

Zeitschrift: Theologische Zeitschrift
Herausgeber: Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel
Band: 30 (1974)
Heft: 5

Artikel: Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-878588>

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Selection and Installation to Office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity

If the cultural milieu of early Christianity were described by concentric circles, one would move inward from the Roman to the Greek to the Jewish. The degree of influence in the formative years is in inverse ratio to the size of the circle. Later the relationship tends to be reversed.

This article takes a narrow slice through the series of rings — an aspect of the constitutional procedure. In so doing, our attention will be alert for underlying motifs which may indicate a close correlation. The study attempts to establish a *typology for modes* of selection and installation to office¹. Capitalization is employed for terms given a technical sense for the type of method indicated.

1. Modes of Selection

A characteristic expression of the practice of *Co-option* may be seen in the procedure for filling Roman priestly colleges and sodalities². The pure form of Co-option was employed under the early Republic whereby the members selected replacements to fill vacancies in their number, thus providing for a self-perpetuating membership. Later the colleges made nominations to a special assembly (and still later to the Senate) and then went through the form of co-opting those selected³.

Co-option is the term which best describes the method of filling vacancies in the great Sanhedrin (and presumably the lesser Sanhedrins) of the Jews⁴. Here there was the further refinement of a subordinate body of scholars who according to their rank were advanced to fill vacancies in the Council.

Co-option is natural to an aristocratic society or to a body which is the custodian of traditional knowledge or practice. Its existence in the Christian church would seem to result from cultural influences, in this case probably Jewish. Quite controversial is the evidence of Jerome, Severus of Antioch, and Eutychius to the practice of Co-option in the church of Alexandria in pre-Nicene times⁵. According to the composite picture

¹ This article is based on the material assembled in the author's doctoral dissertation *Ordination in the Ancient Church* (Harvard University, 1959).

² The references are given by G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (1912), p. 487. Livy xl. 42.6ff. may be singled out because of his evidence for the Co-option of pontifices, augures, and *epulones*.

³ Wissowa (n. 2), *ibid.* For Co-option in the senates of municipia in the second century A.D. see M. Cary, *A History of Rome* (1954), pp. 634–636.

⁴ Sanhedrin iv. 3,4; cf. bSanhedrin 17b. See further below, p. 00.

⁵ Jerome, Ep. 146 (partially quoted below at note 114); E. W. Brooks (ed.), *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus Patriarch of Antioch*, 2 (1903), p. 213; Eutychius in *Patr.Gr.* CXI, 982. The case in support of unusual procedures at Alexandria is argued by W. Telfer, *Episcopal Succession in Egypt: Journ. of Eccl. Hist.* 3 (1952), pp. 1–13. An answer is given by J. Lécuyer, *Le problème des consécrations épiscopales dans l'Eglise d'Alexandrie: Bull. de litt. eccl.* 1964 (1964), pp. 241–257; and *La succession des évêques d'Alexandrie aux premiers siècles: ibid.* 1969 (1969), pp. 80–99.

provided by their testimony the twelve presbyters of the Alexandrian church selected and installed one out of their own number as bishop and then appointed to his place on the presbytery another person in order to complete the number twelve. Greatly to be desired as a background for this testimony is information on the selecting of the members of the ruling Council of Alexandrian Jewry⁶.

In keeping with the meaning of “designatio”, the term *Designation* is used for a selection to an office made or announced by a person in authority. Rome had a long history of the exercise of such authoritative Designations to office. The Designation of a “rex” by the “interrex” or of a dictator by the consul was followed by an immediate assumption of duties. Even in the Election of magistrates an essential feature of the elective process was the proclamation of the outcome of the Election by the presiding consul (who was spoken of as formally creating those elected in their office), whereby the successful candidate became “designatus” until the day of assumption of office⁷. The imperial “commendatio” and “nominatio” so infringed on the elective process that these expressions of the emperor’s desires may be seen as later expressions of Designation, even where the forms of election were maintained.

The pontifex maximus in Roman religion designated the “rex sacrorum”, “flamines”, and Vestal Virgins⁸.

Designation occurred in the Hellenic world within the clubs and associations for the appointment of lesser functionaries by a higher officer⁹. Similarly a civic ruler had about himself a row of under-officers who were installed by the ruler himself¹⁰.

The selection of rabbis among the Jews may appropriately be classified as a Designation. At first each rabbi selected one of his students for ordination and raised him to a status equal with himself¹¹. Later this prerogative was centralized in the Nasi (or patriarch), and then a further modification required the joint approval of both the Nasi and the Beth Din (council) for the ordination of a rabbi¹².

The nearest approach in Christianity to the rabbinic choice of a student to succeed to the teaching function was the practice of a bishop selecting and ordaining his own successor. This practice lies buried under the later ecclesiastical proscriptions, but must have been fairly prevalent in Palestine and Syria¹³.

The New Testament era saw frequent manifestations of a type of Designation which is justly regarded as distinct from other expressions of this mode of selection – a choice made by a prophet as the inspired spokesman of the divine will¹⁴. Old Testament prophets functioned in this way in pointing out objects of divine choice¹⁵. Inspired Designations ceased with the cessation of an awareness of direct activity by the Holy Spirit in the church.

⁶ For the meager evidence, see V. A. Tcherikover & A. Fuks (ed.), *Corpus papyrorum Judaicarum*, 1 (1957), pp. 10, 57, 101.

⁷ Th. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 1 (1887), p. 578.

⁸ Wissowa (n. 2), *ibid.*

⁹ F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens* (1909), p. 416.

¹⁰ M. A. Siotis, *Die klassische und die christliche Cheirotonie in ihrem Verhältnis: Theologia* 20 (1949), p. 331.

¹¹ A. Ehrhardt, *Jewish and Christian Ordination: Journ. of Eccl. Hist.* 5 (1954), 125–138, pp. 135f.; J. Newman, *Semikhah* (1950), pp. 19f.

¹² Newman (n. 11), *ibid.*

¹³ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* V. 23; Council of Antioch, *Can.* 23; Socrates, *Patr. Gr.* LXVII, 192.

¹⁴ Acts 13:1–3; 1 Tim. 1:10 and 4:14; cf. Acts 20:28.

¹⁵ 1 Kings 11:20ff.; 19:15, 16.

The most frequent occurrences of Designation in the church are found in the appointment of the lesser clergy by the bishop¹⁶.

Sometimes a Nomination, ordinarily to be thought of as subordinate to the elective process, assumed such proportions as to have been the equivalent of a Designation. Candidates for Roman magistracies might make a voluntary announcement of their candidacy or be proposed through a public posting of their names by the election-director¹⁷. The candidates for Greek magistracies were supplied either by nominations from friends or by announcement¹⁸. As civic responsibility became burdensome under the Empire the enforced assumption of public office became increasingly common. Voting was a formality where the number of candidates did not exceed the positions to be filled or the names of the candidates had to be supplied by the election-director¹⁹.

A striking influence of the imperial system on the church is apparent in imperial Nominations to key bishoprics²⁰. It would have taken special courage to regard such a Nomination as no different from that made by another party.

Members of the Christian clergy proposed names for Election or gave their approval to candidates through a "testimonium"²¹. In ordinary circumstances this action must have carried a decisive weight, so that the popular Election amounted only to a ratification.

Republican Rome and the Romanized towns under the early Empire appointed their magistrates by *Election*. There was first an ascertainment of the candidates, followed by a written vote of the assembly of citizens wherein a majority of a voting division determined the vote of that division, and concluded by a proclamation of the outcome²². The procedure for the Election of Grecian magistrates was similar except that the voting was by a show of hands and the basic voting unit was the individual²³.

Democratic procedures prevailed in both Greek and Roman associations where the common method of choosing officers was Election²⁴. Some civic priesthoods in Greece were filled by Election²⁵, and the modification to include Election in filling Roman priesthoods has been noted above.

Hellenistic Judaism appears to have followed Hellenic precedents in electing their community officers²⁶. Notable is the evidence that Election by the community was practiced by the sectaries at Qumran. When judges (ten) were chosen for a special occasion, the whole congregation appears to have made the choice²⁷. The Old Testament

¹⁶ Didascalia 9; Cyprian, Ep. XXXVIII.1,2.

¹⁷ Th. Mommsen, *Die Stadtrechte der latinischen Gemeinden Salpensa und Malaca in der Provinz Baetica*: Abh. Phil.-Hist. Cl. Kön. Sächs. Ges. der Wiss., 3 (1857), p. 423.

¹⁸ G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde* (1920), p. 1071.

¹⁹ Mommsen (n. 17), *ibid.*

²⁰ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* IV.vii.1; V.ix.14ff.

²¹ Cyprian, Ep. LV.9; cfl. *Apost. Trad.* ii.2.

²² Mommsen (n. 7), pp. 578ff.; *id.* (n. 17), pp. 421–428.

²³ Busolt (n. 18), p. 1071; Siotis (n. 10), pp. 524–529; E. S. Staveley, *Greek and Roman Voting and Elections* (1973).

²⁴ Poland (n. 9) p. 417; W. Liebenam, *Zur Geschichte und Organisation des römischen Vereinswesens* (1890), p. 199.

²⁵ P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer* (1920), pp. 44–46.

²⁶ The evidence is chiefly late: S. Krauss, *Synagogale Altertümer* (1922), p. 152.

²⁷ CD x.4–6; Ch. Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents* (1958), p. 49.

phrase *ys' hgwr* ("the lot shall go out") appears figuratively as a set expression for the making of any decision by the congregation, regardless of how arrived at²⁸. In one passage the phrase has reference to the selection of leaders of the community²⁹.

The prevalence of Election in the ancient world finds its counterpart in the prevailing practice of the ancient church. From the New Testament forward there is abundant reference to this method³⁰. Our knowledge of the details is meager, but what evidence there is shows a close similarity to Greek election procedures³¹.

A special type of Election was the Acclamation. This might be a spontaneous response to a person's name or to an omen³². Or, it might be the manner in which approbation was given to a person submitted to the people for approval³³. Acclamations became part of the ritual of ordination in the church orders³⁴. The Elections were frequently voice votes and led to the abuse that results were decided in favor of the faction which could make the most noise. Such unruliness encouraged the clergy to keep a tight hold on the selective process³⁵.

Nominations in established churches generally came from the bishop or clergy³⁶. Even from an early period there are indications that the clergy made the constitutive choice which was then submitted to the people for their ratification of the action already taken³⁷. When the people elected, the clergy were expected to ratify the choice³⁸.

Lots were familiar in the ancient world, but the Greeks alone of the peoples under review made extensive use of *Lot-taking* in filling important positions. Both civil magistracies and priesthoods were filled in this way³⁹. Democracy to the Greeks meant an equal opportunity to serve as well as an equal right to choose.

The belief that chance left the decision to deity⁴⁰ made Lot-taking appropriate for determining the divine will. As such the procedure is found in the Old Testament for the selection of Israel's first king⁴¹. Lots were employed in the New Testament for the choice of a successor to Judas in the apostolate, apparently because apostles were supposed to

²⁸ 1QS v.2ff.; vi.16–21; CD xiii.2–4; E. Ferguson, *Qumran and Codex D: Revue de Qumran* 8 (1972), pp. 75–80.

²⁹ 1QSa i.13–17. Cf. Josephus, *War* II.viii.123. Interpreting this passage as a selection by the community, in accord with the other usages of the phrase for a community action, provides forceful support for the parallels between Qumran and the Greek clubs drawn by D. Bardtke, *Die Rechtstellung der Qumran-Gemeinde: Theol. Lit.* 86 (1961), pp. 94–104, even though he takes the references to the lot literally. See also B. W. Dombrowski, *Hjhd in 1QS and to koinón. An Instance of Early Greek and Jewish Synthesis: Harv. Theol. Rev.* 59 (1966), pp. 293–307.

³⁰ Acts 6:1–6; Did. 15.1; 1 Clem. 44; Ign., *Phil.* x.1 and *Smyrn.* xi.2; Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* ii.2; Cyprian, *Ep.* LV.9; LIX.5,6; LXVIII.2; LXVII.3,4.

³¹ *Vita Polycarpi* xxii; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita S. Greg. Thaum.* in *Patr.Gr.* XLVI, 933ff. Cf. Siotis (n. 10), 21, pp. 612ff.

³² Paulinus, *Vita S. Amb.* III.6; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* VI.xxix.

³³ Athanasius, *Apol. c. Arian.* vi; Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* IV.xx and xxi; Theophilus of Alexandria, *Can.* 6.

³⁴ *Test. Dom.* I.xxi.

³⁵ Laodicea, *Can.* 13, instead of a denial of election by the laity, may be a restriction of election to the faithful in exclusion of the "mob" – see Siotis (n. 10), 22, p. 111.

³⁶ *Cyp. Ep.* LV.8,9; LXVII.4; Theophilus, *Can.* 6.

³⁷ This may be the procedure in 1 Clem. 44 and *Didascalia* 4.

³⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Mart.* ix; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* XVIII.33; Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* ii.2; *Vita Polycarpi* xxii.

³⁹ V. Ehrenberg, *Losung: Pauly's-Real-Encycl.*, 13,2 (1927), col. 1476; Stengel (n. 25), pp. 44–46.

⁴⁰ Ehrenberg (n. 39), col. 1462ff.; Plato, *Laws* 759C; *Inscr.Gr.* XII.3, 178.

⁴¹ 1 Sam. 10:20–24.

have their appointment directly from the Lord⁴². The practice, however, gained no currency in the early church⁴³.

Hereditary priesthods were common among the Greeks⁴⁴, and the Jewish priesthood was a matter of heredity⁴⁵. The Christian Church, by way of contrast, has always opposed recognizing any right of *inheritance* to its sacred functions. Although no office was filled on the basis of inheritance, protests had to be raised from an early time against preference being given by men in authority to their kinsmen⁴⁶.

2. Modes of Installation

On the solemn occasion of assuming official responsibilities it is natural to expect that the event would be brought into relation to the deity and the religious sentiments of the people involved. The specific manner of *Divine Invocation* varied with the genius of the religion involved.

Roman magistrates took the “auspices” on the morning of their first day in office. The purpose of Auspication was to receive a favorable sign from the gods for the assumption of the office, but the very performance of the Auspication was an indication that the person had entered upon his functions⁴⁷. Among Roman cult functionaries, the “rex sacrorum”, “augures”, and “flamines” received an Inauguration by an augur⁴⁸. Inauguration in this limited technical sense differed from Auspication only in that the signs were taken by another than the person entering office⁴⁹. The ceremony of Inauguration meant the declaration of the assent of the deity to the accomplished Election or Designation.

Another form of Divine Invocation at one’s installation to an office was Oath-taking. The oath was universal in Greek and Roman life⁵⁰. Roman magistrates had to lay an oath in the hands of the quaestors within five days of assuming office that they would observe the laws. A new magistrate was limited in his duties until this was done⁵¹. This “oath of office” was distinct from the vow to Juppiter to offer certain sacrifices, which was

⁴² Acts. 1:15–26, especially verse 24.

⁴³ Codex D changes Acts 1:23, 26 from a Lot-taking to a nomination by Peter and election by the community so that the selection of Judas is made to conform to later church practice; Ferguson (n. 28), *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Stengel (n. 25), pp. 44–46.

⁴⁵ Priesthoods became hereditary among the Greeks when a family was regarded as descended from the god, when the family introduced a cult into the state or was honored for particular acts of piety. The Old Testament assigns the priesthood to the tribe of Levi by virtue of divine election.

⁴⁶ Origen, Homily in Numbers XXII.4.

⁴⁷ Mommsen (n. 7), pp. 615f. In the civil context the decisive moment in a change in office was provided by the calendar, not by any act of installation.

⁴⁸ Wissowa (n. 2), p. 490.

⁴⁹ H. Oldenberg, *De inauguratione sacerdotum Romanorum: Commentationes Philologiae in honorem Theodori Mommseni* (1877), p. 161. Livy i.18 describes an inauguration.

⁵⁰ In general see E. Ziebarth, *Eid: Pauly’s Real-Encycl.*, 5 (1905), col. 2075–2083, and for Roman public life A. Steinwenter, *Ius iurandum: ibid.*, 10 (1917), col. 1256–1257; Mommsen (n. 7), pp. 619–622.

⁵¹ Pliny, *Paneg.* 64; Livy xxxi.50.8. The formula in Republican times was “by Jove and the gods of the household” – Cicero, *Acad.* II.20.65. The oath in imperial times was taken on January 1: Dio xlvii.18.

apparently a regular feature of the activities of the day of entrance into office⁵². Oath-taking, in the form of swearing by the statutes of the association, is the only ceremony attested for the induction into office in Roman associations⁵³. Greek officers too at their entrance into their functions had to take an oath of office to rule according to the best of their ability and according to the laws⁵⁴. The installation of officers of Greek associations was spoken of in wholly general phrases in the great majority of cases, but an oath was apparently taken on entrance into office, as it was on entrance into the association itself⁵⁵.

Oaths appear to have played no part in the installation activities of Jews and the mainstream of the church in the early centuries. Exceptional is the requirement in the *Contestatio* concerning admission of a scholar into the Jewish Christian equivalent of the rabbinic academy. After being proved for a period of six years the new teacher took an oath of secrecy and faithfulness⁵⁶, partook of bread and salt (a covenant meal) with his instructor, and was entrusted with the books of the sect's teaching⁵⁷.

Sacrifices to the deity were a frequent act accompanying entrance into office in the ancient world. Such was a part of a Roman magistrate's activities on his first day in office⁵⁸. Greek sources mention "entrance sacrifices" (*eisitēria*) brought by members of the Council and all magistrates at their entrance into office⁵⁹. Some Attic inscriptions mention entrance sacrifices offered by priests, presumably at the moment of entering on their charge (as was the case with magistrates)⁶⁰. The same term occurs in reference to an association⁶¹, and presumably sacrifices accompanied entrance into office in associations, at least in some cases.

Priests in the Old Testament performed certain sacrifices at their installation. The account of the installation of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood in Ex. 29 and Lev. 8 gives the fullest description of installation to the priestly office in Israel. The seven-day ceremony, in the presence of the people, included sacrifices which were accompanied by the placing of blood on the right ear, thumb, and great toe and by the sprinkling of blood and oil on the person and garments of the new priest.

The Christian renunciation of material sacrifice meant that divine invocation took exclusively the form of prayer. Prayer was the constitutive part of Christian ordination⁶². It occurs already in the appointments to church office in the New Testament⁶³. It is a uniform feature of the ordination

⁵² Livy iv.27.1; xxxvi.2.3–5. For the vow to Juppiter that he had offered sacrifice: Cicero, *De leg.* ii.34.93; Dio xlv.17.

⁵³ Liebenam (n. 24), p. 202. For one such statute see Corp. inscr. lat. VI.10298, studied by A. F. Rudorff in *Zeits. f. gesch. Rechtswiss.* 15 (1850), pp. 232–240.

⁵⁴ Busolt (n. 18), p. 472; Ziebarth (n. 50), p. 2079; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 55.

⁵⁵ Poland (n. 9), pp. 418, 499.

⁵⁶ The explanation given in the document that the candidate does not swear an oath (which is unlawful), but only calls heaven and earth to witness his declaration seems to be largely a verbal distinction, so that this act may justly be classed as an Oath-taking.

⁵⁷ *Ep. Pet. ad Jac.* in the Pseudo-Clementines.

⁵⁸ See Livy's description of what was done on taking office in xxi.63.5–10.

⁵⁹ Busolt (n. 18), pp. 517–518. The clearest statement comes from Demosthenes, XIX.190; cf. XXI.114 and Thucydides viii.70. Attic inscriptions give *eisitētēria*: *Inscr.Gr.* II², 1011 and 1315. *Isitēria* is mentioned at the yearly feast of Artemis in Magnesia: W. Dittenberger, *Syll.*³, No. 695. Dio uses *eisitēria* for the public sacrifices by which the Roman magistrates began the new year. The Greek entrance sacrifices were offered to Zeus Soter and Athena Soteira "on behalf of the Council and people": *Inscr.Gr.* II², 689 and 1011.

⁶⁰ *Inscr.Gr.* II², 689; 690; 1315.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1315. See Poland (n. 9), p. 253.

⁶² E. Ferguson, *Jewish and Christian Ordination*: *Harv. Theol. Rev.* 56 (1963), p. 15, for the absence of prayer in Jewish ordination in contrast to its centrality in Christian ordination.

⁶³ Acts 6:6; 13:3; 14:23.

rituals from the ancient church⁶⁴. When church writers reflected on the significance of ordination, they defined the rite in terms of the prayer⁶⁵. Three elements may be distinguished in the ordination prayers: praise to God who appoints leaders for his people; petition for divine favor in undertaking the task (Divine Invocation), and a personal benediction of the ordinand by the participants. The first two elements appear in the ordination prayer proper. The latter feature is present in the joint imposition of hands and silent prayers. The prayer spelled out that for which one was ordained, so there was a separate prayer for each new grade in the ministry. The prayer and Imposition of hands (considered below) indicate that the character of the ordination was setting apart to divine service by a petition for divine grace and a personal benediction.

Demonstrating accession to office by the first performance of the duties of the office, implying *Inaugural Usurpation*, is widespread and natural. The type of office determined the function exercised in the Usurpation. A great amount of ceremony marked the entrance into office in ancient Rome. The office was not obtained by these ceremonies but rather was by them for the first time exercised (“*usurpatio iuris*”)⁶⁶. Among the opening day activities for a new consul was holding a session of the senate⁶⁷. The praetors assumed judicial functions by hearing a case⁶⁸. Installation by Usurpation was perhaps the most characteristic feature of Roman induction into office.

The sacrifices performed by Aaron and his sons on their installation (Ex. 29 and Lev. 8 above) may be seen as exemplifying the category of Usurpation. The newly ordained rabbi in later Judaism gave a public discourse⁶⁹.

Inaugural Usurpation was also a feature of early Christian ordination. The ordination occurred in the setting of the Sunday worship, and the new bishop proceeded immediately to the celebration of the eucharist⁷⁰. Fourth century sources also indicate the preaching of a sermon by the newly ordained bishop⁷¹. These two acts together indicate the chief functions of the bishop – liturgical president and authoritative teacher of the community.

Teaching was associated with occupying the chair⁷². In Judaism and Christianity, where teaching was an important aspect of the religious life, a significant act of installation was Solemn Seating⁷³. This was a feature of Roman civic life, where praetors, aediles, and quaestors showed their entrance into office by taking their seat⁷⁴. Emperors under the later Empire, following an acclamation by the

⁶⁴ See the collection in H. B. Porter, Jr., *The Ordination Prayers of the Ancient Western Churches* (1967). To his prayers may be added from the East those in documents derived from the Apostolic Tradition (Apost. Const.; Const. per Hipp.; Test. Dom.) and independently in Serapion's Prayer Book.

⁶⁵ Jerome, In Isa. XVI,58 (Patr.Lat. XXIV,591); John Chrysostom, Hom. XIV in Acts 6 (Patr.Gr. LX,116); Gregory of Nyssa, on the Baptism of Christ (Patr.Gr. XLVI,581D).

⁶⁶ Mommsen (n. 7), pp. 615–618.

⁶⁷ Cf. Livy xxvi.26,5; xxvi.1.1; xxx.27.1; xxxii.8.1 and passim

⁶⁸ Mommsen (n. 7), p. 618. Mommsen here only refers to Ovid, Fast. i.165ff., and Juvenal xvi.42 which are evidence for the hearing of law cases on the first of January.

⁶⁹ Newman (n. 11), pp. 122f.

⁷⁰ E. J. Lengeling, *Der Bischof als Hauptzelebrant der Messe seiner Ordination: Kyriakón*. Festschrift Johannes Quasten (1970), II, 886–912.

⁷¹ Apost. Const. VIII.v.9ff.; Vita Polycarpi xxiii.

⁷² Cf. Irenaeus, Demonstr. 2: “The seat is a symbol of teaching.”

⁷³ Ferguson (n. 62), pp. 16–19. I have used Enthronement interchangeably with Solemn Seating for the formal occupying of the chair of office. Thrónos was used of the teacher's chair and no distinction from káthedra can be maintained simply on the basis of these words.

⁷⁴ Mommsen (n. 7), p. 618.

troops, were proclaimed and enthroned⁷⁵. There may have been an “enthronement” in the initiation of certain Greek priests⁷⁶.

All of the earliest descriptions of rabbinic ordination make the key feature the Seating of the ordinand in the teaching chair⁷⁷. According to the Mishna three rows of disciples sat before the Sanhedrin. A vacancy in the Sanhedrin was filled by moving a man from the first row up to a seat on the Council, advancing a man from the second and third rows each, and choosing a man from the congregation to occupy the vacant place in the third row⁷⁸. Taking the appropriate seat, therefore, represented one’s admission to the Sanhedrin.

Solemn Seating remained a significant concept among Jewish Christians. “Even as Moses delivered his teaching to the seventy who succeeded to his chair” was the pattern for committing Peter’s teaching to seventy chosen men who would carry on the tradition⁷⁹. The Pseudo-Clementine Epistle to James, although referring to an imposition of hands, gives primary importance in its account of ordination to the Seating in the teacher’s chair⁸⁰. The similar account of an ordination in Homily III. 60–72 places the Seating before the Imposition of hands and prayer, which are tacked on somewhat incongruously after the ordinand has already taken his position. It would appear that in Jewish Christian circles being seated in the chair of the church was the key act in ordination⁸¹.

Enthronement continued in the church mainly in the installation of a bishop into the chair of his church⁸². Enthronement language could stand for the whole process of induction into office⁸³.

Divine Invocation and Inaugural Usurpation were common Roman and Greek practices, but the Christian application of these motifs were so distinctive as to indicate an independent development.

Bestowal of the instruments signifying an office or used in its performance is called *Porrection*, and is a fairly obvious means of installation. The bishop’s teaching role, indicated by the chair, was also expressed by the ceremony of holding the open Gospels upon the head of the bishop-elect during the ordination prayer⁸⁴.

Porrection was known in Rome under the Empire. A sword was given to the prefect to indicate his appointment⁸⁵. Greek priests would have received any insignia of their office at their installation⁸⁶. The same applies to Israelite priests. The accounts of Ex. 29 and

⁷⁵ H. U. Instinsky, *Bischofsstuhl und Kaiserthron* (1955), pp. 32ff., finds the earliest instance with Pertinax. A thorough criticism of Instinsky’s hypothesis that this event became a pattern for Christian appointment of bishops (and in particular that imperial enthronement was the basis of Solemn Seating as practiced by Christians) is given by E. Stommel, *Bischofsstuhl und hoher Thron: Jahrb. f. Ant. u. Christ.* 1 (1958), pp. 52–78.

⁷⁶ Ph.-E. Legrand, *Sacerdos.Grece: Dict. des ant. Gr. et Rom.*, 4 (1908), p. 938.

⁷⁷ Ehrhardt (n. 11); review by Ferguson (n. 62). The references include the Sifrè to Numbers 27; Sifrè on Deuteronomy cited in E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (1951), p. 33; *pBikkurum* 3, 65d (quoted in Newman, n. 11, p. 103). Cf. the account of Moses’ ordaining of Joshua in Assumption of Moses xii.2: “raised him into the seat before him”.

⁷⁸ Sanhedrin iv.3,4. Similar information indicates that the same procedure was employed for the lesser sanhedrins, or councils of judges, in Palestine – *bSanhedrin* 17b.

⁷⁹ Ep. Pet. ad Jac. 1.2; cf. also 3:1.

⁸⁰ Ep. Clem. ad Jac. 2.2; 3.1,2; 17.1; 19.1.

⁸¹ Further evidence in Ferguson (n. 62); id., *Eusebius and Ordination: Journ. of Eccl. Hist.* 13 (1962), pp. 139–140.

⁸² *Apost. Const.* VIII.v.9f.; *Vita Polycarpi* xxiii; Theodoret, *Hist.eccl.* IV.20, 21. *Didascalia* 4 says: “He receives the imposition of hands to sit in the office of the bishopric.”

⁸³ Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* VI.29; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* XVIII.33; XXI.8; Synesius, *Ep.* LXVII. To hold office was to sit in the chair: Irenaeus, *Adv.hear.* IV.xli.1 (xxvi.3f.); Muratorian Fragment.

⁸⁴ First attested in the *Apost. Const.* VIII.iv.2ff.; cf. Ps. Chrysostom, *De leg.* (Patr.Gr. LVI,404).

⁸⁵ *Dio* lxviii.16.

⁸⁶ Legrand (n. 76), *ibid.*

Lev. 8 referred to above use words from the root “to fill” in connection with the installation of Aaron and his sons. The full form of the expression “to fill the hand” occurs in Judg. 17:5, 12. The expression lost its specific sense in Hebrew, and in most Old Testament texts means only “appoint” or “ordain”. What were the hands of the priest filled with? One view is that there was a handing over of sacrificial portions to the new priest, empowering him to lay these pieces on the altar, or, as the case may be, to receive them as perquisites from the sacrifice⁸⁷. An alternative interpretation, based on the view that originally Semitic priests were diviners and not in charge of sacrifice, is that the hands were filled with the sacred lots⁸⁸. The Jewish Christian Pseudo-Clementines provide, in addition to the oath, the committing of the secret books of the community to the newly ordained⁸⁹.

Episcopal ordination in the Apostolic Constitutions included not only the opening of the Gospels upon the new bishop’s head, but following the prayer, one of the attending bishops “lifted up the sacrifice upon the hands of the one who has been ordained”, a symbol of his right to offer sacrifice⁹⁰. Generally it was in regard to the lower orders that Porrection was used. This is attested already in the Apostolic Tradition where the reader was appointed by the bishop’s handing him a book⁹¹. The spurious canons of the Fourth Council of Carthage, compiled at Arles in the fifth century, provide that at the appointment of a subdeacon the bishop hand him an empty patten and chalice and the archdeacon a ewer and towel. An acolyte received a candlestick and taper and the doorkeeper a key⁹².

Distinctive garments might pertain to an office as well as or instead of particular instruments, and installation by *Investiture* would be marked by donning the clothing pertaining to the office or worn in its exercise.

The ceremonial of ordination for the Israelite high priest in Ex. 29 and Lev. 8 includes ceremonial washing, Investiture with the garments of the priesthood, and Chrismation (see below). There are several indications that the Investiture and the Chrismation were the basic elements in the appointment⁹³. It would appear that in the latter days of the temple the high priest was no longer (or not always) anointed, for the Mishna knows of high priests introduced to their office through Investiture⁹⁴, and Josephus, *Antiquities* XX. 1, would indicate that Investiture was constitutive in making the high priest.

Later rabbinic ordination included an Investiture. The candidate wore a special garment at his ordination and was thereafter distinguished by his clothing. The garment of honor meant much, and priestly garments came to be taken as an example of how rabbis should dress. The Nasi also was installed by Naming and Investiture⁹⁵.

⁸⁷ W. Baudissin, *Priests and Levites: Dict. of the Bible* 4 (1900), p. 70.

⁸⁸ W. R. Arnold, *Ephod and Ark* (1917), p. 134.

⁸⁹ “Contestatio” in *Ep. Pet. ad Jac.*

⁹⁰ *Apost. Const.* VIII.v.9ff.

⁹¹ *Apost. Trad.* xii.

⁹² J. G. Davies, *Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period: Jour. of Eccl. Hist.* 14 (1963), pp. 1–15.

⁹³ Ex. 29:9,29; 40:14f.; Num. 20:26–28.

⁹⁴ Such is the understanding of *Horaioth* iii.4 by E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 2 (1907), p. 284. *BYoma* 12 a,b discusses only Investiture and Usurpation in the installation of a new high priest.

⁹⁵ Newman (n. 11), pp. 117–120.

Anointing with oil or *Chrismation* had a widespread and distinctive role in the Old Testament. Chrismation was used in designating kings in Israel. This is a prominent feature in the stories of Saul⁹⁶ and David⁹⁷. Thereafter, anointing seems only to be mentioned in connection with cases of disputed succession⁹⁸, but perhaps it is only the irregular circumstances that call forth the explicit reference. The king, actual or ideal, was thought of as “anointed”⁹⁹.

Oil applied to priests and to the items they used in the service of God imparted a holy character – fit for divine service and removed from the circle of the profane¹⁰⁰. The close association of Chrismation with divine service gave to the word *māshach* a metaphorical sense of any one chosen by God¹⁰¹. Chrismation is associated with endowment with the Spirit of God in some passages¹⁰².

One strand of priestly materials in the Old Testament suggests that all priests were anointed¹⁰³. On the other hand, the term “the anointed priest” seems to have been a special designation of the high priest (but this interpretation is not necessarily demanded in Leviticus 4), and anointing is given as the mark of Aaron’s successor in Leviticus 6:22¹⁰⁴. Apparently at some point in Old Testament history all priests could be spoken of as “anointed”, but “the anointed priest” *par excellence* was the high priest. Ex. 29 and Lev. 8 do in fact make a distinction in the manner of the application of the anointing oil. It was only sprinkled on Aaron’s sons (also on Aaron himself), whereas it was also poured on Aaron’s head¹⁰⁵. The virtual silence of sources outside the Old Testament leaves the question of what ceremony was in use for the installation of a high priest in later times uncertain. The continuation of Chrismation into Hellenistic times is indicated by Dan. 9:26 and 2 Macc. 1:10. Any cessation of Chrismation would have come in Herodian times¹⁰⁶.

Early Christianity’s break with the priestly conceptions of the Old Testament is indicated by the absence of Investiture and Chrismation in ordination until well into the Middle Ages. The first evidence of Chrismation in ordination is in the eighth century¹⁰⁷.

Designation as a method of selection has its counterpart among acts of installation in *Naming*, a formal verbal proclamation of the name of the office or the title carried by its holder. The formal completion of Co-option to Roman priestly colleges came when the president “ad sacra vocabat” the newly designated member – a constitutive Naming¹⁰⁸.

Verbal Naming came to replace Imposition of hands in rabbinic ordination. The Palestinian Talmud quotes the opinion that “elders are ordained by a verbal declaration”, and adds that “one does not need to lay his hands on the ordained”¹⁰⁹. Billerbeck found the earliest evidence for Imposition of hands being obsolete in an event dated about A.D.

⁹⁶ 1 Sam. 10:1.

⁹⁷ 1 Sam. 16:13f.; 2 Sam. 2:4, 5:3.

⁹⁸ A. Macalister, *Anointings: Dict. of the Bible*, 1 (1900), pp. 100–102.

⁹⁹ Lam. 4:20; Ps. 2:2; Zech. 4:14 (apparently alongside the priest).

¹⁰⁰ See especially Ex. 30:22–33. For the various anointings in the Old Testament see S. Szikszai, *Anoint: Interpreter’s Dict. of the Bible*, 1 (1962), p. 139.

¹⁰¹ Ps. 105:15, Isa. 45:1.

¹⁰² 1 Sam. 10:1, 6; 16:13f.; Isa. 61:1.

¹⁰³ Ex. 28:40f.; 30:30; 40:14f. (but do these passages refer to the sons of Aaron as successors in the high priesthood?); Ex. 29:29f.; Lev. 7:36; 10:7; Num. 3:3.

¹⁰⁴ For an analysis of the problem see Baudissin (n. 87), p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ See further Lev. 21:10, 12; Ps. 133:2.

¹⁰⁶ So Schürer (n. 94), p. 284. 1QM ix.8f. assumes each priest was anointed.

¹⁰⁷ G. Ellard, *Ordination Anointings in the Western Church Before 1000 A.D.* (1933), pp. 7–13, 104. There was chrismation early at baptism, and Tertullian, *De bapt.* 7, connected this ceremony with admission to the Christian priesthood.

¹⁰⁸ J. Toutain, *Sacerdos. Rome: Dict. des ant. Gr. et Rom.*, 4 (1908), p. 945.

¹⁰⁹ pMegilloth 1, 72b (also pYoma 1, 38d).

280¹¹⁰, but there is good reason to date the change in the second century when ordination ceased to be the action of a single rabbi in ordaining a successor and became the prerogative of the Patriarch on behalf of the community¹¹¹. The new circumstances and the new ceremony gave the name *minnūy* to ordination in Palestine; the older term *semīkāh* continued in use among Babylonian Jews. The essential part of the Naming was the giving of the title “Rabbi” to the ordained¹¹².

Naming occurs in Christianity in reference to certain lower orders; thus the Apostolic Tradition has the subdeacon appointed by being “named” to the function by the bishop and the widow “appointed by word only”¹¹³.

Perhaps the most interesting use of this practice in Christianity is in the church at Alexandria, according to the testimony of Jerome. He declares that “at Alexandria from the time of Mark the Evangelist until Heraclas and Dionysius the presbyters always named “nominabant” as bishop one elected out of their own number and placed in a higher rank”¹¹⁴. The significant action, although there was an Election by the presbyters and a Solemn Seating, was the Naming, the bestowing of the title “bishop”. The Canons of Hippolytus makes the same points as does Jerome, distinguishing the bishop from the presbyter in the “name of the episcopate” and by being “seated in the chair”¹¹⁵. Since both sources affirm that the bishop can ordain but presbyters cannot, presumably the setting apart of a bishop did not entail a new ordination.

Imposition of Hands became the universal Christian rite of ordination for the offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. It was known already in the Roman world in an inaugural context¹¹⁶, but the background of Christian practice was clearly Jewish.

The laying on of hands was represented in Hebrew by two different words. *Sāmakh* (“to lean upon”) was the more frequent term, employed in the following circumstances: witnesses laying their hands on the blasphemer who is to be stoned¹¹⁷, the person who brings an animal for sacrifice leaning upon it¹¹⁸, the people consecrating the Levites (which is assimilated to the form of a sacrifice)¹¹⁹, and Moses appointing Joshua as his successor¹²⁰. *Sim* (“to touch”) was used in connection with pronouncing a benediction¹²¹. The Moses-Joshua episode became an important model for rabbinic ordination, and *semīkāh* (from *sāmakh*) became the technical term for ordination. The Imposition of hands was the essential part of the rite in early rabbinic ordination when a scholar ordained one or two of his pupils to carry on his teaching¹²². It has commonly been accepted that rabbinic ordination with

¹¹⁰ P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 2 (1924), p. 655.

¹¹¹ Newman (n. 11), pp. 103–110; cf. J. Z. Lauterbach, *Ordination: The Jew. Encycl.*, 9 (repr. 1916), p. 429.

¹¹² bSanhedrin 13b.

¹¹³ Apost. Trad. xiv. and xi.

¹¹⁴ Ep. 146 (Patr.Lat. XXII,1194). K. Müller, *Kleine Beiträge zur alten Kirchengeschichte: Zeits. nt. Wiss.*, 28 (1929), p. 278), points out that according to his parallels Jerome means “called” and not “nominate”. The sentence structure would also make nominate a difficult reading.

¹¹⁵ Can.Hippol. IV, 30–32. See H. Achelis, *Die Canones Hippolyti* (1891); W. Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (1900), pp. 200–230; R. G. Coquin, *Les Canons d’Hippolyte: Patrologia Orientalis* 31,2 (1966).

¹¹⁶ Livy I.xviii.6–10.

¹¹⁷ Lev. 24:14. This practice probably lies behind the judicial act in Susannah 34.

¹¹⁸ Lev. passim; 2 Chron. 29:23; Josephus, *Ant.* ix.13.3

¹¹⁹ Num. 8:10.

¹²⁰ Num. 27:15ff.; Deut. 34:9.

¹²¹ Gen. 48:14ff.

¹²² pSanhedrin 1.19a, 43. On rabbinic ordination see Newman (n. 11) and K. Hrubby, *La notion d’ordination dans la tradition juive: La Maison Dieu* 102 (1970), pp. 30–56.

its transfer of authority provided the background of Christian ordination practice¹²³.

Laying on of hands occurred in Christianity for simple benedictions, healings, at baptism, reconciliation of penitents and schismatics, imparting the Holy Spirit, as well as in appointment to office¹²⁴. The common theme in all of these occasions is the bestowal of a blessing; therefore, it may be argued that the Christian gesture is rooted in the benedictions of Jewish life, rather than in rabbinic ordination¹²⁵. The fact that prayer consistently accompanied the Christian act, as it did *sīm*, but not the Jewish ordination (nor any instance of *sāmakh*) supports this distinction¹²⁶. Laying on of hands as an accompaniment to prayer brings this study back to the divine Invocation with which this section began.

3. Conclusion

Typological studies have the value of sharpening points of agreement and difference. Similarities in the types of methods employed in selection and installation to office are in part due to the limited number of options available through which to carry out these functions. Christianity was a part of the ancient world and shows the influence of its surrounding cultures. At its beginning the *Jewish* influence was the strongest; in the course of time *Greek* and then *Roman influence* became more noticeable. Nevertheless, *Christianity* showed a *distinctive* development of motifs shared in common with its environment and so demonstrated its own genius. Comparative study of the selection and installation practices sharpens the theological significance of those practices and the offices involved.

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¹²³ D. Daube, *New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (1956), pp. 224–246; Lohse (n. 77), *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Exhaustive references in J. Coopens, *L'imposition des mains* (1925); J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum* (1911); P. A. Elderenbosch, *De Oplegging der Handen* (1953). The use of Imposition of hands in ordination was so common that the second-century Acts of Peter 10 could even refer to the appointment of Peter as an apostle as being done by the Imposition of the Lord's hands; cf. also the Edessene Canons (W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, 1864, p. 24). There is some confusion whether one or both hands were ordinarily employed in the rite. In the case of sacrificial animals where the subject is singular the singular "hand" is always used except in Lev. 16:21 (where the consonantal text is singular but the context demands the plural). The rabbis, however, always spoke of the action in the plural, "hands". Philo, *Spec.leg.* i.203, in speaking of a person's sacrifices says that he lays on "hands". The LXX, although generally following the number of the Hebrew, sometimes changes the singular to the plural (as in Lev. 3:2, 8, 13). The evidence is more confused where persons are concerned. God tells Moses in Num. 27 to impose his hand on Joshua; Moses then imposed his "hands" on him. The New Testament uses the plural in the great majority of cases. The plural is the common form in Greek Christian writers, but the singular is more often utilized in Latin: P. Galtier, *Imposition des mains: Dict. de théol. cath.*, 7 (1923), col. 1335f.

¹²⁵ Ferguson (n. 62), *ibid.* The blessing idea could be used in Judaism to interpret the meaning of ordination – Sifrè Zuta, cited in Newman (n. 11), p. 105.

¹²⁶ The context of the gesture in early Christian art also favors this interpretation: L. DeBruyne, *L'imposition des mains dans l'art Chrétien ancien: Riv. di archeol. christ.*, 20 (1943), pp. 113–278, although going beyond the evidence in making some claims for the laying on of hands.