

external call may be linked to the individual's talents and interests, but those interests and personal desires do not drive the vocational call. Loy's footnote 25 is helpful on this point.

For higher education institutions, Luther's call to serve the neighbor may revitalize liberal arts education through programs that focus on experiential or service learning in the community. Such service makes the liberal arts degree real by encouraging students to participate in the larger community.

Today I am writing this from my dining room table. I am here because the current health crisis prompted by COVID19 has shaken my understanding of both vocation and service to neighbor. Each day I weigh my commitments to home and the larger community. Each task comes with risks associated with the spread of this dangerous virus. I find great comfort in Luther's work on vocation. As an individual, I am assured that I am a child of God, called to serve today in this place. Whether my service involves sewing masks for my grocery store clerk or providing support for the larger community through free giveaways at my local church, which is located in the midst of businesses destroyed in summer unrest, I am fulfilling my external call to fear and love God through service to neighbor. Even if this is not the labor I would have chosen a few months ago, I thank David Loy for reminding me that this work too is important.

### *3. Response by Kiara Jorgenson, St. Olaf College*

David Loy's essay is timely, as pandemic realities lead communities the world over to reflect more critically on a life well lived. In light of great suffering, loss, and uncertainty we ask afresh whether it is helpful to characterize vocation as personal satisfaction or a hopeful quest for significance. Loy accurately outlines troubling contemporary trends related to vocation, wherein calling is increasingly individualistic in scope, future-focused, and thinly reduced to elitist ideals of work. He rightly notes the myriad ways that Luther's democratization of vocation had sanctified the necessary and the mundane. Vocation isn't sexy; calling doesn't fluctuate according to cultural norms or personal preference, even if the smell of dirty diapers proves intolerable.

And yet, vocation is nonetheless dynamic, discerned through attentiveness to the relationships one inhabits at a particular time in a particular place. This is why Luther argued that one's "daily duties" reveal "new decalogues" with the changing needs of the neighbor, human and otherwise. Loy's critique of the "liberal social order" reinforces a reading of calling as task over and above gift; it tethers vocation too tightly to creation rather than casting the doctrine as a lynchpin, bridging law and gospel. It is not that newfound social mobility resulting from "the breakdown of well-integrated medieval social order" plagues the modern subject, but rather that such freedoms often lead to the winnowing of the self, wherein human *esse* is thought to exist wholly disconnected from God and others.

Related to this, I disagree that the modernity of which he speaks lacks a substantive common goal. One ought to look no further than to Francis Bacon (1561–1626) to see how the rise of empiricism, subsequent waves of scientism, and later forms of colonial Cartesian andro/anthropocentrism evoked unabashed extraction of Earth and established eco-social relationships of domination, the sum of which quickly eviscerated *corpus Christianum*. Therefore, while I agree that hyper-individualistic, feel-good renderings of vocation are theologically vacuous and especially damaging to historically marginalized members of our communities, I do not find Loy's historical account convincing, for two reasons. First, it understates the dynamism of Luther's doctrine of vocation and thus suggests a *status quo* view, that peasants should stay peasants. Second, it focuses upon human labor and social relatedness at the expense of other ways of being in the world, specifically, how we humans relate to the created world as a whole, as I argue in *Ecology of Vocation* (Fortress Academic, 2020).

To this end I have some questions associated with Loy's final offerings. First, despite the positive ways he emphasizes differing labors, why focus on labor alone? Does this not reinforce the very siloed renderings of vocation Loy seeks to debunk? Perhaps it would help to extend the conversation as Luther does in many of his sermons, addressing vocation as affection, virtue, or the ecology of one's many roles. Second, how might a sense of our creatureliness as bound up with all of creation inform the kind of labor we undertake? What would Luther of the Anthropocene add to his sixteenth-century

list? For example, would he add to the vocation of childbearing or civic engagement some concerns about planetary health and climate justice? And finally, how might Loy's warranted admonishment of gladness typologies better take sadness to heart without bypassing Good Friday lament for Easter morning hallelujahs? That is, in times such as these how might we understand vocation as both a duty to endure and also a hopeful gift to claim and someday to relish?

4. *Reply by David W. Loy, Concordia University, Irvine CA*

I wish to thank Robert Benne, Suzanne Hequet, and Kiara Jorgenson for their thoughtful comments. Three themes emerge in their responses: joy in vocation, the dynamic character of God's call, and the scope of our relationships.

Benne and Jorgenson worry that I understate the importance of joy and meaning in vocation. I suspect our disagreement is superficial. Family, neighbors, coworkers, and so forth are gifts from God; we ought to rejoice in them. God calls us to serve them; we ought to find satisfaction in doing so. For one whose affections are properly ordered, this task is a gift—the opportunity to serve another under God's care. However, for us who are still sinful, it is not always so. Turned in on ourselves, we sometimes love ourselves more than our neighbors, and we see God's gift as a joyless, meaningless task. My argument is therefore simply that we should not define vocation in terms of joy or satisfaction—at least not for us fallen creatures. However, that does not mean we should not seek meaningful occupations or joy-producing relationships. Indeed, the scripture repeatedly calls us to rejoice: in the Lord, in our spouses (“the wife of one's youth”), in God's gift of prosperity, in work—and even in our sufferings.

Regarding the dynamic character of vocation, I can only say, “Amen!” Hequet beautifully illustrates how God opens up new opportunities for us to love others in the midst of changing—and difficult—circumstances. We do not choose all our relationships, but neither are they static. The people in our lives develop new needs, new people enter our lives, we discover new ways to serve our neighbors, and sometimes God calls us in new directions. The *status quo* changes, and how we live in our various vocations changes