

Texas Baptist Forum

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Laying on hands

Scripture places much more importance upon “laying on hands” than those esteemed men who were cited in “Laying on hands” (March 20). Hebrews 6:1-2 lists laying on hands as a foundational doctrine, giving it weight equal to repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptisms, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.

Out ((Loud))

“For faith to be authentic, it must be freely embraced. ... In a post-9/11 world where individuals die for their faith while others kill in the name of their religion, America's founding principle of religious liberty takes on even greater prominence.”

Robert A. Seiple

U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom (RNS)

“Immigrants have values that can convert America and return America to the values of thrift and hard work.”

Manuel A. Vasquez

University of Florida religion professor (RNS)

“My sense is that we will see the development of human/animal hybrids, mammals that have more and more bits of human in them. You can see a progression developing here that you might not be able to stop.”

Nigel Cameron

Professor of bioethics at the Illinois Institute of Technology (RNS)

“It's arrogant to say that either religion or science can answer all our questions. I don't see the need either to banish one or the other or to artificially unite them.”

Susan Fisher Miller

Editor and English professor in Atlanta, commenting on the “debate” between religion and evolution (*New York Times*)

How could Charles Spurgeon reject the practice “as a form of ritualism that could easily lapse into popery”? He did not refuse to preach the doctrines of grace, although many perverted the teachings to become libertines.

1 Timothy 4:14 also is useful in this discussion. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” This Scripture illustrates the following:

- In the early church, the laying on of hands was administered by the presbytery, not the congregation.
- The laying on of hands was a prophetic act, not a priestly act, requiring men who were proven to know the Scripture (“able to teach”) to judge the validity of the prophetic word. For example, we know from Scripture that God calls individuals to be pastors. However, we cannot ascertain from Scripture exactly who that particular individual is for our church. This requires a prophetic word discerned by those who are mature.
- This Scripture clearly states that grace (“the gift that is in thee”) is in fact conveyed and not merely acknowledged in the process.

This doctrine deserves a much more biblical treatment.

Robert Massey

Conroe

Journalistic license

Regarding Kelvin Kelly’s article considering women pastors (March 20): Biblical standards must supersede religious standards or our faith practices will devolve into exactly what this young man desires—a social and contextual approach to ministry rather than one founded on biblical truth

and biblical principles!

The obvious textual reading of 1 Timothy is biblically correct and must be applied within all social and contextual settings: The pastor shall be the husband; therefore, he cannot be a she!

Attempting to make Scripture conform to culture rather than make cultural conform to Scripture is a dangerous undertaking. Kelly's attempt is a travesty to proper scriptural exegesis, interpretation and application. It is a perfect example of situation ethics—society and culture demand women's equality with men (whatever that means!); therefore, Scripture must be interpreted to fit the social conditions in deference to the demanded biblical standard.

Kelly's article is poor journalism. It panders to those who will use it to justify their societal stance on the subject. Hopefully, it will enrage more than just me who will be willing to confront this type of journalistic license.

Jim Salles

Beaumont

Church labels

Much has been written about our churches not identifying themselves as "Baptist." It seems to be widely, but quietly, agreed that the title "Baptist" is a hindrance to recruiting, but nothing I've read states how we have come to this questionable condition.

Consider the following explanation: Our highly publicized civil war in which the conservatives took control of the Southern Baptist Convention from the moderates sent the public a message that not everyone is welcome in our ranks.

In our gallant quest for biblical authority, we have inadvertently become the group known for what we are against rather than what we are for, not unlike the Pharisees of old. Our targets have included Mickey Mouse, public education, trick or treating, Harry Potter and wives who presume to have a vote in family matters.

Our grand traditions of congregational authority and priesthood of the believer are being compromised by pastors who see themselves as spiritual dictators. Freedom of thought is taking a back seat to blind obedience.

Because of these misguided efforts, what was once America's greatest evangelical denomination has been tragically reduced to cult status in the eyes of much of the secular domain.

In an attempt to be constructive, may I suggest we adjust any condescending or judgmental attitude toward others to that of our Savior's posture eloquently penned in a song, "He looked beyond my fault and saw my need."

John H. Townsend

Memphis, Tenn.

Definition of 'day'

Bill Kincaid's critique of David Jones' letter (March 20) doesn't mention that "yom" in Genesis 1 is defined by "evening and morning"—one Earth revolution, and an ordinal, "one," "second," etc.

While God didn't say "24 hours," every Hebrew scholar, taking the text at face value (exegesis) without reading in evolution (eisegesis), says Moses meant a normal day. Exodus 20:11 says we have a seven-day week because that's how long creation took. Jesus said man was made in the beginning,

not after billions of years (Mark 10:6).

Some have elevated evolution to the level of a fifth gospel. Not only is evolution not scientific, it violates every law of science and was long ago disproved.

Nobel Science Prize winner George Wald said: “When it comes to the origin of life, there are only two possibilities—spontaneous generation and special creation. Spontaneous generation was disproved a hundred years ago. That leaves us only with special creation. We refuse to accept that on philosophical grounds. Therefore, we are left with the unenviable position of having to believe the impossible.”

T.N. Tahmisian of the Atomic Energy Commission said, “In explaining evolution, we do not have one iota of fact.”

The scandal of our day is the censorship of scientific data explainable only by intelligent design. The decisions of judges turning our Constitution on its head are legendary. It’s no surprise when they come down on the wrong side of this issue. What is surprising are Christians who champion such censorship.

Brian Burgess

Peacock

Scientific evidence

I am an experienced and reasonably successful scientist and a biblical inerrantist. Thus, I believe I am qualified to comment on recent letters about the scientific basis for evolution.

The idea that the second law of thermodynamics precludes evolution is

wrong. A greater increase in disorder at one location can be used to drive creation of order elsewhere. The disorder created by the nuclear reactions in the sun is more than enough to balance order created on Earth. Spontaneous creation of order is a common occurrence, for example, when salt crystals form.

Dating by tree rings is absolutely reliable and gives ages much older than the 6,000 years proposed by anti-evolutionists. These dates agree perfectly with carbon 14 dates.

There are many examples of transition forms in the fossil record. Thus, evolution is a reasonably good theory.

In addition, it does not contradict Genesis. Had God intended us to believe that creation occurred in six solar days, he would not have stated that a day occurred before the creation of the sun, and he would not have used a word (“yom”) that can mean “day” or “an era of time” (as it does in Genesis 2:4).

There is plenty of room in Genesis for evolution as a natural tool used by God, along with some supernatural ones. Insisting they are incompatible will not change the mind of people who really know the evidence, but it will continue to make them less receptive to the gospel.

Stephen Pruet

Bossier City, La.

Proud of partnership

It was with great satisfaction and pride that I read of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board’s decision to form a three-year partnership with the Baptist General Convention of Missouri.

Prior to moving to Waco in 2001 to attend Truett Seminary, I spent six years as a Missouri Baptist as my husband earned dual undergraduate degrees at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar and then pastored First Baptist Church in Weaubleau.

We grieved as we watched the turmoil begin, as the Missouri Baptist Convention began legal proceedings against the state Baptist Home, Windermere Conference Center, Word & Way and other institutions.

Our brothers and sisters in Missouri are to be commended, and yes, supported for taking a stand in defense of historic Baptist principals. As a convention who has worked through many of these difficult issues, it is fitting that the BGCT support the BGCM.

Texas Baptists, I plead with you to pray for this partnership, Executive Director Jim Hill and the BGCM.

Michele L. King

Waco

. Letters are limited to 250 words.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.