1. Ordination in Judaism

A scholar should start with Adam or only a few generations after him. Let us, just for once, skip that and state that we know almost nothing about Jewish ordination in the time of Jesus. The earliest evidence refers to an ordination in the seventies of the first century AD by a rabbi with two witnesses besides him. The model is the commissioning of Joshua in Numbers 27:18-23 by Moses, who "laid his hands upon him." It seems to be impossible to distinguish this "leaning on of hands" (semika) from the more general "laying on of hands," as the Hebrew Old Testament does, since neither the Septuagint nor the Qumran writings distinguish the two gestures. Thus, first, we do not know whether the rite was performed before 70 AD, perhaps even by the whole synedrion (as it
was done later on), 5 or was introduced only after the fall of Jerusalem. What we find in the New Testament could have been influenced by the Old Testament models. 6 We can only say that the existence of the rite in the time of Jesus is more probable. 7 Second, we do not know whether the laying on of hands, if it was used at all, was thought of as transferring the spirit of wisdom to the ordained, as some rabbinic passages suggest, 8 or as merely confirming its presence prior to ordination, as Numbers 27:18 says, or as a more general gesture of praying and blessing. 9 Third, we do not know whether finished studies under a rabbi were, at that time, a condition for ordination; the legal aspect of conferring the authorization to autonomous decisions seems to belong to the later period of ordination by the synedrion. 10 What we can say is that the Spirit of God plays no role in the rite; this seems to suggest that the spirit of wisdom has rather been acquired in preceding studies and is acknowledged by ordination.

2. Jesus

When we now turn to Jesus, it is clear that he was not holding an office. There were priests and scribes, prebyters and council members; but God's history passed them by. So much so that it was not even necessary to fight against them. Neither holy persons nor holy places existed for Jesus, and yet, the sanctifying presence of God became mysteriously and overwhelmingly true. Jesus was a visitor of the synagogue services, but he healed there on the sabbath, and his "I tell you" made the living God, who speaks today, tower over the word codified in scripture. He taught in the temple, but he cast out money-changers and pigeon-sellers, without whom the cult could scarcely function. Equally well he could teach and heal on roads and hills with authority, and the true sacrifice was offered outside of the holy district of the temple. Neither did he need the minimum of ten persons prescribed for the Jewish service 11 - "where two or three are gathered, he is in the midst of them" - nor a competent academic study.

He differs totally from the scribes when he calls disciples to