



Goahead Theological Seminary & College

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Priesthood Of All Believers



Article 21 of the Augsburg Confession asserts the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers: "The relics of the saints may be kept among us as a memorial, so that we may imitate their faith and good works, according to our respective functions." However, Scripture places Christ alone before us as our mediator, reconciler, high priest, and intercessor, and does not teach us to pray to the saints or seek their help. We must pray to Christ, who has promised to grant our prayers.

Protestant

Denominations:

Anglican / Lutheran / Presbyterian / Methodist / Holiness Church / Baptist / Pentecostal / New Apostolic Church / Local Church / Holiness Movement / Salvation Army / Congregational Church / Plymouth Brethren / Seventh-day Adventist / Anabaptist / Quaker / Reformed Church / Puritan / Moravian Brethren

History:

- Reformation / Orthodoxy / Puritanism / Pietism / Great Awakening / Adventism / Oxford Movement / Charismatic Movement



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Ceremony:

- Anglican Prayer Book / Presbyterian Ceremony / Lutheran Ceremony / Methodist Ceremony

Key Theological Concepts:

- Trinity / Evangelicalism / Five Solas / Predestination / Salvation / Justification by Faith / Free Will / Neo-Orthodoxy / Liberal Theology / Classical Orthodoxy / Ecumenism

Protestant heresies:

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints / Jehovah's Witnesses / Christian Science / Christadelphian Church / True Jesus Church / Unification Church / Shincheonji Church of Jesus, Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony / JMS / Unitarianism / Messianic Judaism / Reparation Society / Eastern Lightning / World Mission Society Church of God

The priesthood of all believers

The priesthood of all believers is the doctrine that all believers are equally priests. It emphasizes the concept of equality, emphasizing that there is no class system among believers and that all are equal children of God. This is the theological assertion of the Reformation theologian Martin Luther, who asserted that all believers, when they confess Christ, are holy saints and equal children of God, without the need for a human mediator, such as a priest, between God and humanity.

Theologically, it is a Protestant theological concept that all believers, through Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit, can worship and communicate directly with God. It is also called the universal sacrifice, the universal priesthood, the universal priesthood, or the universal priesthood.



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The priesthood of all believers is a firm belief and one of the fundamental and core principles of Protestantism, born from the Reformation. It was reasserted by Luther, grounded in biblical evidence. Unlike the existing Roman Catholic Church, there is no hierarchical hierarchy between believers and clergy. While the public priesthood mentioned in the Bible is recognized, it emphasizes that it is merely a functional position or role for worship. This is similar to the pre-monarchical era of Israel, which existed during the time of tribal alliances.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). The veil here is interpreted as "Jesus's body" (Hebrews 6:19; 10:20), and its tearing signifies that Jesus' blood has accomplished eternal atonement (Hebrews 9:12). Therefore, with the veil (the veil) that separated believers from God removed through Jesus' atonement, the path was opened for believers to approach God directly through Jesus Christ.

The veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 40:21) was a curtain that protected the sacred objects in the Most Holy Place and maintained its sanctity. Only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for himself, his leaders, the nation, and all the people (Leviticus 16).

However, the tearing of this veil signifies that all religious rites of the Old Testament were abolished by the eternal sacrifice and high priest Jesus, and therefore priests were no longer needed.[7] Therefore, the doctrine of the universal priesthood implies that all believers are qualified to pray for others and teach doctrine to others, and that there can be no special clergy or groups with special positions or authority within the church.

From the perspective of the universal priesthood, believers and clergy are equal. In other words, since there can be no hierarchy within the church, there is no biblical basis for the existence of the Pope. Therefore, the fundamental doctrine and core of Protestantism, which rejects and resists the existence and authority of the Pope, lies in the universal priesthood.

The concept of equality for all people:

The doctrine of the universal priesthood is a theological concept that rediscovers the Christian idea of universal equality. It was a theological theory of those in favor of reforming the Western Church in the 16th century, seeking to reform the institutional contradictions and abuses of the



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papacy. This theological concept transcends the hierarchical divisions within the church—adults, clergy, and laypeople—following the European medieval social hierarchy, emphasizing that all who follow Christ in the Gospel are equal saints. From the 11th to the 16th centuries, the Western Church rediscovered Christian equality as a means of reforming the church's hierarchical system, which had followed the social hierarchies of the Middle Ages. According to 1 Peter 2:4-8, not only clergy but all God's saints are priests by the grace of Christ's redemption.

Equality in the Eucharist:

Within the Protestant churches of the West, which followed this doctrine, various institutions and sacraments underwent radical changes. Only the clergy, not priests, became ministers of the Eucharist and worship (in Luther's term, "ministers"). In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Western Christian community began sharing the bread and wine, a practice restricted from the 12th to 16th centuries. Hymns, once restricted, were transformed into hymns sung by all believers. Furthermore, the Protestant tradition of the Communion Supper, in which the clergy face the congregation while presiding, shifted to the Communion of Communion.

Equality of Saints:

This emphasizes the equality of the saints, not that there is no distinction between clergy and laity, but that anyone can become a clergy member based on their calling, not their class. It can also be interpreted that the clergy, the pastor, are not an absolute class like the priests of the Old Testament monarchy who forgave sins, but rather, like the Levites, a tribe equal to the other tribes in the Old Testament wilderness period, who performed sacrifices at the tabernacle. They lead worship and are responsible for administering the sacraments by virtue of their clerical status.

Alternatively, it can be interpreted as literally indistinguishable between clergy and laity. The "concept" of the universal priesthood was not first proposed by Luther. In the Waldensian Church, a Turkish Protestant denomination, laypeople preach. Furthermore, in the early church, when worship was conducted in a discussion format, anyone could serve as a moderator or facilitator, but it was often understood as simply a role performed by that person.



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Even in the Old Testament, priests, before the monarchy, were members of the Levitical tribe of Israel, not in a hierarchical order, but rather equal members of the other tribes. In the Old Testament era, with the rise of royalty after the monarchy, priests became aristocratic.

Protestant clergy, or pastors, are not seen as priests who forgive sins and offer sacrifices, but as responsible for the five elements of the traditional Christian church (worship, fellowship, education, proclamation, and service), and as those who teach and protect the faith. Therefore, the absolute authority and mediation of the Catholic Church's Pope, saints, and the Virgin Mary are unnecessary theological concepts and unnecessary institutions.

Priests of the Old Testament:

In the Old Testament, the concept of priesthood differed between the pre- and post-monarchical Israelite eras. Before the monarchy, during the tribal alliance, priests were solely from the tribe of Levi among the twelve tribes. The Levites, too, had no hierarchical relationship with the other tribes, but were considered equal. Priesthood was a distinction of equal tribal roles and qualifications between the other eleven tribes and the Levites, not a hierarchical relationship. After the advent of the monarchy, royalty and nobility were formed, and classes were divided into nobles, commoners, and slaves. The priests, who had become members of the nobility, also entered into a hierarchical relationship between priests and believers.

In the Old Testament, the concept of priesthood is divided into the early priesthood, which predates the era of tribal alliances, and the later priesthood, which follows the monarchy. The priests of the Jerusalem Temple during Jesus' time were a further distortion of the later concept. They were not descendants of the tribe of Levi and enjoyed a status of aristocracy within the Jewish monarchy under the Roman Empire. The priesthood described in the New Testament embodies the concepts of the patriarchs of the patriarchal era and the Levitical priesthood of the era of tribal alliances.

Within the Western Church, the Protestant Church emphasizes the concept of the "early priest" before the Old Testament monarchy, the concept of qualified priests, and the concept of priests in the New Testament, while the Catholic Church emphasizes the concept of priests in the hierarchical priesthood, the concept of the "late priest" after the Old Testament monarchy.



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This doctrine is different from the doctrine of the hierarchical Catholic Church, which divides believers into the teaching church (Ecclesia Docens) and the listening church (Ecclesia Discens), and also from the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, etc.

Doctrine:

The doctrine of the universal priesthood holds that all believers are equal saints. There is no hierarchical relationship between clergy and laypeople; they are all children of the Lord, with different missions "All believers, regardless of whether they are clergy or not, can approach God directly, worship Him, and have fellowship with Him, solely through Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humanity." In other words, in Protestant theology, this led to the view that faithful Christians are chosen before God, like the children of Israel, chosen for God's purpose.

This was a theological concept that all Christians in the Western Church at the time in the 16th century could worship and have fellowship directly before God through Christ with the Holy Spirit, and it was a theological concept that completely denied the need for indulgences sold by the Western Church in the name of the Pope and the power of indulgences that the Pope and bishops at the time used for socio-political purposes. The doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers concludes that Jesus Christ alone provides salvation and forgiveness, and that no other mediator or intercessor is necessary. Therefore, the doctrines concerning the canonization of saints and the Virgin Mary are meaningless and unnecessary, and the Old Testament high priestly ministry, such as the Pope, is deemed unnecessary. Therefore, the clergy of the Protestant church, that is, the pastor, is not a priest who forgives sins and offers sacrifices, but is recognized as someone who is responsible for the five elements of the traditional Christian church (worship, fellowship, education, proclamation, and service), teaches the faith delivered by the Bible and the apostles, and protects the church.

That is, according to Galatians 3:28 (There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (New International Version)), all Christians have equal rights, and the only difference is in their roles according to qualifications or positions.

Protestantism accepts this doctrine, recognizing only baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments established by Jesus Christ and preached by the apostles. The seven sacraments established at the Lateran Council, held only in the Roman region of the Western Church in the 12th century, including Holy Orders and Confession, are viewed as unnecessary aspects of the priestly ministry, and are recognized as church rites rather than sacraments. In most Protestant



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churches, the sacraments and sermons are administered only by ordained clergy who have received specialized theological training.

Protestant view:

In his 1520 work, "Address to the German Christian Nobility," the religious reformer Martin Luther criticized the Western church's medieval division of Christians into spiritual and secular, which had developed since the 12th century. During the Reformation, the structure of the Western church in the 16th century, dominated by absolute monarchy, and the existence of the Pope, the Supreme Pontiff, were compared to the Gospel of Christ, making them relative and denying their absoluteness. This also led to criticism of the dichotomous, hierarchical attitude that divided the work of clergy into hierarchical and secular work, and that Christian ethics, such as those in the Sermon on the Mount, applied only to clergy. The Reformers argued that all Christians, whether clergy or laypeople, were qualified as priests, and therefore engaged in their own vocations according to God's calling in the gospel, that is, their own vocations. Furthermore, ethical attitudes and standards applied to all Christians. In other words, the work of God does not only mean pastoral work such as preaching, sacraments, and worship that priests do by following the gospel, but also has been expanded to mean the right profession that believers engage in according to their calling.

A frequently cited Bible verse supporting the doctrine of the universal priesthood is 1 Peter 2:9 in the New Testament:

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. So proclaim the wonders of his power, which has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9, New International Version)

The Apostle John also taught: "You have made them a kingdom for our God, priests, and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10, Common English Version).

Luther, basing his argument on these verses, asserted that all Christians were priests in God's eyes. Three months later, he reaffirmed this point in his work "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church."

Understanding by denomination:



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All Protestant denominations recognize and adhere to the doctrine of the universal priesthood. However, understandings of this doctrine vary among Protestant denominations. The doctrine of the universal priesthood, which holds that all believers possess the qualifications of priests and that all their work according to their calling falls within the scope of a sacred calling, a calling that is pleasing to God, is divided into three main perspectives: the ecumenical episcopal system, the presbyterian system, and the congregational system. Depending on theological stance, the episcopal church that follows the reformist doctrine of the Protestant church can be seen as having a 'moderate' understanding of the universal priesthood, while the presbyterian or congregational church that follows reconstructionism can be seen as having a 'radical' understanding of the universal priesthood.

Anglican Church:

The Anglican Church, which maintains the priesthood like the Catholic Church, interprets it from two perspectives.

1. From the perspective of a priest for all, for all people. That is, everyone prays for and lives for one another.
2. Since the high priest Jesus Christ has become the channel of salvation, no other channel is needed. He is a priest who can communicate directly with God.

Episcopal:

The ecumenical episcopal position is a denomination that adheres to the traditional structure of the Catholic Church and the Western Church. They follow the catholic Church's understanding of clergy, which is based on the distinction between rank and qualification. These denominations distinguish between clergy and laity based on their qualifications for ministry. This distinction is not based on an absolute hierarchy with the authority to forgive sins, but rather on the ordination of a bishop as a priest. This is analogous to the practice of medicine, where only those who are equal citizens or have completed medical education and passed the medical examination are permitted to practice medicine and surgery. Within South Korea, denominations with a common church tradition, such as the Lutheran Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, and Salvation Army, clearly distinguish between clergy and laity through the



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clerical system. Following the three-order clerical structure of the universal church, there are three orders: deacon, elder, and bishop. In South Korean Protestantism, these three orders are often divided into evangelist, pastor, and bishop.

Eldership:

The eldership system refers to denominations with a system of governance centered around the General Assembly of Elders or the General Assembly of Elders, which is a form of governance by elders, leaders elected from the church community. In South Korea, pastors serving in the Presbyterian Church, Holiness Church, and Full Gospel Church are among the elders. Among these elders, administrative and pastoral roles are distinguished, and pastors are categorized as administrative elders and pastoral elders. Therefore, pastors, as elders, are understood to carry out the special pastoral mission.

Congregationalism:

The congregationalist position refers to denominations with a lay-centered structure, governed by congregational meetings. In South Korea, congregational churches, Baptist churches, and other denominations understand pastors as laypeople, with ordained deacons selected from the congregation to lead the ministry. Therefore, the pastoral office is understood as a clergy position, with elders selected from the congregation through a specific system, such as voting, to lead the ministry.