

**THE LAYING ON OF HANDS
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

JULY 2000

SUMMARY OF THESIS

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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This study investigates the procedural techniques, significance and the tangible effects of the laying on of hands in the New Testament. The introductory chapter reviews critically previous contributions to the subject of the laying on of hands in the New Testament and establishes the purpose and delimitations of this study and the methodology used. The next two chapters are devoted to a study of the background of the New Testament practice of the laying on of hands. The investigation is conducted in the Old Testament and contemporary Judaism (Chapter Two) and in the Graeco-Roman and Near-Eastern literature (Chapter Three). Chapters Four through Seven are exegetical, each discussing a particular use of the laying on of hands in the New Testament. Chapter Four examines the function of the gesture in healing. Special attention is given to the inner process of transfer of power through physical contact. A comparative study of Jesus' method of healing with similar practices of his contemporaries challenges the idea that the origin of the healing touch is Hellenistic. The custom of blessing with the laying on of hands, as practised by Jesus, is examined in Chapter Five in terms of origin, significance and the form of the gesture. The next chapter is devoted to the use of the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the exegetical analysis of the relevant pericopes, an attempt is made to explain the circumstances which led to the birth of this distinctive Christian practice. Chapter Seven examines the use of the laying on of hands in ordination and commissioning. It discusses the significance of the gesture, argues for the Jewish origin of the Christian rite and opposes the view that in the post-Pauline period charismata are tied to an office and thus institutionalised. In the final section of the thesis, an attempt is made to gauge the possibility of any uniformity in the significance of the various New Testament uses of the laying on of hands.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to a number of people who, in various ways, enabled me to write this thesis. I am especially thankful to have had the privilege of starting this project under the supervision of Professor Ralph P. Martin, a man of incisive mind and gentle manner, who gave me the impetus I needed at the beginning of this project. My thanks also go to Dr. Stephen D. Moore, my second supervisor, for his critical eye and his willingness to coordinate a subject which falls outside of his immediate concerns. I express my deep gratitude to Rev. Dr. Loveday C.A. Alexander, my third and last supervisor, for being a constant source of encouragement during the final stages of this research. Her obvious enthusiasm for the study of the New Testament and inexhaustible energy, her generous spirit and calm support greatly enhanced this research.

I am also indebted to Dr. John Christopher Thomas, the scholar who introduced me to the critical study of the New Testament, for his valuable comments and detailed observations which made a difference in the presentation of this thesis.

Thanks are due to Mrs. Frances Arrington, Director of the William Squire Library in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA, and Dr. Bruce Winters, the Warden of Tyndale House Library in Cambridge, England, for allowing me to use all the available resources and services of these research institutions.

Special thanks I owe to Geoffrey and Pauline Williams of Sheffield, true friends who helped my family settle in and opened their home whenever I needed accommodation for shorter or longer periods of time. My deep appreciation goes also to Dr. Chris Ellis, the pastor of the Cemetery Road Baptist Church of Sheffield, an excellent partner of reflective discussions and a constant source of inspiration.

I cannot thank enough my children, Ramona, Rebecca, Ruth, Raymond, and Ronella, who endured more than I will probably ever get to know. I have taken from them innumerable hours adding up in days, months, and years which I will never be able to bring back. The disturbing question 'Daddy, when are you going to finish that book?' will reverberate for a long time in my ears. In spite of their obvious frustration, they were a constant source of encouragement and support. I only hope that, one way or another, I will be able to make up for all distress I caused to my wonderful children.

Finally, and most importantly, my closest friend and true life companion, Rodica, deserves considerably more than a mere word of thanks. Of all of us, she sacrificed the most and worked the hardest. Without her enormous sacrifices, her determination, her willingness to assume additional responsibilities beyond the call of duty, this thesis would never have been completed. Truly, 'a good wife is the crown of her husband' and 'a gift from YHWH' (Prov 12.4; 19.14).

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. Periodicals, Reference Works, and Serials.

| | |
|--------|---|
| AB | Anchor Bible |
| ABD | <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> |
| AJT | <i>The American Journal of Theology</i> |
| ANRW | <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini, W. Haase. |
| ASNU | Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis |
| ATR | <i>Anglican Theological Review</i> |
| AusBR | <i>Australian Biblical Review</i> |
| AUSDDS | Andrew University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series |
| AUSS | <i>Andrew University Seminary Studies</i> |
| BAGD | W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> |
| BamL | Bampton Lectures |
| BC | <i>The Beginnings of Christianity</i> , Foakes-Jackson, F.J. and K. Lake (eds.), London, 1920-33. |
| BDF | F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R.W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament</i> |
| BECNT | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament |
| BETL | Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium |
| Bib | <i>Biblica</i> |
| BibOr | Biblica et Orientalia |
| BJRL | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> |
| BJS | Brown Judaic Studies |
| BTB | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i> |
| BWANT | Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament |
| BZ | <i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i> |
| BZAW | <i>Beihefte zur ZAW</i> |
| CB | Clarendon Bible |
| CBQ | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> |
| CRIANT | Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum |
| CSEL | Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum |
| CT | Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, British Museum, 1896. |
| CurrTM | <i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i> |
| DB | <i>Dictionnaire de la Bible</i> |
| DJG | <i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> |
| DPCM | <i>Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement</i> |
| DTC | <i>Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique</i> |
| EB | Etude bibliques |
| EBT | <i>Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology</i> , ed. Johannes B. Bauer, 1970. |
| EHAT | Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament |
| EKKNT | Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament |
| EJ | <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> |
| ER | <i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i> , M. Eliade, ed. (16 vols., London and New York: Macmillan, 1987) |
| ERE | <i>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , J. Hastings, ed. (12 vols. plus Index, Edinburgh, 1908-26) |
| EvQ | <i>Evangelical Quarterly</i> |
| ExpTim | <i>Expository Times</i> |
| FOTL | The Forms of the Old Testament Literature |
| FRLANT | Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments |
| FZPT | <i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i> |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| HAT | Handkommentar zum Alten Testament |
| Herm | Hermeneia |
| HNT | Handbuch zum Neuen Testament |
| HSS | Harvard Semitic Series |
| <i>HST</i> | <i>The History of the Synoptic Tradition</i> , R. Bultman (1963) |
| <i>HTR</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| <i>HUCA</i> | <i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i> |
| <i>IBS</i> | <i>Irish Biblical Studies</i> |
| ICC | International Critical Commentary |
| <i>IDB</i> | <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) |
| <i>IEJ</i> | <i>Israel Exploration Journal</i> |
| <i>IG</i> | <i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (see bibliography) |
| <i>IRJ</i> | <i>Israel Restoration Journal</i> |
| <i>JAAR</i> | <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> |
| <i>JAOS</i> | <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> |
| <i>JBL</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> |
| <i>JEH</i> | <i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i> |
| <i>JE</i> | <i>Jewish Encyclopaedia</i> |
| <i>JETS</i> | <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> |
| JL | Jordan Lectures |
| <i>JPT</i> | <i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i> |
| JPTS | Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series |
| <i>JQR</i> | <i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> |
| <i>JRH</i> | <i>Journal of Religious History</i> |
| JSNTS | Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series |
| <i>JSOT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> |
| JSOTS | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series |
| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> |
| KAR | Keilschrifttexte aus Assurreligiösen Inhalts, ed. Erich Ebeling, 1915-1923. |
| <i>LavTP</i> | <i>Laval théologique et philosophique</i> |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library |
| LD | Lectio Divina |
| <i>LexTQ</i> | <i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i> |
| <i>LQ</i> | <i>Lutheran Quarterly</i> |
| MHT | J.H. Moulton, W.F. Howard, and N. Turner, <i>Grammar of New Testament Greek</i> , I-IV (1906-76) |
| MT | Masoretic Text |
| <i>NBD</i> | <i>New Bible Dictionary</i> , 2nd ed., edited by J.D. Douglas, 1982. |
| NCB | New Century Bible (new ed.) |
| NIBC | The New International Biblical Commentary |
| NICNT | The New International Commentary on the New Testament |
| NICOT | The New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| <i>NIDNTT</i> | <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> |
| NIGTC | The New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| NIV | New International Version |
| <i>NovT</i> | <i>Novum Testamentum</i> |
| NovTSup | Novum Testamentum Supplement Series |
| <i>NRT</i> | <i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i> |
| NTA | Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen |
| NTD | Das Neue Testament Deutsch |
| NTOA | Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus |
| <i>NTRJ</i> | D. Daube, <i>The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism</i> (1956) |
| <i>NTS</i> | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| <i>OLZ</i> | <i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i> |
| <i>PerspRelSt</i> | <i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i> |
| <i>PG</i> | <i>Patrologia graeca</i> , J.P. Migne |
| <i>PGM</i> | <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> |
| <i>RB</i> | <i>Revue biblique</i> |

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|----------------|--|
| REB | Revised English Bible |
| <i>RefR</i> | <i>The Reformed Review</i> |
| <i>RestQ</i> | <i>Restoration Quarterly</i> |
| RNT | Regensburger Neuen Testament |
| <i>RSR</i> | <i>Recherches de science religieuse</i> |
| RSV | Revised Standard Version |
| <i>RevExp</i> | <i>Review and Expositor</i> |
| Sam.Pent. | Samaritan Pentateuch |
| SANT | Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament |
| SBLDS | SBL Dissertation Series |
| SBS | Stuttgarter Bibelstudien |
| SBT | Studies in Biblical Theology |
| SBTS | Sources for Biblical and Theological Study (D.W. Baker, Gen. ed.) |
| <i>ScEsp</i> | <i>Science et Esprit</i> |
| <i>SJT</i> | <i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i> |
| SJTOP | Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers |
| <i>SLJT</i> | <i>St. Luke's Journal of Theology</i> |
| SNTSMS | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series |
| SO | Symbolae osloenses |
| SOTBT | Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology |
| <i>SR</i> | <i>Sciences Religieuses / Studies in Religion</i> |
| <i>ST</i> | <i>Studia Theologica</i> |
| <i>Str.-B</i> | <i>H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> (München: Becksche, 1922-1928) |
| <i>StudLit</i> | <i>Studia Liturgica</i> |
| <i>TDNT</i> | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.) |
| <i>ThZ</i> | <i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i> |
| <i>TLNT</i> | <i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , 3 vols, by C. Spicq. |
| TNTC | Tyndale New Testament Commentaries |
| <i>TRE</i> | <i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> , H.R. Balz and G. Müller, eds. |
| <i>TrinJ</i> | <i>Trinity Journal</i> |
| <i>TS</i> | <i>Theological Studies</i> |
| <i>TTZ</i> | <i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i> |
| <i>TWAT</i> | <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> |
| <i>TynB</i> | <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> |
| VAT | Vorderasiatische Tablets - in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin |
| <i>VoxEv</i> | <i>Vox Evangelica</i> |
| <i>VT</i> | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i> |
| VTSup | Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| WEC | Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary |
| <i>WTJ</i> | <i>Westminster Theological Journal</i> |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>ZA</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i> |
| <i>ZAW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |
| <i>ZDMG</i> | <i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i> |
| <i>ZNW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |

B. Mishnah*, Talmud** and Other Rabbinic Works

(Italicized *m.*, *t.*, *b.*, or *y.* before a tractate name distinguishes between tractates in Mishnah, Tosepta, Babylonian Talmud, and Jerusalem Talmud.)

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| <i>Abot</i> | <i>Abot</i> |
| <i>B. Bat.</i> | <i>Baba Batra</i> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Hag.</i> | <i>Hagiga</i> |
| <i>Kel.</i> | <i>Kelim</i> |
| <i>Menah.</i> | <i>Menahot</i> |
| <i>Midr.</i> | <i>Midrash</i> (followed by abbrev. for biblical book; e.g. <i>Midr. Num.</i>) |
| <i>Ned.</i> | <i>Nedarim</i> |
| <i>Parah</i> | <i>Parah</i> |
| <i>Sanh.</i> | <i>Sanhedrin</i> |
| <i>Shab.</i> | <i>Shabbath</i> |
| <i>Sheq.</i> | <i>Sheqalim</i> |
| <i>Sota</i> | <i>Sota</i> |
| <i>Rab.</i> | <i>Rabbah</i> (preceded by abbreviation for biblical book, e.g. <i>Num. Rab.</i>) |
| <i>Tamid</i> | <i>Tamid</i> |
| <i>Yad.</i> | <i>Yadayim</i> |
| <i>Yoma</i> | <i>Yoma</i> |
| <i>Zeb.</i> | <i>Zebahim</i> |

* All Mishnaic citations are from J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), unless indicated otherwise.

** All Talmudic citations are from the *Babylonian Talmud* (ed. I. Epstein; London: The Soncino Press, 1935-1971).

C. Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

| | |
|---------|---|
| 1QGA | <i>Genesis Apocryphon</i> from Qumran Cave 1 |
| 4QPrNab | <i>Prayer of Nabonidus</i> from Qumran Cave 4 |

D. Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>LAE</i> | <i>The Life of Adam and Eve</i> |
| <i>ApAb</i> | <i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i> (1st to 2nd cent. C.E.) |
| <i>Apoc. Mos.</i> | <i>Apocalypse of Moses</i> |
| <i>AsIsa</i> | <i>Ascension of Isaiah</i> |
| <i>AsMos</i> | <i>Assumption of Moses</i> |
| <i>Jub</i> | <i>Jubilees</i> |
| <i>SibOr</i> | <i>Sibylline Oracles</i> |
| <i>TAb</i> | <i>Testament of Abraham</i> |
| <i>VisIs</i> | <i>Vision of Isaiah</i> |

E. Josephus and Philo

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Ant.</i> | Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> |
| <i>Life</i> | Josephus, <i>Life of Josephus</i> |
| <i>War</i> | Josephus, <i>Jewish Wars</i> |
| <i>De Abr.</i> | Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i> |
| <i>Spec. Laws</i> | Philo, <i>Special Laws</i> |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Hand as a Symbol of Power

In the ancient world, the human hand was an universal symbol of power. It was looked upon as an instrument which actually conveys power from one person to another. The numerous references to the hand(s) of a god in ancient literature are the result of the primitive anthropomorphic representation of divinity. The symbolism attached to the divine hand was so strong that potent medicines were frequently labeled as ‘the hands of God’.¹

The symbolism is also frequent in the Old and the New Testament, with reference either to God’s hands or to human hands. God uses his hands to create the universe in general (Ps 95.5; Heb 1.10) and humankind in particular (Jb 10.8; Ps 138.8). His activity and its result are called simply ‘the work of his hands’ (Ps 28.5; 92.4). To experience divine punishment is ‘to fall into the hands of God’ (Heb 10.31). God’s hands can also heal (Jb 5.18).² In like manner, the power of humans resides in their hands. To have dominion over something or somebody is to have that thing/person in one’s hands (Dt 21.10; Mt 17.22; Acts 28.17). To entrust something to a person is to put it into his/her hands (Gen 42.7). To have power means to have the hands strengthened (Jg 7.11; 2 Sa 2.7; 16.21; Ne 2.18). The power to heal is symbolically attributed to human hands (Acts 9.11) as is prosperity (Gen 39.3). Quite often in the Old Testament, hands stand for the whole person; they can be innocent (Gen 10.5), guilty (1 Sa 26.18), morally clean (2 Sa 22.21), can do wrong and betray (1 Sa 24.11; Ps 7.3). In other words, it is almost as if hands had an independent existence.³

1.2. The Issue

The laying on of hands (hereafter **LH**) was practised on numerous occasions in the Christian traditions. It was a gesture used in blessing (e.g. Mk 10.16 par.), for healing (Mk 5.23; 6.5; 8.23, 25; 16.18; Lk 4.40; 13.13; Acts 28.28), in commissioning and ordination (Acts 6.6, 13.2; 1 Tim. 4.14, 5.22; 2 Tim. 1.6), and for the conveyance of the Holy Spirit

¹ Plutarch writes: *Τὰς ... ἀλεξιφαρμάκας ἐκείνας δυνάμεις, ἃς θεῶν χεῖρας ὠνόμαζεν Ἐρασίστρατος* (*Quaest. conv.* IV, 1, 3). Other examples in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder: Untersuchungen zum Wunderglauben der Griechen und Römer* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1909), 37.

² For a fuller discussion on the ‘hands of God’, see J.M. Roberts, ‘The Hand of Yahweh’, *VT* 21 (1971): 244-251.

³ W.K. Lowther Clarke, *Confirmation or the Laying on of Hands* (1926), 1. For a variety of symbols attached to the human hand by the ancient Israelites, see Aubrey E. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 50-64.

(Acts 8.17; 19.6; Heb. 6.2). The association of the LH with aspects of Christian experience and ministry so vital for the early church ensured an important place for this gesture among its practices. One text even describes it as a foundational teaching (Heb 6. 1-2). The importance of the practice for Christianity on the one hand and for biblical studies on the other, is asserted by Jean-Thierry Maertens: ‘De toutes les sociétés religieuses, l’Eglise chrétienne est incontestablement celle qui a fait le plus large usage de l’imposition des mains dans son rituel. Elle nous offre un vaste terrain d’étude’.⁴

It is surprising, then, that this topic has received little scholarly attention. Hort, for instance, believes that the New Testament evidence about the LH is so meager that ‘it can hardly be likely that any essential principle was held to be involved in it’.⁵ Of course, not everybody will agree with Hort’s opinion, but even if one allows that the New Testament practice of LH is obscure and its occurrence infrequent, such obscurity and infrequency are not valid criteria to use in assessing its importance. After all, the New Testament instances of ordination (1 Tim. 4.14, 5.22; 2 Tim. 1.6) and footwashing (Jn 13.1-20; 1 Tim 5.10) appear to be less frequent even than those of the LH and, yet, the importance of these doctrines is either obvious or has been demonstrated.⁶ The present work attempts to fill a gap which exists in scholarship on the LH.

1.3. Survey of Modern Scholarship on the Role of the Laying on of Hands in the New Testament Church.

Although this topic has received relatively little scholarly attention, two full length monographs have been devoted to it, one in German and the other in French. They continue to be the only monographs written in the twentieth century which deal with all the New Testament uses of the gesture.⁷

1.3.1. *Johannes Behm*

In *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum: Nach Verwendung, Herkunft und Bedeutung in religionsgeschichtlichem Zusammenhang untersucht* Johannes Behm treats the subject of the LH by investigating its New Testament uses and its origin and meaning from the larger perspective of the history of religions.

⁴ J.-T. Maertens, ‘Un Rite de Pouvoir: L’Imposition des Mains’ in *SR* 7, no 1 (1978), 29.

⁵ F.J.A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London, 1897), 216.

⁶ See, for instance, J.C. Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (JSNTS 61; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). Although the practice appears in detail only in Jn 13.1-20 and is mentioned incidentally in 1 Tim 5.10, Thomas demonstrates how important that practice was for the Johannine Community. On ordination, see E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vanderboeck & Ruprecht, 1951); A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Ministry* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), and other bibliography listed in Chapter 7 of our study.

⁷ A book entitled *The Doctrine of Imposition of Hands* was written in 1845 by John Frere. Unfortunately, it was not available to me. For a detailed bibliography on the LH from the 17th, 18th and 19th century, consisting mostly of journal articles in Latin and German, see J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum* (Leipzig, 1911), 6-7.

The first part of the study is divided in three chapters as follows: I) The **LH** by Jesus, II) The **LH** in the Apostolic Period and III) The **LH** in the Early Church. It consists of a discussion of all the occasions where the gesture occurs in the New Testament and an exegetical analysis of the relevant passages. Behm concludes that the practice of Jesus' followers is both similar to and distinguishable from that of Jesus. The similarity consists in the fact that, in both situations, the gesture was used in connection with prayer. The gesture as used by Jesus' followers, however, differs from that of Jesus in respect to form and occasion. The **LH** was for Jesus a form of touching (ordinarily the infirm part of the body was touched), but for the early church it became a ritualistic gesture in which hands were laid on one's head. As for the occasions when the gesture was used, the church supplemented Jesus' practice with its use in ordination.

The second part of the book treats the issue of the origin of the Christian practice. The initial chapter in this part describes the use of **LH** as a gesture of healing in antiquity, with special attention being given to Hellenistic miracle-stories. Behm's view is that the **LH** as practised by Jesus was paralleled in numerous pagan myths and legends.

The second chapter is a study of the **LH** in the installation of officials and in ordination. After examining various installation rites in the Roman, Greek and Jewish environments, Behm concludes that no practice of antiquity offers a closer parallel to the Christian rite of ordination than the *סְמִיָּכָה* of Judaism. Rabbinic ordination is seen to be the bridge which connects the Old Testament model (Num. 27.18-23) with the Christian rite.⁸

The third chapter of the second part is a treatment of the origin of the **LH** in connection with baptism. In Behm's view, the **LH** as a means of mediating the Spirit had Jewish roots, but as a rite of initiation into Christianity (together with baptism) it was a novelty in the history of religions. It has no parallels in the mystery religions examined.

In the last part of the book, the author attempts to derive the meaning of the **LH** from each of its uses. The meaning of the **LH** in the early church, concludes Behm, was predetermined by the world view of the first century Christians who understood spiritual realities in physical categories. He makes the following relevant observations:

(1) As used in healing, the **LH** was a physical means by which the life-force (*Lebenskraft*) was transferred in a real sense.⁹ This was also the meaning of the gesture when used to transfer the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit was understood by the early Christians as an ethereal substance the receiving of the Spirit was, then, a physical act in which the substance of the Spirit (*Pneuma-Stoff*) goes into the human body.¹⁰

(2) The meaning of the **LH** in ordination, concludes Behm, is not much different from the meaning of the gesture as a means of transferring the Holy Spirit, for in ordination

⁸ *Die Handauflegung*, 142.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195

a spark of the Spirit is thought to have been imparted to the ordinand. However, the role of *charisma* is limited to an empowering for kerygmatic and didactic activities and *paraclesis*.¹¹

(3) As for the relation between water baptism and Spirit baptism, it is Behm's view that originally water baptism had nothing to do with the transference of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit fell almost regularly on those who received water baptism, the immediate association of water baptism with the Spirit and the image of the Holy Spirit as fluid (ethereal substance), led to the understanding that the reception of the Spirit must be seen as a baptism. The juxtaposition of the two baptisms, the real baptism (in water) and the imaginary baptism (in the Holy Spirit), led further to the combination of the two rites into one. At the end of this development, Christian baptism was regarded as an single act with a double effect.¹²

Behm's overall conclusion in respect to the meaning of the LH in the New Testament is that, for the first Christians, the gesture was more than a symbol; it was an effective symbol (*symbolum efficax*).¹³

The strengths of Behm's work are many. He demonstrates acquaintance with many previous works which treat or touch on the subject of LH. Similarly, he is familiar with Hellenistic and Jewish sources which contain references to the gesture. Behm is no stranger to the critical issues of the passages examined, demonstrating familiarity with textual critical and source critical issues.

However, some of Behm's conclusions are less than convincing. Without elaborating on the relation between baptism in water and Spirit-baptism, Behm simply assumes that the reception of the Spirit through the LH is initiatory.¹⁴ Another questionable conclusion is that the LH in ordination has the same meaning as the LH for the reception of the Holy Spirit. It means conferral of the Holy Spirit, argues Behm, on the grounds that ordination confers *χάρισμα(τα)* and this is only a particularised form of the Spirit (*individualisierter Geist*).¹⁵ Such a conclusion is untenable for at least two reasons: first, the Holy Spirit must not be equated with its gifts; secondly, if ordination confers *χάρισμα(τα)* at all, such empowering would be only secondary to the real purpose and effect of ordination.

1.3.2. *Joseph Coppens*

Coppens made a significant contribution to the study of the LH in the New Testament through a monograph¹⁶ and a few articles.¹⁷ The book is divided into five parts, with each

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46, 51.

¹² *Ibid.*, 170-71, 193f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁶ J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des Mains et les Rites Connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et dans l'Eglise Ancienne* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1925).

section treating one use of the LH. The categories are as follows: LH (I) in blessing, (II) in healing, (III) in ordination, (IV) as a rite of confirmation and (V) as a rite of reconciliation. Basically, each part presents the New Testament occurrences, their significance and the origin of that particular use of the gesture.

The LH in blessing, says Coppens, started out in antiquity as a private gesture (cf. Gen 48.17, 18), but later was institutionalised in Judaism, at least in the form of raising the hands.¹⁸ The same pattern was followed later when the church institutionalised the private gesture of Jesus. As for the significance of the LH in blessing, it is Coppens' understanding that the rite was effective, with the result that it conferred 'the grace of the Lord'.¹⁹ Such grace is defined as the intervention of God in the actual course of events in such a manner that it reflects and engages God's benevolence, his power and his Spirit. However, warns Coppens, one should not confound the 'indeterminate *pneuma*', conferred in the rite of blessing, with the gift of the Spirit received in connection with baptism.²⁰ Working with absolute definitions of magic/miraculous, i.e. manipulative vs. supplicative, characteristic of the twentieth century social anthropology, Coppens concludes that any superstitious or magical understanding of the Christian gesture/rite of blessing is precluded by its association with prayer, the invocation of Jesus' name.²¹

According to Coppens, Jesus' gesture of laying hands on the sick was both a means by which he would transfer his healing power and an expression of his willingness to heal, of his goodness and his sublime condescension. The gesture as used by Jesus was efficacious in two ways: first, it built confidence in those who sought healing and faith in his supernatural powers and, secondly, it actually transferred the healing power to them.²² For the apostles, the charismatic gesture of Jesus becomes a rite of healing. Although their power was delegated, the gesture had the same effect as that of Jesus, on the basis of the prayers in his name which accompanied their LH.²³

As for the origin of Jesus' gesture of healing, his LH is to be distinguished from the magical gestures of the Hellenistic miracle-workers. In this regard, Coppens is critical of Behm's inability to make this distinction. The latter has erroneously seen in the pagan myths and legends parallels to the LH practised by Jesus. He failed to classify critically the pagan documents and he overlooked the essentially different inspiration of the Christian narratives.²⁴ Coppens thinks it is possible that Jesus borrowed the gesture from Jewish traditions and gave it a new significance and efficacy.

¹⁷ The most significant is his article 'L'imposition des mains', in *Les Actes des Apôtres*, ed. J. Kremer (Leuven: University Press, 1979).

¹⁸ *L'imposition*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 63f.

²³ *Ibid.*, 33f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, viii.

According to Coppens, ordination confers both office and special graces of the Spirit. There is no immediate dependence between the apostolic rite of ordination and the ordination of rabbis. In choosing the LH as the rite of ordination, says Coppens, the apostles followed the Old Testament model of ordination (Joshua and the Levites). However, they considered the rite as having been formally instituted by the risen Lord, through the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 13.2-3) who, throughout the book of Acts, was the interpreter of Christ's work and will. It was the Spirit himself who made the connection between the ordination of the Levites and that of Paul and Barnabas.²⁵

The LH for the reception of the Holy Spirit is the subject-matter of the fourth part of the book. Coppens' conclusions can be summarised as follows: 1) in the apostolic age, the church adopted a rite distinct from and complementary to baptism, for the conferral of the Spirit to the new converts; 2) this rite consisted in the LH and was accompanied by prayer; 3) the effect of the rite was the communication of the Holy Spirit to those on whom the hands were laid; and 4) the administration of the rite was an apostolic prerogative, but occasionally it was delegated to other Christian ministers.²⁶ Concerning the significance of the rite, Coppens emphasises its sacramental character. The LH meant communication of the Spirit accompanied by miraculous gifts. However, the supernatural manifestations were not presented by Luke as a formal effect of the post-baptismal rite, for such formal effect consisted in the apostles' boldness as witnesses (cf. Acts 1.8). In Luke's eyes, says Coppens, the infusion of charismatic phenomena (*charismata* in Paul's language) is a manifestation of the grace (*charis*) received by Christians.²⁷

In the post-apostolic period the Spirit continued to be an universal gift, but the supernatural manifestations accompanying its reception ceased progressively. This led to a closer connection between baptism and the post-baptismal rite of the LH to the point that the two were eventually regarded as one rite.²⁸ The closer association of the two initially distinct rites was facilitated by Paul's use of the term 'Spirit' as an appellation for the sanctifying grace communicated in baptism. Next, Coppens presents various source-critical hypotheses which deny the historicity of the narratives in Acts 8.4-25 and 19.1-6. Defending the historical reliability of Luke's accounts, Coppens concludes that the two narratives indeed show traces of redactional activity, but Luke made use of the sources at hand in a responsible way.²⁹ Lastly, Coppens discusses the origin of the Christian rite of Confirmation. He concludes that the rite is a Christian innovation (more precisely an apostolic one) unparalleled in any other religion. There are several factors which contributed to the institution of this rite, suggests Coppens: the Jewish custom of blessing with the LH, the Jewish rite of ordination (*Semikah*) which communicated the divine

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170-73.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 220-43.

Spirit, the belief in and the expectation of a messianic blessing, the promise of the gift of the Spirit by Christ, and finally the suggestion of the rite by the Lord himself to Ananias.³⁰

The last part of the book is a treatment of the role of LH as a rite of reconciliation. Since, in Coppens' view, the rite cannot be traced back to the apostolic period, it does not fall under the purview of our study.

Coppens' monograph is the most extensive and thorough work on the LH to date. Like Behm, Coppens demonstrates an excellent acquaintance with Jewish and pagan sources which describe various uses of the gesture. Written fourteen years after Behm's monograph, this study benefits from its interaction with the work of the German scholar, whose expertise, especially in the area of the history of religions, it praises. Coppens' historical comparative study is more complete and his conclusions presented in a more systematic fashion. However, some of Coppens' conclusions are questionable. Among these are his views that the LH as a rite of Confirmation was an apostolic prerogative, that Christian ordination was suggested, if not commanded, by Jesus, and that, in the apostolic age, the giving of the Spirit was integral to the rite of Confirmation.

1.3.3. *David Daube*

Daube's chapter on 'The Laying on of Hands' in his book, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, has been widely discussed.³¹ Daube's thesis is that, on the basis of the Hebrew terms used in the Old Testament for the LH, one can distinguish two kinds of LH: one described by the term לָמַח (to lean/press) which indicates the pouring of one's personality into another being and another described by שָׁם or שָׁב (to place) indicating the transference of something other than personality. Although the New Testament does not distinguish linguistically between the two kinds of LH, Daube suggests that one should read לָמַח or שָׁב (שָׁב) behind each occurrence of the gesture in the New Testament. The only criterion for choosing one term or the other in a given passage is the nature of each occasion, e.g. blessing, healing, ordination, etc.

Although the distinction between the two kinds of laying on hands is helpful, Daube's thesis that לָמַח implies transference of one's personality to the person on whom the hands are laid has been widely criticised by many scholars.³² Another point which stirred much debate is Daube's suggestion that 'the LH of the presbytery' in 1 Tim 4.14 ($\text{\epsilon\pi\iota\theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\omega}\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon}$) should be read 'the LH in order to make elders'.³³ Daube regards the phrase as a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew technical term

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 371-73.

³¹ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956). (hereafter, *NTRJ*)

³² E.g. E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', *HTR* 56 (1963): 13-19 and 'Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', *JTS* 26 (1975):1-12; J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament: A Re-examination in the Light of the Hebrew Terminology', *ExpTim* 80 (1969): 210-14; R. Alan Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination', *RevExp* 78 (1981): 471-84.

³³ Daube's view is shared by J.N.D. Kelley, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: A.

סְמִיכָה זְקוּיִם. Therefore, reasons Daube, Timothy's ordination by Paul was in fact 'Rabbinic ordination'. It is questionable, however, whether זְקוּיִם is meant to be an objective genitive, as Daube claims.³⁴

1.3.4. Karl Gross

The most recent monograph on the LH/touch is Karl Gross' *Menschenhand und Gotteshand in Antike und Christentum*.³⁵ The work is simply 'encyclopedic', for it treats all possible aspects and facets of the use of hand in various customs, religious and magical rites. A sample of issues discussed, from the most common to the most bizarre ones, will give the reader a glimpse of the comprehensive character of the book: gestures of prayer (positions and moving of the hands), gestures associated with sacrifices, gestures of blessing and curse, the laying on of hands in various contexts, the ceremonial purification of the hands, the covering of the hands, gestures of order and silence, gestures of oath-taking and thanksgiving, gestures associated with wedding and engagement, gestures of punishment, position of the dead person's hands, tattoos, the use of hands in magic, etc.

Written from the history of religion perspective, the book is divided in two parts; the first part treats the various uses of the human hands and the second one is devoted to the study of the gods' hands. The large variety of examples are taken from various customs, ancient literature and art. In spite of the enormous quantity of information secured from ancient and late antiquity literature, art and various customs, those aspects of the use of hands which present interest for our study, namely the touch and the laying on of hands, are treated quite summarily. An exegetical and critical analysis of the biblical occurrences of the LH/touch is almost completely missing. Some of the few relevant opinions we were able to gather from Gross' treatment are presented in what follows.

Gross follows de Vaux and Lohse in holding that the laying of the hands on the sacrificial animal is not a magical rite or a sign of substitution. It signifies ownership and, implicitly, the right of the owner to obtain all the benefits which result from the act of sacrificing.³⁶ The LH in the commissioning of Joshua by Moses signifies transfer of office and the impartation of the 'spirit of wisdom'. Similarly, in Judaism, argues Gross, the LH in ordination was believed to transfer not only the right to exercise office prerogatives but also the Spirit which gave the new Rabbi the capacity to fulfill the task of the office.³⁷ This

& C. Black, 1963), 108; J. Jeremias, 'ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΙΟΝ ausserchristlich bezeugt', *ZNW* 48 (1957), 129; J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1962), 279. For a critique of Daube's position, see T.F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', *SJT* 11 (1958), 328; G. Bornkamm, 'πρέσβυς', *TDNT* VI, 666, n. 92; E. Ferguson, 'The Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', *JTS* 26 (1975), ; and esp. J.P. Meier, 'Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles', *CBQ* 35 (1973), 340-42.

³⁴ Arguments against Daube's position are summarised by J.P. Meier, 'Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles', *CBQ* 35 (1973), 340-344.

³⁵ K. Gross, *Menschenhand und Gotteshand in Antike und Christentum*, ed. W. Speyer (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1985).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 117f.

debatable issue will receive special attention in our discussion of the Rabbinic literature. The treatment of the LH and touch in the New Testament is most disappointing. The discussion of the various uses of the LH is not exegetical; rather, it is a simple narrative description of the occurrences of the gesture. The LH/touch by Jesus and his followers signifies transfer of 'healing and sanctifying power'.³⁸ In Christian ordination, as in Judaism, the LH transfers to Spirit-filled successors the right to instruct others, thus, guaranteeing the transmission of the tradition.³⁹ Gross argues for the indiscriminate use of the LH and touch by the gospel writers with reference to Jesus' acts of healing. This conclusion is based on the lack of any pattern in the use of the various 'touching' terms and on the lack of any reasons given for changing from one term to the other (445).⁴⁰ Generally speaking, the conclusions drawn by Gross are sound but the treatment of the various uses of the LH and touch is not exhaustive at all.

1.3.5. *Hiroyuki Kanamori*

Another work devoted to this topic is a ThM thesis submitted to Covenant Theological Seminary by Hiroyuki Kanamori.⁴¹ The work starts with a survey of recent understandings of the LH. Unfortunately, the author manifests little knowledge of the major works on the topic, completely overlooking the most thorough of them (e.g. the monographs written by J. Behm and J. Coppens, and P. Galtier's article). The survey is limited to the exposition of Daube's thesis and a few reactions to it.⁴² The main body of this work treats individually each occasion of the LH in the Bible. Five such occasions are distinguished: the LH in healing, in sacrifice, in blessing, in ordination, and in connection with baptism. Given its purpose and scope, this study amounts to a good survey of the biblical accounts of the LH; however, none of the pertinent issues are treated in depth. The origin and background of the New Testament practice are completely ignored. Nor does the work reflect familiarity with critical issues involved in the pertinent passages. Kanamori concludes that the LH always symbolises transference of something to the one who receives the gesture.⁴³

The subject of the LH has also been treated in a number of works as a main or an auxiliary feature.⁴⁴ In most situations only one use of the gesture is treated.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁴¹ Hiroyuki Kanamori, 'A Study of the Laying on of Hands' (Th.M. Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 1986).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁴ General articles on the LH include: J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands', 210-14; R. Péter, 'L'Imposition des Mains dans L'Ancien Testament', *VT* 27 (1970):48-55; F.A. Sullivan, 'The Laying on of Hands in Christian Tradition', in *Spirit and Renewal*, ed. by M.W. Wilson (Sheffield, 1994), 42-54; Specialised works - On ordination: J. Newman, *Semikhah: A Study of Its Origin, History and Function in Rabbinic Literature* (Manchester, 1950); E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen, 1951); A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', *JEH* 5 (1954): 125-39; E. Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 13-19; 'Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', 1-12; On Christian initiation: S. New, 'The Name,

1.4. *Statement of Purpose and Methodology*

No doubt, many of the previous studies have contributed to a better understanding of the place and significance of the LH in the early church, but the conclusions reached are not always convincing. The limitations of Behm's and Coppens' monographs have already been pinpointed. Some of their conclusions are flawed, being based either on faulty exegesis or, simply, on *a priori* assumptions. Many of the shorter studies focusing on only one use of the gesture are, no doubt, useful and needed. However, they are limited in scope and, therefore, fail to discuss the relationship between various uses of the LH and the elements which are common to all occurrences of the gesture. Moreover, not a few times scholars have attempted to rationalise the significance of the LH, imposing modern ideas upon these primitive texts. Then, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the evidence for the ancient practice of the LH has been supplemented. Although the singular use of the LH by the Essenes has been treated summarily in a few works⁴⁵, the new data needs to be compared with other uses of the gesture characteristic of the Jewish environment.

In conclusion, the above survey revealed the need for a fresh and updated study of the early Christian practice of the LH. This will include all relevant ancient texts, investigate the elements which are common to various uses of the LH, and assess the different points of view on the origin and significance of the gesture.

Against the various interpretations which were attributed to the LH, I will seek to demonstrate that in all contexts in which the gesture occurs in the Old Testament and the New Testament, with the exception of some sacrificial rites, it signifies transference of some materia (positive or evil) from (or through) the one who lays hands to the person on whom the hands are laid.

To the extent that the purpose of this study is to reconstruct the practice of the LH in the New Testament period and to uncover the significance attached to the gesture by earliest Christianity, the method estimated as most appropriate to accomplish this objective is the historical-critical method. It is true that valuable insights can be obtained by using literary critical approaches, but, in dealing with a historical practice, purely literary approaches will render only partially satisfactory results.

Baptism, and the Laying on of Hands', in F.J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, V, (1933), 121-40; N. Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung* (Münster, 1951); G.W.H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London, 1951); J.E.L. Oulton, 'The Holy Spirit, Baptism and Laying on of Hands in Acts', *ExpTim* 66 (1954-55): 236-40; J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London, 1970); H.M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1984); **On blessing and healing:** O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*; E. May, '...For Power Went forth from Him..', *CBQ* 14 (1952):93-103; D. Flusser, 'Healing through the Laying-on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll', *Israel Restoration Journal* 7 (1957): 107-108.

⁴⁵ E.g. D. Flusser, 'Healing through the Laying-on of Hands', 107-108; G.R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls* (New York, 1965), 460-62.

Unlike literary critical methods which deal strictly with the final form of a text, the historical-critical method considers the *locus* of meaning to be the world of the author and the intended audience. Consequently, in seeking to reconstruct the practice of the LH in the New Testament period, I will attempt to reconstruct the ‘world’ behind the relevant texts, i.e. to find what these texts disclose about people, practices, beliefs, etc. associated with the LH. The method presupposes that the investigation is to be conducted on two levels: attention is to be given to 1) the world(s) of the author and of the intended audience, which informs us about the historical and sociological setting of the text (background Chapters 2-3), and 2) to the text itself, to see what the words and grammatical structures disclose about the probable intention of the author and the probable understanding of the text by the intended audience (exegetical Chapters 4-7).⁴⁶ Owing to its interest in and dependence on the grammatical structures of the text, the method is also known as the grammatico-historical method.

Specifically, Part I of this study is devoted to a historical analysis of the background of the New Testament practice of LH. A clear understanding of any religious practice implies a knowledge of its origins. Since the power of the human hand was a universal concept, the LH as a religious rite was a familiar gesture to many peoples and civilizations. However, my interest is not to discuss the evolution of the practice from the history of religions point of view, but to trace the immediate antecedents of the New Testament practice. Given the religious heritage of first century CE Christianity and the world of ideas in which the new religion originated, it is natural that this background investigation be conducted in the Old Testament and contemporary Judaism on the one hand (chapter 2) and in the Graeco-Roman world on the other hand (chapter 3). What is of interest for this historical investigation is not only the occasions when the rite was practised but also the religious significance attached to it. Such significance may prove to be helpful in the attempt to determine the origin of the various New Testament uses of the gesture or the extent to which the latter were influenced by the Jewish or Hellenistic practices.

Part II is devoted to the study of all the New Testament applications of the LH. Structurally, each chapter will treat a particular use of the gesture: Chapter 4 treats the LH in healing. It begins with recent perspectives on the use of the gesture in healing and its significance. This is the point of departure for the debate which dominates the entire chapter - the extent of the parallelism between Jesus’ gesture of healing and that of the miracle-workers of his time. Essential to this comparative study are understandings of (1) the distinct concept of power of each environment studied and (2) the role played by other

⁴⁶ Cotterell and Max Turner suggest that the two areas discussed above should be divided in three categories: *text*, *co-text*, and *context* (*Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989, 15-19). The text refers to the study of words and co-text to the study of grammatical and literary structures. The text and co-text fall roughly in division no. 2) above. The context refers to the historical and sociological setting(s) in which the author and the intended readers lived and the text was created.

elements associated with the **LH**, like the prayer of the healer and the faith of the person who seeks healing. The exegetical study of the gospel accounts which make reference to the **LH** shows that the emphasis placed on the gesture (or the associated elements) differs with each gospel writer. The possibility that one or more of them were influenced by Jewish or Hellenistic thought will be investigated. Particular to this chapter is the discussion on the indiscriminate use of the 'touching' terms by the gospel writers. I will aim to argue that the 'laying on of hands' is not a technical term, but forms part of this complex of 'touching' terms.

The subject-matter of Chapter 5 is the **LH** in blessing. The prime focus of the discussion is the significance attributed by each gospel writer to the gesture. Such significance appears to be determined by the context in which the gesture is performed (e.g. covenantal blessing, blessing of the disciples, etc.).

The role of the **LH** in the reception of the Holy Spirit is treated in Chapter 6. Only two instances in the New Testament clearly state that the Holy Spirit was received through the **LH** (Acts 8.17, 18; 19.6). An impressive number of scholars consider these instances exceptional and some call their historicity into question. They charge Luke with modifying the traditions he received in order to adapt them to his theological perspective. The validity of this charge will be examined. Whether or not these instances were normative, both in regard to the use of the gesture and to the relation between the gesture and the rite of baptism, will also be explored through an exegetical study of all pertinent texts. Since this particular use of the **LH** has no parallels in the Jewish or Graeco-Roman environment, an attempt will be made to explain the circumstances which led to the birth of this distinctive Christian practice.

Chapter 7 is a study of the **LH** in ordination and commissioning. A first task of this study is to provide a clear definition of the Christian rite of ordination in the first century church. Secondly, the origin of the rite is to be determined. Thus, this chapter will draw extensively on the findings of Chapters 2 and 3 with regard to the significance of the ordination rite in the Old Testament, Rabbinic Judaism and Graeco-Roman world. A third important issue for this study is the significance of the **LH** in ordination. There is no scholarly consensus about what the rite actually conferred. Opinions range from a mere conferral of office to the creation of a substitute, the conferral of charismata, and even the conferral of the Holy Spirit. Insight on this issue will be gained by means of a detailed exegetical analysis of the five ordination passages (Acts 6.6; 13.3; 1 Tim 4.14; 5.22; 2 Tim 1.6). Having determined the significance of the **LH** in ordination, we are in the position to establish whether the nature of ordination in the apostolic church was charismatic or institutional. Another issue to be discussed in this chapter is the uniformity of the ordination rite during the apostolic period.

In the concluding remarks, I will attempt to gauge whether there is any uniformity in the significance of the various New Testament uses of the gesture. If any such

uniformity exists, it may point to a common origin of the various uses of the **LH** by the apostolic church.

1.5. Delimitations

Since this study focuses strictly on the various uses of the **LH**, other related aspects will be either overlooked or treated briefly. Thus, in the background chapters (2-3) general discussions on various gestures of the hand, symbolism of gods' hands and human hands in both pagan and Jewish literature, etc., are omitted. They are treated in comprehensive works like the monograph written by Karl Gross. In the exegetical sections of the relevant passages, textual-critical, source-critical and redactional-critical issues will be discussed only inasmuch as they have a direct bearing on and enhance our understanding of the **LH**.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ For general background on the symbolism of the divine and human hand and the various gestures, see Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 102-142, 192-99; P.R. Ackroyd, 'ת', *TDOT*, 5:397-426; K. Gross, *Menschenhand und Gotteshand*, Part I and 418-443.

CHAPTER 2

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE JEWISH ENVIRONMENT

2.1. The Laying on of Hands in the Old Testament

2.1.1. Introduction

The first place where one should look for the origin of the New Testament practice of the LH is the OT, given that the LXX was the Bible of earliest Christianity. There are several instances in the OT where the LH is used as a gesture or as part of a rite. The contexts in which it appears can be classified as follows:

1. Blessing (Gen. 48.14, 17 - נָש , *ἐπέβαλεν τὴν χεῖρα τὴν δεξιάν* - LXX; Gen. 48.18 - נָש , *ἐπίθες τὴν δεξιάν [χεῖρα]* - LXX).
2. Healing (5.11 - נָש , *ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα* - LXX).
3. Sacrifices: peace offerings (Lev. 3.2, 8, 13); sin offerings (Lev. 4.4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 8.14; Ex. 29.10; Num. 8.12; 2 Chr. 29.23); burnt offerings (Lev. 1.4, 10 - LXX); 8.18, 22; Ex. 29.15; Num. 8.12); and the ram of consecration (Lev. 8.22; Ex. 29.19).
4. The Day of Atonement ritual (Lev. 16.21).
5. Consecration (Num. 8.10).
6. Commissioning (Num. 27.18, 23; Dt. 34.9).
7. The passing of sentence upon a blasphemer (Lev. 24.14; Dan. 13.34 - LXX).

2.1.2. Terminology

There are basically three verbs used to designate the gesture of the LH in the OT, נָש , נָש and נָש . David Daube has demonstrated that these three verbs must be carefully distinguished.¹ Thus, נָש , ‘to press [one’s hand(s) on somebody or something]’, always involves a certain amount of pressure, while נָש and נָש merely have the effect of ‘placing or laying hands gently on somebody or something’. The distinction between ‘leaning’ and ‘placing’ the hand is not carried over in the LXX. Here, נָש and נָש are translated identically by *ἐπιτίθημι*, but נָש by *ἐπιβάλλω*. The reason why the LXX did not translate נָש literally, i.e. by *ἐρείδω*, is not clear.² Following the LXX, the English translations speak indiscriminately of ‘laying on’ or ‘putting on’ of hands.

The verbs נָש and נָש appear in various contexts. They are used interchangeably in Gen. 48 to describe a gesture of blessing. There are other contexts of lesser importance for our research in which the terms appear. A few examples will suffice. נָש : The dying Elisha

¹ D. Daube, *NTRJ*, 224-46.

² Without qualifying his assertion, Daube contends that the idea of pressing one’s hands upon a being would have appeared as ‘outlandish’ to a Hellenistic public (*NTRJ*, 224). The use of the LH in the Graeco-Roman world will be discussed later.

lays his hands (יָשָׁם) upon the hands of king Joash while the latter is holding his bow (2 Kgs. 13.16; ἐπέθηκεν Ελισαιε τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὰς χεῖρας τοῦ βασιλέως - LXX). Although the meaning is uncertain, the gesture seems to signify a symbolic transmission of divine power.³ The common phrase ‘to place the hand upon the mouth’, as an injunction to silence, makes use of שָׁם: (e.g. Jgs. 18.19; ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὸ στόμα σου - LXX). Hands are also placed on one’s head as a sign of mourning (e.g. 2 Sam. 13.19, שָׁם; ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς - LXX). The verb is also used to indicate the taking by force of a person: To catch Athalia, soldiers ‘lay hands on her’ (2 Reg. 11.16, וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ לָהּ יָדַיִם; ἐπέθηκαν αὐτῇ χεῖρας - LXX). שָׁם: YAHWEH lays his hand on humans (Ps. 139.5, שָׁם; ἐθήκας ἐπ’ ἐμέ τὴν χεῖρα σου - LXX). An arbitrator can place his hands upon both parties (Job 9.33, וַיִּדְּ יְהוָה; διακούω - LXX). The other verb, שָׁם, is used 25 times in the Hebrew Bible: in sacrifices (20 times), consecrations (4 times), and the passing of sentence upon a condemned person (1 time).

2.1.3. *The Meaning(s) of the LH in Different Contexts*

2.1.3.1. *A gesture of blessing (Gen. 48.14, 17, 18)*

The first occurrence of the LH one encounters in the OT describes a gesture of blessing: ‘And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it [שָׁם; ἐπέβαλεν, LXX] upon the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand upon the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the first-born’. When Jacob ‘laid [שָׁם; ἐπέβαλεν, LXX] his right hand upon Ephraim’s head’ (v. 17), Joseph objected and said to his father: ‘(T)his [Manasseh] is the first born; put your right hand [שָׁם; ἐπίθες τὴν δεξιάν, LXX] upon his head’ (v. 18). Three points can be made from this text, which are relevant to our discussion. 1) The two verbs which designate a gentle placing of hands, שָׁם and שָׁם, are used interchangeably, which indicates that there is no basic difference between their meaning on this occasion. 2) The LH as a gesture of blessing does not require more than one hand. 3) From Joseph’s request that the right hand be placed on the older son and Jacob’s answer that ‘the younger will be greater than he’ (48.17-19) we derive the concept of the right hand bestowing a greater blessing than the left hand. Although this is the only text in the OT to treat the laying on of the right hand as superior to that of the left hand,

³ So J. Gray, *1 & 2 Kings* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 542. For a different interpretation see W. Boyd Barrick, ‘Elisha and the Magic Bow: A Note on 2 Kings 13:15-17’, *VT* 35 (1985): 355-363. According to Barrick, רָכַב in v. 16a refers not to ‘drawing’ the bow but to ‘stringing’ it. Consequently, v. 16b does not describe a magico-symbolic practice, but a two-man bow stringing operation, such as depicted in an Assyrian relief from the reign of Ashurbanipal. It is, however, doubtful that, on philological grounds, רָכַב can be connected more closely with the action of ‘stringing’ than to that of ‘drawing’ a bow. According to J. Robinson, Elisha’s gesture was intended ‘to show that the king’s action and God’s action were one’ (*The Second Book of Kings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 125).

there are numerous passages, especially in the Psalms, which describe the right hand as a symbol of power and victory.⁴

That Jacob's gesture described by נָשָׂא and נָשָׂה involved no significant pressure, argues Daube, is confirmed by the precarious physical condition of the patriarch (48.1, 2, 21; 49.33) and the crossed position of his hands at the time of blessing (cf. 48.13-14).⁵ However, the LH is not an indispensable gesture of blessing in the OT. Lev. 9.22 describes another form of blessing, consisting in the lifting up (נָשָׂה ; $\epsilon\xi\alpha\lambda\iota\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$ in the LXX) of Aaron's hands toward the people whom he blesses. Obviously, on this particular occasion, the LH would have been thought impossible.

The function of the LH is understood differently by various scholars. While for some the gesture is nothing more than a physical representation of the bestowal of blessing,⁶ others attribute it full efficacy. Daube, for instance, suggests that by such physical contact it was expected that 'some beneficial virtue inherent in the hand of the blessing party would produce its results in the party blessed'.⁷ This seems to be confirmed by Joseph's request that the right hand of Jacob be placed on the head of the older son who is to receive the greater blessing (Gen. 48.17-19). The concept at work is that the inherent power of the right hand is thought to be greater than that of the left hand. According to Hempel,⁸ Pedersen,⁹ Mowinckel¹⁰ and Harrelson,¹¹ Jacob's LH on Ephraim and Manasseh, along with other gestures mentioned there, indicates that magical beliefs underlie the blessing custom. In Pedersen's view, blessing consists in the communication of 'soul-power/soul-substance' between two persons. The blesser (God/humans) gives the recipient a part of his soul. Physical contact, such as kissing or the LH, is generally necessary for the proper communication of the soul.¹² Wehmeier speaks about a transfer of power effected through oral blessing which, again, is facilitated through physical contact.¹³

⁴ For YHWH's right hand see Ex. 15.6, 12; Ps. 16.11; 18.35; 20.6; 21.8; 48.10; 60.5; 63.8; 78.54; Is. 48.13. For the right hand of a human, see Ps.89.42; Ps. 137.5; Is. 41.13; 45.1. Cf. also W. Grundmann, $\delta\epsilon\xi\iota\acute{o}\varsigma$, *TDNT* II, 38; E. Lohse, $\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho$, *TDNT* IX, 426.

⁵ Daube, *NTRJ*, 228.

⁶ E.g. C.W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK 'To Bless' in the Old Testament* (SBLDS 95; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 84.

⁷ Daube, *NTRJ*, 228; cf. also J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 235.

⁸ J. Hempel, 'Die israelitische Anschauungen von Segen und Fluch im Lichte altorientalischer Parallelen', *BZAW* 81 (1961), 35, 56.

⁹ J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 201, 203.

¹⁰ S. Mowinckel, *Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmendichtung. Psalmenstudien V.* (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1924), 9.

¹¹ W.J. Harrelson, 'Blessings and Cursings', *IDB* 1.446.

¹² *Israel*, 200f.

¹³ G. Wehmeier, *Der Segen im Alten Testament*, Theologische Dissertationen 6, Bo Reicke, ed. (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970), 197. Harrelson speaks of 'power-laden words', *op. cit.*, 446.

In assessing the magical interpretation of the gesture, we must first look to the text. The LH is accompanied by the words of blessing. There are two types of oral blessing in the OT: pronouncements of blessing and petitions of blessing. There is nothing in Jacob's words to indicate magical beliefs. On the contrary, they are words of prayer, by which he invokes the divine favour on the children: 'May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has led me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads'. Whether or not the LH should be understood as a magical gesture, is a more difficult issue. I already referred to the fact that the LH in this particular case was thought of as having an efficacious nature. It must be emphasised, however, that belief in the physical transfer of power or some virtue does not always have magical connotations. Rather, it may simply reflect primitive beliefs in the power of the hand, common to all ancient peoples.¹⁴ The belief in the greater power of the right hand is not necessarily an indication of magical traits.¹⁵ It may simply reflect a conventional use of the right hand to indicate preference or higher social status, in the same manner we prefer it today for handshaking.¹⁶

In conclusion, the LH in blessing seems to have had a twofold meaning. It first signifies a transfer of a blessing (virtue, status, fertility, wealth, etc.) from one person to another. Secondly, the gesture is a sign of prayer by which the one who prays identifies the person prayed for.¹⁷ The person who lays hands functions as both petitioner and mediator of the numinous power he prays for.

2.1.3.2. A Gesture in Association with Healing

The account of Naaman's healing (2Kgs. 5.1-14) mentions a gesture which Naaman expects from Elisha as a means by which his leprosy would be cured. Filled with anger for not receiving the expected treatment, Naaman exclaims:

Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand (וַהֲנִיף יָדוֹ) over the place (אֶל הַמָּקוֹם), and cure (אָסַף) the leper (5.11)

¹⁴ The magical interpretation of blessing by Pedersen has nothing to do with the LH. It is related to his view of blessing as a 'self-fulfilling power'. An oral blessing cannot be revoked because it is created by the power of the soul of the one who pronounces it. Once the blessing is pronounced 'it must act by the power which has been put into it' (*Israel*, 200).

¹⁵ *Contra* Hempel, who takes the preference for the right hand to mean that the gesture, along with the words, imparted the blessing with no help from YHWH (*op. cit.*, 35).

¹⁶ Mitchell, *Meaning of BRK*, 22, 84.

¹⁷ Similarly, the lifting up of Moses' hands in the account of Israel's victory over the Amalekites (Ex. 17.8-13) is best explained as a gesture of prayer rather than a gesture of blessing. Alternatively, the account may be taken as a graphic illustration of the power thought to be mediated through the hands; cf. A.E. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 59.

The Hebrew verb used here, הניף (to agitate, to wave, to flap), does not imply physical contact. The ‘waving’ of the hand is to be ‘toward the place’ (אל המקום), a prepositional phrase which has been interpreted as a reference to ‘the Sanctuary-place’,¹⁸ the place where Naaman was standing,¹⁹ or “‘some particular place’ to which the disease . . . was expected to be exorcised’.²⁰ However, in view of Lev. 13.19 where the spot of leprosy is described as a ‘place of the boil’ (מקום השחין), the phrase can more naturally be taken as an allusion to the part of the body affected by the leprosy.²¹ This interpretation is also supported by the LXX which translates the sentence ‘and lay his hand upon the place’ (καὶ ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον) and the Vulgate (*et tangeret manu sua locum leprae*). The next verb, קטף, translated exegetically by some versions as *to cure*, reveals something of the purpose of the gesture and possibly even the movement of the hand. The Hebrew term means *to gather* and, in combination with the previous verb *to wave, flap [the hand]*, suggests a magical gesture by which the leprosy is collected from the spot where it is visible.²² It is possible to understand that the Hebrew text reflects a practice of the Syrian thaumaturges which is known to the Hebrew writer.²³ There is, however, no evidence to prove the case.

Although there is no evidence in the OT that leprosy was attributed to some evil power,²⁴ the translators of the LXX understood the gesture here as an exorcistic feature: καὶ ἀποσυνάξει τὸ λεπρόν. Whether or not this is influenced by the Akkadian *asapu*, *to exorcise*, is uncertain.²⁵ The use in the LXX of a verb of touch for the magical gesture referred to in the original Hebrew may point to an evolution of the Jewish attitude towards magic; the mention of a magical gesture, i.e. the waving or flapping of the hand (הניף ידו), was censored probably to avoid the impression that such practice was condoned.²⁶

¹⁸ R. Kittle, *Die Bücher der Könige* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), 205; J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains*, 104 f.

¹⁹ A. Sanda, *Die Bücher der Könige*, vol. II (EHAT; Münster: Aschendorffscher Verlag, 1911-1912), 40.

²⁰ Suggested as a possibility by J. Gray, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 455.

²¹ Cf. J.A. Montgomery, *A Commentary on Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), 379.

²² But see M.L. Brown (*Israel's Divine Healer* [SOTBT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 31-32) who argues that the direct object of קטף, *to gather*, is not the leprosy but the leper and, thus, the verb refers not to the removal of the leprosy but to the re-integration of the leper into society, ‘to heal a person of leprosy and so make it possible to mix with his fellows’.

²³ The possibility has been mentioned by J. Coppens (*L'imposition des mains*, 104) although he preferred to translate אל המקום ידו והניף as ‘and wave his hand towards the Sanctuary-place’, signifying a gesture of prayer.

²⁴ Leprosy can be caused by sin (Num. 12.10; 2 Sam. 2.39; 2 Kgs. 5.27; 15.5; 2 Chr. 26.20).

²⁵ Finding the meaning of the Hebrew verb unsatisfactory, Montgomery reads here the Akkadian *asapu* (*Commentary on Kings*, 375, 378, 379); Cf. also J. Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 455. M. Cogan and H. Tadmor disagree on the grounds that there is no such verb in Akkadian; only the noun *asipu*, *exorcist*, is attested (*II Kings* [AB; New York: Doubleday & Co., 1988], 64).

²⁶ René Péter (‘L'imposition des mains dans l'Ancien Testament’, 54) explains the different reading of the LXX as an indication of an evolution of the healing rite; the LH which later became a ritual for healing was at its origins a magical gesture which involved the waving or flapping of the hand over the

Whatever the reasons of the LXX translators were for substituting a verb of touch for the Hebrew *הניף ידו*, by doing this they might have created a problem for early Jewish readers. Considering the nature of the disease, a gesture which implies touching would have been inappropriate according to the Torah (Num. 5.2; 19.22). Yet, it is possible to argue that, in this case, the stipulation of the Torah was thought to have been overridden on the basis that the superior power of the healer would neutralize the contaminating power of leprosy.

There are three instances in the OT which describe people resurrected through physical contact. One instance concerns the dead man who is placed in Elisha's grave and is reanimated by touching (*גע*) the bones of the prophet (2 Kgs 13.21). The incident is presented by the narrator in a positive light and has been understood a post-mortem confirmation and approval by YHWH of the prophet's activity.²⁷ While this is possible, the text indicates clearly that a transfer of power has occurred from Elisha's bones to the dead corpse. Elisha's power was so great and potent that, even after his death, a significant measure of it was retained in his bones.²⁸ The power was sufficient to revive a dead person who came in contact with the bones of the prophet. Since the power in this case does not emanate from the hand or the clothes of a living person, this story provides probably the most 'mechanical' conception of the transfer of power found in the Old and the New Testament.²⁹ Such automatism is a feature characteristic of magic. The function of the story is, however, to emphasise the enormous power which was believed to reside in Elisha during his life.

Each of the other two references concerns the resurrection of a child; one is said to have been accomplished through Elijah and the other through Elisha. In both cases the reanimation takes place through physical contact. In Elijah's case, the gesture is depicted in one clause: 'Then he stretched himself (or better, 'measured himself', *ויתמרד*) three times over the child' (1Kgs 17.21). A more complete description is offered in the second case: 'Then he [Elisha] went up and lay upon the child. He placed (*שם*; LXX, *ἔθηκεν . . . ἐπὶ . . .*) his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm' (2Kgs 4.34).

The text of 1 Kgs. 17.21 is not a complete parallel to 2 Kgs. 4.34. In the former, the ritual action of the prophet is depicted in one clause: 'Then he stretched himself three

ill part of one's body.

²⁷ Burke O. Long (*2 Kings* [FOTL 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 166) takes the story to be both 'a confirmation of the prophet and a foreshadowing of the victory to come'. So J. Robinson, *The Second Book of Kings*, 125. This interpretation of the story is confirmed in *Sirach*: 'His [Elisha's] body prophesied when he was dead. As in his life he did wonders, so in his death his deeds were marvelous' (48:13-14).

²⁸ With the power of Elisha's bones is to be compared Pyrrhus' great toe which is said to have had such a great *δύναμιν θείαν* that the toe remained intact after the entire body of Pyrrhus was consumed by fire (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 3.5).

²⁹ So B. Blackburn, *Theios Aner*, 116. Cf. also PGM XXXVI. 312 (discussion in Ch. 3).

times over the child'. This text is nowadays seen as a later revision of 2 Kgs. 4.34, in which the theme is transferred to Elijah.³⁰ There are closer literary parallels to Elisha's ritual action in a number of incantations from Babylon, in which a demon is conjured: 'your head upon his head, your hand upon his hand, your foot upon his foot, you (the evil spirit) shall not place'.³¹ The idea is that a disease or a demon-possession is the result of a demon touching the body parts of a human being. Evaluated against the ritual action described in the Babylonian incantations, Elisha's action can be understood a 'mirror-ritual' or 'counter-ritual', for it reaches the opposite effect, i.e. healing, by using the same means. The action belongs to the field of contactual magic,³² Elisha acting in the manner of a witch-doctor.³³ Whether or not the illness was understood as being caused by a demon, the gesture was, undoubtedly, a means by which 'life-force' was transferred from the body of the prophet to the dead child. Noteworthy is the fact that, in each situation, the reanimation is described as a result of prayer (1 Kgs 17.20, 22; 2 Kgs 4.33).³⁴

In conclusion, the above investigation conveyed insufficient data to allow us assess the use of the LH / touch for healing in ancient Israel. Nevertheless, it provided grounds to assert with some degree of certainty that the idea of contactual transference of 'life-force' was known to ancient Israelites. The LXX translation of 2 Kg. 5.11 might be an indication that the healing through the LH (or simply by touching) is known in the second century BCE at least among the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria.

2.1.3.3. *The Sacrificial Rites*

The Hebrew verb used for the LH in connection with sacrifices is always $\eta\sigma\mu$. The gesture is included in the prescribed procedure for blood-offerings (i.e. peace, sin and burnt offerings), but it is not mentioned in the case of guilt-offerings (cf. Lev. 5.6, 14-19;

³⁰ To name a few: J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 382; S. Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri* (FRLANT 124; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 59; S.M. Fischback, *Totenerweckungen. Zur Geschichte einer Gattung*, FzB 69, 1992, 57f; Bob Becking, "'Touch for Health..". Magic in II Reg 4,31-37 with a Remark on the History of Yahwism', ZAW 108/1 (1996), 38.

³¹ The evidence was unearthed for the first time by S. Daiches in 'Zu II. Kön iv,34 (Elisas Handlung durch babylonische Beschwörungstextstellen erklärt)', *OLZ* 11 (1908): 492-93. He mentions four ancient texts: Utukku limnutû III 54-62; III 182-183; IV 180; zi-pà incantation I:139-144. More recently, Bob Becking ('Touch for Health . . .', 38-47) argues that, of all the texts used by Daiches, only the Utukku limnutû IV 180 offers a parallel to 2 Kgs. 4,34. He adds three other texts: Utukku limnutû V 186-188, Rev. II:6-15 and *etlu*-text (pp. 44-46).

³² J. Gray, *I & 2 Kings* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 382; G.H. Jones, *I & 2 Kings*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 308.

³³ R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 59.

³⁴ Pioreschi notes: 'Some have interpreted this episode, obviously meant to be miraculous, as a case of mouth-to mouth resuscitation, of closed-chest cardiac massage, and of hypothermia with resuscitation by re-warming. This in spite of the similarity of this case with the one of Elijah . . . which underlies the miraculous nature of the cure' (*A History of Medicine. Vol. 1, Primitive and Ancient Medicine*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991, 517).

Num. 5.5-10). However, in view of the similarities between the description of sin-offerings and guilt-offerings (cf. Lev. 5.6 f.; 7.1-7) it is quite possible that the LH applied to the latter as well.³⁵

Three elements are common to peace, sin and burnt offerings: 1) the bringing of the victim before the Lord, 2) the laying of hands on its head, and 3) the slaughtering of the victim. In each case the LH is an act of worship undertaken by the one who brings the offering, not by the religious official. When a sacrifice has an individual character, it is said that the one offering the sacrifice not only lays his hands on the head of the animal but also slaughters it. When, however, the sin offering is made for all Israel (Lev. 4.15), this individual participation is not possible; therefore, the people participate in the ritual through their representatives. Such a collective sin-offering is described as taking place during the time of Hezekiah's reform, when the king and the congregation (most likely the latter through their representatives) laid hands on the animals and the priests slaughtered them (2 Chr. 29.23). In the description of the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29; Lev. 8), three offerings are mentioned: a sin-offering (= purification offering, פחית - v. 14), a burnt offering (v. 18), and the offering of the ram of ordination (v. 22). Each time, Aaron and his sons, i.e. the persons who bring the offering, lay hands on the victim's head, but it is Moses who slaughters the animals (cf. 2 Chr. 29.23).

Of all the sacrificial passages which mention the LH, only two provide clues as to how the rite is to be interpreted, Lev. 1.4 and 16.21. However, each of these texts poses its own interpretative challenges. On the one hand, Lev. 1.4 allows several interpretations of the LH. On the other hand, it has been argued that Lev. 16.21, where the meaning of the rite appears to be transparent, is irrelevant to the LH in sacrificial contexts because the scapegoat ritual is not sacrificial. The interpreter is thus left with little to go on.

Before examining the details of the relevant passages, we need to note that two opposing views have dominated the debate on this issue. The first view has been suggested by Robertson Smith. It claims that only in the case of the scapegoat is the LH interpreted as indicating transference; elsewhere, the idea is that of a general identification, by means of physical contact, of the person who placed the hands with the person or animal on whom the hands are placed.³⁶ On linguistic grounds Daube arrives at a different

³⁵ J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 151; J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 20. So G.J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 104-105, although he sees the two sacrifices as quite distinct. The relationship between the two offerings is much discussed and is not the object of our study. What certainly distinguishes between a sin offering and a guilt offering is that some reparation is made along with the latter (Lev. 5.16; 6.5). Wenham associates the LH with the confession made on this occasion (Num. 5.7) but, as J. Milgrom indicates (*Leviticus 1-16*, 302), it is clear from this text that confession preceded the bringing of the sacrifice. By contrast, H.W. Robinson, 'Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism', *JTS* 43 (1942), 130, n.4, is of the opinion that the LH is not necessary in connection with guilt-offerings, since the main emphasis of the latter is 'compensation'.

³⁶ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (2nd ed.; London: Black, 1914), 422-423.

conclusion. He claims that **סמך**, which is employed invariably for offerings and consecrations, has in all its occurrences the same significance, i.e. transference:

In all probability, by leaning your hands upon somebody or something, by pressing in this way upon a person or animal, you were pouring your personality into him or it; or in other words, you were making him or it into your substitute.³⁷

As already mentioned, Daube argues that the terms **שם** and **שח** are used exclusively for blessings and healing, the latter being also a form of blessing. In a later work,³⁸ he modifies his position by acknowledging that **סמך** can be used in connection with acts of blessing and healing as well, but even there it retains the idea of transference in the sense that the healer conveys his own vitality to the sufferer. Undoubtedly, Daube's differentiation of the vocabulary used in the OT for the LH is a significant contribution. However, his claim that **סמך** always denotes transference as a 'pouring of one's personality into another' has triggered sharp criticism from a number of scholars, as noted earlier.³⁹

The following meanings have been suggested for the LH in sacrificial contexts:

- (i) *Transference of sins*. By laying his hand(s) on the victim, the offerer transfers his/her⁴⁰ sins symbolically to the animal which, becoming a substitute, suffers the penalty of death.⁴¹

³⁷ Daube, *NTRJ*, 225. Similar views are shared by J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 238; N. Adler, 'Laying on of Hands' in *EBT* (ed. by Johannes B. Bauer; London: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 496.

³⁸ Daube, 'A Reform in Acts and its Models', in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in Honor of W.D. Davies*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 162-63. The *Genesis Apocryphon* is the only text known to use **סמך** in connection with healing. The passage deals with Abraham healing Abimelech: 'And I prayed for [Pharaoh] and I laid my hand on his [hea]d and the plague departed from him, and the evil [spirit] was rebuked [from him]' (1QGA 20, 28-29). This passage will receive attention later in section 2.3.

³⁹ See *supra*, Introduction, 7, n. 32.

⁴⁰ There is no indication in the OT that women were restricted from sacrifice in general, or from laying hands on the sacrifice in particular, except those cases when they were prevented because of their impurity. Rabbinic literature, however, stipulates that women were generally not to lay hands on sacrifices. For references, see L.J. Archer, 'The Role of Jewish Women in the Religion, Ritual and Cult of Graeco Roman Palestine', in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 273-287, esp. 279.

⁴¹ Proponents of this meaning include Volz, 'Die Handauflegen beim Opfer', *ZAW* 21 (1901), 95-96; G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 162 ff.; Daube, *NTRJ*, 226; E.O. James, *Sacrifice and Sacrament* (London, 1962), 34; H.H. Rowley, 'The Meaning of Sacrifice in the OT', in *From Moses to Qumran* (London, 1964), 83; G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 61 ff.; A. Noordzij, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 22-33; E.S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 30, 47. P.A. Medebielle, *L'expiation dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament* (Rome: Institute biblique pontifical, 1923), 147-50, 157. According to Medebielle, it is the penalty the offerer deserves, not his/her guilt, which is transferred. N. Kiuchi (*The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature* [JSOTS 56; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987], 116-119) interprets the rite to symbolize substitution, however, without being specific on the nature of the substitution.

(ii) *Transfer of personality*. Through the LH the personality of the offerer is transferred to the animal. Upon such transfer, the animal is regarded either as a substitute for the offerer, suffering death in his/her place,⁴² or as a means by which the offerer presents himself/herself to YHWH in worship.⁴³

(iii) *Dedication*. By the LH, the sacrificial animal is designated as a gift to YHWH.⁴⁴

(iv) *Ownership*. By laying his/her hands on the animal, the offerer simply identifies it as his/her possession and indicates that the fruit of the sacrifice will be his/hers.⁴⁵

Proponents of view (i) normally build their case on the model provided by the scapegoat. The relevance of the scapegoat ritual for the meaning of the LH in sacrificial contexts is a debated issue. Although some would transfer the meaning of the gesture in Lev. 16.21 to all sacrifices, most modern scholars agree that the gesture has a particular meaning in each context. The non-relevance of the scapegoat case for the meaning of the LH in sacrificial contexts has been sustained on a) contextual and b) conceptual grounds.

a) Janowski points to three elements found of Lev. 16.21 which are missing from any sacrificial context and, thus, make the scapegoat ritual non-relevant to the meaning of the LH in these contexts. These elements are: (1) the laying on of *both* hands, (2) the transference of *materia peccans* to the sacrificial animal and (3) the sending off of the goat into the desert.⁴⁶

With regard to the number of hands used in various Levitical rituals, the fact that one hand was always used in sacrificial contexts and two hands always in non-sacrificial rites seems to be substantiated.⁴⁷ However, the inference that *one* hand always connotes identification and *both* hands always transference of some sort of *materia* (sin, power,

⁴² MacCulloch, J.A. 'Hand', *ERE*, ed. J. Hastings, 6 (1951), 494; M. Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 22; H. Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1981), 104-108.

⁴³ W.O.E. Oesterley, *Sacrifices in Ancient Israel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), 234; B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* (Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 218, n.118. Noth argues that later when the LH was used for all offerings, it became a symbol of self-offering to YHWH (*Leviticus*, 22).

⁴⁴ G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 61 ff.; B.A. Levine, *Leviticus* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 6.

⁴⁵ W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 325; J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, vol. 3 (London: University Press, 1940), 366; H.W. Robinson, 'Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism', 129-139; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 416 and *Studies in OT Sacrifices* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 28; H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (ET; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 169; M.C. Sansom, 'Laying on of Hands in the OT', *ExpTim* 94 (1983): 323-26; W.D. Stacey, 'Concerning the Ministry - Three Addresses to Ordinands. II. Ordination', *ExpTim* 75 (1964):264-67; R.K. Yerkes, *Sacrifices in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (1952), 134; René Péter, 'L'imposition des mains', 52; W.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature', *JAOS* 106/3 (1986), 436-39; J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, 21; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 152.

⁴⁶ B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, 209-210, 215 f. Cf. also D.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement', 437-38.

⁴⁷ See *infra*, 45-47.

personality) must remain an inference, plausible as it is, for there is nothing in the pertinent texts to support such a differentiation in meaning.⁴⁸

With regard to the second element indicated by Janowski, indeed, no transference of *materia peccans* is explicitly mentioned in any type of sacrifice. However, we cannot go any further than this observation. This is precisely the point that we are trying to establish: *Is transference implied in these contexts or not?* In order to avoid circular argumentation, we cannot use this distinctive feature of the scapegoat ritual to make Lev. 16 non-relevant to the meaning of the LH in other sacrificial contexts.

As for the third element of Janowski's argument, it must be said that, on purely contextual considerations, the fact that the sending off of the animal is missing in sacrificial contexts has no direct bearing upon the meaning of the LH in these contexts. It has to do primarily with the nature of the rite. It is, however, the reason behind the sending off of the scapegoat that may influence our understanding of the LH. This reason will be discussed further in the next section, which deals with conceptual categories.

b) On conceptual grounds the following points have been made by various authors to show the non-relevance of the LH on the scapegoat for the meaning of the rite in sacrificial contexts:

1. The uncleanness contracted by the scapegoat through Aaron's LH renders the animal unfit to be sacrificed. Therefore, the LH on animals which are to be sacrificed cannot mean transference of sins.⁴⁹
2. The cleansing power of the חַטָּאת blood through its sprinkling on the altar excludes the idea of its contamination through a transfer of sins.⁵⁰
3. The burning of the חַטָּאת in a clean place attests its 'most holy' status.⁵¹
4. The description of the sin-offering as 'most holy' after the sacrifice (Lev. 6.25, 29; 7.6) and as fit for priestly food excludes any transfer of sin.⁵²

Conceptual categories provide us with a stronger basis for not allowing the rite of the scapegoat to shape our understanding of the meaning of the LH in sacrificial contexts. R. de Vaux argues that on the Day of Atonement we have two categories of rites, 'different in spirit and in origin': one sacrificial and the other non-sacrificial.⁵³ He is certainly right at

⁴⁸ Cf. *infra*, 46 and n. 143.

⁴⁹ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 416; René Péter, 'L'imposition des mains', 51; W.D. Stacey, 'Concerning the Ministry', 265.

⁵⁰ J.C. Matthes, 'Der Sühnegedanke bei den Sündopfern', *ZAW* 27 (1903), 97-119.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² The following offerings had to be eaten by Aaron and his sons: cereal-offerings, Lev. 2.3, 10; 6.16, 18; 7.9, 10; 10.12, 13; peace-offerings, Lev. 10.14, 15; sin-offerings, Lev. 5.13; 6.26, 29; 10.16-20; the ram of consecration, Ex. 29.32-33; Lev. 8.31. Peace offerings were eaten also by the offerer, cf. Lev. 7.15-18.

⁵³ R. de Vaux, *Studies*, 96. According to de Vaux, the origin of the scapegoat rite is unknown, but it is an ancient custom, 'a particular rite which stems from other conceptions' than 'the rules and ideas

least in regard to the first half of his assertion; the scapegoat is not a sacrifice. Moreover, de Vaux and others who follow him rightly emphasize that the object of סָמָן on which sins are transferred is defiled and cannot be sacrificed (or even touched) after its contamination. This seems to be the very reason why a 'fit man' is employed to drive the scapegoat into the wilderness (Lev. 16.21) or why the blasphemer of Lev. 24 is to be stoned (vv. 14, 16, 23).⁵⁴ In contrast to this, a sacrificed animal is said to be 'most holy' (for the חֲטָאתֹהוּ , Lev. 6.17, 25, 29; 10.17; for the זֶבַח־שָׁמֶן , Lev. 6.17; 7.1), which seems to exclude any transfer of *materia peccans* from the offerer to the animal offered.⁵⁵ Neither can we accept the view that a transfer of sin pollutes only the חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh, without affecting the fat and the blood which continue to be holy.⁵⁶ Since the alleged transfer of sin through the LH occurs before the animal is slaughtered, it is reasonable to infer that it would pollute the whole sacrificial animal. Further, the manner in which both the חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh and the vessel wherein it is boiled are to be disposed of points to the 'most holy' status of the sacrifice. The חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh is to be either eaten by priests 'in the holy place' (Lev. 6.26; 10.17-18) or burned outside the camp 'in a clean place' (Lev. 4.12; 6.11). Similarly, the vessel is to be broken to prevent any further use of it or, if made of brass, it is to be scoured and rinsed in water (Lev. 6.28). At least two attempts have been made to reconcile the idea of a transference of sin through the LH with the fact that the sacrifice was eaten by the priests.

According to one view, it was the superior 'holiness' of the priests that absorbed the pollution of the חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh when the latter was eaten by the priests.⁵⁷ The preposition לְ in לִשְׂאֵתָהּ , 'to bear' (Lev. 10.17) is understood in this case to express purpose: 'God has given it [the חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh] to you [so that by eating it] to bear the iniquity of the congregation'. But this is to make the priest's eating a part of the atonement rite and to ascribe atoning powers to this meal, which is unlikely. At least three points can be made against this idea: (1) Lev. 17.11 states clearly that it is the blood on the altar which makes atonement. (2) It is clearly indicated that the eating of the חֲטָאתֹהוּ flesh took place after the completion of the handling of the blood. In fact, it was the way in which the blood was handled which determined whether or not the sacrifice could be eaten (Lev. 6.30; 10.18;

of Leviticus'. The issue of the origin of the rite is nonrelevant to our discussion.

⁵⁴ See R. Péter, 'L'Imposition des Mains', 53.

⁵⁵ The position taken by A.M. Rodriguez (*Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus* [Berrien Springs, 1979], 218-19) and more cautiously by N. Kiuchi (*The Purification Offering*, 115, 119) allows for the coexistence of guilt and holiness in the חֲטָאתֹהוּ . This position cannot be substantiated since it denotes a contradiction of terms.

⁵⁶ See J.R. Porter, *Leviticus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), 38.

⁵⁷ See J.C. Matthes, 'Der Sühnedanke bei den Sündopfern', 107; G. von Rad, *OT Theology*, I. 248; A.M. Rodriguez, *Substitution*, 135; R.J. Thompson, 'Sacrifice and Offering', *NBD*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 1052. About the origins and the forms of the 'sin-eating' custom, popular in Great Britain, Bavaria, Near-Eastern cultures and India, see S. Hartland, 'Sin-Eating', *ERE* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 572-76. Other proponents of this view are listed in Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 171, n.25. According to Hartland, the roots of this custom are to be found in the Mosaic legislation, namely in the motif of the scapegoat. Under the influence of the Christian belief, it

16.27). (3) There is no indication that the atonement in Lev. 9 was invalidated by the priests' failure to eat the **חַטָּאת** flesh (9.23-24). Therefore, it is rather the eating which depends on the atonement, not vice versa as the above view suggests. Milgrom points out that 'there is no evidence anywhere in the ancient Near East that impurity was removed by eating'.⁵⁸ Then, to understand the relation in which **חַטָּאת** stands to the 'priests' bearing the iniquity', we can follow Milgrom who translates v. 17b: 'God has given it (i.e. the **חַטָּאת** flesh) to you [as a perquisite] *for* bearing the iniquity..', the ל being translated by 'for' to express retribution.⁵⁹ Alternatively, in view of the fact that **חַטָּאת** can be used to refer to the rite itself (4.21; 6.25, 26), to the sacrificial animal (4.2, 8, 14, 20, 25, 29, 30, 33, 34; 6.25) or to the flesh of the animal (6.30; 10.17), we may consider that in Lev. 10.17a, **חַטָּאת** refers to the flesh of the animal sacrificed, while in v. 17b it refers to the **חַטָּאת** rite, as a means for making atonement. The bearing of the iniquity, then, alludes rather to the mediating role of the priests, who were to make atonement for the people through the handling of the **חַטָּאת** and the handling of the blood.⁶⁰

The other view which entertains the idea of transference of sin but avoids the suggestion that the priests ate the polluted **חַטָּאת** flesh claims that the death of the animal neutralized the pollution.⁶¹ On this view, the shedding of the blood becomes the climactic moment of the rite in which the divine justice is satisfied and expiation made. On this reading, all the subsequent elements of the rite, i.e. manipulation of the blood and the disposal of the **חַטָּאת**, would appear as meaningless. But any view which ignores or minimizes the role of the blood on the altar (Lev. 17.11) cannot be sustained.

We may conclude, therefore, that the transference of sin seems to be incompatible with the description of the **חַטָּאת** as 'most holy', the placing of the blood on the altar and the disposal of the **חַטָּאת**. The implication is that the LH in sacrificial contexts cannot signify transference of sin. Additionally, on conceptual grounds, the case of the scapegoat appears to be non-relevant for the meaning of the LH in the sacrificial system.

Next, the only other text which promises to shed some light on the meaning of the LH in sacrificial contexts, i.e. Lev. 1.4, is examined against the other three views (ii, iii, iv) listed above.

And he shall lay (וּסְמַךְ) his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted (וְנִרְצָה) for him (לּוֹ) to make atonement for him (עָלָיו). (Lev. 1.4)

was imported into Europe and India.

⁵⁸ J. Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 71.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁰ So N. Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 49 f., but he takes **חַטָּאת** in both v. 17a and v. 17b to refer to the sacrificial animal as a whole, claiming that **חַטָּאת** cannot change its meaning according to the verbs with which it is conjoined. But Lev. 6.25 is another example when, in the same verse, **חַטָּאת** refers to two different things: in the first appearance it refers to the rite itself and in the second to the sacrificial victim.

⁶¹ See R.J. Thompson, 'Sacrifice and Offering', 1052.

Those who see this verse as being relevant for the meaning of the LH claim that it is the imposition of the hands that makes the sacrifice acceptable as an atonement. Taking the ו + perfect (וּרְצָה) as expressing purpose, Wenham translates: ‘Then he must lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, *so that* it may be accepted on his behalf’.⁶² To claim that the efficacy of the atonement is dependent upon the LH is to read too much into the text. We are not bound grammatically to interpret v. 4b this way. The sacrifice is not accepted *because* the hands are placed on it; it is accepted *on behalf of him* whose hands are placed on it. Other conditions applied for its acceptance (see vv. 2f.). The function of conjunction וְ here is other than that of expressing purpose. In its immediate context (vv. 2-8), the LH is one of the many stages of the ceremony. Each stage except the first is introduced by the connective conjunction וְ which can be translated by ‘and’ or ‘then’ (vv. 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, 8). There is indeed a causative connection between each stage and the one which precedes it, so that each stage is made possible by the preceding one(s). It would be wrong, however, to make any given stage dependent solely on the one which immediately precedes it. Thus, the acceptance of the sacrifice in order ‘to make atonement’ depends both on the LH and the preceding stage, i.e. the bringing of the animal. Moreover, the emphasis seems to be on the conditions attached to the first stage: the animal must be without blemish, must be offered voluntarily, and must be presented at the door of the tabernacle (1.3). In conclusion, the first few stages of the rite run as follows:

- 2-3. He shall bring...offer....
- 4a. Then, he shall lay his hand on the head....
- 4b. Then, it shall be accepted [by the priest,⁶³ provided the conditions laid down in vv. 2-3 are met] in his behalf.
- 5a. Then, he [the offerer] shall kill the bullock...
- 5b. Then, the priests... shall bring the blood, etc.

Another element of v.4 which affects the way in which one understands the relationship between the LH on the animal and its acceptance is the preposition לְ - *to, for, in/on one's behalf*. The sentence וּרְצָה לוֹ can be translated ‘and it shall be accepted [by the priest] *in his place*’ or ‘and it shall be accepted [by the priest] *for his benefit*’. The translation of לוֹ יב ‘on his behalf’ is preferred in v. 4b, but no conclusions can be drawn as to whether or not it implies substitution.⁶⁴ Our position is, however, different from that taken by Kiuchi and Wenham in that we do not see the meaning of the LH resting solely on וּרְצָה לוֹ.⁶⁵ Whether

⁶² G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 61.

⁶³ The subject of וּרְצָה, *to accept*, is not expressed. It could be YHWH or the priest, but the causative sequence of events shows that the author intended the second alternative. Cf. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 53.

⁶⁴ Kiuchi’s translation is identical with that suggested above, but his inference that ‘the imposition of a hand in Lev 1.4 simply expresses the idea of substitution’ is not necessarily correct (*Purification Offering*, 117 f.). In view of the possible translations of the preposition לְ, we reiterate that it may or may not suggest substitution.

⁶⁵ Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 117f.; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 61.

or not the LH in Lev. 1.4 implies substitution seems to depend in the final analysis on the next group of words *לכפר עליו*. The *ל* in front of *כפר* has been translated in two different ways:

1. 'and it shall be accepted... *by* making atonement for him'
2. 'and it shall be accepted... *to* make atonement for him' (RSV)

The first translation is improbable since it confers efficacy to the LH by making it the *locus* for the atonement. However, according to Lev. 17.11, it is the blood which makes atonement for sins. As R. de Vaux correctly notes, the LH has only a preparatory function.⁶⁶ The second translation is, therefore, preferable; it expresses the purpose for the acceptance of the sacrifice. But as Kiuchi shows, by rejecting the first translation and accepting the second one, the significance of Lev. 1.4b becomes minimal for the meaning of the LH in sacrificial contexts.⁶⁷ Then, the translation of the *ל* one way or another does not elucidate the meaning of the gesture here.

Finally, it is hoped that the meaning of *לכפר* will inform our understanding of the significance of the LH. The most common translation for *לכפר* is 'to make atonement', a rather general term which is *not* descriptive of the way in which a sacrifice removes the sin. This translation will be of little help in our attempt to understand the meaning of the LH in this context. If, on the other hand, one translates *לכפר* by 'to pay a ransom', as Wenham suggests,⁶⁸ the idea of substitution is implicit in this term; the worshipper presents the animal as a ransom price to obtain his/her freedom. In this case, the best translation of *לו* would be 'in his place': And he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted in his place to pay a ransom for him. Further, this translation allows for a causal connection between the LH and the acceptance of the sacrifice. In this case, the relationship between the worshipper and the offering which the LH expresses seems to connote more than ownership. By placing his hand on the head of the animal the worshipper might have indicated that he offered himself to YHWH through the sacrificial animal.⁶⁹ It is our conclusion, therefore, that the LH in Lev. 1.4 may signify substitution. Such a meaning is not certain, however, but rates as highly probable when *כפר* is understood as 'ransom'. It must be reiterated, however, that if the gesture is understood as expressing substitution, this should be seen in a limited sense, namely the paying of a ransom price by the worshipper and should not include the ideas of transfer of personality⁷⁰ and substitutionary death.⁷¹ The advantage of this meaning of the LH is that

⁶⁶ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 452.

⁶⁷ *Purification Offering*, 117.

⁶⁸ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 59-61. Other places given by Wenham where *כפר* means 'to pay a ransom' are Lev. 17.11; Num. 25.13; 35:31, 33; 2 Sam. 21.3-6.

⁶⁹ G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 62.

⁷⁰ J. Milgrom notes: 'Identification is alien to biblical thought both because it is magical and because it presupposes the belief that death brings one close to God' (*Leviticus 1-16*, 151).

it can be applied to sacrifices where the offerer is not in a 'biotic rapport' with the thing offered, i.e. cereal and drink offerings (Lev. 5.11-13).⁷²

The question is whether this meaning of the LH, i.e. substitution in a limited sense, can be applied to other sacrificial contexts. The evidence seems to indicate that the meaning of the gesture in different sacrificial contexts is the same.⁷³ First, there is no clue in the Hebrew Bible that the meaning of the LH varies from one type of sacrifice to another. Secondly, since the meaning itself is not stated in the Levitical Code, it is difficult to see the worshipper of the OT as assigning for each type of sacrifice a different meaning to the gesture. The LH is for him/her simply an element common to all sacrifices, performed in the same manner (i.e. by using one hand), in the same place (i.e. 'at/to the door of the tent of meeting'; cf. Lev. 1.3; 3.2; 4.4; 17.4, 9; 19.21) and in the same sequence (i.e. before the killing of the animal). Wenham's view that the LH symbolizes in all sacrificial contexts both substitution and transference of sins must be rejected on the conceptual grounds discussed above.⁷⁴ For instance, the LH on a peace-offering cannot symbolize transference of sins, for this offering has little or nothing to do with sin.⁷⁵ In fact, the eating of the peace offering by worshippers (Lev. 7.15-20) is inconsistent with either transference of sins or with the theory of substitution.⁷⁶

In view of the above, it seems that the significance of the LH which best suits all sacrificial contexts is that of ownership. By laying the hand on the head of the sacrificial animal, the offerer identifies the animal as his possession and indicates that the spiritual benefit which is gained through the offering is his. As Wright demonstrated, this interpretation receives striking support from Hittite ritual.⁷⁷ The express requirement of the Tannaites that the LH be performed by the one who brings the sacrifice, and not by a proxy,⁷⁸ leads inescapably to the conclusion that the gesture indicates ownership.

The context is quite clear that the LH on a sacrifice takes place in the presence of a priest who accepts the offering (Lev. 1.4). Since in the OT the method of the LH is apparently uniform for all types of sacrifices, the gesture is not descriptive as to what type of offering is intended by the worshipper. Although nothing is said about verbal utterances by the priest or the offerer, it is reasonable to infer that, perhaps at the time of the LH, the

⁷¹ So N. Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 118, who criticizes the position taken by Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, 218-21. In Janowski's view, the worshipper participates in the death of the animal by the LH. In contrast with the meaning of the gesture on the Day of Atonement, i.e. 'transference of *materia peccans*' (*Objektabladung*), in sacrificial contexts the rite represents a subjective transference, i.e. the worshippers' 'life-force' is substituted by the animal's 'life-force' (*Subjektübertragung*).

⁷² For a discussion on expiation without shedding of blood, see G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 163 f.

⁷³ So M. Noth, *Leviticus*, 22; G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 93 ff.; Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 117f.

⁷⁴ *Leviticus*, 62, 94. See also *supra*, 24f.

⁷⁵ See J. Milgrom, *Cultic Theology*, 100; M.C. Sansom, 'Laying on of Hands in the OT', 324.

⁷⁶ W.D. Stacey, 'Concerning the Ministry', 64-67.

⁷⁷ D.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement', 443-446.

⁷⁸ *M. Menah.* 9.8-9; *t. Menah.* 10.9-10. For the representative nature of the LH on sacrifices, see section 2.4.2.3.

worshipper makes a statement of purpose.⁷⁹ The priest would then handle the blood and dispose of the sacrificial flesh, according to the type of offering intended.

To summarize, in sacrificial contexts the **LH** primarily signifies ownership [view (iv)]; the owner identifies the animal *as* his possession and indicates that the accrual which is gained through the offering is his.⁸⁰ This conclusion is confirmed by the Deuteronomic idioms ‘the offering of your hand’ (12.17) or ‘freewill offering from your hand’ (16.10), whereby stress is laid on the worshipper’s offering as his own gift. Secondly, the gesture may signify substitution but, as said above, in a limited sense. The offerer identifies himself *with* the sacrifice in the sense that the latter is regarded as a ‘ransom’ (כֶּפֶר) which he pays for his freedom, be it legal or spiritual. He can say ‘this is me’ and thus offer himself to YHWH through the sacrificial victim [view (ii)]. It must be reiterated, however, that such substitution would not include the idea of substitutionary death, otherwise this meaning would not be applicable to all sacrificial contexts.

2.1.3.4. *The Day of Atonement Ritual*

Aside from the sin and burnt offerings which are said to have been offered on the Day of Atonement by Aaron for himself and for the people, the ceremony also includes the unique ritual of the scapegoat:

And Aaron shall lay both his hands (וְיָדָיו) upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away into the wilderness, by the hand of a fit man. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited..’. (Lev. 16. 21-22).

This is the only place in sacrificial contexts where the transference of sin is mentioned in connection with the **LH**. The text stresses the fact that the rite is executed with both hands and this is the key to understanding the function of the Azazel goat. The role of the **LH** is unmistakably expressed: by laying his hands upon the head of the goat, Aaron places (נָתַן) the iniquities of the people upon it. Concomitant with the gesture, a confession of sins is

⁷⁹ According to Wenham (*Leviticus*, 53, 61 f.) and Hartley (*Leviticus*, 21), when the situation requires, a confession is made at this time. Indeed, confession of sins is mentioned in connection with sin-offering (Lev. 5.1-5) and guilt-offering (Num. 5.7) but it is made *before* the sacrifice is even brought. Wenham also argues that one reason why the **LH** is emphasized in sacrificial contexts is that ‘it was at this point that the worshipper said his prayer’ (p. 61). He also mentions the possibility that psalms were sung by the worshipper at this time. The Levitical code does not stipulate any prayer in connection with the **LH**, nor is it found in any OT passage dealing with the **LH**. (In 2 Chr. 29.29 f., the prayer takes place following the completion of the communal sin- and burnt-offerings.) Prayer and confession are associated with the washing of the elders’ hands in the rite of the heifer (Dt. 21.7-8).

⁸⁰ The omission of the **LH** from the ritual for offering ‘birds’ (Lev. 1.14-17) is to be explained by the fact that the birds are much smaller animals and could be held in the hand. Therefore, the worshipper needed no additional gesture to indicate that he/she was the owner of the sacrificial animal. So R. Peter, ‘L’imposition des mains dans l’Ancien Testament’, 52 n. 9; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 152.

made by the priest on behalf of the people.⁸¹ Upon the execution of the rite, the Azazel goat is not slaughtered, but driven out to a solitary place.

Relevant to the subject of the LH is also the relationship between the goat for the 'purification offering' and the scapegoat. The high priest is to lay his hands on the scapegoat (v. 21), but not on the goat sacrificed as a 'purification offering'. But, what exactly is the relationship between the two goats? One gets the impression from v. 5 that the two goats are to be regarded together as one sacrificial object: 'And he [i.e. Aaron] shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering'. The language of v. 15 as rendered by the RSV ('Then he [i.e. Aaron] shall kill the goat of the sin offering which is for the people') seems to lead to the same conclusion. Kiuchi, indeed, holds that the two rituals combined to form a single purification offering. In his view, the rite of the scapegoat is a special form of disposal of the ordinary *חטאת*, outside the camp.⁸² If, indeed, 'the goat for the Lord' atoned for the sins of the people, as v. 15 suggests, then the view offered by G. Vos that the ritual of the scapegoat was merely a dramatic representation of the expiation which is effected by the first goat makes sense.⁸³ The immediate context (16.15-20) leads, however, to a different interpretation which attributes to each goat a distinctive function. On this view, 'the goat for the Lord' is said to have effected the purification⁸⁴ of the sanctuary alone:

Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood within the veil, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat; thus he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness. There shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he enters to make atonement in the holy place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of

⁸¹ Individual confessions of sins are mentioned in connection with some sin-offerings (Lev. 5.5) and guilt-offerings (Num. 5.7).

⁸² N. Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 147-56.

⁸³ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 163. Vos argues that the scapegoat was needed for a 'clearer expression, in visible form, of the removal of sin after the expiation had been made, something which the ordinary sacrificial animal could not well express, since it died in the process of expiation'.

⁸⁴ J. Milgrom, *Cultic Theology*, 67-69, has demonstrated convincingly that the phrase 'sin offering', used virtually in all English translations of the Bible, is an inaccurate translation of *חטאת*. On contextual, morphological and etymological grounds, he has shown that the pristine meaning of the Hebrew term was 'purification' and, therefore, it should be translated 'purification offering'. To mention only the contextual evidence, *חטאת* is used for persons and objects who cannot possibly have sinned (Lev. 12-15; Num. 6; Lev. 8.15; Ex. 29.36f.). The concept of sin/uncleanness contaminating the sanctuary is common to all Near Eastern cultures, Milgrom argues, and in Israel the contamination of the sanctuary is proportional with the 'graded power' of the impurity: (1) The individual's inadvertent sins and severe physical impurity contaminate the courtyard altar (Lev. 4.25, 30; 9.9 ff.). (2) The inadvertent sins of the high priest or of the entire congregation pollute the shrine (Lev. 4.5-7, 16-18). (3) Wanton, unrepented sins pollute not only the courtyard and the shrine but penetrate the veil into the Holy of Holies. This pollution is purged once a year (Lev. 16.16-19) on the Day of Atonement (pp. 77-79). See also J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, 240-41.

The 'offering for sin' of Isa. 53.10 is a mistranslation in many versions among which KJV and RSV. The Hebrew term is not *חטאת*, but *אשם*.

Israel. Then he shall go out to the altar which is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle some of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the people of Israel. And *when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar* (italics mine), he shall present the live goat (vv. 15-20).

The parenthetical injunction of v. 17 that no man can enter the tent of meeting ‘until he [Aaron] comes out, and has made atonement for himself, and for his house, and for all the assembly of Israel’ seems to allude to the time of the scapegoat ritual. People could not enter the tabernacle before their sins had been transferred onto the scapegoat, otherwise they would have polluted the tabernacle. If this interpretation of v. 17 is correct, then the two goats must be seen as having two different functions: the sacrificed goat removes only the pollution (מטמאה) of the sanctuary, i.e. the effects of Israel’s wrongs, whereas the scapegoat (the goat for Azazel) removes the wrongs themselves (כל-עונת בני ישראל), v. 21).⁸⁵ This is an important aspect, and perhaps a decisive factor in establishing the meaning of the LH in all sacrificial contexts.

The LH in Lev. 16.21 is described as the climactic point of the Day of Atonement ceremony. Its meaning, i.e. transference of sins, is unmistakably indicated in the text:

And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, . . . putting them upon the head of the goat.

The imagery this rite of the LH conveys is that of transferring sins quasi-physically⁸⁶ to an animal which, subsequently, is dismissed to a barren land to carry the sins away from the people.⁸⁷ I must disagree here with D.P. Wright who regards the hand placement on the scapegoat simply as ‘the means of demonstrating who the focus of the ritual action is, . . . a demonstrative pointing finger’ which signifies: ‘This is the recipient of the sins of this people’.⁸⁸ His reason for interpreting the gesture this way is the fact that, in his view, the

⁸⁵ See J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1033-34; cf. also *Cultic Theology*, 81; ‘Day of Atonement’, *EJ*, vol. 5, cols. 1384-87. Milgrom’s conclusions are based on *M. Sheb.* 1.6: ‘And for a deliberate act of imparting uncleanness to the sanctuary and the Holy Things, a goat [whose blood is sprinkled] inside and the Day of Atonement effect atonement. And for all other transgressions which are in the Torah, the minor or serious, deliberate or inadvertent, those done knowingly or done unknowingly, violating a positive or a negative commandment, those punishable by extirpation and those punishable by death at the hands of a court, the goat which is sent away [Lev. 16:21] effects atonement’ - cited according to the translation of J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 622.

⁸⁶ Sin is treated in this passage almost as a substance, *materia peccans*, a sort of ‘bacterial infection’ which can be transferred from one person to another.

⁸⁷ The idea of transference appears in other passages of the OT, but the rite of the LH is not mentioned. Lev. 14.2-7 describes the purification rite of a leper, when one of the birds is killed as an offering and the other carries away the disease into the ‘open field’. The principle is also illustrated in Zech. 5.5-11, where the woman who symbolized ‘the wickedness throughout the land’ is transported in a ephah to Shinar (i.e. the land of Babylon, LXX). The wickedness of Judah is transferred to the woman and by her removal, the land is cleansed. The building of ‘a house’ for the ephah and ‘a base’ on which it was established were measures taken to ensure that the wickedness would not come back.

⁸⁸ D.P. Wright, ‘The Gesture of Hand Placement’, 436.

laying of the hands upon the blasphemer of Lev. 24 cannot be interpreted as a means of transfer and, consequently, it would not ‘make sense together’ with the case of the scapegoat and that of Joshua. Firstly, the reasoning used by Wright seems illogical. One must not force the interpretation of one text for the sake of ‘making sense together’ with other texts. Secondly, as we will demonstrate later, there is sufficient evidence that the laying of hands on the blasphemer is to be interpreted as a transfer of pollution.⁸⁹ However, independently of how one interprets the gesture in Lev. 24, here it is clearly intended as a means by which the transgressions of the people are placed⁹⁰ upon the goat for Azazel. According to late Jewish sources, the scapegoat is to be pushed over the edge of a ravine, so as to ensure that it would not turn back to pollute the inhabited areas.⁹¹

The question is whether, alongside the transference of sins, Lev. 16.21 implies also the idea of substitution. Kiuchi answers the question affirmatively. His argument is that ‘guilt cannot be envisaged separately from the persons who produced it’.⁹² His understanding is that guilt is permanently attached to the guilty person or to that person’s substitute. Kiuchi’s assertion needs further clarification. Indeed, the guilt cannot be conceived separately from the guilty person, but this is true only in the period preceding its removal. In the case of a substitutionary death, the point of separation between the guilty and the guilt (i.e., the moment when the guilt is eradicated) is precisely the death of the animal. Unlike the sacrificial contexts where the LH has only a preparatory function, on the Day of Atonement the gesture is part of the atonement. In fact, it is the climactic moment of the atonement ceremony, the separation point between the guilty and the guilt. The idea of substitution makes sense only when associated with a vicarious suffering or

⁸⁹ See *infra*, section 2.1.3.7.

⁹⁰ Wright’s differentiation between ‘placing’ and ‘transferring’ the sins in this case is valid (p. 436). Indeed, sins are not strictly transferred from Aaron to the scapegoat, as if he carried them. The fact that they are ‘confessed over’ the scapegoat and then ‘placed upon’ it does not lessen the role of the LH as a means of transferring sins.

⁹¹ See G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 241 and M. Yoma 6.6. However, such death must not be regarded as being retributive. Cf. also R. Helm, ‘Azazel in Early Jewish Tradition’, *AUSS* 32/3 (1994): 217-226. From early Jewish sources as *I Enoch* and *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Helm demonstrates the existence of a tradition in which Azazel was regarded as a demon and the scapegoat as a symbol of demonic expulsion. He also argues that, for some Jewish apocalypticists, the rite of the scapegoat was ‘a symbol of eschatological victory over demonic forces’ (p. 217).

⁹² *Purification Offering*, 118-19. According to Kiuchi’s interpretation, the sacrificial goat purifies the sanctuary and in the process, the guilt of the people is transferred to Aaron who bears it (cf. Lev. 10.17). The guilt is unloaded then on the scapegoat through the laying on of Aaron’s hands, an action which signifies both transference and substitution. The sending off of the scapegoat is a special form of the burning of the *תאזבל* (pp. 148-49). It is not clear from Kiuchi’s argument for whom the scapegoat is a substitute, for Aaron or for the whole nation. Kiuchi’s interpretation is based on the statement of Lev. 10.17 that YHWH had given the sin-offering to the priest ‘to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord’. It is our understanding, however, that the priests were ‘to bear the iniquity’ *towards the altar* and not away from the altar as it is claimed by Kiuchi (see discussion *supra*, 25 and n. 57). Moreover, the text is clear that what is transferred is not Aaron’s uncleanness, but ‘the iniquities of the children of Israel’ (Lev. 16.21). Cf. also D.P. Wright, ‘The Gesture of Hand Placement’, 436.

vicarious death, but the scapegoat ritual is not portrayed as an act of judgment on sin which requires the death penalty of the sinner. Therefore, it is safe to infer that the rite of LH does not connote in this particular case substitution, but simply transference of sins. The animal on which the sins are transferred is not a substitute, but rather a medium for the confinement of *materia peccans* and a vehicle for its removal.⁹³

2.1.3.5. *Commissioning of Joshua and the Seventy Elders*

The appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor is best understood when examined in the light of other passages which denote transference of Mosaic authority.⁹⁴ There are five such passages and they can be divided in two groups. The subject-matter of the first group of passages is the sharing of Mosaic authority with other members of the community (Ex. 18.13-27; Num. 11.16-30). The texts of the second group describe the transfer of Moses' authority to his successor, Joshua (Num. 27.12-23; Dt. 31.7, 14-15, 23; 34.9). Our attention will focus mainly on three aspects: the nature of the faculty transferred, the role played by Moses in passing on that particular faculty and the method of transference.

Due to its peripheral nature vis-à-vis the main interests just mentioned, the first passage, Ex. 18.13-27 will be discussed rather briefly. Here, Moses chooses select members of the community to help him govern the people. The criteria of selection is laid down in v. 21; they must be competent men, with fear of YHWH, truthful and uncorrupted by bribes. In other words, they are men who display leadership qualities but never occupied such positions. The appointment is described in the simplest terms possible: 'Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people' (18.25). The language is purely institutional; no unusual phenomenon is described, no 'charismatic empowering' by which Moses' choice would be divinely ratified.

The case of Num. 11.16-30 is quite different. Here Moses is required to select seventy men from among the 'elders' (זקנים) and 'officers' (שפירים) of the people. They must be brought to the tent of meeting where YHWH would take some of the 'spirit' which is on Moses and place it upon them. The ceremony described is not a

⁹³ It is possible that the idea of transference of guilt is also connected to the rite of the killed heifer (Dt 21.1-9). By washing their hands 'over the heifer', the elders transfer the guilt which has befallen their city back on the murderer who, being unknown, is substituted in the rite by the heifer. It is significant that the killing of the heifer precedes the transmission of guilt. This is to ensure that, as with the stoning of the blasphemer of Lev. 24.14, the contact with the polluted animal/person is avoided. Another remark is that, like the scapegoat, the heifer is not a sacrifice; the breaking of the neck (*νευροκοπέω*, LXX) without blood-shedding is a method of slaughter unacceptable in the sacrificial system.

⁹⁴ The transfer of authority from Moses to various leaders appointed by him is depicted by D.T. Olson as 'an act of letting go, relinquishing, a kind of dying' (*Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994, 18). For Olson, Moses' death is a recurring theme in Deuteronomy, stressing both 'the necessary and inevitable losses and limits of human life and power before God' and 'the vocation of sacrificial giving [as] Moses gave his life for the sake of the community's future' (p. 17).

commissioning, for the men chosen have *already* occupied positions of authority. In fact, it is possible to argue that most of these ‘elders’ and ‘officers’ are the men appointed on the occasion reported in Ex. 18.13-27. The language used is not institutional but rather charismatic: ‘Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied’ (11.25). What is in view here is an empowering of select leaders, by which their leadership abilities would be enhanced. The intention of the writer, it seems, is to convey the idea that the reception/possession of the spirit is a paradigmatic requirement for leadership in Israel. The charismatic manifestation which accompanies their reception of the spirit has been interpreted variously. It has been understood by some to be the genesis of a prophetic guild with Moses as the leading figure.⁹⁵ This interpretation is, however, invalidated by the clear description of the prophetic utterance as a one-time experience. ‘But they did so no more’ adds the text.⁹⁶ Another view understands the prophesying as a sign that the seventy men are divinely chosen to leadership.⁹⁷ The problem with this interpretation is that, as v. 16 clearly states, the task of selecting the seventy men is given by YHWH to Moses: ‘Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know . . .’. Their selection takes place before the spirit descends upon them. The ‘charismatic’ manifestation is intended, therefore, as a confirmation of the internal reality of the reception of the ‘spirit’ by the seventy elders and a divine endorsement of their selection by Moses.⁹⁸

The role played by Moses on this occasion is limited to the selection of the seventy men. The transfer of his ‘spirit’ does not depend on any physical action or his prayer; rather he is passively involved.⁹⁹ What is actually transferred is probably the most debated point of the narrative. According to vv. 17 and 25, the elders receive ‘some of the spirit which is upon’ Moses (מִן־הַרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו). From this verse it is not clear whether the author refers to Moses’ spirit or the divine spirit, but the ambiguity seems to be elucidated in v. 29. The reference here to the Lord placing ‘his spirit’ upon all people (as He has done with the seventy elders) is a clear indication that it is not Moses’ spirit but ‘[YHWH’s] spirit which is on [Moses]’ that is transferred to the seventy elders.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ A targumic tradition which translates the last words of Num. 11.25 as ‘and they prophesied and did not cease’ - cited by R.R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 26, n. 26; M. Noth (*Numbers: A Commentary*, London: SCM Press, 1968, 88) relies upon the Targum. G. von Rad detects here a tendency to derive ecstatic prophecy from Moses: G. von Rad, ‘Die falschen Propheten’, *ZAW* 51 (1953), 115-117.

⁹⁶ *Sifre* interprets: ‘They only prophesied on that day alone’.

⁹⁷ E.g. M. Buber, *Moses* (Oxford and London: East and West Library, 1946), 148.

⁹⁸ Ze’ev Weisman, ‘The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority’, *ZAW* 93 (1981), 229-232; W. Hildebrandt, *An OT Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 110-111, 157.

⁹⁹ Later Rabbinic tradition, however, maintains that the transference of spirit was mediated through the laying on of Moses’ hands (e.g. Maimonides, *Yad. Sanhedrin*, 4.2).

¹⁰⁰ M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972),

Another factor which points to the divine nature of the spirit transferred is the ecstatic manifestations experienced by the beneficiaries of the spirit. Had the writer intended to say that Moses' vitality was transferred on the elders, most likely he would not have mentioned any prophetic utterance. It is important, however, that the divine spirit comes not directly, but is mediated through Moses. As Hutton puts it, 'it is the divine spirit as filtered through Moses' own body and spirit'.¹⁰¹ In that sense, it is identified as Moses' own spirit. The tension between the two notions, the human spirit and the divine spirit, cannot be put in better words than those offered by Hutton:

The text is trying to hold two notions of power in tension. The one would understand the force that empowers the seventy to be God's spirit, discontinuous with human experience and with the human spirit. Such charismatic empowerment would be regarded as standing over against human conveyance, institutions, and limitations. It is God's *own* spirit. Accordingly, Moses would serve simply as the channel through which such divine power passed, untouched, on its way to its final destination. The other, however, refuses to allow such a notion of utter discontinuity to pass unchallenged. That empowering spirit is at one and the same time precisely *the* spirit that is Moses' very own. Here Moses is conceived not simply as a mere accessory or funnel who plays at best a passive role. Rather Moses is himself the repository of 'the spirit'. The spirit that the seventy receive is not discontinuous with human experience or with the human spirit. This spirit does not stand over against the human spirit, but is at one with it.¹⁰²

The identification of the divine spirit as Moses' own spirit is clearly intended to emphasize the share which the elders have in the Mosaic authority. But a second tension is introduced here; on the one hand they share the same spirit Moses has (מִן הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו), on the other hand, they cannot have the same authority he enjoys. Preposition מִן is here both *derivative* and *partitive*: *Materially* it indicates that the source of the spirit placed on the elders is Moses' spirit (better, YHWH's spirit as filtered through Moses) and *quantitatively* that only a portion of Moses' spirit is transferred.¹⁰³ As we will see next, even when Moses passes on the entire leadership to his successor, only a part of his 'majesty' is transferred to him.

Joshua is described as being a leader even before his commissioning by Moses; he has been appointed by his master to lead the army in Israel's first battle after the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 17.8-13), and he is one of Moses' 'chosen men' (Num. 11.28). The subsequent commissioning of Joshua involves more than an appointment for a specific task; he is commissioned as Moses' successor. The chosen order in which the

244; Cf. R. Stronstad on the 'transfer motif' (*The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984, 20-21). On this view, 'the transfer of the Spirit has a twofold purpose: 1) to authenticate or accredit the new leadership, and 2) to endow the appropriate skills for the new leadership responsibilities' (p. 20). A transfer of Moses' personal spirit is suggested by Ze'ev Weisman, 'The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority', 226, 234.

¹⁰¹ R.R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority*, 27.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ The 'legendary' motif of Moses' uniqueness is underlined by G.W. Coats, 'Legendary Motifs in the Moses' Death Reports', *CBQ* 39 (1977), 36-37.

three texts treating Joshua's commissioning will be examined (Dt. 31.1-8, 14, 23; Num. 27.15-23; Dt. 34.9) couples at the end the two texts containing references to the LH.

In Dt. 31 Joshua is given a charge twice, first publicly by Moses (31.7-8) and a second time privately by the Lord himself (31.14, 23). The charge is the same in both situations: Joshua is admonished to be strong for he is to lead the people in the land which the Lord swore to give them (31.7, 23) and he is assured that the Lord will be with him (31.8, 23). The commissioning of Joshua by the Lord himself does not add any further responsibility to the charge given to him by Moses. Apparently, the privately given commission is intended as nothing more than a divine ratification of that which was done publicly.¹⁰⁴ There is no 'charismatic' transference of spirit reported here and from this vantage point the text is in agreement with Num. 27.18-23. Unlike this latter text, the Deuteronomic account lacks any reference to the ceremony by which Joshua is installed.

The most detailed account of Joshua's installation as Moses' successor is found in Num. 27.15-23. The installation ceremony includes the laying on of Moses' hands (סמך, Num. 27.18, 23). According to the writer of this account, the gesture is prescribed by the Lord himself:

And the LORD said to Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand (וּסְמַכְתָּ אֶת־יָדְךָ) upon him; cause him to stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority (מִהוֹרֶךָ), that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation'. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; he took Joshua and caused him to stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and he laid his hands upon him, and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses. (Num. 27.18-23)

Before we examine what is said to have been accomplished through the laying on of Moses' hands, it should be noted that, according to the text, Joshua already has the 'spirit' (v. 18). In agreement with this, Joshua's description in Num. 11.28 as 'one of his [Moses'] chosen men' (מִבְּחֵירֵי, LXX - ἐκλεκτὸς) denotes that he is one of the elders upon whom YHWH placed 'some of Moses' spirit', i.e. YHWH's own Spirit.¹⁰⁵ But, in order to qualify as Moses' successor, Joshua has to receive more than that which he shares with the elders. Consequently, he receives not only a charge, but also some of Moses' הוֹר. Whether or not the transfer of הוֹר is described as being accomplished by the LH is not clearly stated. Yet, it seems that the author saw a connection between the gesture and the transfer of הוֹר, in the sense that the three actions mentioned - the LH, the giving of a

¹⁰⁴ R.R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ So J. Newman, *Semikhah: A Study of Its Origin, History and Function in Rabbinic Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1950), 2; W. Hildebrandt, *An OT Theology of the Spirit of God*, 108-109. Contra R.R. Hutton who takes the 'spirit' here to refer to personal qualities like 'courage, vitality and strength of character' (*Charisma and Authority*, 30).

charge, and the transfer of the הוֹד - appear to be three aspects of the same event, i.e. the commissioning of Joshua.

The exact meaning of the Hebrew term הוֹד is, however, obscure. The term appears only here in the Pentateuch, but elsewhere in the OT it describes the 'honor', 'glory' or 'majesty' due to YHWH (Ps. 104.1) or a king (e.g., 1Chr. 29.25; Ps. 21.5 [MT 21.6]; 45.3 [MT 25.4]; Jer. 22.18). In Num. 27.20, most English translations have 'honor',¹⁰⁶ or 'authority'.¹⁰⁷ The translation of הוֹד by 'authority' is appropriate for at least two reasons: 1) It is Moses who commissions Joshua and all he can transfer to his successor is the office and the authority needed by the new leader.¹⁰⁸ 2) Joshua's investment with such a faculty is said to be to the effect that 'the children of Israel may be obedient' (v. 20). There is, however, at least one hint in the text that the writer understands הוֹד as referring to something more than authority; a faculty which includes but is not limited to human authority. The preposition מִן which modifies the noun הוֹד is partitive here, denoting that only some (מִן) of Moses' הוֹד is to be placed on Joshua.¹⁰⁹ The partial transfer of הוֹד is best understood as the writer's way of saying that Joshua will never reach the status of his predecessor. This is how the text was interpreted by the rabbis: 'but not all of your *hod*, from which we learn that Moses' face was like the appearance of the sun and Joshua's like the moon'.¹¹⁰ Although it cannot be affirmed with certainty, it seems that the writer of this account saw a connection between the measure of the הוֹד Joshua receives and the level of his intimacy with YHWH. After mentioning the transfer of הוֹד and the reason for such a transfer in 27.20, he immediately proceeds to describe the duties of the new leader in matters of appeal to YHWH, presumably after Moses' death. Verse 21 indicates that, as a person invested with some of Moses' הוֹד, Joshua is authorized to communicate with YHWH on behalf of the people, but not like Moses to whom YHWH speaks 'mouth to mouth' (Num. 12.8). Joshua's limited הוֹד places him under the authority of the high priest who alone is qualified to 'inquire for him [Joshua] by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord'. It is reasonable to infer that, like the rabbis, the writer attributed the lesser status of Joshua to the fact that he receives only a part of Moses' הוֹד.¹¹¹ But, if the priestly writer makes Joshua's intimacy with YHWH dependent on the measure of הוֹד he receives, this הוֹד, whatever it represents, may imply something more than human authority. It may refer

¹⁰⁶ AV and RV.

¹⁰⁷ RSV, NEB, NASB, NIV, NJPS, NKJV, GNB, and Moffatt.

¹⁰⁸ So J. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 236; R.A. Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination', *RevExp* 78 (1981): 472; E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Späjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 199-21.

¹⁰⁹ The partitive function of מִן is quite common in the OT (e.g., Gen. 4.3-4; Exod. 16.27). See R.J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), § 324; G.W. Coats, 'Legendary Motifs in the Moses' Death Reports', 36-37.

¹¹⁰ Sifre Num. §140.

¹¹¹ So E.W. Davics, *Numbers* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 304; T.R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 553.

to a spiritual faculty bestowed on the new leader by YHWH, as He is said to have done with Solomon whom He gave a 'royal majesty' (הוֹר מַלְכוּתָהּ, 1 Chr. 29.25).¹¹² If this was the understanding of the priestly writer, Moses would be only instrumental in the equipping of the new leader with a faculty which would enable him to provide adequate leadership.¹¹³ Such quality can be described as 'spiritual vitality' or 'charisma', translations of הוֹר which have been already suggested by some commentators.¹¹⁴ Then, it is possible to consider that the writer of this account describes Moses' act of laying hands on Joshua as a symbolic transfer of leadership and of a spiritual empowering needed by the new leader (cf. v. 20).

The second reference to the laying of Moses' hands on Joshua does not belong to a commissioning narrative, but rather to the account of Moses' death which concludes the book of Deuteronomy:

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom (רוּחַ חִכְמָה), for (כִּי) Moses had laid (סָמַךְ) his hands upon him; so the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Dt 34.9)

Undoubtedly, the reference to the LH here is an allusion to Joshua's commissioning described in Num. 27 and Dt. 31. The entire section which follows the account of Moses' death (vv. 9-12) seems to be either inspired from the commissioning account found in Num. 27 or based on a common tradition.¹¹⁵ The two accounts agree with each other in

¹¹² Cf. R.K. Harrison, *Numbers* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 360, who correctly points to the fact that the authority to be transferred 'is at once civil and spiritual'.

¹¹³ *Contra* Daube (*NT and Rabbinic Judaism*, 226 f.), who understands the gesture as a transfer of personality, it can be demonstrated that the sentence 'you shall put some of your הוֹר upon him' can be understood as 'you shall put on him some of *the same* הוֹר *you have*'. A similar case is Num. 11.17, 25, where YHWH 'took some of the spirit that was upon him [i.e. Moses] and put it upon the seventy elders'. Both the statement of v. 25 that 'when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied' and Moses' reaction to this manifestation in v. 29 ('Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!') make it unmistakably clear that it is not Moses' spirit which is given the elders, but YHWH's Spirit. Cf. W.D. Stacey who argues that the authority is received 'formally from the predecessors but *de facto* from God' ('Concerning the Ministry', 265).

¹¹⁴ The translation of הוֹר by 'vitality' is suggested by M. Noth, *Numbers*, 215; cf. also, *Leviticus*, 22. Noth's suggestion is based on the alleged magical efficacy which was attributed to the LH as a sacrificial rite. He concludes that the term must refer to some visible marks of Moses' leadership. That the gesture was regarded by the author of Numbers as magical^{ly} effective cannot be proven. Among other translations of the term, Milgrom suggests 'charisma' (*Numbers*, 236).

¹¹⁵ It is generally agreed that Dt. 34 is a later addition to the book of Deuteronomy by a Priestly or a later Deuteronomistic editor, probably at the time Deuteronomy was attached to the Pentateuch. On the basis of the similarities between this account and the Priestly material on Aaron's death and also the account of Joshua's ordination (Num. 27.18-23), A.D.H. Mayes regards Dt. 34.1-12 as the work of a Priestly redactor (*Deuteronomy*, NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, 413). Lothar Perlitt ('Priesterschrift im Deuteronomium?', *ZAW* 100 [Supplement 1988]:65-88) rejects the idea that Deuteronomy includes Priestly material. On this view, the account of Moses' death in Dt. 34 is the work of a Deuteronomistic editor who knew the Priestly material. Whether the text has Priestly or later Deuteronomistic origins, its author betrays acquaintance with the content of Num 27.15-23. There are many parallels between the two accounts: 1) the presence of the spirit in Joshua (Num. 27.18; Dt. 34.9); 2) the commissioning by the laying on of Moses' hands (Num 27.18; Dt 34.9); 3) the obedience

that both describe Joshua's commissioning as being mediated through Moses' hands. There is, however, one remarkable difference between the two accounts. The writer of Numbers states that Joshua possessed רוח before Moses laid his hands on him (27.18). In fact, Joshua's possession of the רוח is precisely the basis for his ordination. The succession of events in this case is: spirit - LH - acceptance by the people. In the second text, Dt. 34.9, Joshua is described as being 'full of the spirit of wisdom' precisely as a result of Moses laying hands on him (פי expressing causality). The order is: LH - spirit - acceptance by the people. This tension may be explained in three ways.

According to one interpretation, the two passages contradict each other. They are based on two sources, each with its own emphasis. Volz, for instance, considers that the Deuteronomic account expresses a more ancient conception which regards the Spirit as still dependent on external rites. On this view, the account in Numbers reflects a later period when the Spirit was freed from the ritual of סְמִיכָה, the latter conferring no more than authority to teach and to judge.¹¹⁶ One positive observation can be made with reference to Volz' view. He correctly notices that the priestly tradition consistently detaches the Spirit from any human rite (e.g. Num. 11.25; 24.2).¹¹⁷ However, his inference that the Deuteronomic account reflects a tradition older than that of the priestly account cannot be substantiated. Deut. 34 is considered to be a combination of several traditions which come together to close the Pentateuch. Exegetes generally agree that both Num. 27.18-23 and Deut. 34.9 belong to P.¹¹⁸ As we have indicated above,¹¹⁹ Deut. 34.9-12 seems to be either inspired from Num. 27.18-23 or based on a common tradition. A similar view is expressed by G. von Rad who also explains the variation in terms of a difference in perspective between the two writers, however, without making any comment on the antiquity of the Deuteronomic account. On this view, the writer of Num. 27 emphasizes the office, and therefore speaks only about a transfer of leadership and authority. The deuteronomist's concern is the charismatic leadership and, therefore, he emphasizes the

of the Israelites (Num 27.20; Dt. 34.9); 4) the fact that Joshua is not Moses' equal (Num 27.20-21; Dt 39.10-12); 5) the use of the phrase 'as the Lord commanded Moses' (Num 27.22-23; Dt. 34.9); 5) Moses' unique intimacy with YHWH (Num 27. 18, 21; Dt. 34.10). Cf. also I. Cairns, *Deuteronomy: Word and Presence* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 24-25; D.T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, 166-168.

¹¹⁶ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschliessenden Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910), 86, 115.

¹¹⁷ This is against the view of Maimonides (d. 1204) who contends that the seventy elders were ordained with the laying on of Moses' hands (Yad, Sanhedrin 4.2).

¹¹⁸ G. von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 209; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 181 n. 3; D.L. Christensen, ed., *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy* (SBTS 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 206 n. 40. More recent commentators like J.H. Tigay (*Deuteronomy*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996) shy away from attributing different passages of Deuteronomy to D or P, partly because of the lack of 'objective criteria on which to base the investigation' (p. xxvi).

¹¹⁹ *Supra*, 39, n. 115.

empowering aspect of Joshua's commissioning.¹²⁰ Neither Volz nor von Rad bring any corroborating evidence to support their explanation. It is our opinion that, since the two texts come from about the same period and since there is a literary dependence between them, it is unlikely that their perspective on Joshua's ordination would be so different. However, our task is to discuss the two texts not from a literary-historical viewpoint but 'holistically', on the basis of the final text of Deuteronomy, as it has come down to the Rabbinic Judaism, the Early Church and to us. Therefore, the above explanations are irrelevant to our purpose.

A second interpretation is suggested by W. Vogels. On this view, the apparent contradictory statements of Num. 27.18 and Dt. 34.9 result from a misunderstanding of the syntactical use of the conjunction ׀ in Dt. 34.9. Vogels suggests that ׀ be taken not as a causative conjunction in relation to the previous sentence (*for, because*), but rather as a particle introducing a strong emphatic statement.¹²¹ He translates the verse: 'And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom. When (or Since) Moses had laid his hands upon him, the people of Israel obeyed him . . .'. By adopting this translation, argues Vogels, the discrepancy between the two texts is eliminated; in both texts the charismatic empowering precedes the installation by the LH. YHWH empowers the new leader directly and unmediated by any human agency. The LH on Joshua is nothing more than a gesture by which the new leader is identified, with the result that the people obey him.¹²² Despite the ingenuity of Vogels' thesis, the MT does not support his rendering. As Hutton points out, the accentuation of the verse indicates that the sentence 'Moses laid his hands on him' must be connected with the preceding sentence rather than with the one following.¹²³

The third explanation, like the second, sees no discrepancies between the two accounts. J. Coppens, for instance, takes the הוּר in Num. 27.20 and the 'spirit of wisdom' in Dt. 34.9 as equivalent concepts, on the grounds that, according to ^{the} book of Numbers, Moses' authority derived from his possession of the Spirit.¹²⁴ By identifying

¹²⁰ G. von Rad, *OT Theology*, vol. I, 99-100; cf. also J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament', 210-214.

¹²¹ For the emphatic use of ׀ see also J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, vols. I-II (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 118; M. Dahood, 'Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography III', *Bib* 46 (1965), 327; T.F. McDaniel, 'Philological Studies in Lamentations II', *Bib* 49 (1968): 210-213.

¹²² W. Vogels, 'The Spirit in Joshua and the Laying on of Hands by Moses', *LavTP* 38 (1982):3-7.

¹²³ R.R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society*, 29. Cf. also G.W. Coats, 'Legendary Motifs', 36.

¹²⁴ J. Coppens says: 'Le parallélisme des deux narrations insinue manifestement d'équivalence des deux concepts d'esprit et de majesté, alors que le livre des Nombres fait dériver lui-même l'autorité de Moïse de la possession de l'Esprit' (*L'Imposition des Mains*, 163). Cf. also H. Schmid, *Mose: Überlieferung und Geschichte* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), 69; R.R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority*, 30-31. Unlike Coppens, Hutton argues that prior to the laying of Moses' hands on Joshua, the latter did not possess the Spirit. The opposite view is taken by E. Lohse who contrasts the entities which are transferred in each text (*Die Ordination*, 20).

the two, he concludes that the laying of the hands upon Joshua was intended to communicate to the new leader ‘a larger measure of the Spirit of Yahweh’.¹²⁵

Coppens’ harmonization of the two accounts seems to be justified especially in view of the probability that the writer of Dt. 34 was familiar with the priestly account of Joshua’s commissioning or with its source. Also probable is Coppens’ suggestion that the author of Dt. 34 interpreted the הוֹד of Num. 27.20 as ‘the spirit of wisdom’. We have already concluded that, in all probability, הוֹד refers to a spiritual faculty. It is possible, then, to conclude that the author of Dt. 34 interprets the הוֹד of Num. 27.20 in a similar way, a spiritual gift which he describes as ‘the spirit of wisdom’. It is not the divine spirit itself, for Joshua already possesses the spirit of YHWH (Num. 27.18), but rather ‘wisdom’ *simpliciter*.¹²⁶ Yet, it is more than an ‘intellectual gift’; it is an essential spiritual faculty which enables Joshua to discern YHWH’s will for his people. In relation to the ‘spirit’ of v. 18 the ‘spirit of wisdom’ is a *donum superadditum*.

2.1.3.6. *The Consecration of the Levites*

The Levites are said to be set apart for YHWH in the place of the firstborn among the children of Israel (Num. 3.40f.; 8.16-18), as caretakers of the tabernacle (Num. 1.50). After a ceremonial purification (Num. 8.6-7), they are brought ‘before the Lord’ and the people lay their hands on them (סמך), most likely through their representatives (v. 10). They are offered then by Aaron ‘as an offering before the Lord’ (v. 21). Subsequently, the Levites themselves are to lay their hands (סמך) on the heads of the two bullocks which are then offered by Moses to make atonement for them (v. 12).

The laying of hands on the Levites has been interpreted in various ways. It has been argued that the gesture in this case signifies transference of personality¹²⁷ or duty¹²⁸. That the Levites were to be offered in the place of the firstborn of Israel is clearly stated in Num. 8.16. However, the problem with the substitutionary significance of the LH is that the gesture is not performed by the firstborn of the Israelites, but by the people as a whole (doubtless through their representatives). A transfer of personality requires that the person who is substituted place his hands on the person or animal who takes his place. The same objection is sustained in regard to the view that the LH symbolizes a transfer of duty. It is logical to expect the gesture to be performed by the firstborn who transfer their

¹²⁵ J. Coppens, *L’Imposition des Mains*, 163.

¹²⁶ Thus is ‘the spirit of wisdom’ understood later by the rabbis: ‘As he [Moses] was about to die, his wisdom was given to Joshua’ (Midrash on Dt 34.9, cited in W. Gunther Plaut, *Deuteronomy* [The Torah, 5; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983], 386). There are other instances in the OT where a quality, state, or faculty is described by its source. E.g. ‘the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord’ (Isa. 11.2) describe faculties characteristic of the Messiah; ‘spirit of dizziness’ (Isa. 19.14), ‘spirit of grace and of supplications’ (Zech. 12.10) describe a human quality or state.

¹²⁷ Daube, *NTRJ*, 226; G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 162.

¹²⁸ N. Adler, ‘Laying on of Hands’, 496.

responsibility to their substitutes. Nor does it seem appropriate to associate the consecration of the Levites with Joshua's ordination by Moses, for the latter is a ceremony by which a successor is appointed, and not a substitute; it is a one-to-one relationship, not a collective action.

Since the Levites are described as a wave offering (v. 11), there is a general agreement that the laying of hands upon them was understood as having basically the same meaning as that of the gesture in sacrificial contexts. As indicated earlier, the meaning of the rite which suits all sacrificial contexts is *identification*. On this view, the people identify the Levites as their offering and set them aside to act in their behalf as their representatives. In doing this, the Israelites renounce any other claim that they might have on them, consecrating them fully to the task appointed.¹²⁹ The LH is understood then not as a rite of investiture, but as one by which the people indicate what they offer.

There is no indication in the Old Testament that the rite of the LH was repeated with each generation of Levites. Since the successors of the first Levites were born to the office, their entry into service at the age of 25 may have not required a ceremony with the LH.

2.1.3.7. *The Passing of Sentence upon an Offender* (Lev. 24.14).

According to Lev. 5.1; Dt. 13.9 and Dt. 17.7, it is the duty of one who witnessed a serious crime to testify against the offender and serve as his/her prosecutor. Leviticus 24.10-23 describes such an occasion when the son of Shelomith 'blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed' (v. 11). Upon divine counsel, those who witness the crime lay their hands (יָמָם) on his head (Lev. 24.14) before the congregation which is to stone him. There are basically three interpretations of the meaning of the LH on the blasphemer of Lev. 24.14. According to one interpretation the gesture is intended for identification alone, while the other two regard it as a means by which some sort of *materia peccans* is transferred.

Identification. Some scholars understand the LH here as having a legal function. The gesture is performed by the witnesses alone and identifies both the guilty party and his/her witnesses.¹³⁰ As we will see next, there is biblical and extra-biblical evidence to support interpretations which assume transference theories.

Transfer of contamination. The proponents of this interpretation suggest that those who witness the crime are also contaminated by it. They refer to Lev. 5.1 which stipulates

¹²⁹ W.D. Stacey, 'Concerning the Ministry', p.265; M. Sansom, 'Laying on of Hands in the Old Testament', 325; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 347; J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands', 213; T.F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination' *SJT* 11 (1958), 227. R. Péter, 'L'imposition des mains', 53, acknowledges the ambiguity of the passage in regard to the number of hands used and, in consequence, claims that the gesture can be understood as signifying both substitution and representation.

¹³⁰ See M.C. Sansom, 'Laying on of Hands in the Old Testament', 326; D.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement', 435-36.

that the person who hears a public imprecation (קול אלה) and does not testify against the offender ‘must bear his punishment’. This formula implies capital punishment.¹³¹ A blasphemous utterance would place an even greater responsibility on the witness. A witness who ignores an imprecatory pronouncement but later realizes his guilt may avoid punishment by bringing a purification offering (הטאת, v. 6). The implication is that he or she has contracted pollution which must be eliminated.¹³² This pollution is transferred back to the culprit through the LH by the witness(es). While some scholars understand that the contamination (and responsibility as well) is confined to the sinner and his witnesses,¹³³ others¹³⁴ suggest the possibility that the community as a whole is defiled (and thus responsible), by virtue of their covenant relationship with YHWH (cf. Josh. 7.1, 11-12). In this latter case, the witnesses who lay their hands on the culprit act not simply as witnesses, but as representatives of the community.

Transfer of blood guilt. Another equally possible interpretation suggests that, by the gesture, the blood guilt which would rest on the community as a result of the death penalty imposed on the blasphemer, is put back on him.¹³⁵ This is the meaning attributed to the gesture in the Rabbinic comment on Lev. 24.14. The witnesses and judges lay their hands on the blasphemer and say ‘your blood be on your head for you have caused this’.¹³⁶ The idiom ‘His blood shall be upon his head’ with its variations (the most common being ‘His blood shall be on him’) appears several times in the Hebrew Bible (Josh. 2.19; Ezek. 18.3; 33.4, 5; Lev. 20.9, 11, 12, 13, 16; cf. also Judg. 9.24; 1 Kgs 2.33). It also appears in the New Testament (Mt. 27.25; cf. Rev. 6.10). It denotes that the person in question is responsible for the action taken against him/her. In addition, there is another related expression ‘His blood I will require at your hand’ which denotes the idea of holding someone responsible for the death of another (2 Sam. 4.11; Ezek. 3.18, 20; 33.6, 8). All these idioms seem to point to a gesture with the hands by which the blood guilt incurred through the imposition of death penalty is transferred symbolically from the hands of the community representatives back onto the head of the blasphemer.

In conclusion, the evidence shows that the laying of hands on the blasphemer can signify more than a mere identification of the criminal. With help from Leviticus 5 and

¹³¹ J. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 295, demonstrates that the expression used (ונשא עונו) implies that punishment rests always with YHWH. According to *M. Sanh.* 4.5, witnesses are not adjured to testify, but only admonished.

¹³² See comment on Lev. 5.1-13 in J. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 293-318, esp. 315.

¹³³ Proponents of this view include J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1041; G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 311 who says that ‘his death atoned for his own and his hearer’s sin’; Daube, *NTRJ*, 227; J.R. Porter, *Leviticus*, 194; M. Noth, *Leviticus*, 180, who speaks of transference of ‘objective’ guilt; H. Lesêtre, ‘Imposition des Mains’, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 850; N. Adler, ‘Laying on of Hands’, 496.

¹³⁴ E.g. Daube, *NTRJ*, 227.

¹³⁵ N.H. Snaith, *Leviticus & Numbers* (CB, London: Thomas Nelson, 1967), 160 f.; J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1992), 410; Daube, *NTRJ*, 227, as an alternate meaning.

¹³⁶ *Sifra*, Emor. 19:2. See below, 2.4.2.2.

Rabbinic literature,¹³⁷ we were able to demonstrate that the gesture can be regarded as a means by which some *materia peccans* is transferred back onto the offender. Whether such *materia* is to be understood as a contamination or blood guilt is a matter which cannot be easily determined and is not essential to our study.

2.1.4. *The Relevance of the Form of the LH for its Significance*

a) The Number of Hands Involved in Each Occurrence of the Gesture

An important aspect of the laying/pressing on of hands is the number of hands used to perform the gesture. As we will see later, in nearly all the cases when the gesture is mentioned in the New Testament the plural ‘hands’ is used, whereas in the post-apostolic writings the singular is predominant. It is possible that the primitive church based its use of the gesture on the OT precedent, and if this is proven to be true, we need to examine this dependence not only in terms of the occasion and meaning of the gesture but also in terms of its form. It is, therefore, of interest to ask whether the gesture is described in the OT as involving one or both hands and whether there is any religious significance attached to the use of either.

The LH in blessing is described as a placing of only one hand on the head of the person who received the blessing (Gen. 48.14, 17). The account of Jacob laying his hands concomitantly on the two sons of Joseph makes it difficult to assess whether the gesture of blessing is understood to be performed in normal situations with one or two hands. It may be that the form of the gesture in this case is determined by the particularity of the occasion which makes it impossible for Jacob to lay both his hands simultaneously on each of his two grandchildren. Neither are we able to arrive at a definite conclusion from the account where Aaron ‘lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them’ (Lev. 9.22) since the gesture is not the LH and the receiver is not an individual, but the people.

According to the LXX, the LH in healing is to be performed with only one hand. Naaman’s expectation is that Elisha would ‘lay his hand over the place’ (2 Kgs 5.11). If the LH in healing is understood as a gesture of blessing, it is reasonable to infer that in both blessing and healing the gesture is to be performed with only one hand. The fact that the verbs used (שם, שח and הניף) describe a gesture of touching which does not require the strength of both hands seems to lead to the same conclusion.

In sacrificial contexts, the Hebrew Bible has the hand in the singular when the gesture is performed by one person and the plural when it is performed by two or more people. Péter’s conclusion was that the סמך of *one* hand is limited to sacrificial contexts.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ See *infra*, section 2.2.1., for another example of transfer of blood-guilt from the OT Apocrypha.

¹³⁸ Péter, ‘L’imposition des mains’, 48-55. Cf. also Sansom, ‘Laying on of Hands in the Old

De Vaux also arrived at the same conclusion,¹³⁹ however without an elaborate treatment of his argument. The determinative cases are, as Péter argues, those in which the subject of the כַּף is in the singular. Thus, some texts indicate clearly that one hand is used (יָדוֹ , 'his hand' - Lev. 1.4, 10 - LXX; 3.2, 8, 13; 4.4, 24, 29, 33). One may argue, however, that the linguistic data are not sufficient to determine the number of hands used in the above cases for it is always possible to take the singular יָד as a collective singular. In passages where the subject is plural the number of hands is also plural or dual (Ex. 29.10, 15, 19; Lev. 4.15; 8.14, 18, 22) so that we are faced with a similar uncertainty; the plural can be either distributive, i.e. denoting that hands are laid on by more than one person, or prescriptive, i.e. indicating the number of hands used by each individual participant in the ceremony.

If a collective singular is assumed in the first group of texts for יָד , we would expect the same thing in texts where the subject is plural. But since such a collective singular is not used, it is more likely that the plural of the second group of texts is distributive and this leads to the conclusion that in sacrificial contexts only one hand is laid on the head of the animal. The express prescription for the use of both hands in Lev. 16.21 seems to confirm that the gesture is normally to be performed with one hand.¹⁴⁰ The more specific targumic comment on Lev. 1.4 indicates that the rite is to be performed with the right hand and that the gesture involves pressure.¹⁴¹ Since the consecration of the Levites falls in the category of sacrificial rites (Num. 8.11), it may be assumed that it is performed with the laying on of only one hand.

The question is whether the choice for one hand has any religious significance or is a matter of convenience. Overall, it seems impossible to attach any religious significance to the use of both hands as contrasted with the use of one hand. Péter's inference that the meaning of the gesture is dependent upon the number of hands used appears to be simple conjecture. There is nothing in 'one-hand' passages to suggest that transference is incompatible with the use of only one hand. As N. Kiuchi states, 'the difference in form does not necessarily imply a difference in the meaning of the gesture'.¹⁴²

The two passages which treat Joshua's commissioning by Moses contain conflicting evidence with regard to the number of hands used. In Num. 27.18 Moses is required to lay his *hand* upon Joshua, but in v. 23 we are told that 'he laid his *hands*' upon him. In agreement with v. 23, the Deuteronomic account (34.9) also has the dual form of the noun. The confusion in the ancient versions is even greater and some of them

Testament', 323-26.

¹³⁹ R. de Vaux, *Studies in OT Sacrifices*, 92, n. 12.

¹⁴⁰ Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 236.

¹⁴¹ *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Lev. 1.4: 'he shall lean his right hand forcefully'.

¹⁴² Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 113. Cf. also Sansom, 'Laying on of Hands in the Old Testament', 326.

attempt to harmonize the accounts.¹⁴³ In Péter's opinion, there was no disagreement in the original Hebrew text, all the confusion being created by the ambiguous employment of ךי in Num. 27.18, a *scriptio defectiva*.¹⁴⁴ On this view, the LXX interpreted the reading ךי as a misspelled dual with a pronominal suffix, and translated it with the plural $\tauὰς \chiεῖρας$. A reverse harmonization was made, partially by the Syriac version (in Num. 27.23 only) and completely by the Samaritan Pentateuch, on the claim that the ךי of Num. 27.18 should be taken as a singular form with a pronominal suffix. Péter follows then the LXX which corrects the ambiguity of Num. 27.18 and he concludes that 'il est question d'une imposition *des (deux) mains* par Moïse'.¹⁴⁵ Following the Syriac and the Samaritan versions, Behm arrives at a different conclusion, i.e. that Moses laid only one hand on Joshua.¹⁴⁶ His view is supported by Ysebaert on the basis that it reflects an older manner of the gesture which latter developed into an intensive form of the rite performed with two hands.¹⁴⁷

At least two points can be made in rejecting the conclusion proposed by Behm and Ysebaert. First, a reverse harmonization which requires the alteration of the unambiguous dual ךי in two places (Num. 27.23 and Dt. 34.9) is unlikely. Secondly, there is no evidence that the gesture performed with one hand is older than that performed with both hands. The alleged evolution of the כִּמְיָהּ from a one-hand to a two-hand gesture cannot be sustained. Péter's conclusion has more to commend itself. His hypothesis explains better the harmonization process. It also allows for the coexistence of the two forms of the LH, coexistence which is reflected in Leviticus and Numbers.

In conclusion, the evidence seems to indicate the use of two hands in Moses' commissioning of Joshua. An analogy with the form of the gesture in the scapegoat ritual seems to lead to the conclusion that, in the case of כִּמְיָהּ , transference is associated with the use of two hands and identification requires no more than one hand. In later Judaism things seem to have changed, but this issue will be discussed in section 2.4. As for שח and חש , we have seen that these verbs can signify transference of positive virtues (blessing, healing - LXX), although the gesture involves no more than a gentle placement of one hand.

b) *The place of contact in the act of כִּמְיָהּ*

Recently, M. Paran has suggested that the expression 'to lean the hand upon (על)' must be distinguished from the more specific 'to lean the hand upon the head (על ראש)', the former

¹⁴³ The LXX has $\tauὰς \chiεῖρας$ three times; the Samaritan Pentateuch has the singular three times; the Syriac version has the singular twice in Num. 27, but the dual in Dt. 34; the Vulgate and the Targum follow the Massoretic text accurately.

¹⁴⁴ 'L'imposition des mains', 51. Cf. also Milgrom, *Numbers* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 235. Cf. also 2 Sam. 3.34; Je. 40.4.

¹⁴⁵ Péter, 'L'imposition des mains', 51. See also D.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement', 435.

¹⁴⁶ *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 124, n. 1.

denoting that the subject of the gesture is substituted by its object and the latter implying only a transfer of sin from the subject to the object of the gesture.¹⁴⁸ Paran's proposal has been rightly criticized by J. Milgrom, who demonstrates its failure on two counts: (1) it does not account for the LH on non-expiatory sacrifices like the offering of joy (Lev. 3.2, 8, 13) the burnt-offering (Lev. 8.18; 22.18; Num. 15.3) and the ram of consecration (Lev. 8.22). In all these sacrifices, substitution and transference of sins are out of question. (2) Where the specification 'on the head' is omitted, such omission is only accidental. There are two cases in which the laying of the hand is not expressly on the head: the consecration of the Levites (Num. 8.10) and the ordination of Joshua (Num. 27.18, 23; Dt. 34.9). Since the objects of the action are persons, argues Milgrom, the laying of the hand *on the head* is taken for granted.¹⁴⁹ In fact, the laying of the hand on the head can be taken for granted even where the objects are sacrificial animals (e.g. 2 Chr. 29.23), as Paran himself acknowledges.¹⁵⁰ In conclusion, there is no basis for assuming two distinct forms of the LH, one *on the head* of the object and the other simply *on* the object, and for attributing to each form a distinctive significance.

2.1.5. Summary

We have seen that the LH occurs in the OT in various contexts, either as a spontaneous gesture or as a prescribed rite. Lohse is probably right in concluding that there is no unified explanation for the OT LH.¹⁵¹ One significance of the gesture, i.e. transference, seems to fit all contexts, with the exception of the sacrificial contexts. In addition to this common point, each use of the gesture seems to have its own distinctive meaning. The LH for blessing primarily signifies transference. This significance originates in the primitive idea of the power which is inherent in the human hand. Since the LH is associated here with prayer (e.g. Gen. 48.15-16), it is also possible to regard the gesture as a symbol of prayer 'over' a person or group. The gesture is to be performed by a gentle placement (שם, נש) of only one hand on the head of the one receiving the blessing.

The LH in sacrificial contexts signifies ownership; the owner identifies the animal as being his possession and indicates that he himself is the one to accrue the positive result of his offering. The gesture may also signify substitution, however, without including the notion of substitutionary death. In all sacrificial contexts, the gesture is performed with one hand which is pressed (סמך) on the head of the sacrificial victim. The ceremony of the

¹⁴⁷ *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 237. Reference is made to Sifre Num. 27.18 §141.

¹⁴⁸ M. Paran, 'Two Types of "Laying Hands Upon" in the Priestly Source', *Beer-Sheva* 2 (1985):115-120.

¹⁴⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 152.

¹⁵⁰ M. Paran, 'Two Types of "Laying Hands Upon" in the Priestly Source', 119.

¹⁵¹ *Die Ordination*, 25.

Azazel goat on the Day of Atonement has a distinctive significance. Here both hands are pressed on the Azazel goat to transfer on it the sins of Israel.

In all nonsacrificial contexts where $\gamma\mu\sigma$ is used, the underlining idea is that of transference. The LH for commissioning primarily signifies transference of office and authority. The hands are laid on a person who already proved to be qualified for the task. In addition to the office, the gesture is understood to confer to the new leader a faculty (or faculties) by which he is empowered to perform the appointed task. When hands are placed on a condemned person, it signifies transference of contamination or responsibility (blood-guilt) back on the sinner. In both cases, the idea of identification is not completely ruled out, for in placing hands on another person, one certainly identified him/her as the recipient of the *materia* which is transferred (pollution, blood guilt, authority, etc.).

2.1.6. *Implications for the Study of the LH in the New Testament*

As we shall see in Part II of this study, from the various usage of the gesture in the Hebrew Bible, only the LH for blessing and commissioning is clearly paralleled in the New Testament. It will be interesting to learn whether, in these two cases, the gesture was imported by the Christian church directly from the OT, was assimilated from the religious practices of the first century Judaism, or is borrowed from rites practiced in the Graeco-Roman world. The form of the gesture, i.e. with one or both hands, is of little help in determining the immediate precedent of the gesture as practiced by the Christian church, since the New Testament does not differentiate between the two forms. It is hoped that the meaning attached to the LH in blessing and commissioning by the primitive Christianity will help us determine whether or not the Christian practice was influenced by its OT parallels. As user of the Septuagint, the Christian church must have been also familiar with the use of the LH for healing. As we shall see later, there is evidence that the gesture of touching or laying hands on a sick person was not exclusively a Jewish custom, but rather a universal gesture, derived from the widespread idea that power resides in the hand. It is in this context that the gesture of healing used by Jesus, and later by the church, should be placed. Whether or not this practice, so common in the New Testament, was carried over from the Greek rendering of Old Testament is the subject of investigation in Chapter 4.

2.2. Laying on of hands in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

2.2.1. *Susanna: Transfer of blood-guilt through the LH*

There are only two references to the LH in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings of the Old Testament. The first reference is found in the Book of Susanna, an apocryphal work dated to the first century BCE.¹⁵²

Susanna, a beautiful young woman known for her pious life, is falsely accused of adultery by two elders whose attempt to have sexual intercourse with her fails. When testifying against Susanna, the two elders lay their hands on her head (*ἐπέθηκαν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς* - v. 34; Dan. 13.34 in the LXX). The LH is concomitant with the deposition of the two alleged witnesses and, therefore, has primarily a legal function, i.e. to identify the young woman as the guilty party. There is, however, sufficient evidence that the gesture is also intended to transfer back on her the blood guilt which the community incurs as a result of their imposing the death penalty on her.¹⁵³ Here are the arguments:

1) The young man who reopens the trial (later identified as Daniel) dissociates himself from the false witness of the two elders and the uninformed decision of the assembly with the words 'I am innocent (lit., clean) of her blood' (v. 46, *Καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος ταύτης*). The implication is that Susanna's accusers still incur the blood guilt in spite of the fact that symbolically they transfer it back on her head. The rite of hands-laying is rendered ineffective by the falsehood of their accusation. The same guilt is shared by the assembly which is tricked into believing the two elders.

2) An allusion to the meaning of the LH is found in Daniel's words by which he incriminates the two elders: 'Rightly you lied upon your own head' (vv. 55, 60; Gk. *Ὀρθῶς ἔψευσαι εἰς τὴν σεαυτοῦ κεφαλῆν*). The interesting juxtaposition of the two antonyms is intended to indicate that truth is revealed sometimes through lying. The next phrase, *εἰς τὴν σεαυτοῦ κεφαλῆν*, implies that the blood guilt which they symbolically

¹⁵² According to R.H. Charles, the story of Susanna is a product of the Pharisaic controversy with the Sadducees in the late years of Alexander Jannaeus (c. 95-80 BCE). Apparently, it was written by a supporter of Simon ben Shetach who, in the wake of a false witness against his son, insisted that witnesses need to be carefully cross-examined. This aspiration was realized when the Pharisees came into power at the death of Jannaeus, in 79 BCE. The presence of Semitic idioms in the Greek text indicates that the story was written originally in Hebrew. The LXX version was probably translated still in the first century BCE (R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. I, Oxford: Clarendon, 1913, 638, 644). See also J.H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I - *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), 500.

¹⁵³ *Contra* D.P. Wright, 'The Gesture of Hand Placement', 435f. J. Milgrom (*Leviticus 1-16*, 1041-42) accepts too easily the non-transference interpretation proposed by Wright, although he acknowledges the possibility that the gesture may be interpreted here as a means of transferring blood-guilt.

transferred on Susanna's head through the laying on of their hands is now back on their own heads.

3) The statement of v. 63 that Susanna's 'innocent blood was saved' (*καὶ ἐσώθη αἷμα ἀναίτιον*) testifies to the ineffectiveness of the rite by which the two elders attempted to impose guilt on the innocent woman. In conclusion, as with the case of the blasphemer of Lev. 24.14, the LH is intended here to identify the alleged offender and transfer back on her the blood guilt which the community incurs as a result of their imposing the death penalty on her.

2.2.2. *Ascension of Isaiah: Charismatic gifts through the LH*

The LH is also found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a composite piece of non-biblical literature, consisting of three originally distinct works. The reference to the LH belongs to the third section known as *The Vision of Isaiah* (chapters vi-xi) which is an eschatological writing of Christian origin. The date suggested for this section varies from the second half of the first century CE (R.H. Charles) to the middle of the second century CE (M.A. Knibb).¹⁵⁴ The setting of the incident is Hezekiah's house in Jerusalem:

And there were there forty prophets and sons of the prophets; they had come from the neighboring districts, and from the mountains, and from the country, when they had heard that Isaiah was coming from Gilgal to Hezekiah. They came that they might greet him, and that they might hear his words, and that he might lay his hand on them, and that they might prophesy, and that he might hear their prophecy.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ For questions of provenance, discovery, date, authorship and state of preservation, see R.H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1917); 'The Martyrdom of Isaiah' in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* edited by R.H. Charles; J. Flemming and H. Duensing, 'The Ascension of Isaiah' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. by E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher and R.McL. Wilson, vol. 2, 642-63 (London: SCM Press, 1974); D. Flusser, 'The Apocryphal Book of Ascensio Isaiæ and the Dead Sea Sect', *IEJ* 3 (1953):30-47; A.K. Helmbold, 'Gnostic Elements in the Ascension of Isaiah', *NTS* 18 (1972):222-27; M. Himmelfarb, 'The Experience of the Visionary and Genre in the Ascension of Isaiah 6-11 and the Apocalypse of Paul', *Semeia* 36 (1986):97-111; M.A. Knibb, 'Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by J.H Charlesworth. David Flusser is of the opinion that the *Ascension of Isaiah* belongs to the writings of the Dead Sea sect and had been written in Damascus to justify the flight of the community to that city. His conclusion is based on the many parallels he finds between the *Ascension* and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some of the parallels are: a dualistic view of the world; the language to describe the demonic forces, their names, and their similar methods; the sect's reason for departing to the desert is the same as Isaiah's reason for leaving Jerusalem; Isaiah is accused of claiming esoteric knowledge (*Ascension*, iv.8) which parallels the critique of the Teacher of Righteousness' claim; Isaiah's exhortation to the prophets to go into the region of Tyre and Sidon (v.13) is paralleled in the Damascus Document (vii. 13-14). Such a view is not plausible and does not explain the use of Christian names (e.g., Christ, the Twelve Apostles), terms and events (Christ's life, death, resurrection and his ascent).

¹⁵⁵ *AsIsa* 6.3-5, trans. by M.A. Knibb, after the Ethiopian version. The story appears in a modified form in a Greek text published by O.v. Gebhardt (*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1878, 342): Ἐπιλαβόμενος Ἐζεκίας ὁ βασιλεὺς Μανασσῆν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, ἤγαγον αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν μακάριον Ἡσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην, ἵνα ἐπιθήσῃ τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐπ' αὐτὸν καὶ εὐλογήσῃ αὐτόν.

Since the origin of this writing is Christian, obviously it is not relevant as an antecedent to our study of the origin of LH in the New Testament. However, the reference to the LH here sheds some light on the use of the gesture by the early Church. The gesture is said to be executed with only one hand. In view of the use of one hand in the Old Testament, the reference seems to point to a gesture of blessing. The causal connection between the last three sentences of the citation seems to indicate that the gesture was intended to confer something more than a blessing. It is described as a means by which the prophets and the sons of prophets receive prophetic utterances. There is no indication here that the LH is intended as an ordination of prophets; the prophets and the sons of the prophets are already part of the prophetic guild. Their desire to prophesy before Isaiah ‘that he might hear their prophecy’ is better understood as a procedure by which the genuineness of their charismatic speech would be ultimately assessed by the prophet. Although it is not clearly stated, the prophesying is nevertheless understood as an effect of an infusion of ‘prophetic Spirit’. Such charismatic manifestations are mentioned frequently in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Num. 11.25, 26; 1 Sam. 10.6, 10; 11.6; 19.20-23).

2.3. Laying on of Hands in Qumran Literature

Genesis Apocryphon: Exorcism through the LH?

There is only one reference to the LH in Qumran literature. The gesture is mentioned in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen) as part of an exorcism-healing rite. The scroll which contains the work is the last to have been discovered in Qumran Cave I. On grounds of paleography, the document dates anywhere from the latter half of the first century BCE to the early part of the first century CE.¹⁵⁶

In the paraphrased and expanded version of the Gen. 12 narrative,¹⁵⁷ contained in col. XX of the scroll, Pharaoh takes Sarai, the wife of Abram, into his household. Abram prays to God that Sarai would not be defiled by Pharaoh (20.14). As a result, Pharaoh is afflicted with a plague of some sort so that he is ‘unable to approach her, and although he was with her for two years he knew her not’ (20.17). At the request of Pharaoh’s servant, Abram prays for the king’s deliverance, by laying hands on him:

¹⁵⁶ The Aramaic is later than that of the Book of Daniel. For the above dates, see E.Y. Kutscher, ‘Dating the Language of the Genesis Apocryphon’, *JBL* 76 (1957): 288-92; R. de Vaux, ‘Essenes or Zealots?’ in *NTS* 13 (1966-67):89-104; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 16-19; cf. also the discussion by G. Vermes in E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. III, revised by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (Edinburgh, 1986), 318-325; L.P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple [sic] Period* (NTOA 21; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 146. A later date is suggested by G.R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 461.

¹⁵⁷ Other parallels include Gen. 20.1-18; Gen. 26.7-11; *Jub.* 13.11-13; Philo, *De Abr.* 93-96; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.162-165.

Then Hirqanos came to me and begged me to come and pray over the king and lay my hands upon him (ואסמוך ידי עלוה) that he might be cured, for [he had seen me] in a dream. But Lot said to him, 'Abram, my uncle, cannot pray for the king, while his wife Sarai is with him. Now go, tell the king that he should send his wife away from him, (back) to her own husband. Then he (Abram) will pray for him that he might be cured'. . . . 'But now pray for me and for my household that this evil spirit may be commanded (to depart) (וחתגער) from us'. So I prayed for that []. . . , and I laid my hands upon his [he]ad (וסמכת ידי על ראיעשה). The plague was removed from him and the evil [spirit] was commanded (to depart) (אתגערת) [from him], and he was cured.¹⁵⁸

The nature of Pharaoh's affliction is not explained, but there is internal¹⁵⁹ and external¹⁶⁰ evidence that it was understood as a sickness caused by a demon. By laying his hands on Pharaoh's head in conjunction with prayer, a combination common in the New Testament, the affliction is removed. The two elements of the rite, i.e. the prayer and the LH, should be seen as one action. There is no indication here that Pharaoh's restoration is understood as a two stage action which requires first the expulsion of the evil spirit through prayer and then the healing through the LH. One cannot dichotomize between the sickness and its cause for, as E.A. Leeper observes, 'the evil spirit is the true agent of sickness; it is both identified with the plague and personifies it'.¹⁶¹ On the practical side, to remove the affliction means to neutralize the power of the evil spirit and vice-versa. As G. Vermes puts it, 'in the Genesis Apocryphon exorcism and healing form one process'.¹⁶² In conclusion, Pharaoh's restoration is not to be regarded as a case of exorcism *per se*, for

¹⁵⁸ 1QapGen 20.21-23, 28-29, edited and translated by J.A. Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 67. Square brackets in the text indicate lacunae in the Aramaic text and parentheses contain additions made by the translator to enhance the sense of the English translation.

¹⁵⁹ The word for 'spirit' (רוח) appears several times in this context to describe the cause of the affliction (20.16a, 16b, 20, 26, 28, 29). The translation of רוח מכרש by 'a pestilential wind', as in Avigad-Yadin (pp. 25-26, 43-44) and M. Burrows (*More light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 389), is not justified for the afflicting spirit is exorcised in 20.29 and is described as 'evil' in 20.16, 28. The use of חתגער and אתגערת whose root גער means 'to rebuke' (see Fitzmyer, J.A., *Genesis Apocryphon*, 138) is further clear evidence that רוח should be understood as referring to a spirit (cf. Mt. 17.18). On רוח as 'spirit' in this context, see A.E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran* (SBLDS 110; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 170; A. Dupont-Sommer, *Exorcismes et guérisons dans les récits de Qumrân* (VTSup 7; Leiden: J.B. Brill, 1960), 249-250; G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 255. Cf. also H.C. Kee, 'The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories', *NTS* 14 (1967-68), 232-246 who argues that גער denotes in the Qumran literature the pronouncement of a command by which evil powers are subdued.

¹⁶⁰ The belief in spirits as the cause of sickness was common at the time this work was composed. Cf. *Book of Jubilees* 10.7, 8, 9-13, Josephus (*Ant.* 8.45) and Lk. 13.11, 'spirit of infirmity'. See also Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 131; Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (1922-1928), 4.524. Pharaoh's affliction is described by Josephus (*Ant.* 1.164) as 'an outbreak of disease and political disturbance' and by Philo (*de Abr.*, 96) as 'almost intolerable pains and grievous penalties. He [God] filled his body and soul with all manner of scarce curable plagues. All appetite for pleasure was eradicated and replaced by visitations of the opposite kind, by cravings for release from the endless tortures which night and day haunted and racked him almost to death'. Neither Josephus nor Philo discuss the manner in which Pharaoh was cured.

¹⁶¹ E.A. Leeper, *Exorcism in Early Christianity* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1991), 68.

¹⁶² *Jesus the Jew*, 66.

hands are not laid here on a demon-possessed but on one who is afflicted by an illness demon.¹⁶³

The scroll is important for our study from historical, linguistic and theological standpoints. Historically, David Flusser notes that 1QapGen provides us with the first evidence for a healing through the LH in a Jewish source; no such evidence can be found in the Old Testament or Rabbinic literature.¹⁶⁴ We have discussed earlier the possibility that the LXX translation of 2 Kg. 5.11 may indicate that the healing through the LH (or simply by touching) is known in the second century BCE at least among the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria.¹⁶⁵ But the LH in healing demon-sickness appears also in older Assyrian and Babylonian texts.¹⁶⁶ The healing rite recorded in the *Genesis Apocryphon* may well have been a Palestinian practice at the turn of the Common Era, probably borrowed from Babylonian magic practices and beliefs.¹⁶⁷ But one must be cautious of using 1QapGen 20 to reconstruct healing rituals at Qumran. We cannot be sure that this document is produced by the Essenes; the possibility that the scroll was written elsewhere and brought later into the community's library must be taken into account.¹⁶⁸ All that can be said with certainty at this point is that the evidence for the LH comes from three different areas of the Near East - Egypt, Palestine and Babylonia - and it attests the existence of this practice in the pre-Christian era. Further, the evidence seems to indicate that some Jews from pre-Christian times were acquainted with the practice of the LH in healing (and perhaps used the gesture, whatever the import of the practice may have been).

Linguistically, one particularity of this text is that, contrary to what we might have expected on the basis of Daube's thesis, the verb used for the LH in healing is not נָשָׂא but נָסַח . Do we have to infer from this that Jews from pre-Christian or Christian times no longer maintained a clear distinction between the 'placing' and the 'pressing' on of hands? In the New Testament, such a distinction is no longer retained and one has to guess which term the Hebrews would have used for any occurrence of the Greek phrase *ἐπιθέσις τῶν χειρῶν*. The Tannaitic literature, however, provides evidence that the meaning of נָסַח was not watered down; on the contrary, the verb became a *terminus technicus*, used especially with reference to the LH on the sacrificial animal.¹⁶⁹ It is possible to consider, with

¹⁶³ A similar case seems to be Lk. 13.11, where Jesus lays hands on a woman who has 'a spirit of infirmity'. The passage will be dealt with in the NT section.

¹⁶⁴ 'Healing through the Laying-on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll', *IEJ* 7 (1957), 107f.

¹⁶⁵ See *supra*, section 2.1.3.2.

¹⁶⁶ See *infra*, section 3.3.

¹⁶⁷ A. Dupont-Sommer, *Exorcismes et guérisons dans les récits de Qoumrân*, 252, n.1; L.P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple [sic] Period*, 149. The interest of the Essenes in the ancient writings which give solutions for the treatment of diseases, is described by Josephus in *War.* 2.136.

¹⁶⁸ J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. II, 458 n.22 and 588.

¹⁶⁹ The issue will be discussed in detail in the next section. At this point it is sufficient to note that there are almost 150 references in the Rabbinic literature to the laying of hands on sacrifices.

Ysebaert, that what we have here is an *en gross* import of a fixed Old Testament expression, ‘to press [the hand(s) upon the head]’, used particularly in sacrificial contexts. In Ysebaert’s view, the use of such an inadequate expression is a proof that the LH was not commonly applied in healing at this time.¹⁷⁰ This may be true, but one cannot rule out the possibility that $\gamma\mu\sigma$ is used here by design, to convey the idea of transference of vitality or power. A transference of some sort might be also indicated by the use of two hands, rather than one.

An important theological aspect of the healing described in the account is the association of the LH with prayer. This combination is not found in the Old Testament or in Jesus’ ministry, though it appears in the New Testament in connection with a healing (Acts 28.8) and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8.15) through the apostles’ hands. The rite of the LH with prayer found in 1QapGen 20 seems to be a combination of elements taken from two stories featuring similar incidents. Prayer is not part of the original narrative of Gen. 12. It is borrowed from a similar incident when Abraham prays for another abductor of his wife, Abimelech, and for his household that they might be healed (Gen. 20.17). But prayer is not a distinctive feature of the healing described in 1QapGen 20. As mentioned above, it is also part of the Babylonian healing rites. It is known that the priest-exorcists sometimes associated prayer with the LH (Though different in form, the incantations intoned during such rites are nevertheless a form of prayer.¹⁷¹). Although, from a ritualistic point of view, the healing of 1QapGen 20 is similar to that of Babylon, in that both associate the LH with prayer, the meaning of the gesture might not be the same. There is indication that the gesture described in the 1QapGen has a profound religious connotation. The text puts in contrast Abram’s ‘healing techniques’ and those of the Egyptian physicians and magicians. No prayer is mentioned in connection with the latter’s attempts to heal Pharaoh. This is a strong indication that healing as such is understood by the producers of 1QapGen as a purely religious action. This is confirmed by *the causal connection between sin and sickness*: Pharaoh’s sickness is caused by his sinning and it cannot be healed until he ceased sinning, by returning Sarah to her husband. As part of a rite devoid of magical connotations, the LH in 1QapGen must then be distinguished from its Babylonian counterpart. Abram’s gesture is not presented as being manipulative and/or coercive, but rather as supplicative; it is auxiliary to prayer.¹⁷² One must be careful, however, and not

¹⁷⁰ J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 230. Cf. also D. Flusser, ‘Healing Through the Laying on of Hands’, 107-108.

¹⁷¹ D. Aune, ‘Magic in Early Christianity’, *ANRW* II 23.1, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1511 and references noted therein.

¹⁷² Abram is not instructed to ‘expell’ the spirit or to utter the command by which the spirit would be cast out. He is asked to pray ‘that this evil spirit *may be commanded to depart* from us’ (20.28; italics mine). Note the passive stem of $\gamma\mu\sigma$ and the silence about the agent of the action. This theological passive indicates that the one who actually commands the spirit to depart is God to whom

infer from this that the LH was understood as having a pure symbolic value. If what we have here is a gesture borrowed from Babylonian practices, it is conceivable that the producers of 1QapGen retained the idea of transference of power. As already mentioned, the choice for $\eta\mu\sigma$ performed with two hands may be an indication that precisely such a transference is intended here.

2.4. Laying on of Hands in Rabbinic Literature

2.4.1. *The Problem of Dating Rabbinic Materials*

A number of Rabbinic passages refer to the practice of the LH, mainly in connection with sacrifices and ordination.¹⁷³ We know that the development of Rabbinic Judaism was a long process which was completed around 500 CE, with the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud. The earliest Rabbinic writings come from the latter part of the second century CE and, obviously, are preceded by the New Testament writings. The claim found in some apologetic passages of the Mishnah¹⁷⁴ that the whole Rabbinic tradition comes unaltered from Moses, through Joshua and the prophets, the men of the Great Synagogue, the Pairs with their two last representatives, Shammai and Hillel, down to Yochanan ben Zakkai, cannot be proven.¹⁷⁵ However, it is generally recognized that the Rabbinic literature contains selected¹⁷⁶ pre-Tannaitic traditions, i.e. from the first century CE or even from the pre-Christian era.¹⁷⁷ Given this possibility and the fact that Christianity had grown up out of Jewish soil, it is natural that one might expect some Rabbinic passages which contain reference to the LH to be relevant for the study of this gesture in a Christian context.

Before such relevance is assessed, one needs to see whether these Rabbinic texts provide sufficient and clear data to allow for the reconstruction of a first-century Jewish practice of the LH. A historical reconstruction is possible only by using a historical

Abram prays. The same theological passive is used for the actual expulsion of the demon, 'and the evil spirit was commanded to depart from him' (20.29).

¹⁷³ The Rabbinic materials examined in this study include portions of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Tannaitic Midrashim, the Midrash Rabbah, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.

¹⁷⁴ *M. Aboth* 1.1; cf. *M. Aboth* 2.8.

¹⁷⁵ Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, ASNU 22 (1961), claims that Rabbinic traditions were transmitted orally unaltered, through memorization. He takes at face value the attributions found in Rabbinic literature. Gerhardsson is rightly criticized by J. Neusner, *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (1979), 63, and Ph. S. Alexander, 'Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament', in *ZNW* 74 (1983), 241.

¹⁷⁶ M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament* (1983), 163. The assumption is that the earlier and fuller tradition has come down to us truncated by Yochanan ben Zakkai and his associates who were interested in perpetuating that interpretation of the law which was compatible with the school they represented, i.e. the School of Hillel.

¹⁷⁷ See J. Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (1969), x-xi; M. McNamara, *op. cit.*, 174 ff.; G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983), 64f., 85; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), 59-60, 63 ff.; J.N. Epstein, *Mebo'ot le-Sifrut ha-Tannaim*, 512 ff., cited by E.P. Sanders, *op. cit.*, 63, n. 23.

method, i.e. one which takes into account the development of Jewish tradition.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the earlier traditions must be distinguished from the later ones. This chronological difficulty is the major hindrance in the use of Rabbinic literature for the interpretation of the New Testament. The methodology for distinguishing different strata of a tradition was laid down by Renée Bloch in 1955, in a well-known essay.¹⁷⁹ She gives criteria for dating Rabbinic traditions otherwise undated, namely an 'internal comparison' to determine the earliest stage of that particular tradition and an 'external comparison' to assign a date for this early stage. Another criterion used in dating Rabbinic literature is that of attributed passages to named Rabbis. However, Philip S. Alexander warns against too much credulity in regard to the accuracy of attributions in Rabbinic literature.¹⁸⁰ He suggests that the degree of suspicion about the accuracy of attributions is directly proportional to the distance of the document containing the saying from the time of the master to whom it is attributed. Generally speaking, it can be assumed that attributions to Tannaitic Rabbis are relatively reliable.¹⁸¹

2.4.2. *Different Contexts*

The LH is attested in the Rabbinic literature in several contexts: in the ritual of the red heifer, in connection with the death penalty, in sacrifices, for blessing and in the ordination of rabbis. Since the first three contexts do not provide parallels to the New Testament occurrences of the LH, they will not make the object of our discussion.¹⁸²

2.4.2.1. *Blessing*

The LH for blessing is depicted in the post-Talmudic tractate *Sopherim* (ca. 600 CE). The text refers to a Jewish custom from the Second Temple period when, on the Day of

¹⁷⁸ G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism*, 82, has criticized the traditional handling of Rabbinic documents which paid no or little attention to the evolutionary factors.

¹⁷⁹ 'Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature', translated from French (in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 43 (1955): 194-227) by William Scott Green and published in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* (1978), 51-75.

¹⁸⁰ P.S. Alexander, 'Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament', 241. Cf. J. Neusner, *Studying Classical Judaism: A Primer* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 66-92.

¹⁸¹ See E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 63. J. Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions* (vol. III, 3), gives two rules of thumb on traditions attributed to named Rabbis: (1) attributions to post-70 Rabbis should be taken 'seriously' and (2) attributions to post-140 Rabbis as 'absolutely reliable'.

¹⁸² For the meaning of the LH on the red heifer (*M. Parah* 3:8), see D. Daube, 'Three Notes Having to do with Yochanan Ben Zakkai' *JTS* 11 (1960): 53-62. The LH on the blasphemer is understood by Rabbis as a means by which the blood guilt incurred by the community through the act of stoning is transferred back on the guilty party (*Sifra* to Lev 24.14; cf. *Sifra*, Emor. 19.2); see comments made by D. Daube, *The NT and Rabbinic Judaism*, 230. Most references to the LH in the Rabbinic literature have to do with sacrifices (cca 150 ref.). The term is always קָמַם. From the mishnaic regulations one may gather that the gesture has a representative (*t. Menah.* 10.17; *m. Menah* 9.8, 9; *m. Zeb.* 1.1f.) and an ancillary nature (*m. Menah.* 9.8; Cf. Danby, *The Mishnah*, 505, n.7). Mishnah also regulates the gesture in terms of form (*m. Menah.* 9.8; cf. also *Sifre, Ahare Mot, Par.* 4.4), setting (*m. Kel.* 1.8) and time (*m. Betz.* 2.4; *m. Hag.* 2.4; *t. Hag.* 2.10; *b. Betz.* 20a).

Atonement, parents brought their children to the elders that they should pray for them and bless them. The post-talmudic source describes the custom as follows:

It was a beautiful custom in Jerusalem to make the little children, boys and girls, fast on the fast-day (i.e. on the Day of Atonement), those who were a year old until daybreak, the twelve-years-olds till evening, and then to carry or lead them to the elders (i.e. the scribes) for them to bless them, strengthen and pray for them, that they might one day attain to knowledge of the Torah and to good works.¹⁸³

Although the text is silent on the gesture accompanying the blessing, a number of scholars believe that it was customary for a Rabbi to lay his hand on the head of the children he blessed.¹⁸⁴ Given the antiquity of the LH in blessing (cf. Gen. 48.14-18), such an assumption must be treated as highly probable. It must be stated, however, that there is no first century CE (or at least Tannaitic) evidence for the custom.

Direct Rabbinic evidence for the raising of the hands (אָנשן) in blessing as part of a liturgical setting is found in the Mishnah:

The blessings of the priests - how so? In the provinces they say it as three blessings, and in the sanctuary, as one blessing. In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written but in the provinces, with a euphemism. In the provinces the priests raise their hands as high as their shoulders, but in the sanctuary, they raise them over their heads, except for the high priest, who does not raise his hands over the frontlet. R. Judah says, 'Also the high priest raises his hands over the frontlet, since it is said, *And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them* (Lev. 9:22)'.¹⁸⁵

This is how E. Schürer describes the liturgical setting of the temple worship in which the Aaronic blessing is given to the people:

At the daily morning service, between the incense offering and the burnt offering, five priests engaged in the sanctuary come on to the steps before the temple and with up-lifted hands pronounce the blessing (Nu. 6.22 ff.) over the people, the name of Yahweh, though only in the temple at Jerusalem, being openly used rather than a substitute.¹⁸⁶

From these citations and other Rabbinic sources, it can be gathered that the priestly blessing (בְּרִכָּה) is imparted according to specific rules, referring especially to the words pronounced.¹⁸⁷ There are also rules which restrict the lifting-up of the hands in

¹⁸³ *Soph.* 18.5, cited in J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: SCM, 1960), 49.

¹⁸⁴ I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Reprint; New York: KTAV Publishing, 1967), 119f.; SB II, 807f.; J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, 49; Buxtorff, *Syn. Jud.*, 138, states: 'After the father of the child had laid his hands on his child's head, he led him to the elders, one by one, and they also blessed him, and prayed that he might grow up famous in the law, faithful in marriage, and abundant in good works'.

¹⁸⁵ *M. Sota* 7.6; cf. *M. Tam.* 7.2.

¹⁸⁶ E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 4th ed., 1901-11, 355, 535 n. 134. The reference to the raising of the hands in the priestly blessing is missing from the revised edition of Schürer's work, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. II (Rev. ed. G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979-87).

¹⁸⁷ Rules and bibliography listed by H.W. Beyer, *εὐλογέω*, *TDNT* II, 759-761.

blessing,¹⁸⁸ rules which are believed to have been worked out before the first century CE.¹⁸⁹ In the Jewish traditions, the gesture of laying on (lifting up) of the hands in blessing had the same significance as in the Old Testament cultus of Yahweh; it was regarded as the means by which the blessing was dispensed.

2.4.2.2. *Healing*

It is difficult to say whether or not the pneumatic Rabbis healed with the LH, but there is evidence that some physical contact with the sick person existed. The passage in b. Ber. 5b attests the use of hand by R. Yochanan (d. 279):

R. Hiyya b. Abba fell ill and R. Johanan went in to visit him. He said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward. He said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand and he raised him.¹⁹⁰

It is possible that later Rabbis ceased to lay hands on the head of a sick person, due to their respect for Shekinah; for it is stated in a Baraita that ‘one who enters [a house] to visit the sick may sit neither upon the bed nor on a seat, but must wrap himself around and sit in front of him, for the Divine Presence is above an invalid’s pillow’.¹⁹¹

Whether or not the touch was commonly used by the Jewish thaumaturges, their chief means of healing was prayer. This is an implicit acknowledgment that Yahweh is the true ‘Healer’.¹⁹² The LH is never mentioned in connection with the miraculous healings performed by the most famous miracle-worker of the Synagogue, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa (c. 70 CE). This Rabbi is best known for his proverbial piety. By his prayers, he is said to have performed many miracles. The efficacy of his intercessions for the sick, he affirmed, was proportionate to the fluency of his prayers.¹⁹³

In conclusion, the Rabbinic literature provides no instance where the LH was used in association with healings. The closest Rabbinic parallel to Jesus’ gesture, the request of

¹⁸⁸ This gesture of blessing is normally the prerogative of a priest, provided that there is no ‘blemishes on his hands’ (*M. Ber.* 5.4; *M. Meg.* 3.7). Apart from priests, hands can be lifted up in blessing by one who reads the Shema, but not by the one who reads the Torah (*M. Meg.* 4.3, 5). If the one who reads is a minor (*M. Meg.* 4.5) or has ragged clothing (*M. Meg.* 4.6), he cannot lift up his hands to give the priestly blessing.

¹⁸⁹ H.W. Beyer, *εὐλογέω*, *TDNT* II, 759.

¹⁹⁰ There are other similar accounts in *B. Ber.* 5b where sick rabbis are ‘raised up’ by the hand of another rabbi.

¹⁹¹ *B. Shab.* 12b. Cf. H. Mantel, ‘Ordination and Appointment’, 341f., n.96. According to *Str-B* 1:479-80, Rabbinic tradition forbade touching a person with a fever; but see *Mk* 1.31 and par.

¹⁹² Prayer in connection with divine healing is found in several places in the Old Testament (e.g. *Gen.* 20.17; *Num.* 12.13; *Jer.* 17.14). It is also found in the oldest part of the Synagogue liturgy, the eighteen benedictions, the words being derived from *Jer.* 17.14 (cf. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 111).

¹⁹³ *Ber.* 5.5. In comparing his intimacy with God with that of Hanina ben Dosa, R. Yochanan ben Zakkai, his teacher, said: ‘There is this difference between us: he is like the body-servant of a king, having at all times free access to the august presence, without even having to await permission to reach his ears; while I, like a lord before a king, must await an opportune moment’ (*B. Ber.* 34b).

R. Yochanan 'Give me your hand', may point to a gesture used in connection with prayer for the sick, but the reason for this request cannot be established with any degree of certainty.

2.4.2.3. *Semikah* (סְמִיכָה): *Rabbinic Ordination*

2.4.2.3.1. The Laying on of hands

The prevailing but not unchallenged view which claims Jewish origins for the Christian rite of ordination is best expressed in Lohse's conclusion that 'Christian ordination was modeled on the pattern of that of Jewish scholars, although early Christianity filled it with a new content'.¹⁹⁴ Obviously, Lohse's view raises two questions: 1) Was Jewish ordination with the LH practiced in the Second Temple period? and 2) In practicing ordination by the LH, was the primitive church influenced by the Jewish practice? Only the first question will be dealt with in this section, the second one remaining to be answered in the section on ordination in the New Testament. In this chapter, issues related to Jewish ordinations in the second and third centuries will be discussed rather summarily, except when they throw light on first century practices.

The traditional view on the ordination of rabbis is that early Jewish ordination included the LH. Various mishnaic passages seem to connect Rabbinic ordination with that of Joshua, through an unbroken chain of סְמִיכָה.¹⁹⁵ The Babylonian Talmud may also imply that ordination continued without interruption from Moses, until after the time of R. Judah b. Baba (d. 135 CE).¹⁹⁶ It was, however, Maimonides (d. 1204) who first stated in quite unambiguous terms that such an unbroken chain of ordinations existed and that ordination was by the LH:

Moses our teacher ordained Joshua by hand, as it says 'and he supported (סָמַךְ) his hands upon him and gave him a charge'. Similarly, the seventy elders were also ordained by Moses, and thus Moses has caused the Divine Glory to rest upon them. And those elders ordained other elders, and others again others, thus you find Semikhah handed over from man to man, right up to the Beth-Din of Joshua, even to the Beth-Din of Moses.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ E. Lohse, *Die Ordination* (1951), 101. Before Lohse, the same view was suggested by J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum* (1911), 142; F. Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments* (1928), 101-109.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. M. Aboth 1.1 states: 'Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly'.

¹⁹⁶ *B. Sanh.* 13b: 'Were it not for him (R. Judah b. Baba) the laws of fines would have been forgotten in Israel'. The allusion is made to the ordination of several students of R. Akiba by R. Judah b. Baba in defiance of the Hadrianic interdiction. He was executed by the Romans for this action and was remembered in the Talmud as a martyr (*B. Sanh.* 13b-14a). The heroic act of R. Judah ben Baba would be inexplicable if סְמִיכָה was a practice newly introduced. The historicity of this case is not important; the mere fact that the Talmud reports the case is a clear indication of the strong belief that סְמִיכָה was regarded as a vital issue, worth dying for.

¹⁹⁷ 'Yad', *Sanh.* 4.1, cited in Newman, *Semikhah: A Study of its Origin, History and Function in Rabbinic Literature* (Manchester: University Press, 1950), 7.

Although some Tannaim and medieval scholars believed in an unbroken chain of ordination originating with Moses, historically such continuity cannot be proven. After the ordination of Joshua by Moses there is no instance of ordination by the LH recorded in the Hebrew Bible or in the intertestamental literature. Rabbinic literature attests, indeed, to the existence of the rite, but there are serious questions about its origin and the elements of the ceremony. The biblical account of Joshua's ordination by Moses is taken occasionally as sufficient evidence to prove a parallel Rabbinic practice, i.e. ordination with the LH.¹⁹⁸ Of course, the basis for drawing such a parallel is primarily linguistic, for the term סמך appears in both the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic literature. The question, however, is whether סמך (and its nominal form סמיכה), as used in the Rabbinic writings, has the same semantic value as in the Hebrew Bible.

In the last half of our century a growing number of scholars have challenged the view that Rabbinic ordination included the LH.¹⁹⁹ It has been pointed out that, although סמך and its nominal form סמיכה appear in Rabbinic literature about 150 times in a variety of senses, there is not one occurrence when the terms refer clearly to ordination.²⁰⁰ If Lawrence can draw categorical conclusions about the form of Jewish ordination from the ambiguous evidence,²⁰¹ others like J. Newman approach the issue more cautiously. For Newman, the available data is insufficient to prove that סמיכה required the LH:

The question of whether the ceremony of Semikhah was, in fact, ever executed by laying the hand on the ordinand, as in the case of Moses, provides interesting discussion for scholars, but, it may be stated, cannot be proved either way from all our Rabbinical literature.²⁰²

The thesis that Jewish ordination with the LH was practised in the first century CE rests on five or six disputed Rabbinic texts. Each text will receive separate consideration.²⁰³

1) *M. San.* 4.4

And three rows of disciples of sages sit before them. Each and every one knows his place. [If] they found need to ordain [a disciple to serve on the court], they ordained (צרכו לסמוך סומכין) one who was sitting in the first row. [Then] one who was sitting in the second row joins the first row, and one who was sitting in the third row moves up to the second row. And they select for

¹⁹⁸ J.Z. Lauterbach, 'Ordination', 428-29.

¹⁹⁹ Representatives are A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', *StudLit* 13 (1979):11-39.

²⁰⁰ L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 15.

²⁰¹ E.g., L.A. Hoffman ('Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 17) who in assessing the form of Jewish ordination states that 'There was... never any laying on of hands'.

²⁰² *Semikhah: A Study of its Origin, History and Function in Rabbinic Literature* (1950), 103.

²⁰³ In addition to the texts analysed below, three other texts are taken by some scholars to refer to the LH in ordination, *m. Hag.* 2.2, *m. Sanh.* 1.3 and *P. Yoma* 1.1 = *P. Meg.* 1.10. In the first two texts the context is clearly sacrificial and the last one does not even mention the LH. Therefore, the evidence for a gesture of ordination is so slim that I considered the three texts to be largely irrelevant to our investigation.

themselves someone else from the crowd and set him in the third row. [The new disciple] did not take a seat in the place of the first party [who had now joined in the court] but in the place that was appropriate for him [at the end of the third row].

Basically, this passage poses two problems: a) the period under discussion is not specified and b) the elements of the ceremony are not identified. Each problem will be discussed separately.

a) *The historical setting of m. San. 4.4.* The previous passage (*M. San. 4.3*) describing the order in which the Sanhedrin was arranged begins with the words ‘There used to be a Sanhedrin . . .’.²⁰⁴ From this and the past tense of the verbs used, one may infer that the above description is a late second century recollection of what appointment to Sanhedrin used to be prior to the destruction of 70 CE.²⁰⁵ But this is not necessarily so. As already suggested by Lohse,²⁰⁶ it could well be a recollection of what the Sanhedrin used to be after the destruction of 70 CE.

The main sources on Sanhedrin - Josephus, the New Testament and the Rabbinic literature (esp. Mishnah) - present conflicting evidence in regard to the composition of this institution. From the Greek sources, Josephus and the New Testament, one can gather a unified picture of the Great Sanhedrin consisting of priests, ‘elders’ (members of aristocracy), and temple scribes, under the leadership of the high priest.²⁰⁷ Mishnah and other Rabbinic writings describe the Great Sanhedrin (or ‘Great Beth Din’) as consisting solely of Rabbinic sages and presided over by a Patriarch (*Nāsī*).²⁰⁸ Attempts to resolve this inconsistency resulted basically in three approaches: 1) Some scholars postulate the existence of two permanent courts in the first century CE, one political closely associated with the Roman authorities (as described in Josephus and the New Testament), and one religious which dealt with issues of Jewish law (as depicted in the Mishnah).²⁰⁹ The weakness of this approach is that none of the pertinent sources hints at the simultaneous existence of two Sanhedrins. 2) Others attempt to harmonize the divergent sources by

²⁰⁴ See Hoffman’s translation, ‘Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity’, 16.

²⁰⁵ So E. Ferguson, ‘Jewish and Christian Ordination’, 17, n.19; H. Mantel, ‘Ordination and Appointment’, 326; L.A. Hoffman, ‘Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity’, 16.

²⁰⁶ E. Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 36-37, thinks that the setting described is the Academy of Yabneh (Jamnia).

²⁰⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1; Acts 4.5-8, 23; 5.21-34; 22.30 - 23.7. Caution must be exercised, however, for not every mention of *συνέδριον* in these sources necessarily refers to the Great Sanhedrin. On the derivation of ‘sanhedrin’ from *συνέδριον* and for other terms for Jewish institutions (*βουλή*, *γερούσια*, Beth Din), see E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief*, 472-476; J.S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine: The Jews and the Governing of their Land 100 BC-AD 70* (JSNTS 63; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 210-222.

²⁰⁸ E.g. *M. San.* 4.4; *M. Mid.* 5.4; *T. Hag.* 2.9; *T. Sheq.* 3.27; *T. San.* 11.2-4;

²⁰⁹ A. Büchler, *Das Synedrion in Jerusalem und das grosse Beth-Din in der Quaderkammer des Jerusalemischen Tempels* (Vienna: Alfred Holder, 1902); B. Hoenig, *The Great Sanhedrin* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1953); H. Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin* (HSS 17; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); E. Rivkin, ‘Beth Din, Boulé, Sanhedrin: A Tragedy of Errors’, *HUCA* 46 (1975): 181-199; *What Crucified Jesus?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 16-18, 75.

postulating either a variation in the composition and competence of the Sanhedrin over the years or the existence of specialized committees in the Sanhedrin, each having its own chairman.²¹⁰ Again, the evidence is not supportive of this view. 3) A third approach is to reject one set of sources, usually the Rabbinic, as historically unreliable.

For the situation of the Sanhedrin in the first century CE, I rely, perhaps with one reservation (see footnote), on the findings of J. McLaren who wrote an extensive thesis on the Jewish institutions of the Second Temple period. He concludes convincingly that the question of whether there was one, two or three permanent institutions called 'sanhedrin' is not relevant, since the institution known by this name in the New Testament and Josephus was not a permanent body, but could be convened whenever it was deemed appropriate. The Sanhedrin depicted in the Mishnah as a supreme governing body consisting exclusively of scholars is, therefore, not a first century CE institution; it is either a second century development or an idealized picture of the pre-70 Sanhedrin, by analogy with later Rabbinic courts.²¹¹

²¹⁰ S. Zeitlin argues that before 70 CE the Sanhedrin (known then as *beth din*) was a religious law court with no civic authority, but after 70 CE it became involved in civic matters and acquired the name sanhedrin ('Synedrion in Greek Literature, the Gospels and the Institution of Sanhedrin', *JQR* 37 [1946-47], 198); Cf. also E. Lohse, 'συνέδριον', *TDNT* VII, 860-867; S. Safrai, 'Jewish Self-Government', in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. by S. Safrai and M. Stern, vol. 1 (CRANT; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 370-400; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, edition revised by G. Vermès et al., vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 199-226.

²¹¹ J. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine*, 213-225. The conclusions reached by McLaren can be summarized as follows: 1) There was a formal Jewish institution prior to the beginning of the direct Roman rule (6 CE) and this was known as *gerousia* or *boule*. 2) It is possible that the *boule* of Jerusalem was instituted in 6 CE. 3) At the beginning of the revolt the *boule/gerousia* was changed into a 'common council' (*κοινόν*) which was different in character and function. 4) The *boule* of Jerusalem acquired the character of a national institution and was an official element in the administration of Palestine. 5) Two further institutions are described by the term *synedrion*. They were not permanent institutions, but could be activated whenever it was deemed appropriate. One acted as an advisory body while the other was designed to arbitrate in capital offense trials. The court *synedrion* obtained a higher profile than that of the consulting body. 6) Inadvertently, the gospel writers depict *sanhedrin* as a permanent institution, due to the prominent influence of this court in opposing Christianity. 7) The membership to these two *synedria* was determined on an *ad hoc* basis. The participants were named by the appropriate leading figure, being selected from among the 'chief priests' (*οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς*) and influential laity. The former were the most important of the two groups, with the high priest often acting as the leader of the Jews. Religious parties were rarely influential. Pharisees, as a group, were prominent as advisors only during the reign of Salome Alexandra. 8) The institution depicted in *m. San.*, i.e. a permanent body formed exclusively of scholars, cannot find a chronological home in the Second Temple period. It is debatable whether we should even attempt to associate the mishnaic institution with any historical period.

While we agree with McLaren's conclusion that the pre-70 Sanhedrin was not a permanent institution, we believe that the degree of stability, as far as the membership is concerned, was higher than what McLaren allows (see the articular form 'the Sanhedrin' twice in Josephus and several times in the New Testament). From the *ad hoc* character of its membership one must not conclude that every time the Court was convened the person in charge appointed new members.

Other scholars who claim that the Mishnah and other Rabbinic texts present a later Rabbinic institution or an idealized picture of the pre-70 Sanhedrin are L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination', 16; L.L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 390; D. Goodblatt,

In view of McLaren's reconstruction, it may be argued that a discussion of the elements of the ceremony described in *m. San.* 4.4 appear to be irrelevant to our study of a first century CE practice. Yet, this may not be so, for it is uncertain whether the idealized picture of the mishnaic Sanhedrin refers solely to its composition or also to the form of the appointment of judges. The elements of the ceremony should, therefore, be identified because they may reflect practices which originated in the Second Temple period.

b) *The elements of the ceremony.* Traditionally, it has been claimed that the members of the Sanhedrin were appointed with the LH.²¹² The verb used in *m. Sanh.* 4.4 to refer to the act of appointing is סמך , but it is essential to know if it retains here the semantic value attached to it in the Hebrew Bible, i.e. to lay hands on someone. The term is translated 'to appoint' in Danby's *Mishnah* and 'to ordain' in Neusner's newer translation. According to Ginzberg, the meaning of the term here is 'to stop up a hole, or to fill a breach'.²¹³ Ehrhardt believes that the term describes the 'elevation to the chair' since the appointed judge was supported (סמך) and placed on the vacant chair by the chairman.²¹⁴ Ehrhardt adduces evidence from two other sources which interpret the ordination of Joshua by Moses: One mentions the LH as a secondary feature, and the other does not mention the gesture at all.²¹⁵ Both sources, contends Ehrhardt, describe the 'elevation to chair', feature which, in his opinion, is the *locus classicus* of Rabbinic ordination. According to Sidon and, more recently, Hoffman, סמך means here *to add* and thus, the Mishnaic statement should be translated: 'If they needed to add (סמך) [another judge to their number], they appointed him from the first row'. Their argument is based on the Tosefta's use of סמך for 'adding' when it describes the adding to one's tithes.²¹⁶ Yet

'Sanhedrin', in *ER* vol. 13 (London and New York: Macmillan, 1987), 60-63; E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief*, 472-481.

²¹² The tradition comes from Maimonides ('Yad', Sanhedrin, 4.2). It is accepted by Lauterbach, *op. cit.*, 428 f., on the basis that: (1) the ceremony of ordination derives its name, סמך , from the custom of the LH and (2) Moses ordained the seventy elders in the same manner he ordained Joshua, i.e. by laying his hands on them. Others who share this view are: D. Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 231-32; H. Revel, 'Ordination' in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 318-19; A. Rothkoff, *op. cit.*, col. 1140.

²¹³ L. Ginzberg, *Perushim we-hiddushim bi-yerushalmi*, III, 178, cited in H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 326.

²¹⁴ A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 129-130; *The Apostolic Ministry* (SJTOP 7; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 18-19. Cf. also R.A. Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination', 474; E.J. Kilmartin, 'Ministry and Ordination in Early Christianity against a Jewish Background', *StudLit* 13 (1979), 53.

²¹⁵ *Sifre* § 140 to Num. 27.18: 'And lay thy hand upon him', [God] said to [Moses]: 'Give Joshua an interpreter to question, expound, and issue decisions during your life time' . . . At once he raised him from the ground and placed him on the stool beside him'. The source is dated in the 2nd century C.E. by A. Ehrhardt (*The Apostolic Ministry*, 18), and in the Second Temple period by H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 340.

TMos. 12.2: 'And Moses grasped his [Joshua's] hand and raised him into the seat before him'. - cited after the translation of J. Priest in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. by J. H. Charlesworth. Dated at the beginning of the 1st century CE.

²¹⁶ A. Sidon, 'Die Controverse der Synhedralhäupter', in *Gedenkbuch zur Erinnerung an David Kaufmann*, cited in L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination', 16.

others think that the term means simply *to select*, in the sense that they selected a sage who was already ordained to be a member of the Sanhedrin'.²¹⁷

Ehrhardt's suggestion that סמך means here 'to physically support the new appointed member to his vacant seat' is not convincing and neither is his suggestion that the main component of the installation ceremony was the 'solemn seating'. The seating of the new member in the ranks of the Sanhedrin is implied, to be sure. There is, however, no indication that such seating is suggested by סמך or that the new member is 'solemnly' seated by the chairman (Nasi) of the court. The sources used by Ehrhardt to substantiate the meager evidence for the 'solemn seating' here are hardly relevant to the appointment to the Sanhedrin: One describes the appointment of a successor rather than the co-option of a student into a body of scholars,²¹⁸ while the other seems to describe not a ceremony, but a gesture of help.²¹⁹ The translations of סמך suggested by Ginzberg, Sidon and Albeck make better sense than that of Ehrhardt, for they describe in more general terms (filling a breach, adding, selecting) the recruiting of a new member into a body of scholars and are not descriptive of the procedure used. Since Tosefta makes it clear that ordination was a prerequisite for the appointment to the Sanhedrin,²²⁰ one may argue that the translations suggested for סמך are fit to describe the method for the promotion to a seat of the Sanhedrin, i.e. co-option. But had סמך lost the semantic value it had in the Hebrew Bible? According to the later Rabbinic usage of the term, it had not.

Mantel demonstrates convincingly that *Sifre* on Num. 27.18 points not to the practice of appointments to the Sanhedrin, as Ehrhardt argues, but to the Pharisaic custom of granting permission to a graduating student to teach publicly and judge in cases not involving fines. That such a permission was needed by one who taught publicly in the days of the Second Temple is stated in the *Yerushalmi*, in connection with R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. He says: 'According to my tradition, any student who decides points of law in

²¹⁷ H. Albeck, *Shishah Sidre Mishnah* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1954-58), *Seder Nezikin*, 445; *Seder Moed* (1959), 511, n. 2; 'Semikhah and Minuy and Beth Din' [Hebrew], *Zion* 8 (1948), 85, cited in L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination', 37 n. 20.

²¹⁸ Not only does Ehrhardt misapply the source, but he also misinterprets it by considering the placing of Joshua on a stool by Moses as a 'rival rite to that of the laying-on-of-hands' ('Jewish and Christian Ordination', 129). The two rites are rather complementary, as they appear side by side in the original scene of Num. 27.18-19 ('Moses . . . placed him before Eleazar').

²¹⁹ The text of *TMos.* 12.2 (first quarter of the 1st century CE) hardly suggests that the seating of Joshua in the chair before Moses was an installation ceremony. The previous line 'And when he had finished (speaking these) words, Joshua again fell at the feet of Moses', suggests that Moses' action of placing Joshua in the chair was the result of the latter's falling down and a means by which he would recover.

²²⁰ *T. San.* 7.1; *y. San.* I, 3, 19c; H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 344; Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 16; A. Rothkoff, 'Semikhah', *EJ*, col. 1140; Edward J. Kilmartin ('Ministry and Ordination in Early Christianity against a Jewish Background', 42-69) makes a distinction between 'Pharisaic ordination' and the 'installation by solemn seating predicated of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin in *M. Sanh* IV. 4' (p. 47). E. Schürer notes that 'rabbinical learning was considered as the sole test of a candidate's eligibility' (*The History of the Jewish People*, vol. II, 211).

the presence of his teacher deserves death'.²²¹ It is said that, R. Eliezer was hesitant to expound in the presence of R. Yochanan ben Zakkai even after he received permission from him.²²² The need for receiving permission seems to be confirmed by the request addressed to Jesus by the chief priests, the scribes and the elders: 'By what authority (ἐξουσία) you do these things [i.e. teaching and preaching, cf. 20.1], or who it is that gave you this authority' (Lk. 20.2 par.). The permission, known as ראשיה (lit., *authority*), was tantamount to ordination. Apparently, such ordination was obtained by the LH, as indicated by the midrash cited above. The reason for the LH is pointed to in another midrash on Num. 27.18: 'And lay your hand upon him, so that your student may be blessed at your hand'.²²³ It must be clarified, however, that in spite of all these pointers to the Pharisaic rite of ordaining students, there is not one instance of such ordination recorded in the Rabbinic literature.

Finally, the Pharisaic custom of ordaining students should not be confused with the institution of מני ('appointments') associated with R. Yochanan ben Zakkai, which conferred the title of 'Rabbi' or 'elders' and the right to judge cases involving fines and capital punishment.²²⁴

Accepting the fact that the above two midrashim hint at the ordination of students in the Second Temple period, the task before us is to explain the occurrence of סמך in *m. San.* 4.4, where the setting is the appointment to Sanhedrin rather than that of ordaining students. Is it possible to understand the term here as the LH? In what follows, we accept Mantel's treatment of the mishnaic text, for not only does it take more seriously the *terminus technicus* סמך,²²⁵ but it also distinguishes between the ordination of students and the appointment to the Sanhedrin. According to Mantel, the ceremony described in *m. San.* 4.4. unfolds in two stages: first, they ordain the student (הלמיד חכמים) at the front of the first row by laying hands on him (סמך) and gave him the title of חכם, i.e. sage. Then, they appoint him as a judge of the Sanhedrin, by solemnly seating him in the vacant chair of the court. Mantel's explanation of the text is preferable since his description of the two-stage ceremony accounts for both the LH expressed by סמך and the 'solemn seating' which is only implied in the text.

²²¹ *Y. Sheb.*, VI, 1, 36d; *Y. Gittin* I, 2, 43c.

²²² Pirke de R. Eliezer, II, cited by Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 337.

²²³ *Sifre Zutta* on Num. 27.18. According to H. Mantel, the origin of this midrash and the *Sifre* § 140 on Num. 27.18 must be sought in the first century CE, since from the time of R. Judah ha Nasi onward it was not customary for a teacher to lay hands on his student upon graduation.

²²⁴ The institution of H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 339-340.

²²⁵ Later Rabbinic texts use סמך and its noun cognates as a *terminus technicus* for the LH, which proves that the term had not lost its original meaning by the time Mishnah was compiled. That סמך means here ordination by the LH has been suggested by J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des Mains*, 164; E. Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 30. Lohse, however, thinks that the Sanhedrin in Yabneh is in view here (36-37).

Although highly idealized, the mishnaic picture of the Sanhedrin is not completely distorted. In terms of the composition of this court, there is a partial agreement between the Mishnah and the Greek sources; both recognize that scholars were part of the Sanhedrin. The Greek sources, especially the New Testament, state that the Sanhedrin consisted of the following: the high priest, ἀρχιερείς, γραμματεῖς and πρεσβύτεροι. The general consensus is that the ἀρχιερείς, the most dignified and influential class, were predominantly Sadducees, while the γραμματεῖς were Pharisees.²²⁶ It becomes evident that the γραμματεῖς of the New Testament are the ‘sages’ of the Mishnah. The Greek sources are silent about the ceremony of appointment to the Sanhedrin; therefore, we do not have a point of reference against which to compare the statements of the Mishnah about such appointments. It is possible, however, that some of the mishnaic reports are accurate recollections about the manner in which some of the learned Pharisees were appointed to the Sanhedrin: The members of the Sanhedrin selected a student (חכמים תלמיד) from the first row, more advanced in his studies than those from the second and third rows. He was ordained by the LH (סמך), ordination which was tantamount to graduation from the rank of חכמים תלמיד to that of חכם (Gk. γραμματεὺς). The LH does not signify here appointment to the Sanhedrin but ordination of a student. As Safrai argues, ‘ordination was not given at the conclusion of studies, but upon appointment to a public office’.²²⁷ Following the ceremony of co-optation to the Sanhedrin, the seat vacated by the now new member of the court had to be filled: a student from the second row took the place of the graduating student and another from the third row was moved in the second. Finally, the court selected someone else from the crowd (קהל) and made him a ‘student of the sages’ (תלמיד חכמים). This is precisely what the Tosefta states: ‘Not everyone who wishes can make himself . . . a *talmid chakham*, unless the *beth din* appoints (Heb. מנה; Aram. מני) him’.²²⁸

²²⁶ The term ἀρχιερείς appears side by side with γραμματεῖς in Mt. 2.4; 21.15; 27.41; Mk 11.18, 27; 14.1, 53; 15.1, 31; Lk. 19.47; 22.2, 66; 23.10, and with φαρισαῖοι in Mt. 21.45; Jn. 7.32, 45; 11.47, 57. There is not one instance where γραμματεῖς appears side by side with φαρισαῖοι, which leads to the conclusion that the γραμματεῖς were in general Pharisees. This does not rule out the possibility that some of the high priests were sages. Mishnah recognizes this possibility when recounting about the High Priest on the Eve of the Day of Atonement: ‘If he is a sage, he may expound’ (*m. Yoma* 1.6). For the identification of ἀρχιερείς with the Sadducees, see Acts 5.17; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 (199).

²²⁷ S. Safrai, ‘Education and the Study of the Torah’, in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 965. Those who were not appointed to office were considered students in spite of their advanced age. They had the choice to remain students all their life if they wished so (p. 965). Similar information indicates that the same procedure of appointment was employed for the lesser courts in Palestine - *B. Sanh.* 17b.

²²⁸ *T. Taan.* 1.7. In my opinion, L.A. Hoffman is wrong to take the verb מנה, *to appoint*, in the sense of ordination here (‘Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity’, 37, n. 19). He further infers that all תלמיד חכמים who were seated in front of the Sanhedrin were already ordained scholars. The verb for ordination is, however, סמך and the mishnaic text makes it clear that they chose a person from these תלמיד חכמים to ordain him (סמך).

The next step is to look at several texts which state that the LH is to be performed by three elders.²²⁹ Since the scholarly opinion on the meaning of these texts is divided between ordination and the LH in sacrificing, each text must receive separate consideration.

2) *T. Sanh.* 1.1: סְמִיכָה requires three and סְמִיכוֹת זְקֵנִים requires three.

This Tosefta is an early third century CE source. Starting from C. Albeck's contention, already quoted, that 'the word *semikhah* by itself in the Mishnah refers to *semikhah* on the sacrifice . . . and cannot be interpreted in the sense of Ordination', Hoffman insists that this should be true also of the Tosefta, it too being a Tannaitic product. With this we agree. However, we dissent from Hoffman's understanding that, while the first term of our citation, סְמִיכָה, refers to individual sacrifices, the second, סְמִיכוֹת זְקֵנִים, describes 'a specialized case in which the identity of the sinner is unknown and the elders act on behalf of the corporate community'.²³⁰ Relying on Albeck's findings, סְמִיכָה must refer to the laying of the hands on sacrifices. Since the Tosefta stipulates here that סְמִיכָה requires the LH by three, it becomes obvious that what is in view here is not an individual sacrifice but one for the whole community (cf. Lev. 4.15). It is a nonsense to consider that both sentences of the citation refer to communal sacrifices, for the way they are phrased indicates that they refer to two different things. The only other rite apart from communal sacrifices which could be performed by the laying on of the elders' hands is ordination. Consequently, סְמִיכוֹת זְקֵנִים must refer to some sort of ordination performed by three elders. The validity of this interpretation seems to be confirmed by the term used, סְמִיכוֹת, and by the statement found in Yerushalmi that סְמִיכוֹת is not the same as סְמִיכָה.²³¹ The abstract noun סְמִיכוֹת is the Aramaic term for 'ordination'. Apparently, the reason why

²²⁹ The belief that Rabbinic ordination requires the LH by three rabbis is attested from the 11th century in a medieval compendium entitled '*Arukh*, which attributes the view to the Babylonian savant Sherira, in the 10th century CE (L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 25.). The view is reaffirmed in the 12th century by Maimonides (*Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 4:3 and in his commentary on *M. Sanh.* 1.3.) and almost universally held in modern times. It is based on the same Rabbinic texts which we are discussing in this chapter. All these texts maintain that the LH is to be performed by three elders (סְמִיכוֹת זְקֵנִים בְּשִׁלְשָׁה or סְמִיכָת זְקֵנִים בְּשִׁלְשָׁה), which will be discussed. There is no instance in the Rabbinic literature, Tannaitic or Amoraic, to describe an ordination performed by a college of three. It is true, the Babli suggests that others were present when Judah ben Baba secretly ordained five elders (*B. Sanh.* 14a). This statement is, however, just one side of an argumentative dialogue on the necessity for an ordaining college of three: One party suggests the necessity for three elders; the other party cites the precedent of Judah ben Baba, which denies the validity of the argument; the first party replies back by arguing that others were present along with Judah ben Baba. This sort of response is most likely biased and cannot be used as supportive argument for ordination by a college of three (L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 26; cf. also J. Newman, *Semikhah*, 13).

²³⁰ L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 29.

²³¹ *Y. Sanh.* 1.19a.

Tosefta substitutes סְמִיכּוֹת for the word סְמִיכָה is because the latter can refer to the laying of hands on sacrifices as well as to the ordination of sages. The substitution which occurs in the Tosefta implies that not only the Amoraim differentiate between the סְמִיכָה and the סְמִיכּוֹת but also the Tannaim. They associate the former term with sacrificial rites and the latter with ordination. To this Hoffman has two objections:

First, Hoffman claims that סְמִיכּוֹת should be read as סְמִיכּוֹת, the plural of סְמִיכָה, describing repeated LH by the elders who take turns to perform the rite. For this multiple LH Hoffman adduces evidence from another Tosefta passage. After the description of a scene in which five people bring a collective offering, the Tosefta states:

סְמִיכָה requires three; סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים requires three; R. Judah says, 'Five'. The people do not put their hands on all at one time, but in turns, each putting his hands on and then stepping back. But with regard to the ram of consecration, Aaron and his sons lay their hands on together.²³²

The first three sentences of *T. Men.* 10.15 are the words of a *baraita* (an extra-Mishnaic Tannaitic teaching) which appears in several Rabbinic passages, Tannaitic and Amoraic.²³³ Hoffman is right in arguing that סְמִיכָת (or סְמִיכּוֹת) can be read as סְמִיכּוֹת, the plural of סְמִיכָה. There is, however, a matter which Hoffman leaves unsettled not only here, but in all Rabbinic passages which employ the above *baraita*. He still has to explain what סְמִיכָה does signify if סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים (or סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים) refers to the LH on collective offerings. We have already expressed our agreement with Albeck that, by itself, סְמִיכָה refers to the LH on ordinary sacrifices. Since according to the *baraita* סְמִיכָה is also done by three, it must denote here a collective offering like that denoted by the סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים. Either of the two statements of the *baraita* is thus rendered superfluous. Again, the way out is to leave the term סְמִיכָת unaltered and take סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים as referring to ordination.

Secondly, Hoffman objects to the differentiation between סְמִיכּוֹת and סְמִיכָה, although such differentiation is clearly made in the Yerushalmi: 'סְמִיכּוֹת is not the same as סְמִיכָה'. In Hoffman's view, this statement is introduced to support the position of one debating party against the other and, consequently, is not a valid argument. A close examination of the text under discussion is in order here:

3) *Y. Sanh.* 19a:

According to R. Simeon, סְמִיכּוֹת זְקֵנִים and the breaking of the heifer's neck require three; R. Judah says, 'Five'. . . It was taught in a *baraita*: *Semikhut* requires three. *Semikhut* is not the same as *semikhah*. In Babylonia [lit. over there] they call appointment [מְנִי; *minuy*] ordination [סְמִיכּוֹתָא; *semikhuta*].

The first statement is an *ad literam* reproduction of the words found in *M. Sanh.* 1.3. The sentence '*Semikhut* is not the same as *semikhah*' is taken by Hoffman to be a declaratory

²³² *T. Men.* 10.15.

²³³ *T. Sanh.* 1.1; *T. Men.* 10.15; *Y. Sanh.* 8; *B. Sanh.* 13b and mentioned in *Y. Sanh.* 19a.

statement, introduced by the supporters of R. Judah in order to refute the validity of the *baraita* adduced by R. Simeon's party. Consequently, argues Hoffman, 'there is no reason to believe that the last speaker believed *semikhut* to be ordination'.²³⁴ In our opinion, the dialogue Hoffman reads in this text lies only in the imagination. A more natural reading of the text is to consider that, starting with the words of the *baraita* (or even earlier), the text introduces the redactor's point of view, shared probably by most Amoraim. Building on the case of *M. Sanh.* 1.3, the redactor turns the discussion from the laying of the hands on sacrifices into a separate debate on ordination: 'It was taught in a *baraita* that *semikhut* [also] requires three'. *Semikhut* (סְמִיכּוּת), the Aramaic term for ordination, is the same word as that used in *T. Sanh.* 1.1. Both texts are Tannaitic and since the Palestinian Amoraim no longer used the term סְמִיכּוּת, the Amoraic redactor feels the need to explain it. He does so by stating that the term should not be confused with סְמִיכָה which they were still using in connection with sacrifices. 'The term, he says, refers to ordination and is still used in Babylonia [though in a wrong way] for that which we call מְנִי'.²³⁵

Turning to the issue of dating the law found in the Tosefta and the *baraita*, it must be noted that both sources antedate the Compromise period when ordination was conferred by a college. Obviously, in the Personal Period 'everyone used to ordain his own students', while in the Centralization Period ordination was the prerogative of the Nasi. The origin of the law must, therefore, be sought in the Second Temple period.²³⁶ But סְמִיכּוּת cannot refer to the appointment of judges in the Temple days, for such appointments were made by the Great Sanhedrin.²³⁷ Consequently, the term must refer to the authorization of students to teach publicly and decide on matters not involving fines.²³⁸ At this point it has to be explained why this law, known to the Tannaim, is not mentioned at all in the Mishnah? The answer given by Mantel is convincing; it is because ordination

²³⁴ L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 31.

²³⁵ Following the *Pene Moshe* commentary on the Yerushalmi, H. Mantel takes the sentence 'Semikhut is not the same as semikhah' as a question, 'Is not semikah the same as semikuta?' ('Ordination and Appointment', 345-346). From here, assuming that the two are the same (p. 345), Mantel continues the argument of the Yerushalmi: 'If so, why did the Tosefta use the term *semikut* instead of *semikah*, which is the Hebrew and the language of the sages? On this the Yerushalmi answers that since the word *semikah* has two different meanings, referring both to the laying of the hands on the sacrifice and the ordination of sages, the Tosefta substituted for the word *semikah* the word *semikut* in order to prevent any misunderstanding, since in Babylon they use the term *semikuta* only for appointments' (p. 346). The flaw of Mantel's argumentation is caused by his assumption that Yerushalmi is based on the Tosefta. As we indicated, the discussion in the Yerushalmi starts with the statement of *M. Sanh.* 1.3.

²³⁶ Bornstein argues that this Tosefta is based on an enactment coming from the third century when ordination was authorized by the Nasi and the Beth Din ('Mishpat Hasemikah', 400-402). At that period, however, ordination was not practiced outside Palestine. According to H. Mantel, it is unlikely that this Tosefta originated in Babylonia, for it is difficult to argue that the Babylonian Jews would rule on something they never practiced (H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 326).

²³⁷ *T. Sanh.* 7.1.

²³⁸ So Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 344-345, n. 115.

of students had been abolished after the Destruction and the editors of the Mishnah felt no need to rule on something that was no longer practiced.²³⁹

4) *B. Sanh.* 13b:

It is taught: The laying on [of hands] (סְמִיכָה) and the laying on [of hands] of the Elders (זְקֵנִים וְסְמִיכָה) is performed by three. What is meant by 'Laying on [of hands], and 'Laying on [of hands] of the Elders'? - R. Yochanan said: [The latter]²⁴⁰ refers to the ordination of Elders (Aram. סְבִי מְסַמְךָ). Abaye asked R. Joseph: 'Whence do we deduce that three are required for the ordination of Elders? Shall we say, from the verse, *And he [Moses] laid his hand upon him [Joshua]*? If so, one should be sufficient! And should you say, Moses stood in place of seventy-one, then seventy-one should be the right number! - The difficulty remained unanswered.²⁴¹

The debate on the laying on of the Elders' hands starts with the controversy between R. Simeon and R. Judah on the number of elders required to perform the סְמִיכָה on communal sacrifices (cf. Lev. 4.15). At a certain point in the controversy, the above citation is introduced. It is not clear, however, whether the Tannaitic teaching 'The laying on of hands and the laying on of the Elders' hands is performed by three' is based on the Mishnah or the *baraita*.²⁴² However, the talmudic passage leaves one in no doubt that fourth century Amoraim (and the editors of the Talmud, we might say) took the phrase זְקֵנִים וְסְמִיכָה to refer to the ordination of elders. Like in the Yerushalmi, here too, a debate on the laying of the hands on communal sacrifices is turned into another debate on ordination. The two debates are connected through a rhetorical question *What is the laying on of the Elders' hands?* and the answer, attributed to R. Yochanan (d. 279). The answer merely translates the Hebrew phrase זְקֵנִים וְסְמִיכָה into its Aramaic equivalent סְבִי מְסַמְךָ. The Aramaic rendering puzzled many scholars since, on the surface, it is difficult to see what new information the Aramaic brings which the Hebrew phrase did not convey. On a closer examination, however, both סְבִי and מְסַמְךָ reveal something new. Unlike the Hebrew זָקֵן, *elder*, which has the special connotation of 'judge', the Aramaic סְבִי never connotes 'judge'; it always means either 'a man advanced in years' or, as in this case, 'one who has gained wisdom'.²⁴³ Such a term describes *par excellence* a student who is adequately prepared to begin his teaching carrier. The translation of סְמִיכָה by מְסַמְךָ seems to be, again, not accidental. If R. Yochanan's intention was to refer to the 'appointment' of a

²³⁹ H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 344.

²⁴⁰ But see Newman (*Semikhah*, 4) who takes the first term as referring to ordination.

²⁴¹ *B. Sanh.* 13b; cf. also *Y. Sanh.* 8.

²⁴² That Rabbinic sources base the requirement of three on *M. Sanh.* 1.3 is the view of J. Newman (*Semikhah*, 3-4), E.J. Kilmartin ('Ministry and Ordination', 67, n. 30). If this is true, then the Talmud attaches a dual meaning to the mishnaic law 'The laying on of the Elders' hands requires three [authorities]'; the primary meaning being the LH on sacrifices, and a secondary one referring to the ordination of sages. Mantel argues that the discussion in the B. Talmud is only on the basis of the *baraita* and that it refers exclusively to the ordination of sages ('Ordination and Appointment', 345 n. 15).

²⁴³ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary*, 409 s.v. 'Zaken II'; 948, s.v. 'Saba I'; H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 345, n. 15.

judge he certainly would have used the appropriate term מני, but we have already argued from the use of סבי that he had no intention to refer to such an appointment. Most likely, by using מספך, he deliberately chose to avoid the ambiguous סמיכה and use a term in the spoken vernacular which would imply the LH and describe the ceremony by which authorization was given to a scholar to teach publicly.²⁴⁴ Thus, the Aramaic phrase סבי מספך must be translated as ‘ordination of Elders’.²⁴⁵

The issue of the number of authorities needed in ordination is left unsettled in the talmudic passages, but the Amoraic debate is not essential to our thesis. The examination of the passages which discuss the law of ordination by three has helped us identify Tannaitic sources containing such a law. It is possible that the law originated in the Second Temple period, when students were ordained by their teachers and, thus, authorized to teach publicly and probably decide on legal matters not involving fines. The reason why three ordaining authorities are necessary is nowhere stated; however, it is reasonable to infer that it was in order to advertise the event.²⁴⁶ In fact, there is a passage in the *Sifre* on Joshua’s ordination by Moses which hints to this aspect.²⁴⁷ Who exactly the three authorities are can only be inferred. Apparently, the teacher who conferred ordination was helped by two other sages.

5) *B. San.* 13b

R. Aha the son of Raba, asked R. Ashi: Is ordination effected by the literal laying on of hands? - [No] he answered; it is by the conferring of the degree: He is designated by the title of Rabbi and granted the authority to adjudicate cases of *Kenas* (i.e., fines imposed on some categories of wrongdoers).

This is the first clear reference in Rabbinic literature to the practice of LH in ordination but, unfortunately, such reference comes in the form of a question. The answer given by R. Ashi (d. 425 CE) clearly indicates that in his time the LH was not part of the ordination of Rabbis. No doubt, R. Aha had reasons for thinking that ordination should include the LH, but what are these reasons? One possibility is that the current practice was

²⁴⁴ The scholarly opinion vis-à-vis the use of the term סמיכה for ‘ordination’ in Palestine can be divided into two major views. Some argue that the term was used there for ‘ordination of judges’ (or rather, ‘appointment’) until the end of the Personal Period, when it was replaced by מני. Advocates of this view include J.Z. Lauterbach (‘Ordination’, 429), M. Gaster (‘Ordination’, 554), J. Newman (*Semikhah*, 112-113), R.A. Culpepper (‘Biblical Basis for Ordination’, 476). While the representatives of this view are correct in arguing the use of סמיכה there for ordination, they fail to see that it applied not to Rabbinic ordination *per se* (= ‘appointment of judges’) but to the authorization of graduating students to teach publicly. The view that סמיכה was never used in Palestine, the only term known there being מני, is best represented by L.A. Hoffman (‘Jewish Ordination’, 33). This view is contradicted by sources like *M. Sanh.* 4.4 and *T. Sanh.* 1.1.

²⁴⁵ Obviously, the genitive has to be taken here as an objective genitive.

²⁴⁶ H. Mantel, ‘Ordination and Appointment’, 344.

²⁴⁷ ‘He (God) said to him (Moses): ‘Appoint an interpreter for Joshua so that he may question, and preach, and issue decisions during your lifetime. When you leave this world, Israel will not say: “During his teacher’s lifetime he did not teach, but now he does”’. (*Sifre Numbers*, 140).

inconsistent with the semantic value of the term used for ordination (סְמִיָּכָה) which carries the idea of the LH. The question whether the ordination was to be executed with the LH was, therefore, quite natural. A second reason for the question is given by Hoffman who believes that it was merely academic: What R. Aha asks is ‘Do we really use our hands to ordain, as we do to sacrifice?’, although neither sacrifice nor ordination was practiced in R. Aha’s Babylonia.²⁴⁸ Another explanation is that the text points to an obsolete practice; although the ordination by the LH is no longer practiced in R. Ashi’s time (d. 425), it was nevertheless the usual method of ordination.²⁴⁹

All three explanations presented above are possible, but as Hoffman argues, ‘it seems difficult to postulate the existence of a custom from a source that categorically denies it’.²⁵⁰ The only certain information from this text is that, at this particular time (380-420 CE), the ordination of Rabbis was not practiced with the LH. It has to be emphasized, however, that the ordination referred to in this text has to do with the appointment of Rabbis (judges) to Sanhedrin and lesser courts, not with the permission given by a Rabbi to his student to teach and decide in financial cases not involving fines.²⁵¹ The word used, *Kenas*, makes this very explicit.

2.4.2.3.2. Conclusion

The survey of the above texts shows how difficult it is to assess Rabbinic materials. Of the texts examined, only the mishnaic tractate *Sanhedrin* provides some evidence for a rite of ordination from the period of the Second Temple. With help from other midrashim and the New Testament, we were able to show that ordination was tantamount to the permission given by a teacher to his student to teach publicly and, possibly, judge cases not involving fines, and that such permission was granted with the LH. Although the setting of the *M. Sanh.* 4.4 is the appointment to the Great Sanhedrin of the Temple period, the text refers indirectly to the rite of ordination of students in view of their subsequent co-option into the High Court. The earliest Jewish ordination, then, is bound up with admission to the Great Sanhedrin, yet distinct from the appointment to this body. We also noted that the ordination of students must be distinguished from the institution of מְנִי (‘appointments’) associated with R. Yochanan ben Zakkai, which also involved the LH. More about this institution and its stages of development will be given in the next section.

²⁴⁸ L.A. Hoffman, ‘Jewish Ordination’, 14.

²⁴⁹ W. Bacher, ‘Zur Geschichte der Ordination’, *MGWJ* 38 (1894), 122, cited in L.A. Hoffman, ‘Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity’, 36, n. 6.

²⁵⁰ L.A. Hoffman, ‘Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity’, 14.

²⁵¹ The distinction between appointment of judges and formal permission of students to teach is best clarified by H. Mantel, ‘Ordination and Appointment’, 328-29, 336-340. More on this point later, in our examination of *m. Sanh.* 4.4.

2.4.2.3.3. Rabbinic Ordination (or Appointments of Judges)

According to the Tosefta, the appointment of judges in the Second Temple period was the prerogative of the Great Sanhedrin.²⁵² Since, at the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the Sanhedrin lost its power of appointment, the system had to be changed. It is at this time when the right to appoint judges was transferred from the Great Sanhedrin to individual sages, under the direction of R. Yochanan ben Zakkai. The step taken by R. Yochanan ben Zakkai in appointing two of his students as judges (see citation below) is considered to be the beginning of the Rabbinic period. Although the title of 'Rabbi' was informally used in the Second Temple period, now it becomes the mark of Rabbinic ordination. According to one text of the Yerushalmi, Rabbinic ordination knows three successive phases of development:

Rabbi Abba said, 'At first everyone appointed (מָנִי) his own disciples. For example, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai appointed Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua; Rabbi Joshua [ordained] Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Akiba [ordained] Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Simeon . . . They changed matters and rendered honor to this dynasty (lit., house; i.e., the House of David which occupied the patriarchal seat for the entire Tannaitic period). They said, 'If the court ordains without the approval of the Patriarch, the ordination is invalid; if the Patriarch ordains without the concurrence of the court, the ordination is valid'. Then they changed and ruled that the court should not ordain without the concurrence of the Patriarch, and the Patriarch should not ordain without the concurrence of the court.'²⁵³

Hoffman describes the three phases as the Personal, Centralization and Compromise periods:

The Personal Period

According to the above statement which is attributed to R. Abba (c. 290 CE), Rabbinic ordination originated with R. Yochanan ben Zakkai (d. 80 CE). The text attests then the existence of a rite of ordination which probably originated between 70 and 80 CE.²⁵⁴ The ordination described is a private affair between a Rabbi and his student, as was the pre-70 Pharisaic custom by which teachers permitted their students to teach publicly. In order not to confuse the two institutions, the requirement that students receive permission to teach publicly was abolished until the time of R. Judah ha-Nasi, when it was reintroduced.²⁵⁵ There are some indications in the Babylonian Talmud as to when the Personal Period

²⁵² *T. Hag.* 2.9; *T. Sanh.* 7.1.

²⁵³ *Y. Sanh.* I, 19a.

²⁵⁴ A date before 70 CE is suggested by E. Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 32-33. The historicity of the event described in this text is, however, questioned by A. Ehrhardt ('Jewish and Christian Ordination', 127; *The Apostolic Ministry*, 17). It is suggested that the alleged tradition may be a retrojection of a later rite in order to validate Akiba's succession-line. However, Ehrhardt brings no evidence to prove his case. Ehrhardt is followed by A. Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination', 475.

²⁵⁵ *B. Sanh.* 5a; *Y. Sheb.* 6.1.36bc; *Y. Gittin* 1.2.43c.

ended. The talmudic tractate *Sanhedrin* describes a case of ordination from a period when any ordination was prohibited:

Once the wicked Government decreed that whoever performed an ordination should be put to death, and whoever received ordination should be put to death, the city in which the ordination took place demolished, and the boundaries wherein it had been performed, uprooted. What did R. Judah b. Baba do? He went and sat between two great mountains, [that lay] between two large cities . . . and there ordained (סמך) five elders: viz., R. Meir, R. Judah, R. Simeon, R. Jose and R. Eliezer b. Shamma'. R. Awia adds also R. Nehemia in the list. As soon as their enemies discovered them he [R. Judah b.B.] urged them: 'My children, flee'. They said to him, 'What will become of you, Rabbi?' 'I lie before them like a stone which none [is concerned to] overturn', he replied. It was said that the enemy did not stir from the spot until they had driven three hundred iron spear-heads into his body, making it like a sieve.²⁵⁶

The report is about a secret ordination of elders during the Hadrianic persecutions prompted by the Bar Kokhba revolt (133-135 CE). It was hoped that, by banning Rabbinic ordination, the local power of the Jews, concentrated in the hands of the rabbis, would be curbed. It must be noted that the Hadrianic ban is not attested outside the Talmud and this casts some doubt about the veracity of the incident reported.²⁵⁷ However, recognizing with Hoffman the 'possibility of some historical validity' of the report, it is possible that this may have been the last ordination of the Personal Period.²⁵⁸

Of major interest for the present study is to know whether the ceremony of Rabbinic ordination (or appointment of judges) included the LH. The term used in the *y. Sanh.* 1.19a is מני, *to appoint*, while the story of Judah b. Baba uses סמך, *to ordain*. The differentiation in terminology is not indicative of the procedure of ordination, but is rather a matter of preference, as stated in the Yerushalmi: 'There [in Babylonia] they refer to מני as סמכה'.²⁵⁹ Although there is no clear evidence for any gesture of ordination for the Personal Period, it is generally believed that, if Rabbinic ordination was ever executed with the LH, it must have been at this time.²⁶⁰

The Centralization Period

Due to certain abuses recorded in *y. Sanh.* 19a, it was decided to center the power of appointment in the hands of the Nasi. The Patriarchs were given this honor because of their Davidic descent, through the great teacher Hillel. According to the text of the Yerushalmi cited above, the beginning of the Centralization Period must postdate the

²⁵⁶ *B. Sanh.* 14a.

²⁵⁷ A. Ehrhardt takes this incident to be 'purely legendary' on the grounds that no non-talmudic source preserves it and that it would have been 'impracticable' anyway. The reason behind this innovation, says Ehrhardt, is 'the glorification of Aqiba's succession, started by the Academy at Yabneh under his leadership, by adding yet another of its masters to its register of martyrs' ('Jewish and Christian Ordination', 127-128).

²⁵⁸ L.A. Hoffman, 'Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', 19 and 38 n. 28.

²⁵⁹ Cf. H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 342.

²⁶⁰ A. Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 133; R.A. Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination', 475-76.

ordination of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Simeon by Rabbi Akiba; it can be, therefore, set as early as the Bar Kokhba war (133-135 CE). The scholarly opinion on the beginning of this period is divided between the time of Simon ben Gamaliel II (mid 2nd century) and that of Judah ha-Nasi (160-200 CE).²⁶¹

The ordination of Rabbis in the Centralized Period was no longer granted by the LH. According to *b. Sanh.* 13b, the ordination was by proclamation, i.e. by pronouncing the name of the candidate and conferring him the title of 'Rabbi'. The change was dictated by the change in the ordaining authority. Ordination is no longer conferred by a teacher to his student and, thus, it no longer shares of the same character as Joshua's ordination by Moses. The function of the new ordination is not to create a successor, but to delegate authority to judge on matters of Jewish laws and rituals. In the new conditions, the LH lost its significance and was consequently abolished. It is not clear whether the gesture was abandoned gradually as its significance diminished or instantly with the first ordination conferred by the Nasi.

The Compromise Period

The Amoraic literature does not provide sufficient data to allow us to infer a specific date for the compromise reached by the Nasi and the Court in regard to the ordination of judges.²⁶² There are, however, indications about the reason behind the compromise. Without naming the Patriarch, the Talmudic literature alludes to abuses of ordination like nepotism and simony.²⁶³ Whether the alleged patriarchal corruption is a historical fact or was a politically motivated stratagem of the scholar class is difficult to assess. This third stage in the development of Rabbinic ordination eventually ended and this ending marks the disappearance of Rabbinic ordination.

The Disappearance of Rabbinic Ordination

When Rabbinic ordination became the prerogative of the Nasi, its significance diminished until it was completely abandoned anywhere between the middle of the fourth century and the time of Maimonides.²⁶⁴ It is not within the scope of this study to investigate

²⁶¹ E.g. Simon b. Gamaliel II is favored by Graetz (*Geschichte*, 4th ed., 453, n. 25), J.Z. Lauterbach ('Ordination', 429) and J. Newman (*Semikhah*, 19). Judah ha-Nasi is preferred by Y. Bornstein ('Mishpat Hasemikhah', 397). C. Albeck ('Semikhah', 89) and H. Mantel ('Ordination and Appointment', 337) consider that the available evidence is insufficient to support either case.

²⁶² According to Graetz (*Geschichte*, 4th ed., 230, 453), the new reform was introduced under Rabbi Judah II (see n. 115). Rashi, however, held that the Nasi deprived of full powers of ordination was Judah ha-Nasi (cf. *B. Bab. Metz.* 85b).

²⁶³ *Y. Bik.* 3.3 and *Y. Sanh.* 7b note that some judges were 'appointed by money' and *Y. Sanh.* 7.2 mentions some 'unlearned appointees', which seems to be an allusion to favoritism. For other sources, see Y. Bornstein, 'Mishpat Hasemikhah', 379-399.

²⁶⁴ Daube believes the practice disappeared by the middle of the fourth century (*NTRJ*, 232). Similarly, in Culpepper's assessment, the practice was abandoned probably during the time of R. Hillel II (prior to 361 CE), but no earlier than 280 CE and no later than the death of the last Patriarch in 425

independently the exact time and the reasons for the disappearance of the practice of LH in Rabbinic ordination. A brief summary of the reasons suggested by different scholars will suffice. Thus, the reasons invoked are:

- a) the necessity to make up for the ordination of absent candidates;²⁶⁵
- b) the centralization of ordination which weakened the notion of one creating a second self (By the new rite, the ordained Rabbi does not receive leadership from his master, but is appointed to office by the Chairman of the High Court, the Nasi. No succession and no transference of Spirit is implied in the new rite);²⁶⁶
- c) corrupt practices like ordaining for money which contributed to the diminishing importance of the סְמִיכָה.²⁶⁷
- d) the increasing use of the gesture in Christian rites.²⁶⁸

2.4.2.3.4. The Significance of the Laying on of Hands in Jewish Ordination

The significance of the LH in Jewish ordination is interpreted in different ways by various authors. While some claim that such ordination was void of any spiritual significance,²⁶⁹ others credit the rite with full sacramental powers.

According to Daube, at least up to the first half of the second century CE, Rabbinic ordination is executed 'with the original intent: it involves a real "leaning on" as opposed to a gentle "placing", and its object is the pouring of the ordaining scholar's personality into the scholar to be ordained'.²⁷⁰ While evidence for the notion of the creation of a second self is not found in the Rabbinic literature, the idea of transference of some faculties is present in at least two midrashim. The first, *Sifre* on Numbers, interprets the commissioning of Joshua by Moses as follows: 'He pressed on him as one presses on a

CE (Culpepper, *op. cit.*, 476). A much later date, up to the time of Maimonides, is set by Y. Bornstein ('Mishpat Hasemikhah', 413) and H. Revel ('Ordination', 319). For Newman, the date of the cessation of Rabbinic ordination is 'the most obscure problem of our subject' (*Semikhah*, 144).

²⁶⁵ Daube, *NTRJ*, 232.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Lauterbach, *op. cit.*, 429; R.A. Culpepper, *op. cit.*, p.476;

²⁶⁷ It is reported that R. Judah II (230-286 CE) sold on occasion Rabbinic authority for money. See Daube, *NTRJ*, 232; Lauterbach, *op. cit.*, 429; Ehrhardt, *op. cit.*, 476.

²⁶⁸ So J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 122f; Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, II, 1924, 655f; D. Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 232; J.Z. Lauterbach, *op. cit.*, 429; W.K. Lowther Clarke, 'Laying on of Hands in the New Testament' in *Confirmation* (1926), 4; J. Newman, *Semikhah*, 105 f., and others cited therein. The argument is rightly dismissed by H. Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 327 ff., on the grounds that other customs (e.g. communal prayer, baptism, the answering of Amen, fasts, the cup of blessing, etc.) were borrowed by Christians from Judaism, and yet the Rabbis did not ban these practices.

²⁶⁹ Ehrhardt, *JEH*, 125f.; M. Gaster, 'Ordination' in Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 552, asserts that 'Jewish ordination does not partake of a sacerdotal or sacramental character' but, unlike Ehrhardt, he sees the rite as 'not entirely devoid of spiritual significance'.

²⁷⁰ D. Daube, *NTRJ*, 231.

vessel already full to overflowing in order to stuff even more into it'.²⁷¹ The midrashic comment takes into consideration both the remark of Num. 27.18 that Joshua already had the spirit and that of Dt. 34.9 which attributes 'the spirit of wisdom' to the laying on of Moses' hands. The second source, *Num. Rabbah* on 27.18, 20, too, implies transference. When Moses leaned his hands on Joshua, he did not lose his faculties because he was 'like one kindling a light with a light'; but when he 'put his honour on him', he was 'like one pouring from vessel to vessel'.²⁷² Midrash Rabbah interprets the second simile: the putting of Moses' honor (in our translation, 'authority') on Joshua refers unmistakably to a transfer of responsibilities to a successor.²⁷³ On the other hand, the simile of 'kindling a light with a light' refers to a faculty which Moses continued to possess even after he transferred it to Joshua through the laying on of his hands. According to Dt. 34.9, this faculty was 'the spirit of wisdom',²⁷⁴ but did the Rabbis identify it with the Divine Spirit?

According to a number of scholars, this is precisely the meaning of the LH in Jewish ordination: the transference of Moses' spirit (or the Divine Spirit) down through all generations in an unbroken sequence. Only by such a transfer was the ordained scholar empowered to preserve the tradition and make legal decisions.²⁷⁵ As we have seen, the existence of an unbroken chain of Jewish ordinations cannot be proved. Similarly, the view that the Divine Spirit was transferred from a teacher to his student through the LH cannot be substantiated from any Rabbinic text. If the LH in pre-Rabbinic and Rabbinic ordination was ever intended as a means by which the Spirit would be transferred, it is difficult to see how this transfer was possible later when the ordination by the LH was replaced by a mere conferral of the title 'Rabbi'. This becomes even more puzzling when we recall that no prayer was used at the time of ordination.²⁷⁶ We may conclude, then, with W.D. Davies that 'it is precarious ... to assume that Rabbinic ordination by the laying on of hands in the first century was meant to signify the transmission of the Holy Spirit'.²⁷⁷

²⁷¹ Sifre on Num. 27.23 (Daube's translation, *NTRJ*, 231).

²⁷² Cited in D. Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 232.

²⁷³ J. Newman, *Semikhah*, 5, translates *hōd* as 'majesty' and concludes that in Rabbinic ordinations there is no transference of *hōd* from a teacher to his pupil.

²⁷⁴ In his comments on the ordination of the seventy elders (Num. 11.17), Philo says that they 'cannot be in real truth even elders, if they have not received a portion of that spirit of perfect wisdom'. The transfer from Moses to the elders took place 'as they take fire from fire' (*De Gigant.* 24, trans. by F.H. Colson).

²⁷⁵ K. Gross, *Menschenhand und Gotteshand*, 118; J.Z. Lauterbach, 'Ordination' in *JE*, 428 f.; A. Rothkoff, *EJ*, col. 1140 f.; Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Newen Testament aus dem Talmud und Midrasch*, (München, 1924), II., 659 ff.; J. Newman, *Semikhah*, 110 f. Reference is sometimes made to B. Sanh. 7a, where it is implied that when a Jewish court is in session, the Divine Presence rests among the judges, but this statement does not testify in any way to a transfer of the Spirit from a scholar to his student.

²⁷⁶ E. Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 77-79; E. Ferguson, *HTR* 56, 15.

²⁷⁷ *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 212 f.; also E. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, 16, n. 16.

It is clear that the rite was intended to convey authority to the ordained student to expound the law and decide in legal cases, but it may be said that it signified more than that. Sifre Zutta on Numbers 27.18 interprets the gesture as a blessing. It becomes clear that the faculty which was imparted to the student through the LH was understood to be a grace needed by the new teacher to fulfill his task. There is no doubt that the grace was not understood to be the Spirit himself, but the gift of wisdom.²⁷⁸ The LH in the ordination of a student signifies, therefore, both a transfer of office and a transfer of the means by which the tasks connected with that office may be fulfilled.

2.4.3. Summary

Our investigation of the LH in the Rabbinic literature led to the following results: The gesture appears predominantly in sacrificial contexts and ordination. Two other uses are attested, namely the laying of the hands on a criminal and on the High Priest. There is no direct evidence in the Tannaitic or Amoraic literature for the LH in blessing or healing. Since of all the occurrences of the LH in Rabbinic literature only the LH in ordination is paralleled in the New Testament, the present study focused on the rite of Jewish ordination.

Culpepper is certainly correct when arguing that until the Talmudic evidence is sorted and clarified and the origins of different traditions determined more accurately, one cannot be dogmatic about the issue of Jewish ordination.²⁷⁹ The evidence seems to show that prior to the destruction of the second Temple the appointment of elders to one of the seats in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin involved no LH, the main feature being the 'solemn seating' (or elevation to the chair).²⁸⁰ Persons so appointed bore the title of 'elders'. The LH seems to have been practiced at this time privately by the Pharisees granting permission to their student to teach in public. For publicizing the event, it appears that two other sages participated in the ceremony. This ordination may have conferred the title of 'sage'. After the destruction of the second Temple when the Sanhedrin lost its power of appointment, the right to appoint judges was transferred from the Sanhedrin to the sages. In order not to confuse the right to judge cases involving fines with the right to instruct publicly, the ordination of students was abolished until the time of R. Judah ha-Nasi when, due to some abuses, students were once again required to obtain permission from their teachers to teach publicly.²⁸¹ It was at about the time of this reinstatement that the right

²⁷⁸ Philo identifies the 'spirit of perfect wisdom' which was transferred by Moses to the seventy elders with 'knowledge' (*De Gigant.* 24-25, Colson's translation); see also E. Lohse, 'χειρ', *TDNT*, vol. ix, 429.

²⁷⁹ *op. cit.*, 476.

²⁸⁰ Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 344; R.A. Culpepper, *op. cit.*, 476.

²⁸¹ Mantel, 'Ordination and Appointment', 337. However, Mantel recognizes that despite this measure, outstanding students were still given permission to teach publicly. Examples include R. Meir

to appoint judges was transferred from individual sages to the Patriarch. If our reconstruction is correct, it is possible that in the transition period between 70 and 135 CE judges were privately appointed with the LH. After the centralization of the appointment, the LH faded into the background until it disappeared in the fourth century.

2.4.4. *Relevance for the Study of the Gesture in the New Testament*

The study of the LH in the Jewish environment in general brought to the surface three uses of the gesture which are paralleled in the New Testament: the use of the gesture in blessing, in healing and in ordination. The form and significance of the LH in each case will inform our understanding of the use of this gesture in the New Testament. It is also hoped that the occurrences of the LH found in various Jewish sources will help us trace the origin of the Christian practices involving the gesture. The following findings are of primary importance for the understanding of the New Testament use of the LH.

1) The verbs used in the Hebrew Bible for the LH in blessing (בָּרַךְ and בָּרַח) indicate that the gesture was understood primarily as a gesture of identification. Further, the association of the LH with prayer defines it as a gesture of prayer by which the blessing is ‘prayed over’ the person who receives it.

2) The LH in blessing is not an indispensable gesture. When it is impracticable, it can be replaced with the lifting-up of the hands or can be omitted altogether. This makes any theory of transference of blessing through the hands improbable.

3) The interpretative translation of the LXX at 2 Kgs. 5.11 and the account of Pharaoh’s healing in 1QapGen imply knowledge of a gesture of healing which involved the laying of a hand. The gesture signifies communication of health, as a divine gift.²⁸²

4) The LH in commissioning, as it appears in the Old Testament and early Rabbinic literature, signifies transference of authority from one person to another. Further, it signifies impartation of leadership qualities needed by the new leader to fulfill the task to which he is appointed. In one phrase, the significance of the LH in ordination is *transfer of leadership*. These texts will inform our understanding of the ‘ordination passages’ of the New Testament, especially 1 Tim. 4.14 and 2 Tim. 1.6, where more than office is said to have been conferred.

and R. Simeon, both ordained by R. Akiba for public preaching (*B. Sanh.* 14a). According to the same source, the ordination of R. Meir was not accepted, so that he had to be ordained again by R. Judah b. Baba. Scholars explain the need for his re-ordination in different ways. Mantel suggests that R. Meir was first ordained only to teach publicly and had to be re-ordained (or better, appointed) in order to be able to decide in cases involving fines (*ibid*). Others suggest that R. Meir’s first ordination was rendered invalid since it took place outside of Palestine, during a journey (cf. *M. Yeb.* 121a).

²⁸² See the reference to calling the name of God in both texts.

CHAPTER 3

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN GRAECO-ROMAN AND NEAR-EASTERN LITERATURE

This chapter is a survey of the pagan literature of the Graeco-Roman world, especially that of the first century CE, seeking to identify the circumstances in which the LH occurs and the significance attributed to the gesture in each situation. In a later stage of this study, I will investigate the influence of the pagan practice on Jesus and the early church.¹

For an adequate understanding of the significance of the LH / touch in the non-Jewish Hellenistic literature, it is necessary to do a preliminary investigation the Hellenistic concept of power.

3.1. The Hellenistic Concept of Power

Until recently, it was commonly believed by historians of religion that all religious phenomena could be reduced to a common element, *mana*, which constituted the oldest religious form. *Mana* can be described as a force which exists everywhere in the universe but manifests itself predominantly in strong personalities (gods, heroes, magicians, Christian missionaries, etc.) and natural phenomena (sun, moon, thunder, storms, floods, etc.). Georges Dumézil defines it as follows:

It is a mystical and dispersed power, with no shape of its own but capable to fill any shape. Being indescribable, it is defined by the very impasse in which it leaves the discourse. It is part of all religions. Highly valued words like *sacer* and *numen*, *hagnos* and *thambos*, *brahman* and *dao*, as well as the Christian *charis*, are all variations of or developments from *mana*.²

According to the primitive religious beliefs of peoples, the act of creating the cosmos was possible by the *mana* of the divinity; a people is conquered by another because the conqueror has a stronger *mana*; the garden or the herd of a man produces more fruit or offspring because he has stones with the *mana* of reproduction, etc. Mircea Eliade shows that, humans and things have *mana* because they received it from beings of a 'higher order' (spirits of dead, demons, divinity), i.e. because they share life with the sacred.³

Mana is generally seen as an impersonal force, but scholars like M. Eliade, H.I. Hogbin and others insist that, though impersonal in itself, it is always bound to some

¹ See *infra* 4.6.

² George Dumézil, in Preface to M. Eliade's *Traité d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris: Payot, 1948).

³ *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (ET, 1958), 19.

person (a deity, a spirit or a human person) who directs it.⁴ It must be clarified, however, that the use of this force by beings of any order does not make it a 'personal' force.⁵

Although *mana* may not be a universal concept⁶, the background for the Hellenistic concept of power appears to be precisely this ancient idea. In his summary of the Greek conception of power, Grundmann states:

Behind the whole Greek conception of power . . . there stands the idea of a natural force which, imparted in different ways, controls, moves and determines the cosmos, and which has its origin in widespread primitive notions of *Mana* and *Orenda*.⁷

Such power can be contained in objects or human vessels. It can be transmitted by physical contact or by being near the vessel which contains it. The discharge of *mana* takes place with or without the approval of the human vessel. An example of the transmission of *mana* by being in the nearness of its receptacle is offered by the practice of incubation. The practice, known also as 'temple sleep', was considered to have had a therapeutic effect.⁸ Another example is provided by Plato, who records that Socrates' *mana* of knowledge was involuntarily transmitted to his disciples not necessarily by learning from their teacher but rather by their being around him and, especially, by touching him:

Now I have told you all this, because this spiritual power that attends me also exerts itself to the full in my intercourse with those who spend their time with me . . . for they make rapid progress there and then. And of these, again, who make progress some find the benefit both solid and enduring; while there are many who, for as long a time as they are with me, make wonderful progress, but when they are parted from me relapse, and are no different from anybody else . . . 'But indeed I myself also', he said, 'am in a ridiculous position, Socrates'. 'How exactly?' I asked. 'Because', he replied, 'before I sailed away, I was able to discuss things with anybody, and show myself inferior to none in argument, so that I even sought out the debates of the most accomplished people: but now, on the contrary, I shun them, wherever I notice there is anyone of education, so ashamed I am of my own ineptitude'. 'Tell me', I said, 'did this power forsake you of

⁴ M. Eliade, *op. cit.*, 20, 22 f.; H.I. Hogbin, 'Mana', *Oceania* 6 (1936), 274.

⁵ In contrasting magic and religion, Sir James G. Frazer works with an absolute manipulative vs. supplicative definition of magic/miracle. He argues that the former makes use of impersonal forces: 'It is true that magic often deals with spirits, which are personal agents of the kind assumed by religion; but whenever it does so in its proper form, it treats them exactly in the same fashion as it treats inanimate agents, that is, it constrains or coerces instead of conciliating or propitiating them as religion would do. Thus it assumes that all personal beings, whether human or divine, are in the last resort subject to those impersonal forces which control all things, but which nevertheless can be turned to account by any one who knows how to manipulate them by the appropriate ceremonies and spells' (*The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1922, 51-52). Further discussion on the distinction between magic and miracle in chapter 4.

⁶ Eliade, *op. cit.*, 20, 21; H.I. Hogbin, *op. cit.*, 274.

⁷ Grundmann, 'δυνάμις', *TDNT*, II, 290. Cf. also J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 108 f. and 164, n. 41. Cf. Herbert J. Rose, 'Mana in Greece and Rome', *HTR* 42 (1949): 155-174. According to Rose, ideas corresponding to *mana* are not prominent in the pre-Hellenistic Greece; they are 'almost on the surface' in Italy (denoted by the word *numen*). Magic is rather 'the product of the mixed civilizations which followed first upon the conquests of Alexander and then on the world-wide spread of Roman influence' (156). For the ancient idea of power in early Roman religion (called *numen* in the 2nd century BC), see also H.J. Rose, 'Numen and Mana', *HTR* 44 (1951): 109-120.

⁸ Incubation was practiced in temples of Asclepius (*asklepieia*) located at Epidauros (4th century BCE), at Pergamos and on an island in the Tiber.

a sudden, or little by little?’ ‘Little by little’, he replied. ‘And when it was present with you’, I asked, ‘was it present through your having learnt something from me, or in some other way?’ ‘I will tell you, Socrates’, he said, ‘what is incredible, upon my soul, yet true. For I never yet learnt anything from you, as you know yourself: but I made progress, whenever I was with you, if I was merely in the same house, without being in the same room, but more progress, when I was in the same room. And it seemed to me to be much more when I was in the same room and looked at you as you were speaking than when I turned my eyes elsewhere: but my progress was far the greatest and most marked whenever I sat beside you and held and touched you.’⁹

The transfer of *mana* is sometimes accompanied by a loss of power in the receptacle, be it human or an object. An involuntary loss of magical power is caused also by the contact with the earth. For instance, a charm to open a door found in PGM XXXVI. 312, specifies that the medium of power, the umbilical cord of a firstborn ram, must be taken from the newly born animal before it has touched the ground:

Take from a firstborn ram an umbilical cord that has not fallen to the ground, and after mixing in myrrh, apply it to the door bolts when you want to open a door, and say this spell, and you will open it immediately.¹⁰

Similarly, an involuntary discharge of magical power can be avoided by having the magician perform magical feats from the roof of a house which allegedly provided the needed insulation.¹¹

3.2. The Laying on of Hands in Healing

3.2.1. *The Hands of Deities*

Certainly, the concept of the power of the divine hands has at its origins the human hand as a symbol of power. This symbolism was transferred from humans to the gods through the anthropomorphic description of the latter.¹² The gods’ hands can protect, intervene in human affairs, and transfer blessings and salvation.¹³ A particularised form of the divine

⁹ *Theages* 129e; 130a, c, d, e; cited according to the translation of W.R.M. Lamb, *Plato: Theages* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), 379, 381. It is generally believed that this work is spurious. It is composed probably in the second century BC by a diligent student of Plato’s writings who wished to highlight the mystical side of Socrates. By the 1st century CE, when Thrasyllus collected Plato’s writings, *Theages* was regarded as being part of Plato’s dialogues. That the dialogue is fictitious is not relevant for our investigation. What matters is that the idea of transfer of power through touch existed.

¹⁰ Cited according to the translation of R.F. Hock, in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, edited by Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 277.

¹¹ H.I. Bell, A.D. Nock and H. Thompson, ‘Magical Texts from a Bilingual Papyrus in the British Museum’, *Proc. Br. Acad.* 17 (1931), 257, cited in J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 114.

¹² It is Blinkenberg’s view that the oldest form of medicine was chirurgery, working with the hands, and that the concept of the power of the divine hands originates from chirurgery (*Archäologische Studien*, 1904, 102, cited in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 30. Both Weinreich and J. Behm (*Die Handauflegung*, 113, n. 3) disagree with Blinkenberg’s suggestion. In my view, such derivation is conceivable, especially if ‘chirurgery’ had initially a larger usage, referring to all types of ‘manual works’.

¹³ See Homer, *The Iliad* 9.420 for the stretching of the gods’ hands over people in a protective manner and 15.694, for the intervention with the hands in earthly events. It is, however, not clear

protection, blessing and salvation was the divine activity of healing. Greek mythology includes many references to the gods performing healing miracles.¹⁴

Due to the beneficial effect of their hands, some Greek deities received appellative additions to their names - either the more general *ἰατρός* or personalized suffixes like Zeus-Hyperdexios, Athena-Hyperdexia¹⁵, Apollo-Hyperdexios,¹⁶ Hera-Hypercheiria,¹⁷ etc. According to Aeschylus, Zeus healed the delirious Io by touching her with his hands,¹⁸ and the same touch was believed to have helped Io conceive a son, Epaphos.¹⁹ Apparently, this son of Zeus inherited the power to heal from his father,²⁰ but there is no evidence that he healed by touch or the LH. This method was believed to have been used by another god of healing, Dionysos Epaphios, whose healing skills were not matched by Zeus.²¹

However, none of the above attained the fame enjoyed by Asclepius (Asklepios, Aesculapius), Apollo's son, known as the god of healing (*Deus clinicus*). Although his name (derived from ἥπιος - gentle, kind) is taken to be an allusion to the beneficial effects of his hands,²² the evidence shows that the touch / LH is rarely the means by which this

whether these elements of the Homeric epics should be taken as poetry, myth or anthropomorphic representations. (The Iliad, Loeb 170/171, with an Engl. trans. by A.T. Murray, vols. I, II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). This subject-matter is treated by E.J. Ehnmark, *Anthropomorphism and Miracle* (1939), 31. Other examples of the gods' hands can be found in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 13 ff., 45-48; K. Sudhoff, 'Die Handanlegung des Heilgottes', *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, 18 (1926), 235-50; E. Lohse, 'χειρ', *TDNT* IX, 425. Examples of art representations of the gods' hands: Egyptian art from 1500 BCE depicts the sun, a divine symbol, with its numerous rays, each ending with an open hand (J.G. Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, London, 1878, iii. 52, quoted in J.A. MacCulloch, 'Hand' in J. Hastings, ed., *ERE*, vol. 6, 492). For Greek and Roman art representing Asclepius healing by the use of his hands, see J. Coppens, *L' Imposition des Mains*, 92-93. Other examples in T. Klausner, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 2 (1960), 116-18.

¹⁴ The most comprehensive study on this is O. Weinreich's chapter on ΘΕΟΥ ΧΕΙΡ in *Antike Heilungswunder*, 1-75. Other major works on the topic include M. Hamilton, *Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1906); E. Thrämer, 'Health and Gods of Healing', *ERE* 6 (1913):540-556; W. Jayne, *Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: AMS Press, 1979).

¹⁵ Zeus-Hyperdexios and Athena-Hyperdexia had their own cult on the island of Lesbos and possibly at Rhodes. See inscriptions containing the appellations in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 41.

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Aratus*, VII, in *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. XI, with and English trans. by Benadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). See Homer, *Iliad*, I, 42 ff., for Apollo as a god of healing, and A. Oepke, 'Ἀπολλύων', *TDNT* I, 397, for Apollo as a god of pestilence. Cf. also O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 41.

¹⁷ See O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 11, 38 ff.

¹⁸ Aeschylus, *Supplikes*, verses 1065-66; *Prometheus Vincit*, verses 848-50.

¹⁹ Aeschylus, *Supplikes*, verse 312; *Prometheus*, verses 850-51.

²⁰ O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie* (cited in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 27), argues that Epaphos became a proficient god of healing, but the evidence is too scarce to justify such assertion.

²¹ O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 28 and n. 3.

²² *Etymologicum Magnum*: 'He is kind either out of his nature or by his craft and the gentleness of the hands' ('ἥπιος ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν τρόπων ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης καὶ τῆς τῶν χειρῶν ἠπιότητος - cited in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 38). Also Schol. Lykiphr., 1054: 'He was called "agreeable" because of his goodness and kindness, but after healing Ascles, the king (tyrant) of Epidaur, who had an illness of eyes, he was called Asclepius' ('ἥπιος διὰ τὸ πρᾶον καὶ ἡσυχον ἐκαλεῖτο, θεραπεύσας δὲ Ἄσκλην, τὸν Ἐπιδαύρου τύραννον, ὀφθαλμιῶντα Ἄσκληπιὸς ἐκλήθη) - cited

god heals.²³ The supernatural cure of his patients is commonly based on *iatromantic*, i.e. on the sending of dream to the patient during incubation, in which the modalities of cure are communicated to him or her. It was then the task of the medically trained priest to interpret the often obscure symbolism of the dreams and prescribe efficacious treatment.

There are, however, a few texts to mention the god's hand as instrumental in the healing process. An inscription from the earliest years of the Roman Empire found in the temple of Asclepius on the island of Tiber reads: 'To Asklepios, supreme God, Savior, and Benefactor, who by his hand saved me from torpor of the spleen'.²⁴ The reference seems to be to one of the few occasions when Asclepius himself is said to have healed, during his epiphanic appearances in the asklepion. According to another inscription found on the same island (2nd cent. CE), Asclepius instructed a blind man named Gaius to touch the base of a statue and then to 'raise his hand and lay it on his own eyes'.²⁵ As expected, the gesture resulted in the restoration of his vision.

When occasionally Asclepius touches people to heal them, the gesture only supplements the many elements of the therapy prescribed. For instance, in the Apellas inscription from Epidaurus (*IG IV² 126*, 2nd century CE), in the thirty-two lines long treatment prescribed for the cure of Julius Apellas, lines 22-24 read: 'Those things (happened) in nine days after I arrived. He also touched my right hand and my breast. And when the next day I was offering ...'.²⁶ Note that the cure does not follow immediately. The touch, thus, plays only a marginal role in the healing, being part of some complicated procedures. In fact, Asclepius does not heal at all by means of a mere touch, be it with his feet or his hand. A miracle story associated with infertility and giving birth which is attributed to Asclepius is misunderstood sometime to describe a healing by mere touch. Based on Herzog's inscription No. 31, it is claimed that Asclepius laid his hand on a sterile woman to help her conceive. The woman comes to the temple because of her infertility and she dreams that a beautiful man uncovers her (*παῖς τις ὠραῖος ἀγκαλύψαι*) and that Asclepius touches her with the 'hand' (*τὸν θεὸν εὐψεσθαί οὐ τᾷ [χη]ρῷ*). But to understand the action as an example of 'die für Asklepios typische Auflegung der milden

in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 38, n. 3). Aelius Aristide refers to Asclepius as the 'great thaumaturge' (*Ὁ μέγας θαυματοποιός*, in *Sacred Discourses*, II.14). For background data on Asclepius, see E. Thraemer, 'Health and Greek Gods of Healing', *ERE* vol. VI, 1913, 550-53; W.A. Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925); C. Kerényi, *Asklepios: Archetypal Image of the Physicaian's Existence* (New York: Pantheon/Bollingen Foundation, 1959); H.C. Kee's chapter on 'Asklepios the Healer', in *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), 78-104.

²³ The title 'Touched by a God: Aelius Aristides, Religious Healing, and Asclepius Cult' of the paper presented by S.C. Muir at the 1995 SBL meeting (in E.H. Lovering, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, 362-79) creates an impression which is not justified by the contents of the paper.

²⁴ T.C. Allbutt, *Greek Medicine in Rome* (1921), 34.

²⁵ *IG*, 14, no. 966; text and Engl. trans. in E.J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (Salem, NH: Ayer Co. Publishers, 1988), 250f.

²⁶ Inscription translated and commented by R. Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen von Epidaurus*, 43-45.

Hand',²⁷ is to interpret it in the light of later depictions of Asclepius.²⁸ When interpreted in the context of other inscriptions from Epidaurus, the interpretation of $\chi\eta\rho$ as a symbol for the phallus, seems to be more adequate.²⁹ Then, as in the other inscriptions (No. 39, 42), this one does not depict Asclepius as healing by a mere touch but as begetting himself the requested child.

In his work *Fasti*, written at the turn of the Common Era, Ovid (43BCE-17CE) reports an alleged case of resuscitation performed by Asclepius by touching the dead three times and pronouncing healing words each time:

Hippolytus fell from the car, and, his limbs entangled by the reins, his mangled body was whirled along, till he gave up the ghost, much to Diana's rage. 'There is no need for grief', said the son of Coronis (i.e., Asklepios), 'for I will restore the pious youth to life all unscathed, and to my leech craft gloomy fate shall yield' ...Thrice he touched the youth's breast (*pectora ter tetigit*), thrice he spoke healing words (*verba salubria dixit*); then Hippolytus lifted his head, low laid upon the ground.³⁰

The context, however, suggests that Asclepius touches Hippolytus with herbs (*gramina*, 6.749; *herbae*, 6.751) rather than his hand. But even if it were with the hand, the touching of the dead body three times and the need to repeat the magical words each time makes this story unparalleled in the gospels (cf. Mk 8.22-25).

Healing by the laying on of a gods' hands is also known to other peoples. Ancient Egyptians believed that all deities of their pantheon possessed an inner virtue which could be dispensed through the LH, especially on the nape of the neck and the spine.³¹ A case of resuscitation appears in the myth of Isis (4th century BCE). The goddess reanimates a dead child by laying her hands on him and uttering spells.³²

For various reasons, enumerated below, most of the above texts are not directly relevant to our discussion of healing by touch in the Gospels: (1) The protagonists are the gods, rather than some human miracle-workers. (2) The miracles take place either during the temple-sleep, or in the imaginary world of the myths, not in a realistic encounter between healer and patient, as found in the gospels. (3) In many cases, the effects of touch / LH are not healings, but concern pregnancy and childbirth. 4) The LH / touch is often just one of the many elements of a complicated healing ritual / therapy.

²⁷ Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen*, No. 31; Oepke, 'ἰάομαι', *TDNT* III, 209.

²⁸ E.g. the Apellas-inscription of the second century C.E., ἤψατο δέ μου καὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς χιρὸς καὶ τοῦ μαστοῦ.

²⁹ W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 105. Cf. O. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, 19-21, for similar examples.

³⁰ *Fasti* 6.744-754. Cited according to the translation of Sir James George Frazer, *Ovid: Fasti* (Loeb; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 378-79.

³¹ Maspéro, *Etudes de mythologie et d'archéologie égyptienne* (Paris, 1893), I, 309, cited in J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des Mains*, 95, n. 2.

³² J.G. Frazer, *Adonis* (London, 1906), 213. According to papyrus 3027 of the Berlin Museum, the resurrected young man was Isis' own son, Horus.

The examples cited demonstrate, however, that the idea of healing by touch appears quite frequently in sources of the pre-Christian era. Although the meaning of the gesture is not always clear, in some cases it unmistakably signifies a transfer of healing power from the god to the sick person.

3.2.2. *Human Hands*

The power to heal is not the exclusive privilege of the gods; it is also possessed by men favoured by the deities. Certain men of the Hellenistic period, especially kings and emperors, were regarded as instruments of the gods, chosen by the latter as channels of their power. The touch / LH are listed among the healing techniques used by the miracle workers of the Pagan environment. However, the occasions when the gesture is reportedly used by men are less frequent than those which describe its use by the gods. When reading Weinreich's *Antike Heilungswunder*, one gets the impression that the idea of healing by a mere touch is very common in the Graeco-Roman literature.³³ In what follows I will demonstrate that the evidence is not as overwhelming as is commonly believed. In order to assess whether or not this literature offers significant parallels to the New Testament usage, each occurrence of the healing gesture will be analyzed in terms of date, form of the gesture, concomitant activity, and the conception of power which stands behind the gesture.

Perhaps the earliest Greek evidence for the touch as a healing gesture comes from (a) Solon (638?-559 BCE). He says of the doctor: 'But he makes at once healthy the one who is wrecked by some evil and difficult diseases, by touching [him] with both hands'.³⁴ Two features are of interest here: the suddenness of the healing and the lack of any concomitant activity. Since there is no evidence here of any medical activity, the use of the gesture resembles the 'Christian' meaning of the word for 'touch'. The touching with both hands (a dual here) may point to the gesture of LH. In any case, the occurrence is too early to be relevant for the period under consideration.

At the beginning of the Christian era, (b) Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE) says: 'If, therefore, a physician does nothing more than feel my pulse (*manum tangit*)'.³⁵ Although

³³ *Antike Heilungswunder*, 1-75. A number of scholars take Weinreich's findings as authoritative. E.g. J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 111-115; H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (SupNT 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 313-314; P.W. van der Horst, 'Hellenistic parallels to Acts (chapters 3 and 4)', *JSNT* 35 (1989):49-60, who states: 'Examples of healing by touching need not be given since a great many of them can be found in O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*. . ' (p. 51).

³⁴ Frag. 13.61-62: τὸν δὲ κακῶς νούσοισι κυκώμενον ἀργαλέαις τε ἀψάμενος χειρῶν αἰψα τίθησ' ὑγιῆ; cited in G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983, 93.

³⁵ *De beneficiis* VI, 16, 2: 'Itaque medico, si nihil amplius quam manum tangit . . .', in *Moral*

the verb is taken by Weinreich to refer to some miraculous healing,³⁶ we believe that it depicts a normal medical procedure (*cheirurgia*).³⁷

The power of the miracle-worker could emanate from any limb but the power of the right hand (especially that of the right thumb) and the big toe, was considered to be superior. Both Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) and Plutarch (40?-120 CE) note that (c) the big toe of Pyrrhus' right foot possessed 'divine virtue' (*δύναμιν θείαν*).³⁸ He cured the sick by touching them with his toe or by allowing them to touch it.³⁹ Similarly, in recording the healings performed by (d) Vespasian, Tacitus (55-after 117 CE) mentions the healing of a man's withered hand by the touch of the emperor's foot:

Another with a diseased hand, at the counsel of the same God [Serapis] prayed that the limb might feel the print of a Caesar's foot. At first Vespasian ridiculed and repulsed them. They persisted...And so Vespasian, supposing that all things were possible to his good fortune, and that nothing was any longer past belief, with a joyful countenance, amid the intense expectation of the multitude of bystanders, accomplished what was required. The hand was instantly restored...⁴⁰

Vespasian is advised by physicians that the miracle was possible 'if a healing influence were applied' and this, associated with the gesture of touching, seems to point to a transfer of power through physical contact. But in all three reports of the case the action goes beyond a simple touch: it involves a stronger and more unusual interaction between the foot of the healer and the afflicted limb.⁴¹

Another extremity of the body which is credited with a greater power than other body parts is the right thumb. In speaking of (e) the cure of epilepsy, Pliny says: Let a virgin touch him with her right thumb'.⁴² It must be noted that the emphasis here is equally

Essays, vol III, LOEB 310, with an Engl. transl. by John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

³⁶ O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 35. So J. Behm, who regards the text as evidence that the idea of touch as a magical gesture has been preserved over a long period of time (*Die Handauflegung*, 113 n. 4).

³⁷ So too G. Theissen who believes that '*manum tangere* has probably become a technical term for "take the pulse", a secondary rationalisation of a magical healing gesture' (*The Miracle Stories*, 93).

³⁸ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vii.20: (*Cuius tactu*) *lienosis medebatur*. Plutarch says that the 'divine virtue' contained in the big toe of Pyrrhus was so great, 'that after the rest of his body had been consumed, this was found to be untouched and unharmed by the fire' (*Pyrrh.* 3.5, in *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. IX, with an English transl. by Bernadotte Perrin, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

³⁹ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 3. 4, 7-9.

⁴⁰ *Hist.* 4.81, text edited by R.M. Hutchins, 1952; cf. also Suetonius who says of Vespasian: 'For the God declared that Vespasian would ... give strength to the leg, if he would deign to touch it with his heel' (*Vesp.* 7, in Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, text edited by J. Gavorse, 1931). According to the report of the same incident by Dio Cassius (150-235 CE), Vespasian stepped on the withered hand: 'Vespasian himself healed two persons, one having a withered hand, the other being blind... he cured the one by stepping on his hand (*τὴν χεῖρα πατήσας*) and the other by spitting upon his eyes (*τοῖν ὀφθαλμοῖν προσπύσας*)' (*Dio's Roman History* 65. 8, 1, cited according to the translation of Earne; LOEB, London: Heinemann, 1969).

⁴¹ B. Kollmann states: 'Es geht also nicht um bloße Berührung . . . und damit verbundene Heilungallein durch Kontakt mit göttlicher Dynamis, sondern um kräftiges Auftreten' (*Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter. Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996], 108, n. 64).

⁴² *Hist. Nat.* xxviii. 43: *Si virgo dextro pollice attigat*. Cited according to the translation of W.H.S.

on the extremity of the body which issues greater amount of power, i.e. the right thumb, and the special status of the person through whom the healing is carried on, i.e. the purity, perhaps, of a vestal virgin. The reference does not depict a healing, but rather prescribes a therapy.

Although Weinreich devotes a whole section to those sick people who reach out to the healer,⁴³ a critical analysis of the examples given there indicates that in only one case the person touches not an artifact, but a human being: The case is that of (f) a mutual healing which allegedly took place when an old blind man touched emperor Hadrian (76-138 CE): 'A certain blind old man came from Panonia to Hadrian who was having fever and touched him. Upon doing this, he immediately received his sight and Hadrian's fever disappeared'.⁴⁴ Whether the emperor's fever was perceived as having any causal effect on the cure of the blind man is difficult to assess. The story reminds us of the biblical account on the healing of the hemorrhaging woman. While admittedly there is no way of proving a Christian influence on the story, the two-way transfer of the power and the late date of the source (4th or 5th century CE) makes it irrelevant for our discussion.

Healing by touch is also recorded by Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius* (ca. 217-220 CE). He describes (g) the healing of a lame man by some Indian wise men:

There also arrived a man who was lame. He was already thirty years old and was a keen hunter of lions; but a lion had sprung upon him and dislocated his hip so that he limped with one leg. However, when they massaged with their hands his hip (*αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῷ καταψῶσαι τὸν γλουτόν*), the youth immediately recovered his upright gait.⁴⁵

It is difficult to assess here whether the touching was understood by Philostratus as a means to transfer healing power to the dislocated hip⁴⁶ or was seen as being simply physiotherapeutic. The use of *καθάπτω* (*to fit or fasten to, bind on*) seems to point to a 'natural' rather than a miraculous healing.

The touching was said to be used in the resuscitation of dead people. Philostratus reports that (h) Apollonius of Tyana (d. 98 CE), raised a dead bride by both touching her and speaking to her:

Here too is a miracle [*θαῦμα*] which Apollonius worked: A girl had died just in the hour of her marriage, and the bridegroom was following her bier lamenting as was natural his marriage left unfulfilled, and the whole of Rome was mourning with him, for the maiden belonged to a consular family. Apollonius then witnessing their grief, said: 'Put down the bier, for I will stay the tears that you are shedding for this maiden'. And withal he asked what was her name. The crowd thought he was about to deliver an oration... but he did nothing of the kind, but merely touching her

Jones (LOEB; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

⁴³ O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 18-28.

⁴⁴ 'Venit de Pannonia quidam vetus caecus ad febrientem Hadrianum eumque contingit. Quo facto et ipse oculos recepit et Hadrianum febris reliquit' - Aelius Spartianus, *Vita Hadriani*, 25 in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, edition 1927, by E. Hohl.

⁴⁵ Cited according to the translation of F.C. Conybeare, *Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (2 vols., LCL 16-17; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), 1.317. (= *Vita Ap.* 3.39).

⁴⁶ Pace Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 106.

(προσαψάμενος αὐτῆς) and whispering in secret some spell over her (καί τι ἀφανῶς ἐπειπών), at once woke up the maiden from her seeming death; and the girl spoke out loud, and returned to her father's house . . . Now whether he detected some spark of life in her, which those who were nursing her had not noticed, - for it is said that although it was raining at the time, a vapor went up from her face - or whether life was really extinct, and he restored it by the warmth of his touch, is a mysterious problem which neither I myself nor those who were present could decide.⁴⁷

Philostratus' lengthy comment at the end of the story leaves room for the possibility that the young woman was not really dead. Therefore, the term resuscitation may be more appropriate here than 'resurrection'. This is the only occasion when Apollonius is said to have healed by touch. But the method involves a combination of touch and magical words. Some similarities with the gospel accounts of the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5.22-24, 35-43 and par. - gender of the dead person, prominence of family, miracle performed by touch and word) and that of the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7.11-17 - the procession, the healer's compassion, his initiative) may point to a Christian influence on the story.

Generally speaking, the use of the philostratic Apollonius as a parallel figure to the Jesus of the gospels is problematic. Scholars warn us about the historical credibility of Philostratus' *Vita Apollonia*.⁴⁸ It is conceivable that Philostratus borrowed from the miracle stories of the gospels to present 'an exalted Apollonius, as a sort of Hellenistic Christ who would overshadow the figure of Jesus of Nazareth'.⁴⁹ Therefore, one should exercise caution in using the miracle-stories attributed to Apollonius to determine the thaumaturgic beliefs and practices of the first century CE.

In light of the above texts, it is undeniable that the concept of transmitting healing power through touch was known in the Greco-Roman world. However, with the exception of Solon's statement about the doctor (which is not actually a record of a healing), none of the examples cited above describes a healing by a mere touch paralleled in the gospels. They either come from a late period and are possibly influenced by Christian miracle-stories, or contain elements which are not compatible with Jesus' simple touch (e.g. stroking, massaging, pressing the foot against the spleen, etc.). It might be said, then, that the Graeco-Roman literature does not offer real parallels to Jesus' miracles of healing by a mere touch and the LH. Are we to infer from this that healing by a mere touch is a

⁴⁷ Cited according to the translation of F.C. Conybeare, *Philostratus*, 1.457, 459 (= *Vita Ap.* IV, 45).

⁴⁸ E.L. Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality', *ANRW* 16.2 (1978), 1655, 1665-67, 1686; E. Koskenniemi, *Apollonios von Tyana in der neutestamentlichen Exegese* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 169-188, 235; R. McMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966; London: Routledge, 1992), 115.

⁴⁹ L. Sabourin, 'Hellenistic and Rabbinical Miracles', *BTB* 2/3 (1972), 289; so also J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2 (London: Doubleday, 1994), 580.

Christian concept?⁵⁰ I will answer to this question in Chapter 4, when all the factors have been taken into account.

3.3. The Laying on of Hands in Exorcism

It is known that Babylonian culture exercised an important influence on the Jewish religious life and thought during the exilic and the postexilic periods. According to A. Dupont Sommer, the Babylonian flavour of the demonological notions found in Jewish texts such as *Tobit* and *Genesis Apocryphon* is recognisable.⁵¹ Although various Babylonian deities are depicted as being responsible for diverse evils and sufferings,⁵² most illnesses and disasters are assumed to have demonic aetiologies.⁵³ This explains the existence of an official class of priests whose main purpose was to manage and restrain these malevolent spirits. The afflicted person appeals for help to the *ashipu* (or *ipu*), the priest-exorcist who conducts the exorcistic rites at the home of the sick, or to the *mashmashu*, the cultic priest who officiates the purification rites in the temple. Malevolent spirits are expelled through incantations and various rites, among which is the LH. The gesture is regarded as a fixed rite, in the sense that it is restricted to the priest-exorcist,⁵⁴ it is performed with the hands laid on the head of the sick person, it is accompanied by incantations and has the value of an exorcism. Four incantations are given below which mention the LH:

When [I] enter the House, Samas is before me, Sin is behind [me], Nergal is at [my] right hand, Ninib is at my left hand; when I draw near unto the sick man, *when I lay my hand on his head* of the sick man, may a kindly spirit, may a kindly guardian angel stand at my side.⁵⁵

Without you (Samas) the diviner cannot make the proper arrangements, without you the exorcist cannot *lay his hand on* a sick person . . .⁵⁶

⁵⁰ See Pieter J. Lalleman, 'Healing by a Mere Touch as a Christian Concept', *TynBul* 48/2 (1998):355-361.

⁵¹ 'Exorcismes et guérisons', 249.

⁵² H.W.F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), 94-95, 109-110; R.C. Thompson (ed.), *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (Luzac's Semitic Texts and Translation Series, vol. 14; London: Luzac and Co., 1903-1904), IV.60-64, V.5-9.

⁵³ Saggs, *Encounter*, 95; R.C. Thompson, 'Assyro-Babylonian Disease and Medicine', in *ERE*, 1913, vol. IV, 741-747; S.H. Hooke, *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 58-96; H. Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 54-55, 80-90.

⁵⁴ ZA 19.378.8: 'The physician should not lay his hand on a patient'.

⁵⁵ Tablet III, l. 141 ff. of the *Utukku*-series, cited in R.C. Thompson, 'Assyro-Babylonian Disease and Medicine', *ERE*, 1913, vol. IV, 743.

⁵⁶ KAR 26.24f.

When I approach the sick person, when I enter his house, *when I lay my hand on his head* . . .⁵⁷

I am the messenger of the great god; Ea and Mardouk, with gradeour sent me. I come with an incantation; there is healing for him on whom I lay my hand: it is their incantation that I bear in my mouth . . .⁵⁸

Quite obviously, all four passages cited above refer to healing of a sick person. There is no demon mentioned and no act of driving out a demon. The references are clearly about demon-sickness.

Early evidence for practices similar to exorcism in the Greek world comes from Hippocrates' essay on 'the sacred disease' (composed anonymously between 430-330 BCE). This work suggests that incantations against spirits of illness may have been as common among the Greeks of Hippocrates' time as they were among the people of the Near East.⁵⁹ But exorcism *per se* is not depicted in the Greek literature until the second century CE.⁶⁰ The silence of the early Greek literature does not necessarily reflect the realities of popular religious practices in ancient Greece; it is rather interpreted as a sign of contempt on the part of pre-Classical and Classical Greek literary traditions.⁶¹ However, we cannot make any judgment on whether the methods of healing such illness included physical contact.

O. Böcher's assertion that the original gesture employed by the exorcist was the **LH** cannot be substantiated.⁶² As G. Theissen shows,⁶³ the examples he cites (the healings of Asclepius) are not exorcisms *per se*. Probably S. Eitrem is right in showing that, in cases of demon-possession, the method was inadequate from a practical standpoint: 'Often it was simply impossible for any exorcist to place his hand on a furious madman'.⁶⁴ In conclusion, the use of the **LH** *vis-à-vis* exorcism in the extra-biblical literature is not different from that found in the New Testament. Hands are never laid on a demon-possessed, but the gesture may attain the value of an exorcism when used for healing a sickness caused by demons.

⁵⁷ CT 16.1,1 ff.

⁵⁸ VAT 8803 = KAR 31 and M.J. Geller (ed.), *Forerunners to Udug-hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantation* (1985), 3.4-11.

⁵⁹ *De morbo sacro* 1.8, 23, 32, 60-65, 68-75.

⁶⁰ D. Aune, 'Exorcism', *ISBE* 2:243; S.V. McCasland, *By the Finger of God: Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 65-69.

⁶¹ T.E. Klutz, 'With Authority and Power: A Sociostylistic Investigation of Exorcism in Luke-Acts' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1995), 359.

⁶² *Dämonenfurcht und Dämonenabwehr* (1970), 171.

⁶³ G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (1983), 62, n. 18.

⁶⁴ S. Eitrem, 'Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament', *SO* Fasc. Suppl XII, 1950, 37.

3.4. The Laying on of Hands for the Installation of Officials

The use of the gesture in connection with the installation of officials is attested in the Roman world of the pre-Christian era. It was part of some complicated inaugural ceremonies.⁶⁵

In his *History of Rome*, Titus Livius (Livy, 59 BCE - 17 CE) reports about the use of the **LH** in connection with the installation of Numa Pompilius (715-672 BC) as king of Rome:

Moving the augural rod into his left hand and having the right one laid on Numa's head, he prayed this way: 'Jupiter father, if you would give us clear signs between the boundaries set by me, to show whether it is acceptable that this Numa Pompilius, whose head I am touching, be the king of Rome'.⁶⁶

Since hands are laid on Numa's head by the augur, the significance of the gesture as a rite to create a second-self is ruled out. The **LH** is concomitant with the prayer addressed by the augur to Jupiter and this indicates that it is not a gesture of installation, but rather one of identification; the priest identifies the object of the *vox populi* and solicits that the *vox Dei* concerning this man would be also disclosed.

Evidence from the Egyptian monuments indicate that, according to the antique popular beliefs, a newly crowned king received the blessings of a long life and glorious reign from the gods, by their laying hands on him.⁶⁷ This example demonstrates that the concept of transference through the **LH** was known by the Egyptians, but the gesture appears to be one of blessing rather than a rite of installation.

3.5. The Laying on of Hands in Consecration

There is one example in Livy which refers to the self-consecration of Decius, the Roman consul, in behalf of the Roman army, during their war with the Latins:

The pontifex ordered him to don the toga of his office and, after veiling his head, to reach out from beneath his toga with one hand and touch his chin; then, standing upon a spear he was to recite the following formula: 'Janus, Jupiter, father Mars, Quirinus, Bellona, Lares, divine Novensiles, divine Indigetes, gods who have power over us and our enemies, and divine Manes, I pray to you and I implore, I beseech and I beg, that you may bestow upon the Roman people power and victory and afflict the enemies of the Roman people with fear, terror, and death'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See E. Ferguson's exceptional article 'Selection and Instalation to office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', *ThZ* 30 (1974):273-284.

⁶⁶ My translation of Livy, *Hist.* I, 18.6-10: '... lituo in laevam manum translato dextra in caput Numae imposita precatus ita est: 'Juppiter pater, si est fas hunc Numam Pompilium, cujus ego caput teneo, regem Romae esse, uti tu signa nobis certa adclarassis inter eos fines, quos feci''. See also E. Ferguson, 'Selection and Instalation to office in Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Antiquity', 283.

⁶⁷ J.G. Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, London, 1878, iii, 363, cited in J.A. MacCulloch, 'Hand', *ERE*, vol. VI, 494.

⁶⁸ Livy, *Hist.* VIII, 9.5.

The passage describes a sacrificial act in which Decius is both subject and object, priest and offering. The meaning of the gesture here has nothing to do with transference of some quality, since the subject and the object is the same. It is best interpreted as a gesture by which the consecrated person is identified.⁶⁹

3.6. Conclusions

The character of pagan healings by touch, as presented in the earliest documents, was medicinal rather than supernatural. The gods were regarded as surgeons (or better, *chiropractors*)⁷⁰ who, in using their hands as medical instruments, were far more skilled than human doctors. The ancient texts do not praise the power of the divine hands as much as their gentleness, dexterity and capacity to heal without imposing additional suffering in the process of healing (e.g. incisions, etc.). Therefore, some of the healing gods were given names which reflected the gentleness of their hands.⁷¹ The occasions when Asclepius is said to have performed healings are associated most frequently with his asklepion at Epidauros.⁷² Coppens argues that of the forty-two accounts of healing recorded at Epidauros none is attributed exclusively to the LH. Similarly, Asclepius' gesture of healing depicted in the four extant inscriptions reflects a medical or surgical employment of the hands.⁷³

The references in the pagan Greek sources to healing by human hands are not more helpful in identifying parallels to Jesus' use of the gesture, than those referring to the hands of the gods. While some sources depict the use of the hand in a medical sense (b,g), others which seem to refer to the supernatural power of the hand disqualify as parallels to

⁶⁹ See J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 122-23, n. 1.

⁷⁰ This name is given to Asclepius by Aristide, II, 64. See also O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 30, n. 2, who quotes Blinkenbergs, *Archäologische Studien*, 102: 'Am Ende geht die Heilkraft der göttlichen Hand wohl einfach darauf zurück dass die älteste Heilkunde besonders χειρουργία war'.

⁷¹ Due to their beneficent hand, deities like Apollo and Hygeia had the attribute of ἡπιόχειρος, the *soothing hand*. Other terms employed include ἥπιος, μαλακός, ὑπερδέξιος(α) - see T.C. Allbutt, *op. cit.*, 33; J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des Mains*, 100, n. 1.

⁷² The other *asklepieia* became clinics and sanatoriums where people lived temporarily in incubation (temple sleep) and received medical assistance from the priests who were initiated in the medical science. The methods used by the priests included an imposed fast and a controlled sleep. By these techniques, the frequency of the patients' dreams was increased, something which aided the priests to establish the diagnosis. The impassivity of the sleeping patient aided the priests to perform surgeries if they deemed it necessary to do so. The touch had a supplementary effect in that it directed the dreams of the sleeping patient so that what in reality were the hands of the priest were taken to be the hands of the healing god. See O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, 30, n. 2. Cf. also J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des Mains*, 99-101. The charlatany is denied by Oepke, 'ἰάομαι', *TDNT* III, 209-210, but see G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories*, 63, who argues that priests were involved in medical practices, as agents of Asclepius. Cf. also H. Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 57-60.

⁷³ Coppens, *L'imposition des mains*, 101.

Jesus' use of touch / LH by containing only general statements about the use of the gesture (a, e), by involving other parts of the human body than the hand (c, d, e), or by being historically unreliable⁷⁴ or too late to help us establish the origin of the Christian practice (f, g, h). It is, therefore, not difficult to agree with Pieter J. Lalleman that the idea of a simple touch as a healing^{gesture} is not paralleled in the pagan Greek literature, as commonly believed.⁷⁵ In fact, pagan Greco-Roman stories in general do not provide the closest parallels to the miracles of Jesus. Our investigation in the Jewish environment revealed that better parallels to Jesus healing touch are found rather in biblical literature (esp. Elijah and Elisha stories) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QapGen).

As for the LH as a gesture of installation, it is attested only in one text. There, it does not signify the transference of office or the impartation of some charisma needed for accomplishing the task of the office, but is a means by which the one selected by *vox populi* is identified before the gods. Still associated with the installation of the Egyptian kings, the LH was believed to have been used by the gods as a gesture of blessing. All the above considered, we agree with Lohse's position that the pagan sources provide no valid analogies to the Christian rite of ordination by the LH.⁷⁶ The background of the Christian practice is clearly Jewish.

⁷⁴ The historical value of Philostratus' work is seriously questioned. In his recent work, *A Marginal Jew*, J.P. Meier states: 'The serious questions that arise about the sources and historical reliability of the *Life of Apollonius* make it difficult to speak in any detail of the 1st-century Apollonius as a parallel figure to Jesus of Nazareth. The miracle stories in the *Life* are indeed useful for ahistorical, synchronic comparisons of literary patterns found in miracle stories of different times and places; as a basis for historical judgements about 1st-century figures they are very shaky' (vol. II, 580 f.) See also B.F. Harris, 'Apollonius of Tyana: Fact of Fiction', *JRH* (1969):189-199; E.L. Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality', *ANRW* 2.16.2 (1978):1652-1699.

⁷⁵ Pieter J. Lalleman, 'Healing by a Mere Touch as a Christian Concept', 355-361; cf. also B. Blackburn, *Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Traditions* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991),

⁷⁶ *Die Ordination*, 13 f.

PART II: THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

Terminology used

From all the Old Testament contexts in which the **LH** occurs, only the use of hands for blessing and commissioning has been carried into the New Testament. Two other uses of the rite are characteristic of early Christianity: the **LH** in healing and in connection with the reception of the Spirit.

There are twenty five direct references in the New Testament to the **LH**; the term appears either in its nominal form *ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν* or in the verbal form *ἐπιτιθέναι τὰς χεῖρας*. The phrase *ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν* appears only four times (Acts 8.18; 1Tim. 4.14; 2Tim. 1.6 and Heb. 6.2). But the most common verb of touching used in the gospels is *ἄπτεσθαι*, *to touch*. It occurs mainly in healing passages (e.g. Mk 7.32-35; 8.22-26; Mt 8.15), but is also used for blessing (e.g. Mk 10.13-16) and as a gesture of reassurance (Mt. 17.7). *Κρατεῖν*, *to hold, to take hold* of something is used in healings (Mk 1.31; Mt. 9.25). The idea of taking by the hand is also expressed by *ἐπιλαμβάνειν* (Lk. 14.4) and *πιάζειν* (Acts 3.7), both having the same meaning, i.e. *to take hold of* something. Finally, a verbal form of the **LH**, less technical than *ἐπιτιθέναι*, appears in Rev 1.17: Having fallen to the ground, John is raised by a divine being who lays his right hand upon him (*ἔθηκεν τὴν δεξιὰν αὐτοῦ ἐπ' ἐμέ*). The **LH** is not intended here to transfer power; it is rather a gesture of help and encouragement.

There are two indicators that the terminology of touching/hand-laying in the gospels is not as set as in the rest of the New Testament. First, the **LH** does not occur in its nominal form in the gospels. Second, on numerous occasions, *ἐπιτιθέναι τὰς χεῖρας* is used interchangeably with other verbs of touching.

There are two situations when the 'touching' terms appear to have been used interchangeably. One is that in which, inside the same pericope, to a certain form of the requested gesture Jesus responds with a gesture of a different form. A second situation is provided by the redactional changes operated by Matthew and Luke in the Marcan material or in Q. When a verb of touch is changed into another, we must ask whether the change has a definite purpose or it signals an indiscriminate use of the terms by that particular gospel writer. The way to distinguish between an intentional and a purposeless change is to look for a possible paradigm of the use of these terms in that particular gospel. If such paradigm can be found, the issue is not one of interchangeability.

Thus, the following are the situations when an author moves freely from a term to another. **Mark**: to the requested *ἄπτεσθαι* in 8.22 corresponds the actual **LH** in 8.23, 25.

Similarly, when Jesus is asked to touch the children in 10.13 he answers by laying his hands on them (10.16). In 7.32, however, Jesus is asked to lay his hand on the deaf man (*ἵνα ἐπιθῆ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα*) but, contrary to the expectation of the petitioners, he engages in various actions which include physical contact (*ἔβαλεν τοὺς δακτύλους αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ καὶ πτύσας ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ*, v. 33). In 5.23 when Jesus is asked by the ruler to lay his hands (pl.) on his daughter (*ἵνα ἐλθὼν ἐπιθῆς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆ*), he takes the hand of the girl (*κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς*) and raises her with a command (v. 41). **Matthew:** There is no move from *ἄπτεσθαι* to the LH or any other verb. However, to the requested LH in 9.18 (*ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ' αὐτήν*) Jesus responds by grabbing the girl's hand (*ἐκράτησεν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς*, 9.25). **Luke:** no move from *ἄπτεσθαι* to the LH or any other verb of touching.

Changes operated by Matthew and Luke in the Marcan material: **Matthew:** In the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Matthew changes Mark's *κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς* (1.31), in *ἤψατο τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς* (8.15). The request that Jesus would 'touch' the children (*ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄψηται*, Mk 10.13) is changed by Matthew into the LH (*ἵνα τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς*, Mt 19.13). Luke never changes from one verb of touch to another within the same pericope and he never changes the verbs in the Marcan material he uses.

The situation presented above shows that Mark moves freely from one verb of touching to another, perhaps sometimes automatically. It is reasonable to infer that if he understood each verb to express a different thing, he would not have shifted so lavishly from one verb to another. The few changes operated by Matthew do not point to any pattern in his use of the 'touching' verbs. He too, moves freely from one verb to another. Luke's absolute consistency is more difficult to interpret. It can mean two things: either (1) Luke distinguishes between touching verbs and refuses to use them interchangeably or (2) he sees no reason to operate any change in Mark's material because any verb would 'convey' the message. An examination of all healing stories in Luke where healing is by physical contact reveals the surprising fact that none of them contain a verb of 'touching' twice. This is mainly because Luke abbreviated sharply the materials he used. Whenever he uses the Marcan material, he is faithful to his source. Luke's 'uncritical' use of Mark's material means that he shares Mark's view with respect to the indiscriminate use of the 'touching' verbs. Thus, we are in the position to conclude that 'the laying on of hands', at least when employed to describe a healing, is not a technical term but forms part of a complex of 'touching' terms (*ἐπιτιθέναι τὰς χεῖρας*, *ἄπτεσθαι*, *κρατεῖν*, *ἐπιλαμβάνειν*, *πιάζειν*) which are often used indiscriminately as indicators of the establishment of physical contact between the bearer of numinous power and the person in need. The form of the gesture is not important in healing. As we will see later, the one thing which counts is the intentionality of the physical contact.

CHAPTER 4

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN HEALING

4.1. Recent Perspectives on the Role of Laying on of Hands and Touch in Healing

4.1.1. *H. Van der Loos*

Van der Loos' monograph *The miracles of Jesus* (1965) is one of the most comprehensive studies on Jesus' miracles, written in the last four decades. Summarizing Jesus' methods of healing and exorcism, Van der Loos concludes: 'In His methods of treatment, too, Jesus stands right in the midst of the world of ideas of His contemporaries, but without resorting to grotesque methods, as the magicians did'.¹ The attitude of Jesus' opponents towards his miracles, one of 'indifference and impassiveness' even at his trial, is an indication that Jesus was not regarded by his contemporaries as being a magician.² The talmudic charge that Jesus practised magic³ is legendary and developed in the second century CE. It appears to be a counter-charge of the rabbis to the charge that they killed Jesus unlawfully.⁴

Discussing the concept of power and its transmission, Van der Loos disagrees with Perels⁵ who sees Hellenistic influences on the tradition of healing by touch. The conception of power being transferred by physical contact was at hand in the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Ki. 17.21; 2 Ki. 4.29); there is no reason then to make appeal to Hellenistic parallels.⁶ He rejects those views which see power as a *mana* or 'ethereal fluid' which is discharged at a simple touch and spreads into living and lifeless things alike.⁷ Equally incorrect, in his opinion, is the symbolistic and psychological understanding of the gesture according to which nothing is transferred through either touch or the LH.⁸

According to Van der Loos, the healing power of Jesus and its transmission are best explained by appealing to the Christology of the first centuries. According to both the Pauline Epistles and the Fathers, Jesus is the Son who creates and preserves. Christ is not only the Logos, but also the hand and the power of God: 'What is said symbolically in the Old Testament about the hand of God manifests itself concretely in the New Testament in

¹ H. Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 315.

² *Ibid*, 149f.

³ Sanh. 43a; 107b; Sota 47a.

⁴ *Miracles of Jesus*, 149 f. and n.1.

⁵ Perels, *Die Wunderüberlieferung der Synoptiker*, 91, cited in *Miracles of Jesus*, 315.

⁶ *Ibid*, 315 f.

⁷ *Ibid*, 316.

⁸ *Ibid*, 316.

the hand of Jesus Christ'.⁹ The power which is transmitted through touch is the creative and preserving power of God. Such power is channeled by word and touch alike. 'By that touch the sick person is "linked" to Jesus, he becomes the property of Jesus, and therefore he is mentally and physically healed, i.e. "restored" within the salvation of the Kingdom of God. Christ is the Regenerator, Christ is the "Recreator"'.¹⁰

By way of evaluation, we think Van der Loos is correct in stating that *dunamis* has its origins in the Septuagint rather than in the universal idea of a *mana*-like power which works impersonally. He correctly shows how the evangelists associate Jesus' power with God and the Holy Spirit. However, for objectivity, he should have made it clear that the evangelists give us occasionally the impression that *dunamis* works immediately and impersonally.

4.1.2. *John M. Hull*

In 1974 John M. Hull published his monograph, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, an influential book at the time. Hull regards the Hellenistic magic of the first century CE as a syncretistic movement, having its own style and ethos.¹¹

Working with an absolute definition of magic¹² (i.e. manipulative/supplicative), Hull claims that early Christian belief in angels, demons or *δαίμονες*, characteristic of the 'uneducated first-century man'¹³, 'amounts to a superstitious inclination towards the magic inevitably associated with such belief'.¹⁴ He ignores the fact that in Judaism and Christianity such beliefs are part of the apocalyptic outlook and exist independently of magic. While on the one hand he plays down the importance of technique as the means by which the magician reaches his objectives¹⁵, on the other hand he includes touching among magical techniques.¹⁶

⁹ *Ibid*, 321.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Naperville, IL: SCM Press, 1974), 7, 27 ff.

¹² Hull says: 'The art of magic is to collect such knowledge [i.e., of the powers, sympathies and antipathies, symbols] and apply it correctly as to swing the enormous forces of the universe in the desired direction' (*op. cit.*, 37-38).

¹³ *Ibid*, 44. Ample bibliography for the view that manipulative magic is the uneducated person's religion in A.M. Reimer, 'Miracle-Workers and Magicians in the Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1999), 6 n. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 51.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 169, n. 32.

Hull contends that ‘by the time the earliest gospel was written, the tradition of the acts of Jesus had already been saturated with the outlook of Hellenistic magic’.¹⁷ Jesus himself is regarded by Jewish traditions as a magician. He possesses magical power, ‘that reality which carries the actual potency of the spirit world into our world’.¹⁸ This power is impersonal and works immediately.¹⁹ It is contained in both living vessels and lifeless ones.²⁰ Deliberate touching is the usual magical technique by which the power is both transmitted and replenished.²¹ The meaning of power in the synoptic gospels (especially in Mark and Luke) as miracle working power is not paralleled in the Old Testament; the background of this concept of power is in the ancient idea of *mana*.²²

Although Mark is so deeply influenced by magical beliefs, he is not conscious of this, nor aware of the danger of pollution. His gospel ‘represents the first stage in any preaching of the gospel - the stage of presentation in terms suitable to the needs and expectations of the hearers’. This explains, in Hull’s view, the naive presentation by Mark of magical concepts (e.g. physical transmission of an impersonal power) and magical techniques (e.g. the gesture of touching).²³

Matthew does not consider the touch as a magical technique but a traditional gesture; therefore he does not seek to avoid referring to it. Exceptions are situations like those of Mk. 3.10; 5.28 ff., when an involuntary, automatic transfer of impersonal power is implied.²⁴

The way in which Hull explains Luke’s attitude toward the gesture of touching is rather awkward: ‘Luke who was certainly aware of the struggle with Hellenistic magic, actually multiplies the touching incidents, but that is because it is his aim to show not that Christianity has nothing to do with magic, but that Christians can outdo magicians at their own game’.²⁵ If Luke thought that Christianity is incompatible with magic, would it not be unlikely that he would multiply the cases which could be interpreted as magic? If, on the other hand, he believed in a Christian magic superior to the Hellenistic magic, we would have expected him to distinguish between the two in one way or another.

Although there is evidence that Luke shows more interest in the miraculous aspect of Jesus’ mission than Mark does, Hull’s contention that Luke’s gospel reflects the ‘traditions penetrated by magic’ is unsubstantiated. While presenting the miracle stories

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 142 f.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 105.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 107, 111.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 112.

²¹ *Ibid*, 82 f., 110.

²² *Ibid*, 108 f., 113.

²³ *Ibid*, 144.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 141.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 169, n. 32.

under the influence of the Hellenistic understanding of magic, Luke must be credited for toning down the magical aspects of the stories he borrowed from Mark.²⁶ Whatever Luke's conception of *dunamis*, contrary to Hull there is considerable evidence that the third evangelist is influenced by the Old Testament use of the term. As Sanders and Davies show, in fifteen out of twenty-five instances of *dunamis* in Luke-Acts the LXX use is reflected. Luke connects *dunamis* with God (Lk 22.69; 5.17), with the Holy Spirit (4.14; cf. 1.17, 35; 24.49, Acts 1.8; 10.38; cf. Is 61.1-2 - a quotation programmatic for Lk 4.18-19) and the future return of the Son of Man (Lk 21.27). The remaining ten instances (4.36; 6.19; 8.46; 9.1; 10.19; Acts 3.12; 4.7; 6.8; 8.10) can be understood without appealing to Hellenistic categories.²⁷ In our analysis of the healing miracles in the gospels and Acts we will endeavour to demonstrate that the background of the gospel miracles is not Hellenistic magic but the Jewish eschatological outlook.

4.1.3. *Morton Smith*

The influence of Graeco-Roman magic on Jesus and primitive Christianity is also affirmed by M. Smith in three of his works: *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (1973), *The Secret Gospel* (1973) and *Jesus the Magician* (1978). Reading the gospels in light of the Graeco-Roman magical traditions, as found in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (PGM, third century CE), Smith's contention is that they convey the image of a Jesus who is first of all a magician. However, such an image of Jesus is not transparent in the gospels, reasons Smith, for 'magic' was unacceptable to Christianity in general and the gospel writers in particular. But the synoptic writers failed to completely disguise such magical traits. The little evidence for magic which can be found in the gospels, 'the elements in them that could be used to support the charge of magic are probably only the tips of the iceberg of suppressed traditions, while elements that counter the charge must be viewed with suspicion as probably exaggerated, if not wholly invented'.²⁸

The healing touch is included by M. Smith among the magical techniques: 'Besides prayer, magicians might - and Jesus did - resort to physical means. Most common was touching the patient, either fingering the affected area, or taking hold of the person; Jesus'/the magician's hand was his most potent instrument.'²⁹ The use by Jesus of healing media like spittle is interpreted either as an auxiliary to the gesture of touch or as an

²⁶ Ample evidence for this in P.J. Achtemeier, 'The Lucan Perspectives on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch', *JBL* 94 (1975), 557f.

²⁷ E.P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying in the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 282. Cf. also G.H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999), 171-72.

²⁸ Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 93.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 128.

extension of it: 'Fluid could help to make the contact closer; the readiest form of fluid was spittle, and both spittle and the act of spitting were commonly believed to have magical powers; so we find Jesus, like other magicians, smearing spittle on his patients or using a salve made with spittle'.³⁰ Smith defines magic so broadly as to include not only Jesus' miracles with the attached 'techniques',³¹ but most of his actions: his baptism and claim to divinity,³² his temptation,³³ his prayers³⁴ and the nature of the Eucharist instituted by him.³⁵

Smith postulate the existence in antiquity of the 'social type' of the magician. The same practitioner is known by various titles, including 'divine man', 'son of God', or 'magician', depending on his social status, success or the person who is doing the calling. As the magical papyri reflect, says Smith, 'with the difference in pretensions goes a supposed difference of technique', but this difference 'is one of form, not of essential content'.³⁶

That an ancient miracle worker would be called one way by his admirers and another way by his enemies is a logical observation. The problem with Smith's postulate is, however, his contention that all ancient miracle workers, in spite of their 'original diversity' and the 'diversity of theological explanations' which resulted in various titles attributed to them, belong to a single 'social type'. By ignoring the status of the practitioner, the setting in which the 'magical' action takes place, the opinions of the practitioner and his audience, M. Smith leaves us, as S.R. Garrett puts it, 'with a "social type" that has nothing "social" about it, because all social factors and characteristics have been disqualified'.³⁷ The identity of the practitioner is evaluated solely by his/her actions or techniques which, regardless of the form they take, have the same 'essential content', i.e. magical. Smith's 'social type' levels down all social factors which should ultimately define the identity of the miracle-worker. It creates an analytical category which ignores the opinions of the sympathizers (or views them as motivated by 'apologetic interests') and is biased in favor of the accusers. Such a category allows him to regard Jesus as a magician, simply because he 'did the things magicians do'. But it is precarious to conclude that any practice paralleled in the magical papyri must be labeled as 'magical'. Smith overlooks the

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 81-84; 91-93; 106-108; 109-129.

³² *Ibid.*, 82, 100, 137.

³³ *Ibid.*, 104-106.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 128, 130. But see Martin Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (1969), 175: 'Magicians do not pray but compel gods or daimones by their potency, and the potency (*δύναμις*) which the operator assumes is called divine power or spirit (*πνεῦμα*), or divine effluence (*ἀπόρροια*)'; cited in D. Wenham, *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6, 154, n. 53.

³⁵ *Jesus the Magician*, 138.

³⁶ *Clement of Alexandria*, 229.

³⁷ S. R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 24.

fact that the language of 'miracle' and 'magic' was ambiguous. If it were otherwise, then it is hard to imagine how there could ever have been any debate on Jesus' status (e.g. the Beelzebub debate). Therefore, it can be prudently assumed that practices which are labeled by some as 'magical' can be understood in more positive ways.

4.1.4. *David E. Aune*

Aune's contribution to the study of 'Magic in Early Christianity' is an article with the same title published in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*.³⁸ It is an attempt to summarize the immense work done in the last two generations on the relationship between magic and early Christianity. The theological distinction between magic and religion is not satisfying, argues Aune, since 'in terms of beliefs and practices, there appears to be no thoroughly convincing way of distinguishing magic from religion'.³⁹ He points to the ambiguous nature of the ancient evidence which makes it very difficult to distinguish between miracle and magic and define the two categories. In his view, the manipulative vs. supplicative definition of miracle and magic⁴⁰ is inappropriate because 'magic not infrequently supplicates while religion not infrequently manipulates supernatural powers'.⁴¹

Describing magic as a form of 'social deviance', Aune believes that 'the sociologic description of the nature and function of magic in relation to religion, particularly within the framework of the structural-functional method . . . appears to be the most satisfying theoretical perspective from which to analyze magic in Graeco-Roman religions'.⁴² Aune uses two criteria to define magic as opposed to religion: 1) magic is 'that form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution' and 2) 'goals sought within the context of religious deviance are magical when attained through the management of supernatural powers in such a way that the results are virtually guaranteed'.⁴³

³⁸ D. Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', *ANRW* II, 23.1 (1980), 1507-57.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 1513.

⁴⁰ The distinction is made by anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, introduction by R. Redfield (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 19, 70; and James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 49. For a history of 'magic'/'religion' distinction in anthropology see Lucy Mair, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 210-231. Within the realm of biblical studies the distinction is best represented in Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3; cf. also his earlier *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 62-63.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 1513.

⁴² *Ibid*, 1514.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 1515.

Magic and miracle involve basically the same kind of practices, the only difference being that 'magic' is the negative label for the opponents' beliefs and practices and 'miracle' is the designation for the extraordinary within one's own group. Although it is not appropriate to regard Jesus as a magician⁴⁴, says Aune, he 'did in fact make use of magical techniques which must be regarded as magical because they were effected within the socially deviant context of a millennial movement and because he was able to harness supernatural power in such a way that he and his followers believed that success was virtually guaranteed'.⁴⁵

As for the practice of the LH, Aune believes that the tradition of Jesus' healing by touch was not influenced by Hellenistic magic, for touch as a healing rite was rarely practised by human miracle workers; it was used mostly by gods in legends. Neither do the Old Testament or Rabbinic healing practices offer any parallel.⁴⁶ In referring to the healing of the haemorrhaging woman, Aune contends: 'The ideas expressed in the story of the woman's healing do not border on magic, they are of the essence of Graeco-Roman magical notions'. Of course, the 'ideas' referred to by Aune include the concept of power and the transmission of such power through touch.⁴⁷

The sociological model on which Aune relies in his evaluation of Jesus' activity has been criticized by E. Yamauchi: Such a model is inappropriate since 1) it does not take seriously the supernatural nature of Christianity, and 2) it is 'inherently incapable of dealing with an individual who is unique'.⁴⁸ A more serious problem poses Aune's presupposition that the context of the millennial movement in which Jesus conducted his activity was 'socially deviant'. This assertion is both unqualified and difficult to sustain. Indeed, it is difficult to judge, if it can be decided at all, who is a member of the dominant social structure and who is 'socially deviant'.⁴⁹

In conclusion, the 'sociology of knowledge' model is not appropriate to distinguish between miracle and magic since it is based on subjective constructions. Within this framework, locative⁵⁰ terms such as 'miracle' and 'magic' have no objective

⁴⁴ Jesus' exorcisms and healings, says Aune, 'can be more appropriately subsumed under the role of messianic prophet', *ibid*, 1539.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 1538.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 1533 and n. 118.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1536 f.

⁴⁸ E. Yamauchi, Yamauchi, E. 'Magic or Miracle?' in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. VI, *The Miracles of Jesus*, edited by D. Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: SAP, 1986), 98.

⁴⁹ S.R. Garrett's, *The Demise*, 125, n. 99. An excellent example of this is the debate between Celsus and Origen about whether Jesus was a magician or a miracle-worker (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.67-68, 3.22-31, 7.35).

⁵⁰ The designation 'locative' for magic is used because 'it serves to differentiate between the person(s) labeling and the person(s) so labeled' (Garrett, *Demise*, 4). It has been initially suggested by J.Z. Smith, 'Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity', in *ANRW* II.16.1 (1978), 425-439.

content, being simply labels or products of the inter-group polemic. Aune himself acknowledges this when referring to accusations of magic he says: '(F)rom a sociological perspective the validity or invalidity of the charge itself becomes relatively unimportant, though from a historical perspective, however, it becomes crucial'.⁵¹

4.1.5. *Stevan L. Davies*

In his controversial contribution to the quest for the historical Jesus, *Jesus the Healer*,⁵² Davies reinterprets the gospel accounts of healings and exorcisms in the light of modern anthropological and psychological studies. Jesus is portrayed as primarily a spirit-possessed healer/exorcist who, being totally controlled by the Spirit, heals various psychosomatic illnesses.

In defining spirit-possession, Davies follows Vincent Crapanzano who uses psychological /psychiatric terminology like 'alter-ego', 'alter-personae', 'the other self', *et al.* For Crapanzano, spirit possession is 'any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit'.⁵³ The presence of ASC is discernible by epileptic-like seizures, convulsions or motor movements in trance-like states.

Spirit possession can be beneficent (or divine) and maleficent (or demonic), the difference between the two being that the former is 'ritualized' and sanctioned by the community and the established power, while the latter is 'peripheral' and generally regarded as sickness.⁵⁴

Davies accepts the common view that the gospel portray Jesus as a prophet, but he sets out to discover the nature of Jesus prophethood. Prophecy is defined as a state of 'Spirit-possession', an ecstatic state in which it is not the prophet himself who speaks, but the alter-persona, i.e. the Spirit. A prophet does not 'possess the Spirit' but is 'possessed by the Spirit'. Like the Old Testament and the first century CE prophets, from his baptism on Jesus is possessed by the Spirit and oscillates between his primary persona and 'the

⁵¹ 'Magic in Early Christianity', 1523. For criteria of distinguishing between miracle and magic which move beyond the absolute or relative definitions provided by anthropologists and the sociology of knowledge advocates, see A.M. Reimer, 'Miracle-Workers and Magicians', 9-16. Reimer builds on Peter Brown's exercise of 'historic imagination' (*Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* [London: Faber and Faber, 1982], 4) and argues that valid criteria for distinguishing between miracle and magic can be found in the content of the debate rather than in the accusations of magic. Reimer's approach is a diachronic investigation of the characters, focusing on the way charges of magic came to be attributed and the way in which the power is used and gained (13-16).

⁵² S.L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (London: SCM Press, 1995).

⁵³ V. Crapanzano, 'Introduction' in his and Vivian Garrison (eds.), *Case Studies in Spirit Possession*, V. Crapanzano and V. Garrison, eds. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977), 7 (italics in original).

⁵⁴ Model developed by Colleen Ward, 'Spirit Possession and Mental Health: A Psycho-Anthropological Perspective', in *Human Relations* 33 (1980): 149-63.

persona spirit of God'.⁵⁵ When possessed by the good Spirit of God, Jesus thought he was the Son of God.⁵⁶

But since the 'spirit-possession' model defines especially group possession phenomena like the Voodoo in Haiti or the Zar ceremonies of Middle East and Africa, and therefore cannot be properly used to describe Jesus as healer, Davies adopts one of Winkelman's five types of healer, namely that of medium.⁵⁷ According to Winkelman's categorisation, mediums are channels between the divine and the human world who, unlike healers, act primarily through the ASC (Altered States of Consciousness).⁵⁸ Their primary activities are healing and divination. If initially a medium experiences spontaneously induced ASC which are beyond his/her control, after a period of training such spontaneous experiences no longer occur. From this point on, it is in the medium's power to induce possession by deliberately entering an ASC.⁵⁹

According to Davies, Jesus displays 'almost all the traits of the "medium"'.⁶⁰ Whether Jesus exhibited 'abnormal, motor behaviour' such as convulsions and epileptic-like seizures during his ASC we cannot know, says Davies, since we cannot use an argument from silence (i.e. even if Jesus experienced this type of trances, the evangelists would have suppress such a tradition).⁶¹ However, 'the kingdom of God is a form of experience, an altered state of consciousness directly related to Jesus' career as a healer'.⁶² Jesus' sayings and parables serve not as teaching about the kingdom, but actually techniques by which Jesus helps his audience to enter in an ASC and, thus, experience the kingdom of God.

Davies' thesis raises many problems. First he makes use of the contemporary Western psychology which is inadequate for analysing persons from ancient Near East (e.g., his claim that abusive relationships in the family lead to demon-possession ignores

⁵⁵ *Jesus the Healer*, 44-51.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

⁵⁷ The other four type are shaman, healer, priest, sorcerer/witch. M. Winkelman, *Shamans, Priests and Witches: A Cross-Cultural Study of Magico-Religious Practitioners* (Anthropological Research Papers No. 44, Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 1992), 60f. A recent investigation of Jesus' identity through the lens of shamanism is provided by Min-Kyu Lee, 'A Man of High Degree: An Exploration of Jesus as Shaman in the Synoptic Gospels' (PhD Thesis, The University of Sheffield, 1999). Min-Kyu is critical of Davies' understanding that, in an ecstatic state, mediums change totally their identity into that of the spirits. Although he recognises that cross-culturally most mediums are in control of their ASC, Min-Kyu rejects the idea that this 'cross-cultural' type of medium can explain the activity of Jesus. His activity differs significantly from that of a medium. He proposes the shamanic model which, in his view, 'provides a significantly better "fit" for the narrative portrayal of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels' (21).

⁵⁸ Winkelman, *Shamans, Priests and Witches*, 30-33.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁶⁰ *Jesus the Healer*, 100.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 115.

the fact that the antique Mediterranean culture was highly competitive so that stress and oppression did not have a such a damaging effect on people as it does in our modern Western culture). Secondly, Davies ignores completely works on possession written by New Testament scholars using the social scientific methodology. However, the most serious problem with Davies use of the 'medium' model is that he does not distinguishes between various types of mediums, but generalises an extreme type of medium, that of the uncontrolled spirit-possession in Voodoo religion. Thus, he inadequately applies to Jesus a medium model which presupposes a total replacement of the medium's primary personality into that of the controlling spirit, whenever an ASC is induced.

I conclude the critique of Davies' thesis with an item which is close to my investigation of the transference of power through touch/the LH. According to Davies, 'the case of the woman with a flow of blood (Mk 5.25-34) where Jesus felt power flow from him without his intention is more likely to be a case of 'low control of ... power' [Winkelman's phrase] than of 'an impersonal source of power''.⁶³ Davies' contention that the power transfer happened during Jesus' ASC ignores the context which clearly indicates that Jesus was in no state of trance. On the contrary, he is portrayed as being fully conscious of what happened and able to communicate with the woman and those around him.

4.1.6. *Summary*

The above survey of works dealing with the issue of miracle and magic in the New Testament has been limited to those authors who discuss the role of physical contact in the transmission of power. A full engagement with the debate on miracles vs. magic in the New Testament is not possible in a limited work like this. Our ultimate goal is to see if Jesus' touch/LH were regarded by the authors of the gospels and their audiences as magic.

One point of agreement with the authors discussed in the above survey is that, in most situations, healing techniques are no valid criterion for distinguishing between miracle and magic. Our exegetical study of the pertinent pericopes will confirm this. The question of how precisely such distinction can be made is beyond the scope of this investigation. Nevertheless, at points we will make judgments on the nature of Jesus' miracles and those of his followers and will challenge the idea that the healing touch was understood by the biblical writers as magic. We will do that on the basis of the concept of power shared by them (and Jesus they depict) and, as Reimer suggests,⁶⁴ looking at the content of the debate and the way in which the power is used and gained.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁴ *Supra*, n. 51.

4.2. Jesus' Use of the Hand in Healing

The methods of healing used by Jesus, as described in the gospels, are various. He heals by pronouncing the healing (Mk 1.41; 2.11; 3.5; 10.52; Mt. 8.8, 13 par.; Lk. 8.54 par.; 17.14; Jn 4.50-53; 5.8), by using mud and saliva (Jn 9.1-41), by simply touching people (Mt. 8.3 par.; 8.15; 9.29; 20.34; Mk 7.33), by laying hands on them (Mk 6.5; 8.23, 25; Lk. 4.40; 13.13) and occasionally by being touched by the people (Mk 5.27f. par.; Lk. 6.19 par.).

The LH in connection with the healing activity of Jesus is mentioned eight times. In three places the gesture is part of a request addressed to Jesus: Jairus pleads with Jesus to lay his hand on his daughter (*ἐπιθῆς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς*, Mk 5.23; *ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ' αὐτήν*, Mt. 9.18); a deaf and dumb man is brought to Jesus that he might lay his hand on him (*ἵνα ἐπιθῆ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα*, Mk 7.32). It follows, then, that there are only five occasions when it is clearly reported that Jesus laid his hands on the sick: on a few at Nazareth (*ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας*, Mk 6.5), twice on a blind man (first 'on him' [*ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ* - Mk 8.23], and the second time 'on his eyes' [*πάλιν ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ*, v. 25]), on many at Capernaum (*ὁ δὲ ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιτιθεῖς ἐθεράπευεν αὐτούς*, Lk. 4.40) and on a woman with a 'spirit of infirmity' (*ἐπέθηκεν αὐτῇ τὰς χεῖρας*, Lk. 13.13).

To determine the significance attributed to the LH/touch as a gesture of healing by each gospel writer, in dealing with each pertinent passage separately, special attention will be given to the redactional contributions of each author. The redactional analysis which follows is conducted on the assumption of Marcan priority.

4.2.1. *Healings at Capernaum* (Mk 1.32-34; Mt. 8.16; Lk. 4.40-41)

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons (*δαιμονιζομένους*). And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him (Mk 1.32-34).

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick (Mt. 8.16).

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ (Lk. 4.40-41).

According to Mark, the healings take place at the entrance door of Peter's house. As for the temporal setting, all three evangelists agree that it is the evening of the very day Peter's mother-in-law is healed. In describing those who benefited from Jesus' healing activity, Mark makes distinction between the sick and the demon-possessed, but is silent about the methods used for their cure. By shifting from 'all' (πάντας) in v. 32 to 'many' (πολλούς) in v. 34, Mark is probably telling us that, for some reasons, not all who were sick were healed.

Matthew's story reduces Mark's account to the essential elements. None of the omissions are relevant to the present discussion. While keeping silent about the methods used by Jesus to heal, Matthew adds an important information, namely that Jesus cast out the spirits 'with a word'. For him, exorcism is performed without touch or hand-laying, only by word. Like Mark, Matthew keeps the healings and exorcisms apart: 'He [Jesus] cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick'.

Luke rewrites Mark more idiomatically and avoids redundancy. He also expands the Marcan material by adding the LH, the disclosure of Jesus' identity by the exorcised demons and the point about demons knowing Jesus as Christ.

Two aspects are relevant for our study. First, the addition of the LH to Mark's account is significant. Luke generalizes what he assumes to have been the customary practice of Jesus.⁶⁵ The second aspect refers to an outcome of Luke's tendency to generalize. Luke does not preserve Mark's clear cut distinction between the sick and the demon-possessed and this will bring into discussion the use of the LH in exorcism. The issue will be dealt with in a separate section of this chapter.⁶⁶

4.2.2. *Healings in connection with the Sermon on the Mount/Sermon on the Plain* (Mk 3.9-11; Lk. 6.19)

And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him; For he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God'. (Mk 3.9-11).

And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him (παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο) and healed them all (Lk. 6.17-19).

While the idea of transfer of power through touch appears earlier in Mark's narrative in 1.41 (the healing of the leper) and possibly in 1.31 (cf. *infra*, 4.3.1.), this is Mark's first story where the act of touching is attributed to the sick. Mark 3.10, 11 is part of a larger unit (3.7-19) in which the narrator presents Jesus as being thronged by crowds for healing

⁶⁵ I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 196.

(3.7-12) and then ascending 'the mountain' to appoint the Twelve. The section which is of interest for our study (3.7-12) is assigned in its entirety by Pesch to a pre-Markan tradition.⁶⁷ Especially on verbal considerations, Keck⁶⁸ and Schweizer⁶⁹ argue for the existence of a traditional core (3.7, 9-10) which Mark used. In spite of the critiques brought against Keck's thesis,⁷⁰ a redaction analysis of this passage cannot ignore the fact that it includes five *hapax-legomena* and several other terms which are found elsewhere in the pre-Markan tradition.⁷¹ Thus, adopting Keck's position as better grounded, verses 9 and 10 on which our discussion focuses contain no redactional elements.

In his account, Luke reverses the two segments of Mk 3.7-19 (i.e. 7-12 and 13-19) by presenting first the ascent of 'the mountain' for the appointment of the Twelve, and then the descent to crowds awaiting 'to hear and to be healed' (6.17). Five redactional elements in Luke's account are relevant to our discussion: 1) Luke brings together what Mark keeps apart (namely, the 'unclean spirits' of Mk 3.11 are put together with the sick [6. 18] and before the reference to the touching of Jesus by people [6.19]). 2) Luke elaborates on Mark's personified 'unclean spirits' (*τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα*) - as he refers to the demoniac - and changes the words to 'those who were troubled with unclean spirits' (*οἱ ἐνοχλούμενοι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων*). 3) Mark's reference to the sick attempting to touch Jesus is changed by Luke to include 'all the crowd'. 4) Luke drops the reference to the disclosure of Jesus' identity by the demons (Mk 3.11). 5) Luke supplements Mark's statement that people sought to touch Jesus (Mk 3.10) with the explanation of the reasons for that action: 'for power came forth from him (*παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο*) and healed them all' (6.19). Moreover, the change operated by Luke clarifies the unresolved tension in Mark with regard to the actual cure by reverse transfer of power (from the one touched to the one who touches). While Mark is silent about it, Luke certainly understood that Jesus yielded to the request of the people.

The insertion of the reference to the unclean spirits before the reference to the touch is awkward because it leaves the impression that the demoniacs too sought to touch Jesus with 'all the crowd'. The re-naming of Mark's demon-possessed as 'those who were troubled with unclean spirits' may indicate that Luke's intention here is to refer not to demoniacs as such, but to people with demonic obsession. The dropping of the reference

⁶⁶ *Infra*, 4.3.

⁶⁷ R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 1 (HTKNT 2/1-1; Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 198.

⁶⁸ L. Keck, 'Mk 3,7-12 and Mark's Christology', *JBL* 84 (1965), 346-47.

⁶⁹ E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, tr. D.H. Madvig (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), 79.

⁷⁰ Especially T.A. Burkill, 'Mark 3,7-12 and the Alleged Dualism in the Evangelist's Miracle Material', *JBL* 87 (1968): 409-17.

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion, see R. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC 34A; Waco, TX: Word Book Publishers, 1989), 142.

to their falling before Jesus and shouting ‘You are the Son of God’ supports this interpretation. Both here and in other passages, Luke broadens the demonic to include more than ‘possession’ (e.g. *θυγατέρα Ἀβραὰμ οὖσαν, ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ Σατανᾶς ἰδοὺ δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ ἔτη, οὐκ ἔδει λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ τούτου*, Lk. 13.16; *ὄχλουμένους ὑπὸ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων*, Acts 5.16; *τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου*, Acts 10.38). It seems that, in Luke’s view, all sickness has a dimension of the demonic.⁷² He uses verb *θεραπεύειν* not only for ‘those afflicted by unclean spirits’ (Lk 6.18, 13.10-13; Acts 5.16), but also for the demon-possessed (Lk. 8.2). If, on the other hand, by ‘troubled with unclean spirits’ Luke understands demon-possessed, the grouping of this category with the sick would look somehow awkward, for he includes them among ‘all the crowd’ (a common Lucan generalization, e.g. 15.1, 19.48, 20.45, 21.4, 17, 24, 38, etc.) who seeks to touch Jesus (v. 19). The same association is made earlier in the gospel (Lk. 4.40-41, to be discussed shortly) where, apparently, demons are exorcised by the LH.

Finally, Luke’s elaboration on Mark’s explanation of the reasons for touching Jesus is based on Mk 5.30. In referring to the source of the healing power, Luke changes Mark’s *ἐξ αὐτοῦ* (5.30) into *πᾶρα* + G. As in 8.46, the construction is to be translated ‘from him’ (*παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο*, 6.19) rather than ‘out of him’. This might be Luke’s way to indicate that Jesus’ power is not a fluid which flows ‘out of’ Jesus’ body, but a force which *proceeds* ‘from him’. A more detailed discussion on Luke’s tendency to avoid a magical understanding of Jesus’ power is included in the next section (4.2.3.).

4.2.3. *The healing of the woman with haemorrhage* (Mk. 5.25-34; Mt. 9.20-22; Lk. 8.44-48)

There are essential differences in the way the three synoptic evangelists relate the story. The longest and most complete narration is given by Mark, as shown in the following synopsis:

⁷² G. H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 98.

| <u>Mark</u> | <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Luke</u> |
|---|--|--|
| 5.25 καὶ γυνὴ οὖσα ἐν ρύσει αἵματος δώδεκα ἔτη | 9.20 Καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ αἱμορροοῦσα δώδεκα ἔτη | 8.43 καὶ γυνὴ οὖσα ἐν ρύσει αἵματος ἀπὸ ἐτῶν δώδεκα, |
| 5.26 καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν καὶ δαπανήσασα τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς πάντα καὶ μηδὲν ὠφεληθεῖσα ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ χεῖρον ἐλθοῦσα, | | ἣτις ἰατροῖς προσαναλώσασα ὅλον τὸν βίον] οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἀπ' οὐδενὸς θεραπευθῆναι, |
| 5.27 ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλθοῦσα ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ· | προσελθοῦσα ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ· | 8.44 προσελθοῦσα ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ, |
| 5.28 ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὅτι Ἐὰν ἄψωμαι κἂν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι. | 9.21 ἔλεγεν γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῇ, Ἐὰν μόνον ἄψωμαι τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι. | |
| 5.29 καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξηράνθη ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς, καὶ ἔγνω τῷ σώματι ὅτι ἴαται ἀπὸ τῆς μᾶστιγος. | | καὶ παραχρῆμα ἔστη ἡ ρύσις τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς. |
| 5.30 καὶ εὐθὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐπιγνοὺς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξελθοῦσαν ἐπιστραφεὶς ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ἔλεγεν, Τίς μου ἤψατο τῶν ἱματίων; | | 8.45 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τίς ὁ ἀψάμενός μου; |
| 5.31 καὶ ἔλεγον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, Βλέπεις τὸν ὄχλον συνθλίβοντά σε, καὶ λέγεις, Τίς μου ἤψατο; | | ἀρνούμενων δὲ πάντων εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος, Ἐπιστάτα, οἱ ὄχλοι συνέχουσίν σε καὶ ἀποθλίβουσιν. |
| 5.32 καὶ περιεβλέπετο ἰδεῖν τὴν τοῦτο ποιήσασαν. | | 8.46 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἦψατό μου τις, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔγνω δύναμιν ἐξεληλυθυῖαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ. |
| 5.33 ἡ δὲ γυνὴ φοβηθεῖσα καὶ τρέμουσα, εἰδυῖα ὃ γέγονεν αὐτῇ, ἦλθεν καὶ προσέπεσεν αὐτῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ πάσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. | | 8.47 ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γυνὴ ὅτι οὐκ ἔλαθεν τρέμουσα ἦλθεν καὶ προσπεσοῦσα αὐτῷ δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἤψατο αὐτοῦ ἀπήγγειλεν ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ὡς ἴαθη παραχρῆμα. |
| 5.34 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· ὑπάγε εἰς εἰρήνην, καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιὴς ἀπὸ τῆς μᾶστιγός σου. | 9.22 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς στραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν εἶπεν, Θάρσει, θυγάτηρ· ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε. καὶ ἐσώθη ἡ γυνὴ ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης. | 8.48 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην. |

In each synoptic gospel, the story of the haemorrhaging woman is ‘sandwiched’ between the beginning and the ending of the story concerning the raising of Jairus’ daughter. The dovetailing of the two stories is most likely the work of Mark⁷³ or the pre-Markan redactor⁷⁴, but can equally well be historical.⁷⁵ They are joined by at least two themes: that of the saving response of faith and that of Jesus’ power which is effective even in the most extreme situations. The narrative function of the intercalation is twofold: (1) it creates a time lapse which underscores the actual death of Jairus’ daughter, and (2) it presents another healing miracle in order to raise the reader’s expectations in anticipation of the restoration to life of the young girl.⁷⁶

The three accounts of the ‘narrative sandwich’ vary considerably not only in length, but also in emphasis. Mark’s story of 374 words is told by Matthew in 138 words and by Luke in 280 words. Significant also is the fact that only 17 words are exactly the same in all three versions of the story. What is basically said in these 17 words is that the woman is ill for twelve years, that she is cured by touching Jesus and that Jesus credits her faith as the cause of her healing.

⁷³ William Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 189; and apparently J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2 (London: Doubleday, 1994), 708-709 and 755 n. 140.

⁷⁴ R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 228f.; M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 220; Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium: Eine redactionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (SANT 23; Munchen: Kosel, 1970), 110; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 292.

⁷⁵ V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 289; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 182; and possibly R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 268.

⁷⁶ R. Gundry, *Mark*, 268; V.K. Robbins, ‘The Woman Who Touched Jesus’ Garment: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of the Synoptic Accounts’, *NTS* 33 (1987), 502. By underscoring the narrative function of the intercalated story, I do not necessarily mean that Mark’s intercalation is artificial. Among those who suggest that the literary connection of the two stories in Mark reflects a historical connection are: C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 182, and possibly R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, p. 268. According to C.S. Mann, the connection, if not historical, ‘rests upon a very early tradition.’ It has the air of and reconstructed oral tradition . . . a compelling and strong narrative, vividly recalled by and eyewitness’ (*Mark* [AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986], p. 284). That the two stories were intercalated in a pre-Markan tradition is claimed by Bultmann (*Geschichte*, 228-29); M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 220; K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu*, 110-111; G. Schneider, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 196; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 292, *et al.* Scholars who view the intercalation as a Marcan literary product include William Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 189, and apparently J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2 (London: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 708-9 and p. 755, n. 140. However, whatever position one takes on the historical nature of the intercalation, the story of the woman with a hemorrhage is self-contained and perfectly intelligible without the story of Jairus’ daughter (so also J.P. Meier, *ibid.*, 709). For an elaborate discussion on the intercalation, see T. Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories: Narration, Definition, and Function* (AUSDDS 18; Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1993).

In what follows, I will analyse the redactional activity of the evangelists and investigate the reasons behind such activity.⁷⁷ For the sake of brevity, only those redactional elements which are directly relevant to this work will be taken up and discussed.

Mark's account is the longest and most picturesque of the three. The hopeless condition of the woman is described by a lengthy series of participial phrases (five) which separate the subject ('woman') from the main verb ('touched'): (1) she has had a flow of blood (for twelve years), (2) suffers much, (3) spends all her money on doctors, (4) her condition is not improving but, on the contrary, (5) gets worse.

The woman's 'hearing about Jesus' (*ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*) implies primarily her hearing about similar cases when people have been healed by Jesus. Earlier in the gospel (3.10), Mark gives prominence to the healing touch when he depicts crowds of sick people pressing upon Jesus to touch him. The woman's 'hearing about Jesus' may also refer to his coming to that area. The news raises her hopes and highlights Jesus' good reputation among the people.⁷⁸

As an omniscient narrator, Mark reproduces the woman's reasoning: 'She had been saying ['in herself' adds Mt. 9.21], 'If I touch even [or 'only' (Gk., *καὶ*)]⁷⁹ his garments, I will be saved'' (Mk 5.28). The background of the woman's faith appears to be the popular belief that a holy man's clothes radiate beneficial power (cf. Acts 5.15; 19.12). Since she is a woman in a male-dominated society⁸⁰ and is probably legally unclean⁸¹ (Lev 15.19-33; Ezek 36.17; *m. Zabim* 5:1), she cannot make public her request;

⁷⁷ For a socio-rhetorical analysis of the use of traditional material in the synoptic accounts of this story, see V.K. Robbins, 'The Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment', 502-515.

⁷⁸ R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 269.

⁷⁹ A.T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 208.

⁸⁰ On this see Mary Ann Tolbert, *Mark*, in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by C.A. Newsom and S. Ringe (London: SPCK, 1992), 267-68; Amy-Jill Levine, *Matthew*, in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, p. 256 f.

⁸¹ This raises the question of the woman's nationality. In most modern commentaries, the question is not dealt with. There are two views on the issue. According to the view suggested by Eusebius of Caesarea, the woman was a gentile from Caesarea of Philippi. Eusebius claims that he has seen a monument there to commemorate the miracle and that at the base of the statue grew a herb which had curative powers (*H.E.* 7.18). Supporters of this view (list in E. May, '... For Power Went Forth from Him ...', *CBQ* 14 [1952], 96 n. 8) argue that an Israelite woman would not have been found in such a throng of people. According to a second view, initially suggested by Tertullian (*Contra Marcion*, 4.20; PL 2, col. 408), the woman was a Jewess, not a Gentile. E. May follows the second view, suggesting that Jesus' manner of addressing the woman as 'daughter' confirms her Israelite nationality (*op. cit.*, 96-97). The apocryphal *Acta Pilati* (7) identifies the woman with Berenice (Lat., Veronica): 'And a certain woman named Berenice, crying out from afar off said: "I had an issue of blood and I touched the fringe of his garment, and the flowing of my blood was stopped which I had twelve years." The Jews say, "We have a law that a woman shall not come to give testimony".' (translated by V.K. Robbins, 'The Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment', *NTS* 33, 511, on the basis of the Greek text found in K. Aland, *Synopsis*, 193). Ambrose (*Sermo* 46) maintains her name was Martha. It must be said that the question of this woman's identity cannot be decided.

this would put her healing in jeopardy. The woman must adopt a strategy which allows her to ‘steal a miracle’; she would come ‘from behind’ and touch imperceptibly Jesus’ clothes.

The narrative function of the secret touching of Jesus’ clothes is to emphasize both the woman’s faith (the touching *even* of Jesus’ clothes will make her well) and the greatness of Jesus’ power which can radiate even through his clothes.⁸² The magnitude of Jesus power is also emphasized by the use of the adverb ‘immediately’ (εὐθύς), which puts such power in contrast with the twelve-year-long effort of the physicians to cure the woman, and by the shift from ‘flow’ (ρύσει, v. 25) to ‘fountain’ (πηγή, v. 29).

The story contains the first occurrence of δύναμις in Mark’s gospel. In 6.2, 5 and 9.39 the word refers to an act of power, but here and in 6.14 it is the force by which a mighty work is accomplished. For Mark, the healing power is transmitted in this case physically. The power, notes Mark, went forth from Jesus himself (lit., ‘the from-him power going’; τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξελοῦσαν, 5.30).

With regard to the nature of Jesus’ power and of the transference process we must investigate the charge that Mark displays a magical conception of miracle-working. Upon this view, when the woman touched Jesus, he suffered a loss of power.⁸³ Mark’s remarks on the woman’s and Jesus’ perception of the ‘power transfer’ supply some information about the nature of the power involved and the process by which it is transferred.

The woman ‘felt in [her] body’ (lit., ‘knew by means of [her] body’, εἶπεν τῷ σώματι) that she had been healed. This language does not necessarily suggest that the healing power entered the woman’s body like electricity. While the text offers no basis for accepting or rejecting such a subjective feeling, the evidence seems to point instead to the woman’s perception of *the effects* of the healing power: ‘She knew in her body *that she*

On the purity issue, it is not certain if she was in a state of ‘ritual uncleanness’ as correctly notes Amy-Jill Levine, ‘Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law, and Haemorrhaging Woman’, in *Treasures New and Old*, ed. by David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 379-97. Cf. Mary Ann Tolbert, *Mark*, 267f.

⁸² R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 269.

⁸³ See D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1837), 98 who likens Jesus with ‘a charged battery which discharges itself when touched’; G. Grundmann, *Der Begriff der Kraft in der neutestamentliche Gedankenwelt*, 61, speaks about such loss of power: ‘One is not allowed in doubt that behind these formulations lies the idea of a “substance/essence of power” (*Kraftsubstanz*), with which Jesus is meant to be filled, and which reduced itself at the blink of an eye [when used] in healing’. However, Grundmann does not identify Jesus’ power with animal magnetism. See also Ray Summners, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 102: ‘This [Jesus’ awareness] is another indication that the healing miracles Jesus performed drained his energies. It was part of his reason for frequent retirement for rest in prayer’. Leon Morris, *Luke* (TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 160, notes: ‘He [Jesus] did not heal without some cost to Himself’. Guelich is not far from making a similar assertion when he describes the power as ‘something that goes out from Jesus, whose absence can be perceived’ (*Mark 1-8:26*, 298). J.P. Meier says: ‘According to Mark, Jesus senses healing power streaming from his body, almost as though it were an electric current. Thus, a magical conception of

had been healed (ὅτι ἴαται) of her disease' (Mk 5.29). Such perception must have been sensory but, on the basis of Mark's information, it cannot be determined whether it refers to something like electricity, to the cessation of the pain, or the stopping of the blood-flow.

The transfer of the healing power is also discerned by Jesus. The words in which Mark describes Jesus' perception are different from those used to describe the woman's feeling: He did not perceive it in his body (τῷ σώματι) but 'in himself' (ἐπιγνοὺς ἐν ἑαυτῷ). The difference in words appears to be significant. Jesus' knowledge is not dependent on somatic feelings but is 'spiritual' (cf. Mk 2.8, ἐπιγνοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ). Generally speaking, by such supernatural knowledge Jesus has the capacity to know not only that someone touched him but also the identity of that person.⁸⁴ It is true that Mark does not attribute supernatural knowledge of this woman's identity to Jesus,⁸⁵ but he does so elsewhere in the gospel.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the question 'Who touched me?' does not necessarily imply lack of knowledge; Mark gives other instances when Jesus asks questions although he already knows the answers.⁸⁷ It is quite probable, then, that Jesus' perception of the power going from him is regarded by Mark as supernatural knowledge.

Even when one argues that Mark understood Jesus to have felt subjectively the transfer of power, there is no evidence that the evangelist regarded this power as an impersonal *mana*. There is nothing in the text (or in the entire gospel) to point to a loss of power in Jesus' body during the performance of miracles (or to a replenishing of the power through prayer, for that matter).⁸⁸ Jesus' power could have been very well understood as a spiritual quantity which is not diminished in the process of its operation. We are reminded here of the simile used by Rabbis in connection with the virtue transferred from Moses to Joshua. Moses did not lose his faculties in the process, because he was 'like one kindling a light with a light'.⁸⁹

miracle-working is attributed by the narrative to Jesus as well as to the woman (v 30).' (*A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2 [London: Doubleday, 1994], 709)

⁸⁴ As Gundry puts it, Mark's statement about Jesus 'adds supernatural knowledge to supernatural power' (*Mark*, 270); so also Eric May, '...For Power Went Forth from Him...', 93-103.

⁸⁵ Some scholars take the feminine participle of 'who had done it' (τὴν τοῦτο ποιήσασαν) in v.32 to imply supernatural knowledge by Jesus of the woman's identity (e.g. R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 271). I follow here C.S. Mann who argues that 'the expression comes from the viewpoint of Mark' (*Mark* [AB; New York: Doubleday, 1986], 285).

⁸⁶ Mk 2.8; Mk 12.43 f. For a detailed discussion on the nature and limits of Jesus' knowledge, see Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 198-204.

⁸⁷ Mk 2.8; 9.33.

⁸⁸ *Contra* Summner, *Commentary on Luke*, 102.

⁸⁹ *Sifre Rabbah* on Num. 27.18, 20.

The healing is effected concomitantly with the woman's action and independently of any action of Jesus (5.29).⁹⁰ Jesus' words to the woman, 'your faith has made you well' (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε), have been understood by some scholars to be a correction of any magical misconceptions the woman displayed. By attributing the healing to her faith, Mark's Jesus reinterprets the means of her healing.⁹¹ That may be so if we allow that the woman's inner reflection about touching Jesus' clothes reflects a superstitious belief. It should be noted that Jesus' words do not bring to her the news that she has been healed (not to mention the healing itself) for, even before Jesus says anything, she knows that she has been healed. Moreover, 'all the truth' that she just stated publicly must have included not only her medical history but also the reality of her healing (cf. Lk. 8.47). Mark's use of a perfect tense (σέσωκέν, v. 34) points to an action already completed and, therefore, rules out the reading of Jesus' words as a healing statement. Jesus' remark explains rather the reason for her healing: She should not think that it was her touch as such that made her well, but her touching Jesus *with faith*.⁹² The implication is that Jesus' power is not regarded by Mark as a 'mana-like' power which discharges

⁹⁰ Again, this has been taken by some scholars as strong evidence for magic, where the power is impersonal and it acts without the knowledge or the approval of its bearer. E.g. G. Grundmann, 'δύναμις', *TDNT*, II, 299-305. E.P. Gould, *St. Mark* (ICC, 7th ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1932), 98, argues that the healing was 'not by the conscious exercise of power by Jesus, but by power that went out from him involuntarily, and of which he became conscious only afterwards.' Similarly, J.M. Hull who, in treating the same healing miracle, argues: 'The power works immediately and impersonally; it responds to the contact of any believing person without the knowledge and approval of the power-bearer himself' (*Hellenistic Magic*, 107). Cf. also G. Twelftree who states: 'Mark sees Jesus' ability to heal as depending on a substance independent of him, flowing from him to the sick person who has faith in his healing power' (*Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* [Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999], 75). It is, however, doubtful that Mark regarded Jesus' power in such terms. First, he does not forget to tell us that the woman approaches Jesus in faith (5.28) and that faith is that which makes her well. Secondly, in mentioning the fear produced among the observers, Mark undoubtedly points to the divine origin of Jesus' power (4.41; 5.15). Similarly, the people's request in 5.17 that he would depart from their area and the association of Jesus in the people's minds with prophets of the Old Testament and with John the Baptist (6.14-15) are in fact a recognition of his sanctity. It becomes clear that in the people's minds, this miracle worker is an agent of God, a prophet and the power he is using is the power of God (J.A. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 213-215). In C.D. Marshall's words, 'Jesus' power is ultimately under the governance of God, and . . . it carries an inherent disposition towards receptive faith' (*Faith As a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 106).

⁹¹ Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium*, 115; J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (EKK 2/1; Zurich: Benzinger/Neukirchen - Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 213.

⁹² The phrase 'even his clothes' marks the intensity of the woman's faith. Surely, Mark would want his readers know that the faith commended by Jesus here is not the superstitious faith in the healing power of Jesus' clothes. As already discussed, by providing information about the woman's inner reflections, Mark leads his readers to understand that it is only her desire to remain unknown that causes her to touch Jesus' clothes rather than his body; Jesus' clothes are nothing but an extension of his person. It is the faith in the sanctity of Jesus and, implicitly, in his power to heal that Jesus commends. So also C.D. Marshall, *Faith As a Theme*, 105-106. E. May, ' . . . For Power Went Forth from Him . . . ', 98.

itself at a simple touch. It responds only to an intentional touch, i.e. a touch which is moved by faith.

Jesus' final words to the woman, 'Be healed of your disease', are taken by some to be in tension with the events described in v. 29. The command, however, 'is far from being an appendage awkwardly redundant of a past cure'.⁹³ It seals what has already happened and looks to the future, assuring the woman of the ongoing condition of her health.⁹⁴

Luke's account is shorter than Mark's but not as drastically abbreviated as Matthew's. He abbreviates Mark's description of how the woman's condition became worse in spite of spending all she had on doctors, by simply saying that she 'could not be healed by anyone'. Next, Luke omits any reference to the woman's implied knowledge of previous healing by Jesus (Mk 5.27) and to her inner thoughts about touching his clothes (Mk 5.28). Other omissions include the reference to the woman's knowledge that she has been cured (Mk 5.28-29) and to her fear (Mk 5.33), although Luke preserves the reference to her trembling.

There are a number of redactional changes which Luke makes, which are relevant to our discussion. First, like Matthew, Luke replaces Mark's *ἱμάτιον* with the more specific *τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου*.⁹⁵ He does so on the basis of Mk 6.56 and, probably, for the sake of being specific. From a narrative standpoint, however, Luke's reading magnifies Jesus' power which is regarded as effective to the furthest point of his garments.

Second, Luke changes Mark's question, *Who touched my clothes?* to a more general one, *Who touched me?* The change is interesting, especially in view of Luke's specific information that it is the tassel of Jesus' cloak that the woman touched. But in

⁹³ R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 272.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 300; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Mark*, 185.

⁹⁵ The *ἱμάτιον* was a rectangular garment worn as an outer cloak which had a tassel in each of the four corners (Num 15.37-39; Dt 22.12). It was thrown over the shoulder, which made two of the four tassels readily accessible from behind. Naturally, the touching of the tassels would make the contact imperceptible. The agreement of Luke with Matthew against Mark is explained by W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison as 'independent use of Mk 6.56' where people touch 'the tassel of his garment' (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. II [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991], 129). For Matthew's and Luke's specific reasons to adopt Mk 6.56 into the story of the woman with hemorrhage, see J.T. Cummings, 'The Tassel of his Cloak: Mark, Luke, Matthew - and Zechariah', in *Studia Biblica* 1978, II. *Papers on the Gospels*, edited by E.A. Livingstone (JSNTS 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 47-61. According to Cummings, Luke notices a triadic structure in Mark, i.e. three ascending stages from touching 'him' (*αὐτοῦ*, Mk 3.10) to touching 'even his clothes' (*καὶ τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ*, Mk 5.28) to the climax of touching 'the tassel of his cloak' (*καὶ τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ*, Mk 6.56) and suppresses the three stages into two (Lk. 6.19; 8.44), postponing the final climax for the stories of Acts (5.15; 9.11). Matthew, on the other hand, suppresses the prelude (Mk 3.10) and repeats Mark's climax (Mt. 9.20; 14.36). Perhaps not even noticing Mark's structure, Matthew rather perceives in the touching of the tassel of Jesus' cloak an allusion to the prophecy of Zech. 8.23. (Cummings, 50-51).

Luke's version the supernatural knowledge of Jesus is better underscored: he knows that someone touched him, although the touching of a tassel is not normally perceptible. While it is difficult to precisely assess Luke's reasons for this change, it might be that he intends to deflect attention from Jesus' clothes to his person as the true source of his power.

Third, the harsh comment of the disciple concerning the absurdity of Jesus' question, 'You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, "Who touched me?"' (Mk 5.31), is softened by Luke and put in Peter's mouth: 'Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!' Luke raises the understanding of the people above that of Peter. They understand the question, for they all deny that they have touched Jesus (8.45).

Fourth, in having Jesus reply to Peter's comment, Luke takes the reference to the power proceeding from Jesus, which Mark has inserted in his narration, and puts it in the mouth of Jesus: 'Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from (ἀπ') me' (Lk. 8.46). This is consistent with Luke's tendency in general to leave it to his characters to give the theological interpretation of the event he describes (e.g. 4.21, 23, 24, 36; 7.16). Here Luke emphasises that to touch Jesus is to come in contact with his power and thus be healed.⁹⁶ However, the change from ἐξ αὐτοῦ in Mark's indirect speech (5.30) to ἀπ' ἐμοῦ in Luke's direct speech may indicate a desire on Luke's part to eliminate any possible idea of an involuntary flow of power from Jesus. This is the second time when Luke mitigates Mark's sharper expressions (cf. discussion on 6.19). In Luke's version, then, the power departs 'from' him rather than 'out of' him. It is the 'power of the Lord' residing in Jesus (cf. 5.17), which flows *from* him to the healed person, in response to faith. Unlike Matthew who in order to avoid the impression of magic changes Mark to the point of transferring the moment of healing to Jesus' words (e.g. Mt. 9.22), Luke deals more boldly with the subject of magic. He is able to take up what appears to be superstition and explain it in terms of divine power.⁹⁷

Fifth, Luke expands Mark's brief statement that the woman told Jesus 'all the truth' by having the woman recount 'in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed'. The expansion is perhaps a compensation for Luke's omission of the woman's inner thoughts before approaching Jesus. However, the repeated accentuation that she was healed 'immediately' connects unmistakably the healing with the moment of touching. Luke's use of παραχρῆμα ('right on the spot') instead of Mark's εὐθύς emphasizes the instantaneous character of the healing.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ P.J. Achtemeier, 'Lucan Perspective', 557.

⁹⁷ W. Grundmann, 'δύναμις', *TDNT* II, 300-303; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 346.

⁹⁸ The differentiation made by J.B. Green between the physical cure in v. 47 (ἰάομαι) and the complete healing of this woman (her being made whole) in v. 48 (σώζω) is noteworthy (*The Gospel of*

As in Mark, the magical function of the touch is eliminated by the statement of Jesus that it was the woman's faith which cured her. It is possible to understand, as Marshall suggests, that, by having Jesus dismiss the woman with a Jewish blessing ('Go in peace'), Luke brings the woman's healing into direct relationship with God's blessing, suggesting that she has been healed through God's power which was with Jesus.⁹⁹

Overall, the changes operated by Luke are not highly significant; they consist mainly of abbreviations and stylistic improvements.¹⁰⁰ The concept of the transfer of power by physical contact in Luke is as prominent as in Mark¹⁰¹, without diminishing, however, the essential role of faith as both cause and effect of the healing. Perhaps more than Mark, Luke emphasizes the fact that Jesus' power to heal is God's power.

Matthew reduces Mark's story to what he considers to be essential; he says in three verses what Mark says in ten. The elements omitted by Matthew which are of interest for the present study are: the references to the woman's perception that she has been healed (v. 29), Jesus' awareness that 'a power came forth from him' (v. 30) and Jesus' question 'Who touched my clothes?' (v. 30). In retelling the story, Matthew recounts basically three aspects: what the woman did, what she thought, and Jesus' comment on her faith.

As in Mark's version, the woman approaches Jesus from behind but here she touches 'the fringe (possibly 'Q') (or 'tassel', *κράσπεδον*) of his garment' (v. 20). Matthew preserves Mark's narration on the woman's contemplation (*ἔλεγεν γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῇ*) in direct discourse: 'If I only (*μόνον*) touch his garment, I shall be made well' (v. 21). The replacing of *κἄν* with *μόνον* (cf. 14.36), a favourite Matthean word, and the placing of *μόνον* before *ἄψωμαι* shifts the emphasis from Jesus' clothes ('at least his garments', Mk 5.28) to touching ('if I *only* touch', 9.21). As Davies and Allison note, the change underlines Jesus' power which can effect healing with little effort: 'only' a touch will suffice.¹⁰² Just as a word is sufficient for Jesus to heal a centurion's servant ('only say the word', Mt. 8.8), so a touch is sufficient here to save a haemorrhaging woman.

In omitting any reference to Jesus' perception of the power flowing from him and the dialogue regarding the discovery of the healed woman, Matthew underlines Jesus' supernatural knowledge: He knows both the woman's identity and her motives. Jesus

Luke, [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 347, n. 103 and 349). For the more comprehensive range of meaning of *σώζω*, see TLNT 3:344-57.

⁹⁹ I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 346.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 341.

¹⁰¹ See J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 105-14.

¹⁰² W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, II, 129. Additionally, as Twelftree notes, both 'if I only touch' and 'at least his garment' emphasise the faith (*Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 119).

addresses her: 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well' (v. 22).¹⁰³ As in Mark, the element of faith is preserved and emphasized. In fact, reading Matthew's account with 'faith' in mind, it becomes obvious that Matthew takes over from Mark only those elements which illustrate the woman's faith.

The view that Matthew, embarrassed by Mark's Hellenistic concept of impersonal power, describes the healing as being entirely through Jesus' word is very common.¹⁰⁴ The touching of Jesus' garment by the woman is intended by Matthew, says Held, not as a means of transfer of power, but 'solely an expression of her request'. The faith which 'saved' the woman is seen as a 'praying faith'.¹⁰⁵

That Matthew was embarrassed by the Hellenistic idea of an involuntary discharge of power is quite possible. This explains his omission of Jesus' perception that power went out from him unexpectedly. Yet, it appears that Matthew's intention is not to eliminate completely the idea of power being transferred through physical contact. The perfect tense of *σέσωκέν* in 9.22 refers back to the moment of touching, indicating that the woman is healed the moment she touches Jesus; the emphasis is, however, on the lasting effect of the action.¹⁰⁶ The phrase *ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης*, characteristic to Matthew, does not seem to refer only to the instance of Jesus' pronouncement but to the encounter as a whole, again with the emphasis on the permanence of the healing.¹⁰⁷ The interpretation that the moment of healing coincides in Matthew with Jesus' pronouncement of the healing rather than with the touching does not seem to be substantiated. In all three synoptic gospels, the words addressed to the woman, 'Your faith has made you well', are not words which make the healing effective, but an explication of what has actually

¹⁰³ Other examples of Matthew correcting the 'low' christology of Mark are Mt 13.58 (compare with Mk 6.5) and his omission of Mk 7.31-37 and 8.22-26.

¹⁰⁴ H.J. Held, 'Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories' in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (1963), 179; Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (1965), 512; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCBC, 1972), 179; E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (1975), 229; R.T. France, *Matthew* (TNTC, 1985), 171; V.K. Robbins, 'The Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment', 507; E.R. Kalin, 'Matthew 9:18-26: An Exercise in Redaction Criticism', *CurTM* 15 (1988), 44-45; Sanders and Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 171; D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 249; D. Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 108.

¹⁰⁵ H.J. Held, *op. cit.*, 287; also M. Hutter, 'Ein altorientalischer Bittgestus in Mt 9,20-22', *ZNW* 75 (1984), 134, with parallels from ancient Mesopotamian literature. The *Babli* has an episode which depicts school children touching the tassels of Hanin ha-Nehba's cloak to gain his attention and ask him to pray for rain (*b.Ta'an*. 23b).

¹⁰⁶ So N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, (Edinburgh, 1965), 33; R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (1964), 375; R.H. Gundry, *Matthew* (1982), 174; R.H. Mounce, *Matthew* (NIBC, 1991), 86.

¹⁰⁷ According to M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospel and Acts* (1968), 108-112, the phrase 'from that hour' is a typical Rabbinic phrase. I disagree at this point with W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison who argue that the expression 'refers not to the woman's action but to Jesus' words' (*op. cit.*, 130).

happened.¹⁰⁸ She should not think that she was healed because she touched Jesus, but because she has done it with faith. Gundry has convincingly shown that Matthew's omissions do not eliminate the idea of a transfer of power through physical touch as is commonly believed:

Though omissions in the first gospel bring the statement concerning salvation by faith to the center of the story, the woman's action in touching Jesus' garment hardly suffers loss. To the contrary, Matthew inserts the tassel and supplies 'only' (v. 21). The implication in the perfect tense of *σέσωκέν* is that the woman was already saved by the time Jesus pronounced her so. Therefore we should not think that to avoid magic Matthew transfers the moment of salvation from the woman's touching Jesus to Jesus' speaking to her.¹⁰⁹

In conclusion, like Mark and Luke, Matthew intends to connect the healing with the moment of contact; it is only that in Matthew one has to derive such a conclusion while the other two gospel writers say it explicitly. Therefore, attempts to associate Mark's and (especially) Luke's concept of power with Hellenistic categories and that of Matthew with Jewish categories are not fully justified. It is possible however that, in retelling the story, Matthew has reshaped it so that it might not convey the idea of an automatic flow of power, while still describing a healing by touch.

4.2.4. *The raising of Jairus' daughter* (Mk. 5.22-43; Mt. 9.18-26; Lk. 8.41-56)

As Guelich notes, the transmission of power through touch or the LH is 'a thematic connection' between this story and that of the healing of the haemorrhaging woman.¹¹⁰ Mark has the LH as part of Jairus' request: 'Come and lay hands on her (*ἐπιθῆς τὰς χεῖρας*) in order that she may be saved and live (*σωθῆ καὶ ζήσῃ*)'. The LH is requested because at this point Jairus' daughter is not dead; she is only ill. Since there is no evidence of a Marcan redactional activity in v. 23, the LH must be part of the pre-Markan tradition. As Marshall notes, Jairus 'does not ask Jesus for special prayer or magical manipulation, as he might a miracle-working rabbi, but for the direct communication of "saving" and "life giving" power through the laying on of hands'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Mark's command 'Be healed of your disease' (5.34) should rather be regarded as a 'sealing' of the healing that has already happened.

¹⁰⁹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 174.

¹¹⁰ R. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 296.

¹¹¹ C.D. Marshall, *Faith as a theme in Mark's narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 96.

| <u>Mark</u> | <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Luke</u> |
|--|--|--|
| 5.22 καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τῶν ἀρχισυναγῶγων, ὀνόματι Ἰαῖρος, καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν πίπτει πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ | 9.18 ἰδοὺ ἄρχων εἰς ἐλθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων | 8.41 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἦλθεν ἀνὴρ ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰαῖρος, καὶ οὗτος ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς ὑπῆρχεν, καὶ πεσὼν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας [τοῦ] Ἰησοῦ παρεκάλει αὐτὸν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, |
| 5.23 καὶ παρακαλεῖ αὐτὸν πολλὰ λέγων ὅτι Τὸ θυγάτριόν μου ἐσχάτως ἔχει, | ὅτι Ἡ θυγάτηρ μου ἄρτι ἐτελεύτησεν· | 8.42 ὅτι θυγάτηρ μονογενῆς ἦν αὐτῷ ὡς ἐτῶν δώδεκα καὶ αὐτὴ ἀπέθνησκειν. |
| ἵνα ἐλθὼν ἐπιθῆς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῇ ἵνα σωθῇ καὶ ζήσῃ. | ἀλλὰ ἐλθὼν ἐπίθεσ τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ' αὐτήν, καὶ ζήσεται. | |
| 5.24 καὶ ἀπήλθεν μετ' αὐτοῦ. | 9.19 καὶ ἐγερθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. | 'Εν δὲ τῷ ὑπάγειν αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι συνέπιγον αὐτόν. |
| 'Ἐτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἔρχονται ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχισυναγῶγου λέγοντες ὅτι Ἡ θυγάτηρ σου ἀπέθανεν· τί ἔτι σκύλλεις τὸν διδάσκαλον; | | 8.49 'Ἐτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἔρχεται τις παρὰ τοῦ ἀρχισυναγῶγου λέγων ὅτι Τέθνηκεν ἡ θυγάτηρ σου, μηκέτι σκύλλε τὸν διδάσκαλον. |
| 5.36 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς παρακούσας τὸν λόγον λαλούμενον λέγει τῷ ἀρχισυναγῶγῳ, Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε. | | 8.50 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀκούσας ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ, Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευσον, καὶ σωθήσεται. |
| 5.37 καὶ οὐκ ἀφήκεν οὐδένα μετ' αὐτοῦ συνακολουθῆσαι εἰ μὴ τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰακώβου. | | 8.51 ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν οὐκ ἀφήκεν εἰσελθεῖν τινα σὺν αὐτῷ εἰ μὴ Πέτρον καὶ Ἰωάννην καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν πατέρα τῆς παιδὸς καὶ τὴν μητέρα. |
| 5.38 καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἀρχισυναγῶγου, καὶ θεωρεῖ θόρυβον καὶ κλαίοντας καὶ ἀλαλάζοντας πολλά, | 9.23 Καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἄρχοντος καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς αἰλητὰς καὶ τὸν ὄχλον θορυβούμενον | 8.52 ἔκλαιον δὲ πάντες καὶ ἐκόπτοντο αὐτήν. |
| 5.39 καὶ εἰσελθὼν λέγει αὐτοῖς, Τί θορυβεῖσθε καὶ κλαίετε; τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. | 9.24 ἔλεγεν, Ἀναχωρεῖτε, οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν τὸ κοράσιον ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. | ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Μὴ κλαίετε, οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. |
| 5.40 καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ. αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκβαλὼν πάντας παραλαμβάνει τὸν πατέρα τοῦ παιδίου καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τοὺς μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰσπορεύεται ὅπου ἦν τὸ παιδίον· | καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ. 9.25 ὅτε δὲ ἐξεβλήθη ὁ ὄχλος, εἰσελθὼν | 8.53 καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ, εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπέθανεν. |
| 5.41 καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου λέγει αὐτῇ, Ταλιθα κουμ, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμημενόμενον Τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε. | ἐκράτησεν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς. | 8.54 αὐτὸς δὲ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς ἐφώνησεν λέγων, Ἡ παῖς, ἔγειρε. |
| 5.42 καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέστη τὸ κοράσιον καὶ περιεπάτει | καὶ ἠγέρθη τὸ κοράσιον. | 8.55 καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀνέστη παραχρῆμα, |

The change of the situation in v.35, i.e. the girl's death,¹¹² requires a change in technique. Although resurrection can be assimilated to healing,¹¹³ the LH might have been inappropriate in this situation; there is not one case in any literature when hands were laid on a corpse.¹¹⁴ Mark says that Jesus grasps the hand of the girl (*κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου*, 'taking hold of the child's hand'), an Old Testament gesture (Is. 41.13; 42.6). Unlike in 1.31 and 9.27, Mark does not say that the action is intended to raise the girl. Although the purpose for the gesture is not stated, Jesus' simple action (to be contrasted with 1 Kgs 17.17-24; 2 Kgs 4.29-37; Acts 20.9-12) conveys his life-giving power to the dead girl. But Jesus' word is as important as his touch. Any claim that the resuscitation is accomplished exclusively by Jesus' touch¹¹⁵ or his word¹¹⁶ goes beyond the textual evidence.

The touching of a corpse raises the purity question¹¹⁷ as the touching of the leper (Mk 1.41) or the gesture of the haemorrhaging woman does (5.27). But Mark makes nothing of this, possibly because, by removing the cause of the defilement, the issue loses its germaneness.¹¹⁸

Matthew reduces the Marcan account to the bare essentials by cutting out details, both historical and technical: the father's name, the child's age, the reference to the disciples, the 'word of power' and the confirmation of the miracle. The change about the situation of Jairus' daughter from Mark's 'is at the point of death' (*ἐσχάτως ἔχει*) to Matthew's 'just died' (*ἄρτι ἐτελεύτησεν*) is a result of the drastic shortening of the

¹¹² The report of the messengers (v. 35) and the presence of the mourners (v. 38) indicate that the girl was dead (*contra* V. Taylor, *Mark*, 295). Jesus' use of the euphemism of sleep depicts the transitory character of the girl's present state; it is used with the coming miracle in view (Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* [London: A&C Black, 1991], 150; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 302; E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, 53. Cf. the Rabbinic parallel of Genesis Rabbah 96.60f., where Jacob's physical death is contrasted with his final resurrection: 'Thou shalt sleep, but thou shalt not die'; also Jn 11.4, 11-14). Death is reinterpreted by Mark from the point of view of God (I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 347).

¹¹³ G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (1983), 90 n. 25.

¹¹⁴ But see 3.2.1. and 3.2.2 for the use of touch and words in resuscitation by Asclepius and Apollonius of Tyana.

¹¹⁵ Werner Kahl claims that, here, the function of Jesus' word only 'prepares the SC (subject of circumstance) to demonstrate the success of a hidden and silent performance but is not a healing word' (*Miracle Stories*, 109-110). It is questionable, though, Kahl's treatment of Jn 5.8 and 11.43, where the words of command seem to be *effective words* or *words of power*, by which the miracle is performed. According to Kahl, healing words as a means of performing the miracle are found only in Matthew (*op. cit.*, p. 111).

¹¹⁶ According to Guelich, 'Jesus' word, not his touch (cf. 1.31; 8.22), conveys the healing here' (*Mark 1-8:26*, 302).

¹¹⁷ For the touching of a corpse, see Num. 19.11-19; E.P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 217-219; J. Neusner, 'The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism', *JAAR* 43 (1975), p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, 302.

pericope by Matthew.¹¹⁹ The effect is that Jairus' request concerns now the raising of his daughter, not simply her healing. *ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ' αὐτήν, καὶ ζήσεται* (9.18). The change magnifies not so much the miracle itself as the faith of the ruler.¹²⁰ If in Mark and Luke Jairus' faith needs encouragement (*μόνον πίστευε*, Mk. 5.36; *μόνον πίστευσον*, Lk. 8.50), Matthew's Jairus has a faith which not even death can shake (note the future tense - *ζήσεται* which replaces Mark's subjunctive).

But the change operated by Matthew reveals also something about his view on the gesture. Although Matthew does not have Jesus use the LH on this occasion, the fact that he has it in Jairus' request points to Matthew's belief that such gesture is efficient even in resuscitating someone. But, according to Matthew, a touch is all what it takes for Jesus to perform the miracle (note the singular *τὴν χεῖρά* in 9.18 and *τῆς χειρός* in 9.25). It is difficult to see why, unlike Mark (5.41) and Luke (8.54), he mentions no word of power.¹²¹ By such omission, all the weight is laid on the act of touching. If Matthew's intention is indeed not to present a miracle story but a teaching narrative about faith, as Held argues,¹²² the fact that he does not suppress the role of touching in the resurrection of Jairus' daughter appears even more significant. Since, as in Mark, the touching takes place just before the miracle is accomplished, the gesture (*ἐκράτησεν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς*) appears to be the means by which the resurrecting power is transferred to the dead child.

In Luke's version, Jairus' daughter is not dead when he approaches Jesus; she is 'at the point of death' or simply 'is dying' (Luke's *ἀπέθνησκεν* replaces Mark's *ἐσχάτως ἔχω*). Luke also replaces Mark's command in Aramaic 'Talitha koum' with the Greek *Ἥ παῖς, ἔγειρε*, 'Child, arise'.

Jairus' request that Jesus lay his hands on the girl is also omitted. According to some scholars, such omission has to do with Luke's understanding of Jesus' gesture in 8.54 as a gesture of help. For Marshall, the use of the aorist *ἐφώνησεν* in 8.54 followed by participle *λέγων* and the statement that the girl's spirit returned (*ἐπέστρεψεν* - 8.55) is a sign that, 'the gesture of Jesus is to be understood as help to sit up rather than as a means of transfer of divine power; the healing is accomplished by summoning the spirit back to the body rather than resuscitating the body (cf. Acts 9.41)'.¹²³ This is possible but

¹¹⁹ D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, p. 248.

¹²⁰ H.J. Held, *op.cit.*, 180; F.D. Bruner, *The Christbook*, 341 says: 'To say 'dead but' requires extraordinary confidence'; R.H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 172.

¹²¹ The command 'Talitha cum' is taken as a 'magical word' by M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 84; H.J. Held, *op.cit.*, 179; J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 85f. Schweizer, 229, thinks it could have been taken as a 'magic formula' but it is difficult to see how common Aramaic words like these could have been so taken by Matthew's audience.

¹²² H.J. Held, *op.cit.*, 180.

¹²³ *The Gospel of Luke*, 343, 348; so D.L. Bock, *Luke 1: 1.1-9.50* (BECNT 3a; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), p. 803. Luke understands *πνεύμα* as surviving death (23.46; Acts 7.59; 9.41); cf.

not certain. We should avoid interpreting one text (in our case Lk) by the means of another (Acts 9). When comparing the two texts, one cannot lose sight of the fact that in Luke the 'taking of the hand' (κρατέω) comes *before* the word, but *after* it in Acts. This can be a sign that in Jairus' case Luke understood the gesture as a means by which life-force was transfer to the dead girl and in Dorca's case a means of help.

4.2.5. *Healings at Nazareth* (Mk 6.1-6; Mt. 13. 53-58; Lk. 4.16-30)

Mark has this pericope immediately following the healing of the haemorrhaging woman. Like the previous story, this one includes both the theme of faith and that of healing by touch. The setting is Jesus' visit to his own city, Nazareth. The story is an illustration of what happens when the faith evoked in the previous pericope is lacking.

| <u>Mark</u> | <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Luke</u> |
|--|---|--|
| 6.5 καὶ οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν, εἰ μὴ ὀλίγοις ἀρρώστοις ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας ἐθεράπευσεν. | 13.58 καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἐκεῖ δυνάμεις πολλὰς | _____ |
| 6.6 καὶ ἐθαύμαζεν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν. | διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν. | _____ |
| | | 4.30 αὐτὸς δὲ διελθὼν διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν ἐπορεύετο. |

As V. Taylor evaluated Mk 6.5, it contains 'one of the boldest statements in the Gospels, since it mentions something that Jesus could not do'.¹²⁴ For christological reasons Matthew edited the tradition before him; he replaced Mark's remark about Jesus' apparent inability to perform *δυνάμεις* with a statement about Jesus' deliberate limitation of his supernatural activity, due to the people's unbelief: 'And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief' (Mt. 13.58). By doing so, Matthew not only avoided a possible misunderstanding of Jesus' power as the Son of God, but also emphasized the binding connection between faith and miracles. Luke has nothing to say about miracles at Nazareth (4.16-30).

Against this background of general disbelief, Mark's Jesus nevertheless heals a few sick by laying his hands on them. There are two ways to interpret Mark's account: he intends to say either that 1) Jesus performed the healings recorded in spite of a total

also 1 Kgs 17.21; Jub. 23.26-31; 1En. 22.39.4ff. For a correspondence between the Lucan *πνεῦμα* and the Greek *ψυχή*, see E. Sjöberg, 'πνεῦμα', *TDNT* VI, 376-380.

¹²⁴ V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 301. Mark's *οὐκ ἐδύνατο* is often taken to refer to Jesus' freedom to withhold his healing power in circumstances like this, when people lack faith, rather than to his inability to perform miracles (H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 118; W. Lane, *Mark*, 204; R.P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian*, 170ff.) But Jesus' 'inability' here is a problem only within the theological framework of Christian doctrine. We cannot be sure if it was a problem in the same way for Mark.

unbelief of the people, or 2) that he healed a few sick people who, in spite of a general disbelief, manifested faith in Jesus.

The proponents of the first interpretation suggest that Mark makes a distinction here between ‘mighty works’ (*δυναμεις*) and common acts of healing; only the first category of miracles would be entirely dependent on faith.¹²⁵ The alternate interpretation, that in healing the few Jesus honored their faith, goes beyond the gospel evidence.

A third interpretation is, however, possible. The healings by the LH of v.5 can be linked with *διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ* of v.2, in the sense that the healings took place prior to the display of unbelief by his countrymen.¹²⁶ The reference to the LH in verse 5 is then part of a summary of Jesus’ activity in Nazareth. This interpretation requires that the prepositional phrase of v.2 (*διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ*) be taken literally as a reference to the LH.¹²⁷

4.2.6. *Healings at Gennesaret* (Mk 6.56; Mt. 14.35-36)

And when they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even (*καὶ*) the fringe (*κρασπέδου*) of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well (Mk 6.54-56).

And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent round to all that region and brought to him all that were sick, and besought him that they might only (*μόνον*) touch the fringe (*κρασπέδου*) of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well (Mt. 14.35-36).

This is the third time in Mark's narrative when the touching for healing is attributed to the people (cf. Mk 3.10; 5.27). In both Mark and Matthew, the story of the haemorrhaging woman precedes this episode. It is possible, as Guelich suggests, that the summaries of Mk 3.10 and 6.56, as part of the pre-Markan tradition,¹²⁸ had the story of the healing of the haemorrhaging woman ‘as their point of reference, if not their actual starting point in the tradition’.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ So A.E.J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark* (1925), 74; R.P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian*, 173. This view accords with evidence from the gospels when the faith of the people healed was not always a prerequisite for the healing.

¹²⁶ Mark 6.2 may refer to miracles of healing performed by Jesus in Nazareth, prior to the Sabbath .

¹²⁷ This goes against the view of W.L. Lane (*Mark*, 201, n.4) and C.E.B. Cranfield (*Mark*, 193) who think that ‘through his hands’ does not refer to healing by touch, but is a Semitic idiom describing the activity of the whole person (cf. BAGD s.v. *χείρ* 1). But we agree with R.H. Gundry who notes that ‘the regular use of Jesus’ hands to heal . . . combines with a literalistic reference to his hands in v 5b to militate against such a figurative interpretation’ (*Mark*, 295f.).

¹²⁸ The many connections of this summary with the pre-Markan miracle collection, dispersed in the first six chapters of Mark, suggest that it comes from the redactor of that collection. Cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 355.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

In Mk 6.56, Jesus is implored by the sick to let them touch his clothes. When the episode is read in the context of other stories describing people who seek to touch Jesus (3.10) or his clothes (5.27), people's request to touch 'at least' the tassel of his cloak emphasizes not so much the power of Jesus, as their faith.¹³⁰ Mark does not comment on the nature of this faith. He dealt with the issue in the story of the haemorrhaging woman. Here, the people believe that the healing power which radiates from Jesus' body has permeated also his clothes. They could appropriate it by touching even the extreme parts of Jesus' clothing, the tassel.

Unlike in the story of the haemorrhaging woman, the element of secrecy is missing here. The sick do not attempt to obtain healing independently of Jesus' knowledge and will, but ask permission (*παρεκάλουν*) to touch his clothes. Jesus does not offer to touch the sick or lay his hands on them, but yields to their request, consenting to passively watch the sick touching the tassel of his cloak. Or one can picture Jesus walking through the market place and stopping from place to place in order to expedite the touching of his garments. Either way, Mark depicts here a situation in which the superabundant healing power which resides in Jesus is voluntarily released by its bearer and is not diminished in the process for 'as many as touched it [the tassel] were made well'. This is the ^{second} time when reverse-transfer occurs in Mark, i.e. power moves towards the subject of touching.¹³¹

Matthew's account is, again, very much abbreviated by the dropping of most topographical details. He preserves from Mark the people's request that they might touch Jesus' clothes, as he has already used the motif in the story of the haemorrhaging woman. As in that story, people's request to touch Jesus' clothes has a distinct emphasis in each gospel: Mark's *καὶ* modifies the garment ('at least the fringe') while Matthew's *μόνον* emphasises the touch ('that they might *only* touch'). While Mark's narrative underscores the faith of the sick (or of those who brought them and pleaded for their cause), Matthew's redaction seems to strengthen the idea that he is hesitant to highlight physical means of healing. His characters are content 'to touch . . .'. at least, if no other means of healing is available to them.

4.2.7. *The Healing of the Deaf and Dumb (Mk 7.31-37) and that of the Blind Man of Bethsaida (Mk 8.22-26)*

These two stories are the only Marcan miracles that are omitted by both Matthew and Luke. Because of the similarities between the two pericopes it has been suggested that they form a doublet.¹³² The synopsis of the two texts reveal the following parallels:

¹³⁰ See *supra* n. 69, for the triadic structure discussed by Cummings in which faith in touching Jesus is presented in three ascending stages.

¹³¹ Mk 3.10 reports only about the request of the sick people; it does not mention the cure.

¹³² R. Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 228; C.S. Mann, *Mark*, 335 f.

7.32-37

32. καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ
καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα
ἐπιθῆ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα
33. ἀπολαβόμενος αὐτὸν
καὶ πτύσας

ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ
34. καὶ ἀναβλέψας
λέγει αὐτῷ
36. διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν

8.22-26

22. καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ
καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα
αὐτοῦ ἄψηται
23. ἐξήνεγκεν αὐτὸν
καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα
αὐτοῦ
ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ
24. καὶ ἀναβλέψας
ἔλεγεν
26. ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν (variant reading)

Apart from the above similarities, the two stories contain a significant number of words which never occur in the rest of the gospel. Despite all verbal agreements and the similarities in vocabulary, the suggestion that the two accounts are a doublet is improbable for the following reasons: 1) the infirmities are different; 2) looking up in 7.34 applies to Jesus, but in 8.24 to the person afflicted; 3) there is no parallel to the gradual healing of 8.23-25 and the second LH of 8.25. As it appears, one of the stories (probably that of the healing of the blind man) was shaped as a ‘twin narrative’ either by a pre-Markan editor¹³³ or by Mark himself.¹³⁴

The two pericopes illustrate, perhaps better than any other text, the interchangeable use of ἐπιτιθέσθαι τὰς χεῖρας and ἄπτεσθαι. In Mk 7, people expect the LH and Jesus responds with a touch; in chapter 8, the proposed touch corresponds to the actual LH.

Mark does not state clearly what people expected when requesting Jesus’ touch / LH. Referring to the story of the deaf and dumb man, W.L. Lane claims that ‘the great surprise exhibited by the people when the afflicted man spoke clearly suggests that they had not expected healing, but had brought the man to Jesus for his blessing’.¹³⁵ This is, however, unconvincing. Reading in the larger context of Mark’s narrative, on the basis of 1.31, 4.1, 3.10, 5.23 and 6.56 it becomes clear that, in both cases, Mark intended to speak of a gesture of healing.¹³⁶

The treatment of the two afflicted men is not by mere touch; it consisted of a group of actions.¹³⁷ In the case of the deaf and dumb man, Jesus ‘put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue’ (7.33); in addition, he looked up to heaven, sighed and addressed the man with the command ‘Ephphatha’, *Be opened* (7.34). In the case of

¹³³ J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 691, 712.

¹³⁴ Morna D. Hooker, *St Mark*, 197.

¹³⁵ *Mark*, 266.

¹³⁶ R.H. Gundry says: ‘. . . they bring a deaf mute for hand-laying. So often has Jesus used this gesture to heal people that here it stands for the desired healing itself’ (*Mark*, 383); cf. also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 394.

¹³⁷ Only the motif of touching will be discussed in this section; on the use of spittle in healing see *infra*, 4.4.1.

the blind man, 'he spat on his eyes and laid his hands upon him' (8.23) and 'then again he laid his hands upon his eyes' (8.25). That the methods of healing used by Jesus in the two cases under discussion were unusual seems to be acknowledged by Mark. Because they could have detracted the people from an understanding that it was Jesus who performed the healing, Mark has Jesus lead the deaf and dumb man out of the crowd.¹³⁸

The motif of touching in 8.23a 'and he took the blind man by the hand' (cf. 7.33) does not have the function of healing. The man is healed only when Jesus touches him intentionally, to convey his healing power.¹³⁹ Verse 23b is silent about the part of the body on which Jesus' hands are placed to heal the blind man. When his hands are placed for the second time, it is explicitly said that it was on his eyes (8.25). The 'again' of v. 25 makes it quite plausible that even in v. 23 the hands are laid on the eyes.

This is the only place in the synoptic gospels where the healing by the LH is gradual. The two stage healing attests to the authenticity of the tradition, for it is unlikely that an evangelist would invent a story which would present Jesus as being unable to completely heal someone at his first attempt. The partial healing resulting from Jesus' gestures recorded in 8.23 is implicit in the blind man's answer, 'I see men; but they look like trees, walking' (8.24). If, however, one translates the participle *ἀναβλέψας* by 'after receiving his sight' (and not by 'looking up' as in 7.34), the healing is explicitly stated in the participle. Since there are two gestures involved, the 'spitting into his eyes' (*πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ*) and the LH (*ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ*), the question is what is the precise function of each gesture. Although the spitting implied more than simply an announcement that the healing was coming,¹⁴⁰ the repeated LH and the lack of any word of power suggest that the healing here is primarily through the LH.¹⁴¹

A number of scholars believe that the 'two stage' healing symbolizes the disciples' gradual insight into the identity of Jesus.¹⁴² Although Mark appears to have intended this symbolism, there is no evidence that he has accomplished it by writing up the story.¹⁴³ The gradual healing has, therefore, significance for the story itself. But this raises a theological

¹³⁸ G.H. Twelftree, *Jesus The Miracle Worker*, 84. But the reason could have been the unbelief, as in Jairus' case.

¹³⁹ W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories*, 107.

¹⁴⁰ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 432. *Contra* J. Gnilka, *Markus*, 1:314.

¹⁴¹ So also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 432, but referring only to the repeated gesture. On the use of spittle in healing, see *infra* 4.4.1.

¹⁴² E.S. Johnson, 'Mark VIII 22-26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida', *NTS* 25 (1978-79):370-383, esp. 381; F.J. Matera, 'Bib 70 (1989):163-71; Morna D. Hooker, *St Mark*, 198; G.H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 84.

¹⁴³ Guelich argues that the symbolism is not accomplished by Mark's inventing the 'two phase' healing, but rather by pairing the story with that of 7.32-37 and strategically locating the two pericopes after the discussion on the disciples' lack of perception and before their gaining insight (*Mark 1-8:26*, 433); R.H. Gundry rejects completely the symbolic function of the story (see detailed arguments in *Mark*, 421 f.).

problem for Mark: Would Mark agree that sometimes healing may be difficult for Jesus? After emphasizing repeatedly the enormous efficacy of Jesus' healing power (see his characteristic *ἐύθως*), it is hard to believe that Mark would favor such a view. For reasons unknown, Mark's Jesus looks here more as a physician than a miracle worker; he acts, asks the blind man a leading question and then acts again on the basis of the feedback.¹⁴⁴ Whether such depiction is simply a narrative device¹⁴⁵ or is faithfully construed on a historical event cannot be established with certainty.

Omission by Matthew and Luke

The two pericopes are omitted by both Matthew and Luke. According to Wellhausen, Matthew was 'put off by the magical procedure' described by Mark.¹⁴⁶ But Matthew has proved that he can adapt a story by stripping it of features which appear to be magic. Consequently, the reason behind Matthew's omission is hardly connected with his alleged aversion towards magic. Nor can it be said that Matthew resents the symbolic meaning given to the two stories by Mark. As Ulrich Luz points out, it is typical of Matthew to edit Mark's stories in such a way that they would express more than what they said in their Marcan *Sitz im Leben*.¹⁴⁷ But here the symbolism expresses a Marcan theological agenda which Matthew may not be prepared to accept - the presentation of the disciples as deaf and blind to the identity of Jesus as Son of God.¹⁴⁸

Generally speaking, Luke does not seem to be disconcerted by features which border on magic. It is possible that his modifications and omissions of Mark 'were due more to following his own ideas or the information and sequence of some other source than to any conscious weighting and rejecting of what Mark offered'.¹⁴⁹ In our case, the two pericopes are part of a literary unit (Mk. 6.45 - 8.26) known as the 'Gentile

¹⁴⁴ Roloff, *Kerygma*, 128; Pesch, 1:419; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 433.

¹⁴⁵ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:314.

¹⁴⁶ *Marci*, 64, cited in H.J. Held, *op.cit.*, 207. A magical interpretation of both healings is also given by J.M. Hull; the case of the deaf and dumb man is 'typical of magical exorcism' (*Hellenistic Magic*, 83, following G.A. Deissmann, *New Light on the New Testament from Records of the Graeco-Roman Period* [1907], 84-88). Aune's contention that Luke attempts to avoid any reference to magic¹⁴⁶ is unconvincing for in his second book (Acts 5.15; 19.12) Luke mentions techniques which can be interpreted as magical ('Magic in Early Christianity', 1537). Aune follows F.W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (1962), 133 ff.

¹⁴⁷ Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (ET, 1995), 66 f. Matthew's aim in editing the Marcan miracle stories, suggests Luz, was 'to accommodate the experiences of Matthew's own community' (68). Luz says: 'I would like to argue on behalf of a 'symbolic' explication of Matthew's miracle stories. Almost all of them are designed to mean more than they say: they transcend past events in the history of Jesus and enter one's own life, encouraging personal experiences with Jesus or making such experiences intelligible' (67).

¹⁴⁸ E.S. Johnson, 'Mark VIII 22-26', 376ff.; J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 692; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 433f.

¹⁴⁹ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (1927), 97.

Mission'¹⁵⁰; the geographical marker of the unit is Bethsaida, the place where the mission both starts (6.45) and ends (8.22, 26). In his first volume, Luke appears to curb his interest in the Gentile mission. For him, such mission was indeed promised by Jesus, but inaugurated only by his disciples. Luke's resolution is to dedicate an entire book (Acts) to this missionary enterprise. Thus he omits the two miracle-stories as part of the whole unit which is not relevant for his purpose. The reason for such omission is then primarily historical.¹⁵¹ In conclusion, the grounds for Matthew and Luke's omission of the two stories are to be sought elsewhere than in the form of the healing gesture.

4.3. Exorcism by the Laying on of Hands?

The use of the LH in healing demon-diseases was known among Jewish and non-Jewish peoples.¹⁵² In the New Testament there are three stories in which Luke amalgamates the language of healing with that of exorcism (Lk 4.40-41; 13.10-17; Acts 19.11) which leaves the impression that Jesus and his followers used the LH/touch even in exorcism. The alleged connection between touch/LH and exorcism is not indisputable, as the following analysis will reveal.

4.3.1. *The Healing of Peter's mother-in-law* (Mk 1.29-31; Mt 8.14-15; Lk 4.38-39)

| <u>Mark</u> | <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Luke</u> |
|---|---|--|
| 31. καὶ προσελθὼν ἤγειρεν αὐτὴν κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς· καὶ ἀφήκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός, καὶ διηκόνει αὐτοῖς. | 15. καὶ ἥψατο τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀφήκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός· καὶ ἠγέρθη καὶ διηκόνει αὐτῷ. | 39. καὶ ἐπιστάς ἐπάνω αὐτῆς ἐπέτιμήσεν τῷ πυρετῷ, καὶ ἀφήκεν αὐτήν· παραχρῆμα δὲ ἀναστᾶσα διηκόνει αὐτοῖς. |

The order of the words in the Greek text of Mark is unnatural, since the active verb is sandwiched between two participles: καὶ προσελθὼν ἤγειρεν αὐτὴν κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς (1.31). If verb ἐγείρειν means here 'to lift up', then the 'taking by the hand' appears to be a gesture of help. If, on the other hand, the verb means 'to raise her from the state in which she were', the gesture can be taken as a means by which the healing power

¹⁵⁰ Nineham, *Saint Mark* (1963), 197.

¹⁵¹ See J. Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel* (1976), 98.

¹⁵² Supra, 2.3 and 3.3. Cf. also, J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum* (1911), 106, for the practice in Babylon. Behm rejects the suggestion that every illness is caused by a demon and that

The detail of Jesus holding (Mark) or touching (Matthew) the woman's hand is omitted by Luke; the cure is by word only. Luke's intention in operating such change is probably to emphasise Jesus' ability.¹⁵⁷ But there is another possibility deriving from Luke's view that all sickness is a form of oppression by Satan (*ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου*, Acts 10.38). In healing any affliction, Luke's Jesus is opposing cosmic forces.¹⁵⁸ Although no mention is made here of demons,¹⁵⁹ Luke probably intends to present the miracle with exorcistic features. There are two actions attributed by Luke to Jesus which point to this possibility: Jesus 'stands over' the afflicted woman and 'rebukes the fever'.¹⁶⁰ However, the miracle is not presented as an exorcism *per se*, for features like the protest or the departure of the demon are absent. As Hendricks suggests, here the demon is not the main opponent, but 'just a secondary character hidden in the background'.¹⁶¹

Luke's reasons for omitting the physical means of healing remain unknown. Certainly, it is not because of his frequent association of sickness with demonic influences, since in 13.10-17 (the next pericope under consideration) the healing touch is used alongside with the word of healing. It is possible to understand that Luke was familiar with some tradition which prohibited the touching of a person with fever,¹⁶² but we have no evidence that this was the reason.

4.3.2. *Luke's Amalgamation of healing and exorcism language (Lk 4.40-41; Acts 19.11-12)*

4.3.2.1. *Luke 4.40-41*

In his own fashion, Luke does not preserve Mark's clear cut distinction between the sick and the demon-possessed. The structure of Mark's report in 1.32-34 is rigorous. Mark introduces distinctly the two categories of people brought to Jesus, the 'sick' and those 'possessed with demons' and then he reports about the cure preserving the distinction - 'he healed many who were sick ... and cast out many demons'. Luke's language is

¹⁵⁷ Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 147.

¹⁵⁸ For an excellent treatment of Luke's handling of the demonic, see S.R. Garret, *The Demise*, ch. 2 'The Struggle for Authority: Satan in the Narrative World of Luke-Acts', 37-60. Cf. also Joel B. Green, 'Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13.10-17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus' Miracles', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 653.

¹⁵⁹ According to G. Theissen (*Miracle Stories*, 86), 'fever is often regarded as a demon'.

¹⁶⁰ Twelftree notes that 'the practice of an exorcist of standing over the patient has its roots in ancient Babylonian healings and in the New Testament period it is directly paralleled in Magical Papyri' (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 103. Cf. also his *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 148; 'Demon, Devil, Satan' in *DJG*, 171 and sources cited therein). See also J.D.M. Derrett, 'Getting on Top of a Demon (Luke 4:39)', *EvQ* 65 (1993):99-109. On diseases caused by demons, see also Strack-Billerbeck, IV, 1, 521 f.

¹⁶¹ H. Hendricks, *Miracle Stories*, 72.

¹⁶² This interdiction is found in the Rabbinic tradition (see Str-B 1:479-80 for references).

ambiguous: ‘Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many ...’ (Lk. 4.40, 41). Luke introduces only one category of people, ‘the sick with various diseases’. In reporting about cures, he mentions both the healings and exorcisms. The changes operated by Luke can be understood in two ways:

a) Luke places both the sick and the demon possessed under one label, ‘the sick with various diseases’. The next sentence is understood to support the contention that Luke amalgamates the sick with the demon-possessed: ‘Even demons came out of many’ (ἐξήρχετο δὲ καὶ δαιμόνια ἀπὸ πολλῶν, 4.41). Although Nolland pushes too far the meaning of the Greek text when he argues that ‘as many of the sick were healed, demons came out of them’,¹⁶³ still the advocates of this view claim that Luke counts the ‘many’ among those who are healed by the LH. Thus, he makes the casting out of demons incidental to the healings recorded.¹⁶⁴ If this interpretation were correct, Luke would be the only author in the New Testament to attribute exorcisms to the LH/touch. This reading has not passed, however, unchallenged.

b) A second interpretation is offered by Fitzmyer who claims that Luke has separated the reports of healing from those of exorcism more clearly than Mark. For him, the LH does not apply to exorcisms.¹⁶⁵ Although the reading is not as clear cut as Fitzmyer wants it to be, in view of the construction with δὲ καὶ (‘but also’, ‘but even’), his contention that Luke separates the healings from exorcisms appears to be correct. First Luke reports about the bringing of the sick people and their healing, and then he moves to the demoniacs, mentioning only their healing. The ‘many’ of verse 41 are not part of the crowd of verse 40. If this is the case, a connection between the LH and exorcism is not intended by Luke.¹⁶⁶ This is consistent with the previous story, where Luke has Jesus stand over Simon’s mother-in-law and rebuke the demon rather than touch her, as in Mark 1:31.¹⁶⁷

4.3.2.2. Acts 19.11-12

In the account of Paul’s healing miracles and exorcisms, it is clear that Luke intends a connection between the use of handkerchiefs and aprons and the exorcisms reported: ‘And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out

¹⁶³ J. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (WBC 35a; Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 214.

¹⁶⁴ I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 196.

¹⁶⁵ *Luke I-IX* (AB 28; 1981), 552.

¹⁶⁶ G.H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 148; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 553.

¹⁶⁷ The contrary view is held by Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 213; L.P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Tempel [sic] Period*, 149.

of them' (Acts 19.11, 12). What is not so clear is whether Luke implies any connection between the use of hands by Paul and the casting out of demons. It appears that the interpretation of Paul's miracles here depends on the way one understands the prepositional phrase *διὰ τῶν χειρῶν Παύλου*. On the one hand, if the phrase is understood as implying the gesture of the **LH**, the conjunction *ὥστε* makes a natural connection between Paul's hands and the handkerchiefs and aprons. In other words, Luke intends to say that Paul laid his hands on these pieces of material which were further used for healings and exorcisms. On the other hand, if one takes the prepositional phrase *διὰ τῶν χειρῶν* as a fixed expression which simply indicates instrumentality (cf. 2.23, *διὰ χειρὸς*), the **LH** is not part of the description. Luke does not say whether or not Paul was aware of the intention of those who took his clothes or whether he approved of such practices. The use of the passive infinitive *ἀποφέρεσθαι* and the fact that the materials are not brought 'from Paul' but 'from his skin/body' (*ἀπὸ τοῦ χρωτὸς αὐτοῦ*) seems to favour the view that the reference is to Paul's working clothes¹⁶⁸ and that he did not consciously participate in the action. Luke is also silent about the faith of those who were healed by these means. In all probability, he does not understand it as a faith in magic but as a faith which, beyond these pieces of material, acknowledges the power of God which was manifested through Paul. In conclusion, we cannot see any connection between the **LH** and exorcisms, neither here nor in the gospel account examined above.

4.3.3. *The Woman with a Spirit of Infirmary* (Lk 13.10-17)

The story of the healing of the woman with a spirit of infirmity is unique to Luke.¹⁶⁹ The setting is a day of Sabbath in the synagogue. Here, Jesus sees a woman who 'was bent over and could not fully straighten herself' for eighteen years. J. Wilkinson, identifies the affliction as *spondylitis ankylopoietica*,¹⁷⁰ but Luke is not interested in a medical diagnosis. The healing takes place by word and physical action. Unlike in the story of the healing of the haemorrhaging woman, here the order of the word and the gesture is reversed. First Jesus pronounces the healing 'you are freed from your infirmity' (*ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου*, v. 12), but when he laid his hands on her (*ἐπέθηκεν αὐτῇ τὰς χεῖρας*), 'immediately she was made straight' (*παραχρῆμα ἀνωρθώθη*, v. 13). Nonetheless, in both cases the healing is mediated through physical contact.

¹⁶⁸ On *σουδάρια* and *σιμικίνθια*, see F.F. Bruce, *Book*, 389; T.J. Leary, 'The "Aprons" of St. Paul - Acts 19.12', *JTS* 41 (1990): 527-29. Both words are of Latin origin - cf. Martial, *Works* 14.153; Petronius, *Works* 94.8. In Bruce's view, these are 'sweat-rags' and aprons which Paul used while engaged in his tent-making business.

¹⁶⁹ For the literary integrity of the pericope, see Joel B. Green, 'Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham', 643-48.

¹⁷⁰ J. Wilkinson, 'The Case of the Bent Woman in Luke 13:10-17,' *EvQ* 49 (1977):196-200.

4.3.3.1. *Healing or exorcism (or both)?*

In his own fashion (cf. 4.38-39, 40, 41), Luke blends here exorcistic and healing vocabulary: the woman has ‘a spirit of infirmity’ (πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας, v. 11), is ‘bound by Satan’ (ἦν ἔδησεν ὁ Σατανᾶς, v. 16), is ‘released/freed from . . . infirmity’ (ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας, v.12), and again ‘released from . . . bondage’ (λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ, v. 16). The ‘spirit of infirmity’ must be interpreted here with reference to the bondage of Satan: it is Satan who keeps this woman in bondage, through a spirit which is causing an infirmity.

Whether Jesus’ action is understood by Luke to be a case of healing or one of exorcism is a debated issue.¹⁷¹ The following arguments favour demonic obsession rather than possession: 1) the woman’s disability is physical not behavioural; 2) the vocabulary is not adequate to describe a demon possession; terms like δαιμόνιον, δαιμονίζομαι, πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον, ἐκβάλλω, ἐξέρχομαι are missing; 3) The method of treatment is not that of exorcism; Jesus addresses the woman, not the demon, and he lays hands on her; 4) the verb ἀπολύω used to describe the cure is never used in the New Testament for exorcism; it is too mild to be used for a spirit; 5) the presence in the synagogue of a person who is known to have been possessed for a long period of time and is easily recognised and would have been prohibited; 6) the L source does not contain an account of exorcism.¹⁷²

The possession hypothesis rests on two phrases: ‘spirit of infirmity’ in v. 11 and ‘whom Satan bound for eighteen years’ in v.16. That ‘spirit of infirmity’ describes possession is improbable in view of the use of Luke’s phrase¹⁷³ ‘a/the spirit of ..’ elsewhere (‘spirit of an unclean demon’ - 4.33; ‘spirit of divination’ - Acts 16.16; cf. ‘spirit of pestilence’ - 1QapGen 20.26). In all these cases, the nature of the circumstances described is defined by the noun in the genitive which follows the word ‘spirit’. If in 4.33 Luke clearly identifies demon possession by using the phrase ‘spirit of an unclean demon’, in 13.11 he is rather describing a physical ailment. The phrase of verse 16 about Satan having bound the woman for eighteen years may be a construction which Luke uses simply for the purpose of his argument: if Jesus’ opponents untie on the Sabbath day the bond which confine their cattle, why are they so critical about loosing the ‘bond’ of this

¹⁷¹ For demonic obsession/influence, *inter al.* Lagrange, 382; R. Latourelle, *Miracles de Jésus*, 224; quite emphatic F. Bovon: ‘Luc distingue la maladie de la possession; les actes de guérison, des exorcismes’ (*L’Evangile selon Saint Luc 9,51-14,35*, 352, 354f.); D.L. Bock, *Luke 2.1215*, n. 5; For demonic possession, *inter al.* Plummer, *St. Luke*, 341; W. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 122f.; G. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*, 103-104, and *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 177.

¹⁷² Pts. 2-5 from J. Wilkinson, ‘The Case’, 201f. For examples of its use in exorcism outside the New Testament, see Büchsel, ‘δέω (λύω)’, *TDNT* II, 60, n. 3

¹⁷³ The phrase ‘spirit on an unclean demon’ in 4.33 is an adaptation of Mark’s ‘an unclean spirit’ (Mk 1.23).

‘daughter of Abraham’ in which she was kept by Satan for so long?¹⁷⁴ The language is metaphorical (bond = physical ailment).

In conclusion, this case cannot be assimilated to a demonic possession. The most we can make of Luke’s language is that he either regards some individual cases of disease as being caused by demonic activity or, at a general scale, he understands any disease as an evil which is a sign of the reign of Satan. According to Acts 10.38, the latter seems to be the case.¹⁷⁵

4.3.3.2. *The significance of the laying on of hands in Lk 13.10-17*

Although I have substantiated the case for healing, W. Kahl’s discussion of this case as exorcism is still illuminating for our understanding of the role of the LH. Kahl states:

Jesus’ performance (a word sanctioning the performance: ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου, followed by the laying-on-of-hands) does not necessarily indicate an exorcism. The immediately following *passive* description of the main performance or its outcome, ἀνωρθώθη, gives a hint that Jesus is not thought of as AS [active subject] but rather as a preparing BNP [bearer of numinous power]. ... Thus, the sanction of Jesus, ‘You are set free from your ailment’ (ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου), implies the woman’s being freed from her illness-demon. Even though the AS of the performance is not explicitly mentioned, it is probable that the demon, as is common in exorcisms, is the AS of the healing performance, prepared by Jesus (*devoir-faire*) to engage in the restoration performance.¹⁷⁶ (italics his)

Firstly, we address the issue raised by Kahl with regard to the identity of the AS. On the one hand, Kahl regards Jesus here as the BNP. We would expect that, in any circumstance, a BNP would use his numen to perform the miracle / exorcism. Kahl, however, tells us that Jesus is not the AS who actually performs the exorcism, but only a BNP who prepares the demon - the actual AS - to leave the SC (subject of circumstance). This would reduce Jesus’ word and his LH to preparatory functions. But Kahl does not say explicitly what is the role of Jesus’ words and gesture in this ‘preparatory action’. Anyone would agree that, were the demon to leave, Jesus word and gesture must have been *coercive* and *effective*. This means that Jesus, as a BNP, must have activated his numinous power. The interposition of παραχρήμα between the LH and the actual result of Jesus’ action (ἀνωρθώθη) indicates that Luke understood the gesture to be the main restoration performance.¹⁷⁷ Certainly, the narrator treats Jesus here as the AS, as implied from v. 14: the synagogue leader was indignant that ‘Jesus *healed* on the Sabbath’.

¹⁷⁴ Wilkinson, 'The Case', 202-204.

¹⁷⁵ Busse, *Die Wunder der Propheten Jesus*, 79-80, 111; G. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 176. M.D. Hamm takes the Satanic/demonic language of this pericope to be ‘generic end-time references rather than clinical diagnosis’ ('The Freeing of the Woman', 32).

¹⁷⁶ W. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 122 f. So also.

¹⁷⁷ Kahl is certainly wrong in assuming that, because the verb is in the passive (ἀνωρθώθη), the AS is someone else rather than Jesus (122). Other instance when Luke uses a passive verb in conjunction with παραχρήμα to describe the outcome of the main performance is 1.64. But this is a theological

The LH cannot be understood, then, as an exorcistic technique. Luke regards it as a physical means by which the power of Jesus (BNP) is transferred to the bent woman (SC) and actually effects the healing which has been already pronounced (13.12).

4.3.3.3. *The relevance of 1QapGen 20 for Luke 13.10-17*

Whether or not Luke was cognisant of the use of the LH by the Essene community we cannot know.¹⁷⁸ The 1QapGen 20 offers the closest parallel to the story of the woman with a spirit of infirmity. First, in both cases the demon afflicts the person from the outside, without taking over his/her psyche. Secondly, healing is in both cases by the LH. There are some differences, but they are not significant: 1) the miracle here takes place entirely at Jesus' initiative while in 1QapGen Pharaoh begs Abram for cure. As the psyche of this woman was not affected, Luke would have had no objection to have the woman ask for healing; 2) in 1QapGen Abram rebukes the 'spirit of pestilence' (Aram. *g'r* - 1QapGen 20:28-29, but the 'rebuke' is missing in Luke's story; but see 4.39 where Jesus 'rebuked the fever' (in 4.40-41, as in 1QapGen, both rebuking and LH occur, though we cannot be sure that the reference is to the same person being cured); 3) in contrast to Abram (as PNP) who prays that the exorcistic command would be given by God (AS), the Lucan Jesus (as BNP) has a direct impact on the physical ailment. But Luke is not unfamiliar with situations similar to that recorded in 1QapGen; he has Jesus' followers pray to receive power to perform healings (Acts 4.30; 9.40; 28.8).

As I indicated earlier,¹⁷⁹ 1QapGen is not in itself an evidence that the Essenes practised exorcism. In conclusion, with all the similarities between 1QapGen and Lk 13.10-17, one cannot demonstrate Luke's dependence on the alleged exorcistic practice at Qumran.¹⁸⁰

4.3.3.4. *Light from Rabbinic literature*

Although our discussion so far centered on whether Luke presents the healing of the 'bent woman' as an exorcism, Luke focuses primarily on Jesus' role as an eschatological healer, 'in contradistinction to the Jewish institutions that threw up a dividing wall restricting access to God's mercy for this needy woman'.¹⁸¹ In the eyes of the scrupulous Pharisees,

passive, indicating that the AS is God - Cf. Bock, *Luke* 2.1216; M.D. Hamm, 'The Freeing of the Bent Woman and the Restoration of Israel: Luke 13.10-17 as Narrative Theology', *JSNT* 31 (1987): 23-44; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2.1013; F. Bovon, *St Luc*, 355. But *ἀνωρθώθη* can also be understood as a reflexive, describing the woman's action as a result of her healing - 'she straightened up herself' (cf. NRSV).

¹⁷⁸ G.H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*, 103-104, thinks he was.

¹⁷⁹ See *supra*, 2.3.1.

¹⁸⁰ *Contra* L.P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple [sic] Period* (NTOA 21; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 149.

¹⁸¹ J.B. Green, 'Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham', 654.

the act of Jesus laying hands on the woman on the Sabbath day is perceived to be an illegal 'work' which violates the Law (13.14-17).¹⁸² From this controversy one may infer that the gesture involved significant pressure. Although the New Testament terminology does not distinguish between the gesture described by $\gamma\mu\sigma$ and that described by $\alpha\psi$ or $\pi\psi$, we may have here the only example in the New Testament when, contrary to Daube's differentiation, $\gamma\mu\sigma$ is used in healing.¹⁸³ This is significant especially as we have already drawn some parallels between this pericope and the story of 1QapGen 20:28-29, where the same verb is used.

Excursus: *The LH in the Exorcistic Practices of the Post-apostolic Church*

The LH was used for exorcism later in the practice of the Early Church, in connection with baptism. According to the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (3rd century CE), during the catechumenate the teacher laid hands on each candidate before dismissing them.¹⁸⁴ Then, in the last part of the catechumenate the candidates received the LH daily, as a rite of exorcism; the whole series culminated in the day before baptism, when the rite was performed by the bishop himself.¹⁸⁵ Since there is no New Testament precedent to the LH in exorcism, it is difficult to assess the importation of this practice into the Christian church. It is possible that it was based on a different understanding of the above Lucan passages.

But, one may wonder what is the significance of the LH in exorcism. The word used in the New Testament for the deliverance of the possessed (*ἐκβάλλειν*) indicates that demons had to be forced to leave a person. The most common way in which demons were cast out was by word (*ἐξέβαλεν τὰ πνεύματα λόγῳ*, Mt. 8.16), that is by rebuking them (*ἐπιτιμῆν*).¹⁸⁶

One may legitimately ask whether or not the later use of the LH in exorcism has a similar threatening character. For Cyprian what distinguishes the gesture of healing from

¹⁸² We are reminded here of the mishnaic debate between the School of Hillel and that of Shammai, as to whether the laying of the hands on sacrifices was permissible on a festival day: 'The House of Shammai say, '[On a festival] they bring peace offerings, but they do not lay hands on them. But [they do] not [bring] whole offerings [at all]. And the House of Hillel say, 'They bring peace offerings and whole offerings, and they lay hands on them' (*m.Betz. 2.4 = m.Hag. 2.4*; cf. also *b.Bet. 20a*; *t.Hag. 2.10*). A festival day is treated like a Sabbath, with one exception: the preparation of food for that particular day is permitted (Ex. 12.16; Lev. 23). The more conservative School of Shammai permitted on a festival day only those sacrifices which provided food for priests and offerers. However, the laying of hands on the sacrifice is prohibited, due to the pressure exerted on the head of the animal ($\gamma\mu\sigma$ must be performed 'with all one's strength', *b. Hag. 16b*; cf. *b. Zeb 33a*; *b. Menah. 93b*) in both sin- and peace-offerings. No interdiction is stipulated in the Rabbinic literature for placing the hands in blessing ($\alpha\psi$ or $\pi\psi$) on such festival days.

¹⁸³ *NTRJ*, 224, 234. Curiously enough, this is the only reference^{to the LH} in the NT which Daube does not mention at all. In a later article, 'A Reform in Acts and its Models', in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in Honour of W.D. Davies* (1976), 162, he acknowledged that the two rites, the 'placing' and the 'pressing' of the hand, may overlap in healing.

¹⁸⁴ *Traditio Apostolica* 19.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 20. See also Foakes-Jackson & Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, I, *Acts of the Apostles*, vol. V (1933), 139; F.A. Sullivan, 'The Laying on of Hands in Christian Tradition', 46.

¹⁸⁶ Mt. 17.18; Mk 1.25; 9.25; Lk. 4.35; 9.42; Biblical ref.; 1QGA 20.28, 29; other ref. But Jesus rebukes also an illness, Lk. 4.39; the wind Mk. 4.39 par.

the gesture used in exorcism is not its form, but the character of the power used. The LH does not have a helping effect in exorcism, but a coercive function. When hands are laid on for healing they transfer 'life-force' to the sick but when the gesture is used in exorcism, it has a threatening character.¹⁸⁷ As Theissen has already noted, there is no place in the New Testament where the LH has a threatening character; it is always a gesture of help, a healing motif.¹⁸⁸ His view is based on his understanding that both Lk. 4.40 and Acts 19.11 refer only to healings. There are scholars who believe that even in exorcism the LH has positive connotations; it imparts blessings and the Holy Spirit. According to this view, demons are driven out not by a coercive force, but by the presence of the Spirit in that person.¹⁸⁹ Such a view, however, does not explain the terminology used in the New Testament in connection with exorcism. Jesus did not deal with demons softly; he did not invite them out or use indirect means by which to force them out. On the contrary, he cast them out by rebuking and commanding them. The LH, as used later in exorcism, must have had the same threatening character as the words by which demons were driven out. We suggest the possibility that, in healing a demon-obsession (as in Lk. 13.13; cf. also 1QGA 20.28-29), the LH was understood to have had both a helping effect and a threatening character. Both the cause and the effect must have been dealt with simultaneously.

4.4. The Laying on of Hands and Healing Media

4.4.1. Spittle

The association of Jesus' touch/LH with healing substances is an interesting and enigmatic combination. Jesus is said to have used spittle for healing three times: In Mk 7.33 he touches the tongue of the deaf and dumb man with spittle¹⁹⁰ (καὶ πτύσας ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ); in 8.23 Jesus spits on the blind man's eyes (καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ...); in Jn 9.6 he anoints the blind man's eyes with clay made with spittle (ἔπτυσεν χαμαὶ καὶ ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτύσματος, καὶ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς). πτύω does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament but ἐμπτύω is found in six places in connection with Jesus' sufferings to express contempt. While these references to contemptuous spitting appear to have been influenced by the Old Testament, there is nothing in the Old Testament to parallel the use

¹⁸⁷ Cyprian, *Demetr.* 15 (CSEL 3,1,361f.), describes the effect of the LH in exorcism as follows: 'videbis sub manu nostra stare vinctos et tremere captivos quos tu suspicis et veneraris ut dominos'. See also G. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 93f. In discussing on the effect of consecrated oil in exorcism as it appears in the *Acts of Thomas*, J.M. Hull says: 'The exorcising effect of the oil is based on the idea of the divine power driving out the evil power' (*Hellenistic Magic*, 112).

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 92. He follows J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 156, and A. von Harnack, *Lukas der Arzt* (1906), 136.

¹⁸⁹ See J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains et les rites connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et dans l'église ancienne* (1925), 400 f.

¹⁹⁰ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 28.7.36, however, refers to 'the custom, in using any remedy, of spitting on the ground three times by way of ritual, thus increasing its efficacy'. J.A. Wharton suggested that Jesus spat to disperse demonic forces ('Spit', in *IDB IV*, 437). But in light of the other two references (Mk 8.23, 25; Jn 9.6), Jesus seems to have spat on his fingers in order to apply the spittle to the tongue when he touched it.

of spittle in healing. Therefore, the significance of healing spittle must be sought in non-biblical sources.

Spittle is known as possessing magical and curative properties in Assyria¹⁹¹, Babylon¹⁹², Egypt¹⁹³ and North Africa¹⁹⁴. T. Canaan shows that sometimes the power of spittle was reinforced by mixing it with other organic substances.¹⁹⁵ Both the apotropaic and therapeutic value of spittle and the act of spitting are attested in Hellenistic literature.¹⁹⁶ Pliny gives a list of diseases which were believed to be cured by spittle.¹⁹⁷ In the first century CE, both Tacitus and Suetonius report that the spittle of the emperor Vespasian had medicinal and/or magical properties.¹⁹⁸ Judaism made no exception; here spittle was regarded as having curative properties. It is known to have been used for healing eye diseases and for exorcism.¹⁹⁹ To what extent Jesus' contemporaries believed in and used the apotropaic and curative powers of spittle is unknown. Considering the pagan use of spittle for healing during the pre-Christian era,²⁰⁰ the Rabbinic evidence, and the Old Testament practice of healing by use of material means (cake of figs - 2Kgs 20.7; the anointing of Tobit's eyes with the gall of a fish - Tob 6.8; 11.7.14), we have to assume

¹⁹¹ According to S. Eitrem, 'Some notes on the demonology in the New Testament' (*Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. supplet. XII*; Oslo: 1950), the Assyrians had a 'spittle of life' and a 'spittle of death'.

¹⁹² Babylonian inscriptions show that spittle can have both curative and harmful properties; see A. Jeremias, *Babylonisches im Neuen Testament* (1905), 108.

¹⁹³ In the Pyramid Texts (late 3rd millennium BCE) spitting is part of the act of creation. Atum spits out Shu, the air. See S.G.F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (1963), 22. The same texts describe an incident when the spittle was used for healing: After Horus loses an eye in his battle with Set, the eye is healed by Thoth who spits on it; see J.H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (1912), 31. An Egyptian papyrus contains the story of Isis making a sacred serpent from Ra's spittle, by mixing it with earth in her hand; see Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (1899), 137; John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 76.

¹⁹⁴ Spittle can reinforce the powers of medicine, as shown in the prayer of an Ewe priest: 'I have no spittle in my mouth. You are the possessor of spittle. Come then and spray your spittle over this medicine'; quoted in Van der Loos, *op. cit.*, 307, from F. Heiler, *Das Gebt. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und religionspsychologische Untersuchung* (1921), 65.

¹⁹⁵ *Aberglaube und Volkmedizin im Lande der Bibel* (1914), 118, cited in Van der Loos, *op. cit.*, 308.

¹⁹⁶ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, 28.2.8, 6.31, 7.35-39; Persius 2.31-34; Lucan 9.920-36. Petronius, *Satyricon* 131; Ael. *Nat. An.* 1.57; 16.28. According to Aristophanes, *Pl.* 736ff., the blind god Plutus regained his sight when Asclepius' snakes licked his eyelids.

¹⁹⁷ *Hist. nat.*, 28.7. Spittle from a man who has not broken his fast (*saliva ieiuna*) neutralises snake poison, cures epilepsy, skin diseases, leprosy and inflammations of the eye, malignant tumors, etc. On the curative power of women's spittle (*saliva ieiuna mulieris*), see *Hist. nat.*, 28, 22.

¹⁹⁸ Tacitus, *Hist.* 4. 81; Suetonius, *Vespasianus*, 7. They describe an incident when Vespasian cures a blind man with his spittle.

¹⁹⁹ See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 627 f., II, 15 ff. The earliest reference which is attributed to R. Samuel (d. 254) says: 'One is not allowed to put the spittle of a fasting man (*nüchternen Speichel*) on the eye on the Sabbath (this means that is forbidden to heal on Sabbath day). The same you can deduce concerning skin-disease.' (*pShab.* 14, 14d, 18); also *Baba Bathra* 126b: 'The spittle of an older son has curative powers for the eye'. According to *p.Sotah.* 16d, 37, the use of 'fasting' saliva for such purposes is prohibited.

²⁰⁰ Additional sources in Bultmann, *IIST*, 221, n.1; W. Crooke, 'Saliva', in *ERE* 11:100-104.

that the prevailing superstitions and customs associated with the use of spittle were familiar to Jesus and his contemporaries.²⁰¹

The use of spittle in healing brings together medicine, miracle and magic. There are cases when the use of spittle has unambiguous magical²⁰² functions. In many cases, however, the role of spittle is not obvious. The variety of opinions expressed makes it clear that not only the line between miracle and magic is thin but also that between medicine and miracle on the one hand and that between medicine and magic on the other. For instance, most scholars take the use of spittle by Vespasian in healing the blind man as an example of the medical value of spittle.²⁰³ We tend, however, to agree with J.M. Hull that what is implied here is not a belief in the medical value of spittle, but its magical properties.²⁰⁴ The blind man would not accept spittle from any other man but the emperor Vespasian. The skepticism of Vespasian suggests that spittle was not known by the emperor as having medicinal properties. This seems to be further confirmed by the sudden healing of the blind man, rather than by a gradual improvement of his condition. Most likely, this particular case of the use of spittle was perceived as magic. It should be noted that, even in Judaism, the use of spittle does not seem to be purely medicinal. Its power depends on the age of the donor and his religious virtues, e.g. his piety.²⁰⁵ The Judaic belief in the power of spittle can be described at best as superstitious. The question is how is the use of spittle by Jesus understood by the gospel writers who report about such incidents.

According to Oepke, the use of spittle in healing by Jesus is 'much more primitive than medicine'. In his view, there may have been particular reasons for its use on people with impaired senses, unless the references to spittle are later additions to the tradition.²⁰⁶ Some scholars suggest that, according to the gospel writers, Jesus combines miraculous healing with folk medicine. In M. Hengel's opinion, some of Jesus' actions can be compared with those of an ancient doctor.²⁰⁷ That some of Jesus' actions can be compared with those of the doctors is possible in the same way his methods of healing resemble

²⁰¹ See J.H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (1912), 31, who claims that Jesus' use of spittle in healing should be traced back to Egyptian origins.

²⁰² For instance, in Petronius' *Satyricon* 131, an old woman casts a love spell by mixing spittle with dust and smearing the clay with her middle finger on the forehead of the person on which the spell was cast.

²⁰³ For instance, Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 308.

²⁰⁴ *Hellenistic Magic*, 76f.

²⁰⁵ The spittle from a man who had not broken his fast was considered to possess particularly great powers. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, II.15ff. For the use of oil and spittle on the Sabbath, see Strack-Billerbeck, I.627f.

²⁰⁶ Oepke, *TDNT*, III, 209.

²⁰⁷ M. Hengel, 'Heilungen', 346, quoted in G. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 93. The same view is shared by E.R. Micklem, *Miracles and the New Psychology* (1922), 101; R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (1937), 308, 356; G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (1973), 65.

sometimes magical practices. But we cannot find any evidence in the gospels that he was regarded by his contemporaries and the gospel writers as one who used medical techniques.

According to some scholars, Jesus' use of spittle must be regarded as magic. Seeking to understand the significance of Jesus' use of spittle from non-biblical literature, J.M. Hull argues that Jesus' gesture is ... 'in that shadowy world where medicine fades into magic and no sharp distinction can be made'.²⁰⁸ There is no indication in the two instances recorded by Mark that Jesus used spittle as a substance possessing its own healing power. Mark presents him as using spittle along with other methods and this excludes the magical use of it. If it had been used magically, then it would have been efficacious by itself or it would have been accompanied by some incantation. The lack of any uniformity in the use of spittle by Jesus suggests that he followed no ritual pattern and that he used it in a non-magical way.²⁰⁹

In discussing the episode of the healing of the deaf and dumb man, Strack-Billerbeck suggest that, by using spittle, Jesus tried to focus the attention of the sick on the healer and thus to build up the faith of the sick:

When he touches the tongue of the deaf and dumb man with his spittle, he indicates to this man that he must expect his healing from the person who stands before him. Jesus' action has to do only with the building up of this confidence, which precedes the actual healing; the healing itself is performed next by the word of Jesus.²¹⁰

Van der Loos is critical of the one-sided interpretation offered by Strack-Billerbeck. He states: 'In our opinion we are concerned here with an important mental means of salvation. By using spittle Jesus enters the mental world of the patient and gains his confidence. For this reason His action is more than a sign and a symbol; it is the *action* that brings salvation!'²¹¹

A more practical reason for the use of spittle by Jesus is suggested by J. Keir Howard. In discussing the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, he sees the use of spittle as being preparatory for the healing in the sense that it removed the secretions from the eyelids so that the blind man could open his eyes.²¹² The use of spittle as a moisturizer is, however, unlikely since it does not explain the other two instances when spittle was used (Mk. 7.33; Jn 9.6).

It is my opinion that Van der Loos' psychological interpretation cannot be substantiated with evidence from the gospels. First, it is unlikely that Jesus would use

²⁰⁸ *Hellenistic Magic*, 76.

²⁰⁹ J. Wilkinson, *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice* (Edinburgh: Hansel, 1980), 55f.

²¹⁰ Strack-Billerbeck, II.17.

²¹¹ Van der Loos, *op. cit.*, 311.

²¹² J. Keir Howard, 'Men as Trees, Walking: Mark 8.22-26', *SJT* 37 (1984): 163-70.

such an indirect means as spittle to build saving faith in someone. Secondly, it is inappropriate to link healing with salvation because faith in the healing power of Jesus as agent of God (which is essential for healing) should be distinguished from saving faith.

On the other hand, I agree with both Strack-Billerbeck and Van der Loos that the use of spittle by Jesus could have built the confidence of the deaf and dumb man, although it appears that Jesus' intention was other than using his spittle in a preparatory way. With Morton T. Kelsey, I am of the opinion that Jesus used the spittle 'not so much as a direct healing agent as by way of a carrier of his personality and power'.²¹³ When compared with the role of the spittle in the blind man's healing, here the use of saliva has an added significance in that it carries the healing power *from his well-functioning tongue to the man's bonded tongue* to loosen the bond.²¹⁴ Mark, however, does not ascribe the healing to the material media used but to Jesus himself: 'He even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak' (Mk. 7.37; cf. 'He opened my eyes', Jn 9.30). Why Jesus choose to use spittle rather than other physical means to transfer his power we cannot know. It might be due to the fact that spittle was ready at hand or due to its medicinal associations. Whatever its significance in the healing practice of Jesus, the use of spittle had no magical connotations. The fact that it did not persist in the healing practices of the Church indicates that it was not regarded as an essential component of any healing procedure.

4.4.2. *Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons and Peter's shadow*

As mentioned earlier,²¹⁵ it was a common belief in the first century CE that one could be healed by touching a holy man or an object which belonged to him. In Acts 19.12 Luke reports: 'And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul (*διὰ τῶν χειρῶν Παύλου*) so that (*ὥστε καί*) handkerchiefs (*σουδάρια*) or aprons (*σιμικίνθια*) were carried away from his body to the sick (*ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας*), and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them'. While most commentators understand that Luke regarded these 'mediating substances' as having a positive effect on the sick people,²¹⁶ a quite unnatural reading of the text is offered by J. Wilkinson. He notes:

The fact that he [Paul] would not have had a great number of these items suggests that they were not in fact the means of healing the sick. The first clause of verse twelve describes not the method by which the sick were healed, but the result of the healing by which the people took away cloths which had been worn by Paul in the superstitious belief that they would convey healing to the sick equally with his hands. Luke does not in fact tell us what effect they had on the sick.

²¹³ *Healing and Christianity*, 80.

²¹⁴ Point emphasised by R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 383.

²¹⁵ *Supra*, 2.4.1. For Rabbinic literature, see Daube, *NTRJ*, 234.

²¹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Book*, 389; I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 310; W.J. Larkin, *Acts* (IVP 5; Leicester: Intervarsity, 1995), 276.

Wilkinson is right in noting that the laying of handkerchiefs and aprons on sick people was the result of the ‘extraordinary miracles’ mentioned in verse 11, but he is wrong in assuming that the healings and exorcisms reported in 12b are necessarily the same with those of verse 11 and that they are performed literally ‘through the hands of Paul’.²¹⁷ A natural reading of verse 12 requires that the conjunction *καί* at the beginning of 12b be understood as expressing result and the personal pronoun *αὐτῶν* be taken as referring back to *ἀσθενοῦντας*. In fairness to Luke's text, then, our contention is that the author's intention is to tell his readers that the healings and exorcisms of 12b are precisely the effect of these ‘mediating substances’ on the sick people.

An even more remarkable story provided by Luke is that of the healing shadow of Peter: ‘Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands (*διὰ τῶν χειρῶν*) of the apostles ... so that (*ὥστε καί*) they even carried out the sick into the streets ... that as Peter came by at least (*κᾶν*) his shadow might fall on (*ἵνα ... ἐπισκιάσῃ*) some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed’ (Acts 5.15-16). As in 19.11-12 here too, Luke presents the events in the following order - a general statement about miracles performed ‘by the hands of the apostles’ (5.12) followed by a report about miracles performed by the use of ‘mediating substances’ introduced by *ὥστε καί*. But what is remarkable here is that Peter seems to be portrayed as being completely passive. He does not even seem to pay attention to the sick persons.²¹⁸ Is Luke describing here a popular belief that ‘power’ could be transferred not only by material means, but also by a shadow? Does the use of *κᾶν* suggest a desire for a closer contact than overshadowing (cf. Mk 5.28, *κᾶν τῶν ἱματίων*)? If Luke intended this, he does nothing to contradict such a belief. On the contrary, he makes it clear that the method worked, irrespective of the superstitious nature of the people's belief.

But it is not certain that Luke understood the miracles this way. First, the miracles are taking place in a context of faith (v. 14).²¹⁹ Secondly, the evidence presented by P.W.

²¹⁷ A literal translation of the phrase *διὰ τῶν χειρῶν Παύλου* is possible, but this is a well-known Semitic idiom expressing agency (see also Acts 5.12; 14.3). Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, I.273. Still, Lake and Cadbury (*BC IV*, 239) and E. Haenchen (*Acts*, 51) take each occurrence of the phrase literally.

²¹⁸ C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, I.276.

²¹⁹ The connection between verses 14 and 15 is not good but apparently Luke speaks in verse 14 about the extensive aspect of the believers' faith in the Lord (the church multiplied) and in verse 15 the intensive aspect of the same faith (their faith was so great that ‘they even carried out the sick into the streets ...’). It is also possible that either 12b-14 or simply verse 14 is intended as a parenthesis, so that verse 15 must be connected to 12a (Bauernfeind, 89; J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* [AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967], 45), respectively with 13 (Blass, 83). The similar construction found in 19.11-12 (*ὥστε καί*), in a text reporting similarly on mediating substances, seems to support former suggestion. It is also an indication that Luke intends to equate Peter and Paul in terms of supernatural power. So also, F.F. Bruce, *The Book*, 389; C.K. Barrett, *Acts* I.276f.

van der Horst²²⁰ for the popular belief of Jesus' contemporaries in the magical powers of a shadow reveals no exact parallel to this instance. Probably the closest parallel is provided by Pliny the Elder in his comment on the beneficial medicinal effect of trees' shadows.²²¹ The background of ἐπισκιάζειν seems to be its Septuagintal usage, as in Lk 1.35 and 9.34. With Dieterich we think that the similar use of ἐπισκιάζειν here points to the presence and power of God, so that it is not Peter's shadow that which effects the cures and expels the demons but the presence and power of God which Peter represents. As the apostles hands are considered by Luke to be extensions of God's hands (Acts 4.30), so here, Peter's shadow seems to represent 'the shadow of the Almighty' (Ps 91.1, 4; cf. Ex 40.35).²²² The difference would be that, while the apostles' hands are regarded as 'mediating substances' by which the numinous power is transferred physically, Peter's shadow is simply a symbol of God's presence and power.

In conclusion, Luke's reports about the use of 'mediating substances' in healing are not necessarily an indication that he condoned magical practices or that he entertained superstitious beliefs. As long as the sick person recognised the true source of the healing power mediated through these pieces of material, there would be nothing superstitious about such practice. In fact, one may even consider that for Luke a healer's hand functioned like a 'mediating substance', interposed between the real source (God) and the receiver; they are both carriers of numinous power. The only difference between a healer's hands and a mediating substance is that the symbolism attached to the former is much stronger than that attached the latter. The positive side of the use of mediating substances is that the attention of the sick person is diverted from the healer (Acts 5.13) to God who actually performs the miracle (Acts 19.11).

4.4.3. *The Anointing with Oil for Healing*

The above discussion on the healing substances brings us to another rite of healing, the anointing with oil. We turn next to investigate the significance of the use of oil in healing and the relationship which might exist between the LH and the anointing with oil.

Oil was a common medicine in the ancient world, being known among Jews²²³ and non-Jews alike.²²⁴ In the New Testament, oil is mentioned in connection with healing three

²²⁰ P.W. van der Horst, 'Peter's Shadow: the Religio-Historical Background of Acts 5.15', *NTS* 23 (1976-77): 204-212.

²²¹ *Nat.Hist.* 17.18.

²²² W. Dieterich, *Das Petrusbild der lukanischen Schriften* (BWANT 94; Stuttgart, 1972), 238f. So also C.K. Barrett, *Acts* I.277.

²²³ Is. 1.6; Je. 8.22; Lk. 10.34, for healing wounds; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.172, for warming a sick person's body; *War* 1.657; *Slav. Enoch* 22.8-9; 8.35; Philo, *Somn.* 2.58, for paralysis. Rabbinic examples in Strack-Billerbeck, I, 428 f.; II, 11 f.

²²⁴ Plato, *Menex.*, 238; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 23.39-40, for toothache; Galen, *De. med. temp.* 2.10, for paralysis; Seneca, *Ep.* 53.5, for toning the muscles.

times: It is referred to as medicine in the story of 'The Good Samaritan' (Lk 10.34), but apparently it has a different significance in the other two references, Mk 6.13 and Jas 5.14.

Mark 6.13. When the twelve were sent by Jesus to preach the repentance they also 'anointed (ἠλείφον) with oil many that were sick and healed them'. That they were given authority to do so is stated in 6.7 and the redactional note of 3.14-15. In both places, the term 'authority' (ἐξουσία) should be understood as expressing more than 'permission'; it rather connotes 'supernatural power'.²²⁵ Although oil was known as a common medicine, in view of the references just cited, it becomes obvious that a charismatic leader would not give his disciples power to function as ancient doctors, but divine power over demons and sickness. Therefore, with most commentators, we believe that oil is here a symbol of God's healing power.²²⁶

James 5.14. The reference to the rite of anointing with oil is part of a unit (5.13-18), consisting of a succession of ideas. The main part of the pericope (vv. 13a, 14-18) is devoted to the effect of prayer in the life of the distressed:

Is any among you sick (ἀσθενεῖ)? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him (προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτόν), anointing him with oil (ἀλείψαντες αὐτόν ἐλαίῳ) in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save (σώσει) the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up (ἐγερεῖ); and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

While ἀσθενεῖ may be used to describe spiritual weakness (e.g. Rom 4.19; 1Cor 8.11-12; 2Cor 11.29), here it refers to physical illness;²²⁷ the pointers are κακοπαθεῖν ('to endure evil, to be afflicted') of verse 13, the need that the elders would take a trip to the place of the ill person. Similarly, the use of oil in verse 14 and of the verb σώζειν ('to make whole') and κάμνειν ('to be ill') in verse 15a point in the same direction.²²⁸

The ceremony is to be performed by the elders, i.e. the official leaders of the church.²²⁹ It is not clear whether James prescribes here a new ceremony or whether he

²²⁵ Luke has δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν. See Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 160.

²²⁶ See E.P. Gould, *The Gospel according to Mark* (1896), 108; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according St. Mark* (1959), 201; V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (1981), 306; C.S. Mann, *Mark*, 293; R. A. Cole, *Mark* (1989), 171; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 323 *et. al.*

²²⁷ Contra Daniel R. Hayden, 'Calling the Elders to Pray', *BSac* 138 (1981): 258-66. Hayden's argument is that, apart from James, nowhere in the Bible is physical healing a duty of the elders (p. 262). The anointing with oil by the elders here is 'a means of bestowing honour, refreshment, and grooming' (p. 264). Hayden's conclusion is contradicted by his own argument, i.e. that of a biblical precedent. His use of Lk 7.38 as evidence for such practice does not hold since the custom described there has nothing to do with the Jewish elders. Moreover, if the anointing is for 'bestowing honour, refreshment, grooming' why should it be done 'in the name of the Lord'?

²²⁸ Cf. P.H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (1982), 192; R.P. Martin, *James* (WBC, 1988), 206 ff.

²²⁹ The 'elders of the church' refers here to those who hold a specific office in the church; they are found in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 11.30; 15.2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16.4; 21.18), the Pauline churches (Acts 14.23; 20.17-38; 1 Tim. 4.14; 5.17, 19; Tit. 1.5) and the Petrine churches (1 Pet. 5.1). Cf. also 2Jn 1 and 3Jn 1.

simply describes a practice common to his audience. However, in view of the other admonitions of v. 13, it does not appear that he is introducing a new rite.²³⁰ His aim is to stress the powerful effects of a 'prayer of faith'. The procedure is mentioned only parenthetically and this indicates that the practice of anointing with oil was common.

The injunction that *the elders* be called and not individuals with the charismatic gift of healing, has been explained variously: 1) The elders are to be called because the charismatic gifts were primarily associated with the leadership of the new movement. At least in the earliest days of the movement, as recorded by Luke, leadership arose from the operation and recognition of spiritual gifts (Acts 6.3, 5, 8; 13.1, 2).²³¹ 2) The gift of healing is connected with the office.²³² 3) They are to be called not because they possess some spiritual gift but because are endowed with 'the gift of efficacious prayer' in virtue of their office.²³³ 4) James' injunction is to be taken as 'a course of action which circumvents the charismatic healer in favor of church officers'.²³⁴

In response to the suggestions presented above, I acknowledge the possibility that James was familiar with the operation of the gifts of healing and that some of the elders possessed them (based on the analogy of Acts 6.3-5, 8; 8.6, 7 where, at least in Stephen's and Philip's case, the position of leadership is associated with spiritual gifts). It would, however, be precarious to assume that all elders were endowed with such a gift, i.e. that healing the sick was a special function of this office.²³⁵ The fact that 'the elders of the church' *as a college* had to be called, shifts the emphasis from the gift to the office; they are to be called because of their official position in the church, rather than because of their possession of healing *charismata*. In other words, they are called not as healers but as intercessors. To connect the *charisma* of healing with the office of 'elders', as Dibelius suggests, would necessarily mean to assume a late development characterized by the institutionalization of the *charismata*; for there is sufficient evidence that ordination itself confers some *charismata* (cf. Dt. 34.9; 1Tim. 4.14; 2Tim. 1.6).

At least two things prevent us, however, from concluding that this applied to the elders: a) We do not know whether the elders were ordained in the same way Timothy was ordained (cf. discussion in Chapter 7), and b) if they were ordained, we still lack information about the nature of the *charismata* they received in ordination. Similarly, Bornkamm's suggestion that the elders are endowed with 'the gift of efficacious prayer' in

²³⁰ Songer, *James*, 137; S. Laws, *The Epistle of James* (1980), 229 f.

²³¹ Mayor, *Epistle of James*, 169; S. Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 230-31. The question whether Christian ordination confers spiritual gifts or merely recognises them will be discussed later. See Chapter 7.

²³² M. Dibelius, *James*, 252 f.

²³³ G. Bornkamm, 'πρόσβυσ', *TDNT*, II, 664, following Dibelius.

²³⁴ Gary S. Shogren, 'Will God Heal Us? - A Re-examination of James 5:14-16a', *EvQ* 61 (1989), 100.

²³⁵ J. Wilkinson, *SJT* 24 (1971), 335.

virtue of their office is difficult to defend, for the efficacy of prayer has to do with one's faith (whoever one might be) and is not a privilege of an office holder. In fact, v. 16 shows that a successful healing ministry is not limited to the appointed leaders; all the members of the church have a share in it. The suggestion that James circumvented the charismatic healers is again difficult to substantiate, for there is no indication in James' epistle or elsewhere that he was antipathetic towards those who possessed such gifts.

Why then are the elders to be called? Apparently, the answer has to do with James' view that the healing ministry of the church is not limited to those who possess the *charismata* of healing, not even to those who hold an office in the church. It is rather a privilege of each member of the church (v.16; cf. also Mk. 16.18). The elders act as representatives of the local congregation as a whole and their intercession for the restoration of the sick member expresses the concern and the plea of the entire local Christian community. It is possible to see the role of the 'elders' along the lines of present day pastors.²³⁶ Their concern for and ministry to those physically afflicted would be then all the more natural. The healing ministry of an 'elder' is reminiscent of the duties of a Jewish elder which included, among other things, visitation of the sick and praying for them.²³⁷ If this were the case, the rite does not appear to be a late development at the expense of the charismatic gifts of healing (cf. 1Cor. 12.9, 30), i.e. an 'institutionalizing' of charisma; later in Irenaeus' time charismatic individuals were still around, laying hands on the sick.²³⁸ It appears to be rather an early adaptation of the church to some special needs²³⁹ of its growing membership.

The purpose for the use of oil in this ceremony is not altogether clear. Some scholars take the anointing here as a medical procedure, based on the medicinal use of oil at that time.²⁴⁰ There are, however, two facts which point to a religious use of oil here: 1)

²³⁶ See D.J. Moo, *James*, 176. Cf. also R.P. Martin, *James*, 207. The charge given to the Ephesian elders to 'pastor' their flock (Acts 20.28) and to the fact that 'pastors' are never mentioned along with elders are pointers, says Moo, that the elders' duties included pastoral concerns.

²³⁷ Cf. *b.Bab.Bat.* 116a; *b.Hag.* 3a; *b.Ned.* 41a. See also J.H. Ropes, *James* (ICC, 1916), 304. It is generally believed that the office of 'elder' in the first Christian communities was taken over from the Jewish synagogue. For a detailed discussion on the role of elders in Early Judaism and Graeco-Roman world, see G. Bornkamm, 'προεσβύτης', *TDNT*, VI, 651-83, and more recently A. Campbell, *The Elders* (1994), 28-79.

²³⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 2.32.4, reports: 'For some drive out demons... and others cure the sick by the laying on of hands and make them whole'.

²³⁹ The rite seems to apply primarily to those members who are confined to bed by their illness.

²⁴⁰ Cf. J.B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (1892), 170; R.J. Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, 3rd ed. (1922), 139 f.; A.T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (1959), 189; R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle of James* (1963), 661; J. Wilkinson, 'Healing in the Epistle of James', *SJT* 24 (1971), 338-39 and also in *Health and Healing*, 153f.; D.W. Burdick, *James*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (1981), 204; T. Powel, 'Anointing with Oil' in *DPCM*, 11. This interpretation is rejected by J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 355 f.; Shogren, 'Will God Heal Us?', 101-104; R.P. Martin, 'New Testament Worship: Some Puzzling Practices', *AUSS* 2 (1993), 125.

the anointing was performed by the elders and 2) it was done 'in the name of the Lord'.²⁴¹ As a religious ceremony, the anointing with oil has been interpreted *sacramentally* and *symbolically*. The passage has been taken by some sacramentalists as biblical evidence for the Catholic sacrament of extreme unction. There is however no internal evidence that the rite was intended to 'save from spiritual death' those who were at the point of death.²⁴² Another sacramental position on the rite is that the oil is 'a sacramental vehicle of divine power'.²⁴³ As I have argued in the case of the LH, so here, the fact that the healing is attributed to faith (or the 'prayer of faith') does not automatically exclude any (quasi)-physical transfer of power. However, since there is no evidence that James worked within such a 'sacramental' framework, the sacramental understanding of the anointing with oil is questionable here.²⁴⁴

The most common interpretation of the rite refers to a *symbolic* significance of the oil. At least three symbols have been suggested: First, the anointing with oil may imply here a consecration of the sick to God for a special favor.²⁴⁵ This view is possible on the basis of the LXX synonymous use of *ἀλείφειν* and *χρίειν* and the Old Testament use of oil.²⁴⁶ It is an extension of the Old Testament use of oil in the consecration of priests (e.g. Ex. 28.41; 30.30; 40.15), kings (e.g. 1 Sa. 9.16; 15.1; 16.12; 1 Kgs 1.34; 19.15; 2 Kgs 9.3), and the sacred objects (Lev. 8.11; Nu. 7.1). As an element of consecration for

²⁴¹ So M. Dibelius, *James* (ET, 1976), 252, but he identifies the rite here as a rite of exorcism. Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James* (1980), 227, suggests that the 'medical' element and the 'religious' one should not be distinguished for such a distinction would have been foreign to the Jews of the first century CE. While this may be true, James' intention is undoubtedly to describe a religious procedure; he attributes the healing to the 'prayer of faith' not to the oil. For various ways in which *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου* has been interpreted, see R.P. Martin, *James*, 208; J.C. Thomas, 'The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: James 5.14-16' in *JPT* 2 (1993), 39f.

²⁴² The Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction has been criticised among others by J.H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC, 1916), 306-307; William Barclay, *And He Had Compassion on Them* (1955), 257; M.T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity* (1973), 115f.; R.P. Martin, *James*, 202; *et al.*

²⁴³ P.H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 193. Cf. also M. Dibelius, *James*, 252. D.J. Moo, *James*, 178 f., only acknowledges this possibility, but he prefers a symbolistic view of the oil. There is no indication that the oil referred to in Js 5.14 had to be consecrated. The use of consecrated oil for healing and exorcism is known later in Christian circles. Cf. *Act. Thom.*, 67, where Jesus is asked to anoint with consecrated oil a woman tormented by demons (*καὶ ἀλείψας αὐτὴν ἐλαίῳ ἁγίῳ*); or Tertullian, *Ad Scapul.*, 4, where a Christian heals Emperor Antoninus in the same way.

²⁴⁴ J.C. Thomas, 'The Devil, Disease and Deliverance', 37.

²⁴⁵ D.J. Moo, *James*, 179; R.P. Martin, *James*, 208-209.

²⁴⁶ The term *ἀλείφειν* is used in the New Testament exclusively for physical anointing. In the LXX, it is used as a synonym of *χρίειν* to refer to the consecration of priests (Ex. 40.15; Nu. 3.3). *χρίειν* is always used in the New Testament in a religious or metaphoric sense, of Christ (Lk. 4.18; Acts 4.27; 10.38; Heb. 1.9) and of the Holy Spirit (2Cor. 1.21). For a recent discussion on the use of the two verbs in the LXX and the NT, see J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology* (1962), 238-53, 281-95; D.J. Moo, *James* (1985), 179-81. Among those who draw a sharp distinction between the way in which the two verbs are used, see R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (9th ed., 1880), 136-37: '*ἀλείφειν* is the mundane and profane, *χρίειν* the sacred and religious, word'; H. Schlier, *ἀλείφω*, *TDNT* I, 229; Bernard Martin, *The Healing Ministry in the Church* (1960), 102.

service, oil points to the Holy Spirit, the Enabler for service (cf. 1 Sa. 10.1, 9, 10; 16.13; Is. 61.1; Zc. 4.1-14). This meaning is carried over in the New Testament (Acts 10.38; 1 Jn 2.20, 27). When the anointing consecrates one for God's special favor, the oil points to the Holy Spirit, the Lifegiver.²⁴⁷

Second, the oil may signify the power of God to heal. This view has been suggested by J.C. Thomas who demonstrates from first century CE Jewish documents²⁴⁸ that by this time oil had come to be regarded as an eschatological sign of the healing power which will be made available in the messianic age. He further suggests that it is precisely this significance that the anointing with oil has in both Mk 6.13 and Jas 5.14:

These texts [the Jewish documents] suggest that oil from a tree in paradise had come to have healing virtues associated with it, the implication being that such oil would again become available in the messianic age. Obviously, James does not regard the oil as having healing virtues in and of itself. However, the associations which oil had come to have with healing generally and eschatological healing in particular suggest that its presence in Jesus' ministry and in the practice of the early church signified the power of God to heal, which was one implication of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.²⁴⁹

Third, the oil may signify the mood of joy (cf. Ps. 23.5; 45.7; Prv. 27.9; Is. 61.3; Am. 6.6; Heb. 1.9) which should characterize a Christian even in the midst of adversities; this is a common Jacobean theme (1.2, 3, 12; 2.13; 5.11, 13).²⁵⁰

While all the above suggestions appear to be valid, due to the scarcity of information in the New Testament it is not an easy task to decide which one reflects James' intention. At any rate, the religious significance of the anointing with oil for healing can be directly derived from its medicinal use so that most likely oil signifies here God's presence and the availability of his healing power, pointing perhaps to the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The anointing with oil is associated with prayer. The way in which the elders' prayer is referred to here is unique in the New Testament. They should 'pray over' the sick person (*προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτόν*). The preposition *ἐπί* seems to point to a gesture of the hands which was associated with prayer; the hands of the elders were either stretched over or laid on the sick person.²⁵¹ As early as Origen, the passage was

²⁴⁷ See J.A. Motyer, 'Anointing', *NBD*, 50, who suggests that 'the use of oil in anointing the sick is best understood ... as pointing to the Holy Spirit, the Lifegiver.'

²⁴⁸ In *Life of Adam and Eve* 36 (cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 9.3), Adam hopes that God will give him oil which flows from the tree of life, so that he might anoint himself and be healed.

²⁴⁹ 'The Devil, Disease and Deliverance', 38 f.

²⁵⁰ See R.P. Martin, *James* (WBC, 1988), 202. It is known that Essenes, due to their ascetic views, prohibited the use of oil (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 2.123).

²⁵¹ See J.B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James*, 170; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (1982), 193.

understood to imply the LH.²⁵² Due to the scarcity of evidence, one cannot be dogmatic about the association of the LH with the anointing with oil here. All that can be said is that such association is highly probable.

Ysebaert sees the two gestures in such a close relation that they become one. By analogy with the anointing with clay in Jn 9.6, he believes that the anointing with oil in Jas 5.14 implies a LH, on the basis that both are gestures of touching. In other words, both rites are performed in one gesture; when the presbyters anoint with oil, they implicitly touch the sick and the action of touching is the equivalent of the LH.²⁵³ This is, however, a superficial treatment of the issue. If the LH was part of the rite described in Jas 5.14, then it was associated with prayer and must be distinguished from the anointing with oil. If so, one may rightly ask what is the temporal relationship was between the LH and the anointing with oil. Most likely, the aorist participle ἀλείψαντες denotes here an action prior to that of προσευξάσθωσαν, rendering the translation: ‘let them pray over him having anointed [him] with oil’.²⁵⁴ It is possible, then, that the oil symbolized the power of God to heal thus rekindling the faith of the sick, while the LH actually transferred the life-force.

A final word needs to be said in connection with the promise of v.15, that the request made in faith (εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως) will restore physically the sick person. First, the healing is not attributed to the rite itself as a whole or to some element of it (anointing, LH, prayer) but to the faith of the one(s) who pray(s) (in this case the presbyters). The *ex opere operato* understanding of the rite is then excluded. Secondly, it must be spelled out that not even the faith of the presbyters can always guarantee the physical healing, for otherwise it would confer immortality. James’ intention is rather to describe a principle on the basis of which God will act in most situations (cf. Mk 16.17; Jn 15.7).²⁵⁵ The healing is a matter of divine grace and illustrates the sovereign power of God.

4.5. The Gesture for Healing in Light of the Old Testament Terminology

In the like-manner of the LXX Greek, the New Testament Greek does not distinguish between the two forms of the LH found in the Old Testament: the pressing on of the

²⁵² The verse is quoted in *Leviticam Homiliae* 2.4 [PG 12:419] as follows: *si quis autem infirmatur, vocet presbyteros ecclesiae, et imponant ei manus, ungentes eum oleo in nomine Domini*. Cf. also Galtier, *DTC*, c.1313 f.

²⁵³ J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 258-59. It must be noted that in Jn 9.6, the only place in John's gospel when touching is used in healing, there is no transfer of power implied through the gesture. The healing is completed when the blind man washes his eyes.

²⁵⁴ The aorist participle may also denote an action concomitant with that of the leading verb.

²⁵⁵ See Ralph Martin, *James*, 215 f.; Gary S. Shogren, *EvQ* 61 (1989), 108: ‘Faith always entails risk, or it is not faith’.

hand(s), סמך יד על, and the placing on of the hand(s), שח יד על (שח). Yet, when people addressed Jesus in Aramaic requesting to lay hands on people, the language they used must have differentiated between the two forms. Therefore, since linguistically it is impossible to know in each given situation if the gesture described is a gentle placing of the hand(s) or a gesture involving significant pressure, we will discuss the issue in light of Daube's differentiation.

According to Daube's classification of the New Testament instances of the LH under either שח-שח or סמך, the underlying verbs for the LH in healing by Jesus are שח and שח. The pressing of the hands (סמך) on a sick person would have been an inappropriate gesture, says Daube.²⁵⁶ Yet, we saw in Qumran literature that סמך can be used to describe a gesture of healing (1QapGen 20.28, 29). This led another scholar, David Flusser, to conclude that סמך is the underlying verb in all the New Testament instances of LH in healing.²⁵⁷ In a later article²⁵⁸, Daube acknowledged that the two rites, the 'placing' and the 'pressing' of the hand, may overlap in healing; when the underlying verb is סמך, the healer conveys his own health and vigor to the sick person. It is doubtful, however, that the gesture described in 1QapGen 20.28, 29 is to be understood in this way. Both the nature of Pharaoh's illness and the association of the LH with prayer preclude an understanding of the gesture as a transfer of Abram's own health and vigor to Pharaoh. The verb סמך does not seem to suggest here a concept different from that which is normally conveyed by שח and שח. It suggests a communication of divine power, mediated through the healer.

I have shown that the transfer of God's power from Jesus and the apostles to the sick does not depend exclusively on physical contact. Where such contact nevertheless exists, a mere touch is sufficient to effect the transfer; the use of ἐπιτιθέναι and ἄπτεσθαι interchangeably is prime evidence. Therefore, in view of the free gesture used by Jesus in healing, i.e. a mere touching rather than a laying of hands on the head of the sick, and of the fact that it was the power of God which was transferred, not men's power, it seems fit to us to take נגע, *to touch* (cf. 2Kgs. 13.21), and not שח, שח or סמך as the underlying verb for this particular use of the gesture.²⁵⁹

Finally, a conclusion has to be reached in regard to the number of hands laid on in healing. The LH in blessing is described in the Old Testament as a placing of only one hand on the head of the person who receives the blessing (Gen. 48.14, 17). Similarly, the gesture of healing expected by Naaman (2Kgs. 5.11; LXX, ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ

²⁵⁶ *Rabbinic Judaism*, 234 f.

²⁵⁷ D. Flusser, 'Healing through the Laying-on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll', *Israel Restoration Journal* 7 (1957), 107 f.

²⁵⁸ 'A Reform in Acts and its Models', in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in Honour of W.D. Davies* (1976), 162.

²⁵⁹ J.K. Parratt, 'A Re-examination', 212.

ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον) involved only one hand. In the New Testament, singular forms of *χείρ* appear only in Mk 7.32; Mt. 9.18 and a variant reading of Acts 9.12; the vast majority of references have the plural.²⁶⁰ It may be recalled that in the post-apostolic writings there is a preference for the singular. Behm's conclusion is that the New Testament gesture involved both hands and later it became a gesture performed with one hand.²⁶¹ However, in view of the free gesture used by Jesus and the apostles and of the Old Testament precedent(s), I accept Ysebaert's conclusion that the gesture was performed with one hand, the plural being used as part of a fixed expression.²⁶²

4.6. Parallels to Jesus' and the Apostles' Use of the Laying on of Hands in Healing

In the introduction of this chapter we mentioned a number of scholars who advocate that the background of Jesus' healing by touch must be sought in contemporary Hellenistic practices. Our investigation of the Graeco-Roman literature in Chapter 3 revealed no valid parallel to Jesus' methods of healing. Although the 'healing touch' is used by Jewish and Hellenistic thaumaturges alike, in Hellenism it is only rarely practised by human miracle workers; it was used mostly by gods in legends. When human miracle workers use it, the gesture is part of bizarre and complex healing techniques which are not paralleled in the New Testament. For the reasons indicated in section 3.6., we were not able to find any valid parallel to Jesus' method of healing by mere touch.

Scholars point repeatedly to the fact that neither the Old Testament nor the Rabbinic writings offer any parallel to Jesus' healing by the LH. While this is true, we provided evidence that the conception of power being transferred by physical contact was at hand in the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Ki. 17.21; 2 Ki. 4.29). This challenges the idea that Jesus' gesture of healing is rooted in Hellenistic practices. Our investigation of the Jewish background in Chapter 2 revealed that the only report of healing by the LH in a Jewish source appears in Qumran literature (1QapGen). The scroll comes from a period prior to the destruction of 70 CE, probably from the pre-Christian era. The question is whether or not the LH of 1QapGen describes a Jewish rite of the first century CE, which influenced the Christian practice.

Assuming that 1QapGen is produced by the community of Qumran, G.R. Driver rejects the suggestion that Jesus and his followers took over the practice of the LH and the rebuking of evil spirits in healing from the Essenes. His arguments are a) that the

²⁶⁰ The plural *χείρας* of Mk 16.18 may be taken as a distributive plural and its use in Mk 8.25 implies that one hand was laid on each eye.

²⁶¹ *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 8. n. 1, 98 n. 1.

²⁶² *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 227 f., 258.

Covenanters kept their customs to themselves, and b) that the scrolls are of a later period. Instead, argues Driver, the solitary appearance of the LH in one of the Qumran Scrolls 'may be an echo of a Christian practice which must have become well-known during the first century AD'.²⁶³

Driver may be correct in rejecting the Essenian influence on Jesus and his followers. Strong connections between the sect of Qumran and the early Christian sect have not been found. It is unlikely, therefore, that the Essenes' practice of laying hands on sick people (if such practice ever existed) had any direct influence on the Christian custom. On the other hand, Driver's suggestion of the possibility that the sect assimilated a Christian practice is difficult to accept even when one assumes a later date for the 1QapGen 20, e.g. second half of the first century CE. First, the healing of a demon-sickness by the LH is not well attested in the New Testament, except for Lk. 13.13 and possibly Lk 4.38-39. Even if the evidence were stronger, it would still be difficult to believe that the conservative sect of Qumran would be so prone to assimilate a newly innovated Christian practice. In the light of the LXX translation of וְהִנִּיף יָדוֹ by *καὶ ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα* (2 Kg 5.11), it can be contended that the LH for healing is older than the Essenian sect. We cannot tell whether, in laying his hands on the sick or in touching them, Jesus was influenced by the OT examples. But we know that he was not regarded by the gospel writers and his contemporaries as a magician. Rather, he was perceived as a holy man, a prophet like Elijah and Elisha, who was endued by God with power to heal those afflicted physically.

But the question of the origin of the LH in healing remains unsolved. Whether it is of a Babylonian import or is distinctively Jewish, we cannot prove. We think of no better way to conclude this section than quoting Twelftree who noted that 'in many ways Jesus seems to have been a man of his time in that he used readily recognizable techniques'.²⁶⁴

4.7. Conclusion

All three synoptic writers depict Jesus as a miracle worker, invested with power and authority by God to heal those afflicted with various diseases. One method by which he accomplishes the healing is the touch/LH. The fact that quite often healings are attributed to faith alone should not be interpreted as a denial of a physical transfer of power. All three evangelists intended to convey the very idea that Jesus' body was a source of power which could be released physically, through a touch accompanied by faith.²⁶⁵ The

²⁶³ *The Judaean Scrolls*, 461.

²⁶⁴ 'ΕΙ ΔΕ ... ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ...', in D. Wenham and C. Blomberg [eds.], *The Miracles of Jesus* (Gospel Perspectives 6; Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 393.

²⁶⁵ According to Plummer, *Mark*, 147, the connection between the LH and healing is not as direct as presented above. In his view, Jesus laid his hands on the sick as a symbol of blessing, but this aided

interchangeable use of the ‘verbs of touching’ indicates that for all three synoptic writers the LH was not used in a ritualistic manner; it was just another means by which Jesus established physical contact with his patients and transferred to them his healing power.

Making a comment on the inner process of the transfer of power through physical contact, James Dunn says: ‘No doubt a flow of energy from healer to healed was actually experienced in many cases through the physical contact (cf. Mark 5.28f. pars), though whether the energy was thereby simply released from the latent resources of one or other, or channeled through the man of faith to the sick person from sources outside of himself (God/risen Jesus) we cannot at this distance even begin to judge’.²⁶⁶ Yet, the gospels and the book of Acts offer us evidence that Jesus stood in a different relation to the divine power from that of his followers (Acts 4.30) or the OT prophets (1Kgs 17.20; 2 Kgs 5.11). He is depicted as the unique, self-sufficient bearer of God's power, who does not need to come to God as a suppliant, or to activate the power of a bearer of numinous power mightier than himself.²⁶⁷ He is a ‘repository’ who discharges his healing power at his own will. The most common depiction of Jesus’ followers is that of petitioners and mediators of divine power. They function as channels of the healing power that God/the Risen Christ releases as a result of their petitions.

A transfer of healing power is possible not only through direct physical contact but also through ‘intermediate substances’ like spittle and clothes. Although notions like this seem to ‘border on magic’, they were included nevertheless in the miracle stories of the earliest Christianity in order to emphasise the magnitude of Jesus’ power or the overwhelming presence of God.

the faith of the sick with the result that he/she was healed. This psychological interpretation of the gesture ignores, however, the clear references of the evangelists to a transfer of power by physical contact.

²⁶⁶ *Jesus and the Spirit*, 165.

²⁶⁷ The suggestion in Acts 5.15-16 and 19.12 that Peter and Paul function as bearers of numinous power is only apparent. While in 19.11 Luke states clearly that it was God who performed the miracles, in 5.12 this is only implicit in the passive verb and the *διὰ* plus genitive (*διὰ τῶν χειρῶν ἀποστόλων ...*).

CHAPTER 5

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AS A MARK OF FAVOUR

There are two references in the New Testament to some gesture of the hands used in connection with the pronouncement of a blessing. Children are brought to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them (τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς, Mt. 19. 13; ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄψηται, Mk 10.13, Lk. 18.15). As a result, Jesus blesses the children in the manner requested (τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά, Mk 10.16; ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς, Mt. 19.15). Another gesture of blessing known to Luke, the lifting up of the hands, will be discussed in connection with Luke's account of Jesus' departure (Lk. 24.50), in order to investigate its relationship with the LH.

5.1. The blessing of the children (Mark 10.13, 16; Mt. 19.13,15; Lk. 18.15)

As shown earlier, the custom of blessing someone by laying hands on his/her head is attested in the Old Testament (Gen. 48.14, 17). Nothing is known about the continuity of this practice in the pre-Christian era. The gesture is, however, attested in New Testament times in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, as we already noted.¹ On the basis of the antiquity of the practice, earlier we rated as probable the suggestion that, in the Second Temple times, Jewish children were blessed by the Temple scribes with the LH.² The story of Jesus blessing the children is recorded by all three synoptic writers. There are significant differences between the three accounts, as the following synoptic view shows:

| <u>Mark</u> | <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Luke</u> |
|--|---|--|
| <p>10.13 Καὶ προσέφερον αὐτῷ παιδία ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄψηται· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτοῖς.</p> <p>10.14 ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἠγανάκτησεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἄφετε τὰ παιδία ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με, μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.</p> <p>10.15 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.</p> <p>10.16 καὶ ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ κατευλόγει τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά.</p> | <p>19.13 Τότε προσηνέχθησαν αὐτῷ παιδία, ἵνα τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς καὶ προσεύξηται· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτοῖς.</p> <p>19.14 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἄφετε τὰ παιδία καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτὰ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.</p> <p>19.15 καὶ ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἐπορεύθη ἐκεῖθεν.</p> | <p>18.15 Προσέφερον δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ βρέφη ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄπτηται· ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμων αὐτοῖς.</p> <p>18.16 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσεκαλέσατο αὐτὰ λέγων, Ἄφετε τὰ παιδία ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.</p> <p>18.17 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.</p> |

¹ Section 2.2.2 above.

² See supra § 2.4.2.1.

In Mark's version, the age of the children (*παιδία*) can be from that of an infant up to twelve years old. Luke understands that the children are infants too young to walk (*τὰ βρέφη*, Lk. 18.15). The verb *προσφέρω*, however, does not necessarily imply carrying someone (cf. Mt. 8.16; 9.32; 18.24; Lk. 23.14). None of the gospel writers disclose the identity of those who bring the children. Mark and Luke leaves the subject of the active verb (*προσφέρω*) unexpressed, a feature common in Greek, and Matthew resorts to the passive 'were brought' (*προσηνέχθησαν*). However, the masculine *αὐτοῖς* in the sentence *οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτοῖς* (Mk. 10.13b and par.) prevents one thinking that mothers alone are in view here; most likely, it is a generic masculine used for parents, obviously including the mothers.³

The purpose of the parents' action is not plainly stated. As already noted, Jeremias' suggestion that the occasion is the Day of Atonement, when some parents chose to bring the children to Jesus for blessing rather than to the scribes, is plausible.⁴ Mark and Luke focus on the form of the gesture rather than on the purpose for it. They state simply that the children are brought 'that he might touch them'. Although Matthew is more specific at this point, indicating that the purpose for the action was 'that he might lay his hands⁵ on them and pray', he still does not state clearly the reason for the gesture and prayer. Are the children brought for blessing, healing or some other favour?

The laying on of Jesus' hands in healing is a common feature in the gospels. The gospel writers record cases when people ask Jesus to touch or lay hands on them (Mk 5.23 par.; 7.32; 8.22). However, none of the parallel accounts gives any hint that the gesture in this case is requested for healing.⁶ If the gospel writers understood healing to be the *Sitz im Leben* for this episode, most likely they would have said so and the parents' action would have not met the opposition of the disciples. The only other option which explains satisfactorily the action of the parents is to assume that the touch / LH here is a gesture of blessing. This traditional interpretation of the story is based solely on the action of Jesus which concludes the Markan account - *κατευλόγει τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά*.⁷ It assumes that those who bring the children to Jesus obtain from him precisely the thing sought for. It must be noted that the purpose of the gesture cannot be identified apart from Jesus' action.

³ R.H. Gundry, *Mark*, 546. Cf. Lk. 2.27 where an analogous masculine (*αὐτοῦς*) is interpreted by Luke as referring to the parents of Jesus.

⁴ J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, 49, reference being made to tractate *Sopherim* 18:5 (see section 2.4.2.4). The disciples' indignation is explained by Jeremias as arising out of this situation; 'the disciples reject the idea that Jesus should be treated as on a level with the scribes' (49).

⁵ The plural *χεῖρας* does not necessarily describe a gesture performed with both hands. More likely, it is part of a fixed expression. Cf. J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 255.

⁶ *Contra* J. Sauer, 'Der ursprüngliche "Sitz im Leben" von Mark 10:13-16', *ZNW* 72 (1981):27-50.

⁷ Matthew mentions only Jesus' gesture in response to the request presented to him and Luke omits altogether it. Luke's interest is to show that the Kingdom of God belongs to the humble (Lk. 18.16). It can be deduced from the setting in which he placed the story, i.e. after the parable of the tax-collector and the Pharisee.

J.D.M. Derrett argues that the request addressed to Jesus to lay hands on the children is based on an ‘intercultural, international superstition’ in the magical power of the hand and this is precisely the reason why the disciples blocked the access to Jesus. According to this author, Jesus overlooks the wrong reasons of those who bring the children in order to use the latter as object-lessons for the disciples, concerning the inheritance of his Kingdom.⁸ Derrett may be right in reading here an allusion to a quasi-magical belief in the power of the hand.⁹ Regardless of the nature of people’s belief, it is reasonable to consider with Ysebaert that the request addressed to Jesus was based on the powerful effects of Jesus’ touch, seen especially in healing:

The gesture performed by Jesus is called by Mark a blessing. None the less it may not be so clearly distinguishable from the gesture of healing. Jesus might in the first place have been asked to touch the children on account of the salutary effect which was associated with touching as a gesture of healing. For this reason the episode cannot be taken as proof that the imposition of hands as a gesture of blessing was generally known.¹⁰

5.1.1. *The Unity of the Story*

The original unity of the Marcan account is frequently questioned. According to one view,¹¹ the scene of Jesus blessing the children was created by Mark in order to provide a setting for the logion of Mk. 10.15. Another view suggests that the logion itself existed independently and was added to the story.¹² More recently, the historicity of this pericope has been disputed by J. Sauer. In Sauer’s view, the pericope originated in the circle of such healers and he takes it as a piece of tradition fabricated by the early Christian community in order to encourage the bringing of children to healers in the church.¹³ But, as seen above, the suggestion that healing is in view here cannot be substantiated.

⁸ J.D.M. Derrett, ‘Why Jesus Blessed the Children’, *NovT* 25 (1983):3-18. R.H. Gundry has correctly noted that to credit the disciples with such discernment, as Derrett does, means to flatter them and thereby to be in disagreement with ‘the generally unflattering portrayal of them elsewhere in Mark’ (*Mark*, 547).

⁹ Derrett is probably wrong in concluding that, in rebuking the children, the disciples try to shield Jesus from being treated as a source of magical power (‘Why Jesus Blessed the Children’, 11). As Gundry notes, to attribute the disciples a discernment superior to that of their contemporaries would be flattering on Mark’s part and in disagreement with the general non-laudatory portrayal of them by Mark (*Mark*, 547). The reason for the disciples’ irritation appears to be their (and their contemporaries’) view of children as unimportant to the mission of Jesus, incapable of having a saving faith (F.D. Bruner, *Matthew*, vol. 2 [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990], 694). A low view of children appears to have been pervasive, especially in the ranks of religious leaders. The Mishnah gives us a glimpse of what the attitude of the educated was toward children. R. Dosa ben Archinos said: ‘Morning sleep, mid-day wine, chattering with children and tarrying in places where men of the common people assemble, destroy a man’ (*M. Aboth* 3.10). Cf. also J.D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (1986), 116. An alternate explanation is given by Nolland who thinks that the disciples’ sense of self-importance is offended by the approach of the children (*Luke* I, pp. 881-82).

¹⁰ J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology* (1962), 255.

¹¹ Discussion and bibliography in Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 32.

¹² Suggested by R. Bultmann on the basis that v. 15 has a different point from that of v. 14 (*The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 32).

¹³ J. Sauer, ‘Der ursprüngliche “Sitz im Leben” von Mark 10:13-16’, pp. 27-50.

We agree with Marshall that the different point of Mk. 10.15 from that of v. 14 gives one no valid basis for dissecting the narrative into pieces. The point expressed in v. 15 is a natural development of the story or else its content would be redundant. It applies what has been said about children in v.14 to adults.¹⁴

5.1.2. Redactional elements in Matthew and Luke's accounts

According to Mark, the manner of 'touching' the children was by laying hands on them. Mark uses the 'touching' and the 'LH' interchangeably: *ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄφηται* in Mk 10.13 and *ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ κατευλόγει τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά* in Mk 10.16. After Jesus embraces the children (aorist participle *ἐναγκαλισάμενος*), he blesses them (*κατευλόγει*), while laying hands on them (present participle *τιθεὶς*). Verb *κατευλόγει* is an iterative imperfect (or, if accented *κατευλογεῖ*, an iterative historical present), describing an action which Jesus repeated for each child; 'he blesses them one after another'. The meaning of the composite verb is unclear. According to Gundry, preposition *κατ-* prefixing verb *ευλογέω* may indicate the direction of the blessing's flowing; 'the blessing, the gift of salvation, flows through his hands "down" on the children'.¹⁵ Most authors, however, take *κατευλόγει* as nothing more than an emphatic form of *εὐλόγει*, describing how Jesus blesses the children 'fervently'¹⁶ or 'thoroughly'.¹⁷

There are two distinct redactional elements which are relevant to Matthew's discussion on the LH: First, Matthew replaces Mark's *ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄφηται* (10.13) with *ἵνα τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς* (*ἐπιθῆ* is a Mattheanism - 5,0). It is an interpretive redaction of Mark's *ἄπτεσθαι*, in light of Mk 10.16 which describes the gesture as a LH: *τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά*. The change assumes the interchangeability of *ἄπτεσθαι* and *ἐπιτίθειν τὰς χεῖρας*. Secondly, in the request of those who brought the children, Matthew associates the LH with prayer: *ἵνα τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς καὶ προσεύξηται* (Mt. 19.13). This is the only time in the gospels when such association occurs¹⁸; it appears frequently in Acts to describe the apostles' action on various occasions (6.6; 8.15; 13.3; 28.8). What is significant here is that the combination of prayer with the LH is with reference to Jesus. Again, the change is an interpretive redaction; Mark's word for 'to call down blessings on' (*κατευλογεῖν*, 10.16) is understood by Matthew as a

¹⁴ I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 682.

¹⁵ R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary of His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 545.

¹⁶ Swete, 222, 'blessed them fervently, in no perfunctory way'.

¹⁷ F.D. Bruner, *Matthew 13-18*, 698. Cf. *κατεσθίω*, *to eat thoroughly, eat up, devour*.

¹⁸ Jesus' 'sigh' (*στενάζειν*) in 7.34 in combination with *ἀναβλέψας* is understood by some scholars as an 'inarticulate prayer'. So Schneider, *TDNT*, VII, 603; Van der Loos, *op. cit.*, 327; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 65; W.L. Lane, *Mark*, 267; R.A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, 395. However, in view of the other Markan use of the verb (8.12) it is more likely that it expresses a anguish over the ravages caused by Satan in God's creation. So also H. Anderson, *Mark*, 193; C.S. Mann, *Mark*, 324.

prayer. In Matthew's account, Jesus is expected to pray for the children in the manner of the scribes but we are not told if he satisfied the parents' desire.

The change from 'touching' to the 'LH' and the association of the LH with prayer seems to reflect the practice of the early church in general, or that of the Matthean community in particular.¹⁹ Also, it is possible that the omission in 19.15 of the hugging (Mk. 10.16, *ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ*) reflects Matthew's interest to cast the children in the role of the youth of the church.²⁰

Lk 18.15 is the point at which Luke resumes the use of Mark as a source, after ceasing to follow Mark at 9.50. The narrative of this pronouncement story is based exclusively on Mark. It is placed at the end of the parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector and flows directly out of the aphorism of the preceding verse, 'Every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted' (18.14). The position of the pericope in Luke's narrative is indicative of the author's desire to emphasise teaching on humility.²¹

While preserving from Mark the request for touching, Luke edits the Marcan material as follows: He is more specific about the age of the children (*τὰ βρέφη* (18.15)), but omits Jesus' indignation toward his disciples (18.16), the detail of Jesus' embracing the children and the blessing of them with the LH. The omission of Jesus' indignation and his giving the blessing can be explained in view of Luke's main interest. If in Mark the story is part of a series of teaching on marriage, children and possession (Mk. 10.1-31), in Luke it is part of a series on discipleship (9.51-19.10). Therefore, Luke generalises Mark's story to stress its significance for the adults.²²

5.1.3. *The significance of the laying of Jesus' hands on the children*

We concluded earlier that the gesture of the LH in blessing, as examined in the Old Testament, is rather an ancillary to the words of blessing or the prayer pronounced on that particular occasion. It is a sign of prayer by which the one who prays identifies the person prayed for. It is, therefore, a profoundly religious action.

On the significance of Jesus' gesture, it has been suggested that, at least in Mark's case, the complex form of the verb *κατευλογεῖν* may indicate that the blessing is perceived by Mark as flowing through Jesus' hands 'down' on the children. But, it is difficult to

¹⁹ So E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (1975), 384, who states that 'a popular custom has here been given a Christian interpretation'. To the same effect appears to be the omission of any reference in Mat. 19.15 to Jesus' embracing the children (Mk. 10.16, *ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ*).

²⁰ R. H. Gundry *Matthew* (2nd ed; 1994), 383, 384. Cf. D.A. Hagner who notes that Matthew 'omits Mark's *ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ κατευλόγει* . . . probably to abbreviate (blessing is assumed in the laying on of hands) or because of a varying practice in the laying on of hands' (*Matthew*, vol. 2, 552).

²¹ C.S. Mann, *Mark*, 396.

²² I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 681; cf. also F.B. Craddock, *Luke* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 212.

believe that Mark understood the verb this way. Even when translated by ‘to bring down blessings on’ or ‘to call down blessings on’,²³ one should not think of the blessing as a fluid, coming down through the hands and being transferred through physical contact. As Lenski puts it, ‘the blessing did not flow through the hands but came through the words of Jesus’.²⁴ The gesture is merely a symbol of a transfer of blessing from one person to another. The symbolic nature of the LH in blessing, is confirmed by its ancillary character in other passages. No physical contact is used when Simeon blesses Jesus’ parents (Lk. 2.34) and a stretching out of the hands towards the group suffices when a large group receives the blessing (Lk. 24.50). It can be concluded, therefore, that the purpose for a gesture of blessing (be it a simple touch, the LH or the stretching out of the hands) is primarily to identify the person(s) who receive(s) the blessing. The LH may also function as a powerful symbol of communication between human beings. Aside from the blessing bestowed by it, the gesture is also a sign of Jesus’ identification with and acceptance of this marginalised category of human beings.²⁵

5.2. The blessing of the disciples (Lk. 24.50)

5.2.1. *Precedents of the practice*

Luke’s ascension narratives (Lk. 24.50-53; Acts 1.9-11) are unique, in that they feature the disciples as experiencing the departure of Jesus.²⁶ P.A. van Stempvoort observed that one major difference between the two ascension narratives of Luke refers to the doxological

²³ J.H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 339.

²⁴ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (1946), 429.

²⁵ According to Derrett, the blessing of the children by Jesus with the laying on of his hands signifies, like in Jacob’s case (Gen 48.1-20), a refusal on Jesus’ part ‘to recognize seniority’ (‘Why Jesus Blessed the Children’, 1-10). But, as Gundry notes, the contrast in Mark is not between two boys, but between children and adults and the question is not about seniority in the church but about who enters the kingdom and who does not (*Mark*, 551).

²⁶ Some scholars regard the two accounts as referring to different events (e.g. E.E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* [NCB; London: 1974], 280) but this is improbable. True, there is a certain degree of dissonance between the two accounts, due to some variations. The differences are explained variously. E.g. Benoit suggested that, upon the conclusion of his gospel, Luke received fuller information about the departure of Jesus which he incorporated in his second book (*Exégèse et Théologie*, vol. I [Paris: 1961], 399). It is, however, more probable that Luke had all the information before him at the time he concluded his gospel, but for some purpose he decided to narrate succinctly on Jesus’ departure, reserving the fuller account for his second book. Marshall (*The Gospel of Luke*, 907) says that by referring in Acts 1.2 back to the scene of Luke 24.50-53, Luke makes the departure of Jesus the climax of the gospel and the beginning of his second book. It is our view that the appearance of the ascension account at the beginning of Acts is programmatic. At the commencement of his missionary history, Luke’s intention is to clarify that the missionary work of the church is initiated by Jesus himself. Therefore he repeats the commissioning episode of Lk 24.47-53 in a more detailed fashion. Cf. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 146.

motif which appears only in the gospel: first is Jesus' priestly action of blessing his disciples and then is their action of blessing God in the temple.²⁷

According to Lk. 24.50, when Jesus blesses the disciples on this occasion, the act of blessing is symbolised by the lifting up of his hands (*καὶ ἐπάρας τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς*). The gesture parallels the blessing of the people by Aaron (Lev. 9.22). As already seen, this was a known priestly custom in Judaism.²⁸ The practice is also attested in the Old Testament apocrypha: Simon, the high priest, 'lifted up his hands over the whole assembly of Israel to give the blessing of the Lord' (Sir. 50.22). Some scholars believe that Luke fashioned his account after the concluding scene of Ben Sira.²⁹ The following synopsis displays the parallels of the two texts:

Luke 24.50-53

*ἐπάρας τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ
εὐλόγησεν . . .
προσκυνήσαντες . . .
εὐλογοῦντες τὸν θεόν*

Ben Sira 50.20-22

*ἐπῆρεν χεῖρας αὐτοῦ . . .
δοῦναι εὐλογίαν . . .
προσκυνήσει . . .
εὐλογήσατε τὸν θεόν*

That Luke is dependent on Ben Sira is possible, in spite of the fact that the third evangelist seems to show no great interest in a priestly Christology.³⁰ It is better, however, to consider that the model for both Ben Sira and Luke is Lev. 9.22. As Nolland observes, the Lucan text is at a couple of points closer to the LXX text of Lev. 9.22 than to that of Sir. 50.22.³¹

5.2.2. *The significance of Jesus' raising the hands over his disciples*

Luke has not recorded the words of the blessing pronounced by Jesus but, given the occasion, the purpose for this action is quite obvious. First, it should be noted that the reference is placed in a missionary context. Jesus commissions his disciples to carry on the mission which he has initiated (vv. 47-49).³² The blessing given by Jesus to his disciples in their new role as *ἀπόστολοι* comes as a natural action. The lifting up of Jesus' hands

²⁷ P.A. van Stempvoort, 'The Interpretation of the Ascension in Luke and Acts', *NTS* 5 (1958-59): 30-42.

²⁸ *Supra*, Ch. 2, n. 52.

²⁹ G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu* (München, 1971), pp. 167-169; P.A. van Stempvoort, 'The Interpretation of the Ascension in Luke and Acts', 30-42.

³⁰ R.J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witness to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24* (AnBib 82; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 176; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 909; C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, trans. by Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 87.

³¹ J. Nolland, *Luke II*, 1227.

³² For a structural analysis of the form and content of Luke's commissioning stories (including this one), see B.J. Hubbard, 'Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of Their Antecedents, Form and Content', *Semeia* 8 (1977): 103-26.

symbolises, then, the blessing of the first Christian missionaries. Effective³³ as it is, in Luke's eyes this blessing is not equivalent to an empowering. Jesus' disciples have to wait in Jerusalem until they would be 'clothed with power from on high' (v. 49). But, commissioning for Luke means more than just crediting someone with a mission; it means *sending* and *empowering* together. When Paul receives his commissioning from the Lord (Acts 9.15; 22.15; 26.17,18), he is immediately empowered with the Holy Spirit (9.17).

On this particular occasion, the two elements of commissioning, *sending* and *empowering*, are mentioned together (sending 24.47, 48, 50; empowering, 24.49), but are separated in time from each other. Although the disciples are already sent, they have to wait in Jerusalem until Pentecost when, through the empowering they receive, their commissioning would become complete. Apparently, Jesus' raising of the hands over his disciples is understood by Luke not simply as a gesture of blessing (although he calls it a blessing) or a gesture of leave-taking, as Nolland and Westerman see it.³⁴ Since those who are blessed are not just a group of followers but the first Christian missionaries, it is hard to believe that Luke overlooks the added significance of Jesus' gesture. He understands Jesus' blessing with the raising of his hands also as a ceremony of commissioning by which the disciples are 'commended to the grace of God', in the same manner as Barnabas and Saul are (Acts 14.26). Then, the raising of Jesus' hands over his disciples must have connoted transference of vitality³⁵ from Jesus to his followers, although it would be only later on when the power for mission will be given.³⁶

5.3. The Gesture for Blessing in Light of the Old Testament Terminology

According to Daube's classification of the New Testament instances of the LH under either *שם-ש* or *סמך*, the underlying verbs for the LH in blessing by Jesus are *ש* and *שם*. His view is based on the Old Testament precedent of Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48.17, 18). Although one cannot prove the continuity of the practice from the patriarchal period down to Jesus' time, or its existence in contemporary Judaism, it may safely be inferred that, in blessing the children, Jesus' hand was placed in each case on the head of the child. Therefore, I accept Daube's suggestion that Jesus' LH in blessing translates the meaning of *ש* or *שם*. We reiterate, however, that the physical contact was not

³³ See the 'great joy' of v. 52. As F.A. Sullivan notes, 'we have reasons to see the "great joy" (v.52) with which the disciples returned to Jerusalem as the fruit of this blessing ('The Laying on of Hands in Christian Tradition' in *Spirit and Renewal*, 1994, edited by Mark W. Wilson, 43).

³⁴ J. Nolland, *Luke II*, 1227, 1229; C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible*, 87, 90.

³⁵ Cf. our discussion on Moses and Joshua, *supra* 2.1.3.5.

³⁶ C. Westermann states: 'The one who gives the blessing imparts a power that remains with those he leaves behind, and this power maintains the ties between those who are separated from each other' (*Blessing in the Bible*, 88); I.H. Marshall sees a possible connection between the blessing of Lk. 24 and the 'insufflation' of John 20.22. In his view, the two accounts are probably based on a common tradition which was shaped differently by Luke and John (*The Gospel of Luke*, 909).

essential in blessing; the gesture was sometimes a 'lifting up' of the hands. The Old Testament precedent (Lev. 9.22) and the contemporary priestly practice³⁷ have apparently influenced Jesus' practice of blessing people with his hands lifted up (Lk. 24.50). The underlying verb for this particular form of blessing is then ~~אָרַם~~.

³⁷ See n. 14.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

6.1. Introduction

Among the many issues of Luke-Acts studies which have preoccupied NT scholars for the past 70 years, since the beginning of H.J. Cadbury's seminal work in the 1920's,¹ Luke's pneumatology has been one of the most constantly debated topics. The invitation to the study of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is made by Luke himself, by the frequency with which he uses the term *πνεῦμα* in his two-volume work: 76 occurrences in fifty-two chapters (17 Luke / 59 Acts).² The alternative title 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit', suggested by Pierson,³ is thus fully justified in that it expresses, first of all, Luke's own interest in the subject.

In Acts, the LH is mentioned in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit three times: hands are laid on the Samaritan converts (8.17), on Saul (9.17) and on the Ephesian disciples (19.6). There are, however, other instances in the book of Acts when the Holy Spirit comes directly from God, with no intermediary human action. Such outpourings of the Spirit are recorded by Luke as taking place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.1-4) and in the house of Cornelius (10.44-48). Yet, Luke mentions some men 'full of the Holy Spirit' (e.g. Stephen, 7.55; Barnabas, 11.24) or 'fervent in spirit' (Apollos, 18.25?) without explaining how they received the Spirit.

In reading the above texts, one may perceive a connection between the outpouring of the Spirit and certain human rites. The obvious question is whether Luke intended such a connection. In other words, is baptism or the LH that which gives the Spirit? If it is the LH, what is the significance of the gesture? Is it a means of transfer or simply a symbol? What qualifications are necessary for one to administer the rite? What was the reason for the gesture in each individual case? All the above questions can be answered only upon a careful examination of the relevant passages.

Due to the limited purpose of this chapter, our study will focus on the reception of the Holy Spirit through the LH. Obviously, a discussion of this type cannot ignore the more general issue of 'conversion-initiation' and the question of the relationship between the reception of the Spirit and the human rites associated with Christian initiation. Issues like the nature of the Spirit, the distinctives of Lucan and Pauline pneumatologies, the

¹ Thirty-two articles in the 1920' and three books, among which *The Making of Luke-Acts* (1927).

² J.H.E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), Supplementary notes C3 and D, 187-193. Cf. 6 in Mk, 12 in Mt., 15 in Jn.

³ A.T. Pierson, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* (2nd ed.; London, 1913).

significance of receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts or the issue of separability and subsequence between 'conversion-initiation' and the reception of the Spirit will not be discussed in full detail, only insofar as they enhance our understanding of the function of the LH.

Before I proceed to analyse the relevant passages, it is necessary to present first a (recent) history of interpretation of the function of the LH in connection with the reception of the Spirit.

6.2. Recent Perspectives on the Role of the LH in the Reception of the Spirit.

The literature produced in the last half of the century on the Christian initiation is so voluminous that it is impossible to survey it in a work like this. Therefore, I will limit this survey to discussing the most representative views on the LH in the transmittal of the Spirit and focusing mainly on those points which are directly relevant to the present discussion.

The views on the role of the LH in connection with the reception of the Spirit fall broadly into four categories: 1) The LH is irregular (i.e. occurs in exceptional situations only) and has been used as part of the initiation ceremony, immediately after baptism. 2) The gesture is used regularly as an intrinsic part of the initiation ceremony, immediately following baptism. 3) The gesture is a regular feature, used in the second stage of the initiation process, to convey the Holy Spirit (Confirmation). 4) The LH is used regularly after the conversion-initiation stage, to convey the Spirit as a *donum superadditum*.

6.2.1. *The irregular, initiatory LH*

According to this view, on the basis of Acts 2.38, water baptism is the *locus* for the reception of the Spirit, the rite having full efficacy. In exceptional situations, however, the book of Acts introduces us to another human rite, the LH. This additional rite is regarded by Luke as the climax of the 'conversion-initiation' complex, its function being that of conveying the Spirit to the new convert.

Hans von Baer⁴

For von Baer, the presence of the Spirit in Jesus' baptism transformed John's baptism into a Christian rite.⁵ Christian baptism, then, is essentially a baptism with the Spirit which is outpoured freely and is accompanied by a baptism in water in the name of Jesus. Historically, the free outpouring of the Spirit preceded water baptism. However, from the

⁴ *Der Heilige Geist in den Lukasschriften* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 157-67.

beginning of Christianity, the outpouring of the Spirit and the regenerating work of the Spirit were associated empirically with baptism and the LH. The general rule of the relationship between the reception of the Spirit and the rites is set in Acts 2.38 and the exceptions are Acts 8 and 10. The disciples, like Jesus, receive the Spirit as an empowering for the preaching of the gospel, although in their case the receiving of the Spirit is not always connected with water baptism.⁶

G.W.H. Lampe⁷

In Lampe's view, Luke ties the reception of the Spirit to baptism. The norm is set in Acts 2.38, text which also provides a parallel between the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of believers. The fact that Christian baptism is a representation of the baptism of Jesus implies that it is through water baptism, and not through any other ceremony, that the believer receives the Holy Spirit.⁸ The reception of the Spirit is not always manifested supernaturally. Therefore, Luke does not always mention the coming of the Spirit on the baptised. Yet, the joy and the unity of the believers are clear indicators that the Spirit is present in the community (e.g. the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailer, Acts 8, 16). The three cases when the Spirit is received through the LH (Acts 8, 9 and 19) are exceptional. They are turning points in the missionary enterprise of the church and this explains the presence of the supernatural manifestations. At Samaria, the reception in the church of this estranged group was 'an unprecedented situation' which demanded 'quite exceptional methods'. The laying on of the apostles' hands was first of all a token of fellowship of the new converts with the Church. Only in the second place was it a symbol of the reception of the Spirit.⁹ Similarly, the laying of Ananias' hands on Paul is a 'sign of fellowship and "identification" from Ananias who . . . is, for the purpose of meeting Paul, a duly commissioned Apostle'.¹⁰ Ephesus is seen as 'another decisive moment in the missionary history'. Again, the laying of Paul's hands on the Ephesian disciples is 'a sign of association in the apostolic or missionary task of the Church'.¹¹ According to Lampe, 'there is little evidence [in the New Testament] . . . for the belief that the imposition of hands was a regular ceremony universally employed in the apostolic Church, either in the form of a separate rite distinct from Baptism, or as a particular moment in a complex ceremony of initiation'.¹²

⁶ *Ibid.*, 69-73, 98ff.

⁷ *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: S.P.C.K., 1951).

⁸ *Seal*, 45.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹² *Ibid.*, 78.

While it is not difficult to agree with this last statement, it must be said that Lampe's exegesis of the key passages rests on a questionable methodology. He imposes categories from outside the Lucan corpus to define Luke's view on Christian Baptism.¹³ Then, Lampe's understanding of the LH as symbolising primarily the right hand of fellowship extended to the Samaritans and only secondarily the symbol of the reception of the Spirit is certainly flawed. As Adler correctly notes, the association of the gesture with prayer and the statement of 8.18 that the Spirit was given through the LH are clear signs that the gesture is primarily intended to convey the gift.¹⁴ Lampe's thesis that the LH and the special charismatic manifestations have to do with the inauguration of new stages of development in the missionary venture of the church will be evaluated in the exegetical section of this chapter.

Beasley-Murray,¹⁵ J.E.L. Oulton¹⁶ and M. Gourges¹⁷

Beasley-Murray, Oulton and more recently Gourges hold a view similar to that of Lampe in that both look upon water baptism as the occasion for the reception of the Spirit. The Spirit is an immanent power, manifest in the character of the individual member and in the unity and joyful fellowship of the community. Unlike Lampe, the three scholars regard the laying of the apostles' hands on the Samaritans and the Ephesian disciples as bestowing spiritual gifts rather than the Spirit *simpliciter*. The visible manifestations of the Spirit provoked by the gesture point to a special situation (Beasley-Murray), to the fact that an irregularity has taken place (Oulton) or indicates that 'the time has come to move into the second stage of mission' (Gourges, 376).

The above position falls apart under the weight of the plain statement of 8.18 and 19.6 that it was the Holy Spirit which came on them, not only spiritual charisms. However, Beasley-Murray and Oulton assert accurately that the LH is used in those situations when some irregularity needs to be corrected.

James D.G. Dunn

Dunn's doctoral dissertation, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (1970), by now a 'classic' reading on the meaning of the Spirit in the New Testament, along with its sequel *Jesus and the Spirit* (1975) represent a critique of the Pentecostal and the sacramental interpretations of the reception of the Spirit in the New Testament.¹⁸ Dunn's main thesis is that all instances

¹³ E.g., 48-52.

¹⁴ N. Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung: Eine exegetisch-theologische Untersuchung von Apg 8, 14-17*. Ed. M. Meinertz (NTAbh 19/3. Münster, Westfalia, 1951), 58-75, 81ff.

¹⁵ *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 118-119.

¹⁶ 'The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts', *ExpTim* 66 (1955): 236-40.

¹⁷ M. Gourges, 'Esprit des commencements et Esprit des prolongements dans les Actes: Note sur la "Pentecôte des Samaritains" (Act., VIII, 5-25)', *RB* 93 (1986):376-385.

¹⁸ *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 1-7.

of the receiving of the Spirit in Acts are part of the ‘conversion-initiation’ complex: ‘The high point in conversion-initiation is the gift of the Spirit, and the beginning of the Christian life is to be reckoned from the experience of the Spirit-baptism’.¹⁹ ‘The one thing which makes a man a Christian is the gift of the Spirit’, argues Dunn.²⁰ In other words, the gift of the Spirit is neither a ‘second blessing’ given to people who are already Christians and distinct from their ‘conversion-initiation’, nor is it identified with baptism. If Luke does not always link the reception of the Spirit with baptism it is because for him the Spirit is primarily God’s response to authentic faith; baptism is at best *the occasion*²¹ for the receiving of the gift, if the rite is a true expression of such faith. The time-gap between the Samaritans’ conversion-initiation and their reception of the Spirit is only illusory, contends Dunn. The fact that they had not received the Spirit indicates that they were not yet Christians before the arrival of the two apostles. According to Dunn, although the Samaritans were baptised in water, their faith was defective for two reasons: 1) They misunderstood Philip’s preaching about the Messiah and 2) they believed Philip rather than the Word preached by him.²² Only upon receiving the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands are they to be considered fully initiated in the church. The reception of the Spirit is the climax of the ‘conversion-initiation’ process. The direct falling of the Spirit on Cornelius and his household was God’s way to authenticate the true faith of these Gentiles.²³ The Ephesian disciples were not yet Christians before the arrival of Paul. It is Paul who brings them to faith. Upon the sealing of their faith in baptism, they receive the Spirit through the laying on of Paul’s hands, as the climax of the baptismal ceremony.²⁴

Dunn does not make much of the LH, since the gesture is for him simply accidental. It is an irregular feature of the ‘conversion-initiation’ complex and appears only on special occasions when something anomalous took place.²⁵ As with baptism, Dunn would argue, the LH does not convey the Spirit, because the gift cannot be bound to any human rite; the gesture can be *at best* the occasion for the reception of the Spirit.

Max Turner

Turner is known as the most prolific contemporary writer on Lucan pneumatology. His first contribution in this field is his 1980 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, ‘Luke and the Spirit: Studies in the Significance of Receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts’. Further works include

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4; Cf. also *Jesus and the Spirit*, 6.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 68, 93, 94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

²² *Ibid.*, 65.

²³ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 83-89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

several articles during the 1980s and '90s and two books published in 1996.²⁶ The following are the major points of Turner's argument which define his latest position: 1) According to Luke, the Spirit received by Jesus and his disciples is the Jewish 'Spirit of prophecy'. 2) In Judaism, 'the Spirit of prophecy' was not the source of the charismatic preaching (that was a Christian development), but 'was accepted as the source of miracles of power and . . . as having the potential for spiritual/ethical renewal'.²⁷ 3) The Spirit received by Jesus at his baptism is an empowering of the messianic son/Isaianic servant to announce and effect the restoration of Israel.²⁸ 4) At Pentecost, the Spirit of God becomes the Spirit of Jesus and is given to Jesus' disciples as the 'executive power of the exalted messiah for the restoration of his Israel'.²⁹ 5) In Luke's understanding, then, the 'Spirit of prophecy' announced by Joel is the source of 'charismatic revelation', 'wisdom', 'invasive prophetic speech', and adds a new dimension as the source of 'charismatic preaching or witness'. But apart from its function as 'organ of communication' between God and humanity, the Spirit has also soteriological overtones, enabling the disciples to continue Jesus' work of cleansing and transforming the New Israel.³⁰ Thus, for Luke, argues Turner, the promise made to believers is 'a Christianized version of Joel's promise; the gift of the Spirit of prophecy'.³¹ 6) The Spirit is not a *donum superadditum*, but the *sine qua non* of Christian existence. 7) This is the reason why Luke attaches the Spirit so closely to conversion-initiation, if not to baptism.³²

According to Turner, 'Luke does not encourage the idea that the LH is a necessary condition of receiving the Spirit'.³³ With Dunn, he considers that whenever the gesture occurs it must be seen as part of the 'conversion-initiation' complex.³⁴ The LH which transfers the Spirit must be viewed as simple transfer of power, but it 'may also convey the

²⁶ *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (JPTS 9; Sheffield: SAP, 1996) and *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996). For his other contributions, see my bibliography.

²⁷ *Power*, 138.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 211f., 266.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 303, 315.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 349-52, 398ff., 418-27.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 351. For an evolution of Turner's understanding of the significance of receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts, see the following citations: cf. 'he [Luke] did not identify receiving the Spirit as the gift of messianic salvation itself, but as one particular nexus within it: the Christian version of Judaism's hope for the Spirit of prophecy' ('Luke and the Spirit: Studies in the Significance of Receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts' [PhD dissertation, Cambridge, 1980], 170); 'I think all this means that for Luke the Spirit is not merely a *donum superadditum*, but necessary for salvation' ('The Spirit of Prophecy and the Ethical/Religious Life of the Christian Community', in M. Wilson, *Spirit and Renewal*, 178); 'Luke sees the Spirit as the principal means of God's saving/transforming presence for Israel (and through her to the nations), and that receiving the gift of the Spirit enables participation in this (*Power*, 402; see also 356, 186).

³² *Ibid.*, 79.

³³ *Ibid.*, 391 n. 134.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 398.

notion of identification and solidarity at the admission of believers to the church'.³⁵ In Paul's case (9.17), the hands are probably laid for healing only; the Spirit was received in baptism. In 19.6, the LH and the receiving of the Spirit are tied with baptism,³⁶ proving the norm of 2.38. Here, Turner's argument is unsatisfactory, since the alleged norm would have rendered the LH useless. Turner fails to explain why the LH was necessary in this case. Many positive results of Turner's study will emerge as we engage in the exegetical study of the relevant passages.

6.2.2. *The regular, initiatory LH*

Ove Conrad Hanssen

The most recent monograph on the LH is Hanssen's ThD dissertation, written in Norwegian and submitted in 1987 to Lund University.³⁷ As the title shows, the scope of this thesis is limited to the function of the LH in the baptismal passages of the Book of Acts. Hanssen seeks to reveal whether the LH is to be understood as a part of a normal rite of initiation in an early Christian setting, or whether it has a special function not related to baptism.

The work is structured in three parts. In the first part, Hanssen investigates the Old Testament and Jewish background to the LH in the New Testament. The second part gives an introduction to modern research on Luke-Acts, with a special emphasis on the Lucan History of Salvation, and examines the important studies done on the LH in the 20th century. Some of the major theological themes of Luke-Acts, which are considered to be important for the understanding of the function of the LH, are also explored. These are: the role of the Holy Spirit, the use of the term 'people of God', the nature of the early Christian mission and the relationship between prayer and the Holy Spirit. The main section of the thesis, the third part, is exegetical. The function of the LH in the main baptismal passages of Acts is examined here.

The conclusion of this study is that the LH in relation to Christian initiation has a twofold function. It is a gesture of acceptance and solidarity which often accompanies the integration of groups of 'outsiders' into the new people of God. It is also a fixed component in an early rite of baptism and initiation. The emphasis on the manifestation of the Spirit in connection with the LH in Acts 8 and 19, concludes Hanssen, has to do with the special perspective of *Heilsgeschichte* and, therefore, Luke is describing here rather extraordinary events in the development of the early mission of the church.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 372f., 373 n. 70.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

³⁷ Ove Conrad Hanssen, 'Handspåleggelsens funksjon ved kristen initiasjon i Apostlenes gjerninger' (ThD dissertation, Lund University, 1987). Cf. also F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 251f.

6.2.3. *The LH for Confirmation*

According to this view, the reception of the Spirit is connected with the LH, a gesture separated in time and purpose from baptism. The LH imparts the Holy Spirit as a completion of that which has been started in baptism. The ritual is known as Confirmation.

Nikolaus Adler³⁸

In Adler's view, although historically the Samaritan case could be considered as exceptional, from a theological viewpoint it is not. Baptism cannot convey the fullness of the Spirit. Such fullness is a secondary work and is received by the Samaritans, subsequent to conversion, through the effective rite of the LH. That which is transmitted through the gesture is the Spirit himself, not simply some spiritual gifts. The Spirit cannot be transmitted horizontally from one person to another; its transmission is an act of God who works sometimes through human agency. Unlike baptism, the LH is restricted by Luke to leaders of a higher rank. The 'fullness' of the Spirit conveyed through the gesture was not merely some supplementary charisms, but the Holy Spirit himself in his fullness. So, in Adler's view, in Acts we have an incipient Catholicism which ties the Spirit to the office and ritual.³⁹

A first problem with Adler's treatment is that he makes the Samaritan incident the norm for the reception of the Spirit in Acts. Thus, the normal mode of receiving the Spirit was through the laying on of the apostolic hands, subsequent to water baptism. But, as we will look at the passages in more detail later, it will become obvious that, contrary to Adler's claims, Luke emphasises the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit and does not tie it to office and ritual (cf. 9.17; 10.44 and even 19.6). Another serious problem is Adler's assumption that the Samaritans experienced two manifestations of the Spirit: one 'elementary' experienced in water baptism and the other 'perfect', at the LH. But Adler's treatment is a bit confusing, since he speaks both about the 'spirit of sonship' which is given in baptism and some graces which are worked by the Holy Spirit at this time.⁴⁰

6.2.4. *The post-initiation LH*

According to this view, the LH imparts the Holy Spirit as a *donum superadditum*, subsequent to the conversion-initiation experience (the classical Pentecostal perspective).⁴¹

³⁸ *Taufe und Handauflegung: Eine exegetisch-theologische Untersuchung von Apg 8, 14-17*, Ed. M. Meinertz (NTAbh 19/3. Münster, Westfalia, 1951).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 81-91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 91, 94-95.

⁴¹ Apart from those presented below, other representative scholars for this view are: G. Haya-Prats, *L'Esprit force de l'église* (Paris: Cerf, 1975); H.M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984); H.D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal*

E. Schweizer⁴²

For Schweizer, the Spirit in Luke-Acts is exclusively the 'Spirit of prophecy', with no soteriological function whatsoever. The Spirit is not necessary to salvation; it is a supplementary gift, given to those who are already converted and baptised, for the sole purpose of enabling them to proclaim the gospel:

It is always those who already believe, who are already obedient that receive the Spirit (2:38, 5:32, etc.). Prayer, too, is not the outworking, but the presupposition of the receiving of the Spirit (Lk. 3:21; Acts 4:31; 9:9, 11; 13:1ff.). The Spirit is, therefore, not the power which binds a man to God and transfers him into a state of salvation; it is a supplementary power which enables him to give form to his faith in the concrete activity of the proclamation of the gospel. The distinction between this and the Old Testament and the Jewish concept rests only in the fact that here this power is no longer given to individuals, but to the whole community.⁴³

In referring to the relationship between baptism, the **LH** and the reception of the Spirit, Schweizer articulates the following points: 1) In Acts 2.38 Luke does not tie the Spirit to water baptism. Water baptism has its own explicit function, i.e. the forgiveness of your sins. The account of Jesus' baptism supports the view that the descent of the Spirit must be distinguished from water baptism. 2) Luke relates the giving of the Spirit to prayer and the **LH** (8.15, 17; 9.17; 19.6). In Luke's eyes, prayer is much more important than baptism for the reception of the Spirit. 3) Water baptism and the **LH** form two moments of the same ceremony. The rule is set in 19.5f. 4) One should read the **LH** even in those places where Luke does not mention it. The verb βαπτίζεω in these situations is an 'umbrella' term which includes the gesture. 5) What is given through the **LH** is not merely some charisms of the Spirit, but the Spirit himself. 6) The **LH** does not convey the Spirit *ex opere operato*. Luke emphasises the fact that the Spirit is a gift from God (2.38; 8.20; 11.17), that it comes as a response to prayer, and that he remains free to come in other ways than the **LH** (10.44).⁴⁴

What is specific to Schweizer is that he refrains from speaking about two different sacraments or acts. In his view, Luke distinguishes between two movements of the same act: the first is baptism which offers forgiveness followed by the **LH** which triggers the outpouring of the Spirit.

Alternative (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983); and R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1984).

⁴² 'πνεῦμα', *TDNT*, VI (1956), 332-455. Cf. also 'The Spirit of Power - The Uniformity and Diversity of the Concept of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament', *Int* 6 (1952):259-78 and *The Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1981).

⁴³ 'The Spirit of Power', 268; 'πνεῦμα', 412f.; *The Holy Spirit*, 73-74.

⁴⁴ Points gathered from Schweizer's article, 'πνεῦμα', 412-15.

R.P. Menzies⁴⁵

In his 1989 doctoral thesis, published in 1991, Menzies traces the development of the concept of the Spirit from Judaism to early Christianity. His aim is to compare Luke's understanding of the Spirit with that of Paul and the non-Pauline church, as reflected in Matthew, Mark and Q. The conclusion that Menzies arrives at is that 'Paul was the first Christian to attribute soteriological functions to the Spirit' and that 'neither Luke nor the primitive church attributes soteriological significance to the pneumatic gift in a manner analogous to Paul'.⁴⁶

A logical implication from this conclusion is that the reception of the Spirit in Acts is not related to Christian initiation. The 'Spirit of prophecy' is given to those who are already Christians, as a *donum superadditum*, in order to enable them to witness effectively.⁴⁷

According to Menzies, the connection of the LH with the receiving of the Spirit is loose. The LH should be primarily viewed as part of a commissioning ceremony. The Spirit 'is not integral to the rite, but is rather a supplementary element'.⁴⁸ It accompanies the LH during such commissioning rites only in those cases when the people commissioned have not yet received the prophetic enabling necessary for effective service.⁴⁹ The LH, thus, signifies primarily commissioning into the prophetic/missionary enterprise of the church and, secondarily, the communication of the Spirit as an empowering for the missionary task. A critique of Menzies' view on the significance of the LH will be given later, in section 6.4.3.

6.2.5. *Summary of key points*

The following is a summary of those points from the works presented above which are relevant to this study and will be discussed in the exegetical section of this chapter. These points are related principally to two main themes: the significance of the receiving of the Spirit in Luke-Acts and the role and significance of the LH in connection with the reception of the Spirit. A detailed discussion of the controversial nature of the significance of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is beyond the scope of this study.⁵⁰ Thus, I cannot but state from the outset of this chapter that I embrace the view which regards the Spirit given to the church as

⁴⁵ *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (JSNTSS 54; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991). The book was republished in 1994 in a slightly revised version, entitled *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 278-79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵⁰ For a full treatment of this subject-matter, see M. Turner, 'Luke and the Spirit: Studies in the Significance of Receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts' (PhD dissertation, Cambridge, 1980); for a survey of scholarship and extensive bibliography, *Power*, 38-78.

the 'prophetic Spirit' promised by Joel and hold that Luke attributed no soteriological function to the Spirit. For him the Holy Spirit is an empowering for mission. Other activities which are attributed by Luke to the Spirit (faith, joy, wisdom, guidance) are subordinated to the vocational role of the Spirit, at the service of mission.⁵¹ Thus, references for example to Turner's and Dunn's contention that the giving of the Spirit is initiatory will be made from the position outlined above.

Attention will be also given to the following views on the LH: a) Lampe's view that the LH is primarily a sign of incorporation into the church and only secondarily a symbol of the conferral of the Spirit; b) the view held by Beasley-Murray, Oulton and Gourges that the LH bestows spiritual gifts rather than the Spirit *simpliciter*; c) Ove Hansen's and Schweizer's view that the LH is a fixed component in an early rite of baptism and initiation; d) the Catholic point of view represented by N. Adler who holds that in Acts we have an incipient Catholicism which ties the Spirit to the office and ritual; and finally, e) Menzies' opinion that the LH is ancillary to the receiving of the Spirit and that it signifies primarily commissioning of people into the prophetic/missionary enterprise of the church.

6.3. Exegesis of Pertinent Passages

6.3.1. Acts 2.38: A Paradigm for Christian Initiation?

Acts 2.38 is the starting point in our investigation, as it is frequently understood to lay down conditions for the reception of the Spirit. In responding to the question 'What shall we do?' of those who were 'cut to the heart' at his message, Peter answers:

Repent, and be baptized (*βαπτισθήτω*) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (*ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) for the forgiveness of your sins (*εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν*); and you shall receive (*λήμψεσθε*) the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Tannehill notes that Peter's Pentecost sermon is 'one of the most carefully constructed speeches in Acts ... shaped as a persuasive appeal to the kind of audience pictured in the narrative'.⁵² There are important parallels in Peter's address to John the Baptist's preaching, and such parallels may betray Luke's intention to portray Peter as John's successor in preaching the message of repentance.⁵³

⁵¹ J.M. Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (JPTS 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 119ff.; Menzies, *Development*, 278f., 316ff.; 'Luke and the Spirit: A Reply to James Dunn', *JPT* 4 (1994), 138.

⁵² R.C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. II (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 41.

⁵³ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 40f. The following are the parallels noted by Tannehill: 1) the close connection between repentance and baptism (Lk 3.3, Acts 2.38); 2) the question of the audience 'What shall we do?' (Lk 3.10, 12, 14; Acts 2.37); 3) the use of the appellative 'crooked (*τὰ σκολιὰ*)' (Lk 3.5, Acts 2.40); 4) the reference to sharing possession / having all things in common (Lk 3.11, Acts 2.44).

Repentance and water baptism are presented by Luke as prerequisites for one's reception of the Spirit. They go together, as originally found in the preaching of the Baptist. Each of the two actions required from Peter's audience has to do with their renunciation to the former life-style: *μετανοέω* describes the change of heart (remorse for, repentance of and turning away from their life-style⁵⁴) and *βαπτίζειν* is the dramatic external expression of the changes produced (cf. 'wash away your sins, calling on his name', Acts 22.16). A third condition - faith - is surely implied in the expression 'in [ἐπί] the name of Jesus Christ' which qualifies the post-Pentecost baptism of repentance, i.e. the Christian baptism. In Luke's view, faith is the basis for both repentance and baptism. At the same time, it is the basis on which God acts in cleansing people of their sins ('cleansed their hearts by faith', 15.9; cf. 26.18). Thus, although left unexpressed here, Luke surely understands faith as the basis for repentance and the *sine qua non* condition for receiving forgiveness. In Luke's theology, then, faith comes first, producing *μετάνοια* which in turn, together with baptism,⁵⁵ secures forgiveness for the new convert. This allows Luke to speak of the forgiveness of sins as being effected by faith (Acts 15.9), repentance (Lk 24.47 and Acts 2.38), or baptism (Acts 2.38, 22.16).

In discussing Acts 2.38, three questions must be launched at this stage, remaining to be fully answered later when all other baptismal passages in Acts have been analysed: 1) *Is the sequence repentance-baptism-reception of the Spirit normative*; 2) *What is Luke's view on the temporal relationship between baptism and the reception of the Spirit?* and 3) *Is the reception of the Spirit a necessary element in Christian initiation?*

1) *The sequence repentance-baptism-reception of the Spirit.* An analysis of the baptismal passages in Acts shows that the condition of faith/repentance is always met before one receives the Spirit (8.12, 13; 9.11, 17; 10.43f. corroborated with 15.7-9; 19.2 and also implied in *ἀκούσαντες* of verse 5).⁵⁶ This cannot be said about baptism. At least in Cornelius' case (10.44-48) the Spirit is given before baptism, although Paul's case may be similar (9.17). Apollos is *ζέων τῷ πνεύματι* even though he has not received the Christian baptism (18.25). In only two cases reported by Luke the sequence repentance-baptism-reception of the Spirit is unaltered: the case of the Ephesian disciples (19.1-6) and that of the Samaritans (8.4-17). But even these two passages are problematic, as we will see shortly. All this indicates that, if Luke understood baptism to be a precondition for the

⁵⁴ 'μετανοέω', BAGD, 512.

⁵⁵ The coordinate position of *μετανοήσατε* and *βαπτισθήτω* indicates that forgiveness of sins depends equally on both repentance and baptism. Cf. *μετάνοιαν εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*, Lk 24.47. So also C.K. Barrett, *Acts* 1.154.

⁵⁶ A longer version of the story of the Ethiopian has both the confession of faith by the eunuch (*πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν*, E 36 323 453 945 1739 1981 pc [it vg^{cl} sy^{h**} mae Ir Cyp]) and the report of the Spirit falling on him (*πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον*, A 36 323 453 945 1739 1981 pc l p [w sy^{h**}]).

reception of the Spirit, certainly he looked at it as a normal, but not a *sine qua non* condition.

2) *The temporal relationship between baptism and the reception of the Spirit*, On this question Luke has nothing to say in Acts 2.38. As Turner argues, the text does not suggest any delay of the Spirit once the conditions have been met.⁵⁷ On the other hand, it does not say either that faith/repentance and baptism will result *immediately* in the reception of the Spirit. The consecutive *καί* does not suggest such immediacy.⁵⁸ Sometimes the future tense of *λαμβάνειν*, in contrast with the aorist tense of *βαπτίζειν*, is taken to imply a time gap between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit.⁵⁹ Although a distinction between the two moments is implied in the grammatical construction, the temporal relationship is not defined. It is fair to say that, Acts 2.38 gives us no basis for establishing a temporal relationship between baptism and the reception of the Spirit. All that Luke intends to say in Acts 2.38 is that the Spirit will be ‘imparted to those who are already converted and baptized’.⁶⁰ My examination of the relevant passages will show that Luke is emphasising the sovereignty of God in bestowing the Spirit *ubi et quando visum est Deo*, rather than a norm.⁶¹

2) *Is the reception of the Spirit a necessary element in Christian initiation?* The faith-repentance-baptism complex of ideas is conventionally known as conversion-initiation, faith and repentance belonging to the phase of conversion and baptism being the rite of initiation. For those who regard the receiving of the Spirit as being tied to baptism, Acts 2.38 is a proof-text that reception of the Spirit is a necessary element in Christian initiation. All the ‘abnormal cases’ in the baptismal passages of Acts have been read on the basis of this very presupposition. But there is no evidence in 2.38 or elsewhere that Luke understands water baptism to be the *locus* for the reception of the Spirit⁶² or that he depicts

⁵⁷ Turner, *Power*, 358.

⁵⁸ For the use of the consecutive *καί* with an imperative, see BDF § 442.2.

⁵⁹ S. Brown, ‘Water baptism’ and ‘Spirit-baptism’ in Luke-Acts’, *ATR* 59 (1977), 144.

⁶⁰ E. Schweizer, ‘*πνεῦμα*’, 412. On the distinction between water baptism and the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2.38 see J.K. Parratt, ‘The Holy Spirit and Baptism. Part I. The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles’, *ExpTim* 78 (1966-67), 235; S. Brown, ‘Water baptism’, 135-151; F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, trans. by K. McKinney (Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick Publications, 1987), 235; G. Haya-Prats, *L’Esprit force de l’église. Sa nature et son activité d’après les Actes des Apôtres*, trans. J. Romero (LD, 81; Paris: Cerf, 1975), 136-38; J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 267; J. Coppens, ‘L’imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres’, in *Les Actes des Apôtres*, ed. by J. Kremer (BETL 68; Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1979), 429-30; and M. Barth, *Die Taufe: ein Sakrament?* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1951), 141-45.

⁶¹ E. Schweizer, ‘*πνεῦμα*’, *TDNT* VI, 414.

⁶² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 108; R. N. Longenecker, *Acts*, 283, for whom the Spirit is ‘a logical outcome of repentance and baptism’, words which denote a sort of automatism; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 77; W. F. Flemington, *Doctrine*, 50; E. Haenchen, *The Acts*, 184, 187; G. T. Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 30; R. E. O. White, *Initiation*, 199-200; Lampe, *Seal*, 33; Turner, *Power*, 359, 369.

the giving of the Spirit as a result of the rite.⁶³ The distinct function of baptism is clearly indicated: it is ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ (εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν).

The question of whether the receiving of the Spirit is understood by Luke as being initiatory has to do more with the nature of the pneumatic gift than with the temporal relationship between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit. The fact that in 2.38 Luke presents the two moments in juxtaposition tells us little about the nature of the Spirit. There is nothing in the text to point to the Spirit as the ‘Mittel der Errettung und des Lebens’, as Kremer contends.⁶⁴ On the contrary, contextual considerations suggest that the promise of the Spirit here refers to the promise of Joel 2.28 and thus is a promise of a prophetic empowering (Lk 24.49, Acts 1.4, 8; 2.33). Thus, if Acts 2.38 can be understood as making a close connection between conversion-initiation and the reception of the Spirit, it cannot be taken to imply that the reception of the Spirit is initiatory.

6.3.2. Acts 8.4-25: The ‘Samaritan Pentecost’

6.3.2.1. Presentation of undisputable facts

Chapter 8 of Acts depicts Philip preaching the Word in Samaria and baptising new converts. The Jerusalem church, on hearing that ‘Samaria had received the word of God’, sent Peter and John to the scene of this successful missionary enterprise. Having heard that the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but that they ‘had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus’, the two apostles ‘prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ... then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit’. We start the analysis of this pericope by presenting first those facts which are absolutely clear.

First, it is clear that the Holy Spirit was given to the Samaritans through the LH and not through any other means. The two apostles ‘laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit’ (8.17). Luke reiterates this fact in the next verse: ‘Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands’ (8.18).

Secondly, it is plainly clear that what was given to the Samaritans was not only a charismatic manifestation of the Spirit, but the Spirit Himself. The argument that the anarthrous πνεῦμα ἁγίου (vv. 15, 17) refers only to ‘the charismata of the Spirit’ is unjustified.⁶⁵ As J.D.G. Dunn demonstrates, Luke uses the anarthrous phrase

⁶³ A delay between Jesus’ own baptism and his reception of the Spirit is suggested by the tenses of the two participles: ‘After Jesus had been baptized [βαπτισθέντος, aor.part.] and while he was praying [προσευχόμενου, pres.part.], the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him . . .’ (Lk. 3.21, my translation).

⁶⁴ J. Kremer, *Pfingstbericht und Pfingstgeschehen: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zur Apg 2,1-13* (SBS, 63-64; Stuttgart: KBW, 1973), 197.

⁶⁵ *Contra* Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 118-19; N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (1965), 19; M. Gourguets, ‘Esprit des commencements et esprit des prolongements dans les Actes. Note sur la ‘Pentecôte des samaritains’ (Act., VIII, 5-25), *RB* 93 (1986): 376-85; David J.

interchangeably with τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, the variation having no theological significance, being rather stylistic.⁶⁶

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit was transferred to the Samaritan believers by people who already possessed the gift (cf. Acts 2.2-4).

Fourthly, the bestowal of the Spirit was attested by perceptible supernatural manifestations. They are not described, but only alluded to in v. 18: 'Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands' (8.18). Haenchen's contention that it was the sign of glossolalia by which Simon recognised the presence of the Spirit is probably correct.⁶⁷

Fifthly, there is a considerable time gap between the Samaritans' conversion-initiation and their reception of the Spirit. The implication is that it can hardly be maintained that Luke understands the Spirit as the 'Mittel der Erretung' or 'the one thing that makes a man a Christian'. The reason for this *hiatus* is explained variously and is the most debated issue related to this pericope.

6.3.2.2. *Explanations of the temporal separation of the Spirit from baptism*

The various attempts to explain the chronological separation of the reception of the Spirit from baptism in Acts 8.4-25 can be classified in the following main categories:

6.3.2.2.1. Source-critical explanations

One such attempt looks at the tradition(s) used by Luke and claims that the narrative as it stands is not historically reliable; Luke adapted the original story by either conflating two originally independent sources, or embellishing an original story.⁶⁸ In a recent article,⁶⁹ P.L. Dickerson groups the modern reconstruction of sources into six basic types of arguments:

1) According to Bauernfeind,⁷⁰ Luke combined a source about Philip's missionary activity with another describing a confrontation between Simon Peter and Simon Magus. The connection between Philip and Simon was made by Luke. Bauernfeind contends that in an earlier version Simon wished to buy the gift of healing, not the ability to dispense the Spirit.⁷¹

Williams, *Acts* (NIBC, 1985), 156. Cf. also J.E.L. Oulton, 'The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts', 238f.

⁶⁶ All references listed in Dunn, *Baptism*, 68-70.

⁶⁷ Haenchen, *Acts*, 304, following Wendt, 157. Cf. also Zahn, 287. The presence of supernatural manifestations is denied by J. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 406.

⁶⁸ M. Dibelius, *Studies*, 17; H. Conzelmann, *Acts* (ET, 1987), 62 f.; Haenchen, *Acts*, 307 f.; E. Käsemann, 'The Disciple of John the Baptist in Ephesus' in *Essays on the New Testament Themes*, 165 f.; J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 6; H. Küng, 'Confirmation as the Completion of Baptism', 80.

⁶⁹ P.L. Dickerson, 'The Sources of the Account of the Mission to Samaria in Acts 8:5-25', *NovT* 39/3 (1997):210-234.

⁷⁰ O. Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (1939), 124 f.; So also Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 24 ff.

⁷¹ *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 125.

2) A somehow related view is held by Waitz and Koch who argue that the source of 8.5-25 has Peter and Simon as protagonists. Luke has smuggled Philip into the narrative because, according to 8.1, the apostles remained in Jerusalem.⁷²

3) Barrett suggests the possibility that Luke used four sources, one in 5-8, another in 9-13, a third one in 14-17, and the fourth in 18-24.⁷³ In his view, Luke is responsible for connecting Philip and Simon.⁷⁴

4) That Luke worked with a Philip-versus-Simon tradition is argued by Wellhausen and Haenchen.⁷⁵ According to Haenchen, the pre-Lucan tradition developed in two stages, the first layer reporting the success of Philip in Samaria and the second the conversion of Simon. In the second layer, Simon is depicted as trying to buy the miraculous power of Philip. Luke is responsible for bringing Peter into the narrative.

5) Lüdemann agrees with Haenchen that Luke is responsible for bringing Peter into the picture, but argues that Luke's source reflected only one layer of tradition which reported both Philip's missionary success and his conflict with Simon.⁷⁶

6) Conzelmann argues for three layers of tradition. The first reports about Philip's successful mission, the second is a merger of the Philip and Simon tradition, and the third is a merger of two pieces of tradition about the circle of Hellenists and the Twelve disciples.⁷⁷

With the exception of Lüdemann, all the other scholars consider that in the pre-Lucan sources, Philip is not connected with Simon. Those who hold that the original source is about Peter and Simon argue that Luke is responsible for making a literary connection between Philip and Simon. But inserting Philip into a Peter narrative is least likely for it is difficult to see what function such an insertion can serve.⁷⁸ It would be more plausible to bring Peter into a Philip narrative, because such an insertion can serve Luke's theological purposes. This is precisely what scholars like Dickerson, Käsemann and Haenchen believe Luke did.

Building on Barrett's [hesitant] conclusions, Dickerson suggests that Luke made use of three sources in 8.5-24: verses 5-13 record the story of Philip converting the Samaritans and Simon; vv. 14-17 reflect a source about Peter and John laying hands on

⁷² H. Waitz, 'Die Quelle der Philippusgeschichten in der Apostelgeschichte 8:5-40', *ZNW* 7 (1906), 340-55; D.-A. Koch, 'Geistbesitz, Geistverleihung und Wundermacht: Erwägungen zur Tradition und zur lukanischen Redaktion in Act 8.5-25', *ZNW* 77 (1986), 64-82.

⁷³ C.K. Barrett, 'Light on the Holy Spirit from Simon Magus (Acts 8.4-25)', in J. Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres* (1979), 284; *Acts* 1.398f.

⁷⁴ 'Light on the Holy Spirit', 283f.

⁷⁵ J. Wellhausen, *Kritische Analyse der Apostelgeschichte* (AGG 15; Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), 15; E. Haenchen, *The Acts*, 306-8.

⁷⁶ G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 93-102. See also C.R. Matthews, 'Philip and Simon, Luke and Peter: A Lukan Sequel and its Intertextual Success', *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

⁷⁷ H. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 64.

⁷⁸ P. Dickerson, 'The Sources', 214.

some [anonymous] disciples who had been baptised *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ* (in contrast to the baptism *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* which Dickerson reads in 8.12); and vv. 18-24 reflect a Petrine source about the apostle defeating Simon.

Dickerson makes use of M. Quesnel's thesis⁷⁹ to demonstrate that 8.5-13 and 8.14-17 come from two different sources. Thus, he accepts the view that there are three baptismal rituals embedded in the source of Luke-Acts: (1) the baptism of John, associated with repentance and the remission of sins; (2) the baptism *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* which is for the purpose of forgiveness of sins (*εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἀμαρτίων*) and appears in 2.38 and 10.48; and (3) the baptism *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*, found in 8.16 and 19.5, which is not for the forgiveness of sins but expresses ownership.⁸⁰ The baptism *ἐν/ἐπὶ* issues in the gift of the Spirit but the *εἰς* baptism does not.

To smoothly combine the 'Philip' source (5-13) with the Petrine source (14-17), Luke chose to make the 'Philip' source silent about the fact that the Samaritan converts received the Spirit in their baptism. He had to make them receive the gift at the hands of the apostles, according to the Petrine source. In order to do this, Luke had to obscure the fact that in 8.12 Philip baptised *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. Thus, in the original

When they believed Philip, in the name of Jesus Christ they were baptised, both men and women (*ὅτε δὲ ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐβαπτίζοντο, ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες*)

Luke inserted the phrase *εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ* after *Φιλίππῳ* and changed the dative *τῷ ὀνόματι* into a genitive so that preposition *περὶ* would be forced to modify both 'the kingdom' and 'the name'.⁸¹

That Luke engaged in all this crafty work is unlikely. If his intention was indeed to 'smooth over the differences', as Dickerson suggests, one may ask why didn't Luke change the baptismal formula of 8.12 to match that of 8.16 or simply drop the qualifier *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* from 8.12? Moreover, if Luke operated this insertion to solve a problem, he yet created another one by coining a peculiar phrase which has no parallel in Luke-Acts: *εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περὶ ... τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. Neither Quesnel nor Dickerson explain how is it that the Gentile expression *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* appears in a Petrine source and the older expression *ἐν/ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι* (Palestinian) in a 'Philip' source, when one expects the other way around. Dickerson's reconstruction crumbles with its foundation, i.e. Quesnel's thesis, which has been already proven to be tenuous.⁸²

According to E. Käsemann, Luke's reason to separate baptism and the giving of the Spirit is ecclesiological; his intention is to depict the church as the *una sancta apostolica*,

⁷⁹ See below pt. 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 228, 231f.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 228-31.

⁸² See pt. 5 below and Turner's critique of it (*Power*, 369-71).

built on and directed by the centralised apostolic authority based in Jerusalem. In order to do that, he had to bring Philip's 'defective' mission under apostolic authority. Thus, the laying of the apostles' hands on the Samaritans was Luke's invention by which he credited the apostles with initiating the Samaritans into the Church, thus completing Philip's mission.⁸³ But other narratives of Acts (8.26-40; 9.1-19; 11.19-24; 18.24-28) indicate that Luke has no interest to emphasise the *una sancta apostolica*. At most, Luke's intention was to show the relation with Jerusalem.

According to Haenchen, Luke's reasons for modifying the original sources were theological. Luke's primary intention was that of 'illustrating the superiority of Christian miracles over the magical practices current in the area and of demonstrating the antithesis between the power of God and demonic wizardry'.⁸⁴ But as 'it is not the healings and exorcisms which are the supreme endowment constituting the Church superior to pagan religions', says Haenchen, Luke had to bring in Peter and, thus, change the story to the effect that: 1) Simon does not attempt to buy Philip's miraculous powers, but Peter's power to convey the Spirit; 2) the Spirit has to be presented 'as a demonstrable phenomenon' to Simon, therefore Luke gives the gift 'the form of the ecstatic Spirit'. According to Haenchen's thesis, the end result of Luke's redactional activity was that he separated the Spirit from baptism:

Luke has done no less than to take the combination of baptism, laying-on of hands and reception of the Spirit, which in the belief and custom of his time formed one indissoluble whole, and divide it among Philip and the Apostles in such a way that the former got the beginning and the latter the end. Luke presupposes neither the laying-on of Philip's hands nor the Apostles' re-baptism of the converts.⁸⁵

The separation of the Spirit from the rite of baptism is regarded by Haenchen as being simply incidental, an unexpected result of an ill-conceived modification.

It must be noted that the shaky foundation of the 'source-critical' explanations is acknowledged by Barrett who, himself, accepts it reluctantly:

What sources did Luke use? How did he combine them? What was their historical value, and how far was any historical value they may originally have possessed preserved and how far destroyed in the editorial process? These are not questions that can be answered with confidence, and those who discuss them should remember that they are usually guessing, even when their guesses are guided by observation and probability.⁸⁶

Barratt also acknowledges that 'source-critical' explanations are built on the presupposition that the Spirit is integral to baptism:

It is however precisely the separation of the imposition of hands from baptism, and the attaching of the gift of the Spirit to the imposition of hands rather than to baptism, that constitutes one of

⁸³ E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 145-48; *New Testament Questions of Today* (1969), 236-59.

⁸⁴ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1971), 307f.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ 'Light on the Holy Spirit', 283.

the main problems in Acts 8, a problem that one is tempted to solve by saying that the difficult data arose simply out of Luke's manipulation ... This may in fact be true, but it is important to remember that it is not, and cannot be, more than a guess.⁸⁷

Without entering in all intricacies of the debate, the following general points have been offered against the above 'source-critical' explanations: 1) They portray Luke as an irresponsible handler of his sources and as being incapable of shaping this account without contradicting his own pneumatology.⁸⁸ 2) Philip's disappearance from the story after 8.13 does not necessarily mean that Luke uses two sources. It is characteristic of Luke's style to concentrate on the central figure(s) once they appear in the story.⁸⁹ 3) As it stands, the text scarcely contains indisputable evidence for the collocation of independent sources.⁹⁰ 4) While traces of Luke's hand are easily identified in the text, the cohesive literary account available to us is best understood as a Lucan adaptation of an equally coherent original.⁹¹

6.3.2.2.2. Not the Spirit himself but his *charismata*

A second attempt to explain the time gap between baptism and the reception of the Spirit by the Samaritans is the suggestion that the new converts received the Spirit in baptism (the evidence of which is the 'joy' mentioned in v.8), the LH conferring only some *charismata*.⁹² The need for such supernatural manifestations was dictated by the special situation of the Samaritans; they were regarded as a schismatic and heretical race which had to be brought into fellowship with the Jerusalem church. The argument presented by the proponents of this view is that the anarthrous *πνεῦμα ἅγιον* refers to the 'charismata of the Spirit' rather than to the Spirit *simpliciter*.⁹³ As correctly argued by Dunn, 'one cannot so easily drive a wedge between τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον and πνεῦμα ἅγιον'. Both forms refer to the Holy Spirit + *charismata*, not to *charismata* alone.⁹⁴ That it is the Holy Spirit that Luke has in mind when he uses the anarthrous form *πνεῦμα ἅγιον* (vv. 15, 17, 19) is made clear in v. 18 where τὸ πνεῦμα is employed and by the use of verb ἐπιπίπτειν. As A.J. Mason put it: 'It is the Holy Ghost Himself who falls upon men, and not His gifts,

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁸⁸ So Turner, 'Luke and the Spirit', 161; Power, 362; R. Menzies, *Development*, 249 f.

⁸⁹ Examples in Dunn, *Baptism*, 60.

⁹⁰ F.S. Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations* (JSNTS 67; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 31.

⁹¹ R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; EKKNT, 5/1, 2; Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchener-Verlag, 1986), 1.271; Spencer, *Portrait*, 30f.

⁹² J. Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 236. See also the authors listed in the next footnote.

⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 119. Similarly, the anarthrous *πνεῦμα ἅγιον* in Lk. 11.13 is understood by Beasley-Murray as referring primarily to 'the *charismata* of the Spirit'. Cf. also J.E.L. Oulton, 'The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and the Laying on of Hands in Acts', *ExpTim* 66 (1955), 238; M. Gourgues, 'Esprit des commencements et esprit des prolongements dans les Actes. Notes sur la 'Pentecôte des Samaritains' (Act., VIII, 5-25)', *RB* 93 (1986), 376-85. In Gourgues' view, the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit here, like in 19.6, are necessary to 'legitimate' a Christian community originated by a person outside the circle of the twelve apostles (p. 385).

⁹⁴ Dunn, *Baptism*, 56.

whether moral or miraculous. . .'.⁹⁵ Beasley-Murray admits that 'this interpretation can only tentatively be put forward'.⁹⁶

6.3.2.2.3. An apostolic prerogative?

Another explanation of Philip's alleged failure to bestow the Spirit on his Samaritan converts suggests that the giving of the Spirit through the LH is an apostolic prerogative.⁹⁷ But, this is not Luke's view. He has 'a certain disciple ... named Ananias' lay hands on Paul to receive the Spirit (9.10, 17). Dietrich claims that Acts 8.14-17 is based on an early Jerusalem tradition which speaks about the distribution of various kinds of competence (*Kompetenzverteilung*) in ministry. In Dietrich's view, this tradition attributed the apostles exclusive authority to dispense the Spirit.⁹⁸ In addition to the critique of the 'source-critical' explanations already offered above, Dietrich's suggestion has also anachronistic implications. Acts 8 cannot be taken as a specimen of *Frühkatholizismus*, since the NT evidence, particularly from the undisputed Pauline epistles, shows that institutionalization of the ministry was not an issue before the end of the first and into the second century CE.⁹⁹ Lampe's view¹⁰⁰ that Ananias has been commissioned by God as an Apostle for this particular task is not convincing. It has been refuted by Dunn who correctly states that to broaden the meaning of the term 'apostle' as Lampe does 'is surely to destroy the very thing which the ideas of "Apostle" and "apostolic confirmation" are designed to safeguard'.¹⁰¹

6.3.2.2.4. An exceptional situation

Lampe argues the Samaritan episode offers one of the few exceptions in Acts to the normal association of the Spirit with water baptism. In Lampe's view, all exceptions occur at crucial points in the missionary enterprise of the primitive Church. According to this reconstruction, the Spirit had been providentially withheld from the Samaritans who believed and were baptised, until representatives of the Jerusalem Church came to assure

⁹⁵ A.J. Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism* (1893), 23, n. 3.

⁹⁶ *Baptism*, 119.

⁹⁷ A.J. Mason, *Relation of Confirmation to Baptism*, 23; Chase, *Confirmation in the Apostolic Age*, 26; Lowther Clarke, 'The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament', in *Confirmation or the Laying on of Hands*, 8; M. Dibelius, *Studies*, 17; N. Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 97; Kirsopp Lake, *Beginnings*, IV 92-93, V 53; B. Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation* (1964), 44. For other authors who regard the conferral of the Spirit as an apostolic prerogative, see Dunn, *Baptism*, 58, n. 14.

⁹⁸ W. Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild der lukanischen Schriften*, (BWANT 94, 1972), 247-51.

⁹⁹ Barrett, 'Light from the Holy Spirit', 293; Spencer, *Portrait*, 218f.

¹⁰⁰ *The Seal*, 68, 72.

¹⁰¹ *Baptism*, 58f.

the new converts that they were officially accepted in the fellowship of the Church.¹⁰² On the LH Lampe says:

The imposition of hands is then primarily a token of fellowship and solidarity; it is only secondarily an effective symbol of the gift of the Spirit; it becomes such a symbol solely in virtue of being a sign of incorporation into the Church of the Spirit.¹⁰³

Several arguments may be made against this thesis:

a) The theory does not explain why in other situations as crucial as this (Acts 8.26f.; 9.17f.; 18.24f.; 19.1-6) no representative of the Jerusalem Church intervenes.¹⁰⁴

b) The conversion of the Gentiles in chapter 10 was no less important than the conversion of Samaria, yet the Holy Spirit did not wait to be conferred by apostolic hands (10.44).

c) Luke's description of the events in Antioch (11.22-24), indicates that the connection with Jerusalem could have been established without attributing the bestowal of the Spirit to the representatives of Jerusalem.

d) Lampe's understanding of the gesture as 'a sign of incorporation into the Church' is inadequate since it minimises the role which Luke ascribes to it. Luke clearly associates the LH with the conferral of the Spirit and the accompanying supernatural manifestations (8.17-19). The implication from the first meaning attributed to the gesture by Lampe is that whatever rite incorporates one into the Church (be it baptism, LH, chrismation, signing with the cross, etc.), that rite will confer the Holy Spirit. Since baptism is the normal rite of incorporation, the Spirit must be regarded as belonging to Christian baptism. Yet, this is not Luke's understanding for he regularly separates the gift from baptism.¹⁰⁵

6.3.2.2.5. Two types of Christian baptism

An interesting explication is offered by M. Quesnel¹⁰⁶ who argues that, apart from John's baptism, Luke knew of two other initiation rites: one is the baptism ἐν/ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, administered by the apostles on the day of Pentecost (2.38, 41) and by Peter at Caesarea (10.48). This baptism was understood to lead directly to receiving the Spirit, although at Caesarea the receiving of the Spirit preceded the rite. The other baptism is εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, administered by non-apostles like Philip in

¹⁰² Lampe, *Seal*, 70-72. Others who follow his line are: H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London, 1961), 218; F. D. Burnner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 175; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 182 f.; C.S.C. Williams, *Acts*, 116; J.E.L. Oulton, 'Holy Spirit, Baptism and Laying on of Hands in Acts', *ExpTim* 66, p.239.

¹⁰³ Lampe, *Seal*, 70.

¹⁰⁴ Among those who also criticise this point are: Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 117-118; Dunn, *Baptism*, 62-63; R. Menzies, *Development*, 250-251.

¹⁰⁵ R. Menzies, *Development*, 250; S. Brown, "'Water Baptism' and 'Spirit Baptism' in Luke-Acts", *ATR* 59, 143-144.

¹⁰⁶ M. Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 55-78.

Samaria (8.16) and unknown believers in Ephesus (19.5). The baptism *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, 'into union with', is a Hellenistic-Pauline rite and is not associated with the Spirit of prophecy, as plainly expressed in 8.16. According to Quesnel, the Hellenists were cautious of the 'Spirit of prophecy' and for this reason they developed this rite 'into union with Christ', without invocation of the Spirit or expectation of any manifestation of the charismatic Spirit. Somewhere down the line, in a post-Pauline and pre-Lucan stage¹⁰⁷ the LH was added to the Hellenistic-Pauline baptism, in order to bring the Spirit. It is difficult, however, to see why Luke, as one who embraced the older form of baptism (*ἐπί/ἐν*), as Quesnel argues, still takes over this harmonising tradition. It is more likely that Luke knew only one type of baptism and used the forms *ἐπί/ἐν* and *εἰς* interchangeably.¹⁰⁸

6.3.2.2.6. A narrative-critical explanation

F.S. Spencer explains the separation of the Spirit from the Samaritans' baptism in terms of a Philip-Peter forerunner-culminator relationship modelled on the John-Jesus relationship in Luke. The forerunners are confined to baptising in water and the culminators complete the former's work by conferring the Spirit. The forerunner-culminator tandem is found once again in Acts in the activity of Apollos and Paul in Ephesus.¹⁰⁹ The forerunner-culminator model cannot be discussed in detail here. However, it must be said that the parallel between John/Jesus and Philip/Peter is at points unconvincing.¹¹⁰ As Turner already noted, the parallel mentioned above is not adequate because, John and Jesus stand on two different sides of the Law and the prophets/fulfilment divide; the two are in a promise-fulfilment relationship.¹¹¹ Indeed, such divide must be placed at Jordan and marks the end of John's mission and the commencement of Jesus' own. Philip and Peter are on the same side of the divide. Luke does not portray Philip as consciously preparing the mission of Peter, as is the case with John the Baptist. Neither does Philip's mission come to an abrupt end once their encounter in Samaria is consumed (cf. 8.26-40; 21.8). The 'forerunner-culminator' model provides a literary description of the narrative structure but the historical/theological problem of why the Spirit was not conferred by Philip cannot be solved at the level of pure literary analysis.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Baptisés*, ch. 7.

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed critique of Quesnel's hypothesis, see Turner, *Power*, 369-71. Cf. also C.K. Barratt, *Acts* 1.411.

¹⁰⁹ Spencer, *Portrait*, 211-41, esp. 231ff. A similar relationship between Philip and Peter ('initiator-verifier') has been detected earlier by Tannehill, however, without appealing to John/Jesus precedent (*Narrative Unity*, II, 102-12).

¹¹⁰ See especially the points listed in *Portrait*, 231f.

¹¹¹ *Power*, 371.

¹¹² Another attempt to a narrative-critical explanation is made recently by J.B. Green with the same unconvincing results ('From "John's Baptism" to "Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus": The Significance of Baptism in Luke-Acts', in S.E. Porter and A.R. Cross, eds., *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* [JSNTS 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 157-72).

6.3.2.2.7. Samaritans are ‘not yet Christians’

Finally, an ingenious attempt to explain the separation between the Samaritans’ baptism and their reception of the Spirit has been made by J. Dunn. Unlike most exegetes who build on vv. 4-13 and call in question the assertions of vv. 14-24, this author argues that the clue for solving the ‘riddle of Samaria’ is provided in vv. 4-13. In Dunn’s view, there are two reasons why one should not be concerned about the time gap between the Samaritans’ baptism and their reception of the Spirit: 1) water baptism does not convey the Spirit,¹¹³ and 2) the important thing in Christian initiation is the Spirit, not the rite.¹¹⁴ ‘The one thing which makes a man a Christian is the gift of the Spirit’¹¹⁵; baptism is at best *the occasion*¹¹⁶ for its reception. In Dunn’s view, there are four reasons why the Samaritan converts should not be considered Christians before the coming of the two apostles: (a) Philip’s message was misunderstood by the Samaritans as announcing the ushering of a second Kingdom in which the Messiah, or Taheb, will crush Israel’s enemies and exalt the Samaritans. The fact that Philip preached *ὁ χριστός simpliciter*, i.e. ‘the Messiah of pre-Christian expectation’, led the Samaritans to understand that Jesus was the Taheb they expected.¹¹⁷ (b) The Samaritans are portrayed by Luke as a superstitious people with a high predisposition for the supernatural, matched by their lack of discernment in religious matters. The ‘wave of mass emotion’ stirred up by Simon was fructified by Philip. The Samaritans’ reaction to his message was ‘for the same reasons and of the same quality and depth as their reaction to Simon’ (cf. the use of *προσέχειν* in both situations, vv. 6, 11). (c) The Samaritans’ belief was *τῷ Φιλίππῳ*, not *ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον* (v.12). The use of the dative with *πιστεύειν*, indicates merely ‘an assent of the mind to the acceptability of what Philip was saying’ rather than a commitment to God.¹¹⁸ (d) By analogy with Simon’s faith and baptism, Dunn concludes that, prior to the arrival of the two apostles, all Samaritans were Christians ‘in outward form only’.¹¹⁹

The following is a rather sketchy critique of Dunn’s argument: (a) The claim that Philip’s message was misunderstood by the Samaritans has no material support in Luke’s account. Contrary to Dunn’s claim, Luke can use *ὁ Χριστός simpliciter* to describe Christ

¹¹³ Dunn, *Baptism*, 99, 100, 101, 102.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 91, 92.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68, 93, 94.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97. So Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 196.

¹¹⁷ Dunn, *Baptism*, 63-64.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66. In a recent article, ‘Baptism in the Spirit: A Response to Pentecostal Scholarship on Luke-Acts’, *JPT* 3 (1993):3-27, Dunn adopts a more moderate position by claiming that, due to the sparse narrative, one cannot know the reason(s) why the coming of the Spirit on the Samaritans was delayed. Luke chooses to tell us the important thing, i.e. that the coming of the Spirit was delayed. ‘Beyond that’, says Dunn, ‘everyone, on all sides of the debate, has to indulge in speculation and guesswork’ (p. 10). See also 24-25. While this may be an indirect acknowledgment of the speculative nature of his former argument, Dunn never retracted his former position.

in light of his death and resurrection (2.31, 36; 3.18; 17.3; 26.23). As M. Turner argues, the phrase must be understood as a summary of the kerygma.¹²⁰ Luke clearly states that Samaria received nothing else but ‘the word of God’ (8.14). If he intended to say that Philip’s message was misunderstood, certainly we expect Luke to have the two apostles correct the deficiency. There is, however, no indication that they engaged in any kerygmatic activity in Samaria.¹²¹ (b) The use of *προσέχειν* to describe the Samaritans’ response to both Simon and Philip is no basis for arguing that they acted in both situations in the same manner. The fact that Luke can use the same verb to describe both a mass of people manipulated by a magician (8.6) and a crowd persuaded to accept Christ (the Samaritans, 8.11; Lydia, 16.14) witnesses to the neutrality of the verb. Therefore, it cannot be used as a qualifier of the action it denotes.¹²² As for the psychological structure of the Samaritans, Dunn may be correct to pin-point their emotional instability and high predisposition toward the supernatural. He is certainly not correct to infer from this that the preaching of ‘the word of God’ by Philip was not genuinely received by them. It should be remembered that, unlike Simon whose performance was limited to magic, Philip’s activity was primarily kerygmatic and only secondarily miraculous.¹²³ The fact that the Samaritans accepted baptism is an indication that their response was prompted by Philip’s message rather than his miracles; this is certainly a big step beyond their reaction to Simon’s magical exhibitions. We have no way to know if the Samaritans continued to be fascinated by the supernatural after their conversion, but it would not be surprising if they were and, certainly, it would not be problematic for Luke to describe them so; elsewhere, Luke depicts Christians still involved with magic (e.g. 19.18-20).¹²⁴ (c) Dunn’s argument that the use of *πιστεύειν* with a dative object denotes mere intellectual assent has been rightly criticised and rejected by H.M. Ervin.¹²⁵ d) In response to Dunn’s conclusions from the

¹²⁰ Turner, ‘Luke and the Spirit’, 163. Cf. also Menzies, *Development*, 254.

¹²¹ I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 158; Turner, ‘Luke and the Spirit’, 164, and *Power*, 364; Menzies, *Development*, 254.

¹²² For an analysis of crowd reactions in Luke-Acts, see J.B. Tyson, ‘The Jewish Public in Luke-Acts’, *NTS* 30/4 (1984):574-83. Included are examples of crowds shifting rapidly from an extreme to the other. The pattern is that of initial acceptance followed immediately by rejection. In Jesus’ mission: in Nazareth - Lk 4.22 vs. 4.28; in Jerusalem - 19.48, 20.26, 21.38 vs. 23.4, 5, 13, 18, 21, 23. In Paul’s missionary activity: in Pisidian Antioch (13.13-52), Iconium (14.1-2), Thessalonica (17.1-9), Beroea (17.10-15), and Ephesus (19.8-10). For crowds stirred up easily, see Acts 16.22, 19.33ff., 22.22, 23.7.

¹²³ So Turner, *Power*, 364.

¹²⁴ Cf. the use of perfect participle *πεπιστευκότων*. So I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 312; F.L. Arrington, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1988), 194; Turner, *Power*, 366.

¹²⁵ Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 28-32. Briefly, Ervin’s points are: 1) The claim for the uniqueness of *πιστεύειν* with a dative object in Acts is disproved by parallel occurrences of the idiom in Jn 2.22, 5.47. 2) Dunn’s disclaimer ‘(except perhaps *κύριος* and *θεός*)’ is an example of special pleading, for such exclusion cannot be done on grammatical grounds; it is rather a theological option. 3) Using the process of elimination, Dunn’s claim that the idiom signifies intellectual assent rather than commitment rests on one text only (Acts 26.27) which offers no real parallel to the situation of the Samaritans. 4) The texts where *κύριος* and *θεός* provide the dative object of *πιστεύειν*, all refer to a

analogy of the Samaritans' faith with that of Simon, I would like to note two weaknesses of Dunn's argument: First, he is wrong in assessing the quality of Simon's conversion from his post-baptismal behaviour (Simon 'never had become a member of the people of God'¹²⁶). Perhaps Simon's sin is so grave, in Peter's and Luke's eyes, precisely because it was committed by a Christian (cf. 5.3, 9). Luke says nothing to stigmatise Simon's faith as counterfeit.¹²⁷ Secondly, Dunn's use of Simon's situation to argue that, like him, the Samaritans were not Christians before their reception of the Spirit is rather a reverse logic which makes the exception a rule.¹²⁸

6.3.2.3. *An Alternative Interpretation*

The reason why the Spirit was not given to the Samaritans in connection with their conversion-initiation is not disclosed by Luke. Any attempt to clarify this point is nothing else but a mere guess. Since my treatment of the LH does not necessarily require a clarification of this point, I will leave the issue unsettled.

At least three things can be inferred from the language employed by Luke in his redactional note of 8.16. First, *οὐδέπω γὰρ* ('for not yet...') brings in a mild note of 'contra-expectation'.¹²⁹ On the basis of 2.38 and, as we will see later, of other cases reported in Acts, Luke (and his readers) expects one to receive the Spirit in close proximity with his/her conversion. Therefore, as a narrative aside, Luke feels that his readers need an explanation why the two apostles had to pray for the empowering of the Samaritans: it was because the Spirit 'had not yet fallen on any of them'.

Secondly, the adverb *μόνον* ('only') brings further light, now on the relation between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit. After explaining his readers why the Samaritans stood in need for prayer, in v. 16b Luke explains further the state of Philip's converts: 'they were only baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus' (*μόνον δὲ βεβαπτισμένοι ὑπήρχον εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*). The adverb *μόνον* ('only') in its setting here suggests two things: 1) what the Samaritan believers had before the apostles' arrival was incomplete,¹³⁰ and 2) the reason why they did not receive the Spirit

commitment to God, rather than an intellectual assent given to a proposition about God. See also Menzies, *Development*, 255; Turner, *Power*, 365 f.

¹²⁶ *Holy Spirit*, 65.

¹²⁷ So Turner, *Power*, 366; Menzies, *Development*, 256 f. See also E.A. Russell, 'They Believed Philip Preaching' (Acts 8.12)', *IBS* 1 (1979), 173-74. On the basis of its use in LXX (e.g. Dt 12.22, 14.27), E. Haenchen took the phrase in v. 21 (*οὐκ μερίς οὐδε κλήρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ*) to be a formula of excommunication (*Acts*, 305), but it is unlikely that it has been used here in this sense. The context requires *ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ* be translated 'in this matter', i.e. the imparting of the Spirit (not 'in the matter of salvation', as Dunn, 65, has it). There is no indication in the text that Simon was excommunicated. Moreover, Barrett ('Light on the Holy Spirit', 291) and Turner (*Power*, 366) regard Simon's reception of the Spirit as probable.

¹²⁸ H. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 33 f.

¹²⁹ Assumed by K. Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent of "Early Protestantism"?', *EvQ* 54 (1982), 197f; Turner, *Power*, 360.

¹³⁰ K. Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent of "Early Protestantism"?', 198.

was simply because ‘they had *only* been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus’,¹³¹ i.e. (for some unknown reasons) they had not advanced in their experience beyond baptism. Both 1) and 2) amount to saying that baptism in and by itself would *not* impart the Spirit. Therefore, the case of the Samaritans cannot be understood as an ‘exceptional situation’ in the sense that their baptism failed to convey the Spirit; Luke regularly separates the receiving of the Spirit from baptism. It may have been regarded by Luke as an unusual situation because the Spirit was delayed long beyond their conversion-initiation.

Thirdly, the use of ἐπιπίπτειν, *to fall upon*, is descriptive of the mode in which the Spirit was expected to come. Although in terms of effects the meaning of ἐπιπίπτειν is not different from that of other verbs which describe the coming of the Spirit [βαπτίζεσθαι εν (1.5), ἐπέρχεσθαι (1.8), πίμπλημι (2.4), λαμβάνειν (2.38), or διδόναι (8.18)],¹³² in terms of mode of operation ἐπιπίπτειν describes a sudden and unmediated outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Max Turner recognises the suddenness expressed by ἐπιπίπτειν, but argues that the verb is ‘Luke’s way of distinguishing *abnormally* dramatic irruptions of the Spirit, as at 10.44, 11.15 (and by implication at Pentecost)’.¹³³ While I agree with Turner’s explication that ἐπιπίπτειν describes a ‘dramatic irruption’, I cannot accept his view that such irruption would have been considered by Luke as ‘abnormal’. On the basis of Luke’s expectation in 8.16 and of his association of the reception of the Spirit with supernatural manifestations (2.4ff.; 10.44-48), we may infer that a spontaneous and dramatic ‘falling down’ of the Spirit was a familiar picture to Luke.¹³⁴

Now, I believe we have an answer to a frequently asked question, namely *Why did not Luke have Philip lay hands on the Samaritans immediately after their conversion?* It was because, in his view, the LH is not *the* rite which conveys the Spirit on a regular basis.¹³⁵ The use of the verb ἐπιπίπτειν indicates that the Spirit was expected to fall directly from heaven as the δωρεὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (cf. Acts 2.2-4; 8.39 variant; 10.44-48; 11.15). In view of this, the LH is to be understood as an *ad hoc* measure taken by the two apostles in order to ‘correct’ an unusual situation. Since, for some reasons, the Spirit had

¹³¹ The causal function of μόνον + δέ is clearer when 8.16 is translated ‘for it had not yet fallen on any of them, having only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus’. Turner’s interpretation ‘although they were baptized . . . nevertheless the Spirit had “not yet” . . . come upon them’ loads the adverb with more than it can normally carry; it gives the term the strength of the adversative ‘although’ (Power, 360; underlining mine).

¹³² Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. I, 529.

¹³³ Power, 1996, 357, n. 25 (italics are mine). In other contexts, ἐπιπίπτειν is used metaphorically for the sudden, violent fear which falls on people (Lk. 1.12; Acts 19.17; Rev 11.11).

¹³⁴ Building mainly on the OT and Qumranic evidence, I.H. Marshall shows that verbs like ἐπιπίπτειν are adequate to designate not only the Spirit-baptism, but also the ‘fire-baptism’, since both fire and Spirit can be regarded in liquid terms, as streams coming from above. Speaking about the imagery provided by the evidence he adduced, Marshall says: ‘(T)he allusions have all been to a downpouring of the Spirit from above, a form of imagery which is only to be expected when the Spirit is conceived of as coming from God’ (‘The Meaning of the Verb ‘To Baptize’’, *EvQ* 45, 1973, 130-40).

¹³⁵ Contra Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 126. Cf. Lampe, ‘Holy Spirit’, in *IDB*, II. 635.

not been received by the Samaritans at the time they were converted and initiated by Philip, the apostles had to induce its coming through the LH.

6.3.3. Acts 9.12, 17: Paul's conversion

Luke's account of Paul's conversion culminates with the scene of Paul's encounter with Ananias. There are four elements of this encounter which are relevant to our study: the laying on of Ananias' hands on Paul (9.12, 17), Paul's healing (9.12, 17, 18), Paul's reception of the Spirit (9.17), and Paul's water-baptism (9.18). What is absolutely clear from the passage is that Luke links the recovery of Paul's sight with the laying on of Ananias' hands. In verse 12, the Lord tells Ananias that Paul has seen in a vision a man called Ananias coming and 'laying hands on him that he may regain his sight' (ἐπιθέντα αὐτῷ [τὰς] χεῖρας ὅπως ἀναβλέψη). The same phrase is used in verse 17 where, laying his hands on Paul, Ananias states the purpose of his visit and, implicitly, of the gesture: ὅπως ἀναβλέψῃς. The connection between the LH and the healing is lastly reinforced in verse 18 where Luke describes the result of Ananias' action: 'And immediately (καὶ εὐθέως) [something] like scales fell off of his eyes'. It is also certain that the LH is *not* connected here with baptism, for the gesture precedes the initiation rite.

Of the four elements which define the encounter, the most problematic is Paul's reception of the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned only as a promise, alongside the recovery of the sight: 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus ... has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit' (πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου, 9.17). Although Luke fails to mention the actual event, he leaves us in no doubt that Paul received the Holy Spirit; the immediate inception of Paul's preaching activity (καὶ εὐθέως, v. 20) is Luke's way of signaling that an infilling of the Spirit has taken place (cf. 2.4ff.; 4.8; 4.31; 7.55). But, as in the case of the Samaritans, Luke is not troubled by the temporal relationship between the reception of the Spirit and the human rites mentioned (the LH and water-baptism) and the degree to which the gift was dependent on these rites.¹³⁶ Basically, the views concerning the *locus* of the gift of the Spirit on this occasion can be classified as follows:

1) The Spirit is received by Paul in baptism. The proponents of this view draw the attention on v. 12 where the LH is intended only for healing. In v. 17, they say, Ananias only promises the Spirit, but the promise is fulfilled only in v. 18, at Paul's baptism.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ It is possible that the source used by Luke did not include any reference to Paul's reception of the Spirit, the reference in v. 17c having a redactional character (clause καὶ πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου is Lucan). If so, the silence concerning the actual reception is natural. So Menzies, *Development*, 263, n. 5; Turner, *Power*, 377. But, still, the case is that Luke is not concerned about the issues discussed above.

¹³⁷ R.J. Knowling, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 237; J.E.L. Oulton, 'Holy Spirit, Baptism and Laying on of Hands in Acts', *ExpTim* 66 (1955), 238, as a possibility; G. Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (1970), 137-38; E. Schweizer, *πνεῦμα*, *TDNT*, VI, 413; S. Lundgren, 'Ananias and the Calling of Paul in Acts', *ST* 25 (1971):117-22; I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 172; Turner, *Power*, 377. Cf.

2) The Spirit is received by Paul directly from God, concomitantly with or immediately following the LH, the gesture being intended only for the recovery of Paul's sight.¹³⁸

3) The Spirit was given to Paul through the LH, which in this case had a double purpose, healing and transmission of the Spirit.¹³⁹

4) The biblical evidence is insufficient to allow us decide one way or another. Therefore, the account cannot be used as evidence for a causal connection of the Spirit with the LH.¹⁴⁰

The following is an examination of the views presented above:

1) Those who understand that Paul received the Spirit in baptism argue that Ananias' promise of the Spirit in v. 17 is fulfilled in v. 18. One can agree with the idea that Ananias' words in v. 17 are a statement of intention, referring to two distinct actions (healing and reception of the Spirit) which may take place at different times. In other words, there is nothing in Ananias' words to preclude the view that the Holy Spirit could have been given to Paul later, in connection to his baptism. But this negative statement is not sufficient to allow one infer that baptism was in this case the *locus* for the reception of the Spirit. In order to prove this, one needs some positive indications that such identification is intended by Luke. Some scholars suggest that a parallelism exists between verses 17 and 18 in terms of promise and fulfillment, each element promised in verse 17 being fulfilled in verse 18.¹⁴¹ Such parallelism is said to be indicative of Luke's intention to associate the giving of the Spirit with baptism. An examination of the structure of the two verses in question will be helpful in assessing such claim:

verse 17

verse 18

also D.J. Williams, *Acts* (NIBC, 1985), 172, with the mention that baptism is not to be regarded as the means by which Paul receives the Spirit, but rather as 'an outward sign of an inward spiritual grace'.

¹³⁸ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 242; J.H.E. Hull, *Holy Spirit*, 103 f.

¹³⁹ H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, 95; Lampe, *Seal*, 72f., 74; F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 239 and *The Book of Acts*, 201, although in n. 36 there is a note of uncertainty; W. Wilkens, 'Wassertaufe und Geistempfang bei Lukas', *TZ* 23, 30; Parratt, 'The Holy Spirit and Baptism', 235; E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 324; ; R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1.307; F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian* (1987), 235; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 41-50; J. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 141; Menzies, *Development*, 262-63; L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 165; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 429. G.B. Caird's statement is quite confusing: 'Paul himself received the Spirit at his baptism by the laying on of hands' (*The Apostolic Age*, 70). But here is no indication that Luke regarded the gesture as part of the baptismal rite or that hands were laid on Paul twice.

¹⁴⁰ J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism*, 78, n. 15; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 66.

¹⁴¹ E.g. W.K. Lowther Clarke, 'Laying on of hands in the New Testament', 6. According to Clarke, Ananias laid his hands on Paul twice, first for the recovery of his sight and a second time in connection with baptism, as part of a twofold rite, for the gift of the Spirit. The same suggestion is made by R.B. Rackham (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 135) and J. Ysebaert (*Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 267). In discussing the phrase *καὶ πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου*, Ysebaert suggests that 'this [the phrase] may be taken in a broader sense and is probably not a reference to the gift of the Spirit to be received after baptism' (p. 153). However, neither of the two interpretations is supported by the text.

ὁ κύριος ἀπέσταλκέν με . . .
ὅπως
ἀναβλέψῃς
καὶ
πλησθῆς
πνεύματος ἁγίου

καὶ εὐθέως . . .
ἀνέβλεψέν τε
καὶ
ἀναστὰς
ἐβαπτίσθη

As one can readily see, the alleged parallelism rests on only one element common to both verses, i.e. verb ἀναβλέπειν. The fact that the promise of the Spirit and baptism occupy a correspondent position at the end of each verse is no sufficient proof of Luke's intention to connect the Spirit with the rite.¹⁴²

6.3.3.1. *The Holy Spirit as an unmediated gift*

On linguistic grounds, D. Daube rejects the view that the Spirit was conferred on Paul through the laying on of Ananias' hands. As discussed earlier,¹⁴³ according to Daube, the transfer of one's faculties or personality to another requires $\eta\mu\sigma$, the leaning (pressing) of one's hands on the head of the other, while healing (a form of blessing) requires merely $\pi\psi$ or $\rho\psi$, the placing of the hands. The transfer of the Spirit from one person to another must be described by $\eta\mu\sigma$, argues Daube. Therefore, Ananias' hands could have not been used simultaneously for both healing and the transfer of the Spirit, for it would be inappropriate for one to press hands on the eyes of a blind person.¹⁴⁴ In his view, the gesture was intended only for the recovery of Paul's sight.

Following Daube, J.H.E. Hull believes that Paul's healing 'marked the last phase of a change of heart,'¹⁴⁵ change which made possible the bestowal of the Spirit. Paul's reception of the Spirit, argues Hull, may have coincided with his healing but it was a distinct action. The Spirit was not transferred through Ananias' hands, but 'was the unmediated gift of the risen Lord'.¹⁴⁶

Daube's thesis is unconvincing for at least three reasons. First, the text does not say that Ananias laid his hands on Paul's eyes. Luke never mentions whether, in healing, hands are placed on the afflicted part of the body or on the head of the sick person. Secondly, in the previous chapter I have argued that Daube's thesis, although attractive, is contradicted by a Qumranic text (1QGA, 20.28) where the verb used for the gesture of healing is $\eta\mu\sigma$. Thirdly, as discussed in the previous chapter, the terminology used in the NT for the gesture of healing does not distinguish between 'leaning' and 'placing' the hand.

¹⁴² So M. Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 72-73.

¹⁴³ Above 4.6.

¹⁴⁴ D. Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 234 f.

¹⁴⁵ D. Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 242.

¹⁴⁶ J.H.E. Hull, *Holy Spirit*, 103.

Enfin, due to Hull's dependence on Daube's flawed thesis, his argument for an 'unmediated' descent on the Spirit is inconclusive.

6.3.3.2. *The Holy Spirit through Ananias' LH*

Grammatically, the promise of the Spirit in 9.17 (ὅπως . . . πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου) is not dependent upon the LH (ἐπιθείς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας) but on the verb ἀποστέλλειν.¹⁴⁷ The other Lucan account¹⁴⁸ of Paul's conversion which records his encounter with Ananias (Acts 22.4-16) does not mention at all the reception of the Spirit by Paul; the only element referred to is Paul's healing. In view of 9.12 and on linguistic considerations, it is generally agreed that verse 17 is redactional and the phrase πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου is added by Luke to his sources.¹⁴⁹ Corroborated with the lack of any reference to the reception of the Spirit in 9.18 and 22.13, it becomes unlikely that Paul receives the Spirit in connection with the laying on of Ananias' hands. The ambiguity remains.

6.3.3.3. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the narrative as plotted by Luke leaves unanswered the most important questions with respect to the means by which the Spirit was conferred to Paul, the time of his Spirit-baptism, and the temporal relationship between conversion-initiation and the reception of the Spirit.

With all this confusion, the reference to the kerigmatic activity of Paul in v. 20 indicates that, in Luke's view, Paul received the Spirit during his encounter with Ananias. It must be noted, however, that the temporal proximity of Paul's reception of the Spirit with his conversion-initiation does not automatically indicate that the receiving of the Spirit here must be understood as initiatory. On the contrary, there is evidence in the text that for Luke the Spirit received by Paul is the 'prophetic Spirit' which empowers him to fulfill his missionary call. The two verses immediately preceding the reference to Paul's infilling with the Spirit, vv. 15-16, are about Paul's future missionary activity.¹⁵⁰ At the end of Ananias'

¹⁴⁷ Contra J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament: A Re-examination in the Light of the Hebrew Terminology', *ExpTim* 80 (1969), 210.

¹⁴⁸ Earlier source critics presumed the existence of at least two sources behind the three accounts of Paul's conversion. Examples in R. Menzies, *Development*, 261, n. 2. Contemporary critics, however, generally reject these theories. Examples again in Menzies, *Development*, 261, n. 3. In his article entitled 'Paul's Conversion/Call: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Reports in Acts', *JBL* 100 (1981): 415-32, C.W. Hedrick concludes that the three accounts complement each other and 'the complete story of Paul's conversion, as Luke understood it, can only be determined by bringing together features from all three narratives' (p. 432).

¹⁴⁹ C. Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge. Traditions- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas' Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus* (FRLANT 105; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 124; C.W. Hendrick, 'Paul's Conversion /Call', 422; Turner, *Power*, 377.

¹⁵⁰ It is worth noting here the view that vv. 13-16 are an insertion by a pre-Luke redactor (Löning, Burchard) or the result of Luke's own redaction (Hedrick) which transformed a miracle-conversion story into a commissioning narrative (K. Löning, *Die Saulustradition in der Apostelgeschichte* [NTA, 9;

episode, v. 20 depicts Paul as proclaiming Jesus in the synagogue. The context indicates that Luke understood Paul to have received the Spirit before his preaching in the synagogue and that the Spirit was an endowment to enable Paul fulfil the call he had just received.

6.3.4. *Acts 19.1-6: The Ephesian Disciples*

In Ephesus, we have the puzzling story of twelve ‘disciples’, presumably ‘Christian disciples’, who ‘never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit’ and were not baptised in ‘the name of the Lord’ but received only John’s baptism. Following some explication offered by Paul, the twelve are baptised ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’. Subsequent to their baptism, Paul lays his hands on them and they receive the Holy Spirit.

The text is important for our studies especially as it is the only place in Acts where the LH is mentioned immediately after baptism. Further, it introduces the reader to the singular case of rebaptism in the New Testament. Whether the twelve were Christians before their encounter with Paul is a controversial issue but also very important for our discussion of the temporal relationship between belief and the reception of the Spirit. Since this relationship is instrumental in defining the significance of the LH in 19.6, the issue of their being or not Christians will be given some consideration.

6.3.4.1. *The religious status of the twelve Ephesian disciples before Paul’s arrival*

Two explanations have been offered: 1) that the twelve men were disciples of John and 2) that they were Christians, yet, incomplete Christians.

6.3.4.1.1. Disciples of John

They were converted to the Christian faith and initiated by Paul. This interpretation is common among the Fathers who could not admit the possibility of having unbaptised Christians with no knowledge of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵¹ In recent times, this interpretation may be found in the writings of scholars from an entire spectrum of theological traditions. The reasons invoked are different and so are the ways in which they pursue their line of argumentation.

1. For instance, E. Käsemann cannot conceive the possibility that some early Christian communities did not baptise their members. Yet, for apologetic reasons, says Käsemann, Luke’s intention is precisely to describe the twelve disciples of John as unbaptised ‘semi-Christians, . . . representatives of an inferior and unapostolic brand of

Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1973], 25-48; Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge*, 118-30; Hedrick, ‘Paul’s Conversion/Call’, 420-22).

¹⁵¹ E.g. Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 10.4; J. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, no. 40.

Christianity'.¹⁵² In order to do that, Luke has painted over the real history of primitive Christianity, by modifying sharply the sources he inherited and transferring the scene of events from Palestine to Ephesus.¹⁵³ A detailed critique of Käsemann's and other similar theses is beyond the scope of this study. They were dealt with by different scholars and rightly rejected.¹⁵⁴ It suffices at this point to say that all source-critical theses are based on the presupposition that the Spirit is tied to baptism and question Luke's reliability as historian. My exegesis of Acts 19.1-6 will demonstrate that all these explanations are unnecessary and untenable.

2. Dunn,¹⁵⁵ for whom the account is historically reliable, rejects the view that the twelve were Christians on apologetic reasons. He claims that such view places Luke in disagreement with the rest of the New Testament which cannot recognise the possibility of being a Christian without possessing the Spirit. Whether or not his conclusions are correct, the argument should not be built, apologetically, on the harmony of the New Testament. Luke should not be forced into a Pauline, Johannine or any other mold.

3. According to H.M. Ervin¹⁵⁶ and Max Turner¹⁵⁷, the cue for the understanding of the religious status of the twelve is to be found in 19.4c. The twelve are disciples of John, mistakenly taken by Paul to be disciples of Jesus. As disciples of the Baptist, they are cognisant of the coming messiah and of the preparatory character of John's messianic baptism. They are, however, ignorant that the 'Coming One' has already come. When Paul

¹⁵² E. Käsemann, 'The Disciples of the Baptist in Ephesus', in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 137-38. Luke's intention is to eliminate rivalry between the Church and a community which owed allegiance to the Baptist. The existence of the latter had to be denied by Luke, a spokesman for the Church, otherwise it might have appeared that John acted as a great leader (even as the Messiah), contrary to the way in which the gospels describe him (pp. 142f.). Later Luke will have these 'semi-Christians' brought into the apostolic fellowship, thus defending the *Una sancta apostolica* (pp. 146-48).

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 147-48. Similar hypothesis have been proposed by E. Schweizer, 'Die Bekehrung des Apollos', 71-79; H. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 157-60; H. Küng, 'Confirmation as the Completion of Baptism', 80; E. Haenchen, *The Acts*, 554-57. More recently J.C. O'Neill, 'The Connection Between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts', *JSNT* 63 (1996): 87-103. O'Neill is critical of the theories which suggest that Luke altered his sources in pursuit of his theology of the church. In O'Neill's view, the account of 19.1-6 is a combination of two stories: The first story (19.1b, 2, 6) recounts Paul's encounter with disciples who believed in Jesus but had not received the Spirit. When Paul lays his hands on them, they receive the Spirit. This parallels the situation found in Acts 8, where another group of believers receive the Spirit through an authorised apostle. The second story (19.1d, 3, 4, 5, 7) relates about Paul's encounter with some disciples of John the Baptist. After disclosing the identity of the messiah, unknown to them, Paul converts them to the faith in Jesus. By conjecturing that the original verb in v. 5 was *ἐπίστευσαν*, not *ἐβαπτίσθησαν*, and that the latter was introduced through a scribal error, O'Neill eliminates the account of these disciples' rebaptism. The author himself admits that 'the reconstruction is, of course, speculative, involving conjecture at points' (p. 102).

¹⁵⁴ For a critique of such thesis, see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 109; R. Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 268-270; I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 303-304 and *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 212-15; C.K. Barrett, 'Apollos and the Twelve Disciples of Ephesus', in *The New Testament Age* (1984), I, 35-36. J. Behm believed that Luke's account is based on reports which are reliable but also puzzling (*Die Handauflegung*, 19).

¹⁵⁵ Dunn, *Baptism*, 83-89.

¹⁵⁶ *Conversion-Initiation*, 58-59.

¹⁵⁷ *Power form on High*, 390.

discloses the identity of the Messiah (τοῦτ' ἔστιν εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν) as a 'significant new information',¹⁵⁸ the Ephesian twelve believe in Jesus and are baptised 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (19.5). Subsequent to their baptism (Ervin) or as part of the rite (M. Turner), they receive the Spirit through the laying on of Paul's hands. Since faith, baptism and the reception of the Spirit take place according to the norm set in Acts 2.38, says Turner, the Ephesian disciples provide no special case and could be classified as an 'uncontroversial class of convert'.¹⁵⁹

The view that Paul's statement in v. 4 discloses a 'significant new information' to these men, i.e. the identity of the Messiah, is improbable. First, there is no evidence for the existence of a Johannine sect at Ephesus in the first century.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, it is hard to see in this verse Paul's intention to preach Jesus; his purpose is to remind the twelve men that John's baptism was anticipatory and, therefore, no longer adequate, since the Coming One has already come. Those who believe in him must be baptised now in his name. Following Paul's explanation, the twelve disciples do not make a commitment of faith, but rather submit to baptism 'in the name of the Lord'.

6.3.4.1.2. Christians, but unbaptised Christians

The arguments usually presented are:

1. The fact that Luke depicts the twelve Ephesian men as μαθηταὶ is a positive sign that he regards them as being Christians before their encounter with Paul. The noun μαθήτης is found 28 times in the Acts. In all other 27 occurrences, it means invariably 'Christian', fact which points to its technical use.¹⁶¹

2. Paul's use of πιστεύειν is to be understood as referring to the Christian faith.¹⁶²

3. Luke juxtaposes the two pericopes about Ephesus (18.24-28 and 19.1-6) with the express purpose to connect the twelve with Apollos.¹⁶³ The arguments which are usually adduced to support such connection are: 1) Like Apollos, they knew only the baptism of John; 2) Their limited knowledge about Christianity parallels that of Apollos. What Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos, Paul does for these disciples; 3) Luke mentions no other Christian group in Ephesus at the time of Paul's return, apart from the twelve

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁶⁰ R.N. Longenecker's arguments that Eph 4.5, Jn 1.19-34 and 2.22-36(?) point to a sectarian group in Ephesus hostile to Christians is not convincing (*Acts*, EBC, 1981, 493). Eph 4.5, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' is not an apologetic statement, but rather intended to emphasise the need for unity in the Ephesian church.

¹⁶¹ Stressed by Kirsopp Lake and H.J. Cadbury, *Beginnings* IV, 237; Lampe, *Seal*, 75; F.F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 385; E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 553; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 55-59; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 68; Menzies, *Development*, 272.

¹⁶² So F.F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 385.

¹⁶³ Menzies, *Development*, 270-71.

disciples.¹⁶⁴ 4) The natural flow of the text from one pericope into the other is an indication that Luke is describing Paul's activity as a continuation of what Apollos started.¹⁶⁵

4. The need for repentance is not emphasised¹⁶⁶ nor is Paul preaching to the twelve. He only explains to them that John's preaching and baptism pointed forward to Christ. The fact that he did not engage in any kerygmatic activity indicates that, in Paul's and Luke's eyes, the Ephesian men were already converted.¹⁶⁷

Certainly, we have no reasons to believe that *μαθηται* is used here in a different way from all the other occurrences of the word in Acts. It is noteworthy that the term appears two more times in the immediate context (18.27; 19.9). Some authors, while recognising the strength of this evidence, attempt to avoid it in various ways. For instance, K. Haacker argues that this is just one example of 'erlebter Rede' in Luke-Acts. Luke looked at these men from Paul's perspective: When Paul first met the twelve Ephesian men, he assumed they were Christians. For reasons unspecified, he asked them if they received the Spirit when they believed. Further inquiry following their negative answer would convince Paul that he was wrong in assuming that they were Christians.¹⁶⁸ This view is, however, implausible for it implies bad redaction on Luke's part. The use of *πιστεύσαντες* in Paul's question can, indeed, be understood as reflecting Paul's confusion, but *τινας μαθητάς* of v. 1 is Luke's own redaction¹⁶⁹ and expresses his own view - the twelve men are Christians. If Luke wanted to convey that Paul was mistakenly assuming the Christian status of the twelve, he would have penned the introduction in such a way that his readers could differentiate between his view and that of Paul. He would have added a qualifier to *μαθηταί*, something like: '... and finding certain disciples of John, whom he believed to be disciples of Jesus.'¹⁷⁰ There is nothing in this text to indicate that Luke thought Paul was wrong in assuming the Christian status of the twelve men.

¹⁶⁴ Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 57. Ervin criticises Dunn's view that the indefinite pronoun *τινες* indicates the existence of a group other than that connected with Aquila and Priscilla, the latter being regarded by Luke as the true church of Ephesus (*Baptism*, 84, 86).

¹⁶⁵ The view that Apollos and Paul stand in a 'forerunner-culminator' relation in respect to the conversion of these disciples (cf. also John/Jesus, Philip/Peter) has been advanced by Spencer, *Portrait*, 232-39. See 6.2.2.2.6. above. The suggestion that the twelve men were converted by Apollos is rejected by Turner, *Power*, 389.

¹⁶⁶ Pace H.D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism*, 89, who, following Dunn, argues that 'Paul discovered that he had mistakenly applied *πίστις* to them [the twelve disciples] and he began to instruct them about repentance'. It is true that Paul mentions 'repentance' but only as a qualifier of John's baptism (v. 4), experience which the twelve had already known.

¹⁶⁷ So S.I. Buse, *Christian Baptism*, 120; F.F. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 385; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 271; F.L. Arrington, *Acts*, 191-92. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 111, calls them 'half-Christians'. Both E. Schweizer (*πνεῦμα*, *TDNT*, vol. VI, 411) and E. Haenchen (*The Acts*, 553) contend that the twelve were 'Christians' because Luke wanted to describe them so.

¹⁶⁸ K. Haacker, 'Einige Fälle von "erlebter Rede" im Neuen Testament', *NovT* 12 (1970), 70-77. Cf. also I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 306.

¹⁶⁹ Barrett, *Acts* 2.892; Lüdemann, *Christianity*, 210.

¹⁷⁰ J.B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 150, n. 23.

Dunn argues that the indefinite *τινας μαθητάς* found here, reflects Luke's intention to distinguish between the church at Ephesus and a group of 'enquirers'.¹⁷¹ Firstly, as already noted by numerous authors, this suggestion is unsubstantiated by the use of the same pronoun with *μαθητής* for Ananias (Acts 9.10), for Timothy (Acts 16.1) and (with the feminine form *μαθήτρια*) for Tabitha (Acts 9.36). Most likely, the function of *τινες* here is to indicate that the twelve disciples were unknown to Paul at the time of their encounter.

Secondly, the suggestion that a Christian community existed in Ephesus before the incident reported in 19.1 has not much to go for it in spite of the reference to 'the brethren' (*ἀδελφοί*) in 18.27. A Christian community constituted as a separate entity is introduced only in 19.9 when Paul 'separates' it from the synagogue, perhaps to start the first house church of Ephesus, in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (cf. 1 Cor 16.19). Before then, Apollos' converts must have been loosely connected with each other, the contacts being made mainly in their relationship with the synagogue. It is hard to believe that the Jews converted to Christianity broke abruptly with Judaism, for the synagogue of the Diaspora fulfilled not only the spiritual needs of the estranged Jews but also their social and cultural needs. These individual Christians must have developed a sense of community and organised as such gradually, the process being completed only when Paul, constrained by circumstances, separates the group from the synagogue.¹⁷²

It is reasonable to infer, then, that the twelve 'disciples' of 19.1 are the 'brethren' of 18.27, for no other Christian group is mentioned in Ephesus at the time of Paul's arrival. The twelve are probably converts of Apollos, like him knowing only the baptism of John.¹⁷³ It cannot be known if they were baptised before or after becoming Christians but, if Apollos baptised them, he must have done it before receiving instruction from Aquila and Priscilla.¹⁷⁴ The connection of the twelve with Apollos cannot be proven or disproven from

¹⁷¹ Dunn, *Holy Spirit*, 84-86.

¹⁷² See R.B. Racham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1901), 348-49, for the view that the real work at Ephesus begins with the separation of the disciples from the synagogue (19.9). Cf. also Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 56-57. The NIV translation of 18.27 leaves the impression that a group of mature Christians existed in Ephesus, who are strong enough in faith to 'encourage' their itinerant preacher, Apollos, as he sets off to another destination. But, if we take 'the disciples' of Corinth, and not Apollos, to be the object of *προτρέψαμενοι* (as in KJV) and Aquila and Priscilla the representatives of the group and the authors of the letter at the same time (in view of their previous connection with Corinth), the existence of such a 'mature' church in Ephesus is not evident.

¹⁷³ J.J. Wetstenius says that they were Christians 'quos Apollos docuerat' (*Novum Testamentum Graecum*, vol. II [Amsterdam, 1752], 580).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 385. J.H.E. Hull doubts that there had been any connection between the twelve men and Apollos, on the basis that the latter would have supplied them with more detailed information before his departure for Corinth (*Holy Spirit*, 112). But Luke gives no specific information about the content of the teaching Apollos received from Aquila and Priscilla, or if Apollos passed on such detailed teaching. One may legitimately ask why Aquila and Priscilla did not re-baptise the group. Luke tells nothing about this couple's church activity, except for the instruction they gave to Apollos. With Bruce, it is reasonable to infer that, as a well-to-do couple who owned a tent-making business, their involvement in the Christian work was mainly by their services to the Christian cause (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, 250-51).

our text. Although not essential in deciding whether the twelve are regarded by Luke as Christians, it would provide additional information about the religious status of these disciples.¹⁷⁵

There are, however, two factors in the text which point to the fact that, in Luke's eyes, the twelve disciples are *Christians, but incomplete Christians*: 1) they were not baptised 'in the name of the Lord' and 2) knew nothing about the availability of the Spirit.

6.3.4.2. *The Relationship between Baptism, LH and the Reception of the Spirit in Acts 19.1-6.*

Following the narrative, the first element relevant to this issue is *Paul's first question*: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed (*πιστεύσαντες*)?' The action of the aorist participle *πιστεύσαντες* can be taken either as coincident with that of the leading verb *λαμβάνειν*, or antecedent.¹⁷⁶ On grammatical considerations, then, one cannot argue for a temporal separation of the Spirit from the act of believing. But, as Turner and Menzies have emphasised, the possibility of such a separation is implied in the question itself.¹⁷⁷ A second thing suggested by this question is that the reception of the Spirit and the act of believing are closely related, especially when *πιστεύσαντες* is taken to be coincident with *ἐλάβετε*. But this is not to say that Luke identifies the reception of the Spirit with one element of Christian initiation or the other. I believe he uses the participle *πιστεύσαντες* in a more general sense, as a synonym for what we conventionally term conversion-initiation.¹⁷⁸ If so, Paul's question reflects Luke's view that, in normal situations, the reception of the Spirit is closely connected with conversion-initiation (cf. Acts 2.38; 8.16; variant reading of 8.25; 9.17f.; 10.44ff.).

Paul's second question. After the twelve admit their ignorance about the availability of the Spirit,¹⁷⁹ Paul asks them: 'Into what, then, were you baptised?' (*Εἰς τί οὖν*

¹⁷⁵ Menzies, *Development*, 272.

¹⁷⁶ H. Ervin shows convincingly that the choice for one option or the other is dependent totally upon one's theological presuppositions (*Conversion-Initiation*, 62-66). Moulton recognises this truth when saying that in Acts 19.2 'the coincident aor.ptc. is doctrinally important' (MHT 1.131). Contra Dunn, *Baptism*, 86f., whose choice for a coincident aorist is based on 'Paul's doctrine that a man receives the Spirit *when* he believes' (p. 86). Pauline categories should not be imposed on Luke's view of the Spirit.

¹⁷⁷ M.M.B. Turner, 'Luke and the Spirit', 175; Menzies, *Development*, 274; 'Reply to James Dunn', 122 f.

¹⁷⁸ So also M. Quesnel, *Baptisés*, 67. D.J. Williams argues that Paul's question implies that 'the Holy Spirit is received at a definite point in time and that time is the moment of initial belief' (*Acts*, NIBC, 1985, 329). Such statement is rather confusing for it is not clear whether Williams refers to the moment when they heard the Gospel or the moment they expressed their faith in baptism. According to Luke, the Spirit is connected to neither of the two 'definite' moments.

¹⁷⁹ The disciples response 'We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit' (*'Ἄλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν*) is taken sometimes to imply that they were totally ignorant about the existence of the Holy Spirit. Codex Bezae and a few other manuscripts read *λαμβάνουσίν τινες* instead of *ἔστιν*. It is obviously a paraphrastic version of the better attested and more difficult Alexandrian text, in order to avert the difficulty (cca. 300 C.E. in \wp ³⁸; so in ARV). Cf. Barrett, *Acts*

ἐβαπτίσθητε;). The question is taken sometimes to imply that Paul (and implicitly Luke) understood baptism to be the occasion for the reception of the Spirit. According to Dunn, ‘When Paul learned that they had not received the Spirit he immediately inquired after their baptism, not their faith, and not any other ceremony. Verse 3 therefore implies a very close connection between baptism and receiving the Spirit’.¹⁸⁰ Whether Dunn reads this close connection in Luke’s mind or in Paul’s it is not clear, but since the narrative is shaped by Luke, Paul’s implied views are irrelevant. True, Dunn argues that the connection between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit is not a direct, causal one. He states in unambiguous terms that baptism does not automatically issue in the reception of the Spirit. In his view, the Spirit is given to the faith expressed in baptism.¹⁸¹ But this is just an elaboration of the idea that baptism is the *locus* of the Spirit. It is, however, doubtful that even such an indirect connection is intended here by Luke. He constantly separates the Spirit from baptism (2.4, 38; 8.16; 10.44-48; 9.17f.?; 18.25; 19.6).

Paul’s question, ‘In what, then, were you baptised?’ has nothing to do with Luke’s belief that the receiving of the Spirit is connected with baptism. More readily, we should view it as being awkwardly shaped by Luke (probably by truncating his source; see the awkward use of εἰς with τί and βάπτισμα) in order to ‘set up the disclosure’ that the twelve had received only the Johannine baptism.¹⁸² If Luke regarded baptism to be the *locus* of the Spirit, why the subsequent Christian baptism of these men failed to confer the Holy Spirit? Why was it necessary for Paul to lay hands on them? Dunn anticipates questions of this sort and mitigates their force by assuming in vv. 5 f. a single complex ceremony which included baptism and the LH:

The LH in v. 6 must therefore be the climax of a single ceremony whose most important element is baptism, and whose object is the reception of the Spirit. This is borne out by the form of vv. 5f., which could be translated: ‘. . . they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and, Paul having laid hands on them, the holy Spirit came on them’. The LH is almost parenthetical; the sequence of events is ‘baptism (resulting in) . . . Spirit’. Certainly the one action leads into and reaches its conclusion in the other with no discernible break.¹⁸³

That Luke makes such a close relationship between baptism and the reception of the Spirit is, however, doubtful. The assertion that the LH is mentioned almost parenthetically between baptism and the giving of the Spirit appears to be based rather on some English translations. In view of the fact that the circumstantial participle ἐπιθέντος is part of a Genitive absolute construction (καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου χειρᾶς), Luke’s

2.894; I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 306; F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 385; E.F. Harrison, *Interpreting Acts*, 307; Lake and Cadbury, *Beginnings IV*, 237.

¹⁸⁰ *Holy Spirit*, 87. See also G.B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age*, 70. A.J. Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism*, 26-27.

¹⁸¹ *Baptism*, 98-101.

¹⁸² Price, ‘Confirmation and Charismata’, 178. Cf. C.B. Kaiser, ‘The “Rebaptism” of the Ephesian Twelve: Exegetical Study on Acts 19:1-7’, *RefR* 31/1 (1977), 58.

¹⁸³ *Holy Spirit*, 87.

intention to connect the coming of the Spirit exclusively with the LH becomes apparent. This conclusion is supported by a syntactical analysis of vv. 5f.

v. 5 ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ
καὶ

v. 6 ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου [τὰς] χεῖρας ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα

Conjunction *καί* connects here two coordinate sentences. In each sentence, the participle precedes the main verb and stands in a causal relationship to the action of the latter. Thus, the ‘hearing’ in v. 5 leads to baptism, while the laying of Paul’s hands in v. 6 leads to the coming of the Spirit. The syntactical construction makes clear that Luke intends no connection here between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit. He keeps them apart as two distinct moments, possibly of the same ceremony. The Spirit is clearly attributed to the LH.

In view of the close sequence between baptism and the reception of the Spirit, the case of the Ephesian disciples looks as if were the closest parallel to the ‘norm’ of Acts 2.38. There is, however, one particularity which makes it different from that which is considered to be the ‘norm’ of 2.38. For some reason, the Spirit is not received by these disciples at their conversion (v.2). The unusual situation of being Christians for some time and having not yet received the Spirit, brings them in line with the Samaritan converts. This gives Luke a chance to bring Paul in line with Peter and have him do exactly the thing Peter did for the Samaritans, i.e. to induce the coming of the Spirit by laying hands on them.

6.3.4.3. *The significance of receiving the Spirit in Acts 19.1-6*

The issue addressed in this section is whether the reception of the Spirit on this occasion is regarded by Luke as initiatory or as an empowering element. First, the fact that Luke presents the Ephesian men to be Christians before they met Paul, certainly means that, for him, the Spirit here is not ‘the one thing which makes a man a Christian’.¹⁸⁴ Secondly, Paul’s straightforward question ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ says something about the nature of the gift envisaged here. As Turner puts it, Luke expects the receiving of the Spirit to be ‘*a matter of immediate perception*: the Ephesians are expected to know whether or not they did receive the Spirit when they believed’.¹⁸⁵ Certainly, no moral criterion (the fruit of the Spirit) is involved here, for there is nothing in the text to indicate that the twelve were lacking in moral virtues. Then, what prompted Paul to address the question appears to have been the fact that the twelve disciples were lacking in spiritual manifestations like tongues, prophecy and the like. When Paul lays hands on the twelve

¹⁸⁴ *Contra* Dunn, *Baptism*, 88, 93.

¹⁸⁵ Turner, ‘Luke and the Spirit’, 175. Cf. also G.B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (1955), 57.

men, the manifestations associated with the coming of the Spirit (ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτευον, 19.6) are similar to those of Pentecost, Caesarea and perhaps Samaria, and must be seen as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (2.28). That Luke has in mind here the 'Spirit of prophecy' is confirmed by the language he uses to describe the coming of the Spirit ('the Holy Spirit came upon them' 19.6) similar with that of 1.8 ('when the Holy Spirit comes upon you'). For Luke, the Spirit is primarily an empowering which enables them to be effective Christian witnesses. If their identification with the presbyters of the Ephesian church is correct (Acts 20.17, 18),¹⁸⁶ we have evidence of their effective ministry subsequent to their empowering.

6.4. The relationship between Baptism, LH and the Reception of the Spirit in Acts

The forgoing investigation informed us that Luke is not interested to make the receiving of the Spirit contingent upon some human rite or to establish a rigid sequence of events in one's religious experience. While agreeing with Hunter that, 'the "pattern" in Acts is the absence of uniformity in sequence',¹⁸⁷ I do not believe that all scholarly efforts of finding some 'norm' are necessarily "patterned" to be fruitless. Although Luke is not interested in theological consistency as we would like him to be, there must be some clues in his narrative which would eventually lead to a consistent theory about the temporal relationship between conversion, baptism and the reception of the Spirit.

So far, we have seen that in Acts 2.38 Luke lays down explicitly two conditions for the reception of the Spirit, *repentance* and *baptism*. A third condition, *faith*, is implied in the words 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' which define the Christian baptism. The occasional giving of the Spirit before baptism (8.44; 9.17?) and the possession of the Spirit by those who are not baptised (2.4; 18.25) indicate that the rite cannot be understood as an *absolute* condition. The 'norm' of Acts 2.38 together with the exceptions from this rule impel one to conclude, with Hull, that for Luke the all-important condition for the reception of the Spirit is not baptism, but 'readiness to be baptised'.¹⁸⁸ Further, it can be inferred that whenever the Spirit and baptism are in close connection, such connection must be understood as temporal rather than causal, since Luke never depicts baptism as issuing in the gift of the Spirit.

¹⁸⁶ This identification is made by E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 590, on the basis of Acts 20.18 ('You know how I from the first day on...') which refers back to 19.1. F. Pereira draws a parallel between Jesus/the Twelve apostles and Paul/the twelve Ephesian disciples, suggesting that the laying on of Paul's hands in 19.6 was actually the occasion of the ordination of these disciples as elders - *Ephesus: Climax of Universalism in Luke-Acts* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1983), 107f.

¹⁸⁷ H. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 90.

¹⁸⁸ J.H.E. Hull, *Holy Spirit*, 99. Cf. also K. Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent of "Early Protestantism"?', *EvQ* 54, 200.

We have also seen that, on two occasions, the receiving of the Spirit is clearly attributed to the LH (8.17; 19.6). While some scholars suggest that one has to read in the gesture even in those places where it is not explicitly mentioned,¹⁸⁹ our investigation has shown that there is little evidence in Acts for the belief that the LH was a regular ceremony separate from or associated with baptism. On the contrary, the gesture is quite irregular and is associated with two special situations. It is significant that these are the only two cases recorded by Luke when the Spirit is not received directly 'from above', in close connection with conversion-initiation. Thus, according to 2.38-39, the situation of Philip's converts and that of the Ephesian disciples is anomalous. Each of the two anomalous situations is corrected by Luke's two main characters, Peter and Paul.¹⁹⁰ The apostles induce the coming of the Spirit through the LH. As Dunn notes, 'LH is a beneficial aid, particularly when the normal, simpler procedure (repentance/ belief and baptism) has not "worked" for some reason'.¹⁹¹

To conclude the section on the temporal relationship between conversion, baptism and the reception of the Spirit, all that can be said is that Luke's only interest is to show that the coming of the Spirit was an important matter and that such coming was expected in the first stages of one's Christian experience, before, at or after baptism. Yet, if Luke shows no interest in such an orderly sequence of events, he seems to be familiar with a *normal* way in which the Spirit is received in his day. Since, in treating the case of the Samaritan converts I have made only a brief comment on this, it will be discussed fully in the following paragraphs.

In the redactional note of 8.16, Luke expected the Spirit *to have fallen* upon the Samaritans. In Cornelius' house, the Holy Spirit 'fell on all those who were listening the word' (Acts 10.44, ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον). The episode is reiterated in 11.15, where the verb is used with reference to the descent of the Spirit directly from heaven on both Cornelius' household and the disciples on the Day of Pentecost - ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ὡς περ καὶ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ. The variant reading of 8.39 in the Western text describes the coming of the Spirit in the same way: 'And when they came out of the water, the *Holy Spirit fell on the eunuch, and an angel of the Lord caught up Philip*' (πνεῦμα [ἅγιον ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον, ἄγγελος δέ] κυρίου..) instead of 'Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip'.¹⁹² Thus, in three of its occurrences in Acts and in one variant reading (possibly the original!), the term describes a sudden descent of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁹ So e.g. Silva New, 'The Name, Baptism and the Laying on of Hands', *BC V*, 134; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 49, 64f.; R.M. Price, 'Confirmation and Charismata', 179.

¹⁹⁰ There is no indication in Acts that Luke regarded Paul as the representative of the Twelve, as Fitzmyer holds (*Acts*, 644).

¹⁹¹ J. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1996), 256.

¹⁹² The variant reading (in italics) is found in several witnesses including A^c min p vg^{mss} sy^h arm Ephr Hier Aug Didymus. The longer version is accepted by Zahn, Preuschen, Loisy, Clark, E.

Two other verbs are used by Luke to describe the coming of the Spirit in the same dramatic way: *to come upon* (ἐπιέρχεσθαι, 1.8; 19.6) and *to pour out* (ἐκχέειν, 2.17, 18, 33; 10.45). Of the three verbs, ἐπιέρχεσθαι conveys probably the least dramatic action, especially in the form found in 19.6 - ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς. Yet, ἐπιέρχεσθαι describes a descent of the Spirit 'from above' (implicit in the preposition ἐπί), as ἐπιπίπτειν does.¹⁹³ Ἐκχέειν in connection with the Spirit is borrowed from the LXX (Joel 3.1, 2; Ez. 39.29; Zech. 12.10), where sometimes the pouring out of the Spirit is likened with a fructifying rain on Israel (Is. 32.15, 44.3ff.; Ez. 36.26f.; Jl 2.23f.).¹⁹⁴ The image is clearly that of an unmediated pouring out of the Spirit, as the one Luke describes at Pentecost. The interchangeable use of ἐπιπίπτειν and ἐκχέειν in the account of Cornelius' conversion indicates that for Luke the two verbs describe the same kind of action. Dunn and Turner acknowledge that these verbs strongly suggest a sudden and dramatic irruption,¹⁹⁵ but they seem to think primarily in terms of the effects produced by such irruption. I believe that, in using Old Testament imagery, Luke is also depicting the mode in which the Spirit comes. First, the verbs he uses point to the external origin of the Spirit: as the rain is 'poured' or 'falls' from the sky, so the Spirit comes 'from above', i.e. from God. Secondly, the Spirit comes in a spontaneous, forceful and *unmediated* manner.

The frequency of these terms in Acts, the expectation of 8.16, the paradigmatic Acts 2.16-21 on the basis of Joel 3.1f. (LXX), and the experience of Jesus himself at Jordan (καταβῆναι, Lk 3.22) are sufficient reasons to believe that the normal way in which Luke expects the coming of the Holy Spirit on new converts is through spontaneous irruptions, directly from God, without any human agency. This is consistent with two other Lucan references: In Lk 24.49, 'the promise of ... [the] Father' will come *upon* [ἐπί] Jesus' disciples and the power they will receive is *from on high* (ἐξ ὑψους). The same idea is

Schweizer (*TDNT*, VI, 406), Black (*FS Nida*, 123), Menzies (*Development*, 124) and reluctantly Marshall (*Acts*, 1980, p. 165). Arguments for accepting this variant reading include: 1) this text does not attribute to the Spirit an action which is not paralleled in the NT; 2) the reception of the Spirit, is a feature which Luke normally records when dealing with 'special' categories of people; 3) the omission of the longer (and original) version can be explained in two ways: a) it is omitted because the person who baptised the eunuch was not an apostle and because the laying on of hands is not mentioned; b) an accidental omission is also possible through the skipping of the missing words - Cf. J. Coppens, 'L'Imposition des Mains', in *Les Actes*, 410. B. Metzger, explains: 'Some scholars, holding the longer reading to be the original, have explained its absence in the other witnesses as due either to accidental omission or to deliberate excision because of its variance with the account in verses 15-18 (Lake and Cadbury, *BC*, 5.98), where it is implied that the Holy Spirit was bestowed only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles' (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 360). Barrett (*Acts* 1.435) and Johnson (*Acts*, 157) take the longer minority reading as a scribal addition.

¹⁹³ For meanings see J. Schneider, 'ἐπιέρχομαι', *TDNT* II, 680.

¹⁹⁴ *Contra* Gunkel (*Influence*, 42-43, 59-66), the fact that Luke uses verbs like ἐκχέειν, πίμπλημι (Lk 1.15, 41, 67; Acts 2.4; 4.8, 31; 9.17; 13.9, 52) and ἐπιπίπτειν is not evidence that he viewed the Spirit in Hellenistic terms as a *mana*-like 'Stoff'. As in the LXX, the verbs are used metaphorically. Cf. Turner, *Power*, 167.

¹⁹⁵ Dunn: 'The ἐπί-verbs ... suggest the dramatic empowering impact of the Spirit's coming' (*Baptism*, 72); Turner, *Power*, 357 n. 25.

expressed in Lk 11.13: ‘the Father who from heaven will give you [the] Holy Spirit’ (ὁ πατήρ [ὁ] ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δώσει πνεῦμα ἅγιον).¹⁹⁶

The above view provides a reasonable explanation of how Luke can depict individuals (Philip, 6.3; Stephen, 6.5, 8; Barnabas, 11.24; Agabus, 11.28; Apollos, 18.25) or groups (in Iconium, 13.52 et al.) as having the Spirit, without feeling obliged to describe the manner in which it was received. Similarly, the free outpouring of the Spirit squares very well with Luke’s emphasis that the Spirit is given as an answer to prayer (Lk 11.13; cf. 3.21). Lk 11.13 is a redaction of the Q passage, found in its original form in Matthew 7.9-11.¹⁹⁷ The promise that God ‘will give good gifts (ἀγαθὰ) to those who ask him’ is changed by Luke to ‘will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him’. With Stronstad, I believe Luke uses here a midrash peshet to interpret ‘good gifts’ in terms of the ‘post-Pentecost reality of the gift of the Spirit’.¹⁹⁸ While the reference seems to allude primarily to Pentecost and the fulfilment of the ‘promise’ in Acts¹⁹⁹ - occasions when the Spirit comes after prayer (1.14; 4.23-31; 8.14-17; 9.11, 17) - Luke surely writes out of his post-Pentecostal community’s experience.²⁰⁰ As R.M. Price notes, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the pericope is ‘Christian readers/hearers who are encouraged to seek the Holy Spirit from God who is already their “heavenly Father”’.²⁰¹ The reference can be understood as another pointer to the fact that for Luke the receiving the Spirit has no initiatory overtones, but is an empowering for mission. However, in view of the repetitive character of the exhortation,²⁰² it is reasonable to infer that Luke thinks beyond the initial reception of the Spirit and

¹⁹⁶ The evidence for ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is very mixed. Plummer (*St Luke*, 300) and Arndt (*St Luke*, 298) suggest that ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is contracted from ὁ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. Even without this contraction, the use of ἐξ instead of ἐν brings out the fact that God gives the Spirit ‘from heaven’ (J.Reiling and J.L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* [Leiden: Brill, 1971], 436). So also L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 179; Cf. BDF, § 437.

¹⁹⁷ C.K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1947), 126-27; Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2.915-16; Grundmann, *Lukas*, 235; von Baer, *Der heilige Geist*, 150. Matthew never omits a reference to the Spirit from his sources and never inserts it into the Marcan or Q material. Luke inserts πνεῦμα into Q material in three places (Lk 4.1; 10.21; 11.13) and into Marcan material once (Lk 4.14). See C.S. Rodd, ‘Spirit or Finger’, *ExpTim* 72 (1960-61), 157f.; R. Menzies, *Development*, 181 and n. 3.

¹⁹⁸ Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 64.

¹⁹⁹ L.T. Johnson, *Luke*, 180; so also F. Bovon, *L’Evangile selon Saint Luc* (Geneve: Labor et Fides, 1996), 2:145; C. Evans, *St. Luke*, 487.

²⁰⁰ J. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 916; Bock, *Luke* 2.1062f.; F. Bovon, *Saint Luc* 2.145. J. Ernst suggestion that the context is that of a baptismal ceremony is pertinent but cannot be proved from the evidence available in Acts (*Das Evangelium nach Lukas* [Regensburg: Pustet, 1977], 367). *Contra* S. Brown who claims that Luke limits the promise of Lk 11.13 to the apostles and the Spirit-baptism to the period of the church’s origin (‘Water-Baptism’, 145-47, 150f.). According to Turner, the promise of the Spirit in Lk 11.13 is intended as ‘a pre-Pentecost possibility available to some of Jesus’ followers . . . as divine empowerment against the demonic’ (*Power*, 340). But in 9.1 and 10.19, it is Jesus who gives power and authority and not God, as Turner himself recognises (341, n. 64).

²⁰¹ R.M. Price, ‘Confirmation and Charisma’, 179. Price’s suggestion that the text implies an intermediate period between one’s becoming a Christian and his/her reception of the Spirit is logical, but not always factual, according to Luke (cf. 10.44).

²⁰² See Büchsel, *Der Geist Gottes*, 189f.

recommends such prayer with other functions of the Spirit in mind (e.g. joy, 8.8, 13.52, comfort, 9.31; guidance, 13.2, 16.6 etc.).²⁰³

6.5. The Significance of the Laying on of Hands in Luke's Theology of the Spirit

There are basically four views as to the significance of the LH in connection with the reception of the Spirit. According to these views, the gesture signifies: 1) incorporation into the church; 2) invocatory prayer; 3) ordination of prophets/missionaries, and 4) transmission of the Spirit.

6.5.1. *Incorporation into the Church*

According to I.H. Marshall, the laying of the hands in Samaria and Ephesus should be understood as 'a special act of fellowship, incorporating the people concerned into the fellowship of the church'.²⁰⁴ It was not a regular practice, being necessary only on special situations when some sort of assurance was needed by the new converts that they would be accepted into the fellowship of the church. Lampe holds a similar view, at least in the case of the Samaritans.²⁰⁵ A critique of this view has been already offered in discussing the case of the Samaritans.²⁰⁶ It minimises the role of the gesture by ignoring Luke's clear statement that the gesture is accompanied by prayer for the gift of the Spirit (8.15, 17) and that the Spirit is given through the LH (8.19; 19.6).

6.5.2. *Invocatory Prayer (Epiclesis)*

That the LH signifies simply invocatory prayer and nothing more is claimed by a number of scholars.²⁰⁷ True, the LH is probably the most adequate symbol a mediator can use when praying in behalf of another person. The gesture identifies the person who is to receive the divine favour as a result of the accompanying prayer. It is related to the LH as a gesture of blessing, although the latter seems to convey more apparently the idea of transference. In the case of a prayer for the reception of the Spirit, the person who prays is a petitioner of numinous power in behalf of another.²⁰⁸ The only clear case in this category is that of Peter

²⁰³ *Contra* Menzies, *Development*, 184f.

²⁰⁴ Marshall, *Acts*, 307 f.; F. Pereira, *Ephesus*, 99.

²⁰⁵ *Seal*, 70. Cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Book*, 170.

²⁰⁶ *Supra*, 6.2.2.2.4.

²⁰⁷ E.g. J.E.H. Hull, *Holy Spirit*, ; Barrett, *Acts* I.606, 898; J.K. Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands', 214. F. Sullivan, 'The Laying on of Hands in Christian Tradition', in *Spirit and Renewal* (JPTSS 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 48, 52f.

²⁰⁸ Although Lk 11.13 is designed by Luke to motivate his readers to pray for the Spirit, the evangelist does not record any instance when Christians pray for themselves to receive the Spirit,

and John praying for the Samaritans (8.15). Nothing is said about Ananias praying for Paul or Paul praying for the Ephesian disciples. Yet, it is reasonable to infer that, in these cases, Luke took it for granted that a prayer would accompany the gesture (cf. 28.8). But to understand the LH as simply a gesture of prayer and the communication of the Spirit as totally detached from the gesture is to ignore Luke's clear statement that the Spirit was given through the LH (8.19). As we will see shortly, the gesture implied more than prayer (see 6.5.4.).

6.5.3. *Ordination of Prophets/Missionaries*

The LH for the reception of the Spirit has been sometimes understood as a rite for the ordination of Christian missionaries/prophets.²⁰⁹ The new converts, whether at Samaria or Ephesus, were endowed with the 'Spirit of prophecy' and commissioned to the missionary task of the church.

For Menzies, the reception of the Holy Spirit was not integral to the rite. Unlike the seven deacons (6.1-6) or Paul and Barnabas (13.1-3), these believers did not possess the Spirit before their commissioning; it was necessary, therefore, that the Spirit would be given at the time of their commissioning, all in one ceremony. In Menzies' view, the LH has nothing to do with the reception of the Spirit, since the gift descended directly from God as a 'supplementary element'.²¹⁰

Two objections are in order here: Firstly, the separation of the Spirit from the LH in both 8.17 and 19.6 is in complete disagreement with Luke's clear statement that the Spirit was given through the gesture. Secondly, there is no cue in the two texts that some ordination ceremony was in view. It is unlikely that, in Luke's understanding, each convert had to become a missionary and was commissioned as such. Except for Paul (9.20), Luke does not present any convert as getting immediately involved in evangelistic activities. The format of the commissioning ceremonies in 6.6 and 13.1-4 is different in a number of ways: a) the new appointee is not a new convert, b) the ceremony takes place in a church setting, c) the mission of the new appointees is stated and d) the gesture of commissioning is performed by the church or its representatives, rather than by one person.²¹¹ Further, the

except perhaps the disciples in the upper room who, in anticipation of Pentecost, 'devoted themselves to prayer' (Acts 1.13-15). Cf. Turner, *Power*, 340.

²⁰⁹ Dom Gregory Dix, 'Confirmation, or Laying on of Hands?', in *Theology Occasional Papers* 5 (1936), 18-19, 23; *The Theology of Confirmation*, 21-22; Lampe, *Seal*, 70-78; J. Coppens, 'L'Imposition des Mains', in Kremer, *Les Actes*, 405-38; Menzies, *Development*, 259-60. M. Warkentin's interpretation of Acts 8.14-25 and 19.1-7 is based on questionable exegesis. In her view, Luke uses verbal parallels from LXX (προσέχειν and διαμαρτύρομαι, Deut 31.23) to draw an analogy from the commissioning of Joshua (*Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 130-32). But there is really no correspondance when the subjects of the two verbs are taken into account.

²¹⁰ *Development*, 259 f.

²¹¹ For a full analysis of the role of the LH in commissioning see chapter 7.

OT/Jewish model of commissioning/ordination which, according to Menzies, has been taken over by the church implied a period of training or some spiritual qualifications before a person could be commissioned for service. Joshua was both trained in leadership (Ex. 17.8-13; Nu. 11.28) and had the Spirit of God (Nu 27.18) before he was ordained. Similarly, Jewish rabbis were ordained only after extensive training and practising for a period the art of teaching, under the supervision of their teachers.²¹² Finally, the understanding of the LH in this context as an ordination rite overlooks one major aspect, namely that besides other indicators found in Acts, the close association of the reception of the Spirit with conversion suggests that the Spirit is not exclusively seen by Luke as an empowering for mission.²¹³

6.5.4. *Transfer of the Spirit*

We have seen that, at least in two places, Luke unmistakably says that the Spirit was given through the LH. Peter's intercounter with Simon Magus throws some light upon Luke's understanding of the LH. The narrative does not state clearly whether Simon received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostolic hands, but probably Luke's understanding is that he did not.²¹⁴ However, Luke is critical of Simon's misconceptions at two points: Simon had a manistic conception of the Spirit (which points to his Hellenistic background)²¹⁵ and regarded the laying on of the apostles' hands as 'a specially effective piece of magic'.²¹⁶ It is noteworthy that Luke's criticism is not directed to Simon's association of the Spirit with the LH.²¹⁷ Luke himself believed that the 'gift of God' can come through human hands (cf. also 9.17; 19.6). Verse 18 is written from Luke's perspective, not from Simon's. In Peter's few words, 'you thought that you could obtain the gift of God with money', Luke addresses Simon's view that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit can be manipulated at the discretion of the one who possesses it. The association of the apostles' LH with magic by Simon could not be condoned by Luke. The emphasis he places on the apostles' prayer indicates that for him the Holy Spirit is indeed a 'gift' which

²¹² See *supra*, 2.4.2.3.

²¹³ On the significance of *πνεῦμα* in Luke-Acts, see Turner, 'The Significance of Receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts: A Survey of Modern Scholarship', *TrinJ* 2 (1981):131-58; *Power*, 349-52, 401-27; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (SNTSMS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 261-64.

²¹⁴ Simon's experience and that of the Samaritan believers is presented in parallel: The Samaritans believe Philip's preaching (v.6) and so does Simon (v. 13); they are baptised (v.12) and so is Simon (v.13). Therefore, Luke's silence about Simon's reception of the Spirit after v.17, is an indication that he had no such experience. He only 'saw [as an observer] that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given' (v. 18).

²¹⁵ According to Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 1.23), Simon was the founder of Gnosticism and the leader of a sect known as Simonians.

²¹⁶ E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 304.

²¹⁷ *Contra* F. Bruner, *Theology*, 178; Pereira, *Ephesus*, 98 n. 342.

God bestows, not human beings. The LH was, at best, the channel through which such gift was transmitted.

An interesting viewpoint is offered by M. Turner in an earlier article, where he discusses on the spatial aspect of Luke's phraseology of the Spirit's coming upon people:

The real problem with such a notion [i.e. the coming of the Spirit from a far-off 'heaven'] is not in believing that the ancients, including Luke, may genuinely have considered 'heaven' to be 'up there'. The true difficulty is that there is a sense in which Luke knows the Spirit was not 'up there' (or at least not only so) - for he was 'in' Philip ... when he preached to the Samaritans, and 'in' the apostles when they laid hands on the Samaritans as men full of the Spirit, to impart the Spirit to these new converts ... Similarly, whether the Spirit was 'in', 'on' or 'with' Peter as he preached to Cornelius, it was thus presumably not from very far that the Spirit 'fell upon' the assembled household; and not dissimilar considerations pertain when Paul 'filled with the Spirit' ... lays hands on the Ephesian baptizands.²¹⁸

Turner's comment seems to suggest that, according to Luke, the Spirit does not come from 'on high' but is merely transferred by the human mediators who are themselves filled/full with the Spirit. It is true that in all cases in Acts when the Spirit is transmitted by the LH, the gesture is performed by people who are already filled with the Spirit (Peter, John, Ananias, Paul). But there is no idea in these texts that they 'discharge' horizontally a quantum of the power which infills them. The association of prayer with the gesture indicates that people like Peter or Paul, although 'filled with the Spirit', have neither *exousia* nor *dunamis* to bestow the Spirit, but depend wholly on God to use them as mere channels of power.

In Luke's view, Jesus was the only bearer of numinous²¹⁹ power. Although it is remarkable that Luke never says of anyone (including Jesus) as 'having' (ἔχειν) the Spirit, he nevertheless portrays Jesus as one who could have dispensed such power (especially for healing) on anyone and whenever he wished to do so, without having to resort to prayer.²²⁰ The post-Resurrection Jesus is portrayed by Luke as 'the Lord of the Spirit' who sends the Spirit as 'the promise of the Father' (Lk 24.49, Acts 1.4). The evidence in Acts points to the fact that the disciples stand in a different relation to the Spirit from that of Jesus. In their role as petitioners of the numinous power they must pray to God, the source of the power, so that the Spirit would be granted to the new converts. The second posture in which Luke depicts the disciples is that of mediators of the numinous power. Through the LH they transfer the Spirit they prayed for to the new believers. The episode about Simon Magus clearly indicates that the Spirit cannot be manipulated, neither by Simon nor by the apostles. For Luke, the Holy Spirit is the controller, not the controlled. The sovereignty of

²¹⁸ M. Turner, 'Spirit Endowment in Luke-Acts: Some Linguistic Considerations', *VoxEv* 12 (1981), 49.

²¹⁹ I follow here W. Kahl in using the designation 'numinous' instead of 'divine' power for the reason that the former has a broader meaning which encompass both the healing power and the *πνεῦμα* as the divine Spirit (*Miracle Stories*, 10).

²²⁰ Examples in Chapter 4.

God in giving the Spirit is also stressed in the Cornelius episode: God can give it whenever he pleases (10.44-48).

6.6. Hebrews 6.2: An Elementary Doctrine

6.6.1. *The Context*

The immediate context of the reference to the **LH** in Heb. 6.2 is the interlude of 5.11-6.20. Here the author turns from the christological theme to reflect on his readers' capacity to understand such a doctrine (5.12-14).

In 6.1, the author exhorts his readers to leave voluntarily and once and for all (*ἀφέντες* - aorist active) the 'word of the beginning of Christ' (*τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον*) and let themselves be continually borne (*φερώμεθα*) towards maturity (*τὴν τελειότητα*). Although he speaks in the first person plural, the sense of the passage clearly indicates that he is already a mature Christian. In 5.11-14 he criticises his readers for being 'slow to learn', for needing 'milk', for being infantile. As a mature Christian, he offers to introduce them to and prepare them for the 'solid food' (5.14; 6.3).

The participle *ἀφέντες* denotes separation. Although in certain situations it may be translated 'to leave behind' (as in RSV), the context implies that the departure does not imply here forsaking.²²¹ The reader is called not to discard the 'elementary teachings of Christ', but to build on them, i.e. to grow in knowledge²²² and perhaps to start acting upon that which they already know.²²³ The teaching about the **LH** is part of the 'elementary teaching of Christ'.

6.6.2. *Various interpretations of the LH in Hebrews 6.2*

The interpretation of the reference to the **LH** in Heb. 6.2 depends largely on the way in which the puzzling phrase *τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον* has been understood. The ambiguity is created by the two juxtaposed genitives which allow the phrase to be constructed in three different ways: 1) 'the initial message of Christ', i.e. the original teaching given by Christ; 2) 'the teaching about the beginning of Christ', i.e. about the earthly life of Christ, as contrasted with his resurrection life; 3) 'the elementary teaching(s) about Christ', cf. JB, NIV or in a paraphrased version, 'the first lessons of the Christian message', cf. TEV.

²²¹ Cf. H.P. Owen, 'The "Stages of Ascent" in Hebrews V.11-VI.3', *NTS* 3 (1956-57), 248-49, 'omit the foundation'; 253, 'he [the author] discards the substance of the *θεμέλιος* altogether'.

²²² J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, 131; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 142;

²²³ Stedman, *Hebrews*, 68 f. According to H.P. Owen (*NTS* 3 [1956-57]:243-253), the author of Hebrews indicates two further stages toward maturity, the first one being ethical and practical (5.14) and the second one religious and theoretical (6.1-2).

1) The first translation takes the genitive *τοῦ Χριστοῦ* as subjective. The other genitive, *τῆς ἀρχῆς*, is understood as a descriptive genitive, modifying *τὸν λόγον*, and has been translated by ‘initial’ or ‘original’. Representative of the small number of exegetes who adopt this interpretation is J.C. Adams.²²⁴ If ‘foundation’ is understood to stand in apposition to ‘the ... word of Christ’, the implication from this interpretation is that the LH is given here dominical sanction. Easily to comprehend, on the basis of the gospel account Adams is constrained to conclude that the LH refers here to a gesture of blessing and healing. He says that if, in fact, Jesus practised the gesture, ‘it is *a priori* likely that he taught the disciples its significance’. Although the suggestion that *τοῦ Χριστοῦ* should be taken as a subjective genitive cannot be ruled out on grammatical grounds, the reasons put forward by Adams are not convincing.²²⁵ With Spicq,²²⁶ I believe that neither the laying of hands on the sick nor a gesture of blessing is in question here since these are not foundational Christian doctrines. The juxtaposition of the LH with baptism(s) indicates that the writer of Hebrews must have had in mind a gesture which was part of each believer’s experience.

2) The second translation has been suggested by Westcott who took the genitive *τοῦ Χριστοῦ* to be objective with *τῆς ἀρχῆς* as its object. He understood ‘the word of the beginning of Christ’ to refer to the earthly life of Christ, precisely to ‘the fundamental explanation of the fulfilment of the Messianic promises in Jesus of Nazareth’.²²⁷ But this has little to do with the elements listed in vv.1b-2, which constitute the *θεμέλιον* (v. 1b, itself in apposition to *τὸν λόγον* of 1a). It is likely that *τῆς ἀρχῆς* should be taken in an adjectival sense modifying *τὸν λόγον*, as in the parallel phrase of 5.12, ‘the first principles of God’s word’ (*τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ*).

3) Then, according to the most probable interpretation, *τὸν ... τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον* is intended here as an objective genitive, i.e. the teaching about Christ, with *τῆς ἀρχῆς* taken in an adjectival sense, ‘elementary’ or ‘initial’.²²⁸ The question is whether ‘the initial teaching about Christ (or Messiah)’ is Christian or Jewish teaching.

Wuest, for example, took the phrase as a reference to the Old Testament teaching about the coming Messiah. He contrasted the *τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς ... λόγον* which is ‘the

²²⁴ J.C. Adams, ‘Exegesis of Hebrews vi.1f.’, *NTS* 13 (1967), 378-85. This interpretation was suggested earlier by Alfred Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (ThBü 26; 1966, reprint of the 1903 edition), 248, and more recently defended by H.W. Attridge, *Hebrews* (Hermeneia, 1989), 162.

²²⁵ In Adams’ view, the Hebrew Christians ‘placed great emphasis on the teaching of Jesus’, showing insufficient interest for his person and work. The author of the epistle calls them ‘to grasp more deeply the significance of his person and work’, i.e. the ‘solid food’ (p. 383). But the gospels account seems to indicate that Jesus was a ‘stumbling block’ to the Jews primarily for his claims about his person, which confirms the human inclination to be preoccupied first with one’s person and only then with his/her teaching (cf. Mt. 16.13; Mk 6.3; 8.28; 14.61; Jn 9.24).

²²⁶ *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (1952), vol. 2, 147.

²²⁷ *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1909), 144. So also

²²⁸ So also W. Lane, *Hebrews*, 131;

type' with τὴν τελειότητα which he translated 'the fulfilment' or 'the reality'. Upon this view, the LH refers here to daily Temple ritual of sacrifice, a teaching which is now obsolete (cf. Heb 9.12).²²⁹ The interpretation which makes most sense takes the phrase to refer to the initial (τῆς ἀρχῆς) teaching received at the outset of one's Christian life. As Ellingworth suggests, the least unsatisfactory solution is to take the phrase as referring to 'Christian teaching in continuity with the OT and possibly also with contemporary Jewish teaching'.²³⁰ This interpretation is supported by the use of θεμέλιον (v. 1b) in apposition to τὸν λόγον of 1a. Such teaching is generally understood as part of the catechetical instruction received before baptism.²³¹

6.6.3. Exegesis of Heb 6.1-6

The 'elementary teaching' received at the outset of the readers' Christian life consists of six foundational doctrines: repentance from dead works, faith in God, teaching about ablutions, LH, resurrection and judgement. The writer's exhortation about 'not laying again a foundation' (μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι, v.1) refers primarily to foundational teaching laid down at the outset of the readers' Christian life. But in view of the possible area of overlap mentioned above, the text may also point to an attempt on the part of some Hebrew Christians to remain faithful to their former religion.²³²

It is not clear whether the pre-baptismal catechetical instruction received by the Hebrew Christians was limited to the six points listed in v. 1f.²³³ If it covered more than

²²⁹ K.S. Wuest, *Word Studies*, 2:112; 'Hebrew Six in the Greek New Testament', *BSac* 119 (1962), 49f., followed by M. Warkentin, *Ordination: A Biblical Historical View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 115-19, esp. 118f.

²³⁰ P. Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews* (NIGTC; Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1993), 312; J. Dunn, *Baptism*, 206 f. The view that the six principles represent probably a programmatic summary of the gospel for the Jews has been expressed earlier by Seeberg, *Katechismus*, 249, and shared by F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 112; Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews* (IVP, 1992), 69; H.W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 163f.

²³¹ A.J. Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism* (1893), 29; Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 54; H. Ervin, *Conversion Initiation*, 152; J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism*, ; H.W. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1964), 104 f.; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1964), 112, following O. Michel, MK, *ad loc.*, suggests the possibility that the author of Hebrews quoted a catechises familiar to his readers.

²³² D.A. Hagner, *Hebrews* (1983), 67.

²³³ According to W. Lane, *Hebrews* (WBC 47a, 1991), 140, the catechetical instruction consisted of only four points, i.e. instruction concerning cleansing rites and LH, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement, all these standing in apposition to 'the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God'. This arrangement is based on accepting the variant reading διδαχήν (P⁴⁶, B, 0150, it^d, syr^{pal}) as the original one, although διδαχῆς is better attested (Ⲛ, A, C, D, I, Byz [K L P] vg, syr^h). Contrary to the UBS translation of Nestle-Aland (26th ed.) and Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, 666, the variant reading διδαχήν is preferred by most authors; e.g. J. Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1924), 74-75; F.W. Beare, 'The Text of the Epistle to the Hebrews in P⁴⁶', *JBL* 63 (1944), 394; G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (1953), 93; F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 110, n. 3; H.W. Attridge, *Hebrews* (1989), 155, n. 10. The acceptance of one variant reading or another has no bearing upon our discussion; in either case, the LH is part of the catechetical instruction.

what is recorded, it means that the author selectively picked up six essential doctrines and intentionally displayed them in three sets: 1) ‘repentance from dead works and of faith toward God’, 2) ‘instruction about ablutions and (τε) the LH’ and 3) about ‘the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement’ (italics mine).²³⁴

1) The first set of teachings has to do with inward events preceding initiation, i.e. conversion. Repentance ('to turn from') is the negative aspect of conversion and faith ('to turn to') is the positive one.²³⁵

2) The second set marks a second phase of one's Christian experience.²³⁶ There are two rites listed, closely connected by conjunction τε, but each one having apparently a distinct function. Baptism, is undoubtedly a rite of initiation. The word is in the plural, βαπτισμῶν (sg. βαπτισμός) and it has been interpreted variously.²³⁷ In view of the Jewish nature of the six principles listed in 6.1, 2, the best explanation of the plural is to consider that the teaching is intended to distinguish between Christian baptism on the one hand and John's and the Jewish proselyte baptism on the other hand.²³⁸

The LH, unlike the ‘washings’, is in the singular and this suggests that only one usage of the gesture was associated with and included among the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.²³⁹ The context indicates that the author refers to something that relates to all believers. The juxtaposition of the LH with Christian baptism (implied in βαπτισμῶν) points to one particular use of the gesture, i.e. for the reception of the Spirit. This view is supported by the vast majority of scholars.²⁴⁰ Whether the gesture is intended here as part of

²³⁴ The arrangement is suggested by W. Thüsing, “Milch” und “feste Speise” (1 Kor. 3,1f. und Hebr 5,11-6,3): Elementarkatechese und theologisches Vertiefung im neutestamentlicher Sicht’, *TTZ* 76 (1967): 233-46, 261-80.

²³⁵ See I.H. Marshall, 81, for whom ‘repentance and faith are the two sides of the same coin’.

²³⁶ In writing about the significance of the two rites, T.H. Robinson argues that ‘Both concern a second stage in the spiritual history of the Christian, the reception of the Spirit’ (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Moffatt 1933), 72.

²³⁷ It is taken as a reference to the Christian baptism and the previous baptism of the neophyte (Chrysostom), or ‘stated days of baptism’ (J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 133). Grotius saw here a reference to water baptism and Spirit-baptism, but this is hardly tenable in view of the word used (βαπτισμῶν = ‘ablutions, washings’). The baptism in the Holy Spirit is never referred to as a ‘washing’.

²³⁸ βαπτισμός appears also in Heb. 9.10 for ablutions required by the Jewish law, and in Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.5.2, for the baptism of John. For a distinction between the baptisms of John and Jesus, see P. Andriessen, ‘En lisant l'épître aux Hébreux’, Vaals, Netherlands 1977, 23-26. That the plural refers to the distinction between Christian baptism and Jewish proselyte baptism, see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 315.

²³⁹ According to H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (1964), 383, ‘the vagueness of the plural βαπτισμῶν suggests a wider meaning of ἐπίθεσις χειρῶν in this place... ἐπιθέσεως χειρῶν διδαχῆ will in like manner cover the various uses of the laying on of hands under the old covenant and in the Church, including no doubt its use after baptism’. Similarly Westcott, although the use of the term in a limited sense, i.e. as Confirmation, is considered as a possibility (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1889, 146).

²⁴⁰ Exception make a few scholars who consider that the LH here is to be taken as a gesture of healing. E.g. J.C. Adams, *NTS* 13, 383 f. W. Lane suggests that the gesture refers to the appointment of priests, according to the law (*Hebrews* 1:140). Apart from the fact that there is no OT evidence for this practice, Lane is relying on a variant reading, as already noted. Similarly, C. Maurer thinks that the reference is also to the transmission of office (‘ἐπιτίθημι’, *TDNT* 8.161).

a single conversion-initiation rite or as a separate, non-initiatory rite is debatable and will be discussed shortly.

3) The third set of teachings is eschatological. It would instil in the neophyte the eschatological hope, the motivating factor of his/her faith.

There is a similarity between the sequence of events listed in vv. 1b-2 and that of Acts 2.38:

| <u>Heb 6.1b-2</u> | <u>Acts 2.38</u> |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. repentance | repent - μετανοήσατε |
| 2. faith | ----- |
| 3. baptisms | be baptised - βαπτισθήτω |
| 4. LH | you shall receive (λήμψετε) the gift of the Holy Spirit |
| 5. resurrection | ----- |
| 6. judgement | ----- |

The order of the teaching appears to have been modelled after the stages of one's religious experience (cf. vv.4-5, as it will be demonstrated). It was so designed as to introduce the neophyte to the experiences which he or she would soon encounter (conversion, initiation, reception the Spirit), as well as some essential eschatological issues (resurrection and judgement).

Our concern is to see the relation in which the LH stands with Christian baptism in this text. One view is that baptism and the LH form a single initiatory rite. Dunn argues: 'His [the initiate's] repentance and faith came to its vital climax in *this single rite* of baptism-LH, and to this repentance and faith the Spirit was given'.²⁴¹ It is claimed that the special use of τε instead of και was intended to express the inseparable bond between baptism and the LH as a single rite of initiation.²⁴² Indeed, the function of τε in general is to express a close connection between the adjacent elements, but due to the presence of τε in the next clause αναστάσεως τε νεκρών, with a very strong attestation,²⁴³ it is unlikely that such a close connection is intended here. It is rather probable that conjunction τε is

²⁴¹ *Baptism*, 208, italics mine. Other authors who adopt this view include: A.J. Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism* (1893), 32 f.; T.H. Robinson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1933), 72;

²⁴² Mason, *The Relation*, 33; Dunn, *Baptism*, 207. Reference is made usually to BAGD, where τε is said to connect 'clauses thereby indicating a close relationship between them' (BAGD, 444).

²⁴³ See the *Greek New Testament* (1966) of Aland, Black, Metzger and Wikgren vs. the earlier *Novum Testamentum Graece* by Nestle-Aland. In the more recent version, particle τε is inserted in the text as a preferred reading: αναστάσεως τε νεκρών. Cf. also H. M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 152.

cumulative here, joining (piling up) co-ordinate elements, all depending on *διδασχῆς*.²⁴⁴ The last element of the list makes exception, probably due to its negative connotations. The conjunction *καὶ* which links it to the rest of the series should be translated by ‘and even’: ‘of instruction about baptisms, and (*τε*) the laying on of hands, and (*τε*) the resurrection of the dead, and even (*καὶ*) eternal judgement’. In conclusion, the use of *τε* does not lead to the inevitable conclusion that baptism and the LH must be taken together as one initiation rite. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Christian baptism is not specifically mentioned but only implied in the plural *βαπτισμῶν*.

Another view is that the LH refers to Confirmation, as a separate rite, following baptism.²⁴⁵ In what follows, I will investigate the validity of this claim. It is hoped that the outline of vv. 4-6 will throw some light on the relation between baptism and the LH:

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened (*φωτισθέντας*), who have tasted the heavenly gift (*τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου*), and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit (*μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου*), and have tasted the goodness of the word (*ῥῆμα*) of God and the powers of the age to come (*δυνάμεις ... μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*).

Verses 4-5 describe the religious experience of some actual or hypothetical defectors from faith (*παραπεσόντας*, 6.6), of whose experience appears to be identical with that shared by all readers. That vv.4-6 are connected with the six articles listed in 1b-2 is commonly acknowledged.²⁴⁶ The relation of the clauses in 6.4-6 is uncertain. Verse 4 begins with a negative statement, ‘it is impossible’ (*ἀδύνατον γάρ*), in order to emphasise the need for moving forward; in some cases a new beginning is impossible. The verbal phrase ‘to renew unto repentance’ ought to come immediately after *ἀδύνατον* as in the English translation above (*ἀδύνατον ... πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν*), but the author delayed it until v.6, to follow step by step the *ordo salutis* implied in v. 1b-2, leaving thus the ‘judgement’ part at the end. The presence of the chiasmic construction *τε . . . καὶ . . . καὶ . . . τε* does not solve the difficulty. However, the function of *τε* to connect closely adjacent clauses suggests the following structure of the two verses:

- a) 4a-b *τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσάμενους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου*
- b) 4c *καὶ μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου*
- c) 5 *καὶ καλὸν γευσάμενους θεοῦ ῥῆμα δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*

²⁴⁴ A similar function of *τε* is suggested by H. Ervin (*Conversion-Initiation*, 152), who argues that it ‘introduces an ascensive force’. It appears to me, however, that the function of the conjunction here is not intensive, but extensive (i.e. cumulative). See also Kilian McDonnell and G.T. Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 54 f.

²⁴⁵ W.K. Lowther Clarke, *Confirmation or the Laying on of Hands* (1926), 10; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 164.

²⁴⁶ E.g. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 318; F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 146; Dunn, *Baptism*, 210; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 285.

Line a) corresponds to conversion-initiation, line b) to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and line c) to the blessings of the ongoing Spirit-filled life, principally to the charismatic gifts (the ‘prophetic word’ and the ‘miraculous powers’) which enhance the life and the witness of the Church.

I suggest the following associations between verses 1b-2 and 4-6:

1b-2

4-6a

μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων,
καὶ πίστεως ἐπὶ θεόν,

(6a) πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν
τοὺς ἅπαξ ... γευμαμένους τε τῆς
δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου,

βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς
ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν

φωτισθέντας
καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου
καὶ καλὸν γευμαμένους θεοῦ ῥῆμα
δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος.

ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν, καὶ
κρίματος αἰωνίου

καὶ παραπεσόντας, (4a) Ἄδύνατον . . .

The above arrangement of the corresponding element of vv. 1b-2 and 4-6 not only completes Ellingworth’s diagram²⁴⁷ with the last two articles of the elementary/ foundational principles but, unlike his, allows one to visualise the impossibility (see the discontinued loop) of one’s restoration to repentance/faith after ‘falling away’ (v.6a---> v.4a).

A first observation to be made is that the entire religious experience of the readers can be traced back to the beginning of their Christian life, namely to the two essential moments of their Christian history, water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The two rites are not mentioned in vv. 4-6, but only implied. A second observation is that vv. 4-5 describe an ascending experience which includes salvation, impartation of Holy Spirit and manifestation of the *charismata*. The succession of events appears to be both logical and chronological.²⁴⁸ In the following two paragraphs, I will attempt to show that the

²⁴⁷ *Hebrews*, 318.

²⁴⁸ William L. Lane rejects the idea that the experiences listed are chronological salvific events. His understanding is that ἅπαξ, ‘once’, is distributive, applying equally to all experiences enumerated. Therefore, with Christian initiation in mind, Lane writes: ‘The recital of what occurred with the reception of the gospel does not describe a succession of salvific events but the one event of salvation that is viewed from different aspects’ (*Hebrews*, 141). Similarly, Guthrie takes the tasting of the ‘heavenly gift’, the partaking of the Spirit and the ‘tasting of the goodness of God’s word’ as elaborations on the ‘enlightenment’ (*Hebrews*, 141). Grammatical considerations, however, do not force

participles of vv. 4-6a can be understood as expressing spiritual experiences²⁴⁹ correlating to the elementary doctrines listed in vv. 1b-2 and that the author attributed distinct functions to baptism and the LH.

6.6.3.1. *Baptism as enlightenment*

Christian baptism is often read behind *φωτισθέντας*, 'enlightened'.²⁵⁰ The Syriac Peshitta translates the verb in the sense of 'baptism' both here and in 10.32. The earliest usage of the verb (*φωτίζειν*) and the cognate noun (*φωτισμός*) to describe baptism is found in Justin.²⁵¹ The basis of this designation is the pre-baptismal instruction which illuminated the neophyte's mind.²⁵²

Here, the adverb *ἅπαξ* ('once') indicates that the enlightenment was an once and for all experience. The term is frequently used in the NT metaphorically for spiritual or intellectual illumination.²⁵³ Here it seems to function as a metaphor for God's action in response to one's conversion. The identification of *φωτισμός* with baptism is attested only in the second century, but it is possible that the association goes back to the first century CE. Although the enlightenment is not effected by the rite, it culminates with the initiation rite and is, therefore, 'attested' by it.²⁵⁴ Then, *φωτισθέντας* may be taken as an indirect reference to baptism.²⁵⁵

The tasting of the 'heavenly gift' is understood differently by various authors. It is taken as a reference to the Eucharist,²⁵⁶ to the milk and honey of the baptismal rites,²⁵⁷ or to the 'gift' of the Holy Spirit.²⁵⁸ The first two suggestions are based on a literal understanding

one to take the adverb 'once' as distributive, but even when it is taken as such, it does not automatically follow that all the elements of the list refer to the same experience. The 'once and for all' events in one's religious history must not be limited to a single event.

²⁴⁹ The vast majority of scholars regard the five participles of vv. 4-5 as referring to authentic spiritual experiences of the readers. Yet, R. Nicole waters down the meaning of each of these participles, arguing that they 'do not ... necessarily imply regeneration'. He concludes that the readers did not receive salvation but only 'the greatest possible external exposure to the truth' ('Some Comments on Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Doctrine of the Perseverance of God with the Saints' in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, Festschrift to M.C. Tenney [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 355-64.

²⁵⁰ Conzelmann, *TDNT* 9: 355; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 120, and n. 40; H.W. Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 108f.; H. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 153 f.; R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, 111.

²⁵¹ *First Apology*, 61.12 f.; 65.1; *Dial.* 39.2; 122.1-2, 6.

²⁵² G.W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (Anchor Bible 36, 1972), 106; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 154.

²⁵³ Jn 1.9; Eph. 1.18, 3.9; Heb. 10.32; 2 Tim. 1.10; Rev 18.1.

²⁵⁴ Dunn, *Baptism*, 209-10; Lane, *Hebrews*, 141.

²⁵⁵ So also Bruce, *Hebrews*, 146; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 319f.; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 169. The illumination may also be understood as being partially accomplished through catechetical instruction (Delitzsch, 285; Ellingworth, 320).

²⁵⁶ Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 106; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 154.

²⁵⁷ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 109.

²⁵⁸ Westcott suggests, that, in using two clauses for the reception of the Spirit, the author intended to distinguish between the operation and the Person of the Holy Spirit (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 149).

of γευσάμενος. They are improbable for several reasons: First, γευσάμενος must not be necessarily understood literally, for its metaphoric sense was quite common.²⁵⁹ Its occurrence in the same context with φωτισθέντας suggests that both participles should be taken metaphorically. Secondly, δωρεά is used in the NT only of gifts which are spiritual in nature, therefore it would not apply to Eucharist or honey and milk. Thirdly, particle τε indicates a close connection between the tasting of the heavenly gift and the illumination.²⁶⁰ Fourthly, the adjective ‘heavenly’ (ἐπουράνιος) indicates the nature of the gift; it does not belong to the physical realm, it is spiritual.

The ‘heavenly gift’ in and of itself may describe the gift of the Holy Spirit²⁶¹ but, if the author intended this, we would have expected conjunction τε to connect the ‘heavenly gift’ clause with the subsequent clause not the previous one: ‘have tasted of the heavenly gift *and* have become partakers of the Holy Spirit’. Another difficulty with the above interpretation is that it has still to explain why the author chose to use two clauses for the same idea. The interpretation of the ‘heavenly gift’ which makes most sense is that which takes the words to refer to the divine life imparted to the new convert.²⁶² This interpretation is in agreement with the genitive case of δωρεά; γευσάμενους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου, ‘and have tasted of the heavenly gift’, indicates that the ‘divine life’ is apprehended gradually, little by little.²⁶³

6.6.3.2. The LH as conferral of Holy Spirit and charismata

According to verses 4c-5, the experience of the Hebrew readers involved more than their enlightenment and their salvation. They became ‘partakers of the Holy Spirit’ (μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου).²⁶⁴ The aorist participle points here to a perceptible spiritual experience and, therefore, refers to the initial reception of the Spirit.

The tasting ‘of the good word of God and of the powers of the coming age’, apparently refer to charismatic experiences known by the readers. The distinction made by Westcott (149) and Montefiore (109) between θεοῦ ῥήμα as some special utterance and ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ as referring to the gospel has been rightly criticised by various authors.²⁶⁵ Yet, the connotation of ῥήμα as ‘the spoken word’²⁶⁶ and the close connection between

²⁵⁹ In the Old Testament, Jb 21.25; Ps 34.8; 119.103; in the NT, Mk 9.1 par.; Jn 8.52; He 2.9; 1 Pe 2.3. Also in Philo, *de Abr.* 19.89.

²⁶⁰ N.F. Miller, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Analytical and Exegetical Handbook* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988), 170.

²⁶¹ Elsewhere used in this sense only by Luke, 5 times (Lk 11.13; Acts 2.38; 8.20; 10.45; 11.17).

²⁶² So also P.E. Hughes, ‘Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy’, *WTJ* 35 (1973), 140.

²⁶³ So Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 149.

²⁶⁴ Μέτοχος is also used as a noun (‘associate’, ‘colleague’, ‘joint-owner’, ‘partner’) in Lk 5.7; Heb 1.9, 3.14. Cf. BAGD, 514; K. Wuest, *Word Studies*, vol. 2.115. For examples from the secular Greek, see Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 406.

²⁶⁵ E.g. Ellingworth, 321; Bruce, 210, n. 54;

²⁶⁶ P. Ellingworth and E.A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (London: United Bible Societies), 115.

θεοῦ ῥήμα and the ‘powers of the coming age’ by conjunction τε may suggest that the phrase refers to a special word from God, i.e. some prophetic activity among the Hebrew Christians. The tasting of the ‘powers of the coming age’, is understood by some scholars to refer to the ‘signs, miracles and powers’ *witnessed* by the readers at their conversion (cf. 2.4).²⁶⁷ This is unlikely for at least two reasons. First, since both the ‘word of God’ and the ‘powers of the coming age’ depend on γεύσασθαι, the verb must have the same meaning in both cases, i.e. a personal experience.²⁶⁸ Secondly, nowhere in the OT or the NT is the verb used for a passive contemplation; it always denotes a personal experience in which the subject of γεύσασθαι is involved directly.²⁶⁹ Therefore, the phrase is best understood as a reference to the charismatic gifts exercised by the members of the community.²⁷⁰

The charismatic manifestations of the Hebrews must be linked with their reception of the Spirit (referred to allusively in 6.2 and metaphorically in 6.4). By becoming ‘partakers/partners’ of the Holy Spirit, the believers were endued with charismatic gifts which not only enable them to fulfil their task but also witness to the fact that the ‘age to come’ has penetrated into ‘this age’. That the author of Hebrews wrote about ‘becoming partakers of the Holy Spirit’ having the LH in mind is not only possible but also probable. It is possible that the reference to the LH in v. 2 went beyond the gesture itself and was understood as a sort of technical term for the entire doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Such doctrine would have been a natural part of the catechetical instruction. A logical implication from this would be that not only the reception of the Spirit, but also the spiritual gifts possessed by the readers must be associated with the rite of the LH.²⁷¹

Therefore, if the associations shown in the above chart reflect the intention of the author, it becomes clear that, functionally, the LH is regarded as having a role distinct from that of baptism.²⁷² Baptism is the climactic point of conversion-initiation, and through its

²⁶⁷ W.L. Lane associates the ‘tasting of the goodness of God’s word and of the powers of the coming age’ with conversion, as an external aspect of it, while the ‘heavenly gift’ and the reception of the Spirit are understood as being experienced inwardly (*Hebrews*, 141). It is, however, unlikely that the second phrase governed by γεύσασθαι refers to the word proclaimed to them at the beginning and to the manifestations witnessed by them at their conversion (2.4). The experience described in verses 4-5 appears to be rather an ascending experience which culminates with charismatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit *through* the Hebrew Christians.

²⁶⁸ Referring to 6.4-6, Ellingworth says: ‘There, however, reference is to supernatural powers which the readers have not only seen in action, but inwardly experienced or ‘tasted’ (*Hebrews*, 142).

²⁶⁹ See references above, n. 248.

²⁷⁰ So also D.A. Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC 14; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 91; J. Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (ET; London: Epworth, 1970), 46; C. Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1953), 151.

²⁷¹ See C. Spicq: ‘[L]e néophyte était instruit de la différence entre la χάρις conférée par le baptême et les χαρίσματα transmis par l’imposition des mains’ (*Hébreux*, 148).

²⁷² A different arrangement is suggested by Dunn who takes the clauses subsequent to ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας as ‘elaborations and explanations of the initial experience described in ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας’ (*Baptism*, 208f.). This allows him to conclude: ‘[T]here is the divine act of illumination ... in which the Spirit is given with his heavenly gift in all his power’, thus making the giving of the Spirit part of conversion-initiation. First, Dunn’s arrangement overlooks the close connection expressed by τε in both 4b and 5b. Secondly, the aorist participle suggests punctiliar action rather than

metaphor 'illumination' can stand for the whole conversion. The LH, on the other hand, is the rite which confers the Spirit, but can stand in 6.2 as a technical term for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit which would also include the charismata (cf. 2.4, 6.5).

As for the chronological relation between the two rites, the context indicates that the LH was administered in close connection with water baptism. Although one may speak about two distinct moments of one ceremony, a substantial gap between the two rites can hardly be pressed. Distinctiveness does not always spell subsequence nor should simultaneous actions be interpreted as identical.

6.6.3.3. Conclusion

The passage in Hebrews points to a stage when the church had a developed procedure for the admission of new converts. Unlike in the beginning of Christianity when admission was based upon repentance and request for baptism (Acts 2.38), at the time of this epistle's composition²⁷³ the neophyte had to receive catechetical instruction. Among other teaching, the instruction included an explanation of the rites which the neophyte was about to observe, i.e. baptism and the LH. In regard to the LH, the text under examination points to the fact that, at the close of the apostolic period, the LH had become the established rite for the reception of the Holy Spirit. Its association here in 6.2 with baptism indicates that the rite continued to be administered in close association with baptism, perhaps subsequent to baptism, but clearly distinct of it. In this respect, the Hebrew passage falls in line with Luke's theology of the Spirit. Another common feature in both Luke-Acts and Hebrews is the view that the reception of the Spirit belongs to the beginning of one's Christian life. It is, however, more difficult to determine what is the significance of the receiving of the Spirit in Hebrews. Most commentators do not discuss the issue. The scholars who discuss it reach different conclusions according to their arrangement of the clauses of 6.4-6. For some the reception of the Spirit is initiatory²⁷⁴ and for others it is an empowering for mission.²⁷⁵ On the basis of the available data, it cannot be decided one way or another. All

necessarily a unique or past event (MHT 3.79-81; BDF §339). Then, 'if ἅπαξ is taken with φωτισθέντος alone, it is possible to understand the other participles as references to repeated aspects of present Christian experience of the readers'(Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 319).

²⁷³ The composition of 'Hebrews' is generally dated the earliest in the 60's and no later than 95 C.E. Clement of Rome quoted it extensively in *1 Clement* written about 95 C.E. For arguments, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 6-9; A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (NovTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 179-95; Ellingworth, 'Hebrews and 1 Clement: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition', *BZ* 23 (1979): 262-69. An earlier date (sometime between 52 C.E. and 54 C.E.) is suggested by Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 12, on the assumption that the author was Apollos and that he wrote from Ephesus to the church in Corinth. The majority of scholars seem to prefer a date before the fall of Jerusalem. See list in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 33 n. 105.

²⁷⁴ Dunn, *Baptism*, 208f.

²⁷⁵ E.g. Delitzsch, comparing the function of baptism with that of the LH here, notes: 'Baptism brings the man as a person into the state of grace, the imposition of hands qualifies him for bearing witness; the former translates him out of the world into the fellowship of Christ, the latter by means of marvellous gifts enables him to serve Christ in the world; the former ministers to him the divine

we can safely state at this point is that the Christian community depicted in Hebrews (2.4; 6.5, 10.26) is no less charismatic in nature than the earliest Christianity presented by Luke.

6.7. The Uniformity of the Christian Initiation Rite in the NT Period

According to J. Weiss, baptism was not practised from the earliest days of Christianity. After offering the reasons: 1) There is no evidence that the hundred and twenty were ever baptised and 2) Apollos and the twelve Ephesian disciples were counted as Christians although they had not been baptised, Weiss explains:

These isolated narratives clearly show that baptism was not from the outset a necessary mark of the disciples of Jesus. We must infer then that the author has antedated the situation when he introduces baptism as early as the first Pentecost. When baptism was introduced, we have no means of knowing. At any rate, it marked a step in the direction of a stable organization, which had been lacking at the beginning of the movement. And we cannot fail to note that the author has followed a very natural inclination to date back the later institutions of the church into its period of origin.²⁷⁶

Weiss identified three stages of development of Christian initiation, distinguished by the order in which the receiving of the Spirit, baptism and the LH occur: a) In the 'oldest' stage, the Holy Spirit comes on people directly from God, indicating thereby that they are chosen by God (Acts 10.44-48; 9.17 ff.). This is followed by baptism which 'carries out in an earthly manner that which God has already determined'. b) In the second stage, understood to be transitional, it is hoped that baptism is followed immediately by the reception of the Spirit. Representative passages are Acts 2.38 and 19.1-6. The reception of the Spirit is not mentioned in 2.41 (in the aftermath of Peter's challenge) but in 19.6 is given through Paul's hands.²⁷⁷ c) The third stage presupposes a separation of the reception of the Spirit from baptism and its association exclusively with the LH. The representative passage is Acts 8.14-17 which reflects not only a temporal separation of the Spirit from baptism, but also the administration of the two baptisms by different people.²⁷⁸

The main problem with Weiss' thesis is that it is built on an 'argument from silence'. In claiming that baptism was not a mark of Christianity from its beginnings he argues from the silence about the baptism of the 120 disciples in Acts 1.14-15. But even when proven that the 'upper-room' disciples were not baptised, one must allow for the

χάρις, the latter the manifold divine *χαρίσματα* (*Hebrews*, vol. I, 275). So also Spicq, *Hebreux*, II.148.

²⁷⁶ J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, ET 1937, vol. I, pp. 50 f.; Cf. also *Urchristentum*, 239f., 488f.

²⁷⁷ Lake and F. Jackson argued that the reference to baptism in 2.38, 41 was an interpolation by a redactor familiar with a later practice (*BC*, I.340). But, as Flemington argues, it is likely that such an alleged redactor would have introduced other elements of the 'complex rite', e.g. the LH (*Doctrine*, 43f.).

²⁷⁸ *Earliest Christianity*, 622ff. (*Urchristentum*, 488ff.). Weiss' thesis is adopted by T.W. Manson who, speaking about initiation in the following centuries, argues that 'this difference of view left its trace in a difference of liturgical usage, which is otherwise inexplicable' ('Entry into Membership of the Early Church', *JTS* 48 [1947]:25-33). Cf. also K. Lake and F. Jackson, *BC*, 1.340ff.

possibility that they were disciples of the Baptist before following Jesus and, thus, were baptised by John. In this case, John's baptism was thought to be completed by the reception of the Spirit at Pentecost. Peter's audience in Acts 2 was a totally different constituency from the group of the disciples. The former were Jews and proselytes who were not baptised by John and had not believed in Jesus. They needed to repent and get baptised unto forgiveness of sins. So Peter's call to baptism does not appear at all as something surprising.

There may be some truth in Weiss' thesis that Christian initiation in the earliest Christianity developed in stages, defined by the connection between baptism and the reception of the Spirit. Weiss argues mainly from the Pauline corpus. However, one cannot identify such stages in Acts. As shown earlier, the only 'pattern' that can be establish in Acts is that the Spirit is expected to be given in close connection with conversion-initiation. To classify all baptismal passages in Acts in three categories and make them fit into a pre-established pattern is arbitrary, even when corroborated with evidence from Paul's writings.

Nevertheless, when one looks at the orderly presentation of conversion-initiation-reception of the Spirit by the author of Hebrews against the lack of any pattern in Acts, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that there is some evidence even in the NT for a development of the Christian initiation rite. At the time of Hebrews' composition, the neophytes receive catechetical instruction before being baptised, in which, among other things, the very substance of Christian initiation is explained. The implication is that repentance and faith are, at least in part, prompted by such instruction.²⁷⁹ There is nothing like this in Acts; faith and repentance are prompted exclusively by the powerful proclamation of the Word (2.37; 4.4; 8.6; 10.44; 13.48; 16.14; 18.8). Then, Hebrews 6.2 points either to a development in the use of the gesture from the 'exceptional' (Acts 8.17; 19.6) to the 'customary' (Heb 6.2), or to the regular association of the LH and baptism in some Christian communities. The regular association of the two rites did not blur the distinctive function of each one of them; baptism remains the rite 'unto forgiveness of sins' and the LH is now the 'normal' means by which the Spirit is conferred.

A extra-canonical parallel, though not an exact one, to the use of the LH for conferring the Spirit/charismata is found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Although this text is later than Acts or Hebrews, it points to the fact that, at the end of the 1st century or in the first half of the 2nd century, the LH is known as a gesture for the transmission of charismatic abilities. The 'sons of the prophets' ask prophet Isaiah to lay hand on them 'that they might prophesy, and that he might hear their prophecy' (As.Is. 6.5). On the basis of OT precedents when the infusion of the Spirit is said to have been accompanied by charismatic manifestations (Num. 11.25, 26; 1 Sam. 10.6, 10; 11.6; 19.20-23), we may

²⁷⁹ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1.140.

safely infer that, here too, the prophesying is nevertheless understood as an effect of an infusion of ‘prophetic Spirit’. As we have already seen, in Acts the Spirit makes his presence known through supernatural manifestations. In fact, Luke records one instance when the giving of the Spirit through the **LH** is accompanied precisely by prophetic utterances (19.6). The association of the **LH** with prophesying in the *Ascension of Isaiah* is best understood as an echo of an experience familiar to the Christian circles of the first century CE. The epistle to the Hebrews seems to provide evidence for a more regular use of the **LH** for the reception of the Spirit (+ charismata) than what can be found in Acts. It is possible that in some Christian communities this practice was used regularly right from their beginning.

Is there any evidence for the transmission of *χαρίσματα* through the **LH** in Pauline churches? The absence of any clear reference to the **LH** in the Pauline corpus is not evidence that Paul was not familiar with this use of the gesture. According to Luke, Paul communicated the Spirit to the Ephesian disciples through the **LH** and, possibly, he himself received it through Ananias’ hands. It is possible to understand, with Parratt, that ‘the sacrament of baptism provided Paul with a far more effective vehicle for developing his soteriological and ethical teaching than the **LH** could have done’ and that ‘the very richness of his baptismal theology has overshadowed the complementary rite’.²⁸⁰ Parratt thinks the communication of the *χαρίσματα* through the **LH** may be alluded to in Rom. 1.11 and Gal 3.5.²⁸¹ In Rom 1.11 Paul expresses his desire to impart τὸ χάρισμα πνευματικόν to his readers. Τὸ χάρισμα πνευματικόν can be understood to refer to a ‘charismatic gift’ like tongues and prophecy and, if it does, ‘there would be a strong presumption that the means of imparting it was the **LH**’.²⁸² While the above interpretation can be accepted as a ‘reasonable inference’, it must be said that the reading of an allusion to the gesture in Gal 3.5 is less convincing. As most commentators argue, ‘he who supplies the Spirit to you’ is God, not a charismatic individual, as interpreted by Parratt.²⁸³

6.8. The Origin of the **LH** as a Means of Imparting the Spirit

The question of the origin of the **LH** as a gesture for the transfer of the Spirit is a puzzling one. Our survey of the Jewish literature has shown that the transfer of the Spirit through the gesture is not paralleled in the OT or the Rabbinic literature.²⁸⁴ When the descent of the

²⁸⁰ J.K. Parratt, ‘Romans 1:11 and Galatians 3:5: Pauline Evidence for the Laying on of Hands?’, *ExpTim* 79 (1968): 151-52, following J. Coppens, *L’Imposition des Mains*, 266.

²⁸¹ Parratt, ‘Romans 1:11 and Galatians 3:5’, 151f.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸³ See criticism by R.Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 130 n. 18, on the basis that in the other two occurrences of the verb the supplier is God or Christ.

²⁸⁴ See sections 2.1.3.5., 2.2. and 2.4.2.3.4 above.

Spirit is recorded in the OT as being accompanied by charismatic manifestations, the LH is missing; when the LH transfers some spiritual quality (e.g. יהוה on Joshua), what is transferred is not the Spirit or a charismatic endowment, but a faculty needed by the new leader. But, as we argued above, the LH on the Samaritans and the Ephesian disciples has nothing to do with ordination. I also must disagree here with Daube who understands the background of the LH for the bestowal of the Spirit to be provided by סמך, 'the pouring of one man's personality into other'.²⁸⁵ What is imparted here is not 'one man's personality' but the Spirit himself and his charismatic gifts. There is no idea of creating a second self in the transmission of the Spirit. The closest extra-canonical parallel to this use of the LH - the *Ascension of Isaiah* - is too late to count as a possible influence on the apostolic church.²⁸⁶

It appears that the only alternative left is to consider that the origin of the LH for the reception of the Spirit is the OT use of the gesture as a blessing. As we have seen in the gospels, Jesus used the gesture of blessing himself, but he did not pray as Rabbis did. Thus, the gesture must have been inherited by the apostles from the synagogue and adapted to the worship setting of the church.²⁸⁷ Its association with prayer gives it an additional significance; it becomes also an expression of an *epiclesis*, the *calling down* of the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁸ As already argued by Ferguson, this interpretation of the LH 'breaks any necessary connection between the gesture and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit' in the sense that the Spirit is just one blessing given this way.²⁸⁹ It also supports our thesis that the LH was used only occasionally for the reception of the Spirit .

Given the OT precedent of the LH in blessing (Gen 48), it becomes clear that the idea which stands behind the LH for the reception of the Spirit is that expressed by ׁש and ׁשׁ , rather than that expressed by סמך.

²⁸⁵ *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 241.

²⁸⁶ See above 2.2. and 6.6.

²⁸⁷ H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, 384; Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands', 214.

²⁸⁸ F. Sullivan, 'The Laying on of Hands', 48.

²⁸⁹ Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 16.

CHAPTER 7

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS IN COMMISSIONING/ORDINATION

7.1. Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to examine the New Testament evidence in regard to commissioning/ordination and to draw some conclusions as to its origin and meaning. The development of the rite after the apostolic period is beyond the scope of this study. The issue of (non)uniformity of the gesture in the Christian ordination/ commissioning rites of the first century CE will be briefly discussed. Another subject which cannot be treated extensively here is church order in the New Testament, although some historical aspects will be necessarily discussed as we conduct our investigation.¹

There are five occurrences of the verb *ἐπιτίθεσθαι τὰς χεῖρας* in the NT which might be construed as indicating commissioning/ordination ceremonies: Acts 6.1-6 (the Seven); Acts 13.1-3 (Paul and Barnabas); 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 (Timothy); and 1 Tim 5.22 (ordination of presbyters). The most disputed of these is 1Tim 5.22 which, as shown later, is sometimes understood as a rite of reconciliation. *Χειροτονεῖν*, 'to appoint' (Acts 14.23, 2Cor 8.19), implies a gesture of the hand, but it is the object of this investigation to find if the ceremony included the LH.

There is no biblical word to correspond closely to the English word 'ordination'. English versions of the Bible use 'ordain' as a translation of ten different Hebrew verbs and thirteen different Greek verbs. In order to assess correctly the evidence for ordination in the New Testament, one must first propose an unambiguous definition of ordination. In our conception, ordination is an initiatory rite by which an individual is set apart to a permanent ministry in which he/she has not previously engaged and provided with a special order of ministry in the church and gifts of ministry which he/she cannot otherwise obtain. In working with this definition, we will probably have to conclude that there is little or no evidence for ordination in the New Testament. It will be demonstrated that most passages under discussion in this chapter depict a commissioning rite, i.e. the act by which an

¹ On church order in the New Testament see further: A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953); E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (SBT 32; London: SCM Press, 1961); O. Barlea, *Die Weihe der Bischöfe, Presbyter und Diakone in vor-nicanischer Zeit* (München: Rumanische akademische Gesellschaft, 1969); H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J.A. Baker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969); L. Audet, 'L'organisation des communautés chrétiennes selon des grades épiscopales pauliniennes', *SR* 2 (1972): 235-250; L. Floor, 'Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles', *Neotestamentica* 10 (1976): 81-91; R.E. Brown, 'Episkopē and Episkopos: The New Testament Evidence', *TS* 41 (1980): 330-37; R.A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

individual is set apart or recognized by the church for a particular task through the **LH**. The commission is temporary and expires when the task is completed.

With this definition in mind, we will next conduct an exegetical analysis of the so-called New Testament 'ordination passages' in terms of text, literary parallels/historical precedent, occasion and significance of the **LH**.

7.2. Commissioning/Ordination in Acts

7.2.1. *The Appointment of the Seven (Acts 6.1-6)*

7.2.1.1. *Exegesis*

6.2. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables (*διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*). **6.3.** Therefore, brethren, pick out (*ἐπισκεύασθε*) from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit (*πλήρεις πνεύματος*) and of wisdom, whom we may appoint (*καταστήσομεν*) to this duty (*ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης*). **6.4.** But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (*τῆ διακονία τοῦ λόγου*)". **6.5.** And what they said pleased the whole multitude (*πλήθους*), and they chose (*ἐξελέξαντο*) Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. **6.6.** These they set (*ἔστησαν*) before the apostles, and they prayed (*προσευξάμενοι*) and laid their hands upon them (*ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας*).

This is the first and the most complete account of the selection and setting apart of Christian ministers in the New Testament. The grammar of v. 6 indicates clearly that the **LH** was performed by the whole congregation. The subject of 'they set' (*ἔστησαν*) is 'the multitude' (*τὸ πλῆθος*, 6.5). This collective noun is also by implication the subject of *ἐξελέξαντο* in 6.5, and hence it is reasonable to assume that 'the multitude' continues to be the subject of the plural verbs in verse 6.² For some reason (probably based on verse 3 which contrasts the action of the congregation and that of the apostles), the Western editors credited the apostles with the **LH**. Thus, D reads *οὗτοι ἐστάθησαν* (with support from the Peshitta) *ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων, οἵτινες προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας*, indicating clearly that it was the apostles who laid hands on the Seven. But D must be regarded as secondary. It reflects a later development which no longer approves the participation of the whole community in the installation of its officers. It is difficult to decide whether the changes operated in D were especially designed to endorse the idea of apostolic succession and make the incident the prototype of it.³

² So also D. Daube, *NTRJ* 237f.; C.K. Barrett, *Acts* I.315

³ Daube, *NTRJ*, 238.

Those who contend that it was the apostles who laid hands on the Seven, appeal frequently to verse 3 where the action of the company of disciples (ἐπισκέψασθε [3rd prs.pl.] ... ἐξ ὑμῶν) is contrasted with that of the apostles (καταστήσομεν, 1st prs.pl.). They take the LH in verse 6 as describing the form of the appointment mentioned in verse 3 (καταστήσομεν). For instance, Ferguson thinks that even in the better attested reading, ordination by the apostles as congregational representatives may have been meant.⁴ But, the first person plural in verse 3, “we will appoint” is not necessarily an indication that the apostles laid hands on the seven. As Daube already noted, it may mean ‘we, the Christians of Jerusalem [will appoint]’ and says nothing about the mode of installation. In his view, the apostles suggested the new office, the community elected the holders, presented them before the apostles, and laid their hands on them to make them into their representatives; the apostles sanctioned the choice.⁵ With some variation, this view is also shared by Barrett who warns that ‘we must not think of the ordered dignity of a modern ordination’. Like Daube, he thinks that ‘presentation before the apostles implies their approval, that is, appointment by them’.⁶ The reading of καταστήσομεν as applying equally to the apostles and the congregation is supported by Codex B which makes the apostles sharers not only in the appointment of the Seven but also in their selection (ἐπισκεψώμεθα).⁷

In conclusion, we adhere to the more natural reading of the majority of manuscripts according to which the entire congregation laid hands on the Seven. We do so in spite of the fact that, from a practical standpoint, it is difficult to see how several thousand disciples (4.4) laid their hands on the Seven.

7.2.1.2. *Literary Parallels/Historical Precedent*

Our investigation in Chapter 2 led to the conclusion that in first century Judaism it was customary for Pharisees to lay hands on their disciples in order to give them permission to expound the law and judge in cases not involving fines.⁸ The natural question is whether, in appointing the Seven with the LH, the first Christians borrowed the custom from first century Judaism. Answering in the affirmative, Lohse considers Acts 6 to be the connecting link between Jewish and Christian ordination. However, he was not able to produce any other argument for his thesis except the use of the LH in both rites.⁹ Indeed, it

⁴ E. Ferguson, ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church (IV)’, *RestQ* 5 (1961), 133. Cf. A. Vanhoye and H. Crouzel, ‘Le ministère dans L’Église’, *NRT* 104 (1982), 730.

⁵ *NTRJ*, 238.

⁶ *Acts*, I.316.

⁷ According to J.H. Ropes, the occurrence of ἐπισκεψώμεθα in Codex B is “due to the desire not to exclude the apostles from a share in the selection of the Seven” (‘The Text of Acts’ in *BC* III.56). Cf. also B. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 337.

⁸ *Supra* 2.4.2.3.1.

⁹ *Die Ordination*, 77, 90. Cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (1951) 153 f., following Str-B, II.647f., refers to *m.Sanh.* 4.4.

is very difficult to find any other parallel between the Jewish rite and the appointment of the Seven. To start with the form of the rite, the LH in Acts 6 is performed by the whole congregation. Rabbinic ordination on the other hand is a private matter; it is defined by a master-disciple relationship. Even when one accepts the reading which has the apostles laying hands on the Seven, still the precedent is not Rabbinic ordination, because the apostles did not make the Seven their equals, as in Rabbinic ordination. While *semikah* made the newly ordained Rabbi an equal of his teacher, the rite of Acts 6 signifies simply the offloading of some of the apostles' responsibilities on the Seven. As it has been correctly pointed out by D.F. Wright, the appointment of the Seven, unlike *semikah*, has only a 'temporary *ad hoc* character', as the later activity of Stephen and Philip shows.¹⁰ The Seven were ordained to serve at tables as long as the situation required, rather than to permanently 'sit in Moses' chair'. Another distinction between Acts 6 and Rabbinic ordination is that prayer has a prominent role in the Christian rite, but is absent from Jewish descriptions.¹¹ On the basis of the above points, we may confidently say that the appointment of the Seven by the LH to 'serve tables' does not correspond to either Pharisaic ordination or the installation by solemn seating.

Considering the fact that the LH in Acts 6 is performed by the whole congregation, the closest Old Testament parallel seems to be the consecration of the Levites (Num 8.10). The connection has been emphasised by Torrance. In his view, the apostles are excluded from the LH precisely to show that 'they [the Seven] were not being appointed as [the apostles'] deputies, but only as their assistants, i.e., Levites!'.¹² But the parallel is far from being perfect. Unlike in Num 8 where the initiative belongs to God, in Acts it is the apostles who propose the appointment. The appointment of the Levites has a permanent character, but that of the 'deacons' in Acts 6 seems to be *ad hoc*, a one-off emergency arrangement, as indicated by the wider roles assumed later by Stephen and Philip.

Linguistically, the closest parallel to Acts 6.1-6 is provided by the LXX version of Num 27.15-23. The following verbal parallels can be drawn: 1) in Acts 6.3 people are commanded to 'look about for' (ἐπισκέψασθε) seven men; in Num 27.16, Moses asks God to 'look about for' (ἐπισκέψασθω) a man to lead the people. 2) Acts 6.3 - the Seven are to be πλήρεις πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας; similarly, Joshua is a man ὃς ἔχει πνεῦμα ἐν ἑαυτῷ (Num 27.18). 3) The appointment of the Seven is ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης (6.3); Joshua's appointment is ἐπὶ τῆς συναγωγῆς ταύτης (Num 27.16). 4) The people ἔστησαν [the Seven] ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων (6.6); Moses ἔστησεν αὐτὸν [Joshua]

¹⁰ D.F. Wright, 'Ordination', *Themelios* 10 (1985), 7.

¹¹ This has been emphasised especially by E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 133.

¹² 'Consecration and Ordination', 237. Other who make a connection between the two texts are: J.D. McCaughey, 'The Intention of the Author: Some questions about the exegesis of Acts vi. 1-6', *AusBR* 7 (1959), p. 35f.; T.F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', *SJT* 11, 237; E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 262; D.F. Wright, 'Ordination', 7.

ἐναντίον Ἐλεαζάρ (Num 27.22) after he was commanded στήσεις αὐτὸν ἐναντι Ἐλεαζάρ (Num 27.19). 5) The act of hand-laying occurs in both passages: Acts 6.6 - they ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας; Num 27.18, 23 - Moses ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐπ' αὐτόν. The close verbal parallelism between the two passages makes us agree with Ehrhardt that Luke uses Num 27.18-23 consciously.¹³ But a couple of divergencies are to be noted: 1) Prayer is absent in Joshua's ordination¹⁴; 2) In Num 27 the LH is performed only by Moses while in Acts the Seven receive the act from the entire congregation.

There is one motif, that of transfer of responsibilities, which Luke seems to have taken up from Num 11.1-25 and combined with aspects from the other two OT passages discussed above. As Moses was overburdened with administrative duties, so are the Twelve. God tells Moses that he would take some of the spirit which is upon Moses and will put on the elders, so that these can be partners.¹⁵ Here, the Seven are already 'full of the Spirit' and thus qualified to be the apostles' partners.

In conclusion, there is no evidence in Acts 6.1-6 that Luke modeled the story of the appointment of the Seven on contemporary Jewish practice. Primarily on linguistic and analogical criteria, we conclude that his main source was the OT and that he combined motifs from three different 'ordination' stories. Due to such a combination, the parallelism with either one of these stories cannot be pressed too far.

7.2.1.3. *Significance of the Event*

The interpretation of the appointment of the Seven *via* Num 27.18-23 is complicated by Luke's distinction between the ministry of the apostles and the ministry of the Seven in 6.3-4 and the emphasis which he places in the next chapters on Philip's subordinate position (8.14ff.). The significance of the appointment in Acts 6 has been interpreted variously.

On the basis of the double occurrence of *διακονία*, this passage is taken frequently to relate to the office of a deacon. To exemplify, R. Fraser believes that the church understood from the beginning that the office of a deacon is a permanent office (on the basis of Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.8-13).¹⁶ For Vanhoye, Acts 6.1-6 provides indication of how ecclesiastical authority began to separate from the multitude of the disciples.¹⁷ In Rackham's

¹³ A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Ministry* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 22.

¹⁴ The absence of prayer in Num 27 and its occurrence in Acts 6 may be explained either by the stronger emphasis placed by the Church on prayer or by the fact that Joshua is selected by God while the Seven are selected by the multitude of the disciples. The church's selection must be matched by God's approval

¹⁵ The resemblance of Acts 6.1-6 with Num 11 are pointed out especially by Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 43, and E. Ferguson, 'Laying on of Hands in Acts 6:6 and 13:3', *RestQ* 4 (1960):250-52.

¹⁶ R. Fraser, 'Office of Deacon', *Presbyterion* 11 (1985), 16.

¹⁷ A. Vanhoye and H. Crouzel, 'Le ministère dans L'Église', 730.

opinion, 'Luke evidently means us to take this as a typical picture of apostolic ordination'.¹⁸ Similarly, Ehrhardt believes that Luke intended the ordination of the Seven as a precedent for all ordinations in the Church. Ehrhardt believes that the Seven were authorised by the apostles to conduct Eucharistic services, a task which also included the ministry of the Word.¹⁹ Lastly, J.D. McCaughey considers that what we have here is a later institution (that of the diaconate, late 1st century) read back into this narrative.²⁰

In view of the clear distinction in verses 2-4 between 'serving tables' (*διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*) and the ministry of the Word (*διακονία τοῦ λόγου*), we reject the idea that appointment here relates to a church office or the celebration of Holy Communion; in our view, it refers simply to 'service', the daily ministry to the needy. The events related are a response to a momentary situation. The occurrence in the same passage of *διακονία τοῦ λόγου* confirms our contention that the term is not used with the technical sense it acquired later. In fact, H. Chadwick pointed out that Irenaeus was the first to identify the Seven as deacons.²¹ McCaughey's contention that a later institution is read back into this passage has little to go for it. As noted by J.T. Lienhard, Acts 6.1-6 is based on an old tradition. Verses 5-6, which include the reference to the LH, 'seem to be reporting a received tradition, and redactional elements do not have a significant role in the verses'.²²

It is also our view that the occurrence of the LH does not point to a permanent administrative office. With Schweizer, there is no thought in this passage of any further activity beyond this definite task.²³ Indeed, those appointed by the LH for this emergency situation are found later fulfilling roles other than administrative duties (6.8 ff.; 8.4-13). But the kerygmatic and miraculous activity of Stephen and Philip has nothing to do with the fact that they have been appointed to 'serve tables'; it is the result of their being filled with the Spirit even prior to their appointment.

In summary, there are at least three reasons why we believe that Luke does not treat the appointment of the Seven as the beginning of the diaconate or presbyterate and could have not understood the event as a prototype for all subsequent ordinations. First, the fact that he combines here motifs from three OT passages is an indication that he did not think to model this appointment on a particular OT precedent. All theories which suggest a theological connection between the ordination of Joshua and this event fail to see that, in

¹⁸ *The Acts*, 84.

¹⁹ A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Ministry*, 22f.

²⁰ J.D. McCaughey, 'The Intention of the Author: Some questions about the exegesis of Acts vi. 1-6', *AusBR* 7 (1959), 31.

²¹ H. Chadwick, *Early Church*, 48.

²² J.T. Lienhard, 'Acts 6:1-6: A Redactional View', *CBQ* 37 (1975), 235f.

²³ E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, 208.

fact, Luke depends on more than one OT 'ordination' passage.²⁴ Secondly, Luke could have not associated the appointment of the Seven with the later concept of ordination which refers strictly to the ministry of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. In 6.2-4 he clearly distinguishes between what we may call 'lay-workers' and the ministers of the Word. Third, Luke does not have the apostles lay hands on the Seven; therefore he could not have intended to affirm through this lay-ordination the apostolic basis of ministry. Fourth, a temporary appointment like this one can hardly be regarded as precedent for the later permanent offices acquired through ordination.

7.2.1.4. *The Meaning of the LH*

According to Behm, the LH here meant the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ But he seems to escape the force of the plain statement that the Seven were to be 'full of the Spirit' prior to their appointment and that their possession of the Spirit was precisely the criterion set by the apostles for the selection of the Seven. The possession of the Spirit, however, does not exclude the receiving of a *donum superadditum* at ordination, but the context here mentions no endowment with a charisma for the office. The most we can say is that by the LH the church recognises a grace already evident in the life of those who are appointed.

There is also no indication that the LH was intended to confer apostolic authority on the Seven. As shown above, Luke has the entire congregation laying hands on the seven men to invest them with authority to act as their representatives. The offloading of some responsibility of the apostles on the Seven is not done through the gesture but by the latter being presented to and approved by the apostles. But there is no indication that he places the Seven in subordination to the apostles.²⁶

There is evidence in the text that Luke understands the LH on the Seven as signifying more than a recognition of their spiritual endowment or the making of them into the representatives of the community. The association of the LH with prayer is a sign that Luke understands the LH as a gesture of blessing. By laying hands on the Seven, the disciples of the Jerusalem church pray that God would bless them in their new role.

²⁴ E.g., following Daube (*NTRJ*, 238), Ferguson considers that 'Luke's linking of the first step in developing an organization for the Church with the first transmission of authority in Israel ... was a bold claim that Christians were the true heirs of the biblical tradition' ('Ordain, Ordination', *ABD* V.39). Similarly, M. Warkentin suggests the following analogy: 'As the laying on of hands on Joshua marked the initial stage in the entry into Canaan, so the imposition of hands on the Seven marks the entry of the new Israel into the lands designated in Acts 1:8' (*Ordination*, 130).

²⁵ *Die Handauflegung*, 106ff.

²⁶ So also K. Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent of "Early Protestantism"?', *EvQ* 55 (1983), 16.

7.2.2. *The Commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13.1-3)*

7.2.2.1. *The Text*

Now in the church at Antioch there were (Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὔσαν ἐκκλησίαν) prophets and teachers (προφήται καὶ διδάσκαλοι), Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Mana-en a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping (λειτουροῦντων) the Lord and fasting (νηστευόντων), the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart (Ἀφορίσατε) for me Barnabas and Saul for the work (ἔργον) to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying (νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι) they laid their hands (ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς) on them and sent them off (ἀπέλυσαν).

The setting is the church at Antioch. The leadership of the church consists of 'prophets and teachers' among whom we find Barnabas and Saul (cf. also 11.23-26). As a result of a prophetic message, Barnabas and Saul are to be 'set apart' by the church for the work to which the Holy Spirit called them - that of missionaries, as described in the following chapters. The account is especially interesting because, apart from the LH on Paul at his conversion, this is the only case when an apostle²⁷ is the receiver, rather than the giver, of the gesture.

The dismissal ceremony included fasting, prayer, and the LH (τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν, Acts 13.3). As in Acts 6.6. so here, the text is ambiguous as to who laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. Along with fasting and praying, the LH is regarded either as a corporate action of the whole church²⁸ or as an action of the other three prophets and teachers mentioned in the first verse.²⁹ In our view, with the first word of verse 2 (λειτουροῦντων), the focus is changed from the 'prophets and teachers' to the whole congregation. All following verbs in the plural have the congregation as subject. Codex Bezae clarifies the ambiguity by inserting πάντες after προσευξάμενοι. Whether this corporate action was executed through the charismatic leaders of the church³⁰, 'the prophets and teachers', we do not know.

²⁷ True, Luke does not call Paul an apostle until after this (14.4, 14).

²⁸ A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession*, 32; R. Longenecker, *Ministry and Message of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 42; and commentaries: Haenchen, C.S.E. Williams, E. Schweizer, R. Schnackenburg.

²⁹ J. Coppens, 'L'imposition des mains' in *Les Actes des Apôtres* edited by J. Kremer (Leuven: University Press, 1979), 419.

³⁰ This is argued by D. Moody, 'Charismatic and Official Ministries: A Study of the New Testament Concept', *Int* 19 (1965), 176.

7.2.2.2. Literary parallels/Historical precedent

It is hardly necessary to point out that the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul has nothing to do with Rabbinic ordination. The text makes clear that they already belong to the group of the 'prophets and teachers'. Since they are the Christian 'Rabbis' of the Antiochean community, they need not and cannot be promoted to any higher level.

Lohse argued that the account of the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul is patterned on the sending out of a *shaliach*, a Jewish apostle.³¹ This Jewish institution of *shaliach* is known in the Rabbinic Judaism of the second century CE, but it is believed to have existed earlier.³² Those commissioned as *shaliach* were assigned a temporally limited task, e.g. taking messages and money to and from authorities. This and other duties they performed,³³ conferred them power of attorney, i.e. made them a 'proxy'. One example may be Saul who was sent to Damascus with a specific mission (Acts 9.1f.).

But the evidence in favour of the view that Luke was influenced by the contemporary Jewish institution of *shaliach* is not very strong. Two points can be made to support the view that Luke is writing with the *shaliach* institution in mind: First, Luke seems to understand the mission of Barnabas and Saul as a temporally limited mission. At 14.26 he reports the return of the two missionaries to Antioch and speaks of their mission as being completed (τὸ ἔργον ὃ ἐπλήρωσαν). Secondly, at 14:4, 14 Barnabas and Saul are twice referred to as 'apostles' but in the subsequent chapters, after their separation, Paul is never called an 'apostle'. Luke reserves the term for the Twelve. This means that the designation 'apostle' in chapter 14 must be taken as a translation of the Hebrew 'shaliach', i.e. someone appointed to carry out a short-term mission.³⁴ Although the initiative of their sending belongs to the Holy Spirit,³⁵ Luke still might have understood that, in a sense, they are also 'apostles' of the Antiochene church.

The arguments against an influence of the *shaliach* institution on Luke can be summarised as follows: First, there is no evidence that a *shaliach* was sent out with the LH.³⁶ Secondly, for Luke certainly Paul is more than an 'apostle' in this limited sense; he

³¹ *Die Ordination*, 71f. *Shaliach* derives from the Hebrew verb *shalach*, 'to send', whose participle is *shaluach* (e.g. 1Ki 14.6).

³² E. Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 60-63. T.F. Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', p. 237; E.J. Kilmartin, 'Ministry and Ordination', p. 47.

³³ E.g., according to E. Schürer, they also led the synagogue in prayer (*History of the Jewish People*, 2.442).

³⁴ E. Best, 'Acts XIII.1-3', 346.

³⁵ The selection of Saul and Barnabas is distinct from the Graeco-Roman or Rabbinic modes of selection. Rather, it resembles the OT type of designation, in which the prophet points out the objects of divine choice. See Ferguson, 'Selection and Installation', p. 274.

³⁶ The suggestion that a *shaliach* was appointed with the LH belongs to K.H. Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', in *TDNT*, I, p. 417. His argument is based on Justin's use of *χειροτονεῖν* for the sending out of a *shaliach*: ἀνδρας χειροτονήσαντες ἐκλεκτοὺς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπέμψατε, *Dial.* 108.2. Rengstorf translates *χειροτονεῖν* "to lay on hands" but there is evidence from Greek writings that in the first century CE the verb means simply 'to select' or 'to appoint to office'

is Peter's equal.

But Luke refrains from using the term *ἀπόστολος* to describe Paul. Thirdly, there is no evidence in the Rabbinic sources that *shelichim* were sent out in pairs.³⁷ However, this counter-argument is weak since there is neither any evidence that the sending out of *shelichim* in pairs was prohibited.

A great number of scholars consider that Luke modeled his account on the consecration of the Levites in Numbers 8. The following parallels can be identified in the LXX version of the story which Luke allegedly used: 1) In each case the separation is divinely initiated (God approaching Moses in Num 8.5; the Holy Spirit in Acts 13.2). 2) The commissioning is done in both cases by the LH. 3) The verb *ἀφορίζω*, for separation, appears in both texts: *καὶ ἀφοριεῖ Ἀαρὼν τοὺς Λευείτας* (Num 8.11, LXX; cf. 8.14 where *διαστελεῖς* is used to translate the same Hebrew root, *hibdîl*) and *Ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον* (Acts 13.2). Paul uses the verb twice to refer to his being 'separated' for missionary work (Rom 1.1; Gal 1.15). 4) Similarly, the noun *ἔργον* appears in both texts to designate the task for which the appointment is made: *ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα Κυρίου* (Num 8.11, 15; LXX); *εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτοῦς* (Acts 13.2). 5) The inspired designation of Barnabas and Saul took place during a divine service (*λειτουργούντων*, Acts 13.2; *harax legomenon* in Lucan writings); the Levites, after their consecration, perform a divine service (*λειτουργεῖν τὴν λειτουργίαν*, Num 8.22).³⁸

Although on grammatical grounds it cannot be determined who is the subject of *ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας*, the analogy with Num. 8.5ff. points to a LH by the entire congregation.

7.2.2.3. Significance of the LH on Barnabas and Saul

From a narrative viewpoint, most commentators take this story to represent the emergence of Paul as the chief character in the second part of Acts.³⁹ True as it is, this statement says

(cf. Acts 14.23; 2Cor. 8.19; for ancient sources, see below section 7.2.3.1.). D. Daube, *NTRJ*, 229 f., claims that hands were not laid upon a *shaliach* when he was sent in a mission. In the Rabbis' eyes, the leaning on of hands "must remain confined to those cases where it has direct Mosaic sanction" (p. 230). So also Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 60-63. Closer parallels to the *shaliach* institution are found in Acts 11.33 and 15.22.

³⁷ Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession*, 16.

³⁸ These parallels are pointed out by a number of scholars, among whom Foakes-Jackson, *BC* II.66 ff.; D. Daube, *NTRJ*, 239ff.; E. Haenchen, *Acts*, 71 ff.; E. Best, 'Acts XIII.1-3', *JTS* 11 (1960), 347; M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 133f. Giles, however, disagrees. For him, the description of the activity of the Levites and that of Paul and Barnabas as *ἔργον* is of little significance, for this is a common word, with no technical sense. In fact, says Giles, the two types of work cannot be compared, because the Levites activity is sacerdotal and that of Paul and Barnabas is missionary. But Giles' arguments are unfounded. Vocabulary parallels do not have to refer always to technical terms. The word *ἔργον* in both texts is a label for the very task they were appointed to accomplish, no matter if it was sacerdotal or missionary. We cannot expect a perfect parallel in order to speak of literary dependence. He also mistakenly claims that *ἀφορίζω* is not used in the LXX of Num 8, failing to see its occurrence at Num 8.11. K. Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent of "Early Protestantism"?', 18.

³⁹ E.g. Rackham who refers to chs. 13ff. as 'The Acts of Paul' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 185).

nothing about the role of the LH on Barnabas and Paul. The question is whether the text points to an ordination ceremony or simply to a commissioning.⁴⁰ The event has been interpreted as follows:

First, S. Dockx and others take the ceremony of 13.1-3 as the ordination of Barnabas and Saul, i.e. their elevation to the rank of an 'apostle'.⁴¹ The main argument presented by Dockx is that the two missionaries are called 'apostles' only after the Antiochian episode (Acts 14.4, 14). Similarly, Ysebaert believes that Barnabas and Saul were ordained by the "prophets and teachers" who were themselves ordained by the LH of some 'higher authorities'.⁴² Several points can be made to show the flaws in this interpretation:

1) According to Luke's account, the two men had already been engaged in Christian work in general and at Antioch in particular (Acts 9.22, 27; 11.22, 26, 30; 12.25). They needed no further recognition or appointment.

2) If 'apostle' in the full sense⁴³ is intended in 14.4, 14, it is difficult to see how the other 'prophets and teachers' could have appointed someone to a position higher than their own.

3) There is no evidence that the office of 'apostle' required ordination. As the Twelve received their apostolate from the Lord himself, so does Paul. He claims that his apostolate is 'not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father'

⁴⁰ E. Schweizer prefers to label the account 'an "installation", i.e. a placing in a particular sphere of service which differs in some respects from that previously occupied' (*Church Order*, 208). However, this labeling is rather tantamount to ordination for it applies generally to inception into an office.

⁴¹ S. Dockx, 'L'ordination de Barnabé et de Saul d'après Actes 13.1-3' in *NRT* 98 (1975), 243, 249. Dockx does not treat the term loosely; he refers to an appointment 'd'une manière définitive' (249), on the same level with the Twelve (250 n. 34). Dockx distinguishes the ministry of a prophet from that of a teacher, the former being superior to the latter. Barnabas and Saul are ordained by the prophets (242ff.). Others who share this view include: Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 185, 198; B.S. Easton, *Early Christianity* (New York, 1935), 59f; John Knox, *Chapters in the Life of St Paul* (London, 1957), 118, 127; M. Dibelius, *Studies*, 6 n. 13; J. Coppens, 'L' Imposition des Mains' in J. Kremer, *Les Actes*, 418 ff.

⁴² *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 276f., 279 f. The argument presented by Ysebaert is based on the *Didache*, a second century document which views the service of the deacons and overseers as being of the same rank with that of the prophets and teachers: "For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers (ὑμῖν γὰρ λειτουργοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων). You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you" (15.1, 2). The need for an injunction like that of 15.2 is a sign that, contrary to a normal situation, the prophets and teachers who settled in local churches (cf. 13. 1-3) were more respected than the bishops and deacons. Consequently, in Ysebaert's view, 'if they [the prophets and teachers], however, can perform the same service as deacons and overseers, we must suppose that they had likewise received an ordination by imposition of hands' (280). Cf. also G. Kretschmar, 'Die Ordination im frühen Christentum', *FZPT* 22 (1975): 42-68.

⁴³ Luke reserves the designation "apostle" for the Twelve. In applying the term to Barnabas and Paul in this context (ἀπόστολοι, 14.4, 14), he uses it loosely to refer to them as "apostles" (i.e. commissioners, delegates) of the church of Antioch. Although Luke never uses the designation "apostle" for Paul in the sense in which Paul claims it for himself (cf. Gal. 1.1), the record of Acts strongly supports Paul's claim. Cf. F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, pp. 152-56.

(Gal 1.1). Luke has Paul relate about his own commissioning on the road to Damascus: 'I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness ...' (Acts 26.16-18; cf. 22.10).⁴⁴ This is not to say that, as a friend and companion of Paul, Luke necessarily shared the apostle's views. However, it is reasonable to infer that on so vital matter as Paul's apostleship, Luke would not be in disagreement with Paul.⁴⁵ In short, the view that the two are ordained as apostles clashes with Paul's own view in Gal. 1.1. and with Luke's report on the commissioning of Paul by the risen Lord (Acts 22.21).

4) Barnabas has been previously connected with the twelve apostles (9.27). His very presence in the church of Antioch was due to the fact that he was already an *ἀπόστολος* of the twelve, i.e. their agent or a *shaliach* (11.22).

5) The source used by Ysebaert, i.e. the *Didache*, is late.

6) There was nothing the other prophets and teachers could give Barnabas and Saul, except their blessing and the invocation of God's favour upon their mission.⁴⁶

7) Ysebaert's assumption that the prophets and teachers were ordained has no support from either the first or the second century CE.

Secondly, scholars like E. Best understand the incident as the beginning of 'the first deliberate and professional missionary activity'. In Best's view, 'Paul and Barnabas are set apart to a professional ministry to do for the Church what it can no longer do for itself ... They are sent out as representatives of the whole group. The others made them into their extended selves.'⁴⁷ One can sense here Best's dependence on Daube who states plainly that "the ceremony performed at Antioch is a 'leaning on' of hands, and it still serves to create a substitute".⁴⁸ It must be said, however, that there is no idea of representation in Acts 13.1-3, unless one imports this meaning of the LH from the Num 8 passage and imposes it on this occurrence of the gesture. Here, the two missionaries are not set apart in lieu of the people or their firstborn. Their call to ministry was personal and had taken place prior to this event (see the mid. perf. *προσκέκλημαι*, 13.2). Moreover, Paul and Barnabas are not

⁴⁴ On the basis of the commissioning references found in Acts 9.15-17 and 22.14-15, some scholars understand that Paul received his commission at the hands of Ananias - e.g. G.W.H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, pp. 72-76; R.P. Menzies, *Development*, p. 263

⁴⁵ So J.H.E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 103 f.

⁴⁶ H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (ET; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 99. Dockx's suggestion that the two missionaries have been ordained by 'prophets' who are superior in rank to 'teachers' is without support ('L'ordination', 240).

⁴⁷ E. Best, 'Acts XIII.1-3', 344-48. Quote, 347. Yet, Best gives signs of uncertainty: 'We do not know whether Luke would have taken up the same position and regarded the setting aside of Paul and Barnabas as representative, i.e. as implying the setting aside of a professional ministry, or as only operative in their own particular case and as an example for all future such 'separations' (348).

⁴⁸ *NTRJ*, 240.

called to a new ministry (ἔργον) but simply to 'a new phase of the ministry ... in which both had long been engaged'.⁴⁹

Thus, in response to the first two views presented above on the meaning of the LH on Barnabas and Saul, we agree that the incident recorded by Luke here marks the beginning of Paul's missionary activity and is one of the crucial moments in the history of the primitive church; otherwise Luke would have not recorded it. Based on our investigation in Chapter 6, we can also agree with M. Warkentin's view that the LH is for Luke 'an interpretative tool to highlight occurrences of critical importance'.⁵⁰ However, we disagree with those who interpret the LH in Acts 13.1-3 as ordination. Against Daube and Best, there is no idea here of representation, of creating a substitute, of making someone into one's own extended self. There is no office at stake and no charism given at the LH. In short, the gesture does not signify ordination.

Thirdly, for the majority of scholars, the LH signifies in this case prayer and blessing.⁵¹ For Ferguson the conferring of a blessing or a benediction is the 'basal New Testament significance' of the gesture.⁵² The reason for the LH in 13.1-3 is given in Luke's own commentary on the event: Paul and Barnabas return 'to Antioch, where they had been commended (παραδομένοι) to the grace (χάριτι) of God for (εἰς) the work which they had fulfilled (ἐπλήρωσαν)' (14.26). For Paul and Barnabas to be 'commended to the grace of God' meant to be the beneficiaries of the church's prayer for God's favour (or blessing) upon them. This was the only means by which they could have successfully accomplished their mission.

Not everyone understands the expression 'commended to the grace of God' as simply a blessing. Ehrhardt believes that it meant the conferral of some *charismata* on Barnabas and Saul:

There had been a formal dedication ceremony and in it the power of the charis of the Divine Spirit had been bestowed upon them enabling the two Apostles to administer the charismata of the Divine Word, with all the miraculous works connected with its dissemination.⁵³

There is, however, no indication in the text that some spiritual endowment was received by the two missionaries at their commissioning. The entrusting of the two missionaries to the

⁴⁹ H.F. Peacock, 'Ordination', 264f.

⁵⁰ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 134. Warkentin, however, says nothing about the meaning of the LH.

⁵¹ 'Laying on of Hands', 2; 'Ordination in the Ancient Church (IV)', 141; Spicq, *Les épîtres pastorales*, 726; Schweizer, *Church Order*, 208; E.J. Kilmartin, 'Ministry and Ordination', 47. For Best, the LH here signifies more than a blessing, on the grounds that 'in benediction the hands are lifted up over rather than laid on' ('Acts XIII.1-3', 347). Best fails to make a difference between the 'priestly blessing' of the people by Aaron, case in which it was practically impossible for one person to lay hands on thousands, and the case of Acts 13.1-3 when it was the OT precedent of the LH for blessing (Gen 48).

⁵² E. Ferguson, 'The Laying on of Hands in Acts 6:6 and 13:3', 252.

⁵³ *The Apostolic Succession*, 102.

grace of God meant that *in the process of preaching the gospel* they were to be recipients of God's grace (*χάρις*). In view of the common root of *χάρις* and *χάρισμα*, it is possible that the term was understood to include not only divine guidance and protection but also some spiritual faculties which were needed for the proclamation of the Christian message.⁵⁴ Such spiritual enabling should be regarded as situational and must not be equated with the charisma for office which occurs later in the Pastoral Epistles.

7.2.2.4. Conclusions

Although the setting apart is an element common in all 'ordination passages' of the NT, the idea of bestowing the Holy Spirit or a charism for office is not present in Acts 13.1-3. The LH on Barnabas and Saul cannot strictly be called ordination; there is no specific office in mind, no permanent work, no new spiritual endowment, no Christian workers of a higher status and no sacerdotal rite implied. The appointment (i.e. the separation) of Paul and Barnabas does not inaugurate the lay/clerical distinction within the Christian community. Such a distinction did not exist prior to their appointment and was not created by it.

The LH in this case is simply a gesture of blessing missionaries. On the basis of 14.26, the blessing has been given for that particular task, although the *ἔργον* of 13.2 may refer to a permanent mission. Yet, when Paul begins his second missionary journey, with Silas this time, he is again 'commended (*παραδοθείς*) by the brethren to the grace of the Lord' (15.40).⁵⁵ In view of the recurrence of the phrase, the use of the LH in Paul and Silas' dismissal ceremony is probable. If this could be proved, we would have an additional argument to support our view that the ceremony of 13.3 is not an ordination.

7.2.3. The Appointment of Elders (Acts 14.23)

7.2.3.1. Χειροτονία

And when they had appointed (*χειροτονήσαντες*) elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting (*προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν*) they committed (*παρέθεντο*) them to the Lord in whom they believed.

⁵⁴ Although Luke does not use the designation *χάρισμα*, *τα* for the extraordinary works of the Spirit, he is nevertheless familiar with such supernatural manifestations: e.g. speaking in tongues - Acts 2.4; 10.46; 19.6, prophecy - Acts 19.6; 21.9, divine healing - Acts 4.9; 5.16; 8.7; 9.17; 28.8, etc.

The association of *χάρις* with the miracles of Jesus or those of his followers is not uncommon in Luke's writings. In his description of Stephen, Luke associates *χάρις* and *δύναμις* so that the two are almost identified: Stephen who was "full of grace (*χάριτος*) and power (*δυνάμεως*) did great wonders and signs" (Acts 6.8). *χάρις* seems to point here to a special manifestation of God's presence and favour. Another example is Luke 7.21, where the third evangelist uses the verb *χαρίζομαι* to describe Jesus' healings. Cf. also Lk. 4.22, where *χάρις* is associated with divinely inspired speech.

⁵⁵ In the majority of manuscripts, though not the best ones, at 15.40 occurs *Θεοῦ* rather than *κυρίου*. For the text of the pericope and its variant readings, J.H. Ropes, *The Text of Acts*, 117.

In their missionary journey, on their way back to Syrian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in every church they have founded in ceremonies which include fasting and prayer. The verb used by Luke to refer to the act of appointing is *χειροτονεῖν*. The chief problem of this passage is the meaning of the verb. The original sense of the verb is 'to stretch out the hand' (*χείρ*, 'hand', and *τείνω*, 'to stretch') in the sense of 'voting',⁵⁶ but in the first century CE the derivation was gradually forgotten, the meaning becoming simply 'to choose' or 'to appoint to office'.⁵⁷ The religious use of *χειροτονεῖν* by Philo and Josephus prepared the word for its use in Christianity. Its association with divine choice contributed to the gradual replacement of *καθιστάναι* ('appoint', 'put in charge', Acts 6.3; Titus 1.5) with *χειροτονεῖν*.⁵⁸ In Patristic Greek, the verb came to mean 'to ordain with the LH'.⁵⁹ *Χειροτονεῖν* occurs once in the *Didache* of 'choosing' bishops and deacons and three times in Ignatius of the churches selecting official envoys.⁶⁰ The only other occurrence of the verb in the NT is in 2Cor 8.19, with the same meaning, 'to elect'. Does Luke use *χειροτονεῖν* in Acts 14.23 with its Hellenistic meaning, i.e. to 'elect', or 'select' so that Paul and Barnabas make the choice? Or is the word used with its later meaning of 'appoint' or 'install', pointing to an act of 'ordination'?

The Greek allows the interpreter to identify the 'appointing' with the praying (accompanied by fasting). In this case, the praying is either the means of 'appointing' or the central feature of the action described by *χειροτονεῖν*. This interpretation reflects a later development of *χειροτονεῖν* as a term for ordination.⁶¹ If, on the other hand, *χειροτονεῖν* is distinguished from the praying, then the word refers to a process of selection and the praying is the act by which the elders are committed to the Lord. In using the participle *χειροτονήσαντες* with reference to Paul and Barnabas, we are told, Luke

⁵⁶ For the evolution of the sense of the word from 'to vote' in an assembly to 'appointment by an authority', as in Acts 14.26, see C.H. Turner, '*Χειροτονία, Χειροθεσία, Επίθεσις Χειρῶν*', *JTS* 24 (1923): 496-504; E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 137ff., 143f.; C.K. Barrett, *Acts* 1.687. Cf. Plutarch, *Phocion* 34; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.2.11.; Lucian, *De Morte Peregrini* 41; Plato, *Laws* 763 E; Josephus, *Ant.* IV.297, VI. 81, XIII.45; *Vita* 341; Philo, *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* xxiv.112; *de Mut. Nom.* xxviii.151; *de Spec. Leg.* II.xl.231. The distinctive use of *χειροτονεῖν* as God's action of appointing people to office is found in Josephus (*Ant.* III. 192; IV.34, 54, 66) and Philo (*Quod.Det.Pot.* 39; *de Sac.Abel.* 9; *de Vita Mos.* I.148, 198; *de Virtutibus* x.64; *de Mig. Abrah.* 22; *de Praemiis et Poenis* ix.54).

⁵⁷ Examples include Philo, *de Post. Cain.* xvi.54; *de Jos.* 248; *Quod. Det. Potiori* 66, 145; *de Op. Mundi* 84; *In Flacc.* 189; *de Agricultura* xxix.130; *de Vita Mos.* II.141-43. Josephus, *Ant.* VI.83; *Bell.Jud.* IV.147. Cf. also BAGD, 889; C.H. Turner, '*Χειροτονία...*', 496-504.

⁵⁸ E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 144; 'Eusebius and Ordination', *JEH* 13 (1962), 143.

⁵⁹ E.g. *Apost. Can.* 1; *Apost. Const.* 2.2.3., 3.20.1. For references, C.H. Turner, '*Χειροτονία...*', 496-504; G.W.H. Lampe, *PGL*, 1523; C. Vogel, 'Chirotonie et Chirothésie', *Irenikon* 45/1 (1972): 7-21.

⁶⁰ *Did.* 15; Ignatius, *Philad.* 10, *Smyr.* 11, *Polyc.* 7.

⁶¹ The term was used with its technical sense in the Greek speaking church at Rome in the early 3rd century, and in the Greek East in the 4th century. Cf. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 144.

meant to say that the two either ‘caused [the elders] to be elected’ or did the selecting themselves.⁶²

Most scholars are of the opinion that the meaning of *χειροτονεῖν* in Acts is ‘to choose’ and that it has not yet taken on the technical sense of ordination which it assumes at a later date. Giles, for example, thinks that ‘Luke is not depicting an ordination scene but a selection process’; he does so either by naming certain senior Christians as leaders on the basis of their charismatic endowment (cf. Acts 20.28) or by appointing some senior Christians to specific ministries.⁶³ We believe that *χειροτονεῖν* could have been used by Luke still with its first century meaning, i.e. ‘to appoint’, ‘to select’, however without any reference to either voting or ordination. But, in order to grasp the meaning of *χειροτονεῖν* we must first investigate whether *χειροτονεῖν* involved any physical gesture.

It was Lohse who excluded any thought of the **LH** in the text under examination.⁶⁴ While probably most scholars are in agreement with Lohse, Campbell argues that even here in Acts the verb retains the idea of **LH**.⁶⁵ He does so on the basis of the similarities between this and other Lucan so-called ‘ordination’ passages as shown in the following synopsis:

| Acts 6.1-6 | Acts 13.1-3 | Acts 14.21-23 |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| <i>ἐπισκέψασθε</i> | <i>ἀφορίσατε</i> | -- |
| <i>καταστήσομεν</i> | -- | -- |
| <i>ἐξελέξαντο</i> | -- | -- |
| -- | <i>νηστεύσαντες</i> | <i>μετὰ νηστειῶν</i> |
| <i>προσευξάμενοι</i> | <i>προσευξάμενοι</i> | <i>προσευξάμενοι</i> |
| <i>ἐπέθηκαν τὰς χεῖρας</i> | <i>ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας</i> | <i>χειροτονήσαντες</i> |
| -- | <i>παραδεδομένοι τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ (14.26)</i> | <i>παρέθεντο τῷ κυρίῳ (cf. 20.32)</i> |

As readily seen, the most impressive parallel to 14.23-26 is found in 13.1-3. The following elements indicate that Luke consciously patterns the present account after that of 13.1-3. The account of Barnabas’ and Saul’s separation mentions fasting, prayer and the **LH**. The

⁶² ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church’, 137.

⁶³ Giles, ‘Is Luke an Exponent’, 12. To appoint a senior Christian to a specific ministry does not mean ordination. The function of the ‘elders’ in Acts is not specified. In 11.30, the ‘elders’ are responsible with famine relief, a role similar with that of the Seven. In 15.2, 4, 6, 22 the ‘elders’ together with the apostles form a Christian council similar to that of the Jewish Sanhedrin. In 20.32, the ‘elders’ are charged to ‘shepherd’ the flock, and in 21.18 they resemble a synagogue council with James as their leader (Cf. Bornkamm, ‘πρεσβύτερος’, *TDNT* 6, 662f.).

⁶⁴ Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 67f. So also M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 34.

⁶⁵ R.A. Campbell, *The Elders*, 167f.

event is interpreted by Luke as being the occasion when the two were ‘commended to the grace of God’ (14.26). Similarly, the Lycaonian elders are ‘committed to the Lord’ (*παρατίθημι* is used with a meaning similar to *παραδίδωμι* in 14.26, i.e. ‘to hand over’, ‘to entrust’)⁶⁶ in a liturgical setting which involved prayer, fasting and the use of hands. In view of the above similarities, we believe Campbell has a strong case in arguing that Luke uses *χειροτονεῖν* synonymously with the LH.⁶⁷ As he further suggests, this may be the first appearance of the term with its normal Christian meaning.⁶⁸

7.2.3.2. The significance of *χειροτονεῖν* in Acts 14.23

In order to understand the significance of the LH on the Lycaonian elders, we must know how Luke understood the emergence of eldership. A detailed discussion on the origin of eldership in the primitive church is beyond the scope of this study. We rely, however, on Campbell's thesis that the term ‘elders’ is used in Acts to refer to the heads of the household-churches when they acted together in a representative capacity. In their local churches they were known as *ἐπίσκοποι*.⁶⁹ In the early stages of the development of the

⁶⁶ BAGD, ‘παρατίθημι’ 2.b.β., 623; cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 255; Barrett, *Acts*, I.691. The verb *παραδίδωμι* can be used with the same meaning, i.e. ‘to commit’, ‘to hand over’ someone ‘to God/the grace of God’, and can be repeated, however without any idea of commissioning. E.g. Paul's word to the elders of Ephesus at his departure: *καὶ τὰ νῦν παρατίθεμαι ὑμᾶς τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ τῷ δυναμένῳ οἰκοδομῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πάσιν* (Acts 20.32).

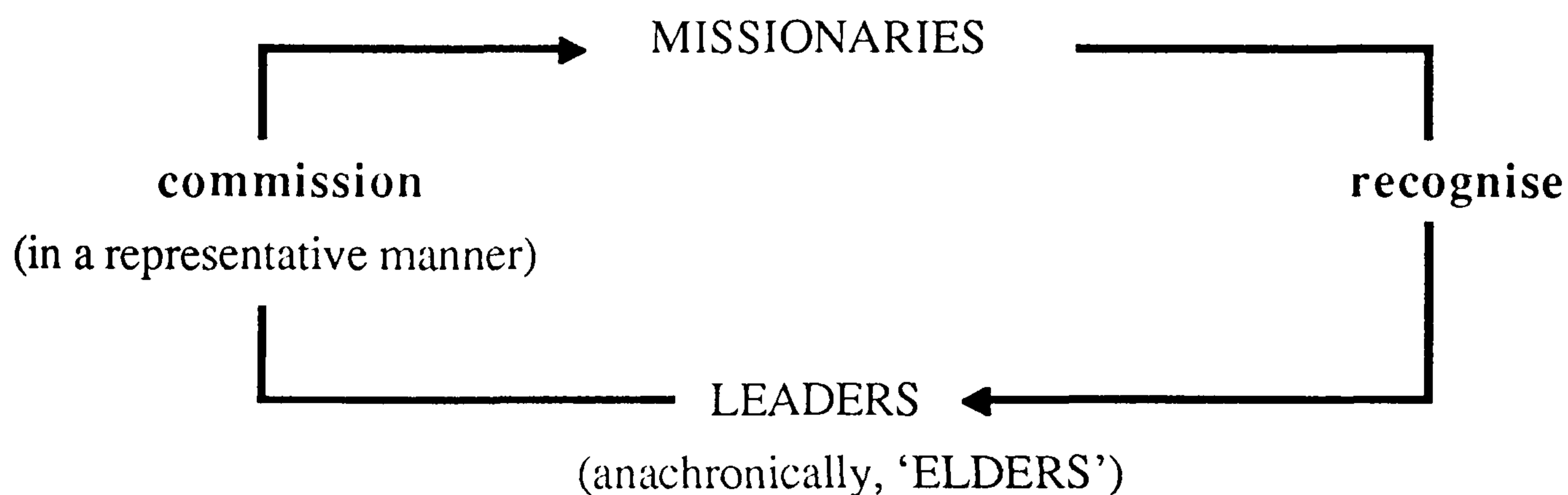
⁶⁷ *Elders*, 168. So also L.T. Johnson, *Acts*, 254; C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 727; Kilmartin, ‘Ministry and Ordination’, 48. Without offering any reason, Barrett refuses to understand *χειροτονεῖν* as including the LH (Acts I.687).

⁶⁸ Campbell, *The Elders*, 168.

⁶⁹ The main views on the emergence of the ‘elders’ in the Jerusalem and the Pauline churches are presented by A. Campbell (*The Elders*, 159-175). In short, the common view on the origin of eldership is that in the first ten or fifteen years of the church's existence, the apostles created the office of elder similar to that of the synagogue, either to replace the apostles or to function as their assistants, in this latter case fulfilling administrative duties (Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 179ff.; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 357; Bruce, *Acts* [1988], 231, n. 44.). The main problem with this view is that in Jerusalem, the elders share authority with the apostles (Acts 15.2, 4, 6, 22f.; 16.4; 21.18) and they are the only leaders of the churches in 1 Peter 5.1-5 and Jas 5.14. Peter calls himself a ‘fellow elder’ (*συμπρεσβύτερος*, 1Pe 5.1). As discussed earlier (section 4.4.3.), the ‘elders’ of Jas 5.14 are not only official leaders but they possess the *charismata* of healing. The above thesis also clashes with the fact that among Jews and Greeks alike, the term ‘elders’ connoted respect rather than office; it was a collective title for those who enjoyed most honour in the community. Campbell also points to the fact that synagogues did not have ‘boards of elders’ as it is often assumed (160). It had but two office bearers: the ruler of the synagogue (*ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, Lk. 8.41, 13.14, Acts 18.8, 17) and the ‘servant’ (*ὑπηρέτης*, Lk 4.20). Cf. Giles, ‘Is Luke an Exponent...?’, 11. The view held by M. Karrer (‘Ältestenamt’, 159) who argues that the early church created the office of elder on the account in Numbers 11 of the seventy elders is also problematic. It assumes that the term ‘elders’ denotes a definite office with two distinct functions, to care for the daily needs of the people (Acts 11.30) and to rule on the application of the Law in the church (Acts 15.1-35). As Campbell indicates, both functions indicated by Karrer find little ground both in Numbers and in Acts (161). A second weakness of Karrer's thesis pointed out by Campbell is his assumption that ‘theological ideas were responsible for shaping the organization of the primitive church, to the neglect of social realities, in this case household churches and the prestige enjoyed by those who led them’ (162). The elders were not appointed out of the church's desire to conform to

church recorded by Luke in Acts, 'elder' connoted respect rather than office, similar to its usage among both Jews and Greeks.⁷⁰ The term 'elder' as a title designating a church office is a later development. It is possible, as suggested by Marshall, that 'Luke has used a term current in his own time to refer to leaders who may possibly have been known by other designations in the earlier period'.⁷¹ We also agree with Campbell that the elders of 14.23, as leaders of the household churches, had emerged rather than being appointed.⁷² This seems to be confirmed in the account of Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20.18-35). Here, the appointment of the elders is credited to the Holy Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπίσκοπους, 20.28).⁷³

If, ceremonially speaking, Barnabas and Paul did for these household leaders exactly what had been done to them before they left Antioch, there are still two elements which distinguish between these events. The first refers to the type of ministry to which one group and the other were appointed; Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for missionary work while the elders are 'appointed' as the leaders of local churches. Secondly, when it comes to who appoints who, the elders and the missionaries reverse their roles; while in Antioch missionaries are commissioned by the entire congregation (possibly through the 'elders'⁷⁴), in Lycaonia the elders are appointed by the missionaries. The appointment to leadership in the primitive church can be presented graphically as a cycle:



Scripture, but rather by reading the Scriptures the Jerusalem leaders 'saw themselves to be the elders' (162).

⁷⁰ For the opposite view (i.e. elders are office-bearers in Acts) see G. Bornkamm, 'πρεσβύτερος', *TDNT* 6, 651-83, esp. 662-72. Cf. also H.W. Beyer, 'ἐπίσκοπος', *TDNT* 2, 615-17.

⁷¹ I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, 241. So also Brown, 'Episkopē and Episkopos', 329; F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (1990), 326. Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 112; Haenchen, *Acts*, 436; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 163; Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 220.

⁷² *Elders*, 168.

⁷³ The interchangeable use of 'elders' and 'bishops' here is no basis to equate the two terms. The latter is not used as a title; rather, it describes the function of the elders. So Schweizer, *Church Order*, 71; Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent...', 10 and n. 97.

⁷⁴ Undoubtedly, the 'prophets and teachers' at Antioch were the leaders of the church. Luke would freely use the same anachronistic designation for them, i.e. 'elders', as he did for the Lycaonian elders. On the possibility that Timothy was commissioned by the same Lycaonian 'elders', see *infra* 7.3.2.1.

If elders were not appointed but rather emerged as leaders of the household churches, it is natural to ask *What need was there for a further appointment?* But we already argued that Luke uses *χειροτονεῖν* here, exactly as he was using *ἐπιτίθειν τὰς χεῖρας* in 13.3. The gesture did not connote selection by voting or appointment in the sense of ordination. It *only recognised* the elders' seniority, status and contribution to the church, and committed them to the grace of God.⁷⁵ This meaning of *χειροτονεῖν* allows us to see how the elders were both already leaders and at the same time 'appointed', as it were, by the departing missionaries. As the two apostles departed, they entrusted the work of the gospel to those who had already emerged as leaders. So, they 'passed the torch' by recognizing those who were now assuming full responsibility for the work of the gospel and by giving them the needed blessing. Thus, the Lycaonian elders, like Barnabas and Saul before them (13.3) and the Ephesian elders after them (20.32), were 'committed to the grace of God' in prayer accompanied by the LH.⁷⁶ Ceremonially speaking, Barnabas and Paul did for these household leaders exactly what had been done to them before they left Antioch.⁷⁷

7.2.4. *Conclusions*

Our investigation of the use of the LH as a gesture of commissioning/installation in Acts revealed the following points which are relevant for our study: There is no rite known to Luke which is similar to our ordination. Luke is not concerned to affirm the apostolic basis of ministries in the Church.⁷⁸ There is no evidence that the presbyterate was instituted by the apostles or that the prophets and teachers depended on them. The three appointment ceremonies investigated may be properly called commissioning rites. They are not established rites, because the same elements cannot be found in each incident. For instance, the election by the community is found in 6.6 but not in 13.1-3 and 14.23, the appointment by church leaders is found in 6.6 and 14.23, but not in 13.1-3. The elements which are common to all three occasions are the prayer and possibly the LH. It is not certain, however, if the prayer was in all three cases preparatory or it was said at the time of the LH. The significance of the LH is immediately evident in 13.3 and 14.23, if in this latter case one can read the LH. It is a gesture of blessing by which those commissioned are committed to God's grace and care. The association of the gesture with prayer in 6.6 points

⁷⁵ Campbell, *The Elders*, 170.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ However, we cannot escape the fact that, in the act of *χειροτονία*, a transfer of responsibility was taking place from the departing missionaries to the 'elders' of the household churches. We must assume that the elders were undertaking full responsibility which included the proclaiming of the *kerygma*, the teaching of the *didache*, possibly the administration of the Lord's supper and maintaining discipline in the community. Yet, the act cannot be called 'ordination' in the technical sense known later.

⁷⁸ So also Giles, 'Is Luke an Exponent...', 16; E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, 49.

in the same direction. Here, too, the LH seems to be a sign of prayer.⁷⁹

7.3. Ordination/Commissioning in the Pastoral Epistles

7.3.1. *The Approach. Delimitation*

An investigation into church order of the Pastoral Epistles in general and the ordination rite in particular cannot be divorced from the literary and historical analysis of these epistles. However, an extensive and documented discussion of the authorship of the Pastorals is beyond the scope of this study. The best we can do at this point is to offer an overview of the main theories on the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and present the perspective from which this investigation is conducted.

We first note that the Pastoral Epistles are generally regarded as Deutero-Pauline. This conclusion is based on four main arguments: *stylistic* (the style and vocabulary are notably similar throughout these epistles but notably different from the other ten undisputed Pauline letters); *theological* (the absence of the great Pauline themes or their presentation in a 'routinized' form - 1Tim 1.8-11; 2Tim 1.9-10; Tit 2.11-14, 3.4-7); *historical* (lack of agreement between some biographical details in the Pastorals and the life of Paul as presented in the Acts - e.g. Paul's activity beyond his Roman imprisonment); *ecclesiastical* (the identification of the opponents with the second-century Gnostics and the church order which points to a later period, probably the beginning of the second century CE).⁸⁰ According to this hypothesis, the intention behind the production of this fictional correspondence is to reclaim Pauline Christianity over against the second-century Gnostic influences. To do this successfully, it was necessary that the letters bear Paul's authority. A minority of scholars hold the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, whether directly⁸¹ or indirectly through a secretary/amanuensis.⁸² According to an alternative view, the Pastoral Epistles are regarded as a pseudonymous collection of letters which incorporate dispatches

⁷⁹ Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 13-20; 'Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', 1-12; 'Ordain, Ordination', *ABD*, vol. 5 (1992), 37-40.

⁸⁰ Ample bibliographical references in Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 59. For an earlier date, cca 85 CE, see J.D. Quinn, 'Ordination in the Pastoral Epistles', 361.

⁸¹ E.g. Johnson, *Writings*, 255-57, 381-89; *Letters*, 5-33. For a comprehensive list of scholars who hold the Pauline authorship, see I.H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 58 n. 67

⁸² C.F.D. Moule, 'The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal', *BJRL* 47 (1965): 430-52; J.D. Quinn, 'The Last Volume of Luke: the Relation of Luke-Acts to the Pastoral Epistles', in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. by C. Talbert (Danville, Va.: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 62-75; S.G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: S.P.C.K., 1979); J. Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (NTD 9. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 9f.; reservedly G.D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988); more recently E.R. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991).

from the last days of Paul (c. 67 CE).⁸³ As Marshall notes, the discussion of the issue of authorship in this case is complicated by the fact that scholars approach the items of evidence from different angles and, consequently, interpret them differently. It is, therefore, difficult to find the decisive elements which will lead to a general acceptance of a view above the other.⁸⁴

With Johnson, we think that it is not possible to demonstrate the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles but, still, one can read them ‘within the context of Paul's own lifetime and ministry’.⁸⁵ Even when taken as examples of ‘allonymity’, as argued by Marshall, the evidence shows that they are based on authentic Pauline materials. They appear to be ‘fresh formulations of Pauline teaching’, written shortly after Paul's death within a circle which probably included Timothy and Titus.⁸⁶ Consequently, to speak about an alleged ‘routinization of charismata’ and a development of an elaborate church order is to go beyond the evidence offered by the text of the Pastorals. Our investigation into the so-called ‘ordination rite’ in the Pastorals will make this plain.

7.3.2. *The Ordination of Timothy (1Tim. 4.14; 2 Tim. 1.6)*

7.3.2.1. *The Texts*

1Tim. 1:18 This charge (*παραγγελίαν*) I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophetic utterances which pointed to you (*κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σέ προφητείας*), ...

1Tim 4:14 Do not neglect (*μὴ ἀμέλει*) the gift you have (*τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος*), which was given you by prophetic utterance (*διὰ προφητείας*) when the council of elders laid their hands upon you (*μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου*).

2Tim 1.6 Hence I remind you to rekindle (*ἀναζωπυρεῖν*) the gift of God (*τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ*) that is within you (*ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοί*) through the laying on of my hands (*διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν μου*).

In 1Tim 1.18 we note a variant reading *εἰς σέ* instead of *ἐπὶ σέ*, but the evidence is weak. A few witnesses along with Sinaiticus have *πρεσβύτερου* rather than *πρεσβυτέρου* at 1Tim 4.14. This seems to be secondary, the change being operated

⁸³ E.g. P.N. Harrisson, ‘The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles’, *ExpTim* 67 (1955-56): 77-81; J.D. Quinn, ‘Ordination in the Pastoral Epistles’, *Communio* (US) 8 (1981): 358-69.

⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 59.

⁸⁵ L.T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. (255-57, 381-89) and *Letters to Paul's Delegates*, 26 and 26-32.

⁸⁶ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 92.

because *πρεσβύτερος* appears immediately after in 5.1. *Πρεσβυτέριον* is less frequent (Lk 22.66; Acts 22.5). There are no textual problems at 2Tim 1.6.

7.3.2.2. *Exegesis*

Primarily, the text of 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 reminds Timothy of his responsibility to use his spiritual gift.⁸⁷ In both texts the LH is only secondarily mentioned as either an accompaniment to the reception of a spiritual gift by Timothy or as a means by which such gift is given to him.

The reader is given no information as to the occasion of this LH and the relationship between 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6. There are three conceivable ways in which the function of the gesture can be understood in association with the conferral of a spiritual gift: 1) as a gesture for the reception of the Holy Spirit in connection with Christian initiation, 2) as an ordination rite which imparts *charisms* or 3) simply as a gesture by which charismatic gifts are imparted to believers⁸⁸ (cf. Rom 1.1). Most commentators believe that 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 refer to the same event and identify it with some sort of commissioning / ordination.⁸⁹ Others are more specific, identifying the event described in these passages with the selection of Timothy as Paul's traveling companion (Acts 16).⁹⁰ Conclusions with regard to the event described and the relationship between the two passages will emerge as we proceed with the exegetical study.

The prophecies. According to 1Tim 4.14, the spiritual gift is given to Timothy 'through prophecy' or 'on account of prophecies' (*διὰ προφητείας*) and 'with the LH of the presbytery' (*μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου*). *Προφητείας* can be taken as an accusative plural ('as a result of', 'because of') or as a genitive singular ('through'). Either way, as in Acts 13.1-3, this is a case of 'Inspired Designation', as branded by Ferguson.⁹¹ However, choosing one reading or the other has implications on the function of prophecy here. Some scholars take the phrase as a genitive to mean an

⁸⁷ At least in 1Tim 4.14, this interpretation is reinforced by the grammatical structure of the passage. The main clause contains the prohibition 'Do not neglect'.

⁸⁸ See J.K. Parratt, J.K. 'Romans 1:11 and Galatians 3:5: Pauline Evidence for the Laying on of Hands?', *ExpTim* 79 (1968): 151-52. In this short article, Parratt contemplates the possibility that Rom 1.1 alludes to a LH for bestowing spiritual gifts with no connection to Christian initiation or ordination.

⁸⁹ M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ET, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 71; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 93; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 564ff. and others.

⁹⁰ C. Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales*, (EB; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1969), 324; E. Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 139; R. Banks, 'Church Order and Government', in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin, eds. (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 135.

⁹¹ 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 143.

ordination prayer or the words spoken at the ordination ceremony by the elders or Paul.⁹² In this case, the gift would have been given to Timothy as a result of prayer. But this is unlikely since ‘prophecy’ is never used in the NT with this meaning. On the other hand, if one reads the phrase in the genitive and understands the ‘prophecy’ as an inspired utterance (as we think it means), it is difficult to imagine how a spiritual gift can be conferred ‘through prophecy’ as a vehicle of transference.⁹³ In our view, taking *διὰ προφητείας* as a genitive leads us to no intelligible reading.

The view which takes *προφητείας* as an accusative plural makes more sense. On this reading, ‘on account of’ or ‘as a result of’ some prophetic words the elders lay their hands of Timothy and, as a result, he receives the *χάρισμα*. The plural *προφητείας* points to more than one occasion and, therefore, one must not necessarily tie such prophetic utterances with the act of ordination referred to in 1Tim 4.14. Thus, *διὰ προφητείας* expresses result, i.e. the *χάρισμα* is given to Timothy as a result of prophetic utterances which previously singled him out as God's choice.⁹⁴ This interpretation is supported by 1Tim 1.18 which points to prophecies (pl.) once made about Timothy. Here, Paul urges him to renew a moral appeal to the Ephesian congregation. The instruction given to Timothy is in keeping with the prophecies once made about him (*κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας*), possibly the same prophetic words referred to in the text under discussion.⁹⁵

⁹² Originally advanced by E. Dekkers, ‘*Prophèteia - Praefatio*’, *Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1963), 190-95. Cf. also A. Lemaire, in *Le Ministère et les Ministères selon le Nouveau Testament*, J. Delorme ed. (Paris, 1974), 104; cf. J.L. Houlden who compares this text with *Philad. 7.1* where Ignatius reminds Philadelphians that he ‘cried out with the voice of God’ (*The Pastoral Epistles* [London: SCM Press, 1976], 61). J. Roloff claims that prophets are not in the picture and that ‘prophetic words’ did not require prophets to deliver them (*Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, EKK XV. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1988, 257f.). Dekkers' thesis has been refuted by N. Brox, ‘*Προφητεία im ersten Timotheusbrieft*’, *BZ* 20 (1976): 229-32.

⁹³ *Contra* Fee who takes *προφητείας* as a genitive, and concludes that the prefixed *δία* expresses a ‘secondary agent’, the primary one being the Spirit who indwells Timothy (*Presence*, 774); D.C. Arichea and H.A. Hatton (*A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBSHS; New York: UBS, 1995), 106.

⁹⁴ Cf. 1.18; Acts 13.1-3. An accusative plural is read here by E. Ferguson, ‘Ordination in the Ancient Church’, 140; ‘Ordination’, *ABD* 5:39; I.H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 566; G.W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), 208. T.D. Lea and H.P. Griffin suggest that the initial utterance could have taken place at Timothy's initial contact with Paul (Acts 16:1-3) or in Ephesus, when Paul left Timothy there to deal with heresy (*1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC 34; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992, p. 80, 139). Cf. REB ‘by those prophetic utterances which first directed me to you’ in 1.18. or ‘prophecies once made about you’. The verb can bear either sense.

⁹⁵ J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung*, 47f., distinguishes between the prophecy of 1.18 and that of 4.14 in that in the former text the prophecy occurred before the LH, while in the latter simultaneous with it. But one is not forced by the text of 4.14 to understand that the prophecy/prophecies is/are simultaneous with the LH. Even in Acts 13.1-3 where the prophetic utterance and the commissioning are closely connected a time-gap between the two is possible. Cf. M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ET, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 56; and Ferguson

The laying on of hands. Both 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 associate the giving of the charism with the LH. Unlike in Acts 6.6 and 13.3, in the Pastorals the identity of those who lay hands is revealed. However, the two accounts under discussion do not say the same thing: In 1Tim 4.14 the gesture is performed by an established presbytery (the only time when a council of Christian elders is mentioned in the NT) and in 2 Tim 1.6 by Paul. There are several explications of the discrepancies between the two texts:

1. According to Daube⁹⁶ the phrase *μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου* is to be translated ‘with the laying on of hands in order to make presbyters’. He takes it as equivalent to the technical term *סְמִיכָה וְקִנְיָם* found in Rabbinic literature.⁹⁷ In assuming that Timothy was ordained by his master alone, Daube is able to reconcile the two passages (1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6) and take them to be ‘the earliest reference to apostolic succession, i.e. the creation of a bishop by a *samakh* on the part of one who is bishop already - on the model of Rabbinic ordination’.⁹⁸ In Daube's opinion, this Christian equivalent of Rabbinic ordination must go back to an early stage in the development of Christianity when Jewish Christians were still in close contact with the Synagogue.⁹⁹

Daube's and Jeremias' position has been refuted by a number of scholars¹⁰⁰ on the following grounds: *πρεσβυτέριον* is used elsewhere in the NT (Lk 22.66 and Acts 22.5) and this usage of the term with reference to a body of Christian elders appears not much later in Ignatius.¹⁰¹ Elsewhere, the genitive after *ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν* is subjective, indicating who is laying hands (Acts 8.18; 2Tim 1.6). The difference between 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 can be adequately explained without changing the meaning of the phrase, as it will be shown below. The rabbinical idiom had primary reference to the elders' LH on sacrifices and comes from a much later period. Daube's interpretation misses the point in that the context is not about Timothy's ordination as elder but rather on his receiving a charism through a prophetic utterance. Timothy is never called a presbyter and his position appears to be quite different from that of the other elders.¹⁰² Further, it produces an

(‘Ordination in the Ancient Church’, 139), although his refutation of Behm's interpretation does no service to his own thesis that the LH is mainly a symbol of prayer.

⁹⁶ Daube, *NTRJ*, 244f. J. Jeremias adopted Daube's translation of the idiom on the basis that it appears with the same meaning in Susana 50 (‘*ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΙΟΝ* ausserchristlich bezeugt’, *ZNTW* 48 [1957], 129-32); J.N.D. Kelley, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963), 108.

⁹⁷ E.g. *b.San.* 13b. Cf. our discussion in 2.4.2.3.1.

⁹⁸ *NTRJ*, 245.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* VI, 666; Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 94; J.P. Meier, ‘Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles’, *CBQ* 35 (1973):340-44; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 569.

¹⁰¹ *Eph.* 2.2; 4.1; 20.2; *Magn.* 2; 13.1; *Philad.* 4; 5.1; 7.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1; 12.2; *Trall.* 2.2; 7.2; 13.2.

¹⁰² A. Cousineau, ‘Le sens de *presbyteros* dans les Pastorales’, *ScEsp* 28 (1976), 160f.

unnatural reading of the Greek and disregards the definite article.¹⁰³ In conclusion, the view that the passage refers to ordination by a group of elders is better substantiated.

2. The two texts depict two different occasions: 2Tim describes a general ordination for ministry, whereas 1Tim records Timothy's installation as church leader at Ephesus.¹⁰⁴ A similar view is developed by Fee who, taking into account the *double entendre* of the gesture in Acts, i.e. both commissioning and reception of the Spirit, argues that 2Tim 1.6 refers to Timothy's initial reception of the Spirit whereas 1Tim 4.14 is about his recognition by the church and his endowment with a specific gift for ministry.¹⁰⁵ The following arguments are presented: (1) In contrast to 1Tim 4.14, here the *χάρισμα* is referred to as 'the gift of God that is in you' and elsewhere in Paul, the Spirit is depicted as being *given* by God and being *in* believers (1Thes 4.8; 1Cor 6.19; 2Cor 1.22). (2) This very truth is expressed here in v.7, 'God gave us the Spirit' and this indicates that the passage focuses on the Spirit rather than the gift of ministry. (3) The exhortation 'fan into flame' the gift parallels 1Thes 5.19 where Paul urges his readers not to 'quench' the Spirit. (4) Verses 6-14 'hold together as a unit of appeal'. In the last verse, the focus is again on the Spirit as in the first verse of the unit: Timothy is urged to guard the good deposit 'through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us'. Thus, Fee concludes that 'even though the concern is with Timothy's loyalty to the gospel, the focus is on the empowering of the Spirit to accomplish it'.¹⁰⁶

The following points can be made to demonstrate the inadequacy of Fee's thesis: (1) The fact that *χάρισμα* is said to be 'in you' (*ἐν σοί*), i.e. in Timothy, is not an indication that it refers to the Spirit. The very same thing is said about Timothy's faith (v.5) and *χάρισμα* in 1Tim 4.14 which is not interpreted by Fee as reception of the Spirit. (2) Nowhere in the NT is *χάρισμα* used to refer to the Spirit *simpliciter*. (3) The focus on the Spirit in vv. 7-14 rather than on the gifts of the Spirit is no indication that in verse 6 *χάρισμα* should be understood as a reference to the Spirit. The whole passage points to the Spirit as the source of the *χαρίσματα*. Thus, Timothy is exhorted to 'rekindle' the *χάρισμα* precisely because its source, i.e. the Spirit, is not 'a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power'. (4) Since the event in 2Tim 1.6 is mentioned in connection with Timothy's religious upbringing (v.5), it is possible to understand that reference is made to the time when he was first chosen by Paul as a fellow worker (Lystra, Acts 16.1-4).¹⁰⁷ If so a LH for the reception of the Spirit would be in disagreement with Luke's view that the gesture is

¹⁰³ Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ J. Jeremias, *Die Briefe*, earlier editions, *ad. loc.*

¹⁰⁵ G.D. Fee, *Presence*, 785-89.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 787.

¹⁰⁷ We argue here for the historicity of this section. It would be difficult to explain from the perspective of pseudonymity the reference to Timothy's religious upbringing and the language which expresses intimacy and affection. Cf. *Johnson*, *Letters*, 53.

needed to bestow the Spirit only in unusual circumstances.¹⁰⁸ The double LH thesis eliminates all textual ambiguities but, at the same time, creates a more serious problem in the sense that it opens a large range of possible interpretations of the two occasions.

3. Ferguson sees here two separate moments of the ceremony: the LH by the elders with the intention to 'set apart' Timothy to the work of evangelism and the LH by Paul to impart him a spiritual gift.¹⁰⁹

4. According to another view, 1Tim reflects the practice of ordination in the writer's time and 2Tim reflects either a historical fact¹¹⁰ or a fiction¹¹¹ meant to give the office apostolic endorsement.¹¹²

5. Most commentators agree that the two texts discuss the same event in which Paul and the elders share in the rite. The apparent discrepancy between the two passages is due to the character of each letter. The reference to the elders in 1Timothy is adequately placed in a book which is more of a church order, whereas the personal reference of 2Tim 1.6 is explained by the emphasis of 2Timothy on the close relationship between Paul and his disciple.¹¹³ A variant of this view, held by Spicq, does not emphasise the difference in the character of the letters as much as it underlines the preponderant role of Paul. Unlike in 1Tim 4.14 where the elders' LH only accompanies (*μετά*) the prophecy, in 2Tim 1.6 the gift is given 'through' (*διὰ*) Paul's hands.¹¹⁴ Spicq's interpretation is different from Fee's position or that of Ferguson in that it does not postulate two separate occasions when hands are laid on Timothy or a double imposition of hands during the same ceremony.

In our view, the majority view is the most plausible. It takes seriously into consideration the similarity of wording between the two texts and avoids the trap of needing to postulate an imposition of hands on two separate occasions, solution which opens up a large range of possible interpretations.

The occasion when the alleged ordination took place is unclear. If the allusion is to

¹⁰⁸ See *supra*, 6.3.2.3.

¹⁰⁹ Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 140; 'Ordain, Ordination', *ABD* V.39.

¹¹⁰ A.T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 121, but in *TRE* 14: 420 he treats 2Tim 1.6 as a 'fiction'; J.C. Leaney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985), 66.

¹¹¹ Oberlinner, 210, *apud* Marshall, *Pastorals*, 568. Cf. also cf. Houlden, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 89, 110. E. Schwartz takes 1Tim 4.14 to be relatively historical, but 2Tim 1.6 as an adjustment to the 'apostolic tradition' ('Über die pseudapostolischen Kirchenordnungen', *Schriften der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft Strassburg* 6 [1910], p. 1). Since for him the priority of the epistles is indicated by the rise of church order, the alleged sequence of the Pastoral Epistles is: 1Tim, Tit, 2Tim.

¹¹² N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 42-46, 228f.

¹¹³ E.g. J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 88; W. Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 85; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6, 666 n. 92; Lohse, 'χειροτονέω', *TDNT* 9, 433f.; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 71, 98; P. Dornier, *L'Épître Pastorales* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969), 85;; Roloff, *Die erste Brief*, 258f.; Lea-Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 188; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 209, 371.

¹¹⁴ *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 729.

Timothy's ordination in Ephesus and considering the fact that Paul's last visit to Ephesus took place not long before his imprisonment, it can hardly be explained how Timothy's zeal diminished so soon. As already mentioned, it is possible to understand that reference is made to the time when he was first chosen by Paul as a fellow traveler (Acts 16.1-4).¹¹⁵ Considering the warning against ordaining young people as ἐπίσκοποι in 1Tim 3.6, it is unlikely that the event described refers to Timothy's ordination. Then, it is possible to infer that the same elders whom Paul appoints in Acts 14.23 are laying hands on Timothy when he departs with Paul as his missionary associate. The parallel would be Acts 13.3. The presbytery (consisting of elders who emerged on the basis of their charismatic gifts) acts here at the command of the Holy Spirit (διὰ προφητείας), as it was the case with Saul and Barnabas. Beyond being commanded to the grace of God, as Paul and Barnabas were, Timothy receives a gift for ministry through Paul's LH. If 1Tim 3 and Tit 1 are interpolations, then the author of the Pastoral Epistles knows of no other ordination except the LH as part of the missionaries-elders cycle presented above.¹¹⁶

7.3.2.3. *The Function of the LH on Timothy*

The understanding of the function of LH on Timothy is shaped in most cases by the way scholars translate the two key-prepositions, μετά and διά which prefix the nominal form ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν in 1Tim 4.14, respectively 2Tim 1.6. The translation of διὰ προφητείας in 1Tim 4.14 as a genitive or accusative plays also a determining role.

According to one view, there is no instrumentality attached to the LH in either passage. Fee argues that the LH in this case is no more than an appendage to prophecy, the latter being the true means by which the χάρισμα is given to Timothy:

Although Paul clearly says 'through the laying of my hands' in v. 6, the evidence from 1Tim 1.18 and 4:14 suggests that it was by the Spirit ('through prophetic utterances') that Timothy received his gift, and that it was *accompanied* by the laying on of hands. Therefore, the *dia* ('through') is either attendant circumstance (so Barrett) or simply a 'telescoped' expression (like 'by faith' for 'by grace through faith').¹¹⁷ (italics his)

On the preposition used with the LH in 2Tim 1.6, C.K. Barrett says:

Through is here a correct translation (of διὰ with the genitive), as it is not at 1Tim 4:14. In view of the different preposition (μετά) there used it might be permissible to suggest that in the present verse we have the διὰ of 'attendant circumstances' - imposition of hands was an attendant rather than a causative act.¹¹⁸ (italics his)

¹¹⁵ Spicq, *Pastorales*, 324; Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 139; Leaney (*A Guide*, 66) but only for 2Tim 1.6.

¹¹⁶ See 7.2.3. Cf. Marshall who links this passage and Acts 13.3 (*Pastorals*, 569).

¹¹⁷ G. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 234.

¹¹⁸ C.K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 93.

But the question rises quite naturally: Why not reverse the thinking and evaluate the preposition *μετά* of 1Tim 4.14 in terms of *διά* of 2Tim 1.6? This is especially so as *μέτα* modifies the anarthrous nominal form *ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν* but in the latter *δία* is followed by the definite ^{της ἐπιθέσεως} *τῶν χειρῶν μου* which makes it emphatically instrumental. We are not saying that the meaning of a preposition should be changed in view of a different preposition which occurs with the same noun (as Barrett does) but, by posing the above question, we are attempting to prove the lacunae of Barrett's suggestion and its erratic character. Dibelius and Conzelmann make a similar error when they translate the preposition *δία* in 2Tim 1.6 according to what they think the meaning of the LH was at that time.¹¹⁹

The use of two different prepositions with the LH in 1Tim 4.14 and 2Tim 1.6 can be explained in two ways. First, the presence of *μετά*, rather than *δία*, in 4.14 can be due to the author's desire to avoid the repetition of *δία* which occurred first with *προφητείας*. Although *μετά* plus the genitive of the LH expresses here an attending circumstance¹²⁰ (as noted by Barrett and Fee),¹²¹ this does not exclude the possibility of understanding the gesture as the means by which the *χάρισμα* is conferred to Timothy.¹²² Fee rejects any idea of instrumentality here, taking the LH as simply a 'full recognition by the believing community', on the basis that *μετά* is nowhere in the *κοινή* used in an instrumental sense.¹²³ But, as said above, while recognising that *μετά* + the genitive of the LH does not normally express instrumentality, the occurrence of such combination here does not necessarily rule out its instrumental function.

Secondly (and probably on safer ground), it is possible that the use of *μετά* + genitive, instead of *δία* + genitive is so calculated by the author as to indicate that *χάρισμα* is bestowed on Timothy only through Paul's hands, rather than the hands of the joining presbyters.¹²⁴ As we have already discussed, one can postulate either two separate occasions or, with Ferguson, two separate moments of the same ceremony. In either case, the significance of the Paul's LH would be different from that of the gesture performed by

¹¹⁹ 'The preposition "through" (*δία*) must not be accorded too much importance. The grace is not yet understood as an habitual disposition transferred from person to person' (*Pastoral Epistles*, 98). We have already demonstrated that the idea is found already in the OT.

¹²⁰ BAGD s.v. *μετά* III.2. Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

¹²¹ Barrett, *Pastorals*, 93; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 234.

¹²² Marshall notes: 'Although it [*μετά* + gen.] expresses accompanying circumstances rather than instrument ... it presumably expresses much the same as *δία* in 2 Tim 1.6' (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 566f.). Cf. H. von Lips, *Glaube-Gemeinde-Amt: Zum Verständnis der Ordination in den Pastoralbriefen* (FRLANT 122. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 250-53.

¹²³ *Presence*, 774f. and n. 92; citation from p. 775. But a prior activity of the Spirit through Timothy is only an assumption.

¹²⁴ J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains*, 134f; Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 83f.; H. Schlier, 'Die Ordnung der Kirche nach den Pastoralbriefen', in *Glaube und Geschichte: Festschrift für Friedrich Gogarten*, H. Runte ed. (Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz, 1948), 56-58; C. Spicq, *Pastorales*, 729.

the accompanying presbyters: the LH by the elders is intended to 'set apart' Timothy to the work of evangelism and Paul's gesture to impart him a spiritual gift¹²⁵; in the former case it denotes identification (acknowledgment)¹²⁶ and in the latter transference. We have already argued that the two texts describe the same event. Instead of postulating, with Ferguson, two separate moments of the same ceremony, it is probably better to accept Spicq's suggestion that Paul and the presbyters lay hands at the same time, but Paul's role in the act is preponderant.

The specific nature of Timothy's appointment is another uncertainty of the two passages. According to Dibelius and Conzelmann, by the laying on of the elders' hands Timothy was given authority over several congregations.¹²⁷ Others believe he was ordained as bishop and invested with powers to ordain presbyters. D.F. Wright believes that Timothy was ordained to a position midway between that of presbyter-bishop and the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.¹²⁸

The above suggestions go beyond what is indicated in the text. Towner warns against reading second century structure in the Pastorals:

'However possible it may be that Timothy ... provided the basis for the emergence of such church figures at a later period, such concepts of church organization are foreign to the Pastorals. No title is attached directly to either of the apostle's delegates [Timothy and Titus], and this should caution attempts to do so, especially when the titles chosen are most closely linked to second-century developments'.¹²⁹

In our view both references to the LH in the pastorals are part of some personal notes from Paul to Timothy. The allusion may be to the time when Paul first met Timothy and recruited him as his missionary colleague. There is no definite office in view here. If the reference is to Timothy's ordination in Ephesus, we still cannot speak properly of ordination. The relationship is still personal. In the manner of a Jewish Rabbi who ordains his own student to become a teacher of the Law, so Paul ordains Timothy as his delegate in order to preserve the established apostolic teaching. Like his Rabbinic counterpart, Timothy is not installed into a given office with precisely defined administrative duties. As an apostolic delegate, he is an intermediary link between the apostolic authority and the mon-episcopacy of the second century.¹³⁰

7.3.2.4. *Literary parallels/Historical precedent*

According to Kilmartin, the ordination rite of the Pastorals resembles the Rabbinic

¹²⁵ Ferguson, 'Ordination in the Ancient Church', 140; 'Ordain, Ordination', *ABD* V.39.

¹²⁶ So also P. Dornier, *Pastorales*, 85.

¹²⁷ *Pastoral Epistles*, 71.

¹²⁸ 'Ordination', 6f.

¹²⁹ Towner, 229.

¹³⁰ E. Kilmartin, 'Ministry and Ordination', 50; R.E. Brown, '*Episkopē* and *Episkopos*', 331.

(Pharisaic) appointment. He draws the following parallels: a) in both a teacher ordains his pupil; b) in both the teacher is assisted by a college of rabbis/presbyters; c) the rite is performed in both cases with the LH; d) neither mention the prayer, although it is reasonable to infer that the Christian rite of the Pastorals included prayer; e) neither of the two rites can be described as an installment into a given office with precisely defined functions; f) those appointed as rabbis or Christian elders can be promoted to the position of overseers (see the use of presbyter/bishop in Tit 1.6-7).¹³¹ Similarly, Käsemann believes that the ordination rite, as it is found in the Pastorals, was taken over into the church from Judaism. It found its way into the Pauline community from the Jewish Christian tradition. In Käsemann's view, Christian ordination must have the same meaning as it had in Judaism: 'it is the bestowal of the Spirit [more precisely the 'ministerial Spirit', i.e. the institutionalised Spirit] and it empowers those who receive it to administer the *depositum fidei* of I Tim. 6.20, which we are to understand, more exactly defined, as the tradition of Pauline teaching'.¹³²

An influence of Pharisaic ordination on the ordination rite as found in the Pastorals is possible with the following clarifications: Upon our investigation of the Rabbinic literature¹³³ we have concluded that the Pharisaic appointment was not thought to have conferred the Spirit but only some charisms, as in the Pastoral Epistles. The presence of prophetic utterances in the Pastorals does not weaken the suggestion that the Pharisaic rite had some influence on Christian ordination. We disagree with Ehrhardt who thinks that the words 'with prophecy' in 1Tim 4.14 sound as an 'anti-Jewish fanfare so clearly that any alleged rabbinical analogies are blown away'.¹³⁴ As our exegesis of 1Tim 4.14 revealed, the 'prophecies' mentioned in this verse are not part of the commissioning/ordination ceremony. They only announce who is God's choice and prepare the stage for the Christian rite of ordination.

If we were able to find some resemblances between the ordination of Timothy and the Pharisaic rite, a parallel with Joshua's commissioning by Moses - the Old Testament precedent of the Pharisaic rite - is also possible. Common to the commissioning of Joshua and Timothy's ordination are the following elements: (1) As Joshua was chosen by YHWH to be Moses' successor, so Timothy is divinely designated as Paul's delegate/successor (Num 27.18; 1Tim 4.14). (2) In both situations, the appointment is set in the context of the precursor's imminent death (Num 27.13; 2Tim 4.6-8). With his own death an ever-present possibility, Paul entrusts the gospel to Timothy and requests that he would 'guard' (*φυλάσσειν*) the faith. (3) The appointment in both cases is by the precursor's LH (Num

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² *Essays*, 86f.

¹³³ *Supra*, 2.4.2.3.4.

¹³⁴ Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 136.

27.23; Dt 34.9; 2Tim 1.6). (4) Both Joshua and Timothy receive an endowment by which they are equipped to fulfill the requirement of the task (Dt 34.9; 1Tim 4.14; 2Tim 1.6). Taking into account the Pharisaic background of Paul, we can easily agree with M. Warkentin who argues that 'when ... Paul envisions his relationship to Timothy as analogous to that of Moses to Joshua, he draws his correspondences in terms of his Pharisaic understanding of Joshua's position as the successor of Moses.'¹³⁵ Surely, this interpretation is valid only when the occasion referred to is considered to be Timothy's installation as church leader at Ephesus.

In Spicq's view, 'Timothy is accountable only to God and his own conscience of the good usage of the grace. Consequently, the Christian sacrament could not be modeled on the Israelite or Rabbinic rite; it is an invention of the primitive church'.¹³⁶ Similarly, J.M. Bassler looks for a Christian antecedent of the use of the LH in Christian commissioning/ordination. In her words, '[t]he most immediate Christian antecedent of the rite described here [1Tim 4.14] was probably the baptismal laying on of hands after the candidate's immersion (see Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6), for the transmission of the Holy Spirit (or the Spirit's gifts) was central to both (see 2 Tim 1:6-7)'.¹³⁷ We consider Spicq's argument as being insubstantial, since it is difficult to see how the issue of accountability can be a valid criterion in accepting or rejecting the Israelite or Rabbinic rite as precedent for Christian ordination. Bassler's suggestion is possible.

7.3.2.5. *Charism and Office*

Before we analyse the relationship between charism and office in the Pastorals, we must investigate how *χάρισμα* is understood by the author of these epistles. The only two places where the word appears in the PE are the two verses under discussion. The majority view is that in both verses *χάρισμα* refers to 'a special gift of ministry'. Because of the emphasis which is placed in 2Tim 1.7-14 on the Spirit, some believe that *χάρισμα* refers in 2Tim 1.6 to the Spirit himself.¹³⁸ While agreeing that a sharp distinction between the Spirit and its charisms cannot be drawn, as the former is the source of the latter, we cannot see any identification of the two in the Pastorals.

For others *χάρισμα* is the task of the office, i.e. the office itself. The majority position (from the perspective of pseudonymity) take the presence of the LH here as a sign of the routinisation of charism in the post-Pauline period. Those who hold this position see

¹³⁵ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 137.

¹³⁶ C. Spicq, *L'Épîtres Pastorales*, 726.

¹³⁷ *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 87.

¹³⁸ For instance, Marshall says: 'At least in the PE the Spirit himself is the charisma', whose influence can then be sub-divided into different spiritual qualities. Although nothing is said explicitly, the charisma is manifestly the gift of the Holy Spirit who empowers people for the functions of ministry' (*Pastorals*, 564). Cf. also Fee, *Presence*, 772f.

a contrast between the view of charisma in the Pastorals and that found in Paul's undisputed letters. There charismata are given by the Holy Spirit to various members of the church to enable them to contribute to the building up of the church. Leadership arises from the operation and recognition of spiritual gifts. Here in the Pastorals, they argue, *χάρισμα* is connected to the office. Statements like 'Charisma has become power of office in the Pastorals'¹³⁹ or 'Spirit and charisma have become in effect subordinate to office, to ritual, to tradition'¹⁴⁰ are not infrequent. J.M. Bassler, for example, explains:

Though the Greek word (*charisma*) is the same, the way spiritual gifts are construed in this passage differs sharply from the way Paul described them. Here there is only one gift - that of ministry - not many, and the gift is inextricably tied to the rite of ordination. Whereas Paul thought of these gifts in terms of their dynamic manifestations through various acts of service to the community, the author of these letters views the gift more objectively as something that is "in you" ... as only a latent power that must be rekindled ... It seems to be a permanent, but not always activated, presence.¹⁴¹

But not everyone agrees that in the PE the routinisation of the *χαρίσματα* is so advanced that spiritual gifts are always conferred through some sacramental act. On a lower key, some scholars point to signs of a gradual institutionalisation of the ministry and the genesis of the Catholic doctrine of ordination in the PE.¹⁴²

Our view is that the text of the PE give us no ground to equate the *χάρισμα* with either the Spirit or the office itself. Timothy was never appointed to an office. There are several reasons why we think *χάρισμα* in the Pastorals cannot be identified with office: (1) The use of the two exhortation verbs *ἀμελέω* and *ἀναζωπυρεῖν* indicates that the author refers to a spiritual gift rather than an office and regards Timothy's leadership as charismatic.¹⁴³ (2) The origin of the charisma has not changed. It is still God who gives it (2Tim 1.6, *χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ*).¹⁴⁴ (3) The 'prophecies' in 1Tim 1.18 and 4.14 as charismatic manifestations come not from the leaders, but from the charismatic community.¹⁴⁵ (4) Timothy is not appointed to an office. He is Paul's delegate and his ministry is itinerant. It is possible that both texts recall Timothy's commissioning as Paul's fellow traveler and his empowering for ministry. (5) Both references 'may shed light on the human side of the charismatic giftedness'.¹⁴⁶ Apparently Timothy is not as assertive as Paul wanted him to be.

¹³⁹ J. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 348.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁴¹ J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 89. Cf. also S. Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 49.

¹⁴² E.g. A.T. Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 121.

¹⁴³ M. Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Epworth Press, 1996), 37.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. also Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales*, 311.

¹⁴⁵ Fee, *Presence*, 776.

¹⁴⁶ Schatzmann, *Charismata*, 50.

The fact that some spiritual gifts may be distributed as part of a commissioning / ordination ceremony, is not an indication that all *χαρίσματα* are tied to an office. The mention of prophecy in 1Tim 1.18 and 4.14 tells us that, as in the undisputed Pauline epistles, here spiritual gifts still operate freely in the church. In parallel with this, *χάρισμα* can be also a ‘special giftedness for ministry’ but, as in Paul, its source is the Spirit which dwells in the believer (2Tim 1.14).¹⁴⁷ In 2Tim 1 the emphasis is not on office, but on spiritual power (*χάρισμα* v.6; *δύναμις* v.7),¹⁴⁸ therefore, verse 6 cannot be taken as a sign of the routinization of charism in a post-Pauline period.¹⁴⁹

There is no antithesis between charisma and church office in Paul's thought. Both are gifts of God, to edify and equip the members of the church (Eph 4.11f.). Charismata do not function as a separate form of office, therefore they should not be regarded next to or contra church offices. Schatzmann is certainly right to argue that ‘there is no textual or contextual evidence that the meaning of *χάρισμα* has indeed changed from “grace gift” to “office.”’¹⁵⁰ Thus, what Timothy received through the LH is a charism *for office* and not a charism *of office*.

7.3.3. 1Tim. 5.22: Ordination or Reconciliation of Sinners?

7.3.3.1. The Context

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands (*Χεῖρας ταχέως μηδενὶ ἐπιτίθει*), nor participate (*κοινωνεῖ*) in another man's sins; keep yourself pure.

Verse 22 is part of a section consisting of instructions about elders (1Tim 5.17-25). The need for such instructions can be best explained by referring to the historical situation in the church in Ephesus, namely, the activity of the false teachers. The genuine concern for the care of the elders (vv. 17-19) is followed by instructions about impartial reproof of those who are sinning (vv. 20-21). Verse 22 is either about the restoration of penitent elders or the appointing of replacements for the sinning elders.¹⁵¹ The restoration or appointment by

¹⁴⁷ Presence, 773.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 697 n.33; L.T. Johnson, *Letters*, 53. But the charism of 2Tim 1.6 is not to be equated with ‘the Spirit of power, and love, and self-discipline’ of v.7, as Spicq has it (729). See discussion in Marshall, 698ff.

¹⁴⁹ L.T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 52.

¹⁵⁰ S. Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 50. Cf. also H.A. Lombard, ‘Charisma and Church Office’, *Neotestamentica* 10 (1976): 31-52.

¹⁵¹ The two interpretations will be discussed in detail below, but it is fitted at this point to present briefly a third interpretation which in our opinion has little to go for it. M. Warkentin suggests that *μηδενί* should be taken as a neuter pronoun and Paul's instruction be read as ‘Do not hastily lay hands on anything’. In her view, the reference in 1Tim 5.22 is to a Nazarite vow that Timothy undertook after

the LH must be proceeded with only after serious consideration, because some people's sins (or the good deeds for that matter) are not always immediately evident (v. 24).

Whether for restoration or appointment of elders, the text indicates that Timothy is authorised to lay hands on elders. It is not certain if this authorisation is the result of the fact that he himself received the LH. Nor is it clear if he were to lay hands on his own or together with the elders. Next, we will attempt to find out what is the occasion referred to in this passage, by analysing the two main views on the role of the LH here.

7.3.3.2. *The Occasion*

7.3.3.2.1. Restoration of penitent elders

The earliest Christian evidence for the interpretation of 1Tim 5.22 as a reference to restoration appears in Tertullian,¹⁵² but Tertullian uses the same text in connection with baptism in his Catholic treatise *De baptismo*.¹⁵³ The number of scholars who take the LH here as restoration is not insignificant.¹⁵⁴ The following arguments have been presented by various scholars in support of this hypothesis:

1) The context indicates that the restoring of sinning elders is in view here. It is said that *τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας* of 5.20 refers exclusively to the sinning elders and the LH is the rite which restores a penitent elder to his former position. But, the connection between verses 20 and 22 is not as strong as it is claimed. A transitional passage begins at verse 21, which leaves verse 22 only loosely connected with 19 and 20. Since verse 21 must not be limited to behaviour toward presbyters, it means that v. 22 may refer either to the reconciliation of sinners in general or to ordination of replacements for sinning elders.

2) The difference between the practice of ordination by presbyters in 4.14 and the alleged ordination by Timothy in 5.22 indicates that the text alludes to a rite other than ordination. Hanson claims that since ordination is performed by a college of presbyters with a presiding bishop (4.14), their oversight would have prevented a hasty ordination,

Paul's example. Timothy is not to hastily lay hands on anything which may defile him, except for a little wine because of his illness (5.23). In doing this, he will 'keep himself pure' (5.22). (*Ordination*, 148-51).

¹⁵² *De pudicitia* 18.9 (CCSL ii.1318).

¹⁵³ *De baptismo* 18.1 (CCSL i.292).

¹⁵⁴ The main defender of this view is P. Galtier, 'La reconciliation des pecheurs dans Saint Paul', *RSR* 3 (1912): 448-60; 'Imposition des mains', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, VII, 1306-13; *Aux origines du sacrement de penitence* (Analecta Gregoriana 54; Rome, 1951), 95-106 and 'La reconciliation des pecheurs dans la première Épître à Timothée' *RSR* 39/40 (1951/52): 317-320. He is followed by Dibelius-Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 80; J.C. Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985), 123, *et al.* Extensive bibliography in: D.A. Mappes, 'The "Laying on of Hands" of Elders', *BSac* 154 (1997), 474f. n. 3, and M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 80. Others are named by J.D. Quinn, 'Tertullian and I Timothy 5:22 on Imposing Hands: Paul Galtier Revisited', *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989), 268; W. Lock, R. Falconer, B.S. Easton, E. Schweizer, H. von Campenhausen, H.W. Bartsch, G. Holtz, V. Hasler, A.T. Hanson.

even if Timothy had desired to do otherwise. Therefore, it is unlikely that the text is about ordination.¹⁵⁵ But, as Guthrie notes, the injunction may be addressed to the presbyters, as well. Since Timothy is the one who presides over the presbyterate, it is his responsibility to exercise restraint.¹⁵⁶

3) Hasler appeals to several texts from the NT period to support his view that discipline and restoration of sinning elders were in process at this time (2 John 11; 3 John 9; 1 Clement 44:1-6; 47:6; and Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians 11:1).¹⁵⁷ Hasler is correct in appealing to these citations to indicate the existence of problems of elder discipline in the last part of the first century CE, but they do not actually support his claim that 1Tim 5.22 refers to a ceremony which restored sinning elders.

4) The passage is so interpreted by Tertulian (*De pud.* 18.9), and probably the Synod of Carthage (256 CE).¹⁵⁸ But this is not sufficient evidence. The use of the LH in reconciliation of sinners is well attested only in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁵⁹

7.3.3.2.2. Appointment of elders

A great number of scholars agree that the text refers to some sort of an appointment.¹⁶⁰ We have already presented four counter-arguments to invalidate the thesis which claims that the LH refers here to restoration of sinning elders. To these we may add a few more to substantiate our view that the text refers to appointment of elders: (1) Genuine repentance is sufficient to take back a penitent; a long period of testing ('not hastily') was not required.¹⁶¹ (2) The link with the teaching about sin in v. 24 is also maintained if the reference in v. 22 is to the appointment of sinful (unworthy) people. In fact verses 24-25 make more sense if appointment is the background. (3) Corroborated with the conditions laid down for eligibility in 1Tim 3.2-13 (esp. 3.6), the reference to appointment in 5.22 makes perfect sense. (4) The LH for appointment is a known practice in the early church and it has been mentioned earlier in this letter (4.14; cf. 2Tim 1.6; Acts 13.1-3). (5) All other references to the LH in the Pastorals are related to appointment. (6) The Pastorals are particularly concerned with the appointment of church leaders (3.1-7, 8-13; Tit 1.6-9).

¹⁵⁵ A.T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 103.

¹⁵⁶ D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, revised edition. TNTC; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1990; So also G.W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 239.

¹⁵⁷ V. Hasler, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Zurich: Theologische Verlag, 1978), 43.

¹⁵⁸ J. Roloff, *Der erste Brief*, 313; cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 621.

¹⁵⁹ Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.12; Eusebius, *HE* 7.2; *Didasc.* 10 (*Apost. Const.* 2.41);

¹⁶⁰ J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des mains*, 125-131; C. Spicq, *L'Épîtres Pastorales*, 546ff.; Easton; G. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 131 - replacement of sinning elders; J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 102; C.K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 81; D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 120; J.N.D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 127f. (1963); G.W. Knight III, *Commentary on 1 Timothy* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), 239. Additional bibliography in D.A. Mappes, 'The "Laying on of Hands" of Elders', 475 n. 8.

¹⁶¹ Marshall, *Pastorals*, 622; Spicq, *Pastorales*, 548.

Appointment without thorough investigation of someone's conduct would make Timothy co-responsible for the sins committed by that person.¹⁶² It is disputed whether it is the past¹⁶³ or the future¹⁶⁴ sins of those ordained with which Timothy would be associated. With Roloff, we think that the author could have referred to both the past and the future sins.¹⁶⁵ In the former case, the appointment to eldership of someone who is not 'above reproach' (3.2) is the same with condoning his past sins. Timothy will share responsibility for those actions. On the other hand, appointment without thorough investigation would make Timothy co-responsible for the sins which such elders might commit while exercising their duties. Because potential future misconduct is assessed on the basis of one's past wrongdoings, one cannot sharply distinguish between the two categories of sins.

Verses 24-25 give the reason why Timothy is not to install men as elders hastily; it is because the sins of some are not as open as those of others: 'The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later' (v. 24). Conversely, the current absence of clear evidence for good deeds in someone's life does not disqualify them for future appointment to eldership: 'So also good deeds are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden' (v. 25). It is debatable whether 'judgment' (*κρίσις*) in verse 24 refers to divine judgment¹⁶⁶ or human judgment.¹⁶⁷ If the reference is to divine judgment, the intention of the author is to console Timothy in case he mistakenly appoints someone who is unworthy. Since some sins do not become public until the final judgment, Timothy cannot be responsible for such hidden sins. If, on the other hand, *κρίσις* refers to human judgment, the author's intention is to warn Timothy rather than to console him. Because some people have the ability to conceal their sins, he is to exercise extreme precaution and lay hands on them only after thorough investigation. To make his point even clearer, the author contrasts the open sins of some with the concealed sins of others. Since the sins of some are clearly evident, no thorough examination is needed; these people automatically disqualify themselves from serving as elders. The sins of others are not so evident, but will be revealed only after a careful examination (*κρίσις*). Therefore,

¹⁶² The additional exhortation, 'Do not share (*κοινωνεί*) in the sins of others', may be translated in two ways: 1) 'Do not get yourself involved in the same kind of sins that the elders [of vv. 20-21] are guilty' or 2) 'Do not make yourself a co-sharer in the sins of others by ordaining hastily unqualified elders'. The context, especially vv. 24-25 support the latter reading. In this case, the imperative 'Keep yourself pure' may be rendered 'Stay away from trouble'. But see Fee who takes the injunction 'Keep yourself pure' to favour the first interpretation (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 132).

¹⁶³ G.W. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 239.

¹⁶⁴ Hendrickson, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 185.

¹⁶⁵ J. Roloff, *Der erste Brief*, 314f. Cf. also H. Merkel, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), 45. For other examples of sharing in other's sins from Jewish and Gracco-Roman literature, see C. Spicq, *L'Épîtres Pastorales*, 547.

¹⁶⁶ Dibelius-Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 81; Ellicot, *Pastoral Epistles*, 97-99; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 120-21.

¹⁶⁷ N.J.D. White, 'The Epistle to Titus', in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 5: 138f; G.W. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 242;

Timothy is not to appoint them hurriedly; he has both to allow time for sins to be revealed and to make an effort to bring them to the surface. By ignoring this exhortation, Timothy becomes co-responsible both for the sins these elders already committed before their appointment and for those which they might commit as elders. The two categories of sins are interrelated.

In conclusion, the context indicates that the reference in v. 22 to the **LH** has to do with the appointment of replacements for the sinning elders. Precisely because some elders are sinning, a proven fact in the community (vv. 20-21), and because not all sins are immediately conspicuous (v. 24), Timothy is not to hasten in ordaining elders.

7.4. The significance of the **LH** in appointment

According to H. Peacock 'the background of New Testament ordination is not the transfer of personality or even of authority from one person to another; it is the prayer-blessing concept of laying on hands seen in healing, blessings, and the gift of the Spirit'.¹⁶⁸ The earliest theological interpretation of ordination placed the emphasis on the prayer and called the act a benediction.¹⁶⁹ In Ferguson's view, all the contexts of the use of the **LH** in the early Church can be understood as a bestowing of a blessing of some kind, e.g. the Holy Spirit, the fellowship, forgiveness, reconciliation, etc. This is so especially as the rite is accompanied by prayer. Prayer was not part of Jewish ordinations. In Christian ordination the **LH** is the outward symbol of prayer.¹⁷⁰ Ferguson *et al.* are certainly right at least with regard to Luke's writings. Indeed, the **LH** in commissioning / appointment in Acts is a mere symbolic gesture. There is no idea of any grace being given at the time of commissioning.

A small step away from a purely symbolical understanding of the **LH** in ordination is made by Thompson who interprets the gesture as being 'either the recognition of gifts already given by the Spirit and now enhanced or a prayer for such to be given and expected'.¹⁷¹ Our investigation in the Pastorals has shown that the gesture is viewed here as being more than a recognition or an enhancement of some existing gifts. By having hands

¹⁶⁸ H.F. Peacock, 'Ordination in the New Testament', *RevExp* 55 (1958), 270.

¹⁶⁹ Jerome, *Isa.* XVI, 58 (PL XXIV, 591); Chrysostom, *Hom.* XIV in Acts 6 (PG LX, 116); Gregory Nyssa, 'On the Baptism of Christ' (PG XLVI, 581 D). Augustine: 'Quid aliud est manuum impositio quam oratio super hominem?' (*De bapt.* 3.16.21; cf. 5.20.28).

¹⁷⁰ 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 15; 'Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination', 6f. Cf. also Lea-Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 188.

¹⁷¹ J. Thompson, 'Ordination', *IBS* 12 (1990), 124. Cf. also R. Banks who argues that the term 'ecclesial recognition' defines better the NT investiture rite than 'ordination' ('Church Order and Government', 135).

laid on him, Timothy receives not merely a new responsibility,¹⁷² but a spiritual endowment which aids him to perform the task he was appointed to. What precisely was transferred through the gesture is debated.

According to Daube and others, the background of the LH in the Pastorals is the Hebrew $\gamma\mu\sigma$. As in the OT, it signifies a transfer of personality to a successor to make him an effective substitute.¹⁷³ But the arguments connecting the LH in Christian ordination with $\gamma\mu\sigma$ are unconvincing, for there is no distinction in the Christian texts either in terminology or circumstantial description.¹⁷⁴ Also, there is no idea of creating a second self in the appointment described in the NT. As Dale Moody comments on the text which allegedly is the closest parallel to Rabbinic ordination in the NT, 'the semikah idea of the pouring of one man's powers into another is more than imaginary exegesis in II Timothy 1:6'.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, the doctrine of the 'apostolic succession' modeled on an uninterrupted Rabbinic succession cannot be supported with evidence from the NT.

In contrast with the commissioning passages in Acts which mention no charism, there the focus being on prayer, in the Pastorals the LH is manifestly an effective gesture. The focus is on the imparting of a charism through direct contact with the established leaders of the church. J.M. Bassler is partially right in pointing to a contrast between appointment in Acts (where the rite confirms something already present, e.g. possession of the Spirit) and in the Pastoral Epistles (where charisms for ministry are imparted during the ordination ceremony):

This essential gift, which enables and empowers for ministry, is carefully controlled through the rite of the laying on of hands (see 5:22). In these letters there is no indication of spiritual gifts apart from that of ordained ministry, and those who have not participated in this rite are not divinely acknowledged or gifted for that ministry. Moreover, the rite guarantees the continuity of the church's leadership (see also Titus 1:5) and thus the reliability of the church's teaching (6:20).¹⁷⁶

The contrast, however, may not be as sharp as Bassler sees it. Her claim that there is no evidence in the Pastorals of spiritual gifts outside the ordained ministry is certainly an exaggeration. We have already seen that the selection of Timothy was done on the basis of

¹⁷² *Contra* F. Stagg who argues for the nonsacramental nature of ordination: 'The laying on of hands, or ordination in any sense, did not confer new rights or authority upon the one ordained; rather, it was a recognition of the presence already of some charismatic gift of ministry, an intercessory prayer for the continuation of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the acceptance on the part of the church and the person ordained of new responsibility' (*New Testament Theology* [Nashville: Broadman, 1962], 256). Cf. also R.A. Ward's view that the gift is present in Timothy's life even before ordination, the rite conferring only the authority to use such gift regularly, in a formal way (*Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974], 77).

¹⁷³ *NTRJ*, 245; Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 106f.

¹⁷⁴ Ferguson, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 14.

¹⁷⁵ Dale Moody, 'Charismatic and Official Ministries', 178f.

¹⁷⁶ J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 89.

some prophecies about him. There is no indication that such prophecy is necessarily a gift for ministry obtained at ordination.

In Acts as well as in the Pastoral Epistles, appointment is seen as an action of God, carried on through human intermediaries.¹⁷⁷ Through prophecy, God indicates who is the person he has chosen and humans commission this person through the LH. In the Pastorals, the mediatory aspect of the LH is even more strongly emphasised. Hands are not merely a symbol of God's act or a sign of prayer. They are literally channels of power by which charisms for ministry are transferred from God, the divine source. Thus, humans act as both petitioners of numinous power (in this case charisma for ministry) and mediators of such power.¹⁷⁸

The LH in ordination has no magical functions. It does not guarantee the conferral of power (it is not an *ex opere operato* communication) nor does the gift so received become the possession of the receiver.¹⁷⁹ If, in the Pastorals the imposition of hands implies bestowal of a permanent gift or grace,¹⁸⁰ it is permanent not because it is something that becomes a possession, but because of a constant cooperation between the human receiver and the divine source. Such interaction is indirectly expressed in the two exhortations about the gift: the gift is in a constant need of not being neglected and of having to be rekindled. The warning is about the possibility of losing it.

7.5. The origin of the Christian rite of ordination.

There are four main views on the origin of Christian ordination, according to which the Christian rite has been influenced by: a) pagan customs; b) Rabbinic practices; c) Old Testament commissioning narratives; d) the example of Jesus and thus is an innovation of the earliest Christianity.

Henry Smith felt that the ordination of Joshua by Moses 'can hardly have given rise to the apostolic rite in all its varieties' and concluded that the Christian rite of LH 'has been influenced by gentile custom'.¹⁸¹ But our investigation of pagan literature in Chapter 3 has

¹⁷⁷ Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', 238.

¹⁷⁸ M. Warkentin, *Ordination*, 109ff.

¹⁷⁹ M.J. Heineken, 'What Does Ordination Confer?', *LQ* 18 (1966), 124, 126.

¹⁸⁰ A.R.C. Leaney, *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 66. For a psychological interpretation of the LH which emphasises the permanency of ordination see W.D. Stacey: 'The laying on of hands is a symbol of constraint ... There is a sense in which ordination denotes constraint, imprisonment within a purpose, from which we can never break free' ('Concerning the Ministry - Three Addresses to Ordinands: II. Ordination', *ExpTim* 75, 1964, 266). Although the laying of one's hands on another can connote violence, there is no evidence that any NT author has made this sort of an analogy between the laying of violent hands and ordination.

¹⁸¹ H.P. Smith, 'The Laying-on of Hands', *AJT* 17 (1913), 62.

demonstrated the fact that we are unable to make a convincing case for any pagan parallel to Christian ordination in the contemporary Hellenistic religions.¹⁸²

Behm suggests that Rabbinic ordination is the bridge which connects the Old Testament model (Num 27.18-23) with the Christian rite.¹⁸³ The thesis is further developed by Lohse who argues that 'Christian ordination was modeled on the pattern of that of Jewish scholars, although early Christianity filled it with a new content'.¹⁸⁴ Lohse at no point indicates what he understands the "new content" to be. The only important argument offered by Lohse is the use of the LH in both rites. A little more explicit is Daube who argues:

The early Church took over the Jewish application of semikah: a bishop might ordain his successor in this manner (I Tim. 4:14; 5:22; II Tim. 1:6). However, the first Christians . . . boldly extended the scope of the ceremony . . . also where the religious leaders wished to consecrate some of their number as special missionaries, where a congregation chose a few men to be distributors of charity, or where an Apostle imparted the Holy Ghost.¹⁸⁵

Peacock's critique of Lohse's thesis is correct:

Although he points out that in Acts 6, which he considers to be the connecting link between Jewish and Christian ordination, there is no hint of the teacher-pupil relationship so characteristic of Jewish ordination, he makes no effort whatsoever to explain how an ordination rite intended primarily to guarantee valid transfer in the chain of tradition could have been adopted by early Christianity with its radically different view of the ministry of the Word. He has brought together a valuable collection of material which must be consulted in any study of ordination, but his conclusions can hardly be accepted without further evidence.¹⁸⁶

According to Ehrhardt, Lohse's thesis, if were true, 'would have grave theological consequences', because the Synagogue was a legal ministry, not a spiritual one. Even if it were true that the ordination of scribes was practised at the time of Jesus, due to the frequent criticism of the scribes and Pharisees by Jesus, it would be difficult to conceive that the apostles would have begun with ordaining Christian scribes.¹⁸⁷ It would place the emphasis upon an official ministry rather than on a charismatic one.

First and foremost, to argue for an influence of Jewish *semikah* on Christian ordination would be an anachronism. But we know that a Pharisaic institution of ראשית, i.e. permission given by Jewish teachers to their students to teach the law, was in effect in the first century CE. In our view, this could have had some influence on Christian ordination. Certainly, there are differences between the two rites. For instance, the strong

¹⁸² See also Lohse, *Ordination*, 13f.; Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Ministry*, 25.

¹⁸³ *Die Handauflegung*, 142. So also F. Gavin, *Jewish Antecedents*, 103.

¹⁸⁴ Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 101, 78. So also L. Audet, 'L'organisation des communautés chrétiennes', 245.

¹⁸⁵ *NTRJ*, 209.

¹⁸⁶ 'Ordination in the New Testament', 265f.

¹⁸⁷ 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 134.

emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit¹⁸⁸ and the strong missionary nuance¹⁸⁹ characteristic of the Christian rite are missing from the Pharisaic model. Yet, we have seen that the Pharisaic rite is not completely devoid of any reference to the Spirit. It did not transfer the Spirit, but the Rabbis believed that in ordination they received a spiritual faculty, Moses-wisdom, by which they were able to fulfill their task.¹⁹⁰ As for the missionary emphasis of the Christian rite, it cannot be totally divorced from the permission to teach. Appointing Christian missionaries meant, among other things, giving them permission to teach (propagate) the new Christian faith. In the Pastorals, however, the emphasis on the continuity of teaching is obvious. Whether or not the author intended to connect the continuity of Pauline teaching with the LH is hard to say. However, it seems to us that the injunction 'Entrust the things you have heard me say to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others' (2Tim 2.2) must be corroborated with the appointing of new elders by Timothy (1Tim 5.22).

While scholars disagree as to the influence of Jewish סְמִיכָה on Christian ordination, there is a wide consensus as to the prototypical nature of Moses' laying hands on Joshua. According to Ehrhardt, 'in the matter of ordination, the Church and the Synagogue appear not in the relation of son and mother, but as half-brothers, ... both in their way appropriating the Old Testament example'.¹⁹¹ Our literary analysis of the commissioning passages in Acts has shown that Luke was at least conscious of - if not influenced by - the Old Testament parallels. A closer resemblance between the New Testament and the Old Testament commissioning passages is provided by the Moses-Joshua / Paul-Timothy parallel. There are at least two common motifs: the idea of succession and the impartation of a gift through the LH. Whether or not the author was influenced directly from the Old Testament or from the Pharisaic institution of רִאשִׁיָּה cannot be known with certainty. If the references to the LH reflect authentic Pauline traditions, then it would be difficult to avoid the implication that Paul, as a former Pharisee, authorises his pupil to teach the 'new Law' by laying hands on him. As in the Pharisaic rite where the teacher is helped in the LH by two other sages, so here Paul is assisted by the presbytery. Not only does Paul give Timothy the authority to teach, but also to continue the chain of successions by appointing presbyters (1Tim 5.22). The nature of such succession is however unclear. It is possible that, as shown above,¹⁹² all happened within the presbyters-missionaries circle: the presbyters commissioned missionaries (Acts 13.1; 1Tim 4.14) and

¹⁸⁸ W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), 212f; Ehrhardt, ???, 136.

¹⁸⁹ E.G. Hinson, 'Ordination in Christian History', *RevExp* 78 (1981), 486.

¹⁹⁰ See above section 2.4.2.3.4.; Ehrhardt, 'Jewish and Christian Ordination', 137.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 138. But Ehrhardt's contention that both Christian and Jewish ordination developed from the *hosheb* - enthronement material of the OT is unconvincing. Cf. also Parratt, 'The Laying on of Hands', 213; Torrance, 'Consecration and Ordination', 251f.

¹⁹² See section 7.2.3.2.

missionaries appointed presbyters (Acts 14.23; 1Tim 5.22). Since 1Tim 3 and Tit 1 allude to a form of mon-episcopacy, these texts can be explained either in terms of the analogy presbyter-bishops at Ephesus (Acts 20.17-20) or as being later interpolations.¹⁹³

Before we state our position on the origin of the Christian rite of commissioning / ordination, it is worth examining the view held by Ferguson who argues for 'a separation of the Christian rite from a background in *semakh* [sic]'.¹⁹⁴ Ferguson believes that the apostolic use of the LH in both Christian initiation and commissioning ceremonies is directly inspired by Jesus' use of LH in blessing and that it always signifies the bestowal of a blessing and a petition for divine favor: 'The basic idea in Christian ordination was not the creation of a substitute or transferring of authority, but conferring a blessing and petition for the divine favor'.¹⁹⁵ Ferguson cites an impressive amount of patristic references in support of his view that the idea of blessing continued beyond the first century CE to unify all the occasions when the LH was used. He appeals to the Syriac Church's use of the equivalent of the Hebrew *דש* (to touch) with *'ida* (hand) for the LH in ordination as the decisive argument that the gesture means blessing. Ferguson's merit consists precisely in his attempt to present a unified picture of the different uses of the LH in the New Testament.

Some influence of Jesus' practice of the LH on the earliest Christianity cannot be discounted completely even when discussing the commissioning/ordination rites. Overall, we believe that scholars are wrong when they place themselves in an 'either...or' position by adopting one definite origin of the Christian rite of ordination and rejecting anything else. We must take into account the fact that the earliest Christianity had at its disposal the Old Testament precedent as presented in the LXX, the contemporary Pharisaic rite, and the example of Jesus who used the LH in various situations. We have no reasons to reject the suggestion that the church was influenced by these three factors. When the need was felt to send missionaries or to appoint elders (both ministries including a mandate to propagate and perpetuate the apostolic teaching), the church corroborated the Old Testament teaching on appointment with the contemporary Pharisaic practice and interpreted both rites in light of Jesus' practice. Thus, the origin of the LH in appointment is clearly Jewish, but the earliest Christianity 'filled it with a new content' inspired from Jesus' use of the gesture in blessing. Unlike in the Old Testament or Judaism, the more charismatic Christian church associated the gesture with prayer. This changed the LH from a gesture which primarily transferred authority into one which was perceived primarily as a means of bestowing a blessing. Such alteration was aided by the fact that the LXX no longer maintained the

¹⁹³ Ehrhardt, *Apostolic Succession*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ 'Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations', *HTR* 56 (1963), 16.

¹⁹⁵ 'Laying on of Hands', 2; 'Ordination in the Ancient Church (IV)', 141. So also Spicq, *Les épîtres pastorales*, 726.

distinction between *שם/חש* and *סמך*. The *χάρισμα* for ministry was just one blessing which was bestowed by the LH. In this sense, it is possible to assume, with Ferguson, that in all instances of the LH in the New Testament the idea behind the gesture is that of ‘conferring a blessing and petition for the divine favor’. But, as we have already seen in section 7.4., the LH in the Pastorals is more than that; it is an effective means by which the person so appointed receives not merely a new responsibility, but also a spiritual endowment to fulfill such responsibility.

Scholars like Kilmartin go beyond Ferguson's conclusions and argue for a direct influence of the postbaptismal LH on commissioning rites. In Kilmartin's view, the LH in postbaptismal contexts was directly influenced by Jesus' use of the gesture in blessing and the use of LH for the reception of the Spirit led further to its use in ordination.¹⁹⁶ True, the receiving of the Spirit in connection with Christian initiation is described as an empowering for mission, rather than a saving agent or grace. The meaning of the post-baptismal LH is then related to the meaning of the gesture in ordination. Therefore, the dependence of the latter upon the former is possible. But this presupposes that the LH for the reception of the Spirit was used regularly. If our conclusion in Chapter 6 that in the first decades of Christianity the LH was not the common means for the bestowal of the Spirit is correct, this rite would hardly qualify for an immediate antecedent for Christian ordination.¹⁹⁷

There is no definite solution that we can offer to the question of the relationship between the LH for the reception of the Spirit and the LH in commissioning. The question of the origin of the LH in Christian ordination as a whole remains open and the verdict on its significance very difficult. However, we incline to think that the three factors mentioned above, the Old Testament precedent, the contemporary Pharisaic rite and the example of Jesus, all contributed to its origin in a measure which we cannot determine.

7.6. The Uniformity of the rite in the primitive church

The ordination with the LH is completely absent from the undisputed Pauline epistles. There are some authors who think that the rite was practised throughout the church from

¹⁹⁶ E. Kilmartin, ‘Ministry and Ordination’, 52.

¹⁹⁷ Kilmartin thinks that a case can be made for the common source of the postbaptismal LH and the LH in commissioning. Both rites provide a relevant analogy to the rabbinical *semikah*, i.e., gives authority to teach. If one grants the existence of the Pharisaic appointment with the LH in the 1st century CE, its influence on the Christian rites is probable (‘Ministry and Ordination’, 53). But how? In responding to this, Kilmartin builds on G. Kretschmar's thesis. According to Kretschmar, the rite is of a Palestinian origin and was probably used by Jewish Christians to ordain prophets on the Pharisaic model. When they fled Palestine after 70 CE, they brought the rite with them to the Pauline communities they have settled in. (‘Die Ordination im frühen Christentum’, *FZPT* 22 [1975], 62f.). Kilmartin believes that the communities of the Pastorals borrowed a rite of ordination of Jewish Christian prophets, ‘as a form which expressed the responsibility for maintaining the Pauline gospel, dependence on the Spirit and recruitment by the community through officials primarily for the ministry of the word but also for other inner-church activities’ (*op. cit.*, 54). The problem with this view is that there is no evidence that prophets were ordained in the earliest Christianity.

the very beginning and that Paul simply omitted to mention it because he took it for granted.¹⁹⁸ While such explication is plausible, it is not positively entrenched in Paul's writings.

Others, on the contrary, argue for the existence of two types of ministry in the primitive church: on the one hand, the charismatic type of ministry to which one was promoted by the possession of charisms is known in the Pauline churches; on the other, the Palestinian type to which one was appointed by the LH. The commissioning/ordination rite found in the Acts and the Pastorals is of the latter type. The Pauline rite recognised the possession of spiritual gifts and the Palestinian signified commissioning for a task. According to Küng, the two types of ministry co-existed from the beginning and, therefore, it is impossible to designate one or the other as the original type. However, the Palestinian type superseded rapidly the Pauline model.¹⁹⁹ While accepting Kung's thesis, Audet disagrees with him in respect to the designation of the Pauline model as 'charismatic', correctly pointing to the fact that even in the Pastorals the selection is 'according to prophecies' and the rite confers spiritual gifts.²⁰⁰

If the thesis is accepted, it follows that the New Testament commissioning/ordination passages indicate that there was no uniformity in the primitive church, at least with respect to the installation rites. The LH was not the only rite of entering into the ministry of the apostolic church.

¹⁹⁸ Karrer, *Questions theologiques aujourd'hui*, 264, cited in L. Audet, 'L'Organisation des Communautés Chrétiennes', 245.

¹⁹⁹ H. Küng, *L'Église*, II.544-609.

²⁰⁰ *Op. cit.*, 246. On the other hand, Campbell argues that charism in the Pauline corpus does not always mean a pneumatic gift. He correctly points to the fact that, at least in the Pauline churches, the gifts of grace (*charisma^G*) and the pneumatic gifts (*charisma^P*, i.e. unusual, supranatural and spontaneous activity which today would be labeled 'charismatic') coexisted. One was not required to possess some *charisma^P* in order to become a Christian leader. The church did not recognise two kinds of ministries: one charismatic and the other institutional. Rather, 'Paul evaluated his leaders as *charismata^G*, and placed the *charismata^P* under their control' (*Elders*, 248-51; citation from 251).

CONCLUSIONS

The frequent occurrence of the LH in the synoptic gospels and in Acts indicates that the ancient authors of these writings must have considered the practice as relevant for their audiences. Indeed, the fact that in most cases they mention the gesture in passing and the lack of explications about it (except for a couple of occasions when Mark and Luke refer specifically to transfer of power through physical contact) gives us the impression that it is common practice.

This fresh and updated study of the LH in the New Testament has examined the four situations in which the laying on of hands was used by the earliest Christians: in healing, in blessing, for the reception of the Spirit and in commissioning/ordination. Of these, only the LH for blessing and the LH for commissioning/ordination have been carried over from the Old Testament.

The stories of healing investigated in Chapter 4 communicate that Jesus and his followers had power and authority over those spiritual forces which are opposed to God's order and harmful to humankind. They also introduce the LH (and more often the physical contact) as a common method by which Jesus neutralised the effects of such forces. Our examination of the background of the gesture of touching and the LH on sick people revealed that this gesture was not exclusively a Jewish custom, but rather a universal gesture, derived from the widespread idea that power resides in the hand. The Jesus of the gospels shares the common idea of his contemporaries that power can be transferred through physical means. Accordingly, his practice of touching or laying hands on sick people resembles that of his pagan contemporaries. Yet, all gospel writers present Jesus as a unique person. Neither they nor their picture of Jesus share the power concept of their contemporaries. Luke, whose tradition was wrongly judged as being 'penetrated by magic', is the most outspoken of them. In contrast with the Hellenistic view which understood power as an impersonal, *mana*-like substance, Luke depicts Jesus as the unique bearer of God's power and authority. It is God who anointed him 'with the Holy Spirit and with power' in order to preach the Gospel and heal the sick. Unlike the miracle workers of his time or the magicians, Jesus bore the divine power and authority within his own person permanently; he is never depicted as resorting to prayer or invoking the name of the deity. The use of Jesus' name by his followers strengthen the idea that Jesus was the embodiment of God's power.

But what distinguishes Jesus from his contemporaries is not only his view of power but also his methods of healing. Although to a certain extent his miracles resemble those of the Hellenistic miracle-workers, he does not resort to their grotesque methods of touching with amulets, toes, herbs or other objects. All he needs to transfer his healing

power to his patients is a mere touch. The indiscriminate use of the 'touching verbs' by the gospel writers indicates that they understood Jesus' gesture of laying hands simply as a means of physical contact, rather than a ritual. Our examination of Graeco-Roman literature demonstrated that the evidence for the use of the hand in healing is not as overwhelming as is commonly believed. It also revealed no parallel to Jesus' mere touch. This challenges, then, the idea that the origin of the healing touch is Hellenistic. Without claiming that it is Jewish, we have shown that closer parallels to Jesus' method of healing by touch/the LH are found rather in Jewish sources, namely in the biblical literature (esp. Elijah and Elisha stories) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QapGen). In both the OT (2Kgs 5.11) and the 1QapGen, the gesture signifies communication of health, as a divine gift. Thus, Jesus was not regarded as a magician by his contemporaries, but as a holy man, a prophet who, like Elijah and Elisha, was endued with power by God.

The reception of the Spirit by the LH is probably the most puzzling usage of the gesture in the New Testament. In Luke's view, Jesus was the only bearer of numinous power. The post-Resurrection Jesus is portrayed by Luke as 'the Lord of the Spirit' who sends the Spirit as 'the promise of the Father' (Lk 24.49, Acts 1.4). The evidence in Acts points to the fact that the disciples stand in a different relation to the Spirit from that of Jesus. In their role as petitioners of the numinous power they must pray to God, the source of the power, so that the Spirit would be granted to the new converts. The second posture in which Luke depicts the disciples is that of mediators of numinous power. Luke associates unmistakably the giving of the Spirit with the LH. But the gesture does not convey the Spirit automatically. We disagreed with the view that the Spirit is transferred horizontally from humans who are themselves filled/full with the Spirit. The association of prayer with the gesture indicates that people like Peter or Paul, although 'filled with the Spirit', have neither *exousia* nor *dunamis* to bestow the Spirit. They depend wholly on God to use them as mediators of divine power. The LH is, at best, the channel through which such gift was transmitted. It is Luke's view that the Spirit cannot be manipulated, neither by magicians nor by God's allies. For Luke, the Holy Spirit is the controller, not the controlled. The sovereignty of God in giving the Spirit is also stressed in the fact that only he chooses the time when the Spirit is given and the method by which the Spirit is conveyed. Therefore, Luke cannot prescribe any pattern for the reception of the Spirit. His readers are told, however, that the coming of the Spirit is an important matter and that such coming is expected in the first stages of one's Christian experience.

On the origin of the LH for the reception of the Spirit, we concluded that this novelty of the Christian Church must be based on the OT use of the gesture as a blessing. As we have seen in the gospels, Jesus used the gesture of blessing himself, but he did not pray as the Rabbis did. Then, the gesture must have been inherited by the apostles from the synagogue and adapted to the worship setting of the church. Its association with prayer

attaches to it an additional significance; it becomes also an expression of an *epiclesis*, the *calling down* of the Holy Spirit. This interpretation breaks any necessary connection between the gesture and the receiving of the Spirit, in the sense that the Spirit is just one blessing given this way. It also supports our thesis that the **LH** was used only occasionally for the reception of the Spirit, in situations which we described as abnormal. But this is not to deny that, in those situation when the Spirit is said to have been given through the apostles' hands the gesture was only symbolic. We argued that it was understood by Luke and his contemporaries as an efficacious means by which the Spirit was communicated.

Based on a comparison of the orderly presentation of conversion-initiation -- reception of the Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews against the lack of any pattern in Acts, we argued that even in the New Testament there is some evidence for a development of the Christian initiation rite. While the Christian initiation passages depicted in Acts reflect earlier stages in the development of this rite, at the time of Hebrews' composition the neophytes receive pre-baptismal catechetical instruction, in which the very substance of Christian initiation is explained. The **LH** is now the 'normal' means by which the Spirit is conferred.

Our investigation of the installation rites in the pagan sources revealed no valid analogies to the Christian rite of ordination by the **LH**. The clear Jewish background of this practice is provided on the one hand by the Old Testament precedent of the consecration of the Levites and the commissioning of Joshua by Moses and, on the other hand, by the contemporary Pharisaic institution of ordaining students. In our attempt to uncover how exactly the Church assimilated this practice, we resisted pressure to push evidence in an 'either-or' position. Thus, we contemplated the possibility that three factors contributed to the origin of the Christian rite by which the Church authorised its ministers: the Old Testament precedent, the contemporary Pharisaic rite and Jesus' example of blessing people by laying hands on them. What is the measure in which each of these three factors contributed to the origin of Christian ordination is something which we cannot determine.

The significance of the **LH** in commissioning/ordination is another debatable issue. As it appears in the Old Testament and early Rabbinic literature, the gesture signifies transference of authority from one person to another. It also signifies conferral of charism(s) to the newly appointee, to enable him/her perform the task of the office. The exegetical study of the commissioning passages of Acts revealed that the idea of transfer of office is not found in Luke's second book. Therefore, the ceremonies described there are not ordination rites but ceremonies by which people are commissioned for a particular task, limited in time. The **LH** in these cases is a gesture of a special blessing by which

those commissioned are committed to God's grace and care. It also signifies a recognition of the gifts already given by the Spirit, as we argued in the case of the elders.

In the Pastorals, the **LH** in ordination is more than a recognition of spiritual gifts or a sign of prayer. Here, the person ordained receives both a new responsibility and a spiritual endowment which aids him to fulfill such responsibility. The mediatory aspect of the **LH** in the Pastorals is even more strongly emphasised. Human hands are literally channels of power by which charisms for ministry are transferred from God, the divine source, to those so appointed. The established leaders of the church act as both petitioners of numinous power (in this case charisma for ministry) and mediators of such power.

The main contribution of this study to the understanding of the use of the **LH** by the earliest Christianity is that it provides a unified explanation of the New Testament rite. On the basis of our findings upon the examination of each use of the **LH**, it is our conclusion that in the New Testament the gesture signifies always transfer of some positive *materia*: blessing, 'life-force', the Spirit and *charismata*. The transference motif is also predominant in the Old Testament, the only exception being the **LH** on sacrifices, where the gesture seems to signify ownership. Unlike in the New Testament, the gesture in the Hebrew Bible transfers both positive and negative *materia*, the latter being exemplified by sin, contamination, blood-guilt.

Our conclusion that, in all its occurrences in the New Testament, the **LH** can be explained as signifying transference offers an alternative to Ferguson's thesis which suggests that the **LH** should be understood a sign of prayer and a symbol of blessing. We have demonstrated in the course of our study that such understanding of the gesture does not explain all situations and is contradicted by the plain statements made occasionally by the New Testament writers that something tangible was communicated through the **LH**.

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