

# Scripture

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## THE SACRAMENT OF HEALING (Jas. 5:14-15)

The epistle of St James, along with that of St Jude and the second of St Peter, belongs to a group of writings which, because they are independent of the great Pauline and Johannine corpus, have an importance all their own. Together with parts of the Acts of the Apostles and, to some extent, the synoptic gospels they are our chief quarry when it comes to drawing the material for a picture of the earliest church of all, the Jewish church, its organisation, its mentality, its doctrine, its prejudices. The passage with which we are dealing occurs at the end of the epistle of St James and furnishes the only allusion in the New Testament to our sacrament of last anointing. The earliest allusion to a rite of last anointing in *Christian* practice apart from the New Testament is to be found in Origen (third to fourth century).<sup>1</sup> Our interpretation of this passage of St James will therefore derive mainly from the New Testament itself and from near-contemporary Jewish literature and practice.

After an inscription the epistle begins with a homily on patiently bearing suffering (1:1-18); the writer then speaks of the duty of living according to the gospel (1:19-29). This is followed by a warning against unjust discrimination of the poor (2:1-13), after which comes the well-known passage on the importance of showing one's faith by good works (2:14-26). There follow homilies on the control of the tongue (3:1-12), on true and false wisdom (3:13-18), on the causes of strife (4:1-12). In 4:13-5:6 there is a series of admonitions and proverbs directed against the traders and the rich, and in 5:7-20 a similar series of proverbial admonitions on patience (7-11), on swearing (12), on prayer—especially for those who are sick (13-18)—and on winning

<sup>1</sup> *Hom. 2 in Levit.* GCS 29 295f. Origen quotes the text of St James to illustrate the seventh means of remitting sin in the N.T., 'when the sinner bathes his couch in tears . . . and when he is not ashamed to show his sin to the priest of the Lord and seek the remedy.' But it is not certain that Origen looks on the ritual as a *last* anointing prior to entry to another life, rather than as a sacrament of physical and spiritual restoration. cf. Paul F. Palmer, S.J., 'The purpose of anointing the sick,' *Theological Studies*, XIX, 1958, pp. 309-44. After a detailed study of early prayer formularies and sacramentaries Father Palmer concludes that 'up to the middle of the twelfth century there is little in the documents to commend the view that extreme unction was looked upon as the preparation of the dying Christian soul for immediate entrance to heaven. The one purpose . . . was to *cure* the sick person both physically and spiritually' (art. cit., p. 342).

back the erring brother (19-20). All these lessons and admonitions are put together without any clear-cut principle of division; like links of a chain each passage follows on the other through an association of ideas or words. The epistle as a whole is intended to inculcate a way of life and practical wisdom pleasing to God, the dominant motives being the love of God and our neighbour and a supernatural outlook on life, its temptations and sufferings, its wealth and poverty. The style is parenetic, like that of late Jewish literature; the predominant literary form is the proverb—reminding one to some extent of the work of Jesus Sirach, or the synoptic tradition; the emphasis on practical life and wisdom gives a strong Jewish colouring to the whole work. Christian traits are few, but those which do exist are so inserted into the woof of the work as to leave little doubt that the letter is by a Jewish Christian author.<sup>1</sup>

The writer signs himself: 'James the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ' (1:1). According to tradition this is James the Less, the brother (cousin) of Jesus and the head of the Christian community at Jerusalem. Along with Peter and John he was looked upon by St Paul as one of the 'pillars of the Church' (Gal. 2:9). No convincing reason has been brought forward for denying that this James<sup>2</sup> is the author of the epistle. His letter, therefore, is an important document, emanating from a Jewish Christian milieu and witnessing to an important church. Much has been written on the relationship of the letter to that of St Paul to the Romans, especially as regards the controversy on faith and good works. The latter does not concern us here, but the general impression is that St James' theology is pre-Pauline in character (though not necessarily in date) and closer to the synoptic tradition.

The over-all character of the epistle, as well as the inscription 'to the twelve tribes of the dispersion,' shows that it was written for Jewish Christians of the *diaspora*.<sup>3</sup> Nowhere else in the New Testament is the

<sup>1</sup> To mention the important ones: the author speaks of 'faith in the Lord Jesus Christ' (2:1); of 'the law of freedom' (1:25; 2:12); of being begotten to God through the 'word of truth' (1:18); of 'the honourable name,' which in the context is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (2:7); of the 'coming of the Lord' (5:7-11) and of the 'elders of the church' (5:14). His admonition on swearing recalls the parallel admonition in the sermon on the mount (5:12). The theory of A. Meyer (*Das Rätsel des Jakobsbriefes*, 1930) that the epistle was originally a Jewish writing, later re-edited and given a Christian slant by a Christian author, has not gained general acceptance. (Cf. however B. S. Easton in *The Interpreter's Bible*, VOL. XII, 1957, who in his introduction to the epistle of James revives Meyer's hypothesis with modifications.)

<sup>2</sup> The other James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, had been put to death by Herod Agrippa about 40 A.D. (Acts 12:2).

<sup>3</sup> 'The twelve tribes of the dispersion' could well mean the whole Christian Church but it is more probable that the writer looks on the small Jewish Christian community, the remnant which has believed in the Messiah, as the true Israel—in flesh and spirit—and therefore the true people of the tribes.

Christian community called by the Jewish term *synagogue* (2:2). It was written at a time when Jewish Christians were still an important body within the Church, therefore not later than the fall of Jerusalem; and since we maintain St James to have been the writer, it must have been written before his death, about A.D. 62.

The passage on the anointing of the sick occurs in the course of an admonition about prayer at the end of the epistle. The following is a rather literal translation of the portion in which we are here interested :

(13) Does any one among you suffer? Let him pray. Is any one cheerful? Let him sing praise. (14) Is any one sick among you? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is infirm and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (16) Confess therefore your sins to one another and pray for each other, that you may be healed; for the powerful prayer of a just man has great effect.

From a warning against the wrong use of the name of God by swearing (v. 12) St James passes to its right use in prayer. By prayer the pious man can raise himself up to God, no matter what his external circumstances may be: if he suffers, then, instead of complaining, let him pray to God; if he is in good spirits, then, instead of dissipating himself, let him sing God's praise; if he is sick, then, instead of worrying or relying on human aid, let him call in the ministers of the Church that they may pray over him.

*Is any one sick among you?* Nothing in the text indicates that anything other than bodily sickness is in question, nor are we told *how* sick the person is. In the Jewish mind, it is true, sin and sickness were closely linked, somewhat as cause and punishment, or as twin evils to which our fallen flesh is heir. But it is first of all from bodily sickness, whatever the cause to which St James may have attributed it, that the sick person is to be healed. Or, perhaps, it would be better to specify that St James does not differentiate between sin and sickness in quite the same way that we do—any more than he differentiates between body and soul, in accord with ideas which we inherit more from Greek philosophy than from the Hebrew world. For St James the object of the anointing ritual is the concrete sick person—body and soul—and its effect is restoration, both bodily and spiritual.

The fundamental meaning of *asthenēs* is 'without strength,' 'weak.' The noun *astheneia* is the word generally used in the gospels for the many sicknesses healed by Jesus. So many were cured (*therapeuesthai*) from their sicknesses (or from 'spirits' (Luke 8:2; cf. Luke 5:15)) that Matthew (8:17) saw in Jesus the fulfilment of Is. 53:4: 'himself has taken our sicknesses and borne our infirmities.' The word *astheneia* does not *per se* connote a grave illness; there may, however, be a

'sickness unto death' (John 11:4), just as there may be a 'sin unto death' (1 John 5:16). Further on (v. 15) St James uses the word *kamṓn*, which means to be physically weary or debilitated.<sup>1</sup> According to the prevailing idea of the time sickness could be brought about either by spirits (cf. Matt. 17:18; Luke 13:11—'a spirit of sickness') or by sins (1 Cor. 11:30; Mark 2:5).<sup>2</sup> Whence the treatment of sickness in the ancient world generally was not merely medicinal but often exorcistic as well. (See p. 38, note 2.)

*Let him call for the presbyters of the Church.* It is part of the supernatural outlook on life inculcated by St James that when sickness comes the sick person should rely first and foremost on prayer, in the present instance on the official and powerful prayer of the presbyters of the Church. Our word for presbyters is priests. Yet, in ordinary Greek usage the word for a priest (meaning one deputed to offer sacrifice to the deity) is *hierēus*; it is the word used throughout the Greek Septuagint translation for the Hebrew *kohēn*. But it is very rarely used in the New Testament, except in reference to the priests of the Jewish liturgy.<sup>3</sup> The English word *priest* comes from the Greek *presbuteros* (presbyter) which is a comparative form meaning, primarily, 'one who is older,' as opposed to one who is younger (*neōteros*). Then it can mean an 'old man' or, again, an 'elder,' that is, one who is a member of a college of elders. In the last case it is more a title of dignity than an indication of age (like our 'Senator'). Colleges of elders were a feature of Jewish life and history. In early Hebrew history elders were the ruling authorities of tribes or clans; after the conquest of Canaan Jewish cities were ruled by elders; and, in the last two centuries before Christ we find that the elders had representation on the Jewish high council along with the high-priests and the teachers of the Law. Lastly, we know from Jewish inscriptions that synagogues were administered by colleges of elders.

In the New Testament local churches were administered, at least

<sup>1</sup> Bauer, however, notes that the meaning *to be sick beyond hope, to wither away, even to die* (Wis. 4:16; 15:9), is not impossible.

<sup>2</sup> On the link between sin and sickness and on our Lord's apparent correction of the prevailing Jewish mentality (John 9:2) see T. Worden, 'The meaning of sin,' *Scripture*, IX, 1957, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> This does not, of course, imply that early Christian ministers did not exercise priestly functions. Christ himself is never called an *hierēus*, except in the epistle to the Hebrews where he is depicted as a high-priest (*archiereus*) exalted to heaven, and the counterpart to the high-priest of the Jewish liturgy. Yet the priestly character of Christ's redemptive work cannot be denied. The fact is that Christianity, for all its originality, emerged as a sect of Judaism. The first Christians, while possessing their own rites (breaking of bread, baptism) and their own identity, still participated in the cult of the temple. The technical term 'priests' (*hierēis*) still belonged to the ministers of the Jewish liturgy.

In 1 Pet. 2:5, 9 Christians are called a 'holy priesthood' (*hierateuma*). But the whole passage derives from Exod. 19:6 and has to be interpreted in the light of it.

during the early period, by colleges of elders and the analogy with the contemporary Jewish synagogues is striking. We find elders in the church at Antioch (Acts 11:30); we find them installed by St Paul in the churches of Lystra, Derbe and Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 14:23); we find them in Jerusalem along with the Apostles, making decrees for the Church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22f.; 16:4—'Apostles and elders,' analogy to the Jewish *synhedrium*?<sup>1</sup>). Together the elders form the *presbyterion* (1 Tim. 4:14), a word which almost certainly means the 'college' of elders, and not an abstract 'eldership' or 'priesthood.' In one passage outside the pastoral epistles the presbyters are also designated *episcopoi* (literally 'overseers'), which shows that the use of the titles was as yet in a fluid state, the one connoting dignity, the other a status or office (cf. Acts 20:18-35).<sup>2</sup>

In our passage the *presbyters of the Church* are clearly the college of elders that presided over the Christian community. The definite article sets them apart; they are not merely a venerable body of charismatics. It is also clear that it is by virtue of their office as heads of the local church that they have the power of healing.<sup>3</sup>

The early Church knew of a charism of healing, a communication

<sup>1</sup> cf. Bornkamm, *TWNT* vi 663, 15ff.

<sup>2</sup> In the pastoral epistles too the office of *episcopus* might appear identical with that of presbyter, viz. 'to preside' and 'to teach' (1 Tim. 5:17; 3:5; Tit. 1:9); in Tit. 1:5 where Titus is told to establish *presbyters* in each city, a description of the ideal *bishop* immediately follows! And yet the two functions cannot be identified absolutely. The *episcopus* is always singular; the presbyters always form a college and the passages about each office are quite distinct, with the exception of Tit. 1:5, 7-9. Even in this passage the change of number and the special enumeration of qualities speaks against absolute identification. The two offices, according to Bornkamm, are envisaged from different points of view. He discerns in the pastoral epistles a tendency towards the monarchical episcopate, growing up alongside of the Jewish tradition of elders, a process which appears already at an earlier stage in Acts 20:17, 28 for the same area (Asia Minor) and in 1 Clement (for Rome). The college of presbyters appear only in Jewish churches, or in churches founded by Jews (Bornkamm, *TWNT* vi 667-8). By the commencement of the second century the monarchical episcopate is widespread (cf. especially the letters of Ignatius Martyr). According to Catholic faith it was of divine institution; therefore the powers of order and jurisdiction which belonged to the bishops must have been borne and transmitted in the earlier period by the Apostles or 'apostolic delegates' such as Timothy and Titus.

<sup>3</sup> With this Bornkamm is in agreement (*TWNT* vi 664). But he goes on: 'Since James 5:16 does not speak of confession of sins before priests but of mutual confession and prayer for one another and, especially, of the power of prayer of the just man, James 5:14 will not allow any deductions on the place of the presbyters as confessors or on their function as liturgists of the community.' One will agree with the first part of this statement; there is not sufficient evidence to indicate that the confession of which James speaks is sacramental confession. But the second part is open to question. If, as he himself claims, the charism of healing is attached to the office of the presbyters; if, as the text would seem to indicate, the ritual has the character of a sacrament, then surely the presbyters are more than wise or just men praying for a sick person. The rite of anointing is one of the evidences, along with the 'laying on of hands of the priestly college' (1 Tim. 4:14) and the presiding over the eucharistic meal, which we must associate with the presbyters, that the office of the presbyters also included the power of order.

of the Holy Spirit to certain favoured Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 12:6, 9, 11, 28). Believers in Jesus would, according to Mark 16:18, 'lay their hands on the sick and they would be well.' Such special gifts or charisms were clearly sporadic manifestations of the Spirit and not connected, so far as we can determine, with any office or rite. But the healing ritual described by St James, while it is of the same order as these charisms of healing, is not of the same kind. In St James the power of healing is connected with the *office* of the presbyters.

*And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* The presbyters are to pray *over* the man—not 'for' him. The sense is local; they gather round the sick person, who lies prostrate, and pray over him.<sup>1</sup> In the next verse the prayer is called the 'prayer of faith,' that is, prayer inspired by complete faith. In the teaching of Jesus faith is an absolute prerequisite for the performance of miracles (Matt. 21:21; Mark 9:23; 11:22-4; 16:17f.) and of works of healing (Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34; 16:18; Luke 8:48), while St James himself says in 1:6: 'Let him pray in faith, in no way wavering, for he that wavers is like the billow of the sea, stirred and tossed by the wind.' This prayer of faith is accompanied by an anointing with oil, the oil being olive oil which in the ancient world was a universal therapeutic agent. When our Lord sent his disciples out into the villages and towns of Galilee to preach the kingdom we are told that 'they anointed many sick with oil and healed them' (Mark 6:13), a practice which was no doubt a prelude to the rite described by St James and of the same order. In the prayer of the priests and the material anointing with oil one can detect the two elements of a sacrament.<sup>2</sup> 'In the

<sup>1</sup> The preposition *epi* could possibly hide an allusion to an imposition of hands, mentioned in Mark 16:18 and in the rite mentioned by Origen (*Hom. in Lev. 2:4*).

<sup>2</sup> *Aleiphō* (to anoint) in the Greek Septuagint nearly always translates the Hebrew *sāḥ*, used of anointing in the ordinary material or therapeutic sense. Another Hebrew verb, *mašāḥ*, is used of anointing in the sacral sense, e.g. the anointing of kings. This is usually translated by the Greek *chrīō*. (The passive *mašāḥ* (messiah) is translated *christos*, anointed one).

Anointing texts in the N.T. fall into three categories: (1) anointing the body as an expression of joy and good spirits (Matt. 6:17); (2) anointing a guest to do him honour (Luke 7:38, 46; John 12:3; Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3—in the last three instances the anointing is given a deeper sense: it was done in anticipation of our Lord's burial); (3) anointing the sick (Mark 6:13; Jas. 5:14; cf. Luke 10:34). Apropos of the anointing of the sick, Schlier notes that in the ancient world olive oil was used not only for purely therapeutic or medicinal purposes (cuts, bruises, skin-diseases, etc.) but also as a *magic-medicinal* or *exorcistic* agent. The demarcation line between the two uses is never clear-cut, for all sicknesses (and especially those of a psychic character) could be traced to demonic influence. The exorcistic use of oil is testified to in Jewish writings (*Test. Sal.* 18, 34; *Vita Adam* 36, 40-42; *Slav. Hen.* 22, 8f.) and also in the Christian *Act. Thomae* (67).

Along with this exorcistic usage there also developed a sacramental practice; it was to be found among certain Gnostics in the form of a baptism of oil; it existed in the Church, in the form of an exorcism either before or after the rite of baptism; it was

New Testament anointing with oil is a medicinal-exorcistic action on the sick. In Mark 6:13 the apostles, in conjunction with their preaching of penance and their casting out of demons, heal the sick and are therefore messengers and bearers of the dawning kingdom of God. In Jas. 5:14 the same medicinal-exorcistic ritual of anointing with oil is carried out on the sick by the officials of the church and brings with it a healing which—corresponding to that which in Mark 6:13 gives health for the kingdom of God—here in the situation of the Church gives health to body and soul (forgiveness of sins). Jas. 5:14 dwells on the carrying out of the whole ritual. The anointing with oil takes place under invocation of the name of the Lord and is enclosed by prayer which, as a prayer of faith, works health and forgiveness. The oil has, in fact, the character of a sacramental material.<sup>1</sup>

*In the name of the Lord*, that is, under invocation of the name of the Lord. The Lord could possibly mean God, in the absolute sense (as in 5:2), but more likely, in this rite carried out by Christian priests, it is Jesus Christ, in whose name it was promised that mighty deeds would take place (Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6; 4:10; 16:18).

*And the prayer of faith will save the one who is infirm and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins he will be forgiven.*<sup>2</sup> The juxtaposition in the one sentence of human prayer and effort on the one hand and divine operation on the other lead one to think that St James makes no distinction in effect between the *saving* and the *raising up*, but only in attribution. Both mean the same thing. But what do they mean?

St James himself uses the word *sōzein* to connote salvation in the era to come, salvation from judgment and therefore from eternal death, in other words salvation which consists in 'eternal life' (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20). Elsewhere in the New Testament the word has the same meaning generally, but *not* in contexts where there is question of sickness or death or their danger (Matt. 9:21; Mark 5:28, 34; 6:56; 10:52; Luke 8:48 et al.). Similarly *egeirein* which occurs only here in James can refer either to resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:15f., 29, 32, 35, 42-4, 52; 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:14) or simply to raising up from sickness, to making well and whole again (cf. Matt. 9:5-7, 25;

<sup>1</sup> Schlier, art. cit. 232

<sup>2</sup> On this verse see, especially, Michel, *Das Regensburger Neue Testament, Band 8* Pustet 1953, pp. 172-4

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practised, as a sacrament of the dead, by the Mandaeans and the Markosites. (The latter practice, however, is doubtful. It may have been no more than an anointing of the dead.)—Schlier, *TWNT* I 230-2.

Mark 1:31 ; 2:9, 11f. ; 5:41 ; 9:27 ; Acts 3:7 et al.).<sup>1</sup> Here in the present context the most obvious meaning of the words seems to be that the sick man will be 'saved' from death and 'raised up' to life and health. This interpretation, which seems to be demanded by the context, is confirmed by the fact that any deviation from it is beset with difficulties such as the following :

1 If one takes it that the salvation of v. 15 means eschatological salvation, then the purpose of the ritual performed by the priests would be to prepare the man for the 'coming of the Lord' of which St James speaks in 5:7. The prayer of faith would save the man from final judgment and give him life and salvation in the era to come. But against this one can object that there is no reason why such a ritual should be performed for the benefit of a *sick* man. Perhaps because he is on the point of death ? But there is no mention of a likelihood of death and, in any case, the possibility of imminent death would have little significance if St James in common with early Christians was acutely conscious of the possibility of a proximate coming of the Lord.

2 In v. 16 St James bids his readers 'confess their sins and pray for one another in order that they may be healed.' Here the 'healing' he has in mind is clearly spiritual ; why not also in v. 15 ? But it is by no means clear that the healing of v. 16 is spiritual (see below). Even if it were, the context is not the same. In v. 15a there is question solely of bodily sickness ; only in v. 15b is it said 'if he should have committed sins he will be forgiven.'

3 A more difficult objection would be that St James promises this salvation without any reservation or thought of possible refusal, whence he can hardly be thinking of bodily salvation. But the same objection can be made to many other promises of the New Testament. In Mark 16:18 the promise of healing is no less explicit than it is here. The early Christians cannot have been less aware than we are that, in spite of the power of healing attached to faith in Christ, sickness and death still held sway among them. Therefore in all the promises attached to faith in Christ there is implicit a tacit condition : 'if it be the will of God' (1 John 5:14f.). Fulfilment also depends on the faith of the prayer ; if faith is wanting, the prayer cannot be heard (Jas 1:6f.).

But if the salvation in v. 15 is spiritual in nature, then in what precisely does it consist ? It can hardly consist in salvation from sins which is a distinct effect of the rite, mentioned only in v. 15b. Nor can it very well consist in an increase of that divine gift which each Christian bears within him and by which he is begotten to God (1:18),

<sup>1</sup> The Latin translation *alleviabit* stresses the idea of relief (physical or spiritual) and may have contributed to later theological development. It should be (with some Latin codices) *adlevabit* or *allevabit*.

for such an effect could hardly be described by the word 'save.' Lastly, if the effect of the anointing is spiritual salvation, then the purpose of the anointing of the sick man, which in the ancient world was universally therapeutic, is largely lost.

It is more in keeping with the context, then, to adhere to the simple idea of salvation from death and restoration to health. It is true that the sacrament will then be a sacrament of healing, not a sacrament of preparation for death. But this apparent inversion of purpose may well be explained as the result of a normal development.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that there are two effects of the sacrament—restoration to health and forgiveness of sins. In the course of time the emphasis on the latter grew greater and the idea of preparing the sick person for death grew dominant.

*If he have committed sins, he will be forgiven.* It may be that the man is sick not merely in body but also in his soul, through sin. To the Jewish mentality the two are always closely connected. St James has in mind grievous sins, not the day-to-day offences of which he speaks in 3:2. He also very probably understands that these sins will be publicly confessed (cf. the *therefore* in v. 16). And just as the miraculous healing by Jesus in Matt. 9:1-8 (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26) operated first on the body and then on the soul, so here the ritual of the priests works not only on the body but also, when necessary, on the soul. It is in this respect, especially, that the rite performed by them differs from the charisms of healing elsewhere in the New Testament.

The admonition concludes: *Confess, therefore, your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* . . . After mention of forgiveness of sins, St James concludes ('therefore') with a general exhortation to mutual confession. Public confession of sins in sorrow and repentance was known to the Jews (Dan. 9:4ff.; Neh. 9:2ff.; Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5) and was made by newly converted Christians at Ephesus (Acts 19:18); 1 John 1:9 speaks of its salutary effects and the *Didache* (14:1) bids Christians celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays 'after you have publicly made known your sins.' So too James probably speaks of mutual confession of sins in the course of liturgical

<sup>1</sup> That the idea of preparing the sick person for death is of recent development has recently been suggested by several theologians (see p. 33, note 1). Also: de Letter, in *Bijdragen*, xvi, 1955, pp. 258-70 (reproduced in abstract in *Theology Digest*, iv, 1956, pp. 185-8); Roguet, *The Sacraments: Signs of Life*, London 1954; Peil, in *Handbuch der Liturgie für Katecheten und Lehrer*, Freiburg 1955, pp. 151-5; Spaemann, in *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, viii, 1958, pp. 147-9; Botte, in *La Maison-Dieu*, xv, 1948, pp. 91-107; Meurant, in *La Vie Spirituelle*, March 1955, pp. 242-51. For an excellent commentary on all these works—and others in a contrary vein—see Charles Davis, in *The Clergy Review*, xviii, 1958, pp. 726-46. On the uncertainty or lack of fixity of form in the sacrament of Extreme Unction up to the Middle Ages, see Bernard Leeming, s.j. in *The Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 1956, pp. 421f. On the Canons of the Council of Trent and the deliberations preceding them, see Palmer, art. cit.

service of God, such as still persists in the *Confiteor*. But there is no adequate ground for thinking that a confession before priests is envisaged, or that it is followed by sacramental absolution. The readers are bid to confess their sins and pray for one another, that they may be *healed*. Healed from spiritual need and sin? Or from bodily infirmity? In view of the association in Jewish minds between sin and bodily infirmity, it seems more probable that the 'healing' St James has in mind embraces both. St Paul could say that because there were some among the Corinthians who received the Eucharist unworthily 'therefore there are among you many sick and infirm and some die' (I Cor. 11:30).

*For the powerful prayer of a just man has great effect*—as had that of the wonder-working Elias (vv. 17–18). The 'just man' could be an allusion to the presbyters of whom he has been speaking, but in this later and broader context more probably means Christians generally.

So concludes St James' account of the ritual of healing by the presbyters of the early Church. Catholic commentators in general are not unaware of a certain *Spannung* between the text of St James and the theology of the sacrament which has become current since the Middle Ages. It needs but little reflection, however, to realise that the original motif of the sacrament of anointing is more in keeping with the character of the sacraments as a whole. The sacraments envisage not directly the final end of man but his condition as a *viator* here on earth. The true sacrament of the dying is the *viaticum*; the first end of the sacrament of anointing is to *heal*—both physically and spiritually. And from a pastoral point of view, what a consolation it would be for the priest to be able to assure the sick or the dying that the anointing is not a summons to the next world but rather—first and foremost—an antidote of death, a powerful remedy for life.

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## THE BIBLE AND EVOLUTION—II <sup>1</sup>

### *The formation of Eve*

For the Catholic who is drawn to the theory of evolution the crux of the matter lies in the formation of Eve. This is described in Gen. 2:21–3: 'Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man, and

<sup>1</sup> For Part I see *Scripture*, XI, 1959, pp. 6–22