

Review

Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A Vision for the Priesthood of All Believers*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016, pp.2015, \$12.78 (paperback).

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Published in Global Missiology, www.globalmissiology.org. Oct. 2017

Uche Anizor (PhD, Wheaton College) and Hank Voss (PhD, Wheaton College) come eminently qualified to speak about the priesthood of believers, a term popularized by Martin Luther but a biblical concept rarely understood and practiced over the centuries. Anizor is an associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University and author of a book on a related topic: *Kings and Priests: Scripture's Theological Account of Its Readers*. Hank Voss, on the other hand, is a theological practitioner as national church planting direct at World Impact and senior national staff with The Urban Ministry Institute of Los Angeles. Both have a passion for the topic and a vested interest in seeing the body of Christ put into practice the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Their desire is to develop a “theological vision” (21) of the doctrine of the people of God as priests in God’s kingdom as part of their “identity in Jesus Christ” (21). They describe their thesis for this “well-rounded theological vision ... one that is constructive rather than reactive ... [and which] develops in four stages—biblical, historical, theological and practical” (21).

First, I want to commend this volume’s outstanding theological discussion of the topic. Especially commendable, I believe, is the authors’ Redemptive-Historical narrative perspective in chapter two entitled: “A Royal Priesthood: Scripture’s Story.” In this section, the authors begin with God’s creation of Adam in the Garden as what they describe as the first Priest-King of the earth. The historical survey then moves through time until God gave the same task of a royal priesthood to the Israelite people in Exodus. Next they show how redemptive history moves directly to the Davidic line using Psalm 110 and the third volume of Isaiah 52-66. This Psalm then foresees the day when the Anointed King from David’s dynasty comes and subsequently gives the exact same task to his people (see e.g., 1 Pet 2:9-10). The authors then illuminate this royal-priestly function through key passages in Hebrews and the Revelation of John.

In addition, helpfully, is an explicit approach to the priesthood of believers from the extremely important Trinitarian viewpoint of Chapter 4 (“Life in Communion: The Trinity and the Priesthood of All Believers”). Alongside of these two important theological chapters is also a superlative overview of the historical development of the doctrine in various traditions including the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and “Luther’s Burden” to reform the priesthood, which in his time was reserved for a tiny minority of males in ecclesial orders. Throughout these chapters the authors strive for more specific, practical application of the doctrine by expounding “Seven Major Ministries of the Priesthood” (75-80) and “The Seven Practices of the Royal Priesthood.”

I also greatly appreciate their seeing the missional aspect of their topic because this, in the long run, is the whole purpose of the royal-priesthood as Peter and the Prophets states – to fill

the earth with the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the seas and to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into light (Hos 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9, see 48-49). The authors following G. K. Beale among others show that the task of the King's priest in the Temple-Garden was to "serve and guard it" (28, author's italics). The two functions of "tending the garden and attending to God's word" both in and over the garden can be unified "as one act of expanding the sanctuary of God. As those created in the image of the divine King, humanity was to spread and reflect his glorious reign by subduing and ruling the entire earth (Gen 1:26-28)" – and I would add, for their King's glory (29, author's italics). At this point the authors move directly into Moses' discussion of Israel's royal-priesthood while, curiously, skipping the underlying informing theology of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is a surprising lacunae as it would have greatly strengthen their theological case.

On the other hand, there are several aspects of the volume that I would like to critique, especially Anizor and Voss' understanding of Adam's ministry of priesthood as a dual office of king and priest. Unfortunately, this is a common position taken by many today such as Meredith Kline, John Walton, and Greg Beale. However, I don't think it is wise to be stampeded into that position. Did the Father create Adam to be king of the earth with judging, law-making, and executive-royal functioning to bring deliverance to his children? This is, as Isaiah states, the sole prerogative of Yahweh himself (Is 33:22)? Or did God create Adam to be a steward-administrator of the divine property? The second is undoubtedly correct. Certainly, the Holy Spirit predicted that the children of Israel would father a king eventually (e.g., Gen 17:6, 16, 35:11, 49:10), and even revealed laws for that king to follow (Dt 17:14-20). However, the account of Samuel's reluctance to give them a king and the LORD's clear displeasure at their request to be "like all the [other] nations" (Dt 17:14; 1 Sam 8:5, 10:19) demonstrates that their request was a treasonous and idolatrous rejection of Yahweh as their sole sovereign. God repeats this twice, once directly to Samuel and the second time through Samuel to the people: "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them;" and "But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses" (1 Sam 10:19). It is clear this was not the Creator's moral will but his revealed, decretive will that allowed their request. Hence he gave them the first king, Saul. In other words, this gives evidence that humans were not originally supposed to be royalty but only servant-administrators of their King's possession. As such, Adam was also to be a human high priest of this extended family, what the Hebrew terms: "Bünê hä'ädäm" (i.e., humankind or more literally, "sons of the Adam," e.g., Gen 11:5). Here Anizor and Voss make an excellent case using the infelicitous term "Priest-King" – only King Jesus is our Priest-King – "Humanity is representational and representative, being like god in the exercise of rule over the earth while receiving delegated authority" (27).

Of course, God used the Israelites rebellious request to bring David and his royal dynasty that ended in the birth of Jesus, the God-man, son of the house of David, as Isaiah 7:14 to 9:7 predicts. In the end, however, God gave an infallible, prophetic interpretation of his abhorrence of human kings in the words of the Prophet Hosea: "I gave you a king in My anger And took him away in My wrath" (Hos 13:11). God foreordained and used the rebel request for a king to bring King Jesus. He did this exactly as he used the murderous anger of Joseph's brothers to send him to Egypt for the brothers' ultimate good and as he foreordained the horrible evil of the cross for our greater good. God is much wiser than we are (1 Cor 1-3). The sin of Adam, then, was that he wanted to be king in his Lord's place, to be able to determine good and evil for himself, and to be wise in his own eyes – a rebellious pattern followed throughout human history by all

humanity and especially human monarchs and royal wannabes. Only Jesus is a King-Priest and not Adam, nor the sons of Adam, who as Woody screamed at Buzz Lightyear, needed to be shaken up and told unequivocally “YOU - ARE - A... ‘TOY’! You aren't the real Buzz Lightyear! You're a... aw, you're - you're an action figure!” In other words, Adam “You are just an administrator,” a toy – so to speak – an instrument to be used by the Creator for his sole glory (Ps 115:1) – not the Savior and King, a title reserved only for Jesus, who granted it to him by the Father (see e.g., Eph 1:19-22).

Biblical-theologically speaking, then, Adam was a type or picture of Christ. In other words, he is in an analogous manner similar to but not in every respect exactly like our Lord (see e.g., Rom 5:14). Christ is absolutely unique. Therefore, human ecclesial-religious government was to be by chosen priestly elders, whom the Levites represented in the days of Israeli “body politick” as the Reformational, British Baptist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian confessions state. Civil government, as was Israel’s original, is ideally republican (rule by chosen elders , e.g., Dt 1:16-18 without a human king) not monarchical. Yahweh desires to monopolize his singular right to be Mon-arche – the sole ruler of the sons of Adam, and His Son to be the sole High Priest. Aaron was to be only a temporary picture of that office and, as stated, the Levites were to serve the Aaronic priest, representing the people. So I disagree with Anizor and Voss at this point. However, I do strongly concur with their exposition that the body of Christ “in union with” their Messiah is to share his royal-priestly ministry (see 72-75): “A mature doctrine of the royal priesthood is Christocentric-Trinitarian” (149). The priesthood then moves from Adam to Israel to the Royal-Priest (Jesus) to the assembly of the King, the body of Christ (55). This then implies rightly that “every member ministry is a vital practice of [our present] royal priesthood” (139). Having said that, however, I greatly desired that the authors had spelled this out in more detail with a chapter on the three types of gifts (ministry, manifestation, and motivation). In this Anizor and Voss could show what every member royal-priestly ministry looks like in practice both within the body and outside of the body as it missionally moves outward into the idolatrous cultures of the world to disciple the peoples and expand the Temple to fill the whole earth.

Furthermore, I also would have desired that Anizor and Voss would have dealt with the implications of the doctrine of the priesthood of believers and Adam’s fall, a surprising oversight. What this implies is that Adam, originally clothed with glory and honor (Ps 8:5), lost that encompassing glory/honor (Rom 3:23) and hence needed to be clothed with the wrapping belonging to another, ultimately Christ (see Rev 3:18). This implies again that Christ’s people are a royal-priesthood only “in Christ” as the authors do notably demonstrate (see chapter 6: “Representing Christ”). This weakness then perhaps leads to an underestimation of the glorious restoration of the whole earth coming from the redemption in Jesus the Christ (the Anointed Priest-King of heaven and earth) through his work operationalized through the hands and feet of his royal-priests on earth who work following the Spirit’s lead.

Last, in the context of the author’s discussion of Luther on official ministry and the priesthood of all believers, Anizor and Voss correctly emphasize, citing Luther, that “every Christian has the right and duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary” (77). Yet there still remains, according to Luther, the public office of preaching. In my view, this is an overreaction to the “radical reformers who denied the validity of the pastoral office.” In other words, the official, paid, full-time, public “ministry of the Word . . . for those called by a congregation to perform this ministry on behalf of the congregation” (77) is always necessary. Here Anizor and Voss accept without much critique the Lutheran/Calvinist/Anglican/Baptist protection of the

official ministry of the Word and Sacrament/Ordinance, inherited and modified from the Roman Church. This has historically always degenerated into an emphasis upon passive people in the pews listening to a preacher hired to do full-time ministry. It doesn't matter whether the clergyman was a single pastor with a board of many deacons (congregational and baptistic polity), or three offices of pastor, ruling elder, and minister of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian system, or bishop, rector, and trustees in the Anglican system, the end result is the same: Passivity of the "laity" and slow conversion growth. This emphasis upon paid clergy and the almost always resulting building fund, while giving more or less lip-service to the priesthood of all believers is one crucial reason why biblical Christianity has been dying in Europe and is destroying the salt and light function of the body of believers in North America, in my opinion.

However, on a more positive note, the authors quickly redeem themselves by agreeing with Luther, who "permits all Christians—particularly in emergency circumstances—to administer baptism" (77) and in similar situations "the Lord's Supper" (78). I agree wholeheartedly if the people of God are being overseen by their elected representatives (who are not clergyman) while doing their every-member ministry (i.e., Eph 4:12 NIV, NASB, ESV) house to house. The Lord's Supper was not a magical ceremony with little cups of juice and a tiny sliver of cracker but a bring-and-share meal in the context of homes with real wine and loaves of bread, the staples of the ancient diet. Only by restoring the ecclesial community as many face-to-face assemblies, meeting primarily in homes as the primary gathering place, and overseen by multiple elders can we restore the rapid disciplining of North America back to the top priority of Christ's community here. Only then can we again become the salt and light of our culture. There can indeed be gatherings of many home ekklesias (communities/assemblies) for celebration, lectures, teaching, and fellowship but this is not the essence of "church" (a very inadequate translation of εκκλησια ekklesia – an assembly, in my opinion).

Here again the authors redeem themselves later, in the section titled: "Three Inadequate Protestant Versions of the Priesthood of all Believers" (103). They are 1) "Clericalism: Monopolizing ministry to the heavenly Father;" 2) Atomistic and collective priesthoods: Misrepresenting our position "in Christ," and 3) Holy egotism: Missing the Spirit's prevenient witness." Concluding this section, the authors add these sage words: "We direct our worship and prayer to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We direct our work of ministry (Eph 4:12) as unto Christ himself, for the glory of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit." Finally, the authors correctly state that "the Holy Spirit directs our witness to Christ, for the glory of the Father" (110).

All in all, this is an excellent and much need redemptive-historical and Trinitarian-theological reflection on the ministry of the people of God that would help the body of Christ worldwide wean itself from exclusive dependence on paid pastors and buildings. A second edition that adds a chapter on how the three types of gifts could be implemented and modifications as mentioned would add even more to an already quite useful volume. I recommend it for any student seeking to understand every-member ministry in a sound missiology and ecclesiology.

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