

# Luther on the Priesthood of Every Believer

by Bob DeWaay

## Luther on the Priesthood of Every Believer

1 Peter 2:9

Presented by Bob DeWaay

August 16, 2015

### Luther on NT Priesthood

For a priest, especially in the New Testament, was not made but was born. He was created, not ordained. He was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and Spirit in the washing of regeneration [John 3:6f.; Titus 3:5f.]. Indeed, all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians. . . . What else do they accomplish than a denial that Christ is a priest among his Christians? For in carrying on their hateful office they make no one a priest until he denies that he was a priest before.+

2

### Christians as Co-heirs with Christ

Furthermore, I shall also prove this conclusion to be trustworthy: Christ is a priest, therefore Christians are priests, as Psalm 22[:23] states: *They will tell of thy name to my brethren.* +Again, *God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows*+[Ps. 45:8]. *That we are his brethren is true only because of the new birth. Wherefore we are priests, as he is Priest, sons as he is Son, kings as he is King.* For he makes us to sit with him in heavenly places, as companions and co-heirs with him, in whom and with whom all things are given us.+

3

### Luther Defines the Functions of Priests

For such passages as, *You are a royal priesthood*+ (1 Pet. 2[:9]) and, *Whom has made them a kingdom and priests*+(Rev. 5[:10]), I have sufficiently treated in other books. Mostly the **functions of a priest** are these: **to teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and to judge of all doctrine and spirits.** Certainly these are splendid and royal duties. But the first and foremost of all on which everything else depends, is the teaching of the Word of God.

4

### Luther on Why All Must Preach the Word

**The first office, that of the ministry of the Word, therefore, is common to all Christians.** This is clear, from what I have already said, and from 1 Pet. 2[:9], *You are a royal priesthood that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* +I ask, who are these who are called out of darkness into marvelous light? Is it only the shorn and anointed masks? Is it not all Christians? And Peter not only gives them the right, but the command, to declare the wonderful deeds of God, which certainly is nothing else than to preach the Word of God.

5

### The Last Supper and the Priesthood of All

Christ proves the same thing according to the account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where he says to all at the Last Supper: *Do this in remembrance of me*+[Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24]. For this he did not say only to the shorn and anointed, else only the shorn and anointed could receive the body and blood of the Lord. **Even this remembrance is nothing else than a preaching of the Word, as Paul explains in 1 Cor. [11:26],** *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* +**To proclaim the death of the Lord is to declare the wonderful deeds of God who called us from darkness into marvelous light.**

6



# Luther on the Priesthood of Every Believer

by Bob DeWaay

## More Proof of the Priesthood of Every Believer

Paul confirms this in 1 Cor. 14[:26] as he speaks not to the shorn or to a few, but to the whole church and each individual Christian: %Each one of you has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.+And further on: %For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged+ [1 Cor. 14:31]. For say, what is meant by %each one of you+? And by %all+? Can this mean only the shorn? **These passages very strongly and clearly corroborate that the ministry of the Word is the highest office in the church, that it is unique and belongs to all who are Christians, not only by right but by command**

7

## Baptism Is the Domain of All: Luther

Whether they wish or not we deduce from their own logic that all Christians, and they alone, even women, are priests, without tonsure and episcopal %character.+For in baptizing we proffer the life-giving Word of God, which renews souls and redeems from death and sins. **To baptize is incomparably greater than to consecrate bread and wine, for it is the greatest office in the church- the proclamation of the Word of God.**

8

## More on the Priesthood of Every Believer

Unmoved by their senselessness we hold that this function, too, like the priesthood, belongs to all, and this we assert, not on our own authority, but that of Christ who at the Last Supper said, %Do this in remembrance of me+[Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24]. This is the word by means of which the shorn papists claim they can make priests and give them the authority to consecrate. **But Christ spoke this word to all those then present and to those who in the future would be at the table, to eat this bread and drink this cup.** So it follows that what is given here is given to all.

9

## Luther on Binding and Loosing

They never employ the keys to open or close heaven to consciences, but they do use them to regulate the money pouches of all the earth. **But this office of the keys belongs to all of us who are Christians,** as I have so often proved and shown in my books against the pope. For the word of Christ in Matt. 18[:15] is addressed not only to the Apostles, but, certainly, to all the brethren: %If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault ò if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.+

10

## More Luther on Binding and Loosing

As we have declared already, the ministry of the Word belongs to all. **To bind and to loose dearly is nothing else than to proclaim and to apply the gospel.** For what is it to loose, if not to announce the forgiveness of sins before God? What is it to bind, except to withdraw the gospel and to declare the retention of sins? Whether they want to or not [they must concede] that the keys are an exercise of the ministry of the Word and belong to all Christians.

11

## The Priesthood of Believers and Sacrifice

We call as witness the writings of the New Testament, to which we appeal in opposing Satan, and assert that **in the New Testament there is no sacrifice except the one which is common to all, namely the one described in Rom. 12[:1],** where Paul teaches us to present our bodies as a sacrifice, just as Christ sacrificed his body for us on the cross. **In this sacrifice he includes the offering of praise and thanksgiving.** Peter likewise commands in 1 Pet. 2[:5] that we offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, that is, ourselves, not gold or animals.

12



# Luther on the Priesthood of Every Believer

by Bob DeWaay

## The Priesthood of Believers and Prayer

The sixth function is to pray for others. How horribly and shamelessly these masks have deceived the world and made a sort of fictitious synagogue out of the true church is a grievous story. **For Christ gave the Lord's Prayer to all his Christians.** By this alone we are sufficiently able to prove and confirm that the priesthood is one and the same to all, whereas the papal priesthood is a falsehood devised outside the church of God and through mere effrontery brought into the church. **To pray for others is to go between and make intercession of God, which is befitting Christ only and all his brethren.**

13

## All Believers Must Judge Doctrines

**The seventh and last function is to judge and pass on doctrines.** Clearly it is not without good reason that the mask priests and counterfeit Christians have claimed this office for themselves. For they could foresee that if they allowed all to have this function they could not monopolize any of the aforementioned privileges. If you could deprive the hearers of this function, what would not a teacher be able and dare to do, even surpassing Satan himself if he could?

14

## All Believers Must Judge Doctrines - Luther

If this is granted, Paul could not only correct Peter, but even pronounce anathema on angels from heaven [Gal. 2:14; 1:8]. **With what fear and trembling bishops and councils would have spoken and issued decrees, if the judgment of hearers would have had to be regarded when decisions were made with respect to priesthood, to the office of teaching, of baptizing, of consecrating, of sacrificing, of binding, of prayer, of judging doctrine.** Indeed, there never would have been a universal papacy if this right of judgment had prevailed. They took good counsel when they monopolized this office!

15

## Judge False Claims (Luther)

Now the word of Christ in John 10[:27, 5] applies: **My sheep hear my voice.** They do not know the voice of strangers,+and in Matt. 7[:15], **Beware of false prophets,+and Matt. 16[:6; Luke 12:1], Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,+which is hypocrisy,** and in Matt. 28[:2f.], **The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do.+By these and many similar passages of the gospel, even all of Scripture, we are admonished not to believe false teachers.**

16

## All Christians Must Judge (Luther)

But Paul has bound this strong man in his own place and taken away his armor [Luke 11:22] when he said, **When a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent+[I Cor. 14:30], and again, The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets+[I Cor. 14:32]. Also, You can all prophesy, one by one+[I Cor. 14:31].** What sense is there to this drunken prattle of the pope and his papists, though handed down over many generations: **We command, we earnestly direct, the Church of Rome is Mistress of the churches and the articles of faith?**

17

## All Christians Have the Holy Spirit (Luther)

We believe that they believe, at least we see them professing and boasting that they are the leaders and shepherds of the Christian people. But I believe they will also be forced to confess that a Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit, and who as Christ says, is taught all things by the Spirit [John 14:26]. And John writes, **This anointing teaches you about everything+[I John 2:27], that is, to put it briefly, a Christian is so certain about what he ought and ought not believe that he will even die, or at least be prepared to die, for it.**

18



# Luther on the Priesthood of Every Believer

by Bob DeWaay

## Rome Denies Christians the Right to Judge

Now I ask you, what effrontery it is of the papists to vaunt themselves and say: **the laity ought to believe us and not themselves?** What is this but to assert: **We** admit that Christians have the Holy Spirit by which they know with certainty what is to be believed and what not to be believed; yet, because the Holy Spirit is inferior to ourselves, and we are much more learned than the Spirit, therefore they ought to subject themselves to us and heed us?

19

## Luther Summarizes the Priesthood of All

Here we take our stand: There is no other Word of God than that which is given all Christians to proclaim. There is no other baptism than the one which any Christian can bestow. There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which any Christian can observe and which Christ has instituted. There is no other kind of sin than that which any Christian can bind or loose. There is no other sacrifice than of the body of every Christian. No one but a Christian can pray. No one but a Christian may judge of doctrine. **These make the priestly and royal office.**

20

