

The Angel Message Tracts

Chapter 6

LAYING ON OF HANDS

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*And I saw another angel fly in the midst
of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
to preach unto them that dwell on the
earth.---Revelation 14 : 6 : : :*



Published by the Herald Publishing House,
Independence, Missouri

Concerning Sound Doctrine

THE SOURCE

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.—John 7: 16.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.—2 Peter 1: 21.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.—Galatians 1: 11, 12.

THE TEST

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed.—2 John 9, 10.

THE PROMISE

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John 7: 17.

THE WARNING

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.—2 Timothy 4: 3, 4.

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.—Titus 2: 1.

THE BLESSING

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.—1 Timothy 4: 16.

THE DOCTRINE

Therefore ¹leaving 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.

¹A better version renders it, "Therefore *not* leaving." No one would argue that we should leave faith behind.

Laying on of Hands

CHAPTER 6

For many years Christianity has been heralded to the world as being of God. We believe this representation of the work of Christ to be altogether correct. Christ is the Savior of the world. Through him there was not reflected one ordinance, one commandment, one promise, that did not have to do with the welfare and salvation of men. Faith in Christ leads to an acceptance of all of those principles which in their entirety constitute Christianity.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16: 16.) Believeth what? Roman Catholicism, Greek Catholicism, all the doctrines of Protestantism, or what? We answer: the teachings of Jesus Christ and his authorized ministry—the gospel as it was taught by them in its entirety.

The gospel must be given representation before it can be believed; it can not be believed until it finds expression through the same teachings, ordinances, commandments, and promises given by Christ. A true belief of the gospel can follow only a correct and full representation of the gospel to the mind. Where only a fragmentary part of the work of Christ is represented the belief is not complete in the great work of Christ our Lord. All of Christianity is essential to salvation,—there are no nonessential doctrines or ordinances in the church of Jesus Christ.

A PERPETUAL ORDINANCE

James wrote:

Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.—James 1: 25.

That which is “perfect” is capable of unfoldment, but not of improvement. The gospel of Christ, which is made up of *parts*, is termed the “perfect law of liberty.” Without the parts there can not be the *whole*. To add to or take from what is perfect will render it imperfect. Now the laying on of hands was established as an ordinance of the Lord’s appointment; it is a part of his doctrine:

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.

It is here placed in the midst of the cardinal principles of the gospel of Christ: faith, repentance, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment; and is specifically referred to as a “principle” of the “doctrine of Christ.”

Christ commanded his apostles:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—Matthew 28: 18-20.

The church soon after this instruction was given,

both taught and practiced, *observed*, the laying on of hands. During the whole period of such teaching and practice the church was not under the guidance of uninspired men, not in apostasy, but was enjoying the favor of God in marvelous blessings from heaven. It is, therefore, conclusive that such observance was commanded by the Lord. In the midst of such practice by the church the apostle wrote:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, *one faith*, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.—Ephesians 4: 4-6.

FAILURE IN RESULTS

The present age of Christendom in no sense equals in its spiritual results those of the apostolic age. Noticeable among the defects of the present age are uninspired men, lack of unity of religious belief, multitudinous religious organizations, healing by the power of God denied, infants baptized, etc.

Every effect has an adequate cause; may the cause of the present religious unrest and spiritual darkness not be a repudiation of one or more of the forces ordained of God to bring spiritual sunshine in the lives of men? Therein lies the reason.

SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

With wonderment we have looked upon the advancement and achievements of the scientific world—men of science have endeavored to utilize every law which in its operation has been found beneficial to man. They have endeavored not only to maintain and perpetuate the scientific accomplishments of the past,

but to make greater use of the forces which in any age were found to add to human welfare. The invisible power of electricity is not only used to-day, but an attempt is made to widen the sphere of its operations; no one would say that the last word has been said concerning the development and use of this wonderful and invisible power.

Scientists do not merely hark back to past days of achievement and live therein, but gather up the forces of the past that have benefited man and *use them to-day*.

Many religious people are satisfied to think there were divine forces in operation nineteen hundred years ago by which the world was blessed, and which surrounded the church with a halo of glory,—but those forces *belong to the past!* Hearken! Is God a God only of the past? or of the past, present, and future? He has declared he is the great I AM. He said through Malachi: “I change not.”

Suppose men of science to-day would simply look to the splendid achievements of the past, and be content with a mere historical recital of scientific advancement, and deny the possibility of a like progress reaching this age.

Do not many religious people rejoice in a mere historical recital of the power of Christ manifested nineteen hundred years ago, and deny an equal manifestation of the power of Christ to-day?

May not the course pursued by scientists in clinging to what has been demonstrated to possess scientific value explain the cause of the decline and lack of spiritual results in Christendom to-day?

Would it be a source of gratification to think of the scientific world to-day not equaling in its results the scientific achievements of the past?

Is it inspiring to think of the religious world to-day not equalling in its blessings and manifestations of power the church of Jesus Christ in the first century?

Persons do not care to attend church where there is not an administration of the means ordained of God to satisfy their spiritual nature—just as persons are restless under a form of government that does not provide a medium for the exercise of their inalienable political rights.

It will be found that the laying on of hands held a high and important position in the divine economy under Christ, under whose rule and the administration of whose ordinances there were wrought the marvelous achievements chronicled in the New Testament. The precious promises of the gospel of Christ can be realized to-day by an observance of the laws and an acceptance of the means ordained of God through Jesus Christ—through which the power of God finds expression.

The laying on of hands was practiced for many purposes:

FOR ORDINATION

Very clearly is it outlined in the Scriptures that imposition of hands was practiced in ordaining to the ministry:

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where-

unto 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.

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.—Acts 6: 5, 6.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.—1 Timohy 4: 14.

Through this ordinance authority was conferred to preach and officiate in the ordinances of the Lord's house, after a call from God to the ministry. No one can be a self-constituted ambassador of Christ. Without knowing the divine mind no one can represent God, or send men to represent him. The Lord must call by revelation, and then the person is set apart by the laying on of hands of those in authority. The necessity of ordination as a prerequisite to preaching is found in the words of Christ:

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils.—Mark 3: 14, 15.

FOR HEALING THE SICK

Christ provided in his church the power to heal the body as well as to save the soul. He commissioned his apostles:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs

shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.—Mark 16: 15-18.

It will be noted that these blessings were not limited to the apostles, but were to follow believers of the gospel proclaimed by the apostles. The Lord announces clearly the recovery of the sick through the *laying on of hands*, as one of the signs following believers of the gospel.

In no sense were fanatical ideas held by the church. Luke is referred to as the “beloved physician” (Colossians 4: 14), which indicates that there was no disparagement of the true physician’s skill in alleviating bodily ills. God’s law is in its operation remedial, preventive, and miraculous. All have not faith to be healed, as is evidenced from Paul’s words to Timothy:

Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.—2 Timothy 4: 20.

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.—1 Timothy 5: 23.

It is seen from the foregoing that the power to heal was with God and not with the ministry to heal whomsoever they desired. A physician to the church could be of immense assistance. But it is clear that God provided in his church a power, accessible by faith, that would supplement man’s powers when used to the utmost. This healing power of God was not placed in the church to encourage ignorance, or violation of law, spiritual or natural.

No promise is made that the sick should always

be healed instantly, but that they should "recover." The testimony of the church to-day is that the promises of God are sure, and that God has not changed.

The following references will suffice to prove the laying on of hands was practiced for the healing of the sick:

And he [Jesus] could do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.—Mark 6: 5, 6.

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.

And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.—Acts 28: 8.

And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.—Mark 5: 22, 23.

It will be observed that so well was it known outside of the church that the laying on of hands was practiced for the healing of the sick that Jairus in making his request of Jesus to heal his daughter, said: "Come and lay thy hands on her."

The following reveals clearly the practice of the church:

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; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.—James 5: 14, 15.

FOR THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN

Children under the age of accountability were not sprinkled by the church of Jesus Christ, but were blessed through the ordinance of the laying on of hands:

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.—Matthew 19:13-15.

Not one case of infant baptism is recorded in the Scriptures. The practice of Christ in the blessing of children, given as an example to the church, is the practice of his church to-day. He is “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” (Hebrews 3:1.)

Read also Genesis 48:8-19 (which reveals that through this ordinance patriarchal or spiritual blessings were given).

FOR CONFIRMATION AND BESTOWAL OF HOLY GHOST

Baptized persons were not initiated into the church by giving their “hand to the preacher and their heart to God.” They were confirmed members of the church by the laying on of hands, and were entitled as members of the “body of Christ” to the reception of the Holy Ghost. The Lord said:

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.—John 14: 15-18.

Of the practice of the church in Samaria we read:

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

And when Simon saw that through 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. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.—Acts 8: 12, 14-20.

Paul received the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost:

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.

Note that Jesus himself sent Ananias to lay his hands on Paul for the conferring of the Holy Ghost and for healing.

In building up the kingdom of God Paul practiced the ordinance:

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe

on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.—Acts 19: 4-6.

Paul says he received his gospel “by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1: 12.) Jesus says he did not speak of himself, but as his Father commanded. (John 12: 49.) God and Jesus were back of Paul in this work.

The church did not enter into competition with itself, therefore the practice of the church was in harmony with the foregoing examples.

The following indicates the probability of the apostles receiving the laying on of hands:

And when he had said this, he breathed [which shows close proximity] on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.—John 20: 22.

Luke records:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he *lifted up his hands, and blessed them.*—Luke 24: 49, 50.

Concerning those who united with the church on the day of Pentecost, we read:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.—Acts 2: 41, 42.

The “apostles' doctrine” is found represented in

the *practice* of the church; and in the teaching of Paul to the Hebrews:

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.

Through the ordinance of baptism there comes the “remission of sins” (Acts 2: 38); through the ordinance of the laying on of hands the Holy Ghost is given.

CONCLUSION

God did not, in blessing through the laying on of hands, indorse a meaningless ceremony. His ministry were not practitioners of an empty, hollow form. The laying on of hands was one of the “principles of the doctrine of Christ,”—such was the ordinance that was practiced by Christ, Peter, John, Paul, Ananias, et al; and such was the ordinance after the practice of which followed an authoritative administration of the gospel, the healing of the sick, the blessing of children, patriarchal blessings, and the reception of the Holy Ghost.

God has not changed—the gospel is still the “power of God unto salvation.”

To receive the blessings enjoyed and accomplish the works performed in the days of primitive Christianity, the ordinances then employed should now be obeyed. It is not consistent to practice the laying on of hands for one purpose and not for all the purposes for which it was observed by the New Testa-

ment church. In case of doubt in religious as in all other matters, one should take the safe side.

To overemphasize or complacently ignore this ordinance of the church of God is disastrous to spiritual life.

As the highest developments of science of any age are not discarded, but an attempt is made to perpetuate and maintain them, so this ordinance employed by the church by which great blessings from God were received should not be discarded but should be practiced, perpetuated, and maintained among all believers in Christ. We should have at least a condition *equal to the greatest advancement ever reached through the employment of divine forces.*

The church is not weakened but strengthened by giving all church ordinances their proper places. The means by which Christ performed his work nineteen hundred years ago have not become obsolete.

God is unchangeable and is no respecter of persons—the work of Christ in its entirety is for men to-day.

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NOTE.—If a man die, shall he live again? Is the human spirit immortal? These old yet ever new questions will be answered in the next chapter.