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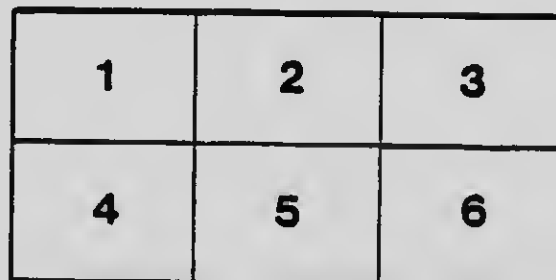
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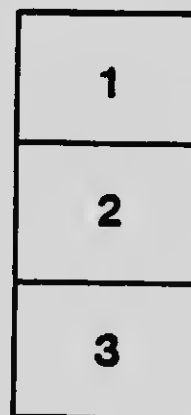
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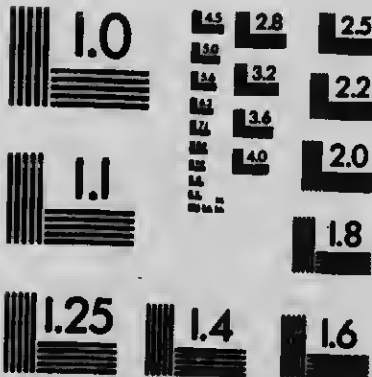
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UNCTION OF THE SICK

FREDERICK GEORGE SCOTT 1861 -

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PREFACE.

The following paper is printed as it was read before the Synod of the Diocese of Quebec in its Session on the 11th day of June, 1883, with only such verbal changes as have suggested themselves upon a careful revision.

At my request and with the consent of the majority of each order, clerical and lay, voting separately, the motion which I then brought forward was withdrawn without being debated.

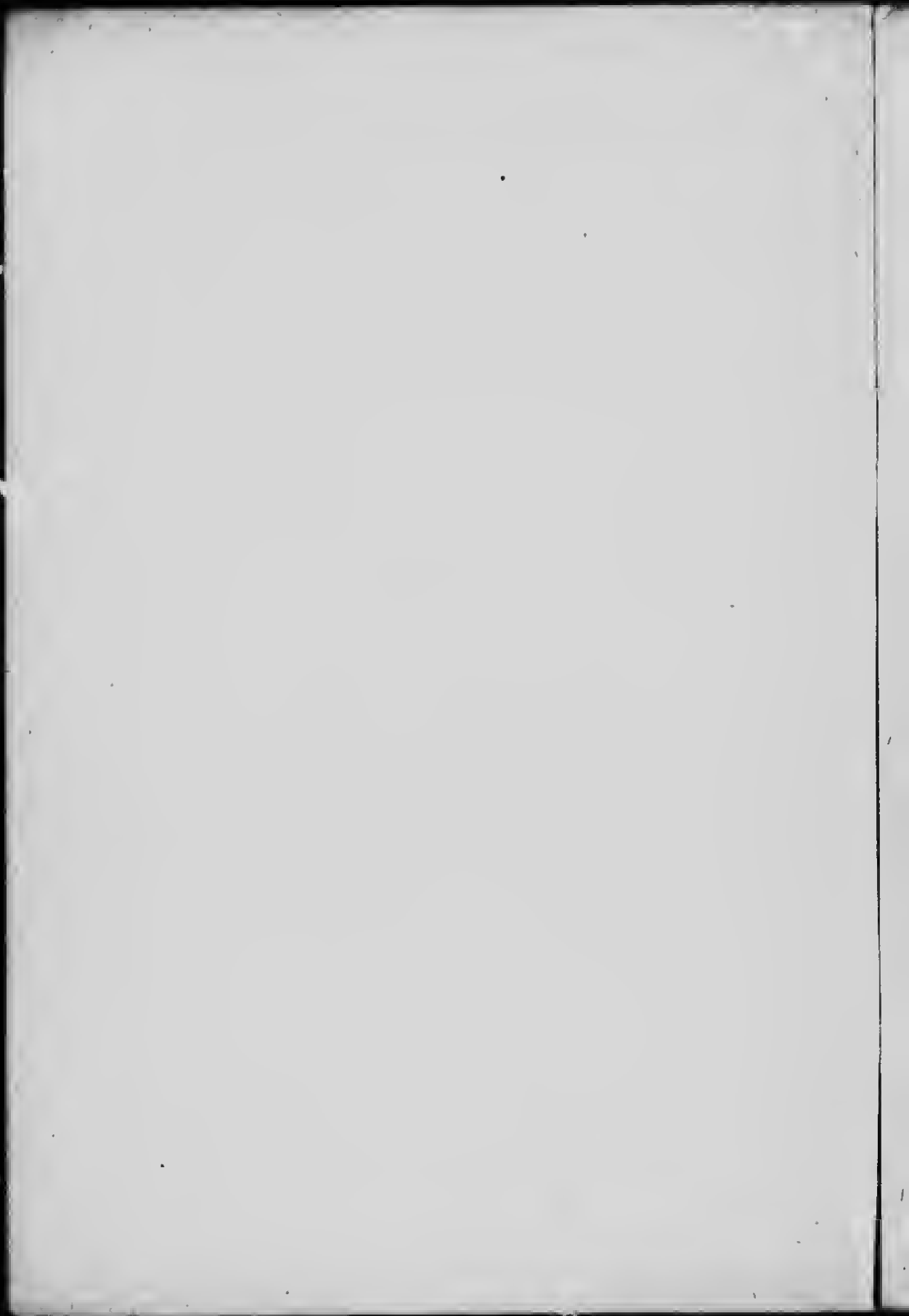
My reason for asking this was because I felt that the members of the Synod had not given the question that amount of careful consideration which ought to precede the public discussion of a subject of this character. At the same time I stated that I should bring the matter before the notice of the public and of individual members of the Synod on some future occasion. In order to do so I have had this paper printed, and I trust that it will make people think over seriously our Church's duty to the sick.

As one who looks upon the English Reformation as the emancipation of the intellect and energies of our race, I cannot but feel that in the peculiar combination in our Church of old and new, Catholic and Protestant, Apostolic order and faith with modern breadth of thought, we hold the key of the religious problems of the age. We have, by our very unity in tolerating differences, secured it, that our differences will contribute to the upholding of a basal unity.

The Anglo-Catholic Church, in its various branches throughout the British Empire and the United States, has a distinct and important mission to the Christian world. She is equipped as no other branch of the Church, for the discussion of all the subjects that press in upon her through her sympathetic contact with a most varied religious environment. It is our duty therefore to be ready to consider in a fair spirit, not only such a question as the one I have brought forward, but other kindred ones affecting the well-being of the Church and society.

In fact it is the exercise of this power of independent action, through the consciousness of the living Spirit within her and of her identity with the Church of the past, which will make her, more and more, the dominant factor in the religious life of the whole English speaking world.

F. G. S.



Unction of the Sick.

In moving the resolution, which is before you on the Agenda Paper, "That this Synod do memorialize the General Synod of Canada to appoint a Committee to consider the question of restoring the permissive use of the ancient practice of Anointing the Sick," I desire to lay before you certain facts to which I would ask the Synod most respectfully to give earnest attention. And first, let me say that this subject is one of no small importance. It is important because it belongs to that sphere of faith and practice in which the universal Church was in primitive ages in absolute accord. And it is important, too, in the sphere which it has upon the Church's mission to the world. We know the intimate relation between soul and body; we know, through the fact of the Resurrection, what the value of the body is, and we know too that some special gifts of healing and a general power working for the health of the body were signs and accompaniments of not merely Apostleship but even Discipleship, in the early Church. Now, if it be that the Apostles, following a direct command, or even an example set by Christ, and, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, practised and recommended an Ordinance, designed to convey a specific blessing to one in grievous sickness, whereby he might look not only for spiritual help in the trying hours of pain and weakness, but also and chiefly, if God saw fit, a restoration to health, and if it be that the early Church continued to practise the custom, testifying to its value, it cannot fail to be a matter of grave questioning whether we are not sustaining in the Anglican branch of the Church, a distinct loss by allowing a perverted following of the Apostles' precept by another branch of the Church to so warp our judgment as to lead us to deny altogether the right use of something which has inspired authority behind it. The spiritual nature of disease, and the power of the mind over the body, are more recognized now than at any time since universal belief in

demoniacal possession passed away, and, behind the teaching of the "faith-cure" sects, (who, by the by, have, I believe, revived the unction of the sick,) and behind the teaching of so-called Christian Science, with all its absurdities, there lies a truth, the suppression of which, one feels, has led in these days to the punishment of the Church by an outbreak of childish and disastrous heresy. In fact, I may say, that it has been conversations with people who have either gone over to Christian Science or are favourable to it, which first brought this subject distinctly before me.

What then is the scriptural warrant for the Unction of the Sick, and what its history in the Christian Church?

The scriptural authority for the Unction of the Sick is limited to two passages in the New Testament. S. Mark, V 1-13, and S. James, V-14.

In the former, we are told that the Apostles "anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." In the latter, St. James says: "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders (presbyters or priests) of the Church; and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven him."

Now, there can be no reasonable doubt that the anointing recommended in this second passage is the same as that which the Apostles used when they were sent out two by two by our Lord. The first instance of anointing was a foreshadowing of the second, just as many things in the Jewish Church were the germs of and anticipated higher spiritual ordinances under the Christian dispensation. By the time the Epistle of St. James was written, the Church was fully established and equipped, and Christian ordinances had then assumed their final form and efficacy; so that it is to the latter passage that we look for justification of the Anointing of the Sick, rather than to the former. The question is then, what does the passage in S. James mean? It means exactly what it says: "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." The anointing with oil, in the name of the Lord, was for the purpose of supernaturally raising the sick person up to health. That with the bodily healing there went a spiritual

blessing also to the soul of him who looked up to God in the time of his necessity, we need not doubt, even though the forgiveness of sins mentioned does not refer to the Unction. The rite, however, though it might also impart such special grace and help as a man requires in sickness, was certainly intended to convey, if God should see fit, bodily healing. The fact that this was the view of the primitive Church, is witnessed to by the writings of the early Fathers. For example, Origen (A.D. 185-254), when speaking of the absolution which is pronounced over a man in the solemn hours of sickness, mentions incidentally that this absolution is given at the time when, according to St. James' injunction, the Unction is to be administered. Origen then evidently looked upon Unction as conveying some other blessing than the forgiveness of sins. The same may be said of St. Chrysostom (born A.D. 347), whose words prove that while the Church of his day practised Unction, the forgiveness of sins was to be attributed to the power of priestly intercession. The act of anointing, therefore, in his eyes, must have been designed to convey some other blessings.

More distinct, however, is the testimony on this point of St. Cyril, of Alexandria (A.D. 376-444), who exhorts the Christians of his day to refrain from resorting to enchanters and magicians in order to regain their health, and to have recourse instead to prayer and the anointing recommended by St. James. Innocent I., Bishop of Rome in 416 A.D., clearly did not suppose the Unction of the Sick conveyed the remission of sins, for he writes, "it is lawful not for the priests only, but for all Christians to use it for anointing in their own need and in the need of members of their household." The Venerable Bede, who died in A.D. 735, also bears witness to the fact that Unction in his time was practised in order that the sick might recover their health. The Unction in Bede's day, according to his statement, was administered not only by presbyters, but by lay people. To this conception of the Unction as a means of restoration to bodily health, all the ancient liturgies and forms of consecrating the holy oil bear witness. In fact it was not till about the beginning of the 9th century that a change came over the mind of the Church in reference to this subject. In A.D. 850, at the Council of Pavia,

the theory that Unction of the Sick conveyed the remission of sins was first clearly propounded. And one can easily see that, as restoration to health did not always follow the Unction, it would be natural for the people to lay stress upon some theory of its sacramental efficacy, which at least could not be disproved by the evidence of the senses. From that date onward, there is a marked change in the mind of the Western Church towards the rite. The primitive use of the Unction as a means of restoration to health was almost entirely superseded by a faith in its efficacy to remit sins. But even this Council of Pavia, A.D. 850 mentions bodily cure, "that healthful Sacrament which James recommends, 'if any man among you is sick, etc.,' should by a wise preaching be made known unto the people, truly a great and very desirable mystery, whereby, if it is asked faithfully, both sins are forgiven and bodily health restored." And the Capitular of Charlemagne orders, "That all priests should ask the Bishop for the oil of the sick, and admonish the faithful sick to seek it, that they, being anointed with the same oil, may be *healed* by the grace of God, because the prayer of faith poured forth by the presbyters shall *save* the sick." The earliest form of consecration of the oil in the English language which is given in the Pontifical of Egbert, who died in A.D. 766, is as follows:—"Send, O Lord, from Heaven, thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, upon this fatness of the olive, which Thou hast deigned to bring forth from the green wood for the restoration of the body, that by Thy holy benediction this unguent may be to everyone who touches it for protection of mind and body, for the driving away of all pains and infirmities, and every sickness of body, with which Thou didst anoint kings, priests and martyrs; Thy perfect Chrism, O Lord, blessed by Thee, remaining in their bowels; In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom, etc." In this prayer you perceive the oil is consecrated simply and solely for the purpose of restoring those sick, in body and mind, to physical health. At the Council of Florence, A.D. 1438, and more clearly at the Council of Trent, A.D. 1551, the modern Roman doctrine of the Sacramental nature and efficacy of Unction as a means whereby, primarily sins are remitted, and secondarily, and only in extraordinary cases, bodily healing is effected, was propounded. In the decrees

of the Council of Trent, it is expressly stated that Unction should not take place except when recovery is not to be looked for. On this account, Extreme Unction has come to be regarded as the Sacrament of the dying, although the title "*Extreme Unction*," which came into use only about the 12th century, had regard originally, not to the recipient's being in extremis, but to this anointing being the last, liturgically, of the unctions of the Church. So much then for the practice and teaching of the Roman Church on this subject. She has very widely departed from the teaching of St. James, as interpreted and practiced by the primitive Church. The Eastern Church, in this matter, has continued the ancient use, and it is to her we turn and not to the Roman Church, for a proof that the Unction of the Sick has continued to the present day in its primitive significance. In the Roman Church, on the one hand, Unction is administered only when a person is believed to be dying, and the words of administration used by the priest are as follows: By this Holy Unction, and through His great mercy the Almighty God forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by sight," or whichever of the senses is being anointed. On the other hand, in the Greek Church the Unction is administered in cases that are serious, but not hopeless, and such sick persons as are able are expected to visit the Church, especially on Maunday Thursday, and to experience through Holy Unction both bodily and spiritual blessings. Only in extreme cases, is anointing administered in the house. The statement of the Russian Catechism is this "Unction with oil is a mystery, in which, while the body is anointed with oil, God's grace is invoked on the sick to heal him of bodily and spiritual infirmities." And the prayer of administration in the Enchiridion is, "Holy Father, Healer of souls and bodies, Who didst send Thine only-begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, healing every disease and redeeming from death, heal this Thy servant of the sickness of soul and body which encompasses him, and quicken him through the grace of Thy Christ—for Thou art the Fountain of Healings, O Christ our God, and to Thee we send up the glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

So much for the witness of the Greek Church to the primitive conception of the rite as a means of bodily heal-

ing and for the obtaining of such blessings to the soul as may be consequent upon the soul's earnest and formal resignation of itself into the Divine Hands.

The next question is what was the attitude of the English reformers towards the Unction of the Sick. Cranmer, as the slight sketch of the history of Unction which I have just given you will prove, was undoubtedly right when he felt that the Roman Church, both in teaching and mode of administration, had departed from the primitive custom. So in the Prayer Book of 1549, this rubric was inserted: "If the sick person desires to be anointed, then shall the priest anoint him upon the forehead or breast only, making the sign of the cross, saying thus:—and here follows the prayer or form of administration, beautiful indeed, and breathing the true primitive and apostolic spirit with regard to the rite—"As with this visible oil thy body outwardly is anointed, so our heavenly Father, Almighty God grant of His infinite goodness that thy soul inwardly may be anointed with the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of all strength, comfort, relief and gladness. And vouchsafe for His great mercy (if it be His blessed will) to restore unto thee thy bodily health and strength, to serve Him; and send thee release of all thy pains, troubles and diseases, both in body and mind. And howsoever His goodness (by His divine and unsearchable Providence) shall dispose of thee; we, His unworthy ministers and servants, humbly beseech the Eternal Majesty to do with thee, according to the multitude of His innumerable mercies, and to pardon thee all thy sins and offences committed by all thy bodily senses, passions and carnal affections: Who also vouchsafe mercifully to grant unto thee ghostly strength, by His Holy Spirit, to withstand and overcome all temptations and assaults of thine adversary, that in no wise he prevail against thee, but that thou mayest have perfect victory and triumph against the devil, sin and death, through Christ our Lord, who by His death hath overcome the Prince of death, and with the Father and Holy Ghost evermore liveth and reigneth God, world without end." Amen.

So the matter stood in 1549, but in 1552 a second Prayer Book was put forth by Royal authority. In this book, which was a revision of the First Prayer Book, made, not by Convocation, but by a Committee of Divines with

Cranmer at their head, the influence of the two foreign reformers—Bucer and Peter Martyr—who did not belong to the Church of England, can most clearly be traced. It was in this book that the office of anointing, for some reasons not stated, was omitted, while at the same time, the act of uniformity enforcing the use of the new Prayer Book expressly says that the First Book had contained "nothing but what was agreeable to the Word of God and the Primitive Church." Thus the same authority which sanctioned the omission of the Unction of the Sick, may be quoted as witnessing to the fact that the practice is "agreeable to the Word of God and the primitive Church." This testimony, taken in conjunction with the teaching of Article XXV, where it is stated that "those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say: Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction, although not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, are such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures," goes to prove that, whatever the omission of the Unction may imply, it does not imply that the Church of England has formally and doctrinally decided against it, when practised and taught after the manner of the primitive Church. In fact, the article, while condemning the erroneous views which had grown up in later ages around the Sacramental administration of the Unction, plainly declares that the rite has for its basis Scriptural authority.

I have now laid before the House, to the best of my ability, the history of the practice of Unction till its omission in the year 1552. I may say that I have, as far as possible, verified all the quotations and consulted all the works which I could find that treated of the subject. And I may also say, in passing, that two things have struck me very forcibly, in looking up authorities, one is the timid special pleading of many of our Anglican Divines on the subject, and the other is the erroneousness of the interpretation which Roman theologians give to the statements on this matter of primitive writers. This however is by the way. What I ask the Synod to do is this: without committing itself in any way, except to such general interest in the subject as all must feel who consider it carefully, to pass a resolution that the General Synod of Canada be memorial-

ized to appoint a committee to study the question in all its bearings, and make such recommendations as it may see fit. Personally, I should like to see the use of the simple and beautiful form given in our first reformed Prayer Book (1549) recommended, or at any rate allowed when the sick man should desire it. Whether the Committee appointed would feel it wise or right to take this step, is of course, another matter.

In any case, I should like to see the whole question conscientiously discussed. At the present time, in our service for the visitation of the sick there is no direct petition for the recovery of the sick person.

Perhaps some one here will say : " Why, after the subject has been dormant for over three centuries, why revive it ? " I would reply because I feel we need it. I do not hold, I see no ground whatever for holding, that the healing power of the Church has left her. I appeal to any presbyter of the Church here if it is not a fact that again and again, in ways beyond his expectation or personal deserts, he has not found his ministrations to have had a direct healing effect upon the sick. The Church is not more dead than it was, surely it is more alive, and if God has appointed a certain definite form as the mode of applying His healing power to the needs of the sick, we cannot but lose by its neglect. A simple, earnest, evangelical and primitive form of applying to those in serious illness, the Unction which St. James speaks of, with the intention which was in his mind and that of the early Church, would be of the greatest assistance to the priest in one of his most difficult ministrations. His visit to the sick man would not then be looked upon as a message, or at any rate warning, of death, but as a witness to the power and goodness of God who holds us in His keeping. It would tend to put the sick man in his proper attitude towards God. The priest, instead of being a half welcome visitor to the sick room, as he sometimes is, one only barely allowed entrance by the family doctor, would then be welcomed by all as one whose mission could have no other than a calming and strengthening effect upon the person lying under God's chastisement.

The question, it seems to me, is a pressing one. We, as a branch of Christ's Catholic Church, have a mission to man's body, to man in his physical strength and health,

which we are not, I believe, at present discharging. Men are seeking help in Hypnotism, Mental Suggestion, Faith Cure, Christian Science. They should seek it in the Church, for she can give it to them and give it in the highest way. Quite a number of people are asking that the Church fulfil St. James' injunction. I have myself been asked to administer Unction, and that by one who belonged to the Irvingite body. I did not think I was justified however in complying, as I thought the Church ought first to give some such consideration to the subject as I am asking her to give now. I commend the matter therefore to your earnest consideration.

There is nothing superstitious in the prayerful use of Unction as a sign and symbol of the conferring of God's help. When the whole British world celebrated the solemn consecration of its King and Emperor, by the central act of anointing, there was no one who said: "This anointing is a vain, a superstitious ceremony." Rather we felt that there was about the rite the halo of something that was more than a mere edifying tradition, a power that was something more than a mere legalizing of the exercise of the sovereign office. I am confident that, unless we read the Bible wrong, unless the primitive Church read it wrong, unless we read our Church's Commission wrong, there is a power resident in our branch of the Church Catholic, through the might of Jesus, part of whose Mystical Body she is, which we do not exercise, but which the world needs now as it needed it in primitive days, and which it will need till the end of time. I ask this Synod then, after quiet, calm deliberation, to take the first step in a movement which may once more send the presbyters of the Church, to hear to the bed-side of the sick who desire it the scriptural, primitive and authoritative means and symbol of God's healing and strengthening power.

