Luke, whose theology of the breaking of the bread as seen in the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-15) is arguably higher than the rest of the Gospels and whose

¹³⁹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 139: “Pneumatology must be made *constitutive* of Christology and ecclesiology, i.e. condition the very being of Christ and the Church.” (emphasis original)

¹⁴⁰ Zizioulas, *Being*, 158.

¹⁴¹ Intriguingly, Scripture is silent on the question of when the Apostles themselves were baptized. Two possible places may indicate this event. In John 20:19-23, Jesus appears to the apostles and breathes the Spirit onto them. Also, the apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-36) in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise (Acts 1:5, 8).

description of the key actions of the apostolic Church included the breaking of the bread with the prayers,¹⁴² baptism in the Holy Spirit remains the constitutive and propulsive force. In fact, Jesus as a character only appears as a character in the Book of Acts three times¹⁴³ while the Holy Spirit dominates the unfolding of the Church's history, bringing forth the charisms of the apostolic Church¹⁴⁴ and the conversion of Samaritans and Gentiles to the ends of the earth¹⁴⁵.

Tradition holds likewise. Baptism in the Early Church was the rite of initiation¹⁴⁶, the action which enabled the newly baptized to partake in all other sacramental actions of the Church.¹⁴⁷ Of all the charisms and sacraments of the church, however defined and debated, only baptism is common to all, non-repeatable, and permanent.¹⁴⁸ As noted, baptism, laying on of hands, and Eucharist occurred simultaneously and in that order. The latter two were not done without the former. Innocent III, moreover, in responding to a pastoral question from Bishop Uggo of Ferrara regarding marriage after one of the partners "passed over into heresy," states that, "Between believers...a true and ratified marriage exists, because the sacrament of faith [baptism] once conferred is never lost, and indeed it makes the sacrament of marriage ratified so that it [the marriage itself] endures in the spouses as long as [the baptism] endures."¹⁴⁹ In other

¹⁴² See, e.g., Acts 2:42.

¹⁴³ Acts 1, 7, and 9.

¹⁴⁴ For example, at Pentecost in Acts 2 and Acts 19:1-7 when Paul invokes the Holy Spirit to "complete" the baptisms of some Ephesians.

¹⁴⁵ Acts 8:4-40, 10-28.

¹⁴⁶ It was not the sole rite. In Johannine communities, the *pedilavium* or foot-washing served this role.

¹⁴⁷ The Articles of Religion of The Episcopal Church (1801), XXVII says as much: *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, 873.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance ELCA, *The Use of the Means of Grace*, 1, 16, and 18. The Catechism of The Episcopal Church notes Eucharist's "continual" nature and the necessity of Baptism and Eucharist: *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, 859-860. The primacy of baptism, to be clear, does not diminish the necessity of Eucharist or its nature as a divine gift of grace. It merely clarifies the relationship of the two together and to the ontology of the Church.

¹⁴⁹ Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, rev. by Helmut Hoping, ed. by Peter Hünermann, Robert L. Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash, 43rd ed., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 251 (at 769).

words, baptism's indelibility anchors the force of the other sacraments.¹⁵⁰ So important is baptism to the constitution of the Church that even in the Middle Ages – the height of a hierarchical and supreme ordained priesthood – the Roman church authorized lay baptism in extreme circumstances when a priest was not available.¹⁵¹ Considering that the sacrament of baptism is not *primus inter pares* but the foundation of the other sacraments, including the no less important dominical sacrament of eucharist, a real question arises of how the constitutive sacrament of the Church can be performed to full – and permanent – efficacy by the laity, yet the eucharist remains bounded out.

3.2 Baptism, Ministry, and Lay Presidency

The cause of this conundrum – and the internal incoherence of the theologies of ministry and of orders in contemporary Anglicanism – comes from an underestimation of baptism with the aforementioned linguistic conflation of hieratic/ontological and presbyteral/functional priesthood. This conflation resulted from the shifts in Eucharistic theology from metaphorical sacrifices of the primitive churches to a literal, carnal sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, which occurred over the course of the Middle Ages. The presbyter-priest who fulfilled a needed function in the burgeoning communities¹⁵² soon became an ancient hiericus-priest, a cultic intercessor between the faithful and God whose ordination changed their being, conferred special powers, and consequently elevated them and the priesthood above and distanced them from the

¹⁵⁰ Innocent II wrote a more stunning example of this in his letter *Apostolicam sedem* to the Bishop of Cremona that an unbaptized priest – something shocking in itself – had been freed from original sin due to invisible administration, which meant that all of the sacraments performed by the presbyter were valid. Denzinger, *Compendium*, 243 (at 741).

¹⁵¹ The Episcopal Church and Anglican tradition have maintained this as well. Ironically, the high infant and maternal mortality rates of the Middle Ages resulted in the vast majority of baptisms being done *quam primum* – immediately after birth by midwives. That women performed the majority of baptisms in the Roman church in itself merits notice given the andro-centric presbyteral arguments held by the Roman magisterium today.

¹⁵² As Newman noted, “The moment, indeed, a society is formed, by the very fact of its formation, it calls forth a government”, *Development of Doctrine*, 83 (I.2.8).

community of the faithful. *Sacerdos* – the ancient Latin word indicating the ancient temple officer who slaughtered the sacrifice – became the preeminent term for priest.¹⁵³ This sacralization of the functions of the priestly office, more specifically the Eucharistic function, ultimately resulted in the collapse and conflation of these two aspects of priesthood. One must be sympathetic on this point to our forebearers: distinguishing being and function in the created world is extremely difficult. It is embedded in English and many other languages such that it would be an odd thing indeed to call someone a loan officer, a teacher, or an astronaut if they did not lend, teach, or travel in space at all. Priesthood, however, should not be reduced to its functions.

When the tension and pressure built up by the changes in the Roman church during the Gregorian Reform period, as Congar noted, finally exploded in the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers almost immediately took aim at this sacral ministry and the sacrificial Eucharist. Martin Luther, in his *Address to the Christian Nobility* in 1520, described the body of faithful Christians as one *Stand*, one walk of life. Here he reaffirmed the teaching of the primitive churches and of Scripture that through baptism, there was one Body of Christ, not two estates of them.¹⁵⁴ Such was the repudiation of the sacrificial language that Lutherans today still do not use it.¹⁵⁵ John Calvin, influenced by Luther as well as his own reading of the Pastoral Epistles, not only biting rejected this sacerdotal priesthood¹⁵⁶, but reconfigured the polity of his church into

¹⁵³ Puglisi, *Roman Catholic Rites*, 186.

¹⁵⁴ Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation & Today*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2008), 4-7.

¹⁵⁵ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 158.

¹⁵⁶ See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, trans. Elsie Anne McKee, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2009), Book 13, 597-613. Of particular note: "...the priests take a cup with the paten and the host, as a sign that they have power to offer sacrifices of reconciliation to God. Their hands are anointed to make it known that they have power to consecrate. These writers have no basis in God's word for all these things, so they could not more wickedly corrupt its order and constitutions", 602.

the presbyterian polity with a purely functional ministry recognizable among Reformed tradition churches to this day.

In England, once Edward VI ascended the throne and ushered in the English Reformation, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer also shifted the focus of the priesthood in the ordination rites of the 1549 and 1552 prayer books from this sacrificial bent to the doctrinal works of the priesthood, viz. reading, teaching, and preaching of Scripture.¹⁵⁷ Though the ordination happened in the context of a communion service – in which, in a break from then current Roman practice, the entire congregation was to partake – at no point in the examination, including its very hortatory preamble, is the Eucharist mentioned explicitly; the closest reference is the oblique ministering of sacraments in the question, but even this is second to “mynister the doctryne”.¹⁵⁸

No less an Anglican luminary as Richard Hooker understood the confusion of the ideas of priesthood and noted, “in truth the word *Presbyter* is more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable than *Priest* with the drift of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁹ Joseph Mede also noted this language, leery of any association with *sacerdos*, but found “priest” acceptable since the etymology of the English word derived from presbyter.¹⁶⁰ Robert Moberly, writing three centuries later amidst a dispute with the papacy over the validity of Anglican Orders, also noted both a dual sense of priest and priesthood and a redefinition in the Reformation. On the former, he states, “[It] is part of the inveterate tendency, particularly of the Western mind, to treat these questions, and to answer them, in...too external and...material a fashion; to treat them...so that

¹⁵⁷ Ordination rites were originally not provided for in the 1549 Prayer Book and were only added in 1550. The 1552 and 1559 Prayer Books, with some minor emendations, retained the language of the 1550 addendum.

¹⁵⁸ http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1549/Priests_1549.htm. The editors have merged the rites of the 1549, 1552, and 1559 prayer books with notes of the differences due to the extreme similarities between the three.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Elmer More and F. L. Cross, eds., *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2008), 246.

¹⁶⁰ More and Cross, *Anglicanism*, 247.

their outward and material meaning no longer represents...a significance spiritual and infinite.”¹⁶¹ On the latter, he notes that priesthood “however truly it might mean Eucharistic offering, was no longer defined exclusively by Eucharistic offering.”¹⁶²

Though Zizioulas laments the whole dilemma of ontological and functional concepts of ordained ministry¹⁶³, these Reformation currents re-opened the vault of tradition and hermeneutics to understand the priesthood. Many of the reformers relied on 1 Peter 2:9 – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” – for their polemics. Hebrews played a role as well and for reasons noted. Christ’s perfect sacrifice made him the great high priest, like Melchizedek, an eternal high priest with an eternal high priesthood, thereby succeeding the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites. As Christians are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, the paschal mystery and perfect sacrifice, we are baptized into the Body of Christ and his priesthood, making all the baptized priests worthy to step into the very throne room of God.¹⁶⁴ The hieratic priesthood – the Being of priesthood – is thus Christ’s high priesthood, which by virtue of and through baptism and baptism alone, all the faithful are a priesthood.¹⁶⁵ Even leaning on a heavily sacrificial Eucharistic theology to discount this does not change the simple fact that baptism unifies us in the body of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, the preeminent sacrificial officer whose ministry encompasses all ministry.¹⁶⁶

The upshots of this are legion. For one, this recognizes and is consonant with the constitutive force of baptism for the Church and the theology of baptism more generally. Just as

¹⁶¹ Robert Campbell Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood: Chapters (Preliminary to a Study of the Ordinal) on the Rationale of Ministry and the Meaning of Christian Priesthood*, [Facsimile reprint of the 2nd ed., new impression], ed. Hardpress Classics Series, (Miami, Fla.: HardPress Books, 2012), 306-307.

¹⁶² Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, 308.

¹⁶³ Zizioulas, *Being*, 164-165.

¹⁶⁴ Heb 9:24, Heb. 10, 12.

¹⁶⁵ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, 256-257.

¹⁶⁶ Zizioulas, *Being*, 210n2-3, 163; 1 Corinthians 1.

there is no gradation of birth, so there is no gradation of baptism, and thus no gradation of hieratic priesthood. As a result, this hieratic baptismal priesthood confers full, perfect, and complete justification and spiritual power for the baptized to exercise all aspects of presbyteral ministry. It belongs by faith and in faith to all Christians. Secondly, it allows for a certain malleability in the priestly office – the presbyteral priesthood – to adapt to local needs and contexts, a key concern in contemporary understandings of missiology.¹⁶⁷ Third, this malleability also reconciles the theology of orders/priesthood with the theology of the ministry of all the baptized, harmonizing the two countercurrents of the Liturgical Reform Movement. Fourth, if the functions of the priesthood and other orders can be changed as the church sees fit, this should open avenues for ecumenical discussion or even remove stumbling blocks in discussion as far as polity is concerned. The church can take whatever shape, whatever structures it seems in its discernment to be meet, right, and proper.

Finally, it follows naturally that these functions can be redistributed to the baptized laity.¹⁶⁸ Not only does this provide validation for the practices of licensed ministers in the Episcopal Church and their analogues in other denominations, it provides the justification for lay presidency at the Eucharist. A baptized and believing Christian can effectuate a legitimate sacrament of any kind, provided that the work of the Holy Spirit is acknowledged – and more appropriately invoked – and that the performance of the sacramental office be done in public. This public nature reminds us that the true celebrant of the Eucharist and any sacrament is Jesus Christ, whose body is the Church, the assembled congregation of the faithful, who in worship

¹⁶⁷ Among others, the decree *Ad gentes* of Vatican II (Dec. 7, 1965) and the Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (1997).

¹⁶⁸ By these functions, I mean those identified with ordained ministry: preaching, catechizing/teaching, leading worship, presiding at the Eucharist, providing pastoral care, serving in ministry within and beyond the church, among others.

perform the sacrament collectively.¹⁶⁹ Even better, this can be done without a massive overhaul of the sacramental theology of the church.

3.3 What Comes Next? The Lay Presider and Ordination Reconsidered

This thesis has endeavored to demolish arguments against lay presidency through the lens of Anglican theological reflection. The church, morally, must follow its own theologies to their conclusion and take action to open its full sacramental life to the so-called laity. That said, the church exercises in its communion of the faithful the full discretion on how it may provide for it, which currently is through an act of the General Convention. Truly, it is only juridicalism wrapped in theology, the great rupture of the twelfth century living today, that prevents this.¹⁷⁰ Nothing in the ontology of the Church does. Living tradition, drawing on the repository of wisdom from the lived experience of the faith in conversation with Scripture, along with the fluidity of polity as discussed grant that the church in communion can determine the processes, procedures, restrictions, requirements, and such other details at it sees fit.¹⁷¹

Perhaps one of the more straightforward proposals for implementing a lay eucharistic presider/celebrant would be by the addition of such into the list of licensed ministries established by General Convention in Canon III.4. The hieratic priesthood gives all believers the power, justification, and even the capacity to celebrate; it does not grant authorization to do so or establish a “right” to do so. Even Acts and the Pastoral Epistles emphasize the community’s lifting up of those to fill roles as leaders; leadership does not derive from within oneself. A presider presides as both part of and as a representative of the community, and certainly for

¹⁶⁹ Witt, *Icons*, 200.

¹⁷⁰ See Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, 258 who advances a juridical argument in such a way, also 64-98. Notwithstanding that problem, his work has much to recommend it, particularly in its defense of the laity.

¹⁷¹ For example, the ELCA does provide an ad extremis option for consecration of the Eucharist, but the rules and requirements around it are exceedingly strenuous – even more so than The Episcopal Church’s requirements for ordained deacons. See *Response of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee to the Request of the Seventy-Seventh General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, Jan. 9, 2014, lines 70-149.

Anglicans, this community extends beyond the immediate worshipping community to the larger communion of the church. This means that not only must the congregation lift up or accept the specific presider, but that this presider must be in communion with the bishop, the representative – both within and beyond the church – of the church in community. Like the other licensed ministries, training must be provided. While I would not advocate such stringent training requirements as the ELCA has, any training must include a sufficient basis in liturgical history, theology, and practice that the presider can not only know *how*, but know *why*. Just as baptism is witness and witness teaching, so is ministry by necessity teaching, and a teacher should be prepared to answer questions as they arise. Additionally, for theological consonance, a provision must be made for *ad extremis* Eucharistic celebration by any baptized Christian, otherwise we risk repeating the problem functionally with orders as exists today. Tradition has provided wisdom on *ad extremis* baptism and the BCP has guidelines to follow. These can be readapted for the celebration of the Eucharist.

One further issue must be addressed. If the full being of Christian priesthood, of the hieratic priesthood, is realized in baptism into the paschal mystery and the eschatological Body of Christ, the Church, does this mean that ordained ministry as we know it is purely functional? To quote the apostle Paul, “by no means!” To say this conflates anew the presbyteral and hieratic priesthood, this time to the opposite extreme of denuding the functions of priesthood of their grace in the Spirit. Yet, if ordained ministry has any kind of existence such that one can *be* a priest in a way other than the hieratic priesthood of baptism in Christ, what is it? Corollary to this question are questions such as: 1) If a lay person is lifted up by a community and performs all the functions of the priestly office, are they a priest? 2) If a priest retires or is “bivocational,” are they still a priest? 3) What do we do with calls to ministry?

I have noted that the key error came not in noticing the Spirit-filled graces embodied in those functions, but in sacralizing the functions of priesthood – especially the celebration of the Eucharist – such that they became separated from and wrongly equated with the nature of the ontological change of baptism. This is what must be avoided. To understand what ordained ministry means in the context of the churches today requires exploring the mechanics of divine call. Noting especially the analysis of Leviticus and Hebrews at the beginning of this thesis, Scripture makes clear that the LORD calls all priesthoods into being, even the high priesthood of the Son by which Christian priesthood has its being. Yet, this truth must not obscure another truth, namely, the diversity of the lived experience of faith, especially the diversity of gifts. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, “strive to excel in [spiritual gifts] for building up the church.”¹⁷²

Ordained ministry is a charism¹⁷³, a specialized gift of the Spirit. All such gifts “are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”¹⁷⁴ Mercifully, Paul continues, explaining the connection to baptism: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.”¹⁷⁵ Thus as in Congar’s Time of the Church and even in the Trinity, unity exists in diversity. The full freedom of God’s will and free action of the Spirit is likewise affirmed. Moberly was right to say, “[The ordained’s] personal relation to the priestliness of the Church is something which has been conferred on him once for all, and which dominates everything that he does, or is. It does not

¹⁷² 1 Corinthians 14:12

¹⁷³ On this, Zizioulas and I agree. However, we part company on the interpretation of the priesthood of all believers. See Zizioulas, *Being*, 215-222.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 12: 11-12. See also 1 Corinthians 12:4-10 and Romans 12:6-8.

¹⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:13.

cease when he leaves church.”¹⁷⁶ What he underappreciated was that the sacramental character of ordination, the grace given therein, derives from baptism with any transformation in the ordained remaining wholly, ontologically separate from the functions performed or authorities exercised. Ordination bestows no special or unique powers. It has no function fundamentally its own. It is not indelible¹⁷⁷ and, if our liturgies speak our true beliefs, it is repeatable as one moves through the orders as the church has received them. It does not constitute a “third priesthood,” as it were. The grace of divine call signified in ordination, however, changes the fundamental relationship of the ordained with their community and their place in a way merely performing the functions does not. The layperson who exercises every licensed ministry remains purely functional and local.

Critical to ordination as noted severally herein is the centrality of the community, the *ekklesia*, the Church. Divine gifts and discernment of divine calls occur in community and in relationship to community.¹⁷⁸ Our principal call was the voice of our Shepherd and that call is only answerable in baptism, the re-birth and becoming anew, inside of and into a communion and a community. Our ordination rites further attest to this communality. Anglicanism has no history of private ordination; the first parts of the liturgy are the presentation of the candidate, their examination by the bishop representing the church, and people affirming both their canonical and moral fitness for ordination.¹⁷⁹ The fundamental change signified in ordination is

¹⁷⁶ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, 260.

¹⁷⁷ One can refuse the priesthood, renounce the priesthood, or by heinous sin, especially against the Holy Spirit, even lose it. The author of Hebrews was no less explicit in interpreting Psalm 110 that God planned a replacement of the Aaronite priesthood and, in the story of Eli, we explicitly hear God’s removal of priestly office from and subsequent annihilation of Eli’s sons (1 Samuel 2:22-3:19).

¹⁷⁸ See, e.g., Zizioulas, *Being*, 165, 218.

¹⁷⁹ Paul Victor Marshall, *Prayer Book Parallels: The Public Services of the Church Arranged for Comparative Study*, Anglican Liturgy in America, 2 vols., vol. 1, (New York: Church Hymnal Corp, 1989), 598-611. The structures remain the same from 1662 to 1928, which themselves show markedly few changes from the 1550 addendum. The 1979 BCP shortens the forms of some questions and performs the oath of conformity at the presentation. The service actually accentuates the role of the laity as it requires both a lay and a clergy presenter and

that the Spirit has activated a grace meant for the larger community of the church and thus unmoored the ordained from place and time. As long as the grace remains activated, they express it at all times and in all places regardless of what they are doing. Such a divine call must be discerned and validated in the context of that larger church beyond the local congregation; it must be celebrated and affirmed by the larger church, which we do through the person of the bishop as the representative to the local church of the larger church. Ordination, then, is not an ontological change; it is a communal embrace of a movement of the Holy Spirit.

as it requests laypeople read the lessons. Despite emphasizing the sacramental, it nonetheless removes some of “magic hands” language and action around the laying on of episcopal hands (see 616-617).

Conclusion

The Episcopal Church has reclaimed for itself the traditions both of the importance of the Eucharist and of the ministry of all the baptized of the Early Church. However, the development of the institutional church over the ensuing centuries transformed the context and complexity of the ideas, language, and practices surrounding sacrament, orders, ministry, and baptism. The priesthood of the Pastoral Epistles is not the priesthood of the contemporary church. The result for The Episcopal Church today has been an internal dissonance in theology, physical and mental exhaustion of its clergy, and a stratification of congregations based on their capacities to find and support a priest to perform the recovered devotional heart of their liturgy and communal life.

The church has responded in many amazing ways to the pastoral, formational, and spiritual needs of its congregants, but in its insistence on the necessity of priests for the two necessary sacramental rites – baptism and Eucharist, the latter of which has no *ad extremis* option – it has continued in the mistaken conflation of the two types of priesthood found in Scripture: the hieratic/ontological priesthood and the presbyteral/functional priesthood. In separating these two aspects of Christian priesthood, we find that the *esse*, the being of priesthood, rests in the nature of Christ and, by the Holy Spirit in baptism, belongs to all Christians. This priesthood grants all justification for exercise of the presbyteral – functional – ministry by all the baptized, though the form of the exercise of that ministry remains the prerogative of the church as the assembly gathered in communion and voiced in its polity to determine. In baptism, then, it can be seen that no theological or ontological obstacle exists for lay celebration of the Eucharist.

That said, ordination can still be said to confer a certain Spirit-given grace – not as an ontological category, not as something that separates the ordained from the whole body of the

Church, but as a gift of the Spirit. Christian priesthood exists in both being and function and, as such, the Church needs leaders who can step into both. The Church, likewise, needs the laity to understand and embrace their full equality of ministry, the priestly ministry of Christ. It is my hope that the Episcopal Church and larger world Anglicanism will be moved by the Spirit to embrace lay presidency, whatever form it deems wisest to establish. In this way could we share more fully in the apostles' ministry, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

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