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Up to now I have not made a distinction, if there is any, between these terms: renewal, revival, spiritual awakening. From a historical perspective it is difficult to categorize the movement of God in the life of the church as renewal or revival or religious awakening. I believe they are all the sovereign work of God and the purpose is to glorify him and extend the kingdom of God on earth. These different terms can be used synonymously.

However Robert L. Roxburgh has given a helpful statement to enable us to understand more of this subject which I quote.

Renewal, like the word love, is difficult to define and open to multiple interpretations. The Bible uses the term for both the initial Christian experience and for the subsequent reinvigorating of one's walk with God. The word has been used culturally and historically, along with synonymous terms such as 'Reformation', 'Renaissance', 'Revival', 'Restoration' and 'Awakening', to explain fresh movements of God's Spirit upon his people. Some have seen these other terms as reflecting different aspects of Renewal. We can generally state that Renewal expresses the revitalizing work of God's Spirit in our generation upon individuals and churches. We must also specifically state that such a renewal affects the inward spiritual life with power and signs as on the Day of Pentecost, and affects also the outward corporate nature of worship, church structures, outreach and lifestyle as described in the rest of the Book of Acts.

Renewal is a dynamic rather than a static experience. That is to say that while the initial 'entering in' (some call this the baptism or the fullness of the Spirit) may be a crisis experience, such a renewal, according to [Ephesians 5:18](#), needs to be constantly renewed itself. Renewal is, therefore, a gateway not a goal. Entering through the gate, individuals and churches grow in their awareness of all the dimensions of God's power at work in his kingdom.

As we have seen in the history of the church, there is need for a continuous process of renewal to keep the church alive, dynamic and mission effective. We have seen in the history of revival that God has given seasons of refreshment and revitalization of the church, all through the past 2000 years of church history. We can expect God will pour forth his mighty power on the church as we move towards the end of this century and into the third millenium. The motivation for Christians all over the world to be revived and renewed, is to enable us to fulfil the goal of evangelization of the whole world, and to plant a viable church in every unreached people group. The church is renewed for mission.

Canon James Wong is an Anglican pastor in Singapore and member of the Executive Committee of the Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore.

The Involvement of the Laity in the Ministry of the Church

Jey J Kanagaraj

In a paper presented at a Pastor's Fellowship in Pune, India, Dr Kanagaraj outlined the calling and ministry of lay leaders in the church. Being a theologian is not restricted to members of the ordained clergy nor to teachers in theological schools! Some of the most

creative and prophetic theologians today are lay men and women, in part because these are the people who are involved in the total ministries of the church in the world.
Editor

The apostle Paul said that the purpose of Christ's gifts given to the church is 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ' ([Eph. 4:11-12](#)). This means, as D. A. Thangasamy puts it, that full-time ministers have a special function, namely to help the whole church to become equipped and make it fit for the task of taking the message of the gospel of love and reconciliation to the world through service.¹ But today we do not see the whole church being involved in Christian programmes. It is often assumed that church work is the work of the pastors and of other paid full-time ministers. This causes the majority of the church members to remain mere inactive spectators; is the Christian task merely the task of a handful of people in the church? If we say 'No', how then can we help the lay people to become involved in church programmes? What are the areas in which laity participation is needed today? Whom do we call 'laity' or 'lay people'? These are some of the concerns of this paper.

WHAT IS LAITY?

The word 'lay' comes from the Greek word *laikos*, but this word never occurs in the Bible. However, the word *laos*, of which *laikos* is the adjective, frequently appears in the Bible. *Laos* means 'people' and it is often used in the Bible in contrast to the gentiles. Therefore it refers to the people of God, distinct from the gentiles. They are the people chosen by God to fulfil his purpose in the world in contrast to the peoples who were not consecrated. According to [1 Peter 2:9-10](#), the priestly functions of the OT are carried over to the people of God as a whole. The word 'cleric' and 'clerk' come from the Greek *klêros*, which primarily means 'lot' and then 'portion' or 'heritage'. In [1 Peter 5:3](#) the word in the plural means the community allotted to each presbyter. This shows that the term clergy refers to an office, a function, and not a state of life. The clergy are allotted a special portion of work from among the whole people of God. The clerical condition is mainly defined by the service of the altar and the religious service of the people. The clergy enter into this service by ordination. The first use of the word 'layman' as opposed to 'priest' is found in the letter of Clement of Rome to Corinthians. Later on the distinction became clear. However, in the NT there appears no such distinction.

The church is called to be the 'salt' and 'light' of the world. If this call is to be fulfilled, it is necessary that the lay people should be motivated and trained to involve themselves in Christian ministry, because it is only by the laity that the church can reach the whole society through its daily occupations and secular living. They are the bridge between the church and the world to which we have an obligation to minister. The church is a corporate community in which all, not just the clergy, have a ministry. This of course includes women, youths, and children. The corporate nature of the church's life and ministry is clearly brought out by Paul in his image of the church as the body of Christ. God has appointed in the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, and speakers of various kinds of tongues ([1 Cor. 12:27-28](#); [Eph. 4:11-13](#)). There are diverse functions, but we all share one life, the life of Jesus Christ through his Spirit. Therefore all members, irrespective of sex and age, are important and necessary for the body of Christ to function. Both clergy and laity should plan and work together to communicate effectively the love of God to contemporary

¹ D. A. Thangasamy, *Towards Involvement: The Theory and Practice of Laity Education* (CLS-ISPCCK-LPH, 1972), p. xi.

society.

Biblical Foundation for Lay Involvement in Ministry

The laity have been God's instruments from the early time in Israel's history. Both Moses and Joshua were heavily dependent on the elders of Israel in their tasks. The authority of Moses to judge people was delegated to the able men chosen by him out of all Israel ([Ex. 18:24-26](#)) and similarly some of the spirit, which was upon Moses, was put by God upon seventy men to be the officers of the people so that they might share the burden with Moses ([Num. 11:16-25](#)). The seventy elders of Israel went up with Moses, Aaron and the priests to Mt. Sinai where they saw God ([Ex. 24:9-11](#)). The elders of Israel went up against Ai along with Joshua ([Josh. 8:10](#)). Without the support of the lay people the leaders could not have discharged their responsibilities successfully. God often spoke through lay prophets in the Old Testament. For example, Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, but God chose him to be his instrument to declare his message not as a priest, but as a simple man in the market place ([Amos 7:14](#)). Elijah and Elisha were peasants and God called them to be his ambassadors before kings and ordinary people ([1 Kgs. 17ff.](#); cf. [Jam. 5:17-18](#)). Even in a male dominated world God used women like Ruth and Esther as his messengers. In the New Testament we have evidence of women like Lydia, a seller of purple goods, and Priscilla, a tent-maker, who were chosen by God to be partners in proclaiming the gospel ([Acts 16:14, 40; 18: 2, 3; Rom. 16:4-5](#)). Paul's journeys and mission were much dependent on lay persons who took care of the churches he established (e.g. [Acts. 14:23; 20:17ff.](#)). Thus the New Testament church was heavily dependent on lay members and leaders.

But today in most of the churches the situation is different. Congregations are heavily dependent upon clerical leadership. They are satisfied with attending Sunday services, paying regular subscriptions and giving offerings. For some reason or the other their talents and abilities hidden unused. They remain inactive partly because of their fear and unwillingness, but mostly because of lack of care on the part of the clergy.

Lay-Clergy Teamwork in Ministry

A. J. Lindgren and N. Shawchuck suggest five factors as important for the increased involvement of lay people in the church's ministry.²

1. The foundation for the empowerment of God's people in carrying out the church's ministry is spiritual renewal. The church, particularly the clergy, must provide many opportunities for the laity through worship, social action, Bible study, group sharing, discussion, etc. in which everyone will be able to realize God's presence and be renewed.
2. The clergy should seek consciously to identify the personal needs, goals, and abilities of members and relate them to the church's goals and activities. People will involve themselves in the church's life only if they find the church programmes interesting and fulfilling some of their own personal needs and goals. A pastor should never build a church programme that reflects only his/her interest and theological position.
3. The laity can work together with the clergy in making basic decisions of policy and programming and also in implementing them. This can be done effectively even

² A. J. Lindgren and N. Shawchuck, *Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 24-26.

without obtaining membership of the Pastorate Committee and other administrative structures.

4. The pastor's leadership style, the quality of his interpersonal relationships, and his professional competence are critical factors in enhancing or blocking the empowerment of lay involvement in the church's ministry.
5. The clergy, along with the whole congregation, should plan for identifying, recruiting, and training lay persons as church leaders so that they may be able to use their interests and abilities at the maximum level.

Thus the church at large and pastors in particular should provide enough service opportunities to release the power of the lay people and enable them to minister effectively to a broader spectrum of human needs around them.

SOME AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT FOR THE LAITY

Yves Congar classifies the functions of the laity in five different categories.³ Using his classification as a framework, I give my suggestions as to the possible areas of lay involvement in churches.

1. *The Church's Priestly Function*: In this type of ministry the lay potential can be used in worship services. They may be encouraged to conduct prayers and intercessions, to read the Scriptures, and to assist the clergy in the celebration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper). I am sure that most of the churches are already doing this, but still many more lay leaders may be trained and used in the priestly function of the church.
2. *The Church's Kingly Function*: The kingly aspect of the ministry may denote the leadership and administrative role which the laity could play in the Body of Christ. They should be delegated the authority for taking care of the congregation by doing house-visiting, by visiting the sick, prisoners, homes for the aged, bereaved families, the shut-ins, and all kinds of needy people. They must be given enough opportunities to give leadership to various committees, to look after the properties and the buildings of the church, and to keep the congregation register and financial accounts. The laity, along with the clergy, can take gifts to people on special occasions and also receive gifts for the growth of the church. The institutions and organizations managed by the church can effectively be administered primarily by the laity who are experts in particular disciplines in secular education.
3. *The Church's Prophetic Function*: The lay members are prophets who can receive the Word of God and deliver it to others. Preaching and teaching are the important aspects of the church's ministry and lay leaders can more meaningfully carry out this ministry, if they are given adequate training. By so doing, they themselves will be strengthened in their Christian faith. Prophetic ministry also includes social action and working for social justice and equality. The laity can become involved in this type of ministry by encouraging the good, and condemning the evil in society, by writing on current issues

³ Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster, Maryland, The Newman Press, reprint, 1967), pp. 121ff. Also, the New Delhi Statement, published at the time of the consultation on 'The Evangelization of the Poor' that was held in New Delhi on 17-23 October 1993, classifies the church's ministry in five categories: the soteriological function, the prophetic function, the ecumenical function, the priestly function, and the kingly function—see *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 18 (2, 1994), p. 178; and B. J. Nicholls and B. R. Wood (eds.), *Sharing the Good News with the Poor*, (Bangalore: Baker Book House, 1996), pp. 15-16.

and by staging forums for discussions.

4. *The Church's Communal Life:* The church's vitality and witness largely depend upon its communal life in terms of fellowship and sharing. The solidarity of its members should be promoted and protected. The role of the laity in this important area of the church's life is crucial. They can organize small groups for each area, occasional get-togethers, fellowship meals, picnics, games, excursions, dramas, choir and orchestra programmes, carol services, village evangelism, community development programmes, conventions, and conferences, and so on (the list is not exhaustive).
5. *The Church's Apostolic Function:* This kind of work involves reaching the unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, planting churches, and strengthening them by teaching the Christian faith in a new way. The laity of the church have more access to society than the clergy and therefore evangelism and mission can effectively be carried out by them. It may be carried out either within or outside one's own culture and language. The apostolic function also includes the ministry of encouragement and collection of gifts for the needy. Such works can better be performed by the lay people.

APPENDIX

The following two major concerns were raised in our discussion:

Problems Involved in Lay Leadership

While lay involvement is essential for the growth and health of the church, one cannot ignore the problems associated with it. In some churches there is a danger of lay people dominating the clergy and not cooperating with the Pastorate Committee. Instead of concentrating on their respective works, sometimes they begin to build up animosity against church administration and organizational structures. However, problems need not stop lay involvement in our churches. The question is: why does such a situation occur in churches today? During the discussion, one member pointed out that it is because of lack of lay training. Indeed an average layperson remains ill-equipped even today to carry out Christ's work in the world.

What Shall We Do for Training the Laity?

Attention was drawn to the need to conduct lay-training programmes in suitable places. A one-year course, preferably in the evenings, may be worked out and teachers from theological colleges may be utilized in this training programme. Courses may be offered to the Pastorate Committee members, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, and women's workers. They must be well trained before they are given authority. Probably this is an area which needs careful thinking and planning.

Further Questions for Discussion:

1. How can we motivate and encourage lay persons in our churches to become involved in ministry?
2. What are the other areas in which they might be involved?
3. In what way can today's laity be better trained?
4. How can we help one another, particularly when problems such as power consciousness, non-cooperating attitudes, etc. arise in the minds of lay members in our churches?

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Christian Responses to the New Age Spirituality

John W Drane

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In this article Dr Drane shows that New Age spirituality and practice is the religious projection of post-modernity. Its origins are many and diverse and its goal is none other than to induce altered and new dimensional levels of human consciousness. Most New Agers identify the church with the failure of western culture and spirituality, and thus if christianity is part of the problem it cannot be part of the solution. The author notes that New Age claims to enhanced mental powers and stress-relieving therapies are attracting the attention of the business world. He urges Christians to respond positively to the challenges of this paradigm shift in spirituality and culture

One of the most obvious signs of the burgeoning spirituality of our day is the growing popularity of the New Age. Most general bookstores have New Age (or Body, Mind, and Spirit) sections, while the New Age identity advertises consumer products ranging from beauty care and fashions to music and complementary health therapies. Moreover, the influence of the New Age is not restricted to popular culture, and the ranks of New Age writers include scientists,¹ as well as social scientists and business professors—while the emergence of transpersonal psychology is also generally recognized as part of this new spiritual search.²

But what exactly is the New Age? Some argue the idea has been dreamed up by paranoid Christian fundamentalists, who, with the collapse of Communism, no longer had anything to hate, and therefore needed to create a new enemy for themselves.³ Even New Agers struggle to define it. Social psychologist John L. Simmons writes: 'I knew something was stirring in the world but I didn't know what', and then adds, 'the signs of the new movement are everywhere . . . millions of people are, in one way or another, becoming unofficially involved in it', and it 'may currently be the most vital information in the world,

¹ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (London: Flamingo, 1983); Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: the Greening of Science and of God* (London: Century, 1990); James Lovelock, author of the classic *Gaia: A New Look at life on Earth* (Oxford: OUP, 1979); Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: I. P. Tarcher, 1980); William Bloom, *The New Age: an anthology of essential writings* (London: Rider, 1991).

² R. S. Valle, 'The Emergence of Transpersonal Psychology' in R. S. Valle & S. Halling, eds., *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology* (New York: Plenum Press, 1989), pp. 257–268.

³ For examples of this approach, cf Constance Cumbe, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* (Louisiana: Huntington House, 1983); Alan Morrison, *The Serpent and the Cross* (Birmingham: K & M Books, 1994).