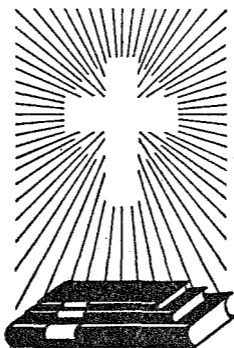

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

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REORGANIZED CHURCH
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The Laying on of Hands

Text.—"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."—Hebrews 6: 1, 2.

A better version of the text just quoted renders it, "Therefore *not* leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." No one would argue for a moment that we should leave faith behind, or that there is no further need to preach repentance.

Importance of This Ordinance

At first glance it might seem that the doctrine of the laying on of hands is not important. Really it is of great importance, for the following reasons: first, because of its *origin*; second, because of its *significance*; third, because of its *association*.

The ordinance of the laying on of hands is very ancient in human practice under divine direction. By commandment of God, Moses ordained

Joshua and set him apart with the laying on of hands. (See Numbers 27: 18-20).

Furthermore, the Lord chose to make it a part of his ritual under the gospel covenant. (Hebrews 6: 1, 2.)

It is important because of its *significance* as a symbol of power and authority. The human hand is the symbol and implement of man's power. With it he wields the sword, guides the pen and the brush, steadies the plow, directs the course of the steamship; in fact, executes all of the designs of his spirit and will upon matter.

It is also the symbol of God's power. We are told, "God came from Teman . . . he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power."—Habakkuk 3: 3, 4.

This language, of course, is highly figurative, yet symbolical. Man has always used symbols. God appeals to men on the plane of his own understanding. The laying on of hands is a symbol, in the church, of authority and power.

It is important because of its *association*: being associated in all biblical history and religious experience with the act of blessing: being associated further with the act of healing of the body and of the soul.

In the Blessing of Children

Infant baptism is unscriptural and unreasonable. Baptism is for those who can understand and believe. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Mark 16: 16.

For little children not old enough to understand the gospel or the significance of baptism, Jesus had a very beautiful ordinance. He took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. (See Mark 10: 13-16.)

In Ordination

As already cited, Moses ordained Joshua by the laying on of hands. (Numbers 27: 18-20.) That was the custom for many centuries, and it continued with new meaning in the church of Christ.

An example: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."—Acts 13: 2, 3.

Another example is found in Acts 6: 5, 6.

It was the universal custom in ordination in the church of Christ and

is still observed by many of the churches. Why should they not observe the laying on of hands in other ways, as was done in the church of Christ? As, for instance,

In Divine Healing

Christ set the example in this particular, "Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them."—Luke 4: 40.

His ministers were to do likewise: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also."—John 14: 12. Also, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."—Mark 16: 18.

The method of healing is thus set forth: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."—James 5: 14, 15.

This work was not to be limited to the twelve apostles. As an example to the contrary, note that Ananias, who was not one of the twelve, came and laid hands on Paul and healed him of his blindness. (Acts 9: 17.)

People should not entertain wild or fanatical ideas concerning divine healing; neither should they neglect sanitation and rational methods of treating the sick, yet it remains a fact that divine healing had its place in the church of Christ and must continue to have its place unless we are to admit that the power of God has departed from his church.

Healing is contingent on faith. There were places where even Jesus could "do no mighty works" because the people lacked faith. Divine healing is for the believer. It is not to make converts. It is a "sign" of the gospel. When not associated with the gospel, healing has much less significance or interest.

To Confirm Members and Bestow the Holy Ghost

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is to follow baptism in water: "Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3: 5); also "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar

off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”—Acts 2: 38, 39.

When the people of Samaria received the gospel and were baptized, Peter and John were sent unto them from Jerusalem and it is said that when they had arrived, “Then *laid they their hands on them*, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” (See Acts 8: 14-19.)

Paul, finding certain believers at Ephesus who had not been properly baptized, baptized them, and afterwards it is said, “And when Paul had *laid his hands upon them*, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.”—Acts 19: 6.

Jesus himself sent Ananias to lay hands upon Paul: “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and *putting his hands on him* said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, *hath sent me*, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”—Acts 9: 17.

The importance of the birth of the Spirit which witnesses of our adoption, testifies of Jesus, guides us into all truth, cannot be overestimated. Associated with it in the New Testament Scriptures was the beautiful ordinance of the laying on of hands of a ministry authorized to represent God.

Why Scoff at This Principle?

This ordinance has always been associated with great and holy experiences. It has a most deeply religious significance. God himself chose to make it part of his ritual. (Hebrews 6: 1, 2.) Who are we that we should withstand God? (Acts 11: 17.)

This series of little tracts thus far has treated upon four fundamental gospel principles—the four to which men may yield obedience in this life, namely: faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands.

The other two of the six mentioned in Hebrews 6: 1, 2, are doctrines having to do with the events towards which men look with faith, and hope, namely: the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment. Those two doctrines will be treated in subsequent tracts.

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