

‘ANOINTING’ IN JOHANNINE INTERPRETATIVE THOUGHT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This work clarifies the meaning of *χρῖσμα* in Johannine interpretative thought to his readers in Ephesus and the Church at large amongst the various interpretations that find those passages suitable to defend their intentions without checking the root ideas and putting their thoughts into the original intentions of John. It has adopted Grammatical-historical method with emphasis on word studies in search of the meaning behind anointing or anoint. It has become clearer that there is the literal sense of the meaning of anointing. Also, anointing is seen as the Word of God and in broader Johannine thought as the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Within various perspectives, the work argues that John’s reference to anointing denotes a personality, the Holy Spirit, a position which seems to have implications to the church in Africa.

KEYWORDS: Anointing, *χρῖσμα*, Johannine, Africa, Church, Pentecostals, and Heresies

INTRODUCTION

A student once cited 1 John 2:20 and 27 to prove that the New Testament allows anointing people with oil when he tried to apply James 5:14 that the Bible says we should anoint all sick people until they get well. With a close look at the verses, one discovers that these verses do not refer to literal anointing but rather a metaphorical reference to the Holy Spirit. We were also pushed to check the Greek words and discovered that both passages carry different words in the original ideas. This prompts that to rely on English words in the Bible is not enough evidence but to check the root ideas in the Greek New Testament.

It is not surprising that even when the words “anoint” and “anointing” are used in the English translations of the New Testament, even though there are many positions scholars hold in regard to the translation of these verses in Johannine thought concerning anointing or anoint. For example, Robert S. Candlish writes that, “the anointing is with the Holy Ghost. He is the anointing oil; the oil of gladness with which God has anointed Christ above his fellows; the precious ointment poured out upon him, as the head, that runs down over all his body, even to the skirts of his garments” (166). Also, C. H. Dodd argues that the anointing oil refers to the Word of God which teaches the truth to believers and which is objective in its testimony to the truth (58-64). However, R. Schnackenburg has observed how what is said here in 1 John about the anointing is paralleled by what is said in John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13 about the activity of the Paraclete (151-4).

In the midst of such interpretations whereby Jesus being the Word of God is seen as the anointing oil as well as the Holy Spirit being seen as the anointing, this work seeks to clarify the meaning of anointing in John's mind to his readers in Ephesus and the Church at large. Such understandings will be applied into the church in Africa as many, particularly among the Pentecostals, find those passages suitable to defend their intentions without checking the root ideas and putting their thoughts into the original intentions of John.

BIBLICAL DEPICTION OF ANOINTING

There are basically 30 matches of the word "anointing" in the entire English NIV, a convenient scholarly version of the Bible for the writers. It is evident that 25 of those usages are from the Old Testament while 5 usages are found in the New Testament. Similarly, the word "anoint" is used 28 times in the Bible. Also, 26 of the 28 usages are from the Old Testament while 2 usages are found in the New Testament. It means that there are altogether 58 usages of the references to either "anoint" or "anointing" in the entire English NIV. Also, there are 51 references in the Old Testament and 7 usages from the New Testament. Of the 7 references to either anoint or anointing in the New Testament, Mark, James and Hebrews have single usage each. All of these usages are aligned with the Old Testament usages of the word, anoint or anointing. Four of those usages are from Johannine work.

To the Jews, the word in *Qal* form means to anoint, to pour in anointing or to anoint oneself, another, or to be poured. The word in *Hiphil* form means to anoint an object. The Hebrew word *mishchah* or *moshchah* refers to consecrated portion, anointing oil, portion, ointment, anointing portion. The word "anoint" reminds us of the Old Testament practice of pouring oil on the head of a person being set apart for special service. A priest was anointed (Exo. 28:41), and so was a king (1 Sam. 15:1) or a prophet (1 Kings 19:16). A New Testament Christian is anointed, not with literal oil, but by the Spirit of God - an anointing that sets him apart for his ministry as one of God's priests (1 Peter 2:5-9). It is not necessary for you to pray for "an anointing of the Spirit"; if you are a Christian, you have already *received* this special anointing. This anointing "abides in us" and therefore does not need to be imparted to us.

Anointing oil speaks of the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. All believers have received the anointing of the Spirit as a gift given by the Father (1 John 2:20, 27), and therefore we ought to be "a fragrance of Christ" to the Heavenly Father (2 Cor. 2:15). The more we are like Jesus Christ in character and conduct, the more we please our Father; and the more we please Him, the more He can bless and use us for His glory. There are meanings of the word, anointing.

Anointing is a Gift: It is “the anointing which ye have received.” It is contrasted in the context with the transient possessions of worldly men. To these, what seems to be solid melts into air; what seems to be permanent vanishes away.

Anointing is a Heart-Cleansing Gift: Those who have it mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit (Rom. 8:13), and purify themselves even as Christ is pure (Rom. 3:3). Not through any natural power of willing and working, but through the Spirit, they are able to do these things.

Anointing is a Heart-Enlarging Gift: A man’s calling and election once made sure to his own mind, the sphere of his studies becomes enlarged. It is not written, One thing have I desired of the Lord that I may be saved (Ps. 27:4).

Anointing is a Heart-Cheering Gift: It is the oil of gladness (Ps. 45:7), the oil of joy (Isa. 61:3), the source of joy unspeakable, never-ending, and glorious (1 Peter 1:8).

Anointing was a Gift divinely given to Christ: As to His human nature He was richly endued. The Spirit of God rested upon Him (Isa. 11:2; John 1:32-33). He was therewith anointed above his fellows (Ps. 45:7).

Anointing is a Gift divinely given to his People: It is “the anointing which ye have received of Him” –not only as a proof that they are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, but also as their instructor and guide (Eph. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2).

Anointing is a Distinguishing Gift: It “is the anointing which ye have received.” As the anointing under the law, which is no doubt alluded to in the text, was of a sweet savour, so we, as many as are anointed with His Spirit, are thereby made a sweet savour of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15). As that anointing oil was sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons (who represent the Church, as pointedly distinguished from the rest of the congregation), so Christ sends the comforter to His disciples, whom He pointedly distinguishes from the world (John 14:16-17). As the anointing oil was forbidden to be poured upon the flesh of man (Exo. 25-33), so the Holy Ghost cannot be received by the world, which, in the present dispensation, “see Him not, neither know Him.”

Anointing is a Permanent Gift: It is “the anointing which abide in you.” It is permanent as opposed to those proffers of grace, so called, which, depending on the volition of the creature, are worse than precarious. This distinctive mark cannot suffer or be blown away. Its permanence is chiefly shown by the vitality of our union to Christ (John 15:5), by the reality of our participation in the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) by the eternity of the life of which the Spirit is the demonstrator and source (1 John 5:11), and by the stability of the covenant under which that life is promised (1 John 2:25).

Anointing is a Truthful Gift: It is truth. It is truthful as opposed to those false misgivings, whether from the flesh or the devil, which frequently trouble the Christian. It is truthful, also, as opposed to the shadows of the law. It is truthful, also, as opposed to the lies and hypocrisy of false professors.

Anointing is a Sufficient Gift: Giving sufficiency to that spiritual judgment, that noble and inestimable endowment, which alone can distinguish truth from error.

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND BEHIND JOHANNINE CORPUS

In *The African Church Under Fire*, Tambiyi states the main thrust behind Johannine writings, which is the heretical doctrines of his day. This, of course, is the late years of the first century while Apostle John was in Ephesus. The situation for the writing was so urgent that in his first epistle he did not write well according to the style of writing of that time as he was a Jew and not a Greek scholar (Tambiyi 108-19). John R. W. Stott wrote, "His first letter is not a theological treatise written in the academic peace of a library, but a track for the times, called forth by a particular and urgent situation in the Church. This situation concerns the insidious propaganda of certain false teachers" (44-5). Stott emphasises the phrase "those who want to lead you astray" (1 John 2:26; 3:7).

It is quite clear as discussed in the Pauline documents that the false teachers came and rose in fulfilment of Paul's prophecy in Acts 20: 29-30 which was also addressed in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 and 4:3-4. John described the heretics using three expressions which draw hit to their origin, wicked influence to the brothers and their false teachings. First, there is the reference to "false prophets" (1 John 4:1) i.e. those who speak under erroneous spirit and for this, he urged that every doctrine be put to test (1 Jn 4:1-6). Secondly, are the deceivers (2 Jn 7) and thirdly, he pointed to their anti-Christ nature (1 Jn 2:18; 2 Jn 7) as they strongly denied the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. It should be noted that there is no case that they are referred to in singular. John always used the word "many" without certainty of number, size and quantity. These people went into the churches to deceive faithful Christians with their spurious teachings. John wrote to reaffirm the Deuteronomic qualification (Deut. 18) for unmasking false teachers or prophets in God's assembly.

The trace of the heresies John confronted during his time would be discussed based on the nature of the heresy. Analysis of passages separately might not be done but all the letters of John would be in view when considering a heresy. Like other New Testament books, John's writings were meant to refute the situation of those churches and the like. John is addressing a complex form of heresy that is not evident in the other epistles. Paul's prophecy about terrible moments in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-9) could account for this. That is to say, John's opponents were more sophisticated and subtle in flawed presentation than those confronted by others. This time was close to the second century. In terms of heresy, it might be that John was addressing the advanced form of heresy in its early state.

The Rise of Docetism: Docetism sprang from the philosophical belief that matter is evil and the soul is good. The word is derived from the Greek word *dokein* the cognate of the verb *dokeō* which has the sense of “seem,” “to seem to be or exist.” This group taught a total denial of the incarnation of Christ and a denial of the union of the divinity and humanity of Christ. To them, Christ “seems to have human form and there were those who maintained that Christ’s body throughout his earthly life was a phantom” (Jackman 14). Some of them seem to have admitted the incarnation but differentiated Jesus from the Christ. Gromacki described their teaching as follows; “Christ appeared as a real man, but he was not. He did not have a real material body. Rather, His appearances were similar to the Theophany or Christophany of the Old Testament” (369-70). Stott also stated about their doctrine of Christ, “He ‘seemed’ to the eyes of witnesses to be truly human, but it was a disguise similar to that of the Old Testament Theophany when the angel of God (or the angel of the Lord) appeared in the form of man” (48). These were Christological errors. They were direct attacks on the humanity of Christ and the body of the Christian which is considered the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The controversy reflected in John’s letters concerning the doctrine of the incarnation rather than of creation. These “proto-Gnostics” as Stott called them were not more concerned about the world’s problem but rather a problem raised by the body. They had some difficulties accepting the Christian faith for it is a ‘material’ religion (48).

John understood that the churches in Ephesus and its surrounding are faced and confronted by such terrible doctrinal error. He discovered the poor spiritual state of the members. 1 John is polemical which did not follow the ancient way of writing for it failed to state the author and the recipients. This is probably the urgency of such a provoked thought by the false teachers that made John forget to reveal his identity. He concentrated on the ‘flesh’ of Jesus and relationship between the divinity and humanity of Jesus. John stated that:

That which is from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched –this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son (1 John 1:1-3).

John’s usage of the verbs “heard,” “seen,” “touched,” “testify,” and “appeared” is worth noting. John employed them to reveal to his readers that they have seen, heard, and touched the incarnate Christ before and after the resurrection (cf. Lk 24:39). Christ had a material bodily form while on earth; he suffered and possessed a material resurrected body before he ascended. Because of John’s emphasis on the flesh, some commentators refer to

the heretics as semi-Gnostics. John identified them as anti-Christ as they denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (4:2) and claimed to be progressive thinkers (2 Jn 9). Stephen S. Smalley argues for a double form of the denial. To him, there were the ex-Jews who did not accept the Messianic nature of Jesus and the ex-pagans who rejected His full humanity (1, 2, 3 John). However, it was an address to the heretics. John called them liars (2:2, 22; 4:20).

Throughout history, the doctrine of Christology has been challenged in all aspects. In the socio-economic and religio-political context of Africa, the Christological discourse has dominated the minds of many scholars as it is in the West and other countries of the Second and Third Worlds. In Africa, Lamin Sanneh for example, in his response to the questions of syncretism which results particularly from the correlation of African Traditional Religions form to explain Christian facts, asserts, focusing his argument on the incarnation of Christ. Affirming this, Sanneh observed that, "...in a different sense, Christianity itself is one of the most syncretistic of religions, if by that we mean the amalgamation of ideas and realities, or principles and mundane practice, for it is a pre-eminent theological teaching that through the incarnation the transcendent and terrestrial merged in human focus" (234). This assertion has considered, according to Sanneh, the negative aspect of the historical doctrine of incarnation. This error i.e. the misunderstanding of the incarnation of Jesus has been seen to make Christianity one of the syncretistic of religions is a replica of the ancient Docetism since it indirectly denies the incarnation of Christ from a different lens in the African Church as observed by Sanneh. There have been Christological discussions in the African Church. In Nigeria, the published incredible work, "Christology in African Context" edited by S. O. Abogunrin, J. A. Akao, D. O. Akintunde and G. M. Toryough, explodes the domination of Christological discourse on the African soil.

The Rise of Cerinthianism: Besides the Docetics, another false teaching at the time of John was the Cerinthian Gnosticism even though recent scholars are questioning the identification as Cerinthianism. To Marshall, the features of the teaching of Cerinthus are not reflected in what John wrote in his letters and the like. To him, the opponent of John might have adopted a view as that of Cerinthus (14-22). Others consider the link to Cerinthus to be somewhat anachronistic and also, feel more sympathy towards John's adversaries than he did. They find his dismissal of them as 'antichrists' and accomplices of the Devil altogether too harsh. Brown called them the 'secessionists' while Houlden and Graystom called them 'dissidents.' Brown later saw the aftermath to be the drifted off into many heretical movements; Cerinthianism, Montanism, Docetism and or Gnosticism of the second century (qtd in Brown 103-115). We cannot forget Arianism of the second century. Cerinthus was a Jew from Egypt and Stott called him a pre-Gnostic or proto-Gnostic. Cerinthus sought to combine Old Testament ideas with Gnostic philosophy, rejecting all of

Paul's letters and accepting only parts of Matthew and Mark from the New Testament writings.

The higher 'knowledge' did away with the characteristic Christian revelation, centred on the person of Jesus, under the guise of reinterpreting the message from a more advanced intellectual standpoint (Jackman 13-4). This was a philosophy of life which lacked foundation when an investigation of historical facts that centred on the birth and resurrection of Christ. This was based on the test of reality. A. Plummer described such knowledge as a "series of imaginative speculations respecting the origin of the universe and its relation to the Supreme Being" (xxi).

Regarding the birth of Jesus, Cerinthus contended that Jesus was in the sphere of naturalism, born of both Mary and Joseph (Gromacki 370). This wiped the incarnation of Jesus and the fact that His birth was as a result of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary and she became pregnant (Matt. 1:18; Lk 1:35). This is a direct slap on the accepted Christology and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It accuses the New Testament of having great limitation on the divinity of Jesus. Christ was both divine and human. Even though human not born of a human father as asserted by this Gnostic. Similarly, Christ did not sin anyway in his human nature (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

Cerinthus miss-viewed and confused the Christ and Jesus. For him, these were distinct personalities. For him, the Christ is somehow the Holy Spirit for his doctrinal stance about the Christ is on the affirmative. According to Gromacki, "Cerinthus ... taught that the Spirit of the divine Christ descended upon the man Jesus at the latter's baptism, indwelt Him for the duration of his ministry, and left Him shortly before His crucifixion" (370). This is what witnessed resurgence in the modern study of Jesus which started in the eighteenth century under what is called the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history (Kahler 55-65; Abogunrin 35; Borg 195-6; Hebert; Baird 1; Marshall *I believe* 61; Michael 193-4).

Most of Cerinthus' doctrinal errors are made known in the writings of Irenaeus and Eusebius. Similarly, Stott cited Irenaeus to have given an account of the heretical views of Cerinthus in Book 1 of "Against Heresies." He states that:

Cerinthus represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him then he proclaimed the unknown Father and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassable (50).

Epiphanius in his account of the heresy has the same documentary; he only identified the divine *aeon* descending upon the man Jesus as 'the Spirit' rather than 'Christ' (Stott 50). John's argument against Cerinthus and his disciples is quite vivid since it defines their error as a rejection that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn 2:22). Clearly it was a denial of the incarnation of Jesus Christ which was another form of Docetism (1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7). John similarly in

his refute of Cerinthus, describes Jesus as the one who came by water and blood (1 Jn 5:6); hence, the ancient reading of 1 John 4:3 gave the impression that the heretical standpoint was never as ‘denying’ but as ‘losing’ Jesus Christ (Stott 51, 158-9).

Irenaeus associated this heresy with the Nicolaitans in the book of Revelation 2:6, 14-15. For him, Cerinthus’ error had been disseminated among men... a long time doctrinal error and worst of all, his lack of Christ’s knowledge had been anticipating the millennium even though criticized by Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria and confirmed by two passages in the work of Eusebius which has very intrigued anti-millenarian views (Stott 158-9).

It should be noted that the heresy regarded righteousness of conduct as a matter of indifference. For this, he affirmed emphatically the need for living holy lives and obeying the commands of the Most High (Plummer xxxv; Jackman 11; Stott 53). Everyone who has this hope in him (Christ) purifies himself and that ‘no one who is born of God will continue to sin...’ (3:3, 9). Cerinthus was a notorious heretic during his days. Many people, because of the danger of his teachings and in view of John’s opposition to him resulted in people isolating themselves from him. He was totally rejected. John Stott quoted Irenaeus to have recorded in “Adversus Heresies” that Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna told that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bath at Ephesus and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, acclaiming, “Let us fly, let even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within” (Stott 50). The question is; do we have such severe treatment for our heretics in the Church today? The reverse is always the case when it comes to treating false teachers in the African Church.

The doctrinal error of Cerinthus was highly paraded by his followers. These people were subject to all kinds of confrontation and correction. John opposed them through his writings having in mind that they were enemies of the Gospel. The early Church Fathers used Johannine writings to say no to the heretical practices of their time since they were confronted by the same false teachers that John attacked. It is certain that the writings of Cerinthus did not survive because of confrontation. Stott affirmed, “True, none of his writings has survived” (Stott 50). Heretical beliefs survive only when there are no apologists, people who confront them with the aim of correction. There might be people on the scene but when they lack the crucial apologetic abilities that would make them to be conscious of heretical realities, the doctrinal errors would still be maintained. The reality of such confrontation might be detached from the basis in view that people are busy building churches and ministries today.

The Rise of Gnosticism: Gnosticism, which is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* (knowledge), refers to the first century heresy which became advanced in the second century. The Gnostics were probably predominantly Gentiles, but sometimes Jews; hence the Greeks influence the reasoning at that time with their belief that the body or matter is

evil. John's situation as we have observed was more sophisticated compared to that of Paul and Timothy as expressed in the Pastoral Epistles.

These Gnostics separated themselves and their followers from the Church (2:19), which led to division in the Church contrary to the prayer of Jesus that the Church be united (Jn 19:20-26). Their reasons centred on the claim to a special anointing of the Holy Spirit by which (cf. Montanus), they have been given true knowledge of God (2:20, 27). The belief in knowledge made up their central belief and lifestyle. Their concern was the exaltation of the mind and therefore of the speculative knowledge over faith and life. These people always treated faith with high contempt. They based their emphasis on intellectual sense of humour which makes them free from their bodily prisons, which made them have a special form of God's knowledge that surpassed that of faith.

For the Gnostics, to describe the eternal Son as having flesh and blood was unthinkable; to John it was the heart of our salvation (Jackman 15). They had tendencies towards lawlessness, claiming to be spiritual aristocrats. Stott enlightened,

Claiming to be a spiritual aristocracy of the enlightened, who alone had come to know 'the depth,' they despised the ordinary run of Christians. John cuts across this dangerous outlook by asserting that there are not two categories of Christians, the enlightened and the unenlightened, for 'God is light,' continuously revealing himself to all. "All of you know," he writes (see 2:13-14, 20; 5:20). His readers have all received the same anointing and the same message which 'you have heard from the beginning' (see 2:20-27) (52).

The truth is Christians all have one God, one Spirit, one baptism, one faith, one body, one Bible but there is room for one to have some form of superior illumination over others since our knowledge cannot be equal. The case of Montanus was based on a claim that the Holy Spirit was speaking through him in a prophetic sense during the second century. There is nothing like the justification of the unloving Spirit among God's people. Stott cited the Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius to have described them as "Do ye, therefore, notice those who preach other doctrines, how they exhibit envy and deceit in their dealings with one another. They have no regard for love..." (52). This is what distinguished them with the true Christians. True Christianity centres on genuine love with God in all aspects as the source of the love and being the love Himself (1 Jn 4:8, 16). They laid claims on attaining moral perfection through their claimed superior enlightenment.

These are the motives behind the three epistles of John among many others. We refer to the doctrinal problems of the false teachers. The truth remains that for an adequate knowledge of first, second and third John, one must take to consideration the heresies of John's time as exposed in this book. We have considered Docetism, Cerinthianism and Gnosticism (including the ascetics and libertists) and the evil practice and belief of Diotrophes (his act is even worse than that of the false teachers and prophets) (Guthrie 844-

68). John wrote to reveal their errors and to give antidotes to the understanding of the epistles of John when the epistles are properly understood in context.

John was concerned with the ethical implications of Gnosticism in his writings. He was concerned with the spiritual state of the believers. The letters dealt with the utmost crucial matters of the churches. Gnostic doctrines struck at the root of all Christian teachings in the Testament. They denied God as the creator of the material world; this led to the denial of the reality of Christ's incarnation, atoning death and bodily resurrection (which is a denial of salvation) and with that redefining sin and redirecting Christians way of life.

John understood all these attacks on the churches. Younger churches were thrown into confusion. John taught that the spirit of the anti-Christ is in the world (1 Jn 4:3). Biblical morality was attacked by the heretics. John took his time to lay sound doctrine in order to clarify the heretical teachings of his time, the accommodation of Christian faith to the prevailing inclines of cultural values. The Church suffers heretical persecution in every generation.

Today, we are confronted with the reflection of existentialist philosophy of our society. We base our judgment and conduct on personal emotional feelings and experiences than God's Word. That is why we are more subjective than being objective to the Word of God. These are practical among Africans. Heretical teachings are at the helm of affairs and at the centre of our conduct. Some people find joy in exposing these beliefs instead of trembling in fear and despairing when they say something in the Church or to anyone that should not have been said, which is to the detriment of those people's spiritual lives.

JOHANNINE LITERARY AND INTERPRETATIVE DEPICTIONS

In the Johannine literature, there are four usages of the word "anointing" particularly used in the first Epistle of John. John has portrayed the dominant usage of the word and applied it differently just like James who also applied the word ἀλείψαντες, which has been translated "anoint" (Jas 5:14). This word carries the sense of applying medicine to the wounded part of the body having prayed by the elders of the Church. Like James, John used a metaphor χρῖσμα, which has been translated "anointing" by a number of English translators (Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and New English Translation). The King James Version uses the word "unction," while the New Living Translation interpreted the metaphor as the Holy Spirit.

The word χρῖσμα could be a deliberate witticism on the word ἀντίχριστος (antichrist) for both words are connected with one name, χριστος. They are all derive from the Greek word χριστο (to anoint, and anointing) means the substance (oil) used to anoint

somebody or something depending on the actual need. The followings are the alternative and possible interpretations of the word:

Literal Sense of Anointing: A number of scholars and lay people believe that John used the word and it should be interpreted within the context of the Old Testament anointing of people for sacred services. In Old Testament usage, anointing was symbolical of the reception of the Spirit (I Sam. 16:13; Isa. 61:1) and when Jesus is said to have been anointed it is his reception of the Spirit at his Baptism which is meant (Acts 10:38; Lk. 4:18).

Anointing might almost be seen as the *leitmotiv* of the first part of the passage. The crucial point of faith is to hold that Jesus is the Anointed One; the opponents are in effect opponents of Jesus. The faithful supporters of Jesus have received an anointing (χρῖσμα) from God. The idea occurs in a comparable way in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and in both passages it is likely that baptism is in mind as the occasion when the anointing is conferred. In later times, literal anointing came to be a ceremony linked with baptism, and it gained particular currency in Gnostic sects. But when there is no evidence that this was the case at this early stage, and the parallel use of the image of divine seed in 3:9 indicates that we have here not a reference to a rite but a verbal scheme which arouse in the manner we have indicated from the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. From verse 27 it appears that the idea of anointing is to be cashed chiefly in terms of teaching: to be anointed is to have received a doctrine. There is a similar use of the idea in Ignatius's Letter to the Ephesians 17 (Holden 79).

It should be noted that χρῖσμα expresses not the act of anointing but with which it is performed (anointing oil) marks the connection of the Christians with their Head. The word χριστοίς employed generally though not exclusively of the anointing of things for sacred use.

Anointing is the Word of God: A different understanding of the metaphor was introduced by C. H. Dodd when he argued that the anointing oil refers to the Word of God which teaches the truth to believers and which is objective in its testimony to the truth (Dodd 58-64). Such a hybrid interpretation has influenced the minds of English people and has helped in shaping the meaning behind the word, "anointing" in the work of John.

Anointing is the Role of the Holy Spirit: John interpreted the place of the Holy Spirit and applied the word "anointing" in a metaphorical way to show depth of the role of the Spirit in the lives of the Christian in respect to the truth. Such a metaphorical interpretative thought of the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer will keep reminding us of the place of the truth which is contrary to the opponents of truth who propounded lies and are the antichrists. R. Schnackenburg has observed how what is said here in 1 John about the anointing is paralleled by what is said in John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13 about the activity of the Paraclete (151-4).

In the New Testament it is found only in the places quoted above and thus always of the impartment of a divine grace. Here the outward symbol of the Old Testament –the sacred oil –is used to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit from the holy One which is the characteristic endowment of Christians. This gift is referred to a definite time (v. 27 ὃ ἐλάβετε).

According to Westcott, the context shows that the word χρῖσμα is not to be understood of the material sign but of the corresponding spiritual reality. There is not indeed any evidence to show that the ‘chrism’ was used at confirmation of the first age. Perhaps as has been suggested St. John’s language here may have tended to fix the custom, which represented the communication of the divine grace in the outward rite (73).

Schnackenburg stresses that the instruction given by Church teachers must be accompanied by inner teaching by the Spirit which enables the hearers to sift out and accept what is true (51). On the other hand, Bruce comments that the Spirit’s instruction comes through teachers who themselves possess the anointing; Christians possessed by the Holy Spirit give one another mutual instruction, without which no single individual can appreciate the whole of God’s truth (Bruce 76-9).

Anointing is the Holy Spirit: It is very possible figuratively that the anointing as used by John was a reference to Holy Spirit. John has in mind the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The anointing in Johannine literary thought is connected to the Holy One, a dominant usage for God the Father (1 John 2:27). The anointing enables people to know the truth (1 John 2:27) and the role of the Spirit as exposed by Jesus as the Spirit of truth in John 15:26-16:15). John related the anointing with the Father and the Son (1 John 2:24-25) showing the Trinitarian formulae; hence, it was the age of the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, the readers already had received the anointing (1 John 2:27). This understanding is connected to Ephesians 1:13-14 “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession –to the praise of his glory.” This anointing is depicted to abide in the believers (1 John 2:27) and he teaches us all things (1 John 2:27), a dominant role of the Holy Spirit as stated by Jesus and we see Him functioning in such manner throughout the history of the Church (John 14:15-26) John wrote, “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

John believed the false teachers are counterfeits of the things of God. He used the word antichrists which is a reference to his understanding of their counterfeit nature of the nature of Christ and they were against the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Later Gnostics laid claim to a special anointing not shared by other Christians. Also, Robert S. Candlish has expressed a similar idea of the word and connected it to the Holy Spirit and how the

word has been used in the progressive nature of Jewish and Christian history. Candlish writes that, “the anointing is with the Holy Ghost. He is the anointing oil; the oil of gladness with which God has anointed Christ above his fellows; the precious ointment poured out upon him, as the head, that runs down over all his body, even to the skirts of his garments” (166). John reveals that the anointing is real and not counterfeit (1 John 2:27). This was a hit on their source of power which he believed was the Devil in his counterfeit nature to the works of Jesus. But John encourage us to remain in him (1 John 2:27; cf. John 15:1-17 – abide in me as I also abide in you) who is the life and genuine source of the truth which we have known over the years.

Such an interpretation of Johannine literary imagery as a reference to the Holy Spirit also prompted Pink and Candlish to observe that, “The anointing is in us; it is an inward anointing. Not with oil on the head, but with the Holy Ghost in the heart, we are anointed; as he from whom we receive the anointing was himself anointed. It is not an application or appeal from without; it is gracious influence, a gracious movement or experience, in the inner man. It is beyond the world’s cognizance” (91).

As a result, I. Howard Marshal sees the need for the church to stand firm in the truth because 1) the anointing which the readers have received is a sufficient source of knowledge; it gives instruction about all things. 2) John emphasizes that the teaching so given is reliable and is not a lie. 3) John reminds his readers that they were instructed to abide in Christ. So he urges them to remain in Christ which means that they will remain in the true teaching (163).

ANOINTING AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

There is need for a deep source of Christian steadfastness in the church in Africa. Anointing is the means of establishing, that is, God confers steadfastness by bestowing the unction of His Spirit. From beginning to end of Scripture, anointing is the symbol of the communication of the Spirit. Note the felicity of the emblem. Oil smoothens the surface, is nutritive and illuminating, and is thus an appropriate emblem of the secret, silent, quickening, nourishing, enlightening influences of the Spirit. And inasmuch as here this oil of the Divine Spirit is the true basis of Christian steadfastness, the anointing cannot be consecration to apostolic or other office, but must be the possession of all Christians.

This anointing is derived from, and parallel with, Christ's anointing. The Christ is the Anointed One. Christians are prophets to make God known to men, priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and kings over themselves, and over a world which serves those that love God. Anointing abides. Other anointings particularly the ones gotten from the false teachers do not abide. Pentecostals believe that it is the anointing of the Holy Ghost that keeps the Christian in the ministry. The fragrance of other unguents soon passes off. But here is an anointing which, like the ointment of the right hand. But you say it is not true; nothing is plainer than that ardent Christians get cold, and those who lived Christ may

grow self-willed and self-assertive. How can St. John say that the unction abide? Well, it is supposed he wants to call attention to the Divine side of the case, to show us that whatever we may do, or whatever we may be, God remain faithful.

The Holy Spirit (Anointing) taught us and has every right to teach us, for He is truth and no lie. Besides, He hath already taught us, and what we have learned of Him should give us confidence in Him for what we are yet to learn. Read the Bibles, but read them in His light; listen to the teachers, but listen to them with continual application to a higher Teacher. It is to that higher Teacher we owe the greatest blessing ever received in the world, the blessing which made us Christians.

CONCLUSION

This work has argued that *χρῖσμα* in the Johannine thought has taken an interpretative mindset unlike other books of the New Testament; hence, John's works are interpretative versions of early Christianity as contained in the Synoptic Gospels. By the time of writing, thoughts have expanded and Christianity had taken shape in the minds of people in different regions. John used the word *χρῖσμα* metaphorically to refer to a person, particularly the Holy Spirit as being the greatest anointing, which has been given to the believer. Such thoughts are contrary to the anointing, which the false teachers carry around as a counterfeit of the truth. John argued that we have a higher anointing, that is the Spirit of truth and that Christians should be steadfast and rely on the guidance of this anointing. This work agrees with Westcott: "Impatience drives men to look without for the guidance which in due time will be recognized within. Such impatience is the opposite to the steadfastness of the Christian" (79). Our steadfastness should be firm in the Lord as we have a good teacher and reminder, who continues to tell us about the truth of the ways of the Father. These verses (1 John 2:20, 27) reflect John's defence against the false teachers as Christians have greater anointing that is greater than the one which the false teachers have received from the Devil. As such, adequate reflection and carefulness are necessary for African Christians in dealing with the Bible passages, particularly the difficult passages in the Bible.

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