The Anointing of the Spirit

"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; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."
—Isaiah 61:1,2

IN THE EXPRESSION, 'anointing of the Spirit,' we have brought to our attention a very important aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of those who compose God's New Creation. The figure of anointing is based on the ancient custom of pouring oil on the heads of priests and kings to signify their Divine appointment to office. This ceremony was called anointing. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, that function by which the Lord's consecrated people are designated, or authorized, to occupy an official position in the great work

and plan of God for the recovery of mankind from sin and death.

In the synagogue at Nazareth, and near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the anointing of the Spirit, and explained, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:16-21) The Apostle Peter confirms this, saying, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."—Acts 10:38

The significance of the anointing symbol is again indicated in Hebrews 1:7-9. The apostle says, "Who [God] maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." From this inspired statement, we learn that Jesus was not only anointed to preach glad tidings, but also to be the highly exalted king in his kingdom, an anointing to such a high position of dignity and authority that "all the angels of God" are commanded to worship him.—vs. 6

From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus was faithful to the service for which he was anointed. As Peter testified, he 'went about doing good.' Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me." (John 9:4) Jesus knew that he had been authorized to preach glad tidings to the meek and to bind up the brokenhearted. He knew that

he had been anointed 'to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He proclaimed the glad tidings both by precept and example. We read that Jesus "went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him."—Luke 8:1

CHURCH ALSO ANOINTED

In II Corinthians 1:21, we read, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." The 'us' class here referred to are those who are 'in Christ'—that is, members of his body. All those thus, in Christ, share in the anointing of the Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus, the Head of the body, at Jordan. In I John 2:27, the apostle speaks of the anointing "which ye have received of him"—that is, of the Heavenly Father, through Christ, and because of being in his body. The anointing of the Holy Spirit means the same for the body members as it did for Jesus, the Head.

When Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit, he said it would "teach" them "all things." (John 14:26) John confirms this. He wrote that the "anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (I John 2:27) In this same verse, John also says, "Ye need not that any man teach you." This seems to be a reference to the human philosophy extant in John's day, and he is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit teaches the anointed ones 'all things' they need to know concerning God's plan in order to serve him properly, and especially that they should abide in Christ.

The Holy Spirit of God miraculously revealed to Jesus an understanding of those truths previously written "in the volume of the book" (Ps. 40:7)—that is, the Old Testament Scriptures. A similar miraculous revealment occurred in the minds of the apostles at Pentecost. Through the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, the New Testament has been provided to supplement the Old, and thus reveal to the remainder of the body members the essential truths of the Divine plan. Thus the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and all that it implies of instruction for the church as a whole, is spelled out for us in the written Word. The Lord, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, has provided pastors, teachers, and evangelists as helpers in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures.—Eph. 4:11

A DIPLOMA

The authority given to the New Creation by the Holy Spirit is in some respects like a doctor's diploma. When we see a diploma in a doctor's office we realize that it not only signifies authority to practice medicine but also implies qualifications acquired through years of study and training. So it is with those who are anointed to preach glad tidings, and to reign as kings and priests. It is not merely that they are honored with this authority, but also implies essential study and preparation. This is why both Jesus and John associate being taught 'all things' with the anointing.

Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Notice how the matter of 'rightly dividing the word

of truth' is essential to being a 'workman' for God 'that needeth not to be ashamed.' Truly, many will be ashamed who thought they were working for God by preaching eternal torture for the wicked. This illustration emphasizes that those who are truly anointed to serve God must be qualified because they have learned how rightly to divide the Word of Truth.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The anointing authority to represent God also reaches us through the written Word. It is not a matter of feeling impressed that we would like to preach the Truth, for definite authority is given us in the Word; and not only authority, but exhortations to be faithful in the exercise of our privileges as the anointed of God. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world." And again, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14,16) These are 'anointing' texts put in the Bible by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to authorize and encourage the body members to proclaim the Truth, and to do it faithfully.

Jesus said of himself, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) He said this by the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures—'The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings.' When he said to his disciples, 'ye are the light of the world,' he indicated that the anointing authority to serve the LORD in this capacity would be passed on to them at Pentecost.

The Apostle Paul explains this clearly. He wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old

things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." (II Cor. 5:17-20) The first verse of the next chapter reads, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."—II Cor. 6:1

This is another anointing passage, another of those revealing statements of the Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which gives assurance that all those 'in Christ' are ministers 'of reconciliation,' 'ambassadors for Christ,' and 'workers together with him.' While the baptism of the Spirit emphasizes immersion into the Divine will, the figure of speech of anointing emphasizes that one aspect of the Lord's will is recognition of the honor of serving as his ambassadors, and the manifestation of the same zeal which consumed Jesus as he went about doing good.

Another Old Testament anointing scripture is Psalm 145:10-12. It reads, "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." This is undoubtedly one of the Spirit-inspired passages that encouraged Jesus to faithfulness as he went from place to place "preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of

God." (Luke 8:1) It should be of equal power in the lives of the LORD's saints today.

GLAD TIDINGS

The kingdom message that the saints are commissioned to preach is essentially one of good news. This is shown in our text, Isaiah 61:1,2, which Jesus applied to himself, and which also applies to every member of his mystical body, for the one anointing covers all. It is a commission to preach 'good tidings unto the meek.' The authorization is to proclaim the message only to those who are meek—that is, teachable. True, we are to "sow beside all waters" (Isa. 32:20), but we are not to force the Truth upon anyone. The meek, after hearing a little of the message, will seek for more, and these are the ones to whom we should give special attention.

We are to proclaim 'liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' The whole world is in bondage to sin and death. The meek who respond to the good tidings should be told that, through faith, demonstrated by a full dedication of themselves to the LORD, they can be free from bondage, and enjoy liberty in Christ. Those who are in the great prison house of death cannot hear the good tidings, but we can assure their living friends and relatives that the prison house of death will, in God's due time, be opened and all death's captives set free. What a message this is to bind up the brokenhearted!

We are also commissioned to proclaim the 'acceptable year of the LORD.' This is a reference to the Gospel Age call to sacrifice in following in the

footsteps of Jesus. When explaining this feature of the Divine plan we are to assure those interested that in presenting their bodies a "living sacrifice," they will be "holy and acceptable" to the LORD. (Rom. 12:1) Jesus, our Head and Exemplar, incorporated this aspect of the Gospel in his message in that he invited his disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. He knew that beginning with Pentecost their sacrifices would be acceptable.

Another part of the Holy Spirit's commission is to 'proclaim . . . the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all that mourn.' There is much said in both the Old and New Testaments concerning the day of vengeance. The Apostle Paul describes it as the "day of the Lord" in which, while the nations are saying "Peace and safety; . . . sudden destruction" comes upon them, "as travail upon a woman with child." (I Thess. 5:1-4) Daniel foretold it to be a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," and Jesus, quoting Daniel, described this period as one of "great tribulation."—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22

It is this 'day' of God's vengeance upon Satan's world that brings the present age to a close. Beyond it will come the manifestation of Messiah's kingdom through which all the families of the earth will be blessed. We are now living in the midst of this day of vengeance. It is this fact that explains why, since 1914, there has been an almost continuous "distress of nations, with perplexity," and why the world is filled with fear. (Luke 21:25-28) Jesus said it would be a time when "all the tribes of the earth" would "mourn" because of

this severe trouble which would come upon them.—Matt. 24:30

It is noteworthy that when Jesus quoted the Holy Spirit's commission for service, and indicated that it applied to him, he did not include the day of vengeance of our God. He understood that this day of vengeance was still future, and that it would be a misapplication of scripture to announce that it was upon the nations in his day. However, since the anointing which he received reaches down to all his body members, and since the last of these are now living in this 'time of trouble,' they are commissioned to proclaim the facts concerning it.

But this does not imply that the anointed ones should pronounce vengeance upon the world. This is the prerogative of the Lord alone. Our commission is merely to announce the meaning of this period of severe distress of nations, to explain that a world, or social order, is being destroyed because of its sin and selfishness, and that in its place Messiah's kingdom will be established. It is significant, that coupled with the commission to proclaim the day of vengeance is the statement to comfort all that mourn. The whole world is mourning because of this time of 'great tribulation,' and a proper explanation of what is taking place in the world is a great comfort to those who have faith to believe the promises of God.

Jesus said of our day that the hearts of the people would fail them as they looked ahead to the things "coming on the earth." (Luke 21:26) Another anointing text of the Old Testament reads, "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance,

even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." (Isa. 35:4) Here, again, is indicated that proclaiming the day of vengeance is, in effect, explaining to those who have a hearing ear that the present trouble upon the world—the worldwide distress, anxiety, and fear—is because the Lord has come 'with vengeance,' but that his objective is not vindictive, for he has come to 'save you.' So we can say to those who will listen, you do not need to fear, for the kingdom of Christ is about to be manifested for the blessing of all mankind, and in that kingdom "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isa. 52:10

MOURNERS IN ZION

Isaiah 61:3 mentions another aspect of service commissioned by the Holy Spirit. It is the comforting of those in Zion who mourn, "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Zion is one of the symbolic names that the Scriptures give to the spiritual phase of Christ's kingdom, and it often applies to the Lord's people who are now being prepared for the kingdom. These are the Zion class. The way of sacrifice in which they walk is a narrow, difficult one.

In Galatians 6:9, we read, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Hebrews 12:3 reads, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." We have the admonition of the Apostle James, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders 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 [the weary—same Greek word as translated 'wearied' in Hebrews 12:3], and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.—James 5:14,15

James says, 'The Lord shall raise him up.' Isaiah 61:3 states that those who are given the "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" shall be called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD." We are commissioned to do all we can to assist those who mourn, who are weary in well doing or in any way are spiritually sick. Where the heart is right the Lord will give strength, so that the "lame" will not be turned out of the way but will remain 'the planting of the Lord,' that he might be glorified.—Heb. 12:13

ALL BODY MEMBERS ANOINTED

The anointing of the Holy Spirit of Truth which came upon Jesus, as it reaches down to the members of his body, includes all who are in the body. Abilities to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom may vary, but each one is to be faithful and zealous according to the ability possessed. The fact that all are members of the same body suggests cooperation, just as the various parts of a natural body work together harmoniously under the direction of the head.

In I Corinthians chapter twelve, and in Ephesians chapter four, Paul explains that the Lord has arranged special services for some who are in the body. There are apostles, prophets (public expounders), pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Not all are anointed to serve in these capacities. Aside from

the apostles and the servants to the seven churches of Revelation, chapters two and three, these special servants are chosen by the Lord through the vote of his people in their local groups, or ecclesias. But to have the Lord's approval they must meet the qualifications set forth by the Holy Spirit in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:7-9.

FUTURE SERVICE

In Hebrews 1:9, we are told that Jesus was anointed with the "oil [symbolic of the Holy Spirit] of gladness above thy fellows"—that is, a position of honor and service above angels, and principalities, and powers. This, as we have noted, indicates that the anointing of the Holy Spirit carries over to the work of Christ and his church in glory, when together they will reign as kings and priests for the blessing of the world with peace, health, life, and joy through the agencies of the kingdom. This means that all the texts of the Bible, which give assurance to the faithful that if they suffer with Christ they will reign with him, are anointing texts whereby the Holy Spirit of Truth makes it plain that we have been invited into a glorious partnership with the Heavenly Father and with his beloved Son, a partnership in his great project of restitution.

One of these anointing texts pertaining to the future work to which all the faithful have been appointed, is Isaiah 49:8,9. In II Corinthians 6:1,2, Paul quotes from the eighth verse and applies it to those who are in Christ. Verses eight and nine together read, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee [this is the 'acceptable year of the Lord' mentioned in our texts], and in a

day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places."

In this wonderful passage which the LORD has put in his Word by his Holy Spirit, we are given the assurance, not only that the LORD will help and preserve his people during this time when they are being prepared for kingdom glory, but also has authorized them to 'establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.' Man's original inheritance was to live on the earth, and to have dominion over it. Through sin he lost both life and his dominion. His 'inheritance' became 'desolate.' But, to the worthy ones of the next age, the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34) The anointing of the body members of Christ authorizes them to participate with him in extending this invitation to the sheep class during the "times of restitution of all things."—Acts 3:21

We are also anointed to say to the prisoners of death, 'Go forth.' During the present Gospel Age, all the anointed have the blessed privilege of proclaiming that in the Kingdom Age the great prisonhouse of death will be opened, and that all who are bound therein will be set free. A blessed message! But those who prove worthy to live and reign with Christ when his kingdom is established will help to fulfill what they said would take place. Then,

instead of merely proclaiming that the dead will be raised, they will have the wonderful privilege of actually saying to the prisoners of death, 'Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.'

The apostles said the oil which anointed Jesus to his high position in glory and in the kingdom was the 'oil of gladness.' Since we share in the same anointing it will be gladness for us also, joy unspeakable, as we participate with our Lord in wiping tears from the faces of all who mourn; by destroying the cause of their mourning; by destroying sin and death, and all the evils which, throughout the ages, have continued to plague a sin-sick and dying race. A glorious prospect! ■