

ORDINATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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The dictionary definition of "ordain" states, "to invest with ministerial or sacerdotal functions; confer holy orders upon."¹ Upon reading this definition, thoughtful church leaders may want to begin adjusting it to fit their own understanding of the term. Some argue that the term should not even be used, because they do not see anything in the Bible that resembles the way that the term tends to be understood in general usage.

In this paper, we will examine the theology and practice of ordination in the New Testament Church. As a part of the data that will be considered in drawing our conclusions, we will present a cursory look at views on ordination expressed by the contemporary American church; survey the Old Testament examples of ordination; note relevant episodes in the four Gospels and Acts; then we shall examine statements made in the Epistles. Finally, with the data examined, we shall present a summary of conclusions.

SECTION I ORDINATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

A. ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Roman Catholicism's doctrine of sacraments states that "The benefits of Redemption are brought to our souls through the sacraments." Sacraments are described as "external means, instituted by Christ to give grace to those receiving them... These external things, Christ appointed to be used, and when they are used as He commanded, they bring His grace to our souls."²

Of the seven sacraments, there are four which can be received more than once (Penance, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, and Matrimony). Three, however (Baptism, Confirmation, and HOLY ORDERS) cannot be repeated because they "imprint a character, that is, they leave an indelible mark upon the soul."³

As one proceeds through the steps of the sacrament of HOLY ORDERS (Tonsure, Porter, Reader, Exorcist, Acolyte, Subdeacon, Deacon, Priesthood), he eventually becomes a priest. His ordination "imprints a character" upon him that is permanent. He is a different being from the one that he was before his ordination.

Thus, in Roman Catholicism, a class of beings is created through ordination to the priesthood. This class represents Christ in all areas relating to salvation. Only those in this class have this privilege and authority.

¹. *The American College Dictionary*, Ed. C.L. Barnhart, New York, Random House, 1967

². Rev. Joseph I Malloy, C.S.P., *A catechism for Inquirers* (New York, New York: The Paulist Press, 1927), p. 26

³. *Ibid.*, p. 27

The priestly class normally is the administrator of all of the sacraments.

Upon becoming a priest, one is endowed with the authority of Christ to forgive or retain sin in conjunction with the sacrament of Penance (confession),⁴ and the granting of indulgences.⁵ The priestly class also has the authority to change the bread and wine of the Eucharist into the substance of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.⁶

The practice of ordination is based upon the premise that Jesus imparted his authority to the apostles,⁷ who in turn imparted this authority to their successors. Thus, only those clergy whose ordination constitutes a link in an unbroken chain back to the apostles have a valid ordination. This is the doctrine of "Apostolic Succession." The authority to ordain is restricted to bishops.

B. PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Although most Protestant churches reject the necessity of apostolic succession for their clergy, the perpetuation of a clergy class is a tenet of Roman Catholicism that survived the Reformation.

One of the points of contention that Martin Luther had with the Church of Rome was the doctrine of ordination. Luther contended that ordination was an invention of the Church of Rome and that in the Apostolic age there was no trace of the doctrine of an outward rite's conferring inward grace. However, he took the view that since ordination had been practised for many ages, it was not to be condemned. He saw ordination as the ceremony whereby the Church established its preachers.⁸

Even though Calvin rejected the Roman Catholic view that the Sacraments have the power to justify and bestow grace, he forbade anyone other than a pastor from administering the sacrament of baptism. He insisted that this was the exclusive domain of the clergy.⁹

The continuance of clergy in the Reformation is surprising when the full implication of the doctrine of the Universal Priesthood of Believers is considered.¹⁰ Luther and his contemporaries were not claiming simply that each Christian is his own priest. What they claimed was that every Christian is a priest to others, "for as priests, we are worthy to appear before God to pray for

⁴. Ibid., p. 29

⁵. Ibid., pp. 34-37

⁶. Ibid., pp. 37-42

⁷. John 20:19-23; Matthew 28:18-20

⁸. K.S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York, Harper & Brothers Pub., 1953), pp. 713-714

⁹. Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* V. III (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 150; John Calvin, Institutes, 4.15.19.& 20.

¹⁰. Martin Luther, *Treatise on the New Testament* (Luther's Works, 35:101, St. Louis & Philadelphia): "Therefore all Christian men are priests, all women priestesses, be they young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, learned or unlearned. Here there is no difference."

others and to teach one another divine things."¹¹ Thus, no one can claim to be a Christian, without accepting the honor and responsibility of priesthood. The logical conclusion that one would expect to come from this doctrine is that there would be no place for clergy. Such however, was not the case.

The view that communion and baptism should be administered only by clergy contributed to the American practice of omitting communion from the Sunday gathering of believers. Most churches were served by clerics who served a "circuit" of congregations. A congregation was fortunate if its clergyman could be present once a month. Since the administration of communion was restricted to the clergy, these churches had communion only on those Sundays that clergy could make it to the settlement.

Even though some denominations in Europe had communion weekly, that practice was changed among their adherents in much of America because of the shortage of clergy on the frontier. Thus, the belief in the necessity of a clergy class resulted in an alteration of an important part of church life. Today, most Protestant, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches do not have communion weekly.

Concerns over the qualifications for ordination, and who determines which believers are qualified, often became a battleground in the ebb and flow of Reformation conflict.

John Jewel (1522-1571), one of the leading Church of England theologians of the Elizabethan period, wrote, "No man hath power to wrest himself into the holy ministry at his own pleasure and list."¹² Jewel's concern sprang from the fear that if the Church of England did not control ordination, "Anabaptist chaos," would engulf the nation.

Controversy over the rite of ordination is what caused Methodism to become a separate denomination. At first, Wesley relied on Anglican clergy to administer the sacraments to his followers. He was an Anglican and always insisted that the small societies that he formed were not substitutes for the established church, but were complimentary to it.

However, when Wesley saw that very few clergy shared in his movement and that there was a need for clergy to be sent to the colonies to supervise the movement there, he made a watershed decision. According to Anglican ecclesiology, only bishops could ordain. Wesley noted that in the N.T. bishops, elders, and pastors were the same men - there were not three separate groups. So, he stated that since he was an ordained Presbyter (elder), he also was a bishop. With that justification, he ordained several men to serve as clergy in the New World.¹³

¹¹. Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (Luther's Works, 31:355)

¹². John Jewel, *An Apology, of the Church of England* ed. J.E. Booty (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 26

¹³. Because English Methodists reflect Wesley's Anglican ecclesiology, and American Methodists reflect Wesley's practice, English and American Methodists always have had their differences.

Even groups such as the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches, which historically have made much ado about the fact that there is no such thing as "clergy" and "laity," functionally have a clergy class. These churches "ordain" to "ministry" certain men who become preachers and dedicated leaders. They rarely are permanent members of any congregation, but will serve in leadership in a church until they are asked to resign, or choose to resign in order to move to another church that has "called" them. Thus, they are true professionals - a clergy class.

Such churches usually do not restrict the administration of the sacraments¹⁴ to this clergy class, but it is rare for others than clergy to baptize converts, officiate at weddings, funerals, etc. Even though such denominations and movements may not view ordination in exactly the same light as Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, etc., they do create a clergy class by their attitudes and functional styles.

Churches in the Pentecostal and Charismatic streams clearly reflect the existence of a clergy class. Because the sacerdotal theology of these churches differs from many of the mainline denominations, the significance of that class also differs from the more traditional churches. Most Pentecostal groups, such as the Assemblies of God, maintain very tight control over ordination. Among Charismatics the doctrine of "God's Anointed" as being one to whom obedience and respect is due - and uncorrectable by anyone other than God - is a growing belief. This teaching has resulted in serious abuse in some churches.

Although Anabaptists would disavow a clergy/laity distinction, some Anabaptist groups function as if there were a clergy and laity. Ordination in some denominations of Anabaptist heritage is contingent upon completing studies in a college affiliated with that denomination.

Many denominations set the clergy class apart by garb (clerical collar and vestments). With rare exception, most denominations and movements bestow titles such as "The Reverend...," "The Right Reverend...," "The Most Reverend...," etc. to set this class apart from the "laity."

In most denominations, it is the ordained clergy that constitute the denominational hierarchy. Only those from the clergy class can ascend the hierarchical ladder.

There are, of course, some movements that do not have a "clergy class," but look more to the functional calling of the individual. Some function as shepherds, teachers, prophets, etc., but are not in a separate class. They are noted for function, rather than position and are "laity" as much as anyone else in the group.

¹⁴. Most churches in this category do not consider communion and baptism as sacraments - that is, an external means of an inward grace - but would label communion and baptism as "ordinances."

SECTION II ORDINATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Much of the current attitude toward ordination is a reflection of the Old Testament statements made concerning those installed as priests and kings, under the Mosaic Covenant. There is no record of an ordination service for one called to be a prophet.

An element used in some of the consecration ceremonies was a holy oil, prepared according to a formula prescribed by God.¹⁵ This oil customarily was kept in a horn in the Tabernacle,¹⁶ although Samuel seems to have had a portable flask or horn.¹⁷

A. THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

The instructions for the consecration of the Aaronic priesthood and the codes that governed them make clear that a clergy class was created as a part of the Mosaic Covenant:

1. They were anointed and that anointing made them holy.¹⁸
2. The consecration took place in an elaborate ordination ceremony which included washings, enrobing, anointing with the holy oil, and the offering of sacrifices.¹⁹
3. Once anointed, a priest's behavior was circumscribed for life. This restricted the priest from doing things that would be normal for others to do.²⁰
4. They wore holy garments, especially made for them according to God's design.²¹

Interesting note: Laying on of hands was not a part of the ordination ceremony of the priesthood.

B. LEVITES

God had said that the first born of all living things in Israel were His. The first-born were to be sacrificed or, in some cases, redeemed.²² Excluding the tribe of Levi, there were 22,273 families in Israel with first-born males. There were a total of 22,000 males in the tribe of Levi. God took the tribe of Levi as His sacerdotal tribe. The Levites were to be set apart to assist the priests in tabernacle service. God took the Levites in lieu of the first-born sons of the other tribes. Since

¹⁵. Exodus 30:22-33

¹⁶. I Kings 1:39

¹⁷. I Samuel 10:1; 16:13

¹⁸. Exodus 28:41ff; 30:30; 40:12-15

¹⁹. Exodus 29:1-31; Leviticus 8

²⁰. Leviticus 21; 10:1-7

²¹. Exodus 28:10ff

²². Exodus 13:2, 1-16; 22:29; 34:19; Lev. 27:26; Num. 18:15

the number of first-born sons among the other tribes exceeded the total number of Levites by 273, the other tribes were to pay the family of Aaron 5 shekels (the prescribed price of redemption for a first born male)²³ for each of the 273 surplus first-born.²⁴

A very elaborate consecration/ordination ceremony for the Levites was prescribed by God.²⁵

CLEANSING: Each Levite was to be sprinkled with purifying water, shave his entire body, and wash his clothes.

CONGREGATIONAL OFFERING: The Levites were to appear before the Tabernacle. The whole congregation of the sons of Israel was to assemble around the Levites and lay hands on them. By doing this, the congregation of Israel was offering the Levites as a wave offering unto Jehovah.

TRIBAL ATONEMENT: The Levites then were to lay their hands on the heads of two bulls which they had brought with them. One of the bulls was then offered as a sin offering for the tribe and the other as an atonement for the tribe.

This ceremony was not to be repeated. The Levites, as a tribe, became another class. Only this class could approach the Tabernacle, without causing a plague to come upon the nation of Israel.²⁶

Two interesting notes:

1. The clergy (Aaron and his sons) did not lay hands on the Levites, the congregation did. This act was a statement that the Levites were Israel's offering that redeemed the first-born sons of the nation.
2. Anointing was not a part of the ceremony.

C. THE SEVENTY ELDERS (Numbers 11:16-30)

At God's instruction, Moses made a list of seventy men who already were functioning as elders. These men were to help Moses bear the burden of leading the people.

They were called to gather around the tabernacle. Two men on the list did not come to the meeting, but remained in the camp. The Presence of God descended in a cloud, God's voice spoke forth, and the same Spirit that was upon Moses was placed upon the seventy whom Moses had designated as elders, including those two who had not come to the tabernacle.

²³. Numbers 18:16

²⁴. Numbers 1:47-54; 3:40-51

²⁵. Numbers 8

²⁶. Numbers 1:51, 53; 8:19

As the Spirit was placed upon these men, they prophesied. This was the only time in their lives, before or after, that they prophesied.

Interesting note: Neither the anointing with holy oil, nor the laying on of hands were a part of this event.

D. JOSHUA (Numbers 27:18-23)

As Moses drew near to the end of his life, Yahweh chose Joshua to succeed Moses as the leader of the nation. Joshua was not to be a lawgiver, as Moses had been, but chiefly a military leader.

At God's instruction, Moses brought Joshua before the priest. In the presence of the congregation, Moses laid hands on Joshua, commissioning him as the leader of the people.

There was a two-fold impartation. First, some of the authority (lit., "majesty") of Moses was imparted to Joshua.²⁷ The second impartation was the spirit of wisdom.²⁸

Interesting note: This consecration/installation included the laying on of hands, but no anointing with holy oil.

E. THE KINGS

The Israelite kings also were consecrated at God's instruction. This gave them a special existence. A class was created. Commenting on the anointing of Saul, the first king, signaling change from a theocracy to a theocratic monarchy, Keil and Delitzsch state,

"Anointing with oil was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God...Hitherto there had been no other anointing among the people of God than that of the priests and sanctuary. When Saul, therefore, was consecrated as king by anointing, the monarchy was inaugurated as a divine institution, standing on a par with the priesthood. Through this anointing, which was performed by Samuel under the direction God, the king was set apart from the rest of the nation as 'anointed of the Lord' (cf. ch. xii. 3,5, etc.)"²⁹

²⁷. The fullness of Moses' authority, etc., were not given to Joshua. Joshua was to be in submission to the will of God, as revealed to the priest through the Urim & Thummim (Exodus 28:30), whereas Moses met God "face to face." (Numbers 12:6-8; Deut. 34:10)

²⁸. Although Joshua is described as a man in whom is the Spirit, prior to Moses' laying hands on him, Deuteronomy 34:9 states that it was through the laying on of Moses' hands that Joshua came to be filled with the spirit of wisdom - ["practical wisdom, manifesting itself in action" - Keil].

²⁹. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Mich, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted Feb. 1982), P. 95,

1. SAUL (I Samuel 10:1-9)

At God's instruction³⁰

- Samuel anointed Saul with oil³¹
- God then changed Saul's heart³²
- Shortly thereafter, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he prophesied³³

Interesting note: The ceremony included anointing with holy oil, but not the laying on of hands.

2. DAVID (I Samuel 16:1-13)

At God's instruction³⁴

- Samuel anointed David with oil³⁵
- The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that time forward³⁶

Interesting note: The ceremony included anointing with holy oil, but not the laying on of hands.

3. Solomon (I Kings 1:32-40)

As King David drew near the end of his life, one of his sons, Adonijah, sought to have himself made king. Upon learning of this, David instructed Zadok (the high priest of the Tabernacle at Gibeon) Nathan (the recognized prophet), and Benaiah (a military commander), to fetch Solomon to the Tabernacle at Gihon and there to anoint him king.³⁷ Solomon seems to have been God's choice for David's successor, as well as David's choice.

³⁰. I Samuel 9:16

³¹. I Samuel 10:1

³². I Samuel 10:9

³³. I Samuel 10:5-6, 10

³⁴. I Samuel 16:1,12

³⁵. I Samuel 16:13

³⁶. I Samue 16:13

³⁷. At this time, there were two tabernacles. The one which had been brought into the promised land from the wilderness was the Tabernacle at Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:3). This is where the sacrifices and covenantal ceremonies took place. Zadok was priest at this tabernacle. The other Tabernacle was a Gihon upon Mt. Zion (2 Samuel 6:17), where the Ark of the Covenant rested. Abiathar was the priest of the Tabernacle at Gihon.

Therefore, at David's instruction,

- Solomon rode on David's mule to Gihon,³⁸
- Zadok took the horn of oil from the Tabernacle and anointed Solomon
- The trumpet was blown and a large company of people joined in the celebration, shouting, "Long live King Solomon!"

Interesting note: Anointing with the holy oil was used, but there was no laying on of hands. Neither was there any supernatural phenomena at this time, although there was a theophany later when Solomon went to Gibeon to sacrifice.³⁹

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS ON OLD TESTAMENT ORDINATION

In no instance were both anointing and laying on of hands bestowed upon anyone. It was either one or the other. The following chart illustrates this.

| | Anointing with oil | Laying on of hands | Purification | Atonement offering | Spiritual manifestation |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Priests | By Moses | | yes | | |
| Levites | | By nation | yes | yes | |
| The Seventy ⁴⁰ | | | | | prophecy |
| Joshua | By Moses | | | | |
| Saul | | By Samuel | | | prophecy |
| David | | By Samuel | | | |
| Solomon | By the priest | | | | A later theophany |

³⁸. "When the king let anyone ride upon the animal on which he generally rode himself, this was a sign that he was his successor upon the throne." Keil & Delitzsch, Vol. III, p. 22

³⁹. II Chronicles 1:1-13; I Kings 3:4-15

⁴⁰. In the case of the 70, no anointing and no laying on of hands occurred. Instead, as they tarried at the Tabernacle, God spoke and they prophesied. No one could doubt God's approval.

In the Mosaic economy, anointing with holy oil symbolized the bestowal of an office by Jehovah,⁴¹, and the commensurate impartation of the presence of the Spirit.⁴²

Laying on of hands expressed an impartation of something from the one whose hands were laid on unto the one who received the action. In some instances, this action recognized the recipient as being the surrogate of he one who executed the action. Thus, the Levites were surrogates for the first born sons of all of the families of the other tribes. This was symbolized as the tribes layed hands on the Levites.

Moses imparted authority and his position of leadership to his successor, Joshua, through the laying on of hands.

SECTION III NEW TESTAMENT CASE STUDIES

We now turn to the New Testament to note the examples that might be cited as being relevant to the subject of ordination.

Three Cases During The Earthly Ministry Of Jesus

A. The Calling of the Twelve (Matthew 5:1; 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16)

The first New Testament example that occurs is the calling of the Twelve. Although there are three records of this event, only Mark has a statement that relates to our subject. In describing

⁴¹. The anointing of Saul, David, and Solomon, as kings, implied God's choice, not based upon clear lines of hereditary succession. Saul was the first king. There was no predecessor. David was Jehovah's next choice, after Saul and his family had been rejected. Because David had several wives and several sons, the imperial hereditary line was not clear. The anointing of Solomon signified which of David's "lines" was to succeed him. Jehovah did not command this anointing. It was done at the instruction of David, so that all of the nation would know whom David had chosen. We are not told what ceremonies were involved un succeeding coronations. The holy anointing oil was to be restricted in its use (Ex. 30:31-33). One wonders if the use of the oil apart from God's clear design was one of the ways in which Juday and Israel manifested growing apostasy.

⁴². It is interesting to note that this Presence seemed to be external to the person. The term, "came upon,: is the common one. The New Testament doctrine of the indwelling Presence of the Spirit (Eph. 2:21; 3:17; 5:18; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; etc.) is not expressed in Old Testament terminology. This is the same terminology used in Acts 1:8, which states that the Holy Spirit would "come upon," the Apostles, empowering them for ministry. Thus, the Old Testament "anointing" and its resulting spiritual authority and empowerment are quite similar to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit of the New Testament.

this event, Mark states, "And he appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons. And He appointed the twelve: Simon,..et.al."⁴³

The term translated, "appoint," which occurs twice in the above verses, is the indicative, aorist, active, 3rd person, singular of the Greek term, ποιέω (*poieo*), i.e., ἐποίησεν (*epoiesen*), the literal meaning of which is, "He made." This is the Greek word that is used to describe God's creative activity. It also is a word that would be used for activity such as building a house - "making" something. A literal translation of verses 14 - 16 would read,

"And he made twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them to proclaim and to have authority to expel the demons; and he made the twelve, and he added a name to Simon, Peter:..."

This is the same word used by the Septuagint in I Samuel 12:6, "Then Samuel said to the people, 'It is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.'"

This word also is used in Acts 2:36, "Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ." (NIV)

It is the word used in Hebrews 3:2, "He [Jesus] was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house."

The word, ποιέω, is used in ways other than inferring creation. The various English terms used for ποιέω in this passage reflect some of these. The more prevalent English versions translate this word in this passage as follows:

- *Ordained* - KJV
- *Appointed* - ASV, NAS, NIV, RSV, NEB, Phillips, Moffatt, Williams, Beck, and The Amplified Bible
- *Chose* - TEV
- *Selected* (v14) & *Chose* (v16) - Living Bible
- *Picked out* - New Life New Testament

According to Kittle, ποιέω is used generally for the appointment of disciples by Jesus... not in the sense of an authoritative act of creation."⁴⁴

It is quite difficult to find a responsible exegete or linguist who holds to a different view than that

⁴³. Mark 3:14-16a. (NAS)

⁴⁴. Ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol.VI, trams. Geoffrey W. Bromley, (Grand Rapids, Mich, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968) p 474, 8ff.

expressed above; i.e., that ποιέω in this passage means something other than "to choose," or "to appoint." This is consistent with colloquial English, in which the expression, "He made Jack the gardener," would mean that Jack has been appointed or hired as the gardener.

We do not know what Jesus did to install these men as members of the Twelve. There is no record of laying on of hands or of any other action, other than calling them to be with Him in a special way - to enter into training with Jesus. At this time, there was nothing that set them apart from the other disciples, other than that Jesus had chosen them for the purpose of having them with Him and that He might send them out to preach⁴⁵

B. Sending of the Twelve (Matthew 10:1,5-42; Mark 6:7-13,30; Luke 9:1-6,10)

Toward the close of his settled ministry in Galilee, Jesus sent out the Twelve for their first ministry experience without Him. They were sent among the area villages to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to perform healing. When Jesus sent them forth, He "gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases."⁴⁶

All three accounts state that indeed their preaching was accompanied by the casting out of demons and healing.⁴⁷ Mark informs us that anointing with oil was a part of their healing formula.

With this power and authority, they were a class apart from the multitude of disciples. Only to them, had Jesus given this power. We do not know by what action or ceremony this power and authority was imparted. No record is given, other than the fact that Jesus gave it.

C. Sending of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-24)

Six months prior to His crucifixion, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. This was followed by a season of ministry in and near Jerusalem. It was during this period that Jesus sent out seventy⁴⁸ disciples with the same commission that he had given the Twelve, earlier. Although there is no record of Jesus' giving them power and authority over demons, upon their return they exult in the fact that they had experienced that authority, and in response Jesus states that he had given such authority to them (v18-20).

Again, we are frustrated in our efforts to learn what sort of action Jesus took to impart this power. Even so, the seventy were a class apart from the multitude of disciples, in that they had power that the rest of the multitude did not have at this time because the Holy Spirit was not as yet generally bestowed.⁴⁹ We conjecture that Jesus may not have done anything of which they

⁴⁵. Mark 3:14

⁴⁶. Luke 9:1 (NAS)

⁴⁷. Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7, 13; Luke 9:1,6

⁴⁸. Some texts say seventy-two

⁴⁹. Evidently, this power from the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon the general class of believers

were aware to impart this power. Perhaps as they went forth they were surprised to find this ministry function occurring through them. Perhaps as they encountered the opposition of demons, they did what they had seen Jesus do and the demons were cast out - to their pleasant amazement.

On the other hand, perhaps Jesus had included this information in their commission, even as He did with the Twelve, but they were amazed when the power did indeed manifest.

D. POST-RESURRECTION, PRE-PENTECOSTAL IMPARTATION OF THE SPIRIT (John 20:21-23)

This passage has been one of the hottest Charismatic-Pentecostal-Evangelical-Roman Catholic battlegrounds. Each group's pneumatology and ecclesiology influences its interpretation of this passage. Any honest exegete will admit that how he interprets the nature of the impartation of the Spirit on this occasion is determined by his pneumatology. From the text, and in the light of Acts 1:8 and Acts 2 there are immutable questions concerning this impartation. This is true, in spite of all of the bluster uttered by advocates of the various views.

We know that this impartation was not for empowerment for witnessing. Acts 1:8 makes clear that the empowerment was to occur after this, which indeed it did ten days after Christ's ascension.⁵⁰

Whatever the nature of the impartation⁵¹ of the Spirit on this occasion, the purpose of the action was to commission them. The impartation of the Spirit was a part of Jesus' commissioning.

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven, if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

The Apostleship (commission, or purpose) of Jesus was to come into the world as God's means and God's agent of redemption. The Apostleship (commission or purpose) of the twelve, made them Jesus' agents of redemption. The context of the impartation of the Holy Spirit, i.e., between the commission ("I am sending you") and the description of the results of that commission (forgiveness of sin) clearly ties that impartation to the commission. This passage parallels the

following Pentecost (Mark 16:17). Even if the final verses of Mark 16 are spurious, as some contend, the fact that an early copiest added these verses is evidence that the church did experience what is stated in these verses. Otherwise, where would the copiest get the idea to add these thoughts?

⁵⁰. Acts 2

⁵¹. Some would view Jesus' action on this occasion as bestowal in "prospect," i.e., given to them legally, at this time, but not possessed until Pentecost. Resolving this question does not relate to the issue before us. The Spirit could have been given in "prospect" as a special anointing for the Apostles or in the sense that He is bestowed upon all believers.

"Great Commission," as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-16. In those two passages, as well as this one in John, the Apostles are the ones being addressed. Only they were present when the commission was given, as reported in all three of these passages.

The question has to be asked,

"Was this impartation something special that was given to the Apostles, equipping them to be Christ's agents, something that was peculiar to them and not for all Christians,

OR,

was this the first bestowal of the Holy Spirit as a seal, the mark of salvation promised to all believers?"⁵²

The Roman Catholic view would agree with the former. Here is the reasoning related to this view:

- Since both Matthew and Mark⁵³ state that only the Apostles were present when the Great Commission was given, it was given only to them.
- John 20:21ff is an elaboration of that commissioning, in which they were given a special gift of the Holy Spirit and special authority to be Christ's vicars.
- Only the Apostles and their successors were of this class.

Contextually, there is much to commend this view.

One of the questions that has to be answered if the second view is to be considered is, "When was Jesus "glorified?" Our Lord stated that after His glorification, the Holy Spirit would be given to those who believe in him.⁵⁴

Here are "glorifications" that would meet the requirement:

- His resurrected body was spoken of as being a glorified body⁵⁵, so in one sense his "glorification" occurred at his resurrection.
- In another sense, his glorification occurred when He became Lord of the universe.⁵⁶ The authority of that Lordship was His even as He gave the Great Commission -"All authority hath been given unto Me, in heaven and on earth, go ye, therefore..."^{57 58},

⁵². Ephesians 1:13-14

⁵³. Matthew 28:16-18; Mark 16:14-15

⁵⁴. John 7:38-39

⁵⁵. I Cor. 15:20, 42-43; Phil. 3:21

⁵⁶. Hebrews 1:1-3; I Cor. 15:20-28

⁵⁷. Matthew 28:18-19

⁵⁸. Another glorification of Jesus will occur when He returns in glory for His Church.

However, that cannot be the glorification referred to in John 7, because the Spirit will have been

Thus, since the glorification of Christ had occurred before this juncture, the impartation of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, as recorded in John 20:21-23 could have been that impartation promised in John 7:38-39. This impartation is for every believer.⁵⁹ If this is true, then-

1. The Apostles were the agents that God used to inaugurate the Church and after this inauguration, all members of the church would have the Spirit in the same manner that He was given to the Apostles in John 20:21-23;
2. Every believer is credentialed in the way that the Apostles were credentialed on this occasion;
3. On the basis of this credentialing, the Great Commission would be to all believers, and not just to the Apostles;
4. This impartation of the Spirit did not create a special "class" of believers.

Contextually, this second view leaves much to be desired, but the experiential history of the Church provides justification for drawing the above conclusions. If this view is correct, then the Church that the Apostles founded upon the person of Jesus Christ had the responsibility to fulfill the commission that was given to the Apostles.

CASE STUDIES FROM ACTS

I. Ascension day commission of the eleven (Acts 1:1-13)

On Mt. Olivet, less than a mile outside of Jerusalem, the resurrected Jesus bid farewell to the eleven. He commissioned them to be His witnesses⁶⁰ throughout the world. They were to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promised "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

That Peter considered the ascension day commission to be to the Apostles and not to the entire company of believers is apparent from the terms that he used in urging that a replacement be chosen for Judas.⁶¹ He urged that one be chosen from the disciples to become a "witness with us (the eleven) of His resurrection." If Peter had viewed this commission and promise as given to all of the disciples, the choice of a "witness" would not have been required.

given prior to that time (Acts 2)

⁵⁹. Ephesians 1:13-14

⁶⁰. In previous studies, we have addressed the particular commission given to the Twelve. James Garrett, *Apostles and Apostolic Ministry in the New Testament* (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tulsa Christian Fellowship, 1987); James Garrett *Contemporary Apostolic Ministry in the Light of the New Testament* (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tulsa Christian Fellowship, 1988)

⁶¹. Acts 1:21-22

At least as far as responsibility was concerned, Peter considered the Apostles to be a special class.

Whatever view Peter had prior to Pentecost, concerning the exclusivity of the promised "baptism in the Holy Spirit," He did not hold a view of exclusivity after the event.

Three phenomena signaled the arrival of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost:⁶²

- A sound, coming from heaven, resembling the sound of a rushing wind;
- The appearance of something that looked like a mighty flame, which immediately broke up into smaller flames; each of these came to rest upon the individuals in the room;
- Each person in the room began to speak one of several foreign languages, uttering messages supplied by the Holy Spirit.

Accompanying this external phenomena was an internal filling of the Spirit.⁶³

Peter launched into the first sermon preached in the Church Age. As he drew to the close of the sermon, he identified the phenomena as the promised baptism in the Holy Spirit, then stated that this was available to everyone who would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.⁶⁴

Thus, Peter acknowledged that the baptism in the Holy Spirit, promised in Acts 1:8, did not produce a special class of believers, but inaugurated an age in which each repentant, baptized believer, is promised the same gift as was bestowed on Pentecost.⁶⁵

⁶². Acts 2:1-4

⁶³. Great debate has raged since the beginning of the Charismatic Movement over whether the persons described in Acts 2:1-4 were only the Twelve, or the entire company, described in Acts 1:14. The answer to that question hinges on how one interprets "all" in 2:1. The immediate antecedent is the Twelve. Normally, pronouns are interpreted to refer to the immediate antecedent. However, this is not always correct. One's pneumatology will determine which side he takes on this issue. The continuing narrative of Acts 2 would lend toward the view that only the Twelve were involved. However, Peter's concluding remarks (2:33-39) imply a more universal distribution.

⁶⁴. Acts 2:34-39

⁶⁵. Acts 2:38-39

Conclusions concerning the twelve

It is apparent that the Twelve Apostles did constitute a special class of believers.

1. They were charged with the responsibility of being witnesses to the world that Jesus came forth from the grave.
2. They had the responsibility of delivering to the Church the accurate revelation of Jesus Christ and the Will of God for His people.
3. They had a special Holy Spirit guaranteed memory. Jesus told the Apostles that they should not fret about not understanding or remembering everything that He said to them, because after His departure the Holy Spirit would cause them to remember and understand.⁶⁶
4. They had the responsibility of laying the foundation of the Church and of leading it from infancy to an established life.
5. They were the sole agents of miraculous ministry, until the appointment of the seven, recorded in Acts 6.
6. They were noted and feared because of the miracles that accompanied them. People kept their distance.⁶⁷
7. No one ever challenged their role as Christ's chosen leaders and spokesmen to the Church.
8. When the Twelve all died, this class perished with them, since no one in any future generation could meet the qualifications.⁶⁸

Interesting Note: This class was not created by any apparent ordination act. They were chosen by Jesus. With the exception of His breathing upon ten of them⁶⁹, they were commissioned without any unusual gesture.

II. The appointment of the seven (Acts 6:1-8)

As the Church grew to the point that it numbered several thousand adherents in Jerusalem, the Apostles no longer were able to care for the routine distribution of food to the widows and needy. This caused charges of favoritism to be levelled against them by the Greek speaking Jews. In order to solve the problem, the Apostles directed the congregation to select seven brothers of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom the Apostles would place in charge of that task.

The congregation picked seven men with Greek names. These were brought before the Apostles who prayed and then laid hands on the seven. Thus, the Apostles delegated a portion of their responsibility and authority to the seven.

⁶⁶. John 14:26; 16:13

⁶⁷. Acts 5:12-13

⁶⁸. Acts 1:21-22

⁶⁹. John 20:21-23

Immediately thereafter, Acts 6:8 reports that one of the seven, Stephen, "full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people."

In this instance, there was not a "call from God," nor instructions from the Holy Spirit to set these men apart for this ministry. The decision was made because of a need. Indeed, there is not a sense of setting these men apart for the task (it did not become their reason for existence) but rather of giving them oversight of the distribution as long as the need was there.

Why, then, did the Apostles lay hands on the seven? Here again we see an illustration of the principle that laying on of hands implies some relationship with or impartation from those who lay on hands. The seven were successors to and delegates of the Apostles in this ministry. The laying on of hands also demonstrates that even the "serving of tables" has spiritual import in the Family of God. In this instance, it was very important because Satan was trying to split the Church and the ministry of these men was designed to prevent any schism.

Of special note is the fact that Stephen's "miracle ministry" evidently did not begin until after the laying on of the Apostles' hands. That this is the first recorded instance of someone other than an Apostle's performing miraculous acts is significant. Of further significance is the fact that the next person other than an Apostle to be mentioned as performing miracles is another one of the seven, Philip.⁷⁰

The question has to be asked, "Did the Apostles impart some miraculous gift to the seven?"⁷¹

Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered with certainty, but the implication of such impartation is there.

III. Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3)

Saul of Tarsus had a supernatural encounter that resulted in his salvation, followed by a call to ministry.⁷² Yet, this supernatural call did not release him into the ministry to which he had been called. Paul tried to be obedient to the commission that had been given to him at the time of his conversion, but he encountered constant frustration. He had a number of maturing and preparing experiences, including time in Arabia, personal instruction from the glorified Lord, rejection in Damascus and Jerusalem, and a stint in his home town of Tarsus. It seems that when he left Jerusalem for his hometown of Tarsus, he laid down the vision. His time in Tarsus was spent in obscurity. It was after this that Barnabas recruited Saul to come to Antioch and work with him in the church there. The two men worked together in Antioch for one year, during which time the

⁷⁰. Acts 8:4-8

⁷¹. Impartation of spiritual gifts did take place through the laying on of hands by those in ecclesiastical authority. This is apparent from Paul's statements to Timothy, which we shall discuss at length in a later section.

⁷². Acts 9:1-18; 22:6-21; 27:12-18

older Barnabas probably served as Saul's mentor. Following this, the Antioch church sent Barnabas and Saul on a mercy mission to Jerusalem, delivering money to help the Judean church in a time of famine.

Sometime after Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, the church leadership was in a time of ministry (εἰάροντας),⁷³ and fasting. The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."⁷⁴

In response to this call of the Spirit, the church leaders continued to fast and pray. They then laid their hands on the two men and released⁷⁵ them into their ministry.

Several things stand out in this incident:

1. The idea to separate Barnabas and Saul did not come from the other prophets and teachers; it was not the result of the Antioch leadership's sensing the need to send out missionaries and do church planting; it was a sovereign command from God, through the Holy Spirit.
2. Neither was the action instigated by Barnabas or Saul; they did not come to the leaders and say, "we feel that the Holy Spirit has called us....," but, rather, the Holy Spirit spoke to the council.
3. The instructions of the Holy Spirit were in keeping with the commission that Saul had received at the time of his conversion.⁷⁶ However, the separation unto God for this ministry was not a fact until the Antioch leadership obeyed the Holy Spirit and, through prayer, fasting, and ceremonially laying on of hands effected that separation.⁷⁷

At least for Saul, this was a lifetime "separation unto the Gospel of God."⁷⁸

⁷³. This term, except in unusual instances, refers to public ministry or worship.

⁷⁴. Acts 13:2

⁷⁵. There is an interesting pair of terms used in this passage. The Holy Spirit instructed the council, "**Set apart** (ἀρέσκεια) for me...." The council then "**dismissed** (ἀδιέσκεια) them." Note that they did not send them out. The basic meaning of the word, "ἀδιέσκεια" is to "release." This is the term used for releasing a prisoner from incarceration. So, the council "released" Barnabas and Saul from the ties that held them to Antioch and allowed them to go forth into the work whereunto they were called.

⁷⁶. FN 71

⁷⁷. God's timing governed the moment of the inauguration of this ministry. God had ordained this separation for Saul, from the time of his birth (Gal. 1:15), and had revealed this call to him at the time of his conversion. Paul tried to be obedient to his commission. However, there was constant frustration until Barnabas took him under his wing and used him as an associate in Antioch. Barnabas still was the lead member of the team when the two were sent out from Antioch. About eight years passed between Saul's conversion and the sending out from Antioch. Saul would have been approximately forty years old when the first missionary tour was begun.

⁷⁸. Romans 1:1

THE FIRST GENTILE ELDERS

As Paul and Barnabas traveled from city to city on their first missionary journey, two contradictory experiences greeted them in each place. There was opposition, but there also was response to the Gospel. Their opponents drove them out of city after city, but in each place, they left behind a band of believers. Derbe was the last city on their itinerary. After many accepted Christ in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps. In each city they installed elders in every church. Here is the brief account (Acts 14:23):

"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

Unfortunately, we are not given any details surrounding the choices made, nor how these men were chosen.⁷⁹ Since prayer and fasting preceded the installation, we would assume that the choices came as a result of confirmation received in prayer. Note that the call of Barnabas and Saul occurred in a time of prayer and fasting, and the preparation for their ordination included prayer and fasting.⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that in Acts 14:23 no mention is made of laying on of hands. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that laying on of hands was included in the installation ceremony. Indeed, that may have been the means whereby they did install them, since Paul instructed Timothy concerning the laying on of hands as a part of installing leadership.⁸¹

These three cases exhaust the case studies available to us in Acts. For further information, we must turn to teachings and comments in the Epistles.

COMMENTS RELATING TO ORDINATION IN THE EPISTLES

I. LAYING ON OF HANDS

The Laying on of hands is mentioned in relationship to inauguration of ministry in three passages. All of these are in Paul's two letters to Timothy.

A. Paul's References To Hands Being Laid On Timothy⁸²

"Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery." (I Timothy 4:14)⁸³

⁷⁹. ἀένοοντες - (*Chairontesantes*) Literally, this word means to elect by popular vote, by a show of hands. However, the word came to be used in the sense of appointing or designating. Clearly, the action described refers to Paul and Barnabas as the actors. For a full discussion of this term, see W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Mich., Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1976), p. 312

⁸⁰. Acts 13:2-3

⁸¹. I Timothy 5:17-22.

⁸². These two statements (I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6) may refer to the same incident, or they may refer to two separate occasions. The question is beyond answering.

The passage of which this verse is a part, relates to teaching and preaching. Therefore, the charismata referred to in this verse, would be the supernatural gifts which enabled Timothy to preach and teach. Paul was urging Timothy to "Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them.... Pay close attention to (them);"⁸⁴ because doing so would assure salvation for both Timothy and his hearers.⁸⁵

"And for this reason, I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (II Timothy 1:6)⁸⁶

The Second Epistle to Timothy relates more to the administrative role that Timothy held, as a delegate of Paul.

Both of these passages state that spiritual gifts were imparted to Timothy as ecclesiastical authorities laid hands on him.

B. The Responsibility Given To Those Who Lay On Hands

"Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin." (I Timothy 5:22)

This verse is in the midst of a section that relates to eldership.⁸⁷ Traditionally, the view has been that this is a caution given to Timothy about the danger of ordaining someone prematurely. Paul would thus be saying that anyone who ordains someone too hastily, shares responsibility for any resulting failure.

A second view would hold that this verse refers to the restoration of those who have fallen, been defrocked, and then returned to ministry. In this view, Paul would be cautioning Timothy against letting his heart rule the situation. This view would understand Paul to say that fallen elders are restored to ministry through a laying on of hands, and that to do so too quickly might result in a second fall; the authority that restored the fallen one would bear responsibility for hasty restoration.

⁸³. The Greek structure here is ἀεά δῆνοῦσσόαέά. "ἀεά" with the genitive means, "through." "ἀεά" with the accusative means "on account of." Because the genitive and accusative of δῆνοῦσσό are identical, the translator must make a judgment call as to whether the translation should read, "through prophecy" (which would imply that prophecy was the imparting agent) or "on account of prophecy" (which would mean that there was prophetic instruction to the elders, causing them to lay on hands).

⁸⁴. I Timothy 4:15-16

⁸⁵. This exhortation is in keeping with Peter's exhortation, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God..." I Peter 4:10-11

⁸⁶. In this passage, there is no ambiguity. The object of the preposition, "ἀεά" is genitive.

⁸⁷. I Timothy 5:17-25

Those who hold the second view would outline the procedure as follows:

V19 - the accusation

V20 - the conviction and sentence, and repentance and reconciliation.

V22, 24-25 - Cautions

This view points to the very early custom of receiving penitents back into communion through imposition of hands. Eusebius wrote, "The ancient custom prevailed with regard to such that they should receive only the laying on of hands with prayers."⁸⁸

It must be noted, however, that the ancient commentators (Chrysostom, Theodosius, Theophilus, Oecumen, etc.) consider this passage to be referring to hasty ordinations. "The intention of the warning would be that Timothy will best avoid clerical scandals by being cautious at the outset as to the character of those whom he ordains."⁸⁹

Regardless of which of the above views one accepts, the point made is that those who install leadership in the church bear a responsibility to move cautiously. If such caution is observed, and the one on whom hands are laid goes astray, the leadership would not be guilty. The guilt occurs when laying on of hands has taken place without proper caution.

II. Instructions To Titus

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." (Titus 1:5)

Titus' task was different from Timothy's. Timothy was to fine tune the leadership organization that already existed in Ephesus. Titus was left behind in Crete to install the first elders of the area. It is interesting that the term used for Titus' work⁹⁰ is the same term used for the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:3.

We are not given any information about how the elders are to be chosen, nor the manner in which they are to be installed. Therefore, the only information in this passage⁹¹ that relates to our quest is that which deals with qualification and responsibility.

This exhausts passages that convey specific data on the subject of ordination.

⁸⁸. Eusebius, *History*, VII 2

⁸⁹. Nicoll, Vol. 4, p. 138

⁹⁰. ἐᾱέόōçìé

⁹¹. Titus 1:5-11

SECTION IV **SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS**

We now will synthesize and analyze the data that has been gleaned from our research.

I. COMMENTS ON LAYING ON OF HANDS

Laying on of hands implies the bestowal of something through those who lay on hands. Here are some categories of impartation that took place in Scripture:

1. Vouching for the recipient. By laying on of hands, the actor says to the world that he approves of the recipient's being in the role wherein he is being installed.
2. In some instances, laying on of hands infers a transfer of responsibility. The actor thereby surrenders a portion of his responsibility to the recipient and desires that the anointing needed will be transferred from the actor to the recipient.
3. In some instances, special giftings of the Holy Spirit are imparted thorough the laying on of hands. The case studies in the New Testament would lead us to conclude that the gifts imparted were also resident in those who laid on hands.

II. COMMENTS ON "SEPARATION"

In the Old Testament, the priestly class was "separated unto God," and thereby was holy.

In the New Testament, the separation is "unto the work," with no holiness beyond that of every believer. In the New Testament, every believer is sanctified and set apart unto God as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

III. COMMENTS ON "THE CALL"

We have seen examples of those who are separated unto God for a lifetime. All of these have been in response to a direct word from God. All of these constituted a "class" that was distinct from their fellows.

1. The Aaronic Priesthood
2. The Levites
3. Saul & David
4. The Twelve
5. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) and Barnabas

The historical record of Timothy, Titus, Silas, and others implies a lifetime given to "ministry," but the Scriptural record does not give us sufficient information for a firm conclusion to be reached about them. None of these, however, seem to be a part of a "class." They seemed to be no different from any other believers except in their call and the anointing given to allow them to fulfill it.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In the New Testament, there are those instances of individuals or groups of individuals who were used in an inaugural way that required them to become a special class of beings. The Twelve and Paul certainly fit this category. These men were used of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to bring an inerrant revelation to the Church. They also were possessors of Spiritual authority that enabled them consistently to perform miraculous works. Those in this category always had a verifiable divine call to the role that they filled in the Kingdom.⁹²

Those who were a "special class" were not special in any sacerdotal way. They did not have any role in salvation, other than that of communicators of the Gospel. They did not have, as the Roman Catholic Priest claims, any right to stand in God's stead in sacerdotal efficacy. They recognized that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.⁹³ Thus, they did not occupy the role fulfilled by the priests of the Old Testament.

Neither were they so august that they could not be rebuked, questioned, or called to account.⁹⁴

Beyond these men, we have no record in the New Testament of anyone else's receiving a verifiable divine call to a lifetime ministry. However, as we read of Silas, Timothy, Titus, James, and others, the picture is painted of men who spent their lives in ministry - separated unto God. We do not have detailed Biblical information about the beginning ministries of most of them.

No one who is pictured in a ministry of leadership in the Church is there by his own suggestion. All were "recruited" or called to ministry by ecclesiastical authorities or by a sovereign act of God. There is no example of someone's coming to leadership with the statement, "I feel called to become a pastor, missionary, etc." All were plucked out of their routines of living by those calling them to ministry.

With the exception of the elders chosen in Acts 14:23,⁹⁵ those installed in ministry roles were experienced, usually mentored, and proven.

⁹². Since the death of these men, no one has been the giver of primary new revelation. No one has moved as miraculously as they did. No one has been the infallible spokesman for God, as they were. This was an inaugural class that has been replaced by the Bible, which now is the infallible spokesman for God.

⁹³. I Timothy 2:5

⁹⁴. Acts 6; Acts 11; Galatians 2:11ff

⁹⁵. We do not know for certain how much time passed between the salvation of these men and their appointment as elders. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas were forceably driven from city to city, before they could train and ordain leaders. It is possible that these elders were men who had been leaders among the Jews, thus synagogue rulers, before their conversion.

In the Old Testament, a holy oil was used for ordaining those whom God had designated for leadership under the Mosaic Covenant (priests and kings). In the New Testament, oil never is used in the ceremony. Fasting, prayer, prophecy, and laying on of hands are the elements found in various degrees in the installation event.

There is ample evidence, both by direct statement and inference, to conclude that in a valid ordination service, some spiritual impartation takes place.

Some are placed in leadership roles that are not for a lifetime. The seven in Acts 6 had their "ministry" ended when the Church scattered. However, the succeeding activity of Stephen and Phillip (two of the seven) cause us to conjecture that more happened in their installation as servants, than just giving them that responsibility. Both later worked miracles and were gifted communicators of the Gospel.

Church leaders should be very cautious when they lay hands on anyone and place them into ministry. The "ordainer" will bear responsibility for the sinful failure of those whom he ordains, if proper caution is not exercised.

God does call people into ministry. Even though He may do this by stirring someone's heart toward a particular ministry, the call is not consummated until it is recognized by others in authority. Thus, valid ministry normally is credentialled by church authority, either by local elders or by one in apostolic church planting ministry.

Some, such as apostles, prophets, and evangelists, will be ordained to ministry that touches many churches, communities, and perhaps, nations. Others, such as elders, will be ordained to ministry that has local authority and responsibility.

Once ordained, the minister will be answerable to God for how he fulfills the ministry assigned to him.⁹⁶

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

When Church leadership senses that God has chosen someone for the role of elder, deacon, apostle, or other ministry to which God has called him, it is appropriate to consider installing that person (if the role is one of local church government) or releasing that person (if the ministry is trans-local). Before this is done, there needs to be a word from God, confirmed in some manner.

In many situations, the prospective minister already will be doing the work for which he is to be set apart, but has not been formally placed into that work.

The ordination service should be preceded by prayer and fasting, probably by the Church and certainly by the parties participating in the ceremony.

⁹⁶. Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1; I Cor. 3:11-17; I Cor. 9:16; I Peter 4:10;

The service will consist of prayer and laying on of hands, and, hopefully, prophetic words. Other things, such as a "charge," may be included, but these will be additions that the ordaining body will design as an addenda to the pattern that Scripture presents.

With the laying on of hands, there will be an impartation of spiritual gifts and authority, appropriate for the role being set before the newly ordained. These may or may not be evident at the time of the ceremony.

The church is obligated to give respect to the authority⁹⁷ now resident in the one ordained, if he has been placed in a governmental position.

From that day forward, the one ordained will be answerable to God for fulfilling the role for which he has been set apart or appointed.

Some will be placed into a lifetime calling. Others will be placed into a role that is but for a season.⁹⁸

⁹⁷. Hebrews 13:17

⁹⁸. Deacons, for instance.