

Septuagint version of this passage, *laos* and *cleros* are the words used; or *people* and *inheritance*, and it is evident that both the terms are applied to the same persons—the laity are the clergy, and the clergy are the laity!

Singular as it may appear that the wolves of whom Paul prophesied, Acts xx. 29, should have made such an unhappy selection of names to distinguish between themselves and those of whom they made a prey, it is by no means difficult to be accounted for. The bishops were so extremely anxious for the welfare of their respective flocks, and so much wiser than the Apostles, that in a short time after the death of the latter, they relieved the deacons from the trouble of managing the church's funds, and took all this labour upon themselves. Unexampled kindness! The church's bounty might have been misapplied if left in the hands of men who were comparatively ignorant and ill informed, but in the hands of men of such exemplary sanctity and holiness as the pastors, no such danger was to be apprehended. The bishops still continued to enforce the duty of liberality, but now the motive was altered. The funds had gradually become their own property, but still they employed the same language in their exhortations as they had always done, beseeching those whom they addressed to be bountiful to God's *cleros*. Every philologist knows that words change their primitive signification insensibly, when associated with ideas with which they had originally no connection, till at length they acquire an entirely new meaning. This is exactly what took place in this instance. The pastors were continually enforcing the duty of liberality to God's *clergy*; that is, God's *inheritances*; and it followed, as a matter of course, that those to whose use the donations were applied were meant by the term employed. The two ideas were so naturally connected with each other, that they could not be separated—those for whose benefit the money was collected were the *clergy*—those who applied it to their own use, received the benefit; and, as the *people* (*laos*: the laity) in process of time were entirely excluded from participating in the fruits of their own bounty; they ceased, of course, to be a part of the clergy.

In a manner somewhat similar, the word *ecclesia* (church) was at length also peculiarly applied to those who had made it a property; and hence, in violation of all propriety of speech, they were exclusively denominated *ecclesiastical* and *churchmen*; names which only mean persons belonging to the *ecclesia* or *church*, and which consequently include every member of the church or congregation. With as much propriety might the pastors have appropriated to themselves the appellation of *Christianoï*, or formed a new name from *Christos*, and called themselves exclusively *Christikoï*, denying to the other members of the *ecclesia* the privilege of being called by name of *Christ*; but this would have been a most unprofitable appropriation, for, had they allowed none to be *Christians* but their own body, whence could they have derived their emoluments? This would have been at once to dry up every source of revenue; but the greater the numbers of Christians, the greater the contribution that could be levied from them, and hence the zeal of those who fleeced the flock, to add to it as many as possible, no matter what their character and conversation under