

ORDINATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Introduction

'No Clergy in Paul's Letters' is one of the headings in *Christian Priesthood Examined* by Richard Hanson, a former Bishop in the Church of Ireland.² Such a slogan is but an echo of Ernest Käsemann, a German New Testament scholar, who in an influential paper 'Ministry and Community in the New Testament'³ argued that the New Testament has no technical definition of what we are accustomed to call ecclesiastical office.

Unfortunately, such statements are one-sided. Important as it is to recognize the charismatic nature of the early Christian church, it is clear that along with 'every-member-ministry', particular leadership roles were emerging. Such passages as Rom 16.1,2 and Phil 1.1 indicate that 'bishops' and 'deacons' were not the creation of a post-Pauline, post-charismatic church.

In this essay, however, I do not want to look at the larger issue of 'ministry', but rather confine myself to investigating the way in which people were appointed to particular ministries: i.e. my intention is to study patterns of 'ordination' (if that not be too anachronistic a word) in the New Testament. With this in mind we shall examine five key passages which have been associated with 'ordination': Acts 6.1-6; 13.1-3; 14.23; 1 Tim 4.14; 2 Tim 1.6.

Acts 6.1-6

Among Anglicans the appointment of the Seven with prayer and laying on of hands is viewed as pointing to the 'diaconal' dimension of the traditional three-fold pattern of ordained ministry: viz. deacon, presbyter, and bishop.⁴ However, Acts 6 raises all kinds of issues in terms of the New Testament's understanding of ministry.

1. Who are these Seven? Traditionally the Seven have been viewed as 'deacons' for their task is described in terms of serving tables (*diakonein trapezious*). However, it is generally acknowledged that there is no justification for such an inference. The Greek word *diakonia* is a term used to describe 'ministry' in general (see e.g. 1 Cor 12.5; 2 Cor 5.18; Eph 4.12). Indeed, here in Acts 6 Luke uses the term '*diakonia*' both

¹ 'Ordination in the New Testament' 1 -13 in *Anyone for Ordination?* (MARC/Monarch, Tunbridge Wells 1993) edited by Paul Beasley-Murray

² Richard Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (Lutterworth, Guildford 1979).

³ Later published in *Essays in New Testament Themes* (SCM, London 1964) 63-94.

⁴ See, for instance, Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church* (DLT, London 2nd edition 2008).

of ‘the ministry of the word’ (6.4) undertaken by ‘the twelve’ and of ‘the ministry of tables’ (6.4) undertaken by ‘the seven’. ‘Ministry’ or ‘service’ is the defining aspect of Christian leadership (see Mark 10.42; Matt 20.25-27; also Luke 22.24-26). Or in the words of American commentator James Edwards, “The preeminent virtue of God’s kingdom is not power, not even freedom, but service”.⁵ All of the Seven in Acts 6 were men of spiritual distinction: they were “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (6.3). Perhaps we are to infer that their wisdom was an expression of the Spirit’s presence in their lives. In particular, Stephen was a creative theologian (see Acts 7) and Philip a gifted evangelist (see Acts 8). The nomenclature of the Seven probably indicates that they belonged to the Hellenist group within the early church.⁶ We are probably right in assuming that the Seven were already acting as leaders within the Hellenist group – indeed, it has been suggested that they were leaders of seven Greek-speaking house churches.⁷

2. What was the task of the Seven? What did Luke mean by ‘serving tables’? Are the tables ‘dining’ tables or ‘banking’ tables? Is the emphasis here on the distribution of food or on the distribution of ‘benefits’? The translation adopted by the NRSV & NIV (“wait on tables”) implies the former, while the translation adopted by the GNB (“handle finances”) implies the latter. Joachim Jeremias favoured the former and drew parallels with the Jewish system of relief (the so-called ‘poor bowl’ and the ‘poor basket’).⁸ Certainty is impossible to obtain. However, almost certainly the role involved ‘people skills’. The seven were appointed to care for people in need rather than simply carry food or handle money.

3. What was the role of the apostles in the appointment of the Seven? It is clear that the apostles took the initiative in asking the church to “choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (6.3). In this regard, the appointment of the seven is reminiscent of the appointment of a successor to Judas as an apostle (Acts 1.23). The selection process involved the whole church. However, what is not clear is whether it was the church as a whole or just the apostles who actually laid hands on the Seven. The Greek is somewhat vague: literally, ‘these they set before the apostles, and having prayed they laid hands on them’. According to the NRSV & NIV it was the apostles “who prayed and laid their hands upon them”. On the other hand, the more natural sense of the Greek would indicate that the whole church was involved in the laying on of hands, for the subject of the verb “they presented” is also the subject of the following verbs “and having prayed they laid their hands upon them”. The Scottish scholar James Dunn commented: “We should probably assume that Luke has simply expressed himself in too casual a fashion, and that he meant his readers to understand that it was the apostles to understand that it was the apostles who laid on hands”. Yet Dunn admitted that “the possible echo of Num 8.10 (the people lay their hands upon the

⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Apollos, Leicester) 325.

⁶ So, for instance, David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Apollos, Nottingham 2009) 234. However, he noted that some of the Apostles also had Greek names such as Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew.

⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1996) 234.

⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (SCM, London, 1964) 131.

Levites) does leave the question much more open than is usually assumed".⁹ In favour of the former view is that when first proposing the scheme, the apostles spoke of men "whom we may appoint to this task"; however, David Daube, an expert on Judaism, argued that the "'we' here most probably includes those whom they address; it means, 'we, the Christians of Jerusalem', not 'we, the apostles'; it says nothing about the mode of installation"¹⁰ As we shall see later, Acts 13.3 might well indicate that in Antioch the church as a whole was involved in laying on of hands. Certainly, even if the church as a whole were not actively involved, the ceremony took place with the blessing and indeed under the direction of the church.

4. What happened when hands were laid on the Seven? Clearly, in the first place the ceremony involved a recognition of their spiritual gifts of leadership. Secondly, it involved a commissioning to specific task of leadership. Thirdly, although the Seven are described as being "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6.3), the fact that the laying on of hands was accompanied by prayer is probably an indication that the church also asked God to bless the Seven with a further filling of the Spirit. As Luke in his account of the early church shows, there is nothing static about the Spirit (see Acts 4.8, 31; also Eph 5.18). We may also infer that implicit in that commissioning was also a conferring of authority. The church – or the apostles on behalf of the church – invested them with the authority necessary to discharge their special task. Here we enter upon the complex debate as to whether hands were "placed upon" the Seven with a view to blessing or hands were 'leant upon' the Seven with a view to making them the formal representatives of the church.¹¹ The Greek itself gives no indication. It may well be that there is a parallel with the 'Seven of a City' elected by the Jewish inhabitants of a Palestinian city to look after the common affairs and who had the full power of representation. If this parallel is valid, then we could conclude that the church in setting apart the Seven made them their representatives and thus delegated to them something of its authority.

It should be emphasised that the whole process was very dynamic. It is unhelpful to talk of this action as being an 'institution to an office': the emphasis is on a service to be rendered, rather than upon an office to be entered upon. Although in the ancient Graeco-Roman world people at every level were obsessed with collecting honorary and official titles, no specific title is given to the Seven. Nor is there any mention of a 'special status' being conferred through the laying on of hands. There is simply a role to be fulfilled.¹² Again it is anachronistic in seeing here an 'ordination', let alone an ordination for 'life'. The Swiss New Testament scholar Eduard Schweizer was right when he said: "Here men are 'installed' for a quite definite ministry within the local church at Jerusalem, with no thought of any further activity beyond this definite task".¹³

⁹ James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* 84.

¹⁰ David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Jerusalem* (Athlone Press, London 1956) 238.

¹¹ For a discussion of the distinction between *sim/shith* and *samakh*, see Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* 224ff.

¹² See Matt 23.8-12, where Jesus makes it clear that there is no place in the church for honorific titles.

¹³ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, SCM, London 1961) 25c.

Acts 13.1-3

A second passage often cited as a biblical precedent for ordination concerns the setting apart of Barnabas and Paul for missionary service.

The first question which arises is: who actually set Barnabas and Paul apart? The prophet and teachers, or the church as a whole? The Greek is unclear. Howard Marshall, a Scottish Methodist, attractively argued: "Since the list of names in v1 is primarily meant to show who was available for missionary service, and since changes of subject are not uncommon in Greek, it is preferable to assume that Luke is thinking of an activity involving the members of the church generally; this will fit in with the fact that elsewhere similar decisions are made by the church as a whole (1.15; 6.2,5: see 14.27; 15.22)".¹⁴ If Marshall is right, then we may assume that it was within the context of a church worship service that the Spirit spoke through one of the prophets, calling the church to put aside two of its leaders. After a period of further fasting and prayer, presumably with a view to testing the prophetic word, the church then acted and "laid their hands on" Paul and Barnabas and "sent them off"¹⁵.

What was involved in this action of the laying on of hands and of prayer? In so far as Barnabas and Paul were already recognised leaders, for they already belonged to the group of prophets and teachers, it could hardly have been a recognition of their leadership. Rather they are commissioned for a new sphere of service, for which prayer is then made. We may well envisage that prayer was offered for these two men to be empowered afresh with God's Spirit, in order that they might fulfil their mission. But did the laying on of hands involve more? Were hands simply 'placed upon Paul and Barnabas for blessing',¹⁶ or were hands 'leant' upon Paul and Barnabas in order that they might become representatives of the Antioch church?¹⁷ If there is an allusion to the consecration of the Levites in Numbers 8, then perhaps the latter is right: i.e. Paul and Barnabas were 'set apart' for special service. If this interpretation is right, then Paul and Barnabas, in being commissioned for service, were being sent out as representatives of the church of Antioch and were therefore invested with authority to act on behalf of that Christian community at Antioch.

There is no indication that Paul and Barnabas were being 'set apart' in terms of who they were, as distinct from what they were to do. According to Luke "the Holy Spirit said 'Set apart for me Barnabas for the work to which I have called them'". The verb "set apart" has the sense of being "appointed"¹⁸ or "commissioned".¹⁹ This being 'set apart' is purely functional. True, as we have already seen in Numbers 8, the Levites were 'set apart' as priests, but there is no reason to assume that Paul and Barnabas by virtue of prayer with laying on of hands become a separate priestly caste. On reflection, the translation "set apart", adopted by most English translations, is unfortunate. Eugene Peterson's translation in *The Message* is more helpful: "Take Barnabas and Paul and commission them". This is not ordination in the sense that here Paul and Barnabas were given a new status. Eduard

¹⁴ Howard Marshall, *Acts* (IVP, Leicester 1980) 215.

¹⁵ So, for instance, James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* 173

¹⁶ See the Hebrew *sim/shith*

¹⁷ See the Hebrew *samakh*.

¹⁸ W.F. Arndt & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (CUP, 4th edition 1952).

¹⁹ James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* 173

Schweizer was therefore on firm ground when he argued that “It is not a matter of ordination... It is an ‘installation’” to a particular task.²⁰

Acts 14.23

Luke in his description of Paul’s first missionary journey tells how in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium, “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church”.

There has been much dispute as to the historicity of this account. James Dunn, for instance, wrote: “Luke suggests that Paul followed the Jerusalem pattern by appointing elders in the churches (14.23; 20.17); but we have absolutely no confirmation of this from Paul himself”.²¹ It is true that with the exception of the Pastorals, Paul never uses the word “elder” for a church leader. However, as my former PhD supervisor F.F. Bruce argued, “The language may be Luke’s, but it is plain from Paul’s letters that he made provision for spiritual guidance in the churches which he founded and encouraged the members to recognise and respect their leaders (see 1 Cor 16.15-18; Gal 6.6; Phil 1.1; 2.29; 1 Thess 5.12-13).²² Charles Kingsley Barrett, an English Methodist, somewhat quaintly made the same point:

“It would not... be wide of the mark to say that what Luke means in his use of the word is that when Paul took leave of the churches... he said to his earlier and best trusted converts (see 1 Cor 16.15), ‘Please keep an eye on things for me until I return’, and that such people were, in Luke’s day and in the churches known to him, described as presbyters (elders).”²³

What was involved in such an appointment? Interest has centred around the verb Luke uses, *cheirotoneo*, which in later ecclesiastical usage came to mean ‘to impose hands in ordination’. However, this Greek verb had nothing to do with ‘laying on of hands’, but in the secular usage of the day it simply meant ‘to appoint’. Originally the verb referred to ‘raising the hand to express agreement in a vote’,²⁴ but there is no indication that in Acts 14 the churches were involved in the election of their leaders. Thus whereas in 2 Cor 8.19 we read that a representative was “appointed” (*cheirotoneitēs*) by “the churches” to accompany Paul on his journey to take the collection to Jerusalem, at this embryonic stage of church life, Paul and Barnabas took the initiative in ‘appointing’ or ‘installing’ the new leaders. As Eduard Schweizer commented, the fact that leaders were appointed with no reference to the church is exceptional and is simply “a question of newly formed churches... Elsewhere, however, the Church has a vital share in important choices and decisions, and takes the final responsibility”.²⁵ Whether or not the “prayer and fasting” was accompanied by the laying on of hands as at Antioch (13.3) when “they committed them to the Lord in whom they come to believe” (see 20.32) we do not know. Within the context of 14.22,23, where Paul stated, “it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God”, the

²⁰ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 24c.

²¹ James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (SCM, London 1975) 182.

²² F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2nd edition 1988) 280

²³ C.K. Barrett, *Church, Ministry & Sacraments in the New Testament* (Paternoster, Exeter 1985) 52.

²⁴ So Arndt and Gingrich: “choose, elect by raising hands”.

²⁵ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* 23c.

prayer may well have included a request for God's protection on the new elders. Whether or not it included a prayer for an empowering with God's Spirit is not known.

1 Timothy 4.14

The situation appears to be somewhat analogous to that of Acts 13.1-3, where the Spirit spoke apparently through one of the prophets. Just as at Antioch the Spirit had caused the church to set aside Paul and Barnabas for missionary service, so the Spirit through the voice of prophecy caused Timothy to be set aside for the ministry of preaching and teaching. Thus the Revised English Bible translates: "Do not neglect the spiritual endowment given you when, *under the guidance of prophecy*, the elders laid their hands upon you". It was on the basis of the Spirit-inspired utterances that the elders set Timothy aside. The laying on of hands was the church's response to the Spirit's initiative (see also 1 Tim 1.18, where Paul writes: "I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that you may fight the good fight").

It is important too to emphasize that the Spirit and his gifts are still conceived in dynamic terms here in the Pastorals. *Charisma* is not, as James Dunn, would suggest, "the power of office",²⁶ a spiritual gifting enabling Timothy to fulfil his calling. Here, as elsewhere in Paul's writings (e.g. Rom 1.11; 1 Cor 1.7; 12.4,31) there is a close tie between *charisma* and the Spirit. A parallel may also be drawn by the way in which the ministries of Eph 4.11 ('apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers') are perceived to be gifts of the Ascended Christ. This dynamism comes to expression in the way in which the two verses of 1 Tim 4.13,14 parallel one another: to devote oneself to reading the Scriptures in public, to preaching and to teaching, is in fact not to neglect one's gift.

Who laid hands upon Timothy? The English versions imply that the elders did. However, according to David Daube, we have here a rabbinic expression which should be translated, "when hands were laid upon you with the object of making you into an elder".²⁷ But this suggestion produces a most unnatural meaning of the Greek phrase. It is more natural to accept the normal translation: "with the laying on of hands by the council of elders". The difficulty with this customary translation is that there then appears to be a contradiction with 2 Tim 1.6, where Paul only talks of himself laying hands on Timothy. However, in 2 Tim 1.6 Paul is not seeking to assert that he alone laid hands upon Timothy. Paul may simply have 'presided' over Timothy's setting apart, just as in an ordination of a rabbi the candidate was ordained by his teacher with the co-operation of two assistants. The apparent differences can therefore be easily harmonized.

Although to speak of this event as an 'ordination' would be an "anachronism",²⁸ nonetheless, as with ordination today, this occasion of laying on of hands functioned, in the words of Philip Towner "to recognize God's binding choice and publicly bless the minister for service. The gift makes ministry possible. The calling makes ministry obligatory."²⁹

²⁶ James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 348

²⁷ David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* 224,225

²⁸ Gordon Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Hendrickson, Peabody 2nd edition 1988) 108.

²⁹ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus* (IVP Academic, Downers Grove 1994) 112.

2 Timothy 1.6

At the beginning of his Second letter to Timothy Paul writes, “Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands”. If 1 Tim 4.14 be any guide, then this verse does not refer to baptism, which was often accompanied by the laying on of hands (see Hebs 6.2; Acts 9.17), but to the occasion when Timothy was set aside for ministry as a preacher-teacher.

In 1 Tim 4.14 the gift in question was the gift of the ministry of preaching and teaching, but here in 2 Tim 1.6 the gift is seen primarily in terms of the Spirit himself. The implication is that Timothy had experienced a special outpouring of the Spirit. Timothy has received not just authority, but also a quite distinct blessing. Now, rather than quenching the Spirit through his natural timidity, Paul encourages him to step out in faith and allow the Spirit full reign in his life. Indeed, this stepping out is to be a continuous process: or to use Paul’s metaphor, it involves a constant fanning of the flame. No minister can rely on past experience. In the words of the Anglo-Catholic scholar, J.N.D. Kelly, “If ordination is already regarded as imparting a positive grace, the idea that this grace operates automatically is excluded. The Christian minister must be continually on the alert to revitalise it”.³⁰ As in 1 Tim 4.14, the emphasis is on the sovereign activity of the Spirit. The laying on of hands is never in itself causal. No individual or group of individuals can ever control or manipulate the Spirit!

As I have already argued, almost certainly the reference here to Paul’s hands is not intended to be exclusive. To quote American Pentecostal Gordon Fee: “In 1 Tim 4.14, where a part of the concern was to authenticate Timothy before the church, Paul mentions the laying on of hands by the elders. Here, where the interest is almost totally personal, the focus is on Paul’s part in that call, thus appealing to their close personal ties.”³¹

I find it significant that Paul immediately adds the words: “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim 1.7). When the church sets aside men and women for ministry, through the act of commissioning (what today we call ‘ordination’) it empowers them for ministry. However, this power is qualified. For besides power Paul mentions love and self-discipline. Power, if it is to be used responsibly in the church, must always be complemented by love and self-discipline. However, in the case of Timothy, this passage implies that he may have felt a natural reticence which made him vulnerable to the temptation to withdraw from his leadership responsibilities. Thomas Oden, an American commentator, saw such an attitude in the Parable of the Talents: “The spirit of timidity is typified by the unprofitable servant who would not take responsibility for having buried his one talent – he buried it out of anxiety

³⁰ J.N.D. Kelly *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black, London 1963) 159.

³¹ Gordon Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Hendrickson, Massachusetts 1984) 266.

that it might be misused (Matt 25,25)".³² Is it reading too much into Scripture to suggest that there are too many 'Timothys' in church leadership today – leaders afraid to lead?³³

Conclusions

1. All five passages examined suggest that in the churches of the New Testament leaders were normally appointed with prayer and with the laying on of hands. In this regard the appointment of the leaders of the young church had much in common with the appointment of Jewish rabbis. Although there may be no hermeneutical principle which necessitates that custom be normative in today's church, there does seem much to be said in maintaining this symbolic act of solidarity and prayer.
2. All five passages clearly indicate that leaders in the churches of the New Testament were not self-appointed. In two of the five passages (Acts 6 and Acts 13) leaders were appointed either by or under the direction of the local church. On the other hand, in the Pastoral Epistles the role of the church receives no mention: their hands are laid upon Timothy by the elders (1 Tim 4.14) – a ceremony in which Paul took a particular part (2 Tim 1.6). Likewise in Acts 14.23 elders were appointed by Paul and Barnabas apparently without reference to the church – but in so far as the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were only at an early stage of their life, it may fairly be argued that this was exceptional (was this also the situation envisaged in Titus 1.5?). Certainly if other evidence of the role of the church is taken seriously (see, for instance, Matt 18.15-20; Acts 15.22, 28; 1 Cor 5.4,5), then it may well be that the silence of the Pastorals is not unduly significant – it may be that their role is simply assumed. Whatever the truth may be, the principle underlying the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 4.5.9: see also 1 Tim 2.5) and of the ministry of all believers (see, for instance, 1 Cor 12) would encourage the practice today of involving the local church as a whole in the appointment of their leaders.
3. Both Acts and the Pastoral Epistles underline the necessity for leaders to be appropriately gifted and of good character. In Acts 6, for instance, the church at Jerusalem is told to choose seven men "known to be full of the Spirit and of wisdom"... In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas had already proved themselves as leaders in the church at Antioch before they were appointed for missionary service. If 1 Tim 3.1-7 and 2 Tim 2.2 (see also 1 Tim 4.12) be any guide, then Timothy will already have evidenced good character as well as the ability to teach before being set apart.
4. Although leaders of the New Testament churches appear to have exercised authoritative (see Heb 13.17; 1 Thess 5.12; 1 Tim 1.3,5; 4.11; 5.7) – as distinct from authoritarian (see 1 Pet 5.2,3) – leadership, it is not clear from the passages we have examined whether authority as such was specifically delegated to them in the ceremony of laying on of hands. Much rests upon the rabbinic evidence which David Daube adduced. If Daube was right, then in Acts 6 and Acts 13 hands were laid upon the Seven and upon Paul and Barnabas not just with a view to conferring blessing, but also with a view to delegating authority to them to enable them to discharge their duties in the name of the church. With the rabbinic

³² Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (John Knox, Louisville 1989) 32-33.

³³ See further Paul Beasley-Murray, *Power for God's Sake: Power and Abuse in the Local Church* (Paternoster, Carlisle 1998) 148-150.

practice in mind, in 1 Tim 4.14 the emphasis is probably upon the authority Timothy received to discharge his ministry of preaching and teaching, whereas in 2 Tim 4.6 the emphasis is upon the blessing received. As for today's practice, few people involved in ordination services would have any awareness of the Hebrew distinction between 'placing hands upon' and 'leaning hands upon' particular individuals. Nonetheless, there are important implications. For in ordination the church is not simply recognizing a person as called of God to leadership, it is also at the same time delegating the authority necessary for them to fulfil their ministry. Such authority is held 'in trust' and has an element of accountability built into it – those whom God has called and the church has recognized are accountable both to the Lord (see Heb 13.17; Jas 3.1) and to the church (see especially Matt 18.15-20).

5. Three of the passages examined suggest that leaders in the churches of the New Testament were appointed to a particular task rather than to a generalized form of service in the church as a whole. Thus in Acts 6 and Acts 13 both the Seven and Paul and Barnabas were appointed to fulfil a specific function, as were presumably the elders in Acts 14. In the Pastorals the picture is less clear: did Timothy receive authority for a particular situation or for a particular ministry? Maybe the question is not real. For if Acts is to be believed, Timothy's ministry was not limited to Ephesus, but was wider in view. In this regard Timothy's appointment is more akin to ordination today, where ordination to a leadership ministry is to be distinguished from 'induction' to a particular situation.

6. Finally, on a negative note, at no stage is priestly language used of the appointment of leaders, as if the leaders of the churches in the New Testament were perceived as possessing a special status – as distinct from function – in the church. Thus we observed in Acts 13.2, that although Luke speaks of Paul and Barnabas being 'set apart', it is very much a functional being 'set apart': i.e. it was first and foremost with a view to being 'sent off' on a missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas were 'appointed'. The language of 'being set apart' at ordination is unhelpful, for it can imply that those being ordained are no longer part of the people of God, but belong to a separate order.