Title: The role of laity, its theological foundation and application in the Batak Karo Seventh-day Adventist Church: a case study

Author: Joseph Syukur Peranginangin

Date completed: May 1995

Granting Institution: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS)

Description: Unpublished Thesis (DPTh): 246 pages

Abstract:

The role of laity, its biblical background, and current relevance is addressed in this study from a Batak Karo perspective. The story of the case illustrates that the laymen in the Karo church have refrained from participation in church ministry. The main pastoral-theological issue in the case is a misunderstanding of the role of the laity and clergy in the Seventh-day Adventist Batak Karo Church which has resulted in a lack of lay involvement and an unproductive church.

The purpose of the study is (1) to provide a better understanding of a theology of laity for the church members and pastors, and an awareness of their role in church ministry, and (2) to help the laity to discover their own spiritual gifts and practice their gifts to strengthen the church ministry. The study involves the following procedures: (1) description, (2) analysis, (3) biblical theological interpretation, and (4) pastoral action.

In the first chapter of part I, the case study relates the story of a young pastor in a Batak Karo Church in North Sumatra who became aware that the members of his church had no interest in church ministry. An introduction to the study follows in chapter 2 presenting a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, its methodology and significance.

Part II presents three chapters devoted to probing the sociocultural and religious dynamics of the case. The chapters provide a historical background of the Karo people, their
characteristics, and how to adapt (customs) have influenced their daily lives. Insights are offered as to how Karo people have been influenced by their ancestral religion, by Christianity, and by Islam. To understand their background is to provide the pastor with motivational methods to engage them voluntarily in gospel work.

Part III discusses in three chapters the pastoral theological issue in the case story through a biblical-theological interpretation. The Scriptures reveal that God has only one kind of people: the laos (the laity) or the people of God. The New Testament makes no distinction between the clergy and the laity except for function. All the laity are ministers, as agents of salvation to carry the gospel to the world.

Part IV describes the findings of the study with a summary, conclusions, and applications to ministry. The laity can be motivated if they are given a clear understanding of a biblical-based concept of laity, a realization of their responsibility, and training to work for God.