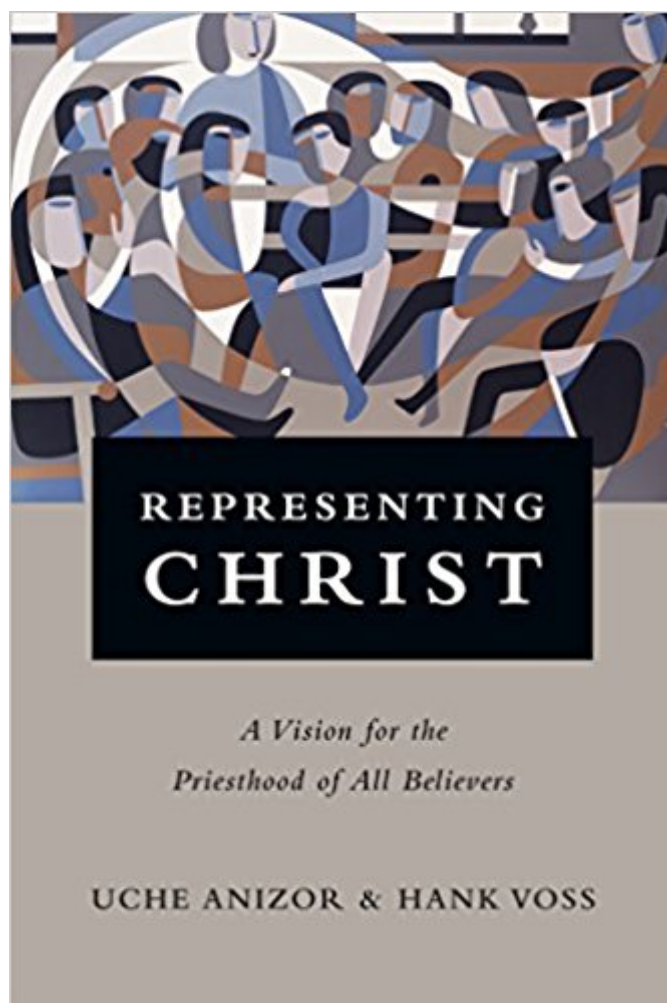


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# Representing Christ: A Vision For The Priesthood Of All Believers



## Synopsis

The priesthood of all believers is a core Protestant belief. But what does it actually mean? Uche Anizor and Hank Voss set the record straight in this concise treatment of a doctrine that lies at the center of church life and Christian spirituality. The authors look at the priesthood of all believers in terms of the biblical witness, the contribution of Martin Luther and the doctrine of the Trinity. They place this concept in the context of the canonical description of Israel and the church as a royal priesthood that responds to God in witness and service to the world. Representing Christ is much more than a piece of Reformation history. It shows that the priesthood of all believers is interwoven with the practical, spiritual and missional life of the church.

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## Customer Reviews

"The title says it all: representing Christ to one another in the church and others outside it—which is to say, participating in the royal priesthood of believers—is the great privilege and responsibility of every Christian. Anizor and Voss rightly call attention to this important theme, explaining its Christocentric-Trinitarian grounding, its biblical unfolding from Adam to Christ and its historical development, especially its recovery by Martin Luther at the time of the Reformation. They also call for a recovery of the royal priesthood in the contemporary church and the seven priestly practices that are vital to the church's ministry and mission. This is a fine example of theology retrieval for the sake of church renewal." (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, research professor of systematic theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)"Having fallen precipitously from watchword

to buzzword, 'the priesthood of all believers' is in dire need of recovery today. Anizor and Voss rescue it from disuse, misuse and abuse and restore it to its proper place: under the high priesthood of Christ, in relation to the Triune God and in service to the world. This book guards a precious doctrine against hierarchical errors on one side and democratic errors on the other. Readers who have come to think of priesthood as a marginal topic or none of their business will find the theme expanding here to such vast and comprehensive proportions that it begins to seem like the main thing the Bible is about." (Fred Sanders, professor of theology, Torrey Honors Institute, Biola University)"Representing Christ provides both a historical and theological framework for understanding this almost forgotten concept, the priesthood of all believers. Anizor and Voss offer a masterful analysis and application of priesthood that is rooted deeply in the Scriptures. Their reflections of both clerical and lay priesthood situate this idea as a connection between liturgy as worship and mission. Their christocentric-trinitarian paradigm also provides practical suggestions for local churches to live out the call to priesthood in the fullest sense of *missio Dei*. Representing Christ will be required reading for my students and should be for all those committed to participating in the work of Christ's priesthood in the church and world." (Elizabeth Gerhardt, professor of theology and social ethics, Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY)"The priesthood of all believers is a phrase that is often cited but a doctrine that rarely receives sustained attention. Representing Christ provides this attention and does so in a way that brings needed theological reflection to this important though neglected subject. It does so with clarity, constructive purpose, and in a manner accessible to all believers." (Kimlyn J. Bender, professor of theology, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University)"Uche Anizor and Hank Voss have taught me a great deal about the biblical doctrine of royal priesthood – not only in their theoretical work but also in their personal churchly practice. I'm excited to see their respective insights brought together and made more widely available in this new book. The ideal result would be an enacted Protestant ecclesiology that, having been reformed through recovery of its own heritage, strengthens Christ's entire body with this distinctive gift." (Daniel Treier, Wheaton College)

Uche Anizor (PhD, Wheaton College) is associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University and an instructor at Los Angeles Bible Training School. He is the author of *Kings and Priests: Scripture's Theological Account of Its Readers*. He is married to Melissa and they have three children. Hank Voss (PhD, Wheaton College) is national director of church planting at World Impact and senior national staff with The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI). He is the author of *The Priesthood of All Believers* and *the *missio Dei*: A Canonical,*

Catholic, and Contextual Perspective. His ministry experience includes fifteen years in urban ministry focused on cross-cultural church planting and contextualized theological education. Voss is married to fellow World Impact missionary Johanna and they have four children.

Protestants champion the priesthood of all believers. But what does this mean? What are the implications and obligations of such a priesthood? How is that ordinary Christian re-present Christ to one another and the world? In *Representing Christ: A Vision of the Priesthood of All Believers*, Uche Anizor and Hank Voss explore the meaning of the priesthood of all believers through the Bible, by engaging Martin Luther (the historic Protestant who championed this doctrine), Trinitarian theology and discussing the practical role and function of the priesthood. Anizor is associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot. Voss is the national church planting director for World Impact. Anizor writes the first three chapters. Chapter one forms an introduction, chapter two examines the biblical case for the priesthood of all believer, chapter three looks at historical theology, with an eye trained on Martin Luther. Voss writes the next three chapters. In chapter four he explores how Trinitarian theology gives shape to the way we live out the priesthood of all believers. Chapter five explores seven central practices of the Priesthood (drawn from Martin Luther). Chapter six forms a conclusion for this study. Anizor and Voss bring their particular strengths to their sections. Anizor roots the concept of the 'Royal Priesthood' in more than just sparse references to the priesthood from 1 Peter and Revelation (1 Peter 2:4-9, Rev. 1:6;5:10). Instead he sketches a robust biblical case for the priesthood of all believers rooted in the priestly function of human image bearing (Genesis 1-2), the role of Israel's priesthood (cf. Exodus), Christ's priesthood foretold (i.e. Psalms, and prophetic literature) and enacted (the gospels) and the church's participation in the priesthood (1 Peter, Paul's epistles, Hebrews, Revelation). His chapter on Luther shows the centrality of the concept in Luther's works (especially in a piece called *Concerning the Ministry*) Anizor identifies seven priestly practices: (1) Preaching and teaching the Word, (2) Baptizing; (3) Administering the Lord's Supper; (4) Binding and Loosing Sin; (5) Prayer; (6) Sacrifice; (7) Judging Doctrine (76). Anizor is critical of scholars who would see the 'priesthood of all believers' as the invention as an 'imaginary' or 'mythical' doctrine invented by the likes of Jakob Spener, the founder of Pietism (58). So he focuses his historical exploration on explicating Martin Luther, though he does identify several antecedents to Luther. Voss's chapters have a more practical focus. He aims to show what this priesthood looks like in how we live it out. His chapter on Trinitarian theology opens with this assertion, "The most important thing about us is the God we worship, and the God we worship will determine the kind of royal priesthood we become" (85). Voss

distinguishes a Christocentric-Trinitarian priesthood of all believers from other approaches to the priesthood of all believers (i.e. Mormonism, Islam) which exhibit a different character. Our worship as priests is "directed to the Father", "performed as service in Christ," and "joins in the Spirit's witness in the world" (91). Voss also identifies ways the priesthood has gone awry because of an over emphasis on one member of the Trinity to the exclusion of other Trinitarian persons (103). Monopolizing ministry to the Father might result in clericalism(103-105). An exclusive emphasis on being 'in Christ' may cause believers to become atomistic individualists in living out the priesthood or collectivists that deny the unique contributions of each person in the body of Christ (105-107). An over emphasis on the blessings of the Spirit may give way to egotism (08-109). A mature priesthood will keep the persons of the Trinity in balance as they seek to worship God and mediate His presence to the world. Chapter five revisits Luther's seven ministry practices and shows how each is an important part of the priesthood of all believers ministry and witness (drawing on Dallas Willard's language of vision, intention and means). Luther's seven practices are described here as: (1) Baptism, (2) Prayer, (3) Lectio Divina, (4) Church Discipline, (5) Ministry, (6) Proclamation, and (7) the Lord's Supper (118). Voss demonstrates how these practices share in the Trinitarian life and explores their implication for the priesthood of all believers: baptism is our commissioning in the priesthood, prayer and lectio divina direct us towards the Father, church discipline and ministry show us how to be in Christ in community, proclamation is our participation in the Spirit's witness, the Eucharist is the culmination of our priestly practice, causing us to remember, forgive, give thanks, be in covenant, experience nourishment, and anticipate the fullness of the kingdom (122-44). This is a short, meaty book on what the priesthood of believers is. My small critique is that I wish the look at the priesthood of believers did more than pay homage to Luther. Pietists, Baptists, Anabaptists, Methodists have each contributed to our contemporary understanding of the doctrine and I would like to see their contributions explored more. Of course a book cannot do everything and showing that Luther (the prototypical Protestant) held this priesthood of believers goes along way towards their aim of recovering a robust theology and practice for today's Protestant evangelical. I recommend this book for students, pastors and lay leaders who wish to recover a fulsome vision of what it means to be the priesthood of believers. I give this four stars. Note: I received this book from IVP Academic in exchange for my honest review

To read the full review, you can go to my Wordpress blog, "SpoiledMilks." Thank goodness that Luther guy came along and re-gave us the priesthood of believers (maybe not in those exact words). In his writings, Luther referred to believers as priests hundreds of times (p18).

“The doctrine, according to Luther, denotes the believer’s sharing in Christ’s royal priesthood through faith and baptism. Its primary implications are every believer’s access to the Father through Christ and responsibility to minister to other believers, especially through the proclamation of the Word” (18). Uche Anizor and Hank Voss locate God’s calling of his people as a kingdom of priests (Exod 19.6; 1 Pet 2.5, 9) within the context of Scripture and show how those who are part of God’s royal priesthood are to respond to God as his witnesses in the world. In Chapter 1 Anizor looks at how the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants define the idea of the priesthood of believers. In this book they will seek to define what a priest is, and show that it is all who are in Christ. Speaking in terms of the Trinity, in Christ the baptized believer has access to the Father, we have the privilege of serving one another in Christ, and we have all received the Holy Spirit’s anointing for this service to one another and to the world (19). The argument is developed in four stages: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Practical. In Chapter 2, the biblical argument, Anizor outlines the story of the priesthood of believers as seen in the Scriptures. In Chapter 3, the historical argument, Anizor details Martin Luther’s theology and presents it as a fruitful and concrete attempt to integrate and develop Scripture’s teaching on priesthood—both ordained and universal (22). We become like what we worship, and Christians worship the triune God. In Chapter 4, the theological argument, Voss shows “what it means for the royal priesthood to worship, work and witness with a Christocentric-Trinitarian vision” (86). This is important, for, as Fred Sanders’s Trinitarian axiom goes, “The more Trinity-centered we become, the more Christ-centered we become, and vice versa” (88). In Chapter 5, the theological argument, Voss asks, “How do we as members of the royal priesthood faithfully and fruitfully respond to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?” Voss lays out seven central practices. In Chapter 6, Voss wraps up, summarizes the book, and asks, “So what?” If believers (myself included) took our ministries before God seriously, what difference would this doctrine make? How could Christians transform society? Recommended? Anizor and Voss have done excellent work in writing *Representing Christ*. It’s clear and easy to read. I hope to see more books out on this particular topic, along with more by these two authors. Some parts will be more difficult to read, not because of the style of language used, but because of subject matter. Generally, the authors write in such a way that they don’t load you down with details, but they

only give you what you need to know. It's easier to read through some parts because you know it's going to be important to the argument. This is a book that all believers should read, with the hopes that we will be humbled and will see our responsibility before the triune God who rules from heaven and has bestowed his people with great honor.

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