

THE UNCTION OF THE HOLY ONE

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, Lord's Day
Afternoon, June 8th, 1845

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" 1 John 2:20

The life of John, the beloved disciple, was prolonged to a very late period; and we see the wisdom and goodness of God in thus prolonging his life, that he might be a standing bulwark against the errors and heresies which overflowed the primitive church. When the Lord of life and glory was upon earth, all the bent of Satan's malice was against him; but when, according to God's elect purpose and counsel, Satan had put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ into the hands of the Jews, and the Son of God was nailed to the accursed tree (for Satan was outwitted by his own invention and out-shot by his own bow); then when Jesus had ascended into heaven, all the power of Satan was turned against his disciples. When he could not touch the Head, he aimed his arrows at the members; and no sooner did the Lord pour out upon the church the gift of the Holy Ghost in great measure on the day of Pentecost, than Satan immediately introduced all manner of error and heresy to harass the church. Now, through the kind providence of God, the life of John was prolonged to bear testimony against these errors and heresies; and thus this blessed apostle was a standing testimony against the errors that came in like a flood. In the chapter from which the text is taken, John addresses himself to the church of God as divided into three distinct classes. There are the weak and young, whom he calls "little children." There are those who are established in the divine life through exercises, trials, temptations, and through corresponding blessings; these he calls "young

men." And there are those whose lives are verging upon eternity, who have received many testimonies of God's goodness and lovingkindness, and have thus become "fathers."

Speaking, then, to the church of God as thus composed, he puts them in mind of those seducers and heretics who had crept into the church. He says, "Little children, it is the last time" (that is the last dispensation): "and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists." They had heard of "antichrist," and they supposed that "antichrist" was some single person; the man of sin that was to rise. "No," says the apostle, "There are many antichrists." All that are opposed to Christ, all that deny the story of his Person, the efficacy of his work, and the power of his blood, these are antichrists, because they are all against Christ. Now these antichrists were formerly among them, members of their churches, walking, apparently, in Christian fellowship. The apostle therefore says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." They could not receive the love of the truth because their hearts secretly loathed it. They could not endure Christian experience, because they possessed it not, nor could they submit to gospel precepts and Christian discipline, because their affections went out after the world. The truth of God, the pure truth, did not suit their impure, corrupt minds; so they went out from the church, they separated themselves, and thus abandoned the communion and community of the faithful; for "if they had been of us," in heart and soul, knit together in the bonds of the Spirit, in real spiritual union and communion, if they had thus "been of us, they would no doubt. have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Separating from the company of God's people is a testimony that such are not of God's people, and they make it manifest that they never were in

heart and soul united with the family of God when they withdraw themselves from them. But the apostle would here rather infer, "How came it to be otherwise with you?" What has preserved you faithful when others have proved unfaithful? What has kept you still leaning on and looking unto a crucified Immanuel when others have trampled on his blood and turned after idols? Was it your own wisdom, your own ability, your own righteousness, your own strength? No; not so! "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." This is what he implies, "ye have an unction from the Holy One." It is that which has kept you, it is that which has taught you. "Ye little children, young men, and fathers, ye have an unction from the Holy One," and by that unction "ye know all things."

With God's blessing, then, this afternoon I shall endeavour to take up the words of the text as they lie before me, and show,

I. What it is to have an unction from the Holy One.

II. How by virtue of this unction from the Holy One we know all things.

I. Let us look at the simple figure contained in the text. Unction signifies literally anointing. It is indeed the same word, and is so rendered a little lower down: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (verse 27). It has probably some reference to the oil or ointment which in those hot countries was employed to anoint the body, and keep it in health. But besides this there is a reference to what we read in Exod.30:22-33, where God

commanded Moses to make a holy anointing oil by which the tabernacle and every vessel in it was to be consecrated; prefiguring the special anointing of the Holy Ghost on the hearts and consciences of God's people. So that as no vessel in the tabernacle was holy until it had been anointed with the consecrating oil, so no soul is holy till it has received the unction from the Holy One. No prayer, no praise, no service no sacrifice, no ordinance can be holy unless it be touched with this pure unction and divine anointing of the Holy Ghost. Now there is a divine suitability and peculiar figure here made use of:

i. Oil is of a *softening, suppling nature*. It is applied to the body to soften and supple it. So spiritually, the unction, or anointing of the oil of the Holy Ghost makes the conscience tender. Wherever that unction comes, it takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. It removes impenitence, unbelief, waywardness, perverseness, self-righteousness, and self-conceit; it softens and supples and makes tender the heart and conscience, so as to fall under the power of the truth. Until the Blessed Spirit by his sacred operations upon a man's heart supples it and softens it in this way, the truth never falls with any weight or power on it. And this is the reason why hundreds hear truth without any effect; not being anointed with this unction from above, the heart of stone is not taken away, that evil heart of unbelief which rejects the solemn truth of God. But when the Blessed Spirit brings the secret, mysterious, and invisible, yet powerful anointing oil of grace into the heart, it receives the truth as from God; and truth thus coming from God penetrates into the soul. The law sounds its curses; but they never touch the conscience till the unction of the Spirit attends it. The gospel holds forth its blessings; but without this unction they never come with savour and power into the soul. Christ is spoken of in Scripture as being to some "a root

out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa.53:2). And why so, but for the want of this unction of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the unction is in a man's conscience it will always make that conscience tender. So that if you see any man, whatever profession he may make, who is bold, presumptuous, daring, and self-confident, be assured that the unction of the Holy Ghost has never yet touched his heart; he has but a name to live whilst dead. Now do you watch for this in professing men and women, and in the ministers whom you hear, whether you see in them this soft, tender and meek spirit. If totally absent the unction of the Holy Ghost has not yet come upon them.

ii. Again, unction or anointing oil is of a *penetrating nature*. When ointment or oil is rubbed on anything it penetrates into the substance beneath. It does not lie on the surface; it penetrates below the surface into the very substance of that to which it is applied. So it is spiritually with respect to the unction of the Holy One on the heart and conscience. In the case of most persons who have truth in the understanding, but it is not brought into the heart by divine power, the effect is superficial. There is no depth of vital experience in their hearts; thus they resemble the stony ground hearers of whom we read in the parable of the sower: "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away" (Matt.13:5,6). In their case the Word has not, as a two-edged sword, pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, nor has it so sunk into their consciences as to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of their heart. But the unction of the Holy One, the internal teaching and operation of the Spirit penetrates into every heart to which it comes. It does

not merely lie on the surface; it does not merely change the creed; it does not merely alter the life. It goes deeper than creed, lip, or life; it sinks into the very roots of the conscience. If your religion has never penetrated below the surface, it lacks this grand test of having come from God. The religion of God consists in the unction of the Holy One which goes beneath the shell and the skin; which works down to the very bottom of man's heart and opens it up and lays it bare before the eyes of him with whom he has to do. It is by virtue of this unction that our secret motives are discovered, and the pride, self-righteousness, presumption, self-seeking, and all that depravity that ferments in a man's heart are laid open. It is by the penetrating effects of this divine light and life in a man's soul that all the secret workings and inward movement of his heart are discovered and laid bare. A man can never loathe himself in dust and ashes, never abhor himself as the vilest of the vile until this secret anointing oil touches his heart. He will be satisfied with a name to live, with an empty profession, till this teaching of God the Spirit goes through every mantle and veil, and searches into the very vitals, so as to sink into the secret depths of a man's spirit before God. He is never thoroughly honest to God or himself till the unction from the Holy One makes him see light in God's light.

iii. Again, unction, or oil is of a *spreading nature*. It diffuses itself, as it is termed. It is not confined to the little spot where it falls, but it extends itself in all directions. So it is with the unctuous teaching of the Blessed Spirit in a man's heart. It spreads itself through the soul. The Lord therefore compares it to leaven (Matt.13:33). How does leaven act? It is very small in itself, a little lump; but when put into the large mass of meal, it diffuses itself through every portion of it; so that not a single crumb of the loaf is unaffected by it. Thus wherever the unction of the Holy One touches a man's

heart it spreads itself, widening and extending its operations. It thus communicates divine gifts and graces wherever it comes. It bestows and draws out faith and gives repentance and godly sorrow, causes secret self-loathing, separation from the world, draws the affections upwards, makes sin hated, and Jesus and his salvation loved. Now if you had a child, and were very anxious for its growth, you would not like to see the child's arm and leg grow, and the other members remain as they were. You would not like to see its head growing much faster than the body; you would soon be afraid lest, the child die of water on the brain. And yet you will find some professors that grow only in one thing; they never grow in simplicity, prayerfulness, spirituality, watchfulness, and heavenly-mindedness. Their faith, if we are to believe their own statements, grows very much, but we never see the other graces and fruits of the Spirit grow with it. But such a monstrous growth as this is not the growth of the new man of grace. That grows equally in all its parts, and every member bears a harmonious proportion to the rest. If faith increase, hope and love grow, and when faith, hope, and love grow, humility, spirituality, and simplicity, deadness to the world, and every other grace and every other fruit of the Spirit grow in the same proportion. Wherever the unction of the Holy Spirit touches a man's heart it diffuses itself through his whole soul, and makes him wholly a new creature. It gives new motives and communicates new feelings; it enlarges and melts the heart, it spiritualises and draws the affections upwards, and brings about what the apostle declares as the effects of union with Christ: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor.5:17). Of this sacred anointing John says that it teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie. Without it all our religion is a bubble, and all our profession a lie; without it all our hopes will end in despair. See to it,

then, you that fear the Lord, or desire to fear him, whether you can find any of this unction from the Holy One resting on your heart; any secret melting down of your spirit before the Lord, any breathings of affection into the bosom of Jesus, any overpowering and overwhelming sense of that love which passeth knowledge; any inward longing to enjoy him and delight yourself wholly and solely in him?

Now this unction of the Holy One will be felt only as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to bring it into your soul. It may be but once a year, once a month, or once a week. There is no fixed time for it to be given; but just at such a season and in such a manner as God sees fit. But whenever it comes into the heart, its operations and effects will be the same, the feelings it creates and the fruits it produces will be the same. O what a mercy to have one drop of this heavenly unction! To enjoy one heavenly feeling! To taste the least measure of Christ's love shed abroad in the heart! What an unspeakable mercy to have one touch, one glimpse, one glance, one communication out of the fulness of him who filleth all in all! This sanctifies all our prayers; this sanctifies the preaching, this sanctifies the ordinances, this sanctifies our public worship, this sanctifies the persons, the sacrifices, the offerings of all spiritual worshippers; as we read: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom.15:16). It is the sweet unction of the Holy One that knits the hearts of the people of God together in indissoluble bonds of love and affection. By this unction from the Holy One we know the truth, believe the truth, love the truth, and are kept in the truth day by day and hour by hour. Is this the grand thing that your soul is longing after and pressing forward to enjoy? In the secret sinkings or in the secret risings of your spirit in the inmost sensations of your

heart towards God, is the unction of the Holy One, the divine anointing of the Holy Ghost the chief thing you are looking for? Without this unction of the Holy One we have no tender feelings towards Jesus, no spiritual desires to know him and the power of his resurrection, without this unction we have not a single breath of prayer, nor one spiritual panting or longing in our soul. The Lord's people have often to walk in a state of darkness; by this unction from the Holy One they are brought out of it. By this unction from the Holy One they are supported under afflictions, perplexities, and sorrows. By this unction from the Holy One when they are reviled they revile not again. By this unction from the Holy One they see the hand of God in every chastisement, in every providence, in every trial, in every grief, and in every burden. By this unction from the Holy One they can bear chastisement with meekness, and put their mouth in the dust, humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God. Every good word, every good work, every gracious thought, holy desire, and spiritual feeling do we owe to this one thing: the unction of the Holy One.

It is a solemn thing to have an unction from the Holy One, and it is a solemn thing not to have it. It is a solemn thing to live under this sweet anointing; but what a solemn thing to have a profession of religion and to know nothing of this sweet anointing! If in the great day those only will be saved who have had this unction of the Holy One, where will thousands be who have had but a name to live? If this be true, as it is, where will thousands be in the last day, when the Judge will sit upon the great white throne? But if the unction of the Holy One be upon a man he is a consecrated vessel of mercy; wrath, justice and the law cannot touch him; the anointing oil is upon him, the blessing of God rests on his soul, and he is safely hid in the hollow of God's hand from the wrath that is coming upon the world.

II. "And ye know all things." What does the apostle mean by that? Does he mean that they actually know all things, all the realms of science; all the varied departments of art? O no; the Lord's people are a very poor people, and usually a very ignorant people in matters of human knowledge. Nay; they are ignorant for the most part of the various branches of human knowledge. It is not their province to know what the learned men of this world pore over, and rack their brains about; such knowledge is not for their comfort or spiritual profit. It is a mercy to be ignorant of what the wise men of this world consider the only things worth knowing. Nor does it mean that they know all gospel mysteries. Many of God's people are ignorant of nice points in divinity, and many a professor dead in sin and living after the course of this world is much clearer in the letter of Scripture and in the grand scheme of salvation than some of God's poor, brokenhearted family.

But by this expression we may understand that they know all things profitable, all things needful, as the apostle Peter says: "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet.1:3). What are, then, some of these all things?

(i) *They know themselves.* A knowledge of oneself is indispensable to salvation. If a man does not know himself he cannot know God; if a man does not know himself he cannot know the Son of God. To know and see oneself in one's true colours as poor, miserable, filthy, guilty sinners, lost, undone children of Adam, with a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, with a nature thoroughly depraved, helpless, and hopeless, thus to know ourselves would stop all boasting. It would stop all thinking himself better than others, and effectually pull down all creature-righteousness, if a man once had the unction of the Holy One

upon his heart and conscience, making himself known to himself.

By this unction from the Holy One we know our sinfulness, our awful, desperate, abominable sinfulness; by this unction from the Holy One we know our hypocrisy, our awful, desperate hypocrisy; by this unction from the Holy One we know our obstinacy, our perverseness, our alienation from God, our proneness to evil, and our horrible aversion to good; by this unction from the Holy One we know that we deserve the eternal wrath of God, that by nature we are at an infinite distance from his purity; that we are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. If a man is not rooted and grounded in the knowledge of self, he never can be rooted and grounded in a knowledge of Christ as a Saviour: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Therefore if a person does not know himself lost, nor groan, nor sigh on account of being lost, all that Jesus is, and all that Jesus has for poor lost sinners is hidden from his eyes. This is the reason of there being so much profession without possession; so much of the letter without the Spirit, so much doctrine without the power. But when we are taught by the Blessed Spirit to know ourselves to be lost, ruined, and undone, then we want to know there is a Saviour, and such a Saviour as alone can save us out of our lost condition. No wonder that men despise the Person of Christ, no wonder that they deny his eternal, underived deity; no wonder that they deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus and the personality and operations of God the Spirit; no wonder they trample underfoot the divine mystery of the Trinity. They have never seen themselves; they have never groaned under a burden of sin; never had a knowledge of self in its ruin and depravity.

(ii) Nor can we *know the purity and spirituality of God's holy law*, but by this unction from the Holy One.

(iii) Nor can we *know that the Scriptures are true*, or that God has revealed his mind and will in them except by virtue of this unction from the Holy One (iv) Nor can we *know there is a Jesus, a divine Mediator, an Immanuel, God with us*, but by virtue of this unction from the Holy One. We may have correct views and sound notions; we may have speculations floating on the brain; but humbling meltings and dissolving views of the Son of God in his sufferings, and agonies we cannot have but by an unction from the Holy One. To see the stream of atoning blood from his sacred body, to see his glorious robe of righteousness, justifying and covering the sins of his people, to see the Holy Mediator interceding at the right hand of the Father, and to have the soul dissolved under the sight and feeling of the mystery of Christ as a God and Saviour, nothing but an unction from the Holy One, the anointing oil of the blessed Spirit upon the heart, can give us this knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal.

(v) Nor can we *know the pardon of our sins*, but by virtue of this unction from the Holy One. We cannot know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, but by virtue of the unction from the Holy One.

(vi) Nor can we *know the liberty of the gospel* or the sweet manifestations of the Lord of life and glory, nor can we walk at large, as David speaks in Psalm 119:45 (margin), nor can we enjoy the sweetness and blessedness of a gospel deliverance but by this anointing. We cannot come out of darkness into light, bondage into liberty, coldness into warmth, but by the unction from the Holy One. Nor can we know what the favour of God is, nor this loving-kindness of a tender Father, nor his watchfulness over his children as a

most affectionate Parent, nor the shedding abroad of his love in the heart, nor the inward witness of the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, Abba, Father, but by virtue of the unction of the Holy One.

(vii) Nor can we *know what it is to have a heavenly home*, a harbour of rest and peace, a blessed mansion above where tears are wiped from off all faces, but by virtue of this unction. How needful, then, it is, how indispensable for a soul that stands on the brink of eternity, that is exercised and troubled at the sight of death and judgment, to know whether he has any unction from the Holy One resting on his heart and conscience! But if he has the unction from the Holy One, there will be fruits and effects, there will be holy panting and desires; the heart will not be always barren, dark, and unfruitful; it will not be always grasping after the things of time and sense. There will be something in the soul as distinct from these things as light from darkness, and heaven from earth. There will be a humility, a brokenness, a tenderness, a contrition, a spirituality of affection as different from the spirit of the world as Christ from Belial. This unction of the Holy One touching a man's heart and conscience will make him more or less manifest as a new creature; it will make spiritual religion more or less the element in which his soul lives and moves; it will transform him, as the apostle speaks, "in the renewing of his mind;" old things will pass away; yea, all things will become new; with it he is happy; without it he is a wretch.

With this unction from the Holy One all is plain, blessed, and clear; without it all is dark, perplexed, and confused; with it there will be a savour in reading the Scriptures, and they will be sweeter to the soul than honey and the honeycomb; without it the Scriptures are nothing but a riddle, a weariness, and a burden. With it prayer is sweet and delightful to the soul, and prayer, and preaching, and hearing

are, alike, blessed; without it all is dark and embarrassed; we feel not the importance of the things we are hearing and speaking. With this unction from the Holy One the ordinances of God are blessed; we see a grandeur and a beauty in the ordinance of baptism, and a sweetness in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. With this unction from the Holy One the people of God are highly prized as our chief companions; without it we care not for them, and feel as though we would rather go out of their company than get into it; with it eternal things are weighty and precious, the only things worth seeking or having, without it eternal things fade away, and the things of time and sense occupy the mind; it is engaged in the world, and eternal realities are out of view. O what a difference in a man's soul when he has this unction and when he has it not! When the unction rests upon a man's heart it makes as great a change as when the sun rises and night disappears; as when the spring comes and winter rolls away with its cutting blasts.

Now do you think you know the difference? Does this find out your religion? Have you these inward changes, these alternations, darkness and light, summer and winter, day and night, seed time and harvest, cold and heat; these are figures of the work of God on the soul. We need both. The corn needs the winter as well as the spring and summer. We need night as much as day; the sun as much as the absence of it. So spiritually; we need unction, and sometimes we need the withdrawing of the unction, because we should get proud, as Hart speaks:

"The heart uplifts with God's own gifts
And makes e'en grace a snare."

Now if you have ever felt in your soul the least drop of this unction you are saved. The little children to whom the

apostle wrote, saying, "their sins are forgiven," were but weak and feeble, but with that unction everything had come to cover their sins. The feeblest, therefore, the most trembling, most doubting and fearing, the most exercised, the most self-condemned, if they have but the least drop of this unction from the Holy One on their souls, are pardoned sinners, and shall be with Christ in glory. When Moses consecrated the vessels in the tabernacle, it was not the quantity of the anointing oil that he put on which sanctified them; if he dipped his little finger in the oil and just touched the vessel it was as much consecrated as if he put both his hands in the anointing oil, and rubbed it all over. So spiritually, the least touch of this unction from God the Holy Ghost upon the conscience, the least drop of this holy oil falling from the Spirit on the heart, sanctifies, and fits it for heaven.