



children in the local Wesleyan chapel. She studied drama and elocution at a small private drama school. As a young woman she saw poverty in the raw among the Durham miners in the strike of 1926: "I was shattered, and drama did not seem to matter any more." After training at the YWCA as a youth leader, she worked for many years with youth clubs, employing her dramatic talents to help build membership. From 1931 to 1945 she worked in a vast housing estate in Dagenham, Essex, where 200,000 artisans had been uprooted from the East End of London. Later she was secretary of the youth department of the British Council of Churches, where she encouraged youth to be aware of community responsibilities, including the quarter million refugees who had come to Britain. From 1952 to 1968 Lacey was director of Christian Aid, the inter-church aid and refugee service of the British Council of Churches. During these years she built Christian Aid into an internationally recognized organization, raising millions of pounds annually through drama, advertising, films, television, concerts in Trafalgar Square with folk singers and a variety of other innovative techniques.

For the WCC's Evanston assembly (1954), Lacey wrote a drama called *By the*

Waters of Babylon: the play was later published in Britain and performed in churches all over the country. For New Delhi (1961), she produced a film for the interchurch aid presentation. From 1961 to 1968 she was vice-chairperson of the WCC's Division of Inter-church Aid, Refugee and World Service. She was what she called the "token female" president for the world conference on Church and Society in Geneva, 1966. Again acting as impresario, she arranged for director Patrick Garland to write and produce a play about revolutionaries called *The Rebel*, which was performed at the conference.

A layperson, Janet Lacey was the first woman to preach in St Paul's Cathedral, London, and in St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. Although brought up as a Methodist, she became an Anglican. In the 1950s and 1960s, when women were seldom found in leadership roles in the WCC, she was an exception. Her keen mind, her gifts of diplomacy and courage, and her eloquence earned her a place in the male-dominated structures of the ecumenical movement.

BETTY THOMPSON

LAITY

"NEVER in church history... has the role and responsibility of the laity in church and world been a matter of so basic, systematic, comprehensive and intensive discussion in the total oikoumene as today" (Hendrik Kraemer, 1961). The re-discovery of the laity was probably the most important aspect of the renewal* of the church in the 1950s and 1960s.

DEFINITION

In the history of Christianity the concept of laypeople as it is now understood was a later development. Only from the 3rd and especially the 4th century onwards did the term gradually become part of ecclesiastical language, usually referring to what is profane, distinguishing the laity from the priests/clergy and deacons.

Laypeople are the unordained members of the church.* That is the most common definition of the word "laity". The problem with it is its negative character: laypeople are

defined by the lack of ordination,* the lack of training and competence, and thus are seen as being secondary to the ordained members of the church. This misconception of their place and role in the church has often led to negative connotations regarding the ministry of the laity. Indeed, throughout church history the clergy has seen the laity mainly as the objects of its preaching, teaching and pastoral care, and theologians have not developed a positive description of the function of the laity. Very often laypeople have had to assert themselves against the clergy (see *laity/clergy*). Lay movements fought the clericalization of the church in the middle ages and during the early stages of the Reformation. The Reformation proclaimed the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9).

There is no exact equivalent in biblical vocabulary for the word "lay" or "laity". The Greek term *laikos* as noun or adjective appears only in the writings of the fathers (Clement of Rome in 95). But the word *laos* from which it derives has an important place in biblical writing. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) it is predominantly used for the people of God,* Israel; in the New Testament it refers to Christians, the people of God including both Jews and gentiles. In the church, therefore, *laikos* means "pertaining to the community chosen in Christ" (Hans-Herman Walz).

The ecumenical movement uses the biblical concept of the people of God in order to define the laity not by comparison with the ordained clergy, the theologians, the professional church workers, but by a new appreciation of the church in the world (see *church and world*). The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories and shops, offices and farms, in political parties, government agencies and countless homes; in the press, radio, television, and in the relationship between nations. It is often said that the church should go into these spheres, but the church is in fact already there. Laypeople are "those members of the church, both men and women, who earn their livelihood in a secular job and who, therefore, spend most of their working hours in a 'worldly' occupation". "The phrase 'the ministry of the laity' expresses the privilege

of the whole church to share in Christ's ministry to the world" (Evanston 1954).

TOWARDS THE RE-DISCOVERY OF THE LAITY

One of the roots of the 20th-century ecumenical movement was the ecumenical lay movements founded in the 19th century: the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Student Christian Movement. John R. Mott, himself a layman and leader in these worldwide movements, called for "liberating the lay forces of Christianity" in order to participate in the missionary task of the church. Also in the Roman Catholic Church there has been a new emphasis on the laity. In 1922 Pius XI, in his pastoral letter *Ubi Arcana*, called on the laity "to participate in the hierarchical apostolate" and proclaimed the foundation of the Catholic lay movement Action catholique.

Another reason for the re-discovery of the laity was the world situation: the breaking down of the corpus Christianum and growing secularization,* as recognized by the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928. J.H. Oldham, in preparing the Oxford world conference on "Church, Community and State" in 1937, pointed to the role of the laity as a crucial matter of ecumenical concern: "If the church is to be an effective force in the social and political sphere, our first task is to laicize our thought about it. We stand before a great historic task – the task of restoring the lost unity between worship and work."

Another impulse for bringing the laity on to the ecumenical agenda came from the founding of lay academies* as attempts for re-thinking and renewal. Such institutions appeared in both parts of Germany after 1945 and in Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Scotland. They were centres for dialogue among laypeople of different professions and functions, who tried to understand the relevance of the gospel in their secular activities. Even before the foundation of the WCC, in 1946 the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey* near Geneva had been opened, led by Suzanne de Diétrich and Hendrik Kraemer, for a similar purpose: "The laity, men and women, had discovered a new vision of their responsibility for expressing the true nature and task of

the church, not only within its own fellowship, but in the world in which the church has been set and their own lives are lived." The German Kirchentag movement, also a post-war phenomenon, initiated by a layman, Reinhold von Thadden-Trieglaff, was another form of church renewal which emphasized the vocation of the laity.

THE LAITY DEPARTMENT OF THE WCC

It was in the context of these ecumenical developments that a committee on the "significance of the laity in the church" was appointed at the first assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam in 1948, with Kraemer as its secretary. The report underlines the need for "relevant Christianity" in the modern secularized world: "Only by the witness of a spiritually intelligent and active laity can the church meet the modern world in its actual perplexities and life situations." In 1949 Walz was appointed as WCC staff person responsible for a Secretariat for Laymen's Work. He organized a European laymen's conference in Bad Boll, Federal Republic of Germany (1951), followed by a North American conference in Buffalo (1952), and published a bulletin *Laymen's Work* (1951-55).

This secretariat and the Ecumenical Institute increasingly became the focal point for pioneer thinking and experimentation regarding the ministry of the laity. During the first post-war years the attention was on Europe and North America, but soon it became clear that it was a burning issue in the churches of all continents. When the second assembly of the WCC at Evanston in 1954 was planned, the rediscovery of the laity became one of the six major subjects. The assembly report on it focused on the Christian in his or her vocation* but also made an attempt to define the ministry of the laity and to see its implications for the renewal of the life and structure of the church (see **ministry in the church**).

Evanston also acknowledged the importance of the issue by replacing the provisional Secretariat for Laymen's Work with a regular Department on the Laity, of which Hans-Ruedi Weber became the secretary (1955-61). He edited a new periodical, *Laity* (from 1959 onward co-edited with Madeleine Barot from the Department on

the Cooperation of Men and Women), in which laypeople from all traditions and regions discussed and shared experiences. The publication had a wide circulation and considerable impact on the ecumenical thinking of laypeople and church leaders throughout the world. The ongoing studies of the department were reflected in the topics dealt with, which included laity training, the house church, saints in everyday life, Christians in power structures, stewardship concepts, the role of the laity in church history, the world of tomorrow. In 1959 one issue was devoted to Asia and reported on the inaugural assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference in Kuala Lumpur, which decided to establish a standing committee on the witness of the laity.

In Africa the Laity department played an important role in the founding of the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in 1958, a centre for study, leadership training and worship with special reference to the laity. Mindolo "attempts to relate the Christian faith to the mainstream of life in Africa today" (Peter Matthews, first director).

The increasing influence of the work of the Laity department was obvious at the New Delhi assembly in 1961, where the ministry of the laity was a central issue in all three sections: witness, service and unity. Under the theme "The Laity: The Church in the World", three laypersons addressed the assembly. And the message from New Delhi states: "The real letter written to the world today does not consist of words. We Christian people, wherever we are, are a letter from Christ to the world." The majority of Christians are laypeople, whose witness comes through their daily lives, work and relationships wherever they are. New Delhi called for full lay participation in the ecumenical movement. Several subsequent sessions of the WCC's central committee dealt with questions relating to the various ministries of the laity.

New Delhi also decided that the Department on Evangelism, with the cooperation of the Laity department, should undertake a study on the "missionary structure of the congregation",* clearly a consequence of the new understanding of the church in the world. During the time of the Second Vatican Council the Laity department cooper-

ated closely with the related Roman Catholic bodies. In 1964 a joint consultation took place in Glion on "The Ministry of the Church".

The ecumenical theology of the laity as the people of God had prepared a new approach to the world as the place of God's action. The emphasis of the Uppsala assembly (1968) was on the dilemmas and hopes of the world, on development,* justice* and peace* issues, and on the participation of Christians in God's renewal of the world. Soon after the assembly new programmes and commissions were created: the Programme to Combat Racism* (1969) and the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (1970), of which C.I. Itty, who had worked for several years with the Laity department, became the director.

In a sense, Uppsala was a turning point. Further consideration of the laity and their self-understanding became less important than the content of their mission and service in the world in the struggle against racial, economic and political injustices. During a re-structuring of the WCC in 1971, with the integration of the World Council of Christian Education, the Laity department was absorbed in the Sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life. Thus began a period when the word "laity" disappeared from ecumenical discussions. The main emphasis of the sub-unit was spiritual and liturgical renewal; it conducted workshops and related to church base communities* and networks. It had a desk for lay and study centres, which functioned as a secretariat for the World Collaboration Committee for Christian Lay Centres, Academies and Movements for Social Concern (WCOLC), founded in Crete in 1972. The academy movement has spread into many parts of the world, and continental associations have been formed.

ACADEMIES, LAY CENTRES, COURSES

The origins of the World Collaboration Committee go back to the first course for leaders in lay training (CLLT) in 1968, sponsored by the directors association of evangelical academies and lay institutes in Europe and the WCC Laity department: lay trainers from Africa, Asia and Latin America saw what was being done in Europe, which enabled them to understand better their own

work. A second course took place in 1970. In Africa and Asia CLLT participants and other leaders began organizing their own regional associations, partly as a consequence of the new self-confidence that resulted from participation in the CLLTs.

In 1972, representatives of academies and lay centres who attended a WCC consultation on centres for social concern and related Christian movements at the Orthodox academy in Crete, Greece, set up the World Collaboration Committee. Originally composed of African, Asian and European associations, it grew into a worldwide network, offering opportunities for an exchange of experiences, renewal of faith, and encouragement and hope.

The impetus for the establishment of the WCOLC came from the associations of Africa and Asia (both founded 1970). The committee always operated jointly with the WCC. At its 20th meeting in 1997, it concluded an evaluation of its work since 1972, and decided to take a new name: OIKOSNET – a global ecumenical network of Christian laity centres, academies and movements for social concern working for an inclusive, just, participatory and sustainable community and society. Today, about 600 centres are related to the WCC, and some 300 to the regional associations. Most are ecumenically oriented and committed to the renewal of the churches.

OIKOSNET is currently focusing on the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), and on a world gathering in 2005 to evaluate work done so far around the DOV, share findings and evaluate achievements and obstacles at mid-decade point; to support and strengthen one another; and to plan input for the next WCC assembly. There are plans to hold a global course for lay leadership training every five years.

Since the evaluation of the regional CLLTs, the African association has focused on training-of-trainers CLLTs.

The European association organized a CLLT in France in 1998 on the theme "Globalization and Ecumenical Action", at which participants developed an ecumenical response for the lay centre movement to engage the dynamics of globalization.

The courses and programmes organized by the World Collaboration Committee/

OIKOSNET aim to equip participants to become dynamic agents of social development in their countries in the light of the Christian faith; to help them understand the nature, problems and forces at work within personal, societal and global dimensions; and to enable them to develop styles and methods of involvement which put the Christian faith into the context of local and regional situations. The courses offer opportunity for encounter and exposure, and are thus different from seminary courses.

LAY PARTICIPATION TOWARDS INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

In 1992, as a result of re-structuring of the WCC following the 1991 Canberra assembly, the ecumenical concept of the laity re-appeared under the stream on Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community. The laity issue no longer implied the old distinction between the church and the world and hence the contrast between the clergy and church office bearers on one side and the laity on the other. Instead, the main emphasis was now on the wider question of participatory structures in the church and in society. One of the key programme priorities of the stream on Lay Participation was the development of a new profile of the laity, which was to emerge from a number of consultations.

The meeting in Montreat, North Carolina, USA, in 1993 was a historic moment in the story of the ecumenical lay movement. The issue of the laity was re-discovered after a long period of silence, and the discussion moved from the concept of the post-war period to beginning to bridge the gap between spirituality* and secularization, *koinonia* and community, the promise of the kingdom and the struggle for justice, peace and integrity of creation.* Montreat resulted in a new focus on ecumenical learning, laity formation and lay training leadership, and a new impetus for lay training courses.

A special plenary session on the laos at the WCC's central committee in Johannesburg in 1994 highlighted the ecumenical concept of the laity and its new profile. The discussion underlined that further work was needed on the clarification of the terms, especially in view of the strong ecclesiological implications attached to the term "laity",

and on the general issue of lay movements and their relationship with the church.

In 1995, an international course in lay training leadership for women in Brazil focused on questions of justice and sustainability, particularly the debt issue and climate change.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the WCC and the 500th of Vasco da Gama's voyage around the world, in 1998 Asian and African centres organized a missionary journey to Europe, specifically to visit churches, banks and the institutions of the European Union.

Another result of the Johannesburg plenary was the course in lay training leadership in Zimbabwe in 1998 under the theme "Being Communities of Hope", which included exposure visits to South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and led to a covenanting document entitled "Towards a Shared Vision for Our Work as Laity".

LAITY IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The idea that laypeople have only an inadequate knowledge of their faith* and therefore need the constant help of the ordained ministry is quite alien to the Orthodox tradition. Therefore the Orthodox member churches of the WCC shared readily in the ecumenical re-discovery of the laity. Several Orthodox lay movements like the Russian Orthodox Student Christian Movement in France, Germany and the USA; the Zoe brotherhood and Aktines movement in Greece; and *Syndesmos** in the Middle East were related to international lay movements. Orthodox academies were founded in Crete and Finland.

In the Orthodox tradition all members of the church are qualitatively equal in receiving God's grace and in realizing it as a new life. The laity is not unordained according to Orthodox tradition. At baptism* they receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit* in the sacrament of chrismation and participate as members of the Body of Christ in the royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). The important discovery of post-war Orthodoxy was that God is Lord both in the church and in the world. The life of the world itself was seen to be of significance to the gospel. In the eucharist the whole world is presented to God. "The whole church participates in the priesthood

of Christ and in his continuing shepherdly ministry in the world" (Paul Verghese, later Metropolitan Mar Gregorios). "The laymen can be, must be and are, by what they say and by the example they give, the best witnesses of Christ to non-Christians and non-believers" (Vitali Borovoy).

THE LAY APOSTOLATE IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1922 Pope Pius XI called the laypeople "to participate in the hierarchical apostolate"; in 1946 Pope Pius XII spoke of the laity as "not only belonging to the church but being the church". Under his pontificate two world congresses on the lay apostolate took place in Rome, in 1951 and 1957. They emphasized the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the church and their calling to be evangelists to their fellow human beings and to humanize the conditions of the world. In 1959 a permanent committee for international congresses of the lay apostolate was formed by Pope John XXIII.

Vatican II* approved officially what had developed, and in several statements it underlined the importance of the lay apostolate. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964), which includes a chapter on the laity, begins by stating that all who are baptized are the people of God, the holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:4-10), and all of humankind is called to become the people of God. Following a chapter on the hierarchical structure of the church, the chapter on the laity describes the particular function of laypeople as leaven and salt: "The laity is called in particular to make the church present and effective in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth" (no. 33).

The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (1965) argues that because of the growing autonomy of many realms of human life, the work of the lay apostolate is more important than ever before and needs to be intensified. The church has one mission and many different services. The realms of service – family, community, society, profession and politics – and the different forms in groups, congregations, lay movements and the training for the lay apostolate are outlined. Finally the Pastoral Constitution on

the Church in the Modern World (1965) affirms that involvement in cultural, social, economic, political and international affairs is to be seen as a task of the church in the world. "The people of God and the human race in whose midst it lives render service to each other. Thus the mission of the church will show its religious, and by that very fact, its supremely human character" (no. 11). In 1989, following the bishops' synod of 1988, Pope John Paul II appealed in a pastoral letter for a clear distinction between ordained and unordained members of the church.

THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE LAITY

No systematic ecumenical theology on the laity has yet been evolved, but many new theological insights have been gained. Nothing less than a "re-defined ecclesiology" (Yves Congar, Kraemer) was required in considering the ministry of the laity as God's action in the world. New insights have come in at least four areas.

The ministry of the laity. "We must understand anew the implications of the fact that we are all baptized, that, as Christ came to minister, so must all Christians become ministers of his saving purpose according to the particular gift of the Spirit which each has received, as messengers of the hope received in Christ. Therefore in daily living and work the laity are not mere fragments of the church who are scattered about in the world and who come together again for worship, instruction and specifically Christian fellowship on Sundays. They are the church's representatives, no matter where they are. It is the laity who draw together work and worship, it is they who manifest in word and action the lordship of Christ over the world, which claims so much of their time and energy and labour. This, and not some new order or organization, is the ministry of the laity" (Evanston 1954).

The church – gathered and dispersed. The church has traditionally been regarded from the aspect of the gathered flock, while the fact that it lives and works mainly as a scattered community is largely neglected. Two biblical images of the Christian community – the salt of the earth and the city on the hill – have been used to illuminate the two poles of the life of the Christian com-

munity. The church's function as salt of the earth can be carried out only by the laity. The church is seen in terms not of an established institution but of a "pilgrim people", constantly on the move into the world but also returning to the city on the mountain, where God's people come together for worship (WCC, Galyatetö 1956).

The function of the ordained ministry. Trained theologians and ordained ministers are in a bad position to be evangelists: they are in a good position to be the biblical and theological instructors of the evangelists. "It is not the duty of the laity to help the pastor to carry out his pastoral work, it is the pastor's duty to equip the laity to carry out their work in the world. The work of the laity is not secondary to that of the pastor, but vice versa" (Weber). Laypeople do not leave the church when they leave the church building. They are fulltime Christians just as much as the pastor is.

Christ in the world. God loved the world so much that he gave his Son. It is the world that matters. "Christ the light did not remain outside the world to illuminate it from above, but entered into human life, conquered the darkness and radiates light from within. This says to us that wherever we are in the world, God is there before us – the light is already there. The responsibility of the laity is to serve as reflecting mirrors or focusing lenses, to beam the light into all parts of the life of the world" (New Delhi).

A new form of lay activities has emerged in church base communities, peace movements, solidarity and ecological groups and the women's movement, often outside traditional church structures, in dialogue or co-operation with non-Christians. What was said about the laity in the churches could be said of these groups too: "The laity are members of God's people, specifically God's people present in the world" (Weber).

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LAITY/CLERGY

THE SEMANTIC field covered by these words is immense, and their meanings vary, depending both on the sociologist's analysis of them as an outsider and on the theologian's interpretation of them from the inside.

Sociologists note a difference among church members between those with a function or special status (the clergy) and other people (the laity). They ask whether that difference is connected with certain professional qualifications of members of the clergy, with the exercise of legal or moral authority,* with the existence of "clergy" as a social group, and so on.

For their part, theologians raise questions about whether the nature of this difference lies in the exercise of some power or "divine right" or in just serving the community, or whether it has some symbolic or "sacred" quality and so on. To a great extent the theory and practice of the various churches in this regard are a historical legacy: social positions and theological arguments have conditioned each other within it.

For sociologists the variety of models is more closely bound up with socio-political situations than with the confessions. The clergy of national churches (paid by the state and perhaps appointed by the civil authorities) are on a similar footing in Lutheran Sweden, Orthodox Greece or (until recently at least) Roman Catholic Spain – just as elsewhere the Roman Catholic worker-priest or the émigré Orthodox priest who works to earn his living or the Protestant pastor in Japan scarcely counts as part of the "clergy".