

Old Testament Ordination (Male-Only) and Commissioning and New Testament Commissioning¹

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Introduction

The Hebrew Bible makes a clear terminological and ritual distinction between the elaborate ordination of male priests, called *millu'im*, and the simple appointment of Joshua that was signified by hand-leaning with commissioning, expressed by the Piel verb *šiwwāh*. The separation and dedication of the Levites for service at the sanctuary is similar in some ways to the priestly ordination, but in other ways it is like Joshua's commissioning. For the Christian church, the New Testament attests only hand-leaning with the equivalent of commissioning; there is no ordination of human priests. The present article compares these authorization rituals in the Old and New Testaments and the implications of the difference between the testaments.

Ordination and Commissioning in the Old Testament Ordination of Priests

Exodus 29 prescribes and Leviticus 8 describes the one-time *millu'im* (e.g., Lev 8:33) of Aaron and his sons to commence a hereditary dynasty of priests. The abstract noun *millu'im* means "filling." In this context, it is a technical term for "fill the hand" (see further below), which can refer to ritual authorization for priestly service.

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The ritual process of priestly authorization, on which we focus here, appears in the expressions “ram of *millu'im*” (Exod 29:22, 26-27, 31; Lev 8:22, 29) and “days of *millu'im*” (Lev 8:33).² English translations of *millu'im* include “investiture” (NJB) and “consecration” (NKJV),³ but most English versions aptly render *millu'im* as “ordination” (NRSV, NJPS, NASB 1995, NIV 2011, ESV, NET Bible, CEB). The term *millu'im* can also refer to the ordination sacrifice (Exod 29:34; Lev 7:37; 8:28, 31). In the Hebrew Bible, *millu'im* in the sense of ordination or ordination offering only appears with reference to the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests.

The verbal expression behind *millu'im* is *millē'* (Piel) + *yād*, “fill the hand,” usually meaning “ordain” as an authorized priest (see refs. below).⁴ The individual whose hand is ceremonially filled, either with the characteristic tool or insignia of one’s role, or in a metaphorical sense, is the one being ordained. The characteristic instrument of a priest is his censer for mediation with God (e.g., Num 16:46-48; cf. apotropaic use in Lev 16:12-13).⁵ However, the consecration service at which Aaron and his sons were ordained (Exod 29; Lev 8) did not include placement of censers in their hands, so the meaning of *millē' yād* in this context is metaphorical.

Persons ordained as priests in the Hebrew Bible are mainly members of the Aaronic priesthood serving in the authorized central Israelite cult: Aaron and his sons (Exod 28:41; 29:9, 33, 35; Lev 8:33), only his sons (Exod 29:29; Num 3:3), or an unnamed high priest (Lev 16:32; 21:10).⁶

² In these contexts, *millu'im* was translated in the Septuagint as *teleiōsis*, “completion,” “accomplishment,” or “fulfillment” (cf. LSJ, 1770).

³ Also *HALOT* 2:585; *DCH* 5:283.

⁴ In verses referring to the Aaronic priesthood, English versions usually translate this expression as “ordain” or sometimes “ordination” (NRSV, NJPS, NASB 1995, NIV 2011, ESV, CEB, and sometimes NET Bible); cf. *DCH* 5:281—“ordain, consecrate as priest.” NKJV renders “consecrate” (also sometimes NET Bible); cf. *HALOT* 2:584—“to consecrate as a priest, devote.” NJB reads “invest” or “investiture.”

⁵ This can explain why Moses told Korah & Co. to show up at the sanctuary with censers in order to test whether God would accept them as priests (Num 16:5-7). This may also explain why Nadab and Abihu took their censers and burned incense at the end of the inaugural service (Lev 10:1): to demonstrate that they were priests.

⁶ Non-Aaronides ordained as “priests” outside the central cult include the son of Micah (Judg 17:5), a Levite ordained by Micah (v. 12), people ordained by Jeroboam as priests of high places (1 Kgs 13:33), and persons offering themselves for ordination as priests in Jeroboam’s northern Israelite cult by means of sacrificial animals (2 Chr 13:9; literally, “to fill his hand with a young bull or seven rams”). In two instances, *millē' yād* refers to self-devotion of non-priests, including to make voluntary contributions to the

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The consecration of this cult, including the ordination of Aaron and his sons to serve as the priests, involved a major ritual complex at the sanctuary that Moses officiated in the presence of the Israelite assembly (introduced in Lev 8:2-4).⁷

As part of the ordination offering, Moses put some of the blood on the right earlobes, right thumbs, and right big toes of Aaron and his sons and tossed the rest of the blood against the sides of YHWH's altar (Lev 8:23-24). This indexed a bond in blood with life-and-death consequences between the deity and his priestly servants, as when Moses had sprinkled blood both on the people and on the altar during the national covenant ritual (Exod 24:6-8). Sacrificial blood on the extremities of the priests implied that they would hear/obey YHWH, do with their hands what he would command them to do, and go with their feet where he told them to go.

“Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and his sons' garments,” thereby consecrating them (Lev 8:30). The liminal period of their rite of passage lasted seven days, during which they were not permitted to leave the sacred precincts (vv. 33-35).

This priestly ordination was characterized by several factors. First, ordination authorized the priests to have special access to the deity as his special servants and as mediators for the laypeople. Second, priests maintained their positions for life (cf. Num 20:26-28 of Aaron's death).⁸ Third, priestly officiation was explicitly limited to males, as shown by the rule that only male descendants of Aaron were to eat portions of most holy sacrifices (Lev 6:11, 22 [Eng. vv. 18, 29]; 7:6).

Lord for construction of the first temple (1 Chr 29:5), and later to participate in restored sacrificial worship at that temple (2 Chr 29:31). Ezekiel 43:26 uses the expression *millē' yād* with the extended sense of authorizing the altar of a future ideal temple.

⁷ Moses washed Aaron and his sons (v. 6) and clothed Aaron in his priestly vestments (vv. 7-9). After consecrating the tabernacle and its contents and the outer altar by anointing them (vv. 10-11), he anointed Aaron (v. 12) and clothed his sons (v. 13). Then Moses officiated a purification offering (vv. 14-17), a burnt offering (vv. 18-21), and the ordination (*millu'im*) offering that included a ram and grain items (vv. 22-29). Exod 28:41 summarizes: “And you shall put them [the priestly vestments] on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint [Qal of *m-š-h*] them and ordain [Piel of *m-l-' + yād*] them and consecrate [Piel of *q-d-š*] them, that they may serve me as priests” (words in brackets supplied). ESV here and for subsequent biblical quotations unless indicated otherwise.

⁸ Contrast the age limit of 50 years old for members of the Levite work force (Num 8:25).

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The Bible does not say why ordained priestly officiation was restricted to males. Women could participate in sacrifices as offerers, as shown by generic language in ritual prescriptions (e.g., Lev 1:2; 2:1; 4:2, 27), and there were occasions when women were required to offer sacrifices (Lev 12:6-8; 15:29-30; Num 6:2, 10-20). Female members of priestly households were permitted to eat portions of holy (but not most holy) food, including from well-being offerings, that had been dedicated to the Lord by the Israelites and belonged to the priests (Lev 22:12-13).⁹ However, no female descendants of Aaron were authorized to officiate as priests.¹⁰ Some possible reasons include distancing from pagan fertility cults in which male and female priests participated together; patriarchal or patricentric society in which males performed public leadership; and/or the practical reason that women could become ritually impure through menstruation before they realized it, which could be disastrous if such a woman were a priest in contact with holy things.¹¹

Commissioning of Joshua

The appointment of Joshua to serve as Israel's leader in place of Moses, as recounted in Num 27:18-23; Deut 31:14, 23, was radically simpler than the priestly ordination:

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay [Qal of *s-m-k*] your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission [Piel *šiwwāh*, "command/charge"] him in their sight. You shall invest [Qal of *n-t-n* + preposition 'al = "give on"] him with some of your authority, 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" (Num 27:18-21; words in brackets supplied).

⁹ On the priestly prebends that could be shared by a priest's family, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 1861.

¹⁰ On lack of evidence in the Hebrew Bible for women officiating legitimate sacrifices at any location, see Nicole J. Ruane, *Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 22-26.

¹¹ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 376.

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This procedure and its results had the following characteristics:

First, whether the words *'āšer-rūah bô*, literally, “in whom is a spirit,” refer to the Holy Spirit or to a right inner attitude, Joshua’s prerequisite qualification was his harmonious relationship with God. So he could be trusted to lead the Israelites in accordance with God’s will. According to Deut 34:9, “Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.” This gives the impression that Joshua received a spiritual gift of wisdom for leadership when the prophet Moses commissioned him.

Second, God told Moses to lean/lay (*Qal* of *s-m-k*) his hand (sing.) on Joshua (Num 27:18), but in the compliance report, Moses leaned his hands (pl.) on Joshua (v. 23).¹² In any case, this ritual gesture indexed a connection between Moses and Joshua that in this context signified the transfer to Joshua of some of Moses’ authority.¹³ Elsewhere in ritual contexts, the gesture could identify an offerer with his/her sacrificial victim (e.g., Lev 1:4; 3:2; 4:4), contribute to transfer of sin (e.g., Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29—purification offerings; 16:21—Azazel’s goat), or transfer a cultic role (Num 8:10—Levites in place of the firstborn of other tribes).¹⁴

¹² However, the Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac Peshitta read sing. “hand” in v. 23 to agree with v. 18.

¹³ Hand-leaning in various contexts, including on sacrificial animals (e.g., Exod 29:10; Lev 1:4; 3:2; 4:4), on Azazel’s goat (Lev 16:21), on the blasphemer (24:14), on the Levites (Num 8:10), and on Joshua (Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9) is much debated, with various theories regarding the function of this action. An influential article is that of David P. Wright, “The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature,” *JAOS* 106 (1986): 433-46. For some recent works that include summaries and critiques of theories, see e.g., David Calabro, “A Reexamination of the Ancient Israelite Gesture of Hand Placement,” in *Sacrifice, Cult, and Atonement in Early Judaism and Christianity: Constituents and Critique*, eds. Christian A. Eberhart and Henrietta L. Wiley, Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 85 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 99-124; Slaviša Janković, “A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology and Atonement as a Hermeneutical Framework for Interpreting the Laying on of Hands” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2020). Regarding hand-leaning on Joshua, see Keith Mattingly, “The Laying on of Hands on Joshua: An Exegetical Study of Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987). See also Keith Mattingly, “Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 59-74.

¹⁴ The basic significance of hand-leaning on a sacrificial victim cannot include transfer of sin (contra Janković, “A Re-Examination”) for the simple reason that the action is required in some contexts where no such transfer could occur (e.g., Lev 1:4; 3:2), i.e., sacrifices other than the purification offering, which is the only sacrifice that transfers sin or impurity from the offerer (Lev 6:20-21 [Engl. vv. 27-28]; 10:17; cf. Roy

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Hand-leaning by itself simply indexes a connection between a person and the animal or person on which/whom they lean their hand.¹⁵ The precise significance of this connection depends on the context.

Third, the ceremony was carried out in the presence of Eleazar, the high priest, and the whole community, the group of people that Joshua would represent as their leader. However, the ritual required no sacrifice.

Fourth, Moses made a certain kind of speech to Joshua, expressed by the Piel of *šiwwāh*, the basic meaning of which is “command.” In this context, the command is for Joshua to serve as Israel’s new leader, so it refers to commissioning him, as reflected in the predominant rendering “commission” in Num 27:19, 23; Deut 31:14, 23 by most English versions (e.g., NRSV, NASB 1995, NIV 2011, ESV, NET Bible, CEB).¹⁶ In Deut 31:14, the entire ceremony is described as commissioning Joshua,¹⁷ but in this account, it is YHWH himself who commissions Joshua at the Tent of Meeting, where Joshua and Moses present themselves. Verse 23 gives the words by which YHWH commissioned Joshua: “Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.” Thus, the divine speech took the form of a “charge” in the sense of exhorting Joshua regarding his new responsibility, which was to bring the Israelites into the land that God had promised them. This implies that Joshua’s commission could be fulfilled and finished once the conquest of the land would be accomplished and the Israelites would be safely settled in the land. Thus, after the land was distributed, Joshua retired at Timnath-serah (Josh 19:50).

Fifth, the purpose of the commissioning was to give/bestow on Joshua some of the authority that Moses had exercised in order that all the Israelites would obey him. Unlike Moses, Joshua would not receive his instructions through direct speech by God,¹⁸ but would be dependent on the mediation of the high priest to ascertain the divine will that he would then carry out in leading the people. Thus, commissioning did not

Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 106-43) or from the sanctuary (16:16, 19).

¹⁵ On a ritual activity serving as an “index,” see William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2004), 5-8.

¹⁶ Cf. *DCH* 7:101—“appoint, commission, to a leadership position,” citing Num 27:19, 23; Deut 3:28; 31:14, 23; 1 Sam 13:14; 25:30; 2 Sam 6:21; 7:11; 1 Kgs 1:35, etc.

¹⁷ Cf. Deut 3:28.

¹⁸ Contrast Moses, to whom God directly spoke (Exod 25:22; 33:9, 11; Num 7:89; 12:7-8; Deut 34:10).

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endow Joshua with priestly or prophetic special access to the deity. The prophetic legacy of Moses would continue, as Deut 34:9 says that the Israelites obeyed Joshua “and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.”

Sixth, unlike priestly ordination, Joshua’s commission was not hereditary.

Seventh, Joshua was male, but there was no divine specification that restricted such commissioning to males, as there was for priests (see above). God simply chose the person whom he wanted, who was a person of the Spirit (Num 27:18) and had the necessary leadership experience.¹⁹ He also chose both men and women as people of the Spirit to serve as prophets. In addition to being a prophetess, Deborah was the national court judge and commander-in-chief of armed forces belonging to several tribes (Judg 4:4-10, 14-16). There was no need for commissioning with hand-leaning on prophets because they were directly commissioned by God himself.

Separation and Dedication of Levites

Numbers 8 prescribes and then describes the ritual separation and dedication of the Levites to assist the priests with work at the sanctuary. The ceremony took place in front of the sanctuary and in the presence of the entire Israelite community (v. 9). Most of the ritual procedures, including sacrifices, were for purification from physical ritual impurity (vv. 6-8, 12, 21)²⁰ so that the Levites would not defile the sancta. Aside from this ritual purification, the core procedures of separating (Hiphil of *b-d-l*) the Levites from the other Israelites (v. 14) were quite simple, consisting of two elements. First, the other Israelites leaned their hands on the Levites (v. 10), thereby designating them as their representatives in a role of service to YHWH instead of the firstborn of the other tribes (vv. 16-18). Second, Aaron, the high priest, dedicated the Levites to God through a symbolic gesture of raising/uplifting them as an uplifted offering (Hiphil of *n-w-p* + *tənuṣpā*, literally, “raise as a raised offering”; vv. 11, 13, 15, 21).²¹

¹⁹ As a military commander (Exod 17:9-13) and Moses’ assistant (24:13; 33:11; Num 11:28).

²⁰ Including from corpse impurity, as indicated by Moses sprinkling the water of purification (*mē ḥattā’t*) on them (Num 8:7; cf. Num 19:9, 13, 17-21, called in Num 19 *mē niddā*, “water of [i.e., to purify from] impurity”).

²¹ It is not clear how the Levites were to be treated as an “uplifted offering” (*tənuṣpā*, not “wave offering”; v. 11), but this indicated that they were dedicated to the Lord. On *tənuṣpā* as “elevation offering,” see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation*

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The separation and dedication of the Levites was similar to the ordination of the priests in that it required physical ritual purification (cf. Moses washing the priests in Lev 8:6) and activities at the sanctuary, including sacrifices (vv. 8, 12, 21b). Separation of the Levites elevated their cultic status, in terms of access to the Lord's sanctuary, above that of the lay Israelites, but below that of the priests (see, e.g., 4:4-20). This separation was hereditary for future generations of Levites, but the work role for an individual Levite was only for prime years of his life, after which he would retire (8:24-25).

Like the priests, the members of the Levite work force were to be male, as shown by YHWH's explicit direction that Levite males should be numbered in their census (Num 3:15; cf. vv. 22, 28, 34, 39). Moreover, the Levite males were to serve in place of the firstborn males from the other tribes (vv. 40-41). Aside from this factor, possible reasons for the gender requirement for the Levite work force could coincide with those suggested above regarding the priests.

However, the separation and dedication of the Levites was simpler than the ordination of the priests. Like Joshua's commissioning, it included hand-leaning on those who were receiving authorization for a role on behalf of the community.

Commissioning in the New Testament

Nothing in the New Testament remotely resembles the ordination of the Aaronic priesthood. However, laying hands on individuals in designating them to perform particular roles as leading representatives of the Christian community, as Moses laid his hand(s) on Joshua, appears in two New Testament passages.²² These concern appointments of seven men as administrators (Acts 6) and Barnabas and Saul (later called Paul) as missionaries (Acts 13). Due to similarities in procedure and function

with Introduction and Commentary, AB 3 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 461-73. On offering the Levites as a *tənūpā* in Num 8:11, Milgrom observes that the gesture "must be presumed to have been executed only in symbolic form" (Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1990], 62).

²² Not included in the scope of this discussion are instances in which laying hands on someone signifies blessing on a child (Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; cf. Gen 48:14-16), is for physical healing (Mark 6:5; 8:23; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:12, 17-18; 28:8), or conveys the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6). Also not included are cases in which power or authority over demons or for healing is given without hand-laying (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:14-15; 6:7; Luke 9:1; cf. James 5:14-18).

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to the commissioning of Joshua, the simple ceremonies of appointment in the New Testament, briefly discussed below, can be regarded as commissioning. At first glance, Paul's references to hand-laying on Timothy appear to refer to his commissioning as a minister, so these passages are also discussed.

Commissioning of Administrators

In Acts 6, the twelve apostles instructed all of the Christian disciples to choose administrators to oversee equitable food distribution: "pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty" (v. 3). The assembled group agreed, so "they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," and six others, presumably also men of faith and of the Spirit (v. 5). "They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them" (vv. 6 NRSV). That is all.

As with Joshua's commissioning, the administrators were chosen because they were people of the Spirit. They were also wise and of good repute, having shown by past experience that they were capable. Just as Moses laid his hand(s) on Joshua, the apostles laid their hands on the deacons to designate the latter for a particular leadership role in the Christian community. The deacons were male, which made sense in this social context, but their gender was not mentioned, so this factor did not set a precedent as a prerequisite for future individuals whom the Christian community could commission for leadership roles.

There are some differences to Joshua's commissioning. Unlike Joshua, the deacons were initially picked by the community, rather than directly by God. However, the apostles prayed to God before laying their hands on the deacons. Thus, it appears that they submitted their choice to God.²³ The deacons did not come to replace the human party that laid hands on them, i.e., the apostles, as Joshua replaced Moses. Nor does Acts 6 explicitly refer to the apostles "charging" the deacons to commission them, although it can be assumed that the deacons were given their job description.

Commissioning of Missionaries

While Christians in the church at Antioch "were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for

²³ As in Acts 1:24-25 regarding a man to replace Judas, but without casting lots to choose between candidates, as was done when Matthias was chosen (v. 26).

the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:2-3). Here Barnabas and Saul were directly chosen by the divine will, apparently expressed through one of the prophets in the church (cf. v. 1), as Joshua was chosen by God, who spoke through his prophet Moses (see above). This was appointment to do a certain kind of work; it was not about elevation of religious status before God. As in Acts 6, the church members prayed and laid hands on them. Additionally, they fasted. The work to which the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul was communicated to them because they knew what to do: travel as missionaries to open up new regions for Christianity (Acts 13:4-14:26). Acts 14:26, which reports the end of their journey, indicates that the appointment of Barnabas and Saul was a commission, and it was temporary until it was completed: “and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended [*paradidōmi*] to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled” (word in italics supplied).

Spiritual Gift Conferred on Timothy

In 1 Tim 4:13-14, Paul encourages Timothy in his ministry: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.” In 2 Tim 1:6, Paul similarly reminds Timothy “to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” If this hand-laying is the same event, Paul would have laid his hands on Timothy with the council of elders.

That which Timothy received was not commissioning to a ministerial role per se, but a spiritual gift. This can be compared to what happened when Peter and John laid their hands on Samaritans who had been baptized, both men and women, so that they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12, 17; cf. vv. 18-19). Also, when Paul laid his hands on people from Ephesus after he baptized them, “the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying” (Acts 19:6). Nevertheless, whatever the precise nature of Timothy’s gift may have been, it was to enhance and empower his ministry, which involved spiritual leadership, including the responsibility of laying his hands on others when it was appropriate (1 Tim 5:22—not hastily).

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Conclusion

The Old Testament attests two distinct kinds of authorization rituals. First, the elaborate ordination of Aaronic priests elevated them to a higher cultic status that authorized them to have more intimate access to God's presence than the laity. This elevation was for life, and it was only for males. Second, the simple commissioning of Joshua, with hand-laying, authorized him to fulfill a representative leadership role for the Israelite community. The New Testament only has equivalents to the simpler commissioning ritual with hand-laying in order to authorize administrators and missionaries for their tasks, with no indication that they thereby gained elevated status in terms of access to God.

Absence of priestly ordination in the New Testament corresponds with the absence of human priests as cultic mediators in the New Testament Christian church. In the New Testament, the only priestly mediator is the divine-human Christ, who ministers in God's temple in heaven (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:17; 4:14-15; 5:5-6, 10; 6:20; chs. 7-10). All Christians comprise "a royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) in the sense that all Israelites were to be "a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6). There are leaders in the Christian church, but they do not have greater access to God than other Christians do, so an ontological distinction between priests or ministers and laypersons does not apply to New Testament Christianity. The tradition of sacramental ordination in Christianity is not from the New Testament; it entered Christian tradition from the Roman *ordinatio* (Latin) tradition after New Testament times.²⁴

As mentioned above, God required Old Testament ordained priests to be male, but there is no corresponding ordination with a gender restriction in the New Testament. This is raw data, not subject to interpretation. Therefore, debates about whether Christian women can be ordained along with men are simply irrelevant and off target if "ordination" is biblically defined as *millu'im*.

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²⁴ See, e.g., Darius Jankiewicz, "The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History," 2013. *Faculty Publications*, Paper 78. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/theology-christian-philosophy-pubs/78>.

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