

The Priesthood of All Believers: Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology as the Nexus of Equipping



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ABSTRACT

The study reviewed the theological foundations of the priesthood of all believers and its significance within Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology, with a specific focus on the role of the church as an equipping center. It explored the historical development of this doctrine, tracing its roots from the Old Testament priesthood to a more inclusive and participatory understanding in the New Testament. Special attention was given to Martin Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers during the Reformation and the contemporary emphasis of this doctrine in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles. The article emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to function as priests, having direct access to God and the ability to minister to others. This study employed a systematic research approach which combined biblical exegesis, historical research, and comparative analysis to explore the theological foundations of the priesthood of all believers. Exploring the essence of the priesthood of all believers, the article delved into how Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology can maximize impact in the nations by highlighting the responsibility of the church to provide the necessary training, discipleship, and support to enable believers to effectively conduct their priestly ministry. The study's equipping center model emphasizes the progression of spiritual gifts, the cultivation of a deep bond with God, and the active engagement in mission and service to transform the church and the society. The study concludes by advocating for a more inclusive and participatory approach to ministry. The work contributes to academia and Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology, a model to maximize impact in the nations.

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Publication History

Received: 24th May, 2024

Accepted: 11th December, 2024

Published online:

30th January, 2025

Keywords: Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology, The Priesthood of All Believers /Universal Priesthood, Equipping Center, Kingdom Ambassador

INTRODUCTION

The notion of the priesthood of all believers/ universal priesthood as a principle is a fundamental tenet in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. It emphasizes the belief that every Christian has direct access to God and is called to be a minister, rather than confining ministry to a chosen group of ordained clergies.¹ This article explores the theological foundations of this principle, and its significance and highlights its implications for the role of the Church as an equipping center. In traditional ecclesiology,

¹ Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2009).

the role of the priest is restricted to ordained individuals who administer sacraments and function as intermediaries between God and the congregation. However, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement challenges this notion by emphasizing the priesthood of all believers, asserting that every member of the church is called to be a minister and participate in the work of the ministry.² This article delves into the scriptural basis for this belief, highlighting 1 Peter 2:9 which proclaims believers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession." It further expounds on how this understanding shapes the identity and function of the church, transforming it into an equipping center.³

The term "equipping center" in this article refers to a community of believers that exists not merely to meet but to equip and empower believers for ministry. This work explores the several ways in which the priesthood of all believers fosters the equipping center model in the Pentecostal-Charismatic context. It delves into practical strategies implemented by Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, such as discipleship programmes, spiritual gifts assessments, and leadership development initiatives.⁴ These initiatives aim to identify and enhance the unique giftings and callings of every believer, ensuring that they are equipped to serve and fulfill their God-given purpose. Furthermore, the article examines how the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers impacts the dynamics of leadership within the church. It explores the shift from a hierarchical structure to a communal one, where leaders are not only authorities to be obeyed but facilitators who empower and enable others to minister effectively. Highlighting the universal priesthood and the role of the church as the equipping center, the work seeks to inspire believers and communities to embrace their role as ministers of the Gospel.⁵ It also aims to challenge conventional ecclesiological models and encourage a more participatory and empowering approach to church life.

The work serves as a guide for Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and believers who aspire to cultivate a community that actively engages in ministry, where every member is equipped and empowered to fulfill their unique role in the body of Christ and in the nations.⁶

METHODOLOGY

This article employed a systematic research approach to explore the theological foundations of the priesthood of all believers within Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology.⁶ The research began with a thorough investigation of relevant biblical passages, particularly those in the Old Testament that describe the role of the priesthood and its development over time. These passages, compared with New Testament teachings on the priesthood of all believers identify the shift towards inclusivity and participation.

Additionally, historical research was conducted, focusing on Martin Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers during the Reformation era. Primary sources from Luther and secondary sources analyzing his theological contributions were consulted to understand Luther's perspective on this doctrine and its impact on the development of Protestant theology. Moreover, contemporary literature sources from Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars were reviewed to capture the current emphasis on the priesthood of all believers within these theological traditions. This included examining works that highlight the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for priestly ministry and the practical implications of this doctrine in the modern church. The research further incorporated a comparative analysis of the priesthood of all believers with other ecclesiological frameworks to identify its distinctive features and potential benefits. This methodology combined biblical exegesis, historical research, and comparative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

² John W. Greig, "The Priesthood of All Believers and Leadership in the Church," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36, no. 3 (2009): 339–58.

³ Donald E. Miller, "Pentecostalism: The Attraction of 'Priesthood of All Believers' for Christians of All Stripes," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 28, no. 4 (1991): 558–74.

⁴ Stephen B. Miller, "The Equipping Task of Pastors: Realizing the Priesthood of All Believers," *Theology Today* 64, no. 3 (2007): 330–40.

⁵ John Sanders, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the New Perspective on Paul," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5, no. 9 (1996): 99–104.

⁶ Peter H. Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, and Gary T. Henry, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*, 8th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2019).

theological foundations of the priesthood of all believers and its role within Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology as an equipping center.

The Theological Foundations of the Priesthood of All Believers:

The Theological foundation of the universal priesthood is considered from the following dimensions: The Biblical basis, the role of the Old Testament Priesthood toward a more inclusive Priesthood in the New Testament, and the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to function as priests in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology.

The Biblical Basis

The priesthood of all believers as a fundamental theological concept within Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology emphasizes the equality and empowerment of all believers to serve God, rather than a hierarchical structure with distinct roles and privileges reserved for a few individuals.⁷ At the heart of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology is a strong emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. According to this perspective, the explosion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was not a one-time event, but an ongoing, empowering experience available to all believers.⁸ This belief is entrenched in the understanding that, through the redemptive work of Christ, humanity is reconciled with God and made participants in the divine nature.⁹ This participation is not constrained to a select few, but open to all who believe in Jesus Christ and receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

The primary biblical foundation for the priesthood of all believers can be found in 1 Peter 2:9, which states, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (ESV) This verse from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective highlights the communal nature of the priesthood, where all believers are referred to as a chosen people and a royal priesthood.¹¹

Furthermore, the Book of Revelation emphasizes the priesthood of all believers by using similar language. In Revelation 1:5-6, it is said that Jesus Christ has made us a "kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." This reinforces the idea that all believers are called to be priests, ministering to God, and serving His purposes.¹²

In Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology, the priesthood of all believers is the basis for the practice of spiritual gifts. According to this view, the Holy Spirit empowers each believer with unique gifts to edify the body of Christ. This includes not only the more observable gifts, such as prophecy or healing, but also the seemingly less projecting gifts, like evangelism, administration, encouragement and serving.¹³ The emphasis on the priesthood of all believers challenges the traditional idea of a clergy-laity distinction founded in some ecclesiastical structures.¹⁴ Instead, it recognizes the egalitarianism of believers' access to God and calling, to be active participants in the mission of God in the world. This theological foundation has weighty extrapolations for the practical functioning of the church within the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition. It promotes a noteworthy participatory and egalitarian approach to ministry, encouraging all believers to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the entire body.

The theological foundations of the priesthood of all believers in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology stem from its emphasis on the conferring work of the Holy Spirit and the belief that every believer is

⁷ Robeck Jr. Cecil M., "Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 34, no. 3 (2007): 287–94.

⁸ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "Will You Not Revive Us Again? (Psalm 85:6): An Evaluation of Revival In The Context Of Evangelical-Pentecostal Movements.," *Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal*, May 20, 2021, 11–22, <https://doi.org/10.38159/pecanep.2021221>.

⁹ Christine Christ Van. Tichy, "The Priesthood of All Believers: A Biblical Approach," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 1, no. 2 (1990): 29–38.

¹⁰ John Day, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Liminality of the Spirit," *Theology Today* 104, no. 808 (2001): 353–60.

¹¹ Scot McKnight, "The Priesthood of All Believers: What It Means," *Christianity Today*, 2013.

¹² Bradley K. T. Malkovsky, "The 'Priesthood of All Believers' Revisited: A Post-Liberal Proposal," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 1, no. 2 (2007): 188–207.

¹³ Clark Pinnock, *The Priesthood of All Believers, Theology for the Community of God* (Nottingham: Baker Academic, 2005).

¹⁴ Michael J. Kruger, "The Priesthood of All Believers in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Reformed Theological Review* 77, no. 1 (2018): 2–15.

a royal priesthood. This doctrine challenges classified structures and encourages the active involvement and ministry of all believers, promoting a more egalitarian and inclusive understanding of the church.¹⁵

Examining the role of the Old Testament priesthood toward a more inclusive priesthood in the New Testament

The charge of the Old Testament priest was significant and highly exclusive, restricted to a specific lineage from the tribe of Levi. However, examining the transition towards a more inclusive priesthood in the New Testament sheds light on a remarkable shift in religious practice and beliefs.¹⁶ In the Old Testament, the priesthood was an essential component of the Jewish religious system. The responsibilities of the priests included performing rituals, offering sacrifices, and acting as intermediaries between God and the people.¹⁷ This exclusive class of priests belonged to the tribe of Levi and held a hereditary position, specifically descending from Aaron, the brother of Moses. The regulations governing the priesthood in the Old Testament were stringent, requiring the priests to adhere to strict codes of conduct and rituals. They were to maintain ceremonial purity, abstain from certain activities, and follow specific guidelines for offering sacrifices. Only men from the tribe of Levi who met these qualifications could hold the position of a priest.

However, in the New Testament, awareness of priesthood underwent a transformative process. The ministry of Jesus Christ marked a significant shift in religious practice and understanding. Jesus himself, as the High Priest, fulfilled the role of the Levitical priesthood, offering a final sacrifice of himself for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁸ The inclusivity of Jesus' ministry played a crucial role in shaping the new understanding of priesthood. Jesus challenged the exclusivity of the Old Testament priesthood by welcoming and engaging with people from various backgrounds, including women, Gentiles, Samaritans, and those considered unclean by societal standards. This emphasis on inclusivity and the democratization of access to God was revolutionary for the time. Moreover, Jesus extended his priesthood to his disciples, empowering them to continue his ministry.¹⁹ This apostolic priesthood included people who witnessed Jesus' teachings, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all believers, symbolizing the democratization of the Spirit throughout the new priesthood.²⁰ The apostle Peter further highlights the broadening of the priesthood in his first letter: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). Here, Peter includes all believers, regardless of lineage or gender, in this new priesthood. This marks a departure from the exclusive nature of the Old Testament priesthood, emphasizing the equality and inclusivity of all believers in their relationship with God.

Examining the role and transition of the priesthood from the Old Testament to the New Testament reveals a remarkable shift from exclusivity towards inclusivity. Jesus' ministry challenged the exclusivity of the Levitical priesthood by welcoming and engaging with people from diverse backgrounds. His sacrificial death and resurrection opened the new priesthood to all believers, eliminating the need for the hereditary lineage of the old system. This inclusivity emphasizes the equality and access to God for all believers, highlighting the transformative nature of the New Testament priesthood.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to function as Priests in Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology

In Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology, the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to function as priests holds great significance. This understanding stems from the belief that every

¹⁵ Donald K. McKim and Westminster J., *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, *Witchcraft in Ghana: Belief, Practice and Consequences* (Noyam Publishers, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.38159/npub.eb2021502>.

¹⁷ Kruger, "The Priesthood of All Believers in the Letter to the Hebrews."

¹⁸ Kruger, "The Priesthood of All Believers in the Letter to the Hebrews."

¹⁹ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

²⁰ Amos Yong, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ministry of the Spirit," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 2 (2008): 178–91.

believer, upon receiving the Holy Spirit, becomes a part of the royal priesthood, with direct access to God and the ability to minister to others in various capacities.²¹ According to Pentecostal-Charismatic theology, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the empowerment of believers to function as priests.²² This empowerment is often associated with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is believed to be a distinct experience after salvation.²³ It is observed as a moment of spiritual empowerment, where believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and receive supernatural gifts and abilities. One of the primary features of the Holy Spirit's empowerment is the endowment of spiritual gifts. These gifts, such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, healing, and discernment, are believed to be given by the Holy Spirit for the elevation of the church and the equipping of believers to minister effectively.²⁴ Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology places a strong accent on the active presence and operation of these gifts within the body of believers.

The Holy Spirit is also seen as the source of divine guidance and revelation in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. Believers are encouraged to seek the leadership of the Spirit in all aspects of their lives, including their ministry and service to others. It is believed that the Holy Spirit provides supernatural wisdom, discernment, and insight to empower believers to fulfill their priestly role effectively.²⁵

Furthermore, in Pentecostal-Charismatic theology, the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of transformation. The Spirit empowers believers to undergo a progression of sanctification, where their lives are progressively transformed into the image of Christ. This transformation enables believers to echo God's attractiveness and love, and thus minister to others in a way that brings glory to God. Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology also emphasizes the prerequisite for believers to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. This ongoing infilling is viewed as necessary for believers to continually operate in the gifts and empowerment of the Spirit, to remain sensitive to His guidance, and to resist the temptations and pressures of the world.

The role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to function as priests in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology is of utmost importance. The Spirit's role is understood in endowing believers with spiritual gifts, providing divine guidance and revelation, facilitating a process of transformation, and enabling believers to minister effectively. This understanding emphasizes the necessity of believers being continually empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill their priestly responsibilities in the Church and in the world.

Historical Development of the priesthood of all believers

The early 20th-century Pentecostal movement challenged the clergy-laity otherness and emphasized the direct experience of the Holy Spirit by every believer. This emphasis resonated with the already existent broader Protestant Reformation idea of the priesthood of all believers, which rejected classified structures and promoted individual connection to God. Additionally, the conviction in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the biblical teachings in the New Testament further reinforced the understanding of the priesthood of all believers throughout history as discussed below:

Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers as a response to the hierarchical structure of the Church

In the 16th century, the German theologian Martin Luther played a critical part in the Protestant Reformation. One of the key ideas he emphasized was the priesthood of all believers, which served as a significant response to the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church at that time. Luther's emphasis on this principle brought about a radical shift in grasping the role of individuals within the

²¹ Allan Anderson, "Towards a Pneumatological Ecclesiology," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 20, no. 2 (2000): 267–87.

²² Yong, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ministry of the Spirit."

²³ Anderson, "Towards a Pneumatological Ecclesiology."

²⁴ Yong, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ministry of the Spirit."

²⁵ Day, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Liminality of the Spirit."

church and opposed the authority and power held by the clergy.²⁶ During Luther's time, the Catholic Church held a hierarchical structure with the pope at the topmost, followed by cardinals, bishops, priests, and then through to the laity. The church positioned the clergy as arbitrators amid God and the people, with the power to interpret scripture and administer sacraments. This system created a division between the spiritual elite and the common believers. However, Luther believed that this power imbalance swerves the true teachings of the Bible.²⁷ Luther drew upon various biblical passages to support his stance on the priesthood of all believers. One of the central passages he referenced is 1 Peter 2:9. Luther believed that these verses affirmed the rightful place of all believers as priests before God, making them equal in access to divine grace and responsible for sharing the Gospel.²⁸

Luther sought to dismantle the hierarchical structure that granted exclusive power to the clergy by emphasizing the concept of universal priesthood. He argued that each believer had an active and individual connection with God and did not need an intermediary to access divine grace. Through this idea, Luther put forth the view that every Christian had the ability and responsibility to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, as well as participate in worship and spiritual activities. Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers had profound implications for the church and society.²⁹ It significantly challenged the authority, privileged status, and influence of the clergy, who no longer held exclusive control over matters of faith and spirituality. This shift promoted individual spiritual growth, community participation, and the democratization of religious practices. It also paved the way for greater religious freedom, as the universal priesthood affirmed the idea that believers possess inherent dignity and worth and should not be subordinated to any human authority regarding one's contact with God.

Furthermore, Luther's emphasis on the universal priesthood laid the groundwork for the development of Protestantism, as it provided a biblical justification for a more egalitarian, decentralized, and all-encompassing approach to church governance.³⁰ It sparked a wave of reforms that included translating the Bible into vernacular languages, encouraging the education of the laity, and fostering congregational autonomy.

Luther's accent on the universal priesthood served as a powerful response to the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, challenging the exclusive power and authority of the clergy and affirming the equal spiritual dignity and responsibility of all believers. Luther's teachings transformed religious practice and contributed to the historic progress of Protestantism by promoting individual access to God's grace and empowering the laity.

Contemporary emphasis on the priesthood of all believers in the context of Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology

The contemporary stress on the universal priesthood in the context of Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology can be traced to the above-discussed historical and theological factors. To appreciate the emphasis on universal priesthood in the contemporary Pentecostal-Charismatic context, it is crucial to delve into the historical backdrop of the Pentecostal drive. The ancestry of Pentecostalism is precisely traced to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century. This revival, led by William Seymour, piloted a new era of spirituality that emphasized the restoration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including prophecy, glossolalia, and divine healing.³¹ One of the central tenets of Pentecostalism is the belief in the unswerving experience of the Holy Spirit by every believer. This notion challenged the established clergy-laity distinction prevalent in many traditional Christian denominations. While historically, the clergy were seen as the intermediaries between God and the laity, the advent of Pentecostalism elevated the individual believer's role in experiencing and

²⁶Robert Kolb, "The Priesthood of All Believers and Confession," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 555–72.

²⁷ Robeck Jr., "Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers."

²⁸ Khiok-Khng Yeo, "Luther on the Priesthood of All Believers: A Shape for True Authenticity," *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 3 (2014): 445–60.

²⁹ Scott H. Hendrix, "Luther's View of the Priesthood of All Believers," *Theology Today* 37, no. 2 (1980): 169–78.

³⁰ Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (Fig, 2013).

³¹ William J Seymour, "Father of Modern Day Pentecostalism," *In the Tradition*, 1976.

ministering through the Holy Spirit.³² This emphasis on personal experience and direct engagement with the Holy Spirit resonated deeply with the idea of the universal priesthood.

However, the roots of the contemporary emphasis on the universal priesthood within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement go beyond the early 20th century, because figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin challenged the hierarchical structure and argued for universal priesthood, suggesting that there is no need for intermediaries between God and the individual believer. Within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, this Protestant Reformation emphasis on the universal priesthood found a new expression.³³ The belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the immediate experience of God's presence affirmed the view that every believer has a unique role and calling within the body of Christ. This understanding led to a flattening of the clergy-laity divide and enabled ordinary believers to engage in various ministries, including preaching, healing, prophecy, and teaching.³⁴ To augment these historical factors, there are also theological keystones that support the contemporary accent on the universal priesthood in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology. Fundamental to this theology is the belief in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer.³⁵ Pentecostals and Charismatics often understand the Holy Spirit as an active and empowering presence within the individual, equipping them for ministry and gifting them for service.³⁶ This empowering presence of the Holy Spirit reinforces the idea that all believers are considered priests, called to minister to one another and to the world. Furthermore, the emphasis on the universal priesthood aligns with the biblical teachings found in the New Testament.³⁷ Books of the Bible such as 1 Peter and Revelation affirm the belief that all believers are a "royal priesthood" and a "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9), with direct access to God and the capacity to offer spiritual sacrifices. These passages, along with various others, form the foundation for the contemporary Pentecostal-Charismatic view of the priesthood of all believers. The contemporary emphasis on the universal priesthood in the context of Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology is therefore traced to a combination of historical and theological factors.

The Essence of the Priesthood of all believers is to maximize its impact on the nations.

Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology stands as a theological framework that emphasizes the importance of universal priesthood within the Christian community. This concept of empowering every believer to actively participate in the ministry and serve as an agent of transformation is essential in maximizing its impact in the nations.³⁸ This work investigates the implication of the priesthood of all believers within the Pentecostal-Charismatic context, highlighting its transformative potential to achieve spiritual and social transformation on a universal scale through unleashing the potential of every believer, to serve as a catalyst for spiritual and social transformation, and expand the reach of the gospel, thereby equipping and empowering believers as briefly discussed below:

Firstly, as opposed to a traditional classified structure, the Pentecostal-Charismatic approach recognizes that every believer has a unique calling and gift from God.³⁹ The priesthood of all believers asserts that all individuals, irrespective of their gender, age, or social status, are called to serve God and be involved in ministry. The Pentecostal-Charismatic movement taps into the vast potential of all its members, empowering them to contribute their skills, talents, and passions toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission by embracing this doctrine.⁴⁰

Secondly, emphasizing the priesthood of all believers serves as a catalyst for spiritual and societal transformation in the nations. When believers, armed with the power of the Holy Spirit, are

³² Miller, "Pentecostalism: The Attraction of 'Priesthood of All Believers' for Christians of All Stripes."

³³ Yong, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ministry of the Spirit."

³⁴ Greig, "The Priesthood of All Believers and Leadership in the Church."

³⁵ Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit Scripture and Community* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2009).

³⁶ Byron Klaus, "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint," *Pneuma* 27, no. 2 (2005): 322–42.

³⁷ Sanders, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the New Perspective on Paul."

³⁸ W. T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London: T&T Clark, 1998).

³⁹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "Pastoral And Theological Responses To The Effects Of Witchcraft Beliefs In Ghana," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, September 24, 2020, 174–84, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ejass.2020096>.

encouraged to fulfill their roles as priests, they are equipped and emboldened to minister to others. This unleashes a powerful force of love, compassion, and healing that reaches past the confines of religious institutions and impacts communities, nations, and even the world at large.⁴¹

Thirdly, by giving credence to the universal priesthood, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement expands the reach of the Gospel message. This belief dismisses the theory that only a select few are called to ministry or possess the authority to share the Good News. Instead, every Christian is empowered to share their faith, engage in evangelism, and make disciples. This democratization of ministry enables a more comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to spreading the message of Christ, increasing the potential for transformation and salvation within the nations.⁴²

Finally, the priesthood of all believers' approach necessitates a shift in ecclesiological practices. It calls for equipping believers with theological education, practical training, and opportunities to gain experience in their faith.⁴³ Pentecostal-Charismatic churches that embrace this principle invest in leadership development programmes, discipleship initiatives, and mentorship structures to nurture a generation of believers who are well-prepared to influence their communities positively. Enabling every believer to fulfill their priestly calling and be involved in ministry maximizes the movement's impact in the nations. This approach not only unlocks the inherent potential of all believers but also fosters spiritual and social transformation on a local and universal scale. The Pentecostal-Charismatic movement can effectively reach the nations with the Gospel, transforming lives and ushering in a Kingdom-focused reality by embracing this theological foundation.

The Role of the Church as an Equipping Centre

Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have emerged as a dynamic force within the framework of global Christianity emphasizing the enabling of believers through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, leading to an active engagement with spiritual gifts for communal benefits.⁴⁴ Beyond this spiritual and experiential aspect, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches play a crucial role as equipping centers through their discipleship and spiritual formation programs. The work explores the significance of these programmes and their impact on individual believers and the community.

At the core of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches' equipping mission is a commitment to discipleship.⁴⁵ These churches recognize the essence of nurturing individuals in their spiritual journey, grounding them in the instructions of Jesus, and helping them grow in their faith. Discipleship programs offer a structured approach to instruction, mentoring, and accountability. Through teaching sessions, small groups, and one-on-one relationships, believers are encouraged to deepen their understanding of Scripture, develop a personal relationship with God, and live out the principles of the kingdom of God for the betterment and transformation of individual believers and the community at large.

Additionally, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches emphasize spiritual formation as a vital component of equipping believers. Spiritual formation focuses on the transformation of the whole person, including their character, attitudes, and behaviors.⁴⁶ These programs encourage participants to cultivate spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, fasting, and study of Scripture, all aimed at nurturing a deeper intimacy with God. Engaging in these practices, individuals not only deepen their relationship with God but also develop qualities such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and humility.

The primary aim of the Pentecostal-Charismatic equipping programs is to empower believers for effective ministering in the nations. These churches believe in the spiritual gifts outlined in the

⁴¹ A. Yong, "The Holy Spirit and the Justice Imperative: Toward a Pentecostal Theory of Social Transformation," *PentecoStudies* 1, no. 7 (2008): 89–106.

⁴² Kostenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*.

⁴³ Miller, "The Equipping Task of Pastors: Realizing the Priesthood of All Believers."

⁴⁴ Allan Anderson, "Spreading Fires: The Globalization of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 1 (2007): 8–14.

⁴⁵ Serah Wambua, "Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship," in *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship* (Fortress Press, 2013), 62–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddesmf.9>.

⁴⁶ Christopher Beard, "Missional Discipleship: Discerning Spiritual-Formation Practices and Goals within the Missional Movement," *Missiology: An International Review* 43, no. 2 (April 11, 2015): 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829614563059>.

New Testament and emphasize their activation and deployment for the edification of the church and society for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth because the earth is the Lord's.⁴⁷

Through discipleship and spiritual formation programs, individuals are taught to recognize their gifts, develop them through training, and deploy them in service. The equipping empowers believers to become active participants in the mission of God, engaging in evangelism, discipleship, compassionate ministries, and other forms of service.

Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are not only concerned with individual spiritual growth but also with the transformation of communities and society at large.⁴⁸ The Equipping programs foster a sense of responsibility and mission, encouraging believers to engage with their communities and address social needs. Through various outreach initiatives, these churches provide tangible help and spiritual support to marginalized groups, contributing to social justice and holistic transformation in the nations. The equipping process helps believers discover their purpose and equips them to impact their spheres of influence, resulting in positive change in the wider society.

Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have made significant strides in lieu of equipping believers to function as priests who serve their nations, nevertheless, challenges exist. Adapting and contextualizing the equipping programs to diverse cultural contexts, maintaining theological integrity, and addressing issues of extremism and abuses.⁴⁹ There is therefore a need for Pentecostal-Charismatic churches to continuously evaluate and refine their discipleship and spiritual formation initiatives, ensuring they remain relevant, balanced, and effective in empowering believers for transformative ministry. Pentecostal-Charismatic churches demonstrate a profound commitment to equipping believers through the briefly discussed discipleship and spiritual formation programs. These initiatives provide a solid foundation for the universal priesthood, enabling them to walk in the fullness of their calling as New Testament Priests. By emphasizing discipleship, spiritual formation, and community engagement, the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches help believers develop a deep-rooted spirituality that not only impacts their personal lives but also transforms their communities and societies. As the Pentecostal-Charismatic equipping programs continue to evolve and adapt, they fulfill their role as vital training centers, equipping the people of God to impact the nations.

The Role of Believers as Kingdom Ambassadors in Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology: Functioning as Everyday priest and making an impact on the nations.

In Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology, believers are understood as kingdom ambassadors whose primary role is to make a significant impact in the nations.⁵⁰ This concept referred to as becoming an everyday priest in this study, is believed to be rooted in the traditions of the early church and fueled by the Holy Spirit's empowerment. It emphasizes the idea that every believer has a unique calling to represent and extend God's kingdom in their everyday lives.⁵¹ In this ecclesiology, the work of the believer as an ambassador is not restricted to the designated clergy or designated few; instead, it encompasses the entire body of believers. Everyone is considered anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to conduct the mission of Christ on earth. The term kingdom ambassador refers to the understanding that believers are representatives of God's kingdom on earth. They reflect the values, principles, and character of the kingdom in their interactions with society.⁵² This includes being a light in the darkness and demonstrating love, compassion, and justice to those they encounter.

The idea of becoming an everyday priest emphasizes that believers are not restricted to professional ministry roles. Instead, they are called to be ministers in their workplaces, schools, communities, and families. Each believer is called to bring God's presence and kingdom influence on

⁴⁷ Kwasi Atta Agyapong and Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "The Earth Is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1): A Pentecostal Perspective on the Doctrine of Creation," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, October 20, 2023, 1219–31, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20234105>.

⁴⁸ Yong, "The Holy Spirit and the Justice Imperative: Toward a Pentecostal Theory of Social Transformation."

⁴⁹ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "A Pentecostal Reflection on Christianity and Extremism: Christianity and Book Burnings in the Late Antiquity," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, July 3, 2023, 268–80, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2023972>.

⁵⁰ John Jackson, *Grace Ambassador: Bringing Heaven to Earth* (Bloomington: Chosen Books, 2023).

⁵¹ Pieter Pikkert, "Protestant Missionaries to the Middle East: Ambassadors of Christ or Culture?" (University of South Africa, 2006).

⁵² Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010).

their respective spheres of influence.⁵³ Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology teaches that the Holy Spirit empowers believers with spiritual gifts to fulfill their ambassadorial role. These gifts include prophecy, healing, deliverance, teaching, and other manifestations of the Spirit's power. Through the exercise of these gifts, believers are equipped to impact the nations for Christ. The impact made by believers as kingdom ambassadors takes various forms. It could be through acts of kindness, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the vulnerable. It could also involve sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others, leading them to salvation and discipleship. Additionally, believers are encouraged to be agents of communal transformation by addressing social injustices and advocating for the marginalized.

The goal of this ecclesiology is to embody the Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples – to make disciples of all nations. Believers are called to actively participate in God's mission to reconcile all things to Himself by becoming everyday priests and kingdom ambassadors. In inference, within Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology, believers are seen as kingdom ambassadors tasked with representing and extending God's kingdom in their everyday lives. This concept, known as becoming an everyday priest, emphasizes that all believers have a role to play in making an impact in the nations. It calls for an integrated approach to ministry, where believers operate in their God-given gifts and anointing to bring about transformation and the expansion of God's kingdom on earth.

Implications of the Model to Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology

The Equipping center model discussed in this study offers implications and recommendations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology as follows:

1. **Active Participation:** According to this ecclesiology, all believers are seen as active participants in the life and ministry of the church. It encourages individuals to use their spiritual gifts, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to contribute to the worship, growth, and mission of the church. Therefore, it is recommended that churches provide opportunities for believers to exercise their spiritual gifts and actively participate in various ministries.
2. **Emphasis on Spiritual Gifts:** The Pentecostal-charismatic tradition emphasizes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, including the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Churches with this ecclesiology should prioritize identifying, nurturing, and utilizing the spiritual gifts of their members. This may involve training, equipping, and creating spaces for the growth and exercise of these gifts.
3. **Authority and Leadership:** While the priesthood of all believers recognizes the equal access of all believers to God, it does not negate the need for authority and leadership within the church. In the Pentecostal-charismatic context, the role of leaders is seen as facilitating and empowering the ministry of all believers, rather than acting as mediators between the believer and God. Churches following this ecclesiology should promote servant leadership that encourages and supports the active engagement and growth of all believers.
4. **Spirit-Empowered Worship:** The Pentecostal-charismatic tradition places a strong emphasis on worship that is characterized by the freedom and leading of the Holy Spirit. This may involve practices such as enthusiastic worship, spontaneous prayer, and the exercise of spiritual gifts during corporate gatherings. It is recommended that churches foster an environment where believers can freely express their worship and allow the Holy Spirit to move among them.
5. **Global Missions and Evangelism:** The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is believed to empower believers for the work of evangelism and missions. Pentecostal-charismatic churches often have a strong emphasis on evangelism and spreading the gospel both locally and globally. Churches should encourage and support believers to actively engage in sharing their faith and participating in missions, recognizing that all believers have a role to play in the Great Commission.

These implications and recommendations reflect the Pentecostal-charismatic understanding of the priesthood of all believers, highlighting the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the active

⁵³ Joe Ibojie, *The Justice of God: Victory in Everyday Living. New Edition* (Chicago: Cross House Books, 2009).

involvement of all believers in the life, worship, and mission of the church to make the desired impact in the church and the nations.

CONCLUSION

The priesthood of all believers is a fundamental principle in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology that highlights the role of every believer in ministry. It challenges the traditional notions of the clergy-laity divide and positions the Church as an equipping center. As believers embrace their calling as priests, the Holy Spirit empowers them to fulfill their ministry both within the church and in the world. This understanding of priesthood encourages active participation, spiritual growth, and effective stewardship of spiritual gifts. The universal priesthood serves as a catalyst for the Church's mission to transform lives and communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The concept of the priesthood of all believers in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology makes the church a powerful equipping center in the nations. The theological foundation of the universal priesthood is applauded by examining the role of the Old Testament priesthood and its evolution towards a more inclusive priesthood in the New Testament.

The empowerment of believers by the Holy Spirit to function as priests is not only a present reality but also a historical development within the Church. This understanding of the priesthood of all believers holds immense significance for the Church as it maximizes its impact in the nations. Recognizing that every believer has a role to play in fulfilling God's purposes, the Church can tap into the vast potential and gifting of its members. No longer are priests limited to a select few, but the entire body of believers is called to minister to the world. This inclusive priesthood promotes unity, diversity, and a shared responsibility within the Church. The priesthood of all believers also encourages believers to embrace their individual calling and to contribute to the needs of the world. The Pentecostal-Charismatic churches serving as equipping centers equip believers to grow in faith, knowledge, and love as the Holy Spirit works among its members. Recognizing the inherent worth and value of every believer, the Church can unleash its collective power and impact society for the better. The priesthood of all believers is not just a theological concept, but a practical reality that can transform the Church and the world. As the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches embraces its role as an equipping center and empowers believers through the Holy Spirit, it can truly maximize its impact in the nations.

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