

1 John 2:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Analysis

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. In contrast to the antichrists who departed, true believers possess divine enablement. "But ye" (kai hymēis) emphasizes contrast—unlike apostates, genuine believers have something securing them. "Have an unction" (chrisma echēte)—chrisma (anointing) comes from chriō, to anoint. This refers to the Holy Spirit's presence and work in believers. The term connects to Christ (Christos, the Anointed One) and Christians (anointed ones).

"From the Holy One" (apo tou hagiou) identifies the anointing's source—the Holy One is Christ (Mark 1:24, John 6:69, Acts 3:14). Through Christ, believers receive the Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26). This anointing occurred at regeneration and conversion—the Spirit's indwelling marking believers as God's possession. Unlike Gnostic claims to special post-conversion enlightenment for elites, John teaches all believers receive the Spirit's anointing.

"And ye know all things" (kai oīdate panta) doesn't mean omniscience but possession of essential truth necessary for salvation and godliness. Through the Spirit's anointing, believers know Christ, the gospel, and fundamental doctrines. This knowledge isn't exhaustive but sufficient—believers possess spiritual discernment through the Spirit to recognize and resist error. The antichrists lacked this anointing; believers possess it, enabling them to remain faithful when others depart.

Historical Context

In the Old Testament, anointing with oil symbolized the Spirit's empowering for special roles—prophets, priests, kings. The Messiah (Anointed One) would possess the Spirit without measure (Isaiah 61:1, fulfilled in Luke 4:18). New covenant promise extended this: all believers would receive the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29, fulfilled at Pentecost, Acts 2:16-18). Peter proclaimed: "the gift of the Holy Spirit" for all who repent and believe (Acts 2:38-39).

Against Gnostic elitism claiming special knowledge (*gnōsis*) for enlightened few, John democratizes spiritual knowledge: all Christians have the Spirit's anointing and therefore "know all things" (essential truth). This provided assurance to ordinary believers intimidated by Gnostic teachers' claimed superior knowledge. Believers need not feel inferior—they possess the Spirit, who guides into truth (John 16:13).

The Reformation emphasized the "priesthood of all believers"—all Christians have direct access to God and truth through the Spirit, not needing priestly mediators. Puritan piety developed detailed teaching on the Spirit's internal witness and illumination, enabling believers to understand Scripture and discern truth from error. John's teaching grounds this: the Spirit's anointing provides essential knowledge for Christian faith and perseverance.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does knowing you possess the Spirit's anointing (not just educated elites or spiritual leaders) provide confidence in spiritual discernment?
2. What does it mean practically that you 'know all things' (essential truth) through the Spirit's teaching?

3. How can you better cultivate sensitivity to the Spirit's anointing when facing doctrinal confusion or deceptive teaching?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὑμεῖς	χρῖσμα	ἔχετε	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	ἀγίου	καὶ	οἴδατε
But	ye	an unction	have	from	G3588	the Holy One	But	ye know
G2532	G5210	G5545	G2192	G575		G40	G2532	G1492

πάντα

all things

G3956

Additional Cross-References

John 14:26 (Holy): But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

1 John 2:27 (Parallel theme): 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.

Isaiah 61:1 (Parallel theme): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Proverbs 28:5 (Parallel theme): Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

Psalms 23:5 (Parallel theme): Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Acts 10:38 (Holy): How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

John 16:13 (Parallel theme): Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Hebrews 1:9 (Parallel theme): Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

1 John 4:13 (Parallel theme): Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Psalms 45:7 (Parallel theme): Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

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