

tion, the theory of Justification by faith in Christ alone. Some have yet to learn that, in this strange and obscured life of ours, what we hold may be real truth, even though, in our dimness, we cannot make all fit in so as to form a perfectly finished Mosaic. The time will come, perhaps, when the different items will shake down into their place, and exhibit a perfect harmony of form and colour.

Good and wise men do not know when they write words laden with truth, what trouble they are going to give some of their descendants as an unfortunate, though, as the world now is, inevitable supplement to the comfort and strength they hand down to the ages. It was a blessing to the sick of his own days and tended to a happy development of church life, that the apostle wrote the passage about the elders of the Church visiting the sick and exercising over him the offices of prayer and anointing; and many an intelligent Christian since that time has found here a rich store of instruction and encouragements. But who shall tell in ample detail the intellectual quibbles, the theological conflicts, the priestly assumptions, the fearful delusions around the bed of death, and the sad degeneracies of human souls that have been consequent upon the writing of these words! Nor ought we to overlook the awkward mental attitude and unnatural uneasiness with which scores of good people, free from the domination of a priesthood, daily regard the Apostle's language.

It is a matter of history that the Roman Church has built up its doctrine and practice of Extreme Unction almost entirely upon the words of the Apostle James in reference to the anointing of the sick. Of course so plain a reference as we find to the "elders of the Church," is easily disposed of by an infallible authority that is so expert in wielding anathemas in the place of argument. Hence, we are not surprised to see the matter disposed of in the Council of Trent (Sess. xiv), in the following terms: "If any one should say that the elders of the Church whom the blessed James exhorts should be called upon to anoint the sick, are not priests ordained by a bishop, but are those most advanced in years in any fellowship, and on that account a priest is not alone the proper ministrant of Extreme Unction, let him be accursed."

An ordinary mind on reading the words descriptive of the result ensuing from the prayers of the elders would naturally conclude that in these cases the patient recovered from his sickness, especially as the spiritual blessing, the saving of the soul, is separately affirmed in words "and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." But with that perversity of understanding which seems to be the natural consequence and Divine retribution of the deliberate committal of the mind to intellectual bondage, the Roman Church persists in fortifying its use of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, in the case of those who are to die by a free use of the apostolic language and practice designed for the benefit of those who were to live!

There can be no doubt, I think, but that Romanists have some advantage over many of our Protestant people in that they have at least a definite ordinance derived from the usages of Apostolic times, and, therefore, an ever present practical interpretation of the Apostle's language; whereas many of our Protestants are in a sea of mist as to the import of the language, the nature of the ancient custom, and the degree to which it behoves us to follow it. I, therefore, desire to say a few words that may help to place us, at all events, in a consistent position, if we can neither accept the Roman Sacrament nor in any way anoint the sick with oil.

*The ceremony of anointing with oil was purely Oriental; was indicative of comfort and cheer to the sick; and was of no spiritual significance requiring perpetuation in every age and clime.*

If any one will compare such passages as Deut. xxviii. 40; Ruth iii. 3; Micah vi. 15; II Sam. xiv. 2; Daniel x. 3; it will be seen how widely the custom of anointing with oil prevailed apart from religious ordinances, as a mere usage agreeable to the skin in an intensely hot and dry climate; and, also, that its use became an emblem of joy, comfort, and favour, and its disuse a sign of