

**A RE-EXAMINATION OF PENTATEUCHAL HAMARTIOLOGY  
AND ATONEMENT AS A HERMENEUTICAL FRAMEWORK  
FOR INTERPRETING THE LAYING ON OF HANDS**

Name of researcher: Slavisa Milodar Jankovic  
Name of faculty adviser: Richard M. Davidson, PhD  
Date completed: October, 2020

The ritual gesture of laying on of hands in Scripture has generated significant interest among theologians from rabbinic times until now. Still today, scholars assign various meanings to the ritual. In the second half of the 20th century, the fresh interest that put forward new meanings for this gesture came primarily through the introduction of the new sub-discipline of Ritualistics within Old Testament studies. This relatively new discipline is not founded upon premises found in biblical texts, but rather, upon those found in various secular social, philosophical sciences, and other disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, literary criticism, and the study of religion. These disciplines often reject major presuppositions found in biblical texts, and scholarly studies based on these approaches have produced multiple proposals regarding the meaning of this gesture. Such proposals generally offer incomplete, limited insights into the biblical meaning conveyed by laying on of hands. I have sought to avoid this interpretative misstep in the context of identifying the meaning of laying on of hands by (1) adopting premises found in the biblical text, especially concerning the nature of human beings and the concepts of sin and atonement, and (2) conducting a reading of the biblical text that applies a terminological/contextual/intertextual approach. The traditional meaning of laying on of hands in cultic contexts has been that of transfer, with various qualities transferred such as sin, guilt, authority, general human sinfulness, and others. Very often the idea of substitution is included in the meaning of the ritual. Through a fresh study of the concepts of sin and atonement, and building upon biblical premises concerning the nature of human beings, I conclude that the meaning of transfer emerges from the biblical texts more than any other, and constitutes the foundational meaning of this ritual.