Theological Reflections 23.2 (2025) 30-44
https://doi.org/10.29357/2789-1577.2025.23.2.2

Scattered, Oppressed, Empowered: Resemanticization of Χρῖσμα in 1 John 2:20

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Abstract: This article focuses on arguably the central element of a Christian's identity as it is seen in John's letters (and the rest of Johannine corpus—the Fourth Gospel and Revelation). While there are many ways of describing this Christ-centred reality (new birth, adoption, election, baptism, etc.), here an attempt is made to show how characteristically Johannine use of the noun χρῖσμα (and some OT precedents of resemanticization) can help the reader identify with Christ himself and with scattered, uprooted Christian communities. The main argument is that this identification is primarily metonymical (based on unity of purpose/mission), rather than metaphorical (based on the perceived similarity of circumstances). John's χρῖσμα is an essential element of the disciples' view of themselves as a community of "sent ones." Such identification may help marginalized and disoriented migrants see their experience of being scattered and displaced against a possible background of God's larger purpose in the world.

In his approach, John seems to be following several OT trajectories of the semantic shift. As the word χριστός in LXX was given sematic extensions, so that it included individuals who originally did not seem to possess the necessary status, so in John's Epistles χρῖσμα, taken far beyond its literal meaning, serves as a group marker. Those whom John identifies as recipients of χρῖσμα are viewed as individuals strongly rooted both in the past and—eschatologically—in the future.

Keywords: resemanticization, metonymy, anointing, antichrists, Epistles of John.

Introduction

Since February 2022, nearly seven million Ukrainians have fled their country and began to adapt to new cultural contexts in more than fifty countries.[1] This adaptation often involves learning new languages, skills, social roles and rules. All those changes inevitably affect one's identity. For Christians, the inner conflict may be

1 Detailed and updated statistics on the Ukrainian refugee crisis are provided by several major organizations, including the UN Refugee Agency https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/ (accessed 11/12/2025).

ISSN 2789-1569 (print), ISSN 2789-1577 (online)

especially hard. In many countries of today's Western world, practicing Christians are in a minority. For Ukrainians, trying to integrate into Christian communities in those countries means becoming a minority within a minority, which can easily lead to discouragement. Uncertainty about the future—something all Ukrainians experience—is another stress factor that adds to the confusion about one's identity in a rapidly changing world.

Perhaps this could be an area where a renewed scholarly interest in the questions of identity in the New Testament and some practical—missiological, pastoral—concerns overlap. Reflections on the identity of a scattered community seem to be a recurring theme in John's Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation. John[2] sees his readers as being in a conflict with the hostile "world," but he also interprets this conflict as a byproduct of his readers' calling, their special status. He points out that their identity is formed by a unique gift called χρῖσμα. That gift implies both hardship and privilege. To understand John's approach better, some OT characters and episodes can be considered. Patriarchs—bearers of God's special blessing—were both marginalized and empowered. David, God's anointed, had to become a persecuted wanderer. Members of the postexilic community, whose experience is to some extent reflected in Psalms 105–106, identified their situation with episodes in the lives of the patriarchs using rather unusual semantic extensions of the word χριστός (in its plural form).

John is not the first biblical author who resemanticizes lexemes from this word family. His approach represents both continuation of several OT trajectories and fulfilment of some OT ideas and imagery. When seen in this light, his peculiar usage of the word χρῖσμα can result in some insights for twenty-first-century diaspora Christians who seek to reaffirm their identity in a rapidly changing context.

The Day of Anointment and the Period of Trials

> But you have been anointed [χρῖσμα ἔχετε] by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.
>
> I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing [τὸ χρῖσμα] that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you

2 This identification is not meant to discourage those readers who cannot accept that the Fourth Gospel and the Letters of John have the same author. In any case, all these texts (and also Revelation) show a remarkable unity of concept and style, so it is still appropriate to talk about "John" as an editor or some authoritative person who put the text in circulation.

> about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (1 Jn 1:20–27)[3]

What exactly does John mean by the word χρῖσμα and how does this understanding of χρῖσμα help his readers—the community torn by conflict, threatened by persecution, and uprooted in several ways? I will argue that χρῖσμα is one of the central elements in that community's worldview, one of the key concepts that help John's readers make sense of their troubled experience.

John is the only New Testament author to use the word χρῖσμα; but related words (often translated as "to anoint," "the anointed one," etc.) constitute a sizable semantic domain that contributes to developing one of the main themes of the Bible: the establishment of God's Kingdom.[4] John's set of connotations is, however, unique in several ways. He resemanticizes χρῖσμα—he takes the word that has its specific semantic field and changes that semantic field. He does not necessarily create new connotations but rather places new emphases on already existing ones, making them more prominent in the context of his theology.

This resemantization is arguably based on earlier precedents. This is why before dealing with John's use of χρῖσμα, a few observations based on Psalm 105:12–15 and some other OT passages will be offered. These passages contain intriguing examples of a rather bold resemanticization at resemanticization. The resemanticization occurred in the Hebrew text, but it is quite accurately reflected in the Septuagint, where the semantic field of the lexeme χριστός is extended in a fascinating way.

For many modern readers, the word χριστός is usually associated almost exclusively with Jesus, but long before Jesus's ministry, this term had its own semantic field. As Selman notes, "… the messianic-type vocabulary of the Old Testament refers primarily to contemporary individuals in specific historical contexts rather than to any ideal embodiment of a future hope."[5] That semantic field was by no means static; it changed as the fortunes of God's people changed. Viewed through a Christ-centred lens, the history of Old Testament Israel is a story of God preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah. In the long run, all the ups and downs Israel went through reflect that grand design. The diachronic changes in the semantic field of the Greek lexeme χριστός were also part of that preparation.

In the Septuagint, χριστός is often used to translate the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which means "the anointed one," "someone who has been anointed." The Greek word

3 Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

4 In this article, the focus is not only on what χρῖσμα is, but on what χρῖσμα does. A brief overview of various interpretations of χρῖσμα can be found in Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 118–119. A well-established view—identifying χρῖσμα with anointing with the Holy Spirit—is defended by Parsenios: "That association [of χρῖσμα with anointing with the Holy Spirit] is made more likely here [in 1 Jn 2:26–27], since now we learn that the anointing has the power to teach—precisely one of the tasks ascribed to the Paraclete-Spirit in John 14:26…" (George L. Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014], 90).

5 Martin J. Selman, "Messianic Mysteries," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, eds. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Carlisle, Cumbria: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 282.

used in the translation is etymologically related to the verb χρίω ("to anoint"). Anointing with oil was practiced throughout the ancient world, but in Israel, this act had some unique connotations, so the use of χρίω- family of words in the Septuagint may be considered a semantic loan.

A king anointed with special oil was by this act set apart from the rest of Israelites. Anointing was seen as visible recognition of his special status and mission. The word χριστός, used 41 times in LXX, often refers to a king.[6] For David, the greatest of the OT kings, being God's χριστός is an essential part of his identity.

> Great salvation he brings to his king,
> and shows steadfast love to his anointed [LXX: τῷ χριστῷ αὐτοῦ],
> to David and his offspring forever. (Ps 17/18:51/50)

David is anointed by Samuel, accompanied by the gift of God's Spirit and the promise of kingship: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [ἔχρισεν][7] him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward" (1 Sm [LXX: 1 Kgs] 16:13). The kingdom, however, did not come on that day. David has to go through severe trials—become a persecuted outcast living in exile for many years—before he can receive the promised kingdom. Without the Spirit forming his core identity, he would not be able to go through these trials and still believe in his unique calling. Later, in the second part of this article, I will try to show that, as David's anointment was a major source of identity for him in his years of exile, the χρῖσμα of the New Testament disciples was to remind them who they are in Christ. David could look back on the day of his anointment and draw strength from those memories, since those memories were connected with God's promise of the future kingdom. The New Testament disciples can also reflect on their χρῖσμα and find encouragement related to God's promised kingdom.

Semantic "Irregularities" in the Diachronic Aspect

A king, however, was not the only one who could be called χριστός in ancient Israel. The high priest also had to be anointed (Lv 4:3; 16:32), set apart for special ministry to God. Exodus 29 describes in much detail the process of consecration, for which a special kind of anointing oil (LXX: χρῖσμα, Ex 29:7) should be used.

As Israel, especially the Northern Kingdom, spirals into apostasy, God reacts in ways that result in extending the semantic field of the χρῖσμα word family. In 1 Kings 19:15–16 Elijah is told to anoint three individuals: "… [Y]ou shall anoint [LXX: χρίσεις] Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint [LXX: χρίσεις] to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint [LXX: χρίσεις] to be prophet in your place."

6 For example, in 1 Sm 24:10 (LXX: 1 Kgs 24:11), David says, "I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed [χριστὸς Κυρίου]."

7 An aorist form of χρίω.

Anointing a king over Israel seems to conform to previous usages of χρίω. What is unusual is the way Elijah does it: he seems to "delegate" this task of anointing to Elisha, who, in turn, "delegates" it to one of his disciples (2 Kgs 9:6). The semantic field of the verb χρίω is extended by way of metonymy: Elijah anoints Jehu by sending Elisha who sends someone else to do it.[8] If the text were to be interpreted in a strictly literal sense, one could say that Elijah did not anoint Jehu; some (unnamed) servant of Elisha did. But, since the entire ministry of Elisha was initiated and overseen by Elijah, it is possible to say that Elijah did anoint Jehu. The metonymic transfer implies that one person (who did not perform the action) is mentioned as someone actually performing it. This metonymic transfer is quite frequently used both in the Bible and in daily life. For example, when a biblical author says that Solomon "built" the temple (1 Kgs 6:2–3), it does not mean that the king did all the construction work by himself—thousands of people were involved. Yet, since Solomon initiated and supervised all the steps of the process, he is referred to "as if" he were the only person who built the house of God.[9] Biblical authors fully expect their readers to be familiar with such metonymic use of language, so no serious misunderstanding arising from strictly literal interpretation is anticipated.

The anointing of Elisha also represents semantic extension. Unlike many other OT prophets, whose calling narrative includes a direct supernatural encounter with God (Is 6; Ez 1), Elisha is called through human agency (1 Kgs 19:19–21).[10]

The third case of semantic extension seems to be the most problematic one. Elijah (or, by way of metonymical extension, Elisha) is to anoint a Gentile king over a Gentile nation through which God will judge Israel. While Jehu is represented as an agent of judgment over the house of Ahab (2 Kgs 9:7–10) and the cult of Baal, Hazael will be an instrument of judgement over the general population, as that population tolerated and even supported Ahab's idolatry and the resulting persecution of prophets.

This motif—anointing a Gentile king for God's purposes related to Israel—is further developed in Isaiah, where the Persian king Cyrus is called God's anointed:

"Thus says the LORD to his anointed [τῷ χριστῷ], to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped…" (Is 45:1). Cyrus is (literally) called χριστός because through him God fulfils his plan for Jerusalem, the temple, the exiled Jews and, eventually, for the whole humankind (44:28). God's words to Cyrus are a part of a larger discourse where God asserts his sovereign rights over Israel and all the nations. Setting a Gentile king over God's people may have been contrary to messianic expectations of many Israelites, and the title χριστός (used in such an unusual way) helps Isaiah emphasize God's will behind this arrangement.

8 This "sending" motif is also prominent in John.

9 This particular type of metonymy is called *synecdoche*—a part is made to represent the whole.

10 Interestingly enough, the Books of Kings contain no description of the act of Elisha's anointment itself. While there is no any special reason why Elijah should not literally anoint Elisha with physical oil, the narrative emphasizes elements that accompany this (would-be) anointment—elements that later become fully developed in the Gospels (calling, leaving one's family and occupation, following the master/teacher, etc.).

The crisis of monarchy in Israel and Judah was accompanied by resemanticization of several key terms related to kingship, election, and power, including χριστός. In the next section, I will briefly treat another case of resemanticization that reflects both Israel's history and later attempts to understand it.

Empowering the Powerless: Psalm 105 and its Genesis background

As Israel's position among the nations changed, those changes inevitably resulted in a new understanding of the key figures of Israel's history and the role they played in God's larger plan. An example of such new interpretation of old memories can be found in Psalms 105–106. In this diptych, a well-known story of the forefathers is retold (or rather "re-sung") with some characteristic new emphases.

The two psalms could be seen as songs of a dispersed community. They end with a passionate plea: "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations…" (106:47)—words that scattered modern refugees can fully appropriate. While not much is known about the background and original audience of this psalm, it is safe to assume that the psalm was used by at least some of the exiles after the Babylonian captivity. The author encourages his marginalized community to reflect on God's dealing with Abraham and other patriarchs who were (mis)treated as strangers and sojourners, often even in the Promised Land:

> When they were few in number,
> of little account, and sojourners in it,
> wandering from nation to nation,
> from one kingdom to another people,
> he allowed no one to oppress them;
> he rebuked kings on their account,
> saying, "Touch not my anointed ones,
> do my prophets no harm!" (Ps 105:12–15)

The psalmist draws attention to the paradoxical character of their experience. On the one hand, these sojourners are vulnerable.[11] Abraham has his wife taken from him and there is not much he can do about it (bitter reality for thousands of Ukrainian families separated in times of war). Their marginal status ("of little account") corresponds to their seeming insignificance ("few in number").[12] On the other hand,

11 This vulnerability is emphasized by indicating their status as "sojourners" (or "strangers")—the term that, according to Declaissé-Walford, "refers to those people who lack a kinship group that will provide a place for them in the world" (Nancy Declaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth Laneel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014], 789).

12 As Goldingay points out, "'[f]ew in number' is Jacob's description of himself in his insecurity in relation to the peoples around (Gen. 34:30) and also Moses's warning about how Israel may end up (Deut. 4:27). 'Little' appears in the same connections (Deut. 7:7; 26:5; 28:62). It would be a telling collocation for the people who used the psalm. 'Aliens' nuances the point and again parallels Gen. 15…" (John Goldingay, *Psalms* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008], 208).

they are immensely powerful because God himself intervenes on their behalf sanctioning whole nations, including mighty ones.

God's intervention, powerful by itself, is often accompanied by verbal warnings. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is interesting to see how he raises the status of his oppressed representatives. In the psalm quoted above he calls them "my anointed ones" and "my prophets," although these individuals are not shown as involved in activities traditionally associated with prophetic and/or priestly occupations. This may be seen as another example of metonymic transfer.

In Genesis 20:3–7 God speaks to Abimelech, a Gentile king (of chieftain) and specifically calls Abraham "a prophet" (v. 7). From the context it follows that Abimelech has already taken Abraham's wife, but has not "touched" her yet (here the term clearly functions as a euphemism with sexual connotations). The reader is not told how much time passed between Sarah's being taken and the day Abimelech planned to "touch" her, but God informs Abimelech that the delay was a result of his direct providential intervention: "... it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her" (v. 6).

Similar episodes are recorded earlier, in Genesis 12:10–20 (when Abraham sojourns in Egypt), and later, in Genesis 26:6–11 (when Abraham's son sojourns in Gerar). In the former episode, no words of God directed to Pharaoh are recorded: God communicates chiefly through plagues (12:17). In the latter episode, God does not speak to Abimelech at all: the king himself takes care that Isaac's wife remain unmolested. "Touching" is mentioned in Abimelech's order to his own people, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death" (Gn 26:11). At this point, it would be helpful to ask what exactly Abimelech's prohibition involved. It is clear that Rebecca is now protected against all kinds of sexual harassment, whereas Isaac seems to have some sort of immunity against physical violence. Applied to Rebecca, the word "touch" could possibly be understood literally (a physical contact could be seen as a form of harassment), while applied to Isaac, it probably was an example of a hyperbole—deliberate exaggeration that emphasized Isaac's protected status.

On the other hand, there may be more to this hyperbole than catches the eye. As Isaac becomes "untouchable," it signifies a quasi-royal status (one of the most basic rules for dealing with royalty in many cultures is to avoid physical contact), and symbolises holiness (sacred objects/persons must not be touched by outsiders[13]).

To sum up the three episodes (Abraham in Egypt, Abraham in Gerar, Isaac in Gerar), God speaks directly to only one of the three Gentile kings. All three eventually understand how the patriarch's and their entourage are to be treated, but God is never reported as forbidding Gentiles to "literally" touch his chosen ones, although the theme of "touching" is very much present in all three narratives. Also, there is only one person in all three episodes whom God calls a "prophet."

Psalm 105:15 is thus not a verbatim record of God's speech addressed to three kings who lived in two different lands in three different periods of time. Rather, it is

13 As 2 Sm 6:6–7 shows.

a theological summary of the message God carried across by various means—verbal and non-verbal. This summarization is accompanied by an extension of the semantics of the verb "touch" and the noun "prophet." The psalmist speaks about multiple "prophets" enjoying God's protection. The ability to prophecy is seen here as an attribute of the whole patriarchal community in different stages of its sojourn. Likewise, Jacob's experience can also be associated with this providential protection: God also rebuked Laban for his sake (31:29), although Laban, of course, was no king. The semantic extension used in Psalm 105:12–15 can imply reasoning "from greater to lesser": if God can apply sanctions to kings, how much more can he rebuke lesser authority? It is this kind of reasoning that makes the experience of patriarchs applicable to the context of a marginalized community scattered after the Babylonian captivity.

The patriarch's vulnerability makes them extremely dangerous. It is Abraham's marginal status that provoked the Egyptians to actions resulting in "great plagues" (Gn 12:17) and exposed Abimelech's people to mortal danger (20:3). This paradox is based on irony: what Gentiles see as a low-status group is in fact the elite.[14]

To emphasize the privileged (although temporarily concealed) status of God's people, the psalmist uses semantic extension in another, even more audacious way. He calls the patriarchs "my anointed ones" (Ps 105:15). For Goldingay, this transfer of meaning is metaphorical:

> Presumably the title of prophet is extended as a courtesy to the other ancestors… In the same way the description "anointed" strictly applies to priests and kings, but it is extended metaphorically to the leaders of the ancestral family, who functioned both like priests (e.g., Gen. 12:7, 8) and like kings… As people who were metaphorically anointed, they were people whom Yhwh had laid hold of and claimed, and they were therefore under Yhwh's protection: no one could attack them with impunity.[15]

Metaphorical transfer (based on similarity) may explain why the patriarchs (and matriarchs) are called "anointed ones," but when the title is extended to their entire household (and even their descendants), it is more than a metaphor. Rather, it is a metonymy—transfer of meaning based on association.

To use a somewhat extreme example from daily life, when a football fan, celebrating his favourite team's achievements, proudly announces, "We won! We are the champions now!" he does not necessarily mean that he made any meaningful contribution to their victory. He says "we" simply because he chooses to identify with the players. When, instead of saying, "They won," he proclaims, "We won," he uses a metonymy: a technically correct pronoun "they" is substituted with "we" to emphasize personal, emotional involvement. There is nothing metaphorical about this transfer: a fan may in no way be physically similar to the fit and disciplined players. The semantic transfer—metonymy—is not based on similarity, but on association.

14 In the original, etymology-based meaning of this word: "the elect."
15 Goldingay, 209.

In a similar (and more serious) way, a Christian talking about religious persecution in many parts of today's world, may use perfectly correct phrases, such as, "Christians in this country are mistreated," or, "The church is marginalized," but he/she can also use metonymic expressions, such as, "We are being slandered and attacked," which would indicate some identification with the persecuted minority. Metonymy often expresses solidarity.

In 1962, when President Kennedy boldly proclaimed, "Ich bin ein Berliner!" this metonymic transfer (substituting the literal meaning "someone who cares deeply about the people of Berlin" with the associated meaning "one of those people") greatly encouraged the Berliners threatened by the Soviets. In a similar way, when God calls vulnerable sojourners "my anointed," he underscores their importance for his plan.

As for the patriarchs themselves, the Book of Genesis never mentions that any of them was ever anointed for any special ministry. But, since they performed priestly functions (Gn 12:8) and were given kingdom-related promises (17:6), they are spoken of *as if* they were anointed priests, kings, and prophets. The privileges and responsibilities related to such anointing are also extended to the whole community. While God never calls Abraham or Isaac (or anyone else in Genesis) his "anointed ones," his message to kings implies that he wants the patriarchs to be treated as priestly/prophetic royalty—and not only the patriarchs, but their entire households. This logic seems to be behind Psalm 105:15 and its rendering in LXX (104:15): μὴ ἅπτεσθε **τῶν χριστῶν μου** καὶ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις μου μὴ πονηρεύεσθε (*bold type added*).

A nation's prosperity or downfall literally depends on how this nation (especially its rulers) treats marginalized bearers of God's blessing. Their presence among the native population constitutes a test, a trial—presenting both dangers and opportunities. God identifies with them in a number of ways, including metonymic transfer. What is done to them may be considered as done to him personally (Zec 2:8). This idea of identification (and the accompanying semantic transfers) is further developed in the New Testament (cf. Mt 25:40, 45). John's contribution to that development is manifold, but in the next section, one particular aspect will be singled out: the way John uses the Greek word χρῖσμα and, extending its meaning, includes his readers in the mission of Christ.

Semantic Extension of χρῖσμα in 1 John

In the previous section I argued that Psalm 105 creates an inspired precedent: people who originally did not share in priestly/royal/prophetic responsibilities of the patriarchs are counted among those who enjoy the privileges following from those responsibilities—including God's providential protection. Without being physically and formally anointed, members of the patriarchs' households could be seen as sharing in God's anointment. This is how they were seen by members of the (post)exilic community scattered throughout the Ancient Middle East. That community saw its preservation as a result of God's gracious intervention (something to be grateful for)

and, looking back on that protection and providential care, could confidently hope that God will continue fulfilling his purpose for them—eventually gathering them from the dispersion (Ps 106:47).

In the New Testament, John seems to imply some continuity between the experience of scattered Old Testament Israelites and first-century followers of Jesus (cf. Jn 11:52). While the letters of John do not contain direct references to the community being physically scattered, there is little doubt that this community was traumatized and uprooted by conflict. John's first readers already experienced the hatred of the hatred, and they are about to experience more of it as their mission continues (Jn 15:18; cf. 1 Jn 3:13).

According to Köstenberger,

> The churches to which 1 John is written are under doctrinal and emotional duress. There has been a recent departure of false teachers from the church (2:19) that was apparently both painful and unpleasant and that is still palpable in 2 John (v. 7). This is evident especially in the repeated charge against the secessionists that they do not love other believers (see, e.g., 1 Jn 2:9–10; 3:10; 4:7).[16]

Even if John's readers never had to leave their physical home, spiritually they are not where they expected to be. This is why they need much encouragement[17]—the kind of exhortation that brings them back to basics, one of which is their χρῖσμα. As David, anointed by God, had to be persecuted by Saul, an apostate χριστός, so John's bearers of χρῖσμα are under pressure by ἀντίχριστοι—those who oppose it. Saul refused to accept David's status as God's chosen. He did not recognize David's χρῖσμα and opposed it with all his might. Likewise, the Son of David, acknowledged by God, also has to face the hatred of his opponents. According to John, there is a great deal of continuity between the mission of Jesus and that of his disciples. That means, among other, things, that the disciples' claims to possession of χρῖσμα are likely to be met with hostility.

One of the ways in which the world's hatred is displayed is through denial of the Incarnation. Those who oppose this core belief of John's readers are called "antichrists." To quote Köstenberger again,

16 Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2009), E-book, PDF.

17 On the nature of John's relationship with his audience and differentiation within that audience, cf.: Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 15; Craig Koester, "The Spectrum of Johannine Readers," in *"What Is John?" Volume 1: Readers and Reading of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 9–11. In this article, attempts were made to avoid getting involved in a discussion about the so-called "Johannine community," since the subject is too massive to be treated briefly. A helpful overview of this concepts, its developments and crisis can be found in: Cirafesi, Wally V. "The Johannine Community Hypothesis (1968–Present): Past and Present Approaches and a New Way Forward." *Currents in Biblical Research* 12, no. 2 (2014): 173–193. A thorough critique of this hypothesis was offered by Bauckham and (from a sociolinguistic perspective) Klink and Lamb, to name just a few. Richard Bauckham, "The Audience of the Fourth Gospel," in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*, eds. R.T. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 101–111. Edward W. Klink, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). David A. Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).

> … [T]he anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, which marks the beginning of his messianic mission, serves as the paradigm for believers' reception (or "anointing with") the Holy Spirit at conversion. This marks them as "little anointed ones," followers of Jesus the Messiah, who, like he, have the Holy Spirit rest on them. This "anointing," in turn, provides them with accurate teaching regarding Jesus and marks them as belonging to God as a seal of his ownership of them… There may also be a connection between true believers affirming that Jesus is the Messiah (Christos) and themselves receiving an anointing (chrisma), while those who reject Jesus' messianic claim are instead infused by the "spirit of the antichrist" (antichristos; 2:18, 22; 4:3).[18]

The conflict is unavoidable. The semantic domain containing the lexemes χρῖσμα, χρίω, χριστός also contains the term ἀντίχριστος. This term itself implies a connection with χρῖσμα. The latter, after all, is the main cause of persecution. Saul would not be so afraid of David if it were not for David's χρῖσμα that made him a true heir of the kingdom. In a world that actively resists Jesus's messianic claims, it is virtually impossible to possess χρῖσμα without experiencing some hostility. The etymology of the word ἀντίχριστος suggests more than just antagonism. The prefix ἀντί- can also indicate the meaning "instead of": the antichrists try to replace the bearers of true χρῖσμα.[19] Used in forming this unique Johannine lexeme, the prefix may also have connotations "next to," "added to." When the author of the Fourth Gospel describes Christological blessings available in Jesus, he also implies some continuity with the earlier benefits given to Israel through Moses. Thus the expression χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος (Jn 1:16) can be translated as "grace upon grace." The antichrists, whoever they were, could also view themselves as adding something to χρῖσμα, as if that χρῖσμα by itself were not enough.[20]

Understood in a context created by largely a metonymical device, χρῖσμα is something the disciples have in common with Christ himself.[21] This common possession (ἡ κοινωνία, 1 Jn 1:3) of χρῖσμα makes them objects of hate of the world (3:13), especially false teachers, ἀντίχριστοι, who seek to assert themselves at the expense of God's χριστός. The dispersion, the experience of being uprooted (physically and/or psychologically) in the hostile world is virtually inevitable, but it is part of their mission in the world.

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18 Köstenberger, *Theology*, 21.4, e-book, PDF.

19 As, for example, in Mt 2:22—Joseph hears the news that "Archelaus [is] reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod [ἀντὶ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρῴδου]." This Archelaus positioned himself as a legitimate successor Herod, and this idea of continuity does not contradict the use of ἀντὶ.

20 It is often assumed that the antichrists had some sort of Gnostic background and were trying to add some esoteric teaching to the apostolic Gospels. A minority view is represented by Leithart who argues that the antichrists were Judaizers—the kind of false teachers Apostle Paul fought against (Peter J. Leithart. *The Epistles of John Through New Eyes: From Behind the Veil* [Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2009]), 98–99. While lack of historical details related to the antichrists is frustrating, John seems to limit the description of the antichrists to their Christology (denial of the Incarnation being the only test for an antichrist), and this makes his observations applicable to many different historical and cultural contexts.

21 According to Lieu, John "…emphasizes it as something they have 'received' and do not merely possess…" Judith M. Lieu, *I, II, III John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 112.

Knowing that traumatic experiences were inevitable for his disciples, Jesus gives special attention to correcting their expectations. He teaches them to see themselves not so much displaced as "sent." Thus, one of the final episodes of the Gospel of John describes Jesus sending his disciples into the world—in a way he himself was sent by the Father (Jn 20:21). The early readers of that Gospel, without having a face-to-face interaction with Jesus, could also see themselves as "sent ones" through their baptism. As the blind man in ch. 9 discovers, being "sent" by Jesus included both the blessing of light/vision and the obligation of courageous testimony in the face of the hostile world. The name of the pool where he the blind man was healed ("Sent," 9:7) must have contributed greatly to his identity—to his understanding himself as being sent on a mission. Since baptism means identification with Jesus and his mission in the world, every Christian becomes "sent" into the world when he is baptized (or, perhaps in some cases, later, when he/she comes to realize the meaning of his/her baptism). The connection between the blind man and a later reader of the Gospel is not so much metaphorical (the reader's circumstances may or may not be similar to the ones the former blind man found himself in) as metonymical: both the blind man in the story and the reader outside of the story participate in the same mission of Jesus in the world.

In a similar way, the readers of John's letters may identify—by way of metonymy—with the patriarchs. Through this small persecuted community scattered in the world God accomplished the same goal he had in mind with the patriarchs as well—establishment of his Kingdom. This unity of purpose allows the bearers of χρῖσμα to identify with David—with his experience of being anointed, persecuted, and eventually established as a king. Thus they can see themselves as ones who "overcome the world" through their faith.

Finally, having χρῖσμα allows John's readers to identify with Jesus himself. On his way to glory he experienced rejection, humiliation, and utmost hostility from false leaders who sought to assert themselves in his stead. John's readers have also been attacked by antichrists and overcome by staying faithful to their χρῖσμα, to their Christ-centred identity and calling. John sees it as a major victory (1 Jn 5:4) that guarantees their future triumph and eschatological possession of the world.

Yarbrough uses a term "derivative anointing" to describe this identification:

> As John writes… to believers who "have anointing from the Holy One" who was himself anointed, it is hard to imagine him not recalling this heritage of blessing and setting apart for service dating back to Christ's own life and then many centuries earlier to God's people in OT times… The climactic coming of the "Anointed One" … results in a whole community that revels in a derivative anointing.[22]

"Derivative" here probably means not so much similarity as metonymical association. The metaphorical aspects (parallels between the experiences of Christ and the disciples) result from the unity of mission.

22 Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 150.

It is in light of these metonymical associations that some of John's more difficult statements can become somewhat less obscure. In the next section, I will try to establish some parallels that may help one understand John's use of a rather difficult metaphor. After that, some suggestions related to the experience of twenty-first century diaspora Christians will be offered.

"The Evil One Does Not Touch Him"

John sees his readers' faithfulness to the original χρῖσμα and teaching as a sign of great victory—a victory accomplished by God.

"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 Jn 5:18). Having χρῖσμα, being "born of God" is a great privilege that comes with great trials and even greater promises. When John describes the victorious experience of his readers, he uses metaphors that can be interpreted as statements of privilege in the midst of trial—with an eschatological potential. For example, when he writes that "the evil one does not touch" a believer born from God, it has a metaphorical meaning that implies semantic extension. This semantic extension needs to be kept in mind in order to avoid false expectations based on literal meaning. After all, in the Book of Revelation, Antipas was not just "touched," but killed by his opponents (Rv 2:13). He did not seem to have immunity ascribed to the patriarchs in Psalm 105. Could the triumphant claim in 1 John 5:18 be applied to Antipas and other Christian martyrs? The answer seems to be "yes," unless that claim is understood in an absolutist sense, without appreciating the paradoxical nature of John's theology of conquest.

In order to understand some of the Old Testament parallels, one can start with a look directed into the past. When all is said and done, when the mission of the patriarchs is accomplished, it is obvious that they enjoyed God's special protection. In a similar way, their descendants, while dispersed throughout the ancient world, can testify to many cases of God's special care. Psalm 105 calls for thanksgiving: the worshippers are to understand that they have been preserved by God and they are expected to thank him for that special protection, as their very survival completely depends on God's mercy. For twenty-first century refugees, this psalm can also be seen as an encouragement to recognize our dependence on God and express our gratitude in liturgically appropriate forms.

The motif of the righteous who is "touched" with calamity is developed in the Book of Job. Satan very much wants God to "touch" (that is, destroy) all Job's possessions (Jb 1:12) and, later, to "touch" his bones and his flesh (2:5). As it turns out, Satan himself cannot "touch" anyone without God's permission. It is only when he received that permission that he went and "struck Job with loathsome sores" (2:7). Job's experience prior to this trial may be interpreted in this way: God did not allow the evil one to touch him—until the day when God himself gave a special permission. After that, even though Job was severely afflicted, he did not give up his faith in God and thus he overcame.

This semantic extension—"does not touch" meaning "does not touch unless God gives his special permission"—helps the reader separate his/her previous experiences from expectations for the future. A look directed into the past strengthens the worshipper through gratitude: he/she realizes that his/her very survival is an expression of God's mercy. God did not let the evil one "touch" the worshipper in a way that would destroy his/her χρῖσμα, his/her status as born from God. The very fact of the believer's persevering in that χρῖσμα in the context of war and other trials is by itself a work of God—something to be grateful for.

When the worshiper looks into the future, there is (understandably) fear and anxiety mixed with hope. That hope can be considerably strengthened through thanksgiving and praise in a proper liturgical context. John's encouragement, based on the long history of resemanticizing words of χρῖσμα family, does not suggest that no evil will ever be done to the reader. It does mean, however, that no evil will be allowed to destroy that component of our identity that is based on χρῖσμα—the privileges of regeneration, adoption, and future participation in Christ's eschatological conquest.

Conclusion

The marginal status of Christian migrants in the countries of their sojourn does not need to be seen as indication of their diminished value in God's sight. God often accomplishes his purposes in history through marginalized communities. The painful reality of being scattered throughout the world can be seen as part of God's plan all along. This confidence of a scattered community can be strengthened, as was suggested in the article, by two means: 1) practicing gratitude in a liturgical setting (specifically, thanking God for one's preservation and relative safety), 2) metonymical identification with the scattered and providentially preserved God's people of the previous age (identifying with them not because our circumstances are similar, but because our mission is essentially the same).

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Розпорошені, пригноблені, уповноважені: Ресемантизація іменника χρῖσμα у 1 Посланні Івана 2:20

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Анотація: Ця стаття присвячена одному з ключових елементів християнської ідентичності, які розкриваються у посланнях Івана (та решті Іванового корпусу — Четвертому Євангелії та Об'явленні). Існує багато способів описання цієї Христоцентричної реальності (нове народження, усиновлення, обрання, хрещення тощо). У цій статті робиться спроба показати, як характерне для Івана використання іменника χρῖσμα (а також низка старозавітних прикладів ресемантизації споріднених слів) може допомогти читачеві ідентифікувати себе з самим Христом та з розпорошеними, вирваними з корінням християнськими спільнотами. Головний аргумент полягає в тому, що ця ідентифікація є переважно метонімічною (заснованою на єдності мети/місії), а не метафоричною (заснованою на можливій подібності обставин). Така ідентифікація допоможе дезорієнтованим мігрантам побачити свій досвід розсіяння та маргіналізації на тлі більшого Божого задуму.

У своєму підході Іван, скоріш за все, слідує кільком старозавітним траєкторіям семантичного зсуву. Як слово χριστός у LXX отримало семантичні розширення, завдяки чому воно включало осіб, які спочатку не мали необхідного статусу, так і в Посланнях Івана лексема χρῖσμα, винесена далеко за межі свого буквального значення, служить груповим маркером. Ті, кого Іван ідентифікує як одержувачів χρῖσμα, розглядаються як особистості, котрі міцно вкорінені у минулому, а також — есхатологічно — у майбутньому.

Ключові слова: ресемантизація, метонімія, помазання, антихристи, Послання Івана.

Надійшла до редакції / Received 06.10.2025
Прийнята до публікації / Accepted 07.12.2025