

*Priests are to be defenders, not polluters ("heretics"), of the Faith. Like the unordained, they need guidance and correction so they'll be "straight" (ortho-doxy and ortho-praxy).

An excellent lay preacher asked me to do this thinksheet, puzzled as he is about ordination--after a five year pastorate, in which he was installed ("local-church ordination") by UCC Conn. Conference Minister Jas. English; and since the Synod '83 distinctions between "licensed," "commissioned," and "ordained" clergy.

1. In all human societies, priests (whether or not bearing that title) embody, incarnate, **RE-PRESENT** the peoples' fears/hopes/loves/hates, and **present** all these, and the people with them, to the Source-Destiny. As the work of this functionary is solemn-important and central to the community's life and well-being, all societies "ordain" priests in the sense of initiating them into their role after sufficient preparation.
2. Preparation for priesthood is meant to insure (1) **tabu** honoring, (2) **values** protecting, (3) **virtues** engendering, and (4) **quality control** (selecting "out" applicants officially judged unworthy).
3. Almost all societies provide, with "ordination," a "living" (i.e., **life-support** for the person and family). Exceptions: Some traditions in Judaism (the rabbi being expected to practice a remunerative, non-rabbinical occupation); left-wing Protestantism (e.g., Roger Williams' **THE HIRELING PREACHER TWICE DAMNED**); and 20th-c. "worker-priests."
4. "CLAITY" is Terry Fullam's **obscuration** of the cleric/laic distinction. I'm suspicious of this obscuration, which is usually practiced by (a) a very clerical clergyman, as is Terry, or (b) an ignorant upstart of a lay/man-woman. Myself, I'm neither pro- nor anti-clerical: I don't ideologize the function in either direction. At age 22 I was ordained by the American Baptist Convention association in which I'd been "in care," a great black preacher preaching the sermon (1940). But I've been and am strong for "lay ministry," and at NYTS was (for a period) Prof. of Lay Theological Education....In seven hours with Fullam, late '83 Hyannis, I observed an ordained autocrat prating about "all are ministers." He brought brainwashed laity with him, who--in the small groups they led--meant by "the teaching" Terry's teaching (specifically, his scribal strings or chains (Latin, "catenae") of Bible quotes). He releases the laity to their ministries by scribizing them! Yet on balance, the effect is, I believe, more divine than demonic.
5. Scripture says we're supposed to avoid giving the devil openings, and ordination does that. The conferring of **sacral status** is the most seductive human initiation, almost a contract for mutual people/priest delusion. Especially in the America of the 1960s, many young people who prepared for priesthood refused ordination, and thousands of the ordained defrocked themselves: ordination was "out," almost bad-naughty-boo-hiss. Another tack was the promotion of the notion of universal ordination: (1) every believer has a ministry, so why not community-recognition of it and commission to it? and (2) as Gilbert and Sullivan said, "When everybody's somebody nobody's anybody": universal ordination spikes the crime of a clerical-superior class. We began to "commission" laity for specific ministries, as we'd always commissioned clergy to special ministries (e.g., I gave the charge to Harriet Kurtz as the first UCC "Peace Minister," Truman Douglas preaching the sermon).
6. As for terms, "ordaining" better fits OT and "commissioning," NT. Priestcraft includes nature-cycle ministry and is awkward in a religion-of-choice (e.g., Christianity), natural to a religion-of-birth (e.g., Judaism). Christian ordination into a clerical-professional class is (1) **ambiguous**, and therefore suspect, and (2) **necessary**, and therefore to be distinguished from "lay ministry" and protected against interlopers, attackers, and degenerates (priests who become unworthy).^{*} Normally, only the ordained should be permitted life-support from the community.