

Deacon, and from his hands received baptism. On this being made known to the Apostles at Jerusalem, they immediately sent two of their number to lay their hands on the converts, and pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost. You observe it was a special function of Apostles, something above and beyond the office of a deacon, (one qualified merely to *initiate* new members,) this laying-on-of-hands. Again (in the xix. chap.) we find that S. Paul came to Ephesus, and found there certain disciples, of whom he enquired whether they had received the Holy Ghost, evidently by the laying-on-of-hands. If they had not, his intention was to communicate the blessing himself, having apostolic rank. He supposed they had already been admitted to the church by the initiatory rite, for you may remember, when they said in reply to his question, that they had not heard of the Holy Ghost having been given to believers in Christ,* he asks in surprise, “unto what then were ye baptized?” And on learning that it was only as disciples of S. John the Baptist, he caused them first to be baptized as *Christians*, and then he laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. In both these instances, Imposition of hands is closely connected with Baptism.

Here *an objection* may be raised—was not all this laying-on-of-hands intended to confer the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit? True, we *reply*, but though all these *Gifts*, the manifestation of an in-dwelling Spirit, were in that age granted because in that age necessary, still the *Grace* that enlightens, the *Grace* that sanctifies, the *Grace* that consoles the heart, is just as needful now as in the days of the Apostles. This *Grace* is given as fully and as copiously now as it was then; and from the fact that miraculous *Gifts* are

* This is the true meaning of the passage. See Conybeare and Howson L. & E. of S. Paul, and Wordsworth's Gk. Test. in loc.