

# G L O S S A

## Prepositions and Our Experience

In previous issues of *Affirmation & Critique* the use of prepositions to describe the relationships among the persons in the Trinity and in the economy of the Triune God has been examined. In Volume I, Number 2 the first stage of God's New Testament economy was considered as the journey of the Triune God into time, coming as the Son *from/with* the Father *by* the Spirit in the person of Jesus Christ, passing through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection to complete His journey back *to* the Father in His ascension. Just as the first God-man went through a process, the use of the prepositions also illustrates the process of the believers' experience in God's economy. The most outstanding feature in this process involves the use of the prepositions *eis* and *en*. These two prepositions strongly indicate that the experience of a believer is a co-inherence, interpenetration, or mingling, of God and man (cf. John 14:20). We enter into the Triune God and He enters into us. The normal experience of the believer is a process of going further and deeper into God and of God going further and deeper into us.

The first stage of the believer's experience is regeneration. A number of equivalent expressions are used to indicate regeneration. According to John 1:12-13, those who receive Him, that is, believe into (*eis*) His name, are begotten of (*ek*) God. *Ek* with the genitive case and the verb *beget* (*genmaō*) refers to the source of the birth. God is the origin and source of our regeneration. The believers are those who are born of (*ek*) the Spirit (John 3:5-6, 8), and this birth takes place in the believers' human spirit (v. 6). This divine birth or regeneration (*anagennaō*) took place through (*dia*) the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). As a result of this divine birth we become of (*ek*) God (1 John 4:4, 6; 5:19; 3 John 11); that is, we have God as our source, and this divine birth makes us the same as God in life and nature, but not in the Godhead.

As mentioned above, regeneration occurs through believing *into* Him. The verb *believe* (*pisteuō*) in the New Testament occurs with the prepositions *eis*, *en*, and *epi* (believe *into*, *in*, and *upon*); occurs with nouns in the accusative or dative cases (believe *someone* or *something*); precedes *hoti* (believe *that*); and occurs absolutely, that is, by itself (*believe*). Some scholars, such as Bultmann, argue that these uses have basically the same meaning and can be used interchangeably. While this may be the case with *pisteuō* with *en* and *epi*, it is not the case with *pisteuō* with *eis*. Although there is similarity

between believing what is true concerning Christ and believing based upon all that Christ is, there is a fundamental difference between this and a believing that brings us *into* (*eis*) Him. The former is a necessary prerequisite for the latter, again indicating their distinction. *Pisteuō* with *eis* never occurs in classical Greek or in the Septuagint, but in the writings of John *pisteuō* with the preposition *eis* occurs frequently (thirty-six times), more than any other combination with *pisteuō*, indicating the need to utilize a new linguistic construct to express a deeper realization. The particular use of *pisteuō* with *eis* indicates something more than just mental assent; it is a believing that results in a mystical union with the object of belief, Christ. *Eis* has its full semantic force as a preposition indicating motion toward and into the object of the preposition. As Moulton states in his *Prolegomena*, "*Eis* recalls at once the bringing of the soul *into* that mystical union which Paul loved to express by *en Christō*" (68). "Faith, for John, is an activity which takes men right out of themselves and makes them one with Christ" (Morris 336). Turner points out that John was careful in his use of *pisteuō*. He cites John 14:11-12 and 8:31:

"Believe me [dative] that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me [dative] for the very works' sake. Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me [*eis* with accusative] the works that I do shall he do also;..."

If we place the above along with 8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him [dative]...", we see that the dative indicates a weaker type of belief. Believing *in* Christ is antecedent to believing *into* Christ. (52)

To seal that we have believed *into* Him, we are also baptized *into* Him. This baptism is conducted *into* (*eis*) the name of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19), implying a "spiritual and mystical union with him" (Vincent 149). It is *into* (*eis*) the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16; 19:5) as well as in (*en*) (10:48) and upon (*epi*) (2:38) the name of Jesus Christ, and *into* (*eis*) Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). It is also *into* (*eis*) Christ's death (Rom. 6:3) and in (*en*) the Spirit *into* (*eis*) the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

Once we have been regenerated, having believed *into* Him and having been baptized *into* Him, the Triune God is in our spirit (cf. 2 Tim. 4:22), and we are in the Triune God (cf. John 17:21). The Father is in us (Eph. 4:6), the Son is in us (John 14:20; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27), and the Spirit is in us (John 14:17;

James 4:5). We are also in God the Father (1 Thes. 1:1; 1 John 2:24), in Christ the Son (Rom. 6:11; 8:1), and in the Holy Spirit (9:1; 15:16; 1 Cor. 12:3). The expression *in Christ* is particularly striking in Paul's writings where it occurs more than fifty times related to the believers and their experience.

**T**he apostle John stresses the mutual indwelling of God and man when he refers to abiding or remaining (*menō*) in Him. This abiding is mutual. We abide in Him and He abides in us. Through eating His flesh and drinking His blood, we abide in Him and He in us (John 6:56). As Alford says, "He who thus lives upon Me, abides in Me;—and I (that living power and nourishment conveyed by the *artos tēs zōēs* [the bread of life] which = *egō*) abide in him" (768). Through this eating of Him we also have life in ourselves (v. 53) and live because of (*dia* + accusative case) Him (v. 57). The vine with its branches is used to illustrate this mutual abiding in John 15:4-7. Our abiding in Him and He in us is a prerequisite for bearing fruit. On the one hand, we could say that abiding in Him is a condition and cause for Him to abide in us; on the other hand, they occur simultaneously with one condition not existing without the other. According to Alford the clause "I in you" in John 15:4 should not be taken as a promise but "as a clause dependent on *meinate en emoi* [abide in Me], 'Take care that ye abide in Me and I in you.'" (858).

This abiding "in you" does not refer to Christ in our spirit. His abiding or living in our spirit has been accomplished, and we here are eternally joined to the Lord. Rather, it refers to His abiding in and spreading into the faculties of our soul (mind, emotion, and will). John's use of *menō* (abide) is equivalent to Paul's use of the verb *oikeō* (dwell). This verb comes from the word *oikos* (house/home) and is used with the prepositional prefix *kata* in Ephesians 3:17. The use of *kata* intensifies the idea of dwelling. Wuest captures this sense in his translation: "That the Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts" (452).

This distinction is also particularly important in understanding Romans 8:9-11. While Christ being "in you" in verse 10 refers to the time of regeneration when Christ initially came into us, in verses 9 and 11 it is best to understand the phrase "in you" to refer to the faculty of the soul (i.e., mind, emotion, and will). These two verses should be taken as occurring after the stage of regeneration; the Spirit (of Christ) is (in)dwelling (*(en)oikeō*) or making home in us (our soul). His indwelling of the faculties of our soul then becomes the ground for Him to give life to our mortal bodies.

This spreading of the Triune God into the faculties of the soul is referred to or implied in other places. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be *in you*, which was also in Christ Jesus." Here "in you" particularly refers to our mind. We also have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Our mind should be set on the spirit and mind the things of the spirit (Rom.

8:5-6), and it is undergoing the process of transformation by being renewed to the extent that we are renewed in the spirit of our mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). Philippians 2:13 says, "God...operates *in you* both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." Here the willing particularly refers to our will. Other verses that refer to the spreading of Christ into the faculties of our soul include Galatians 2:20, 4:19, and Philippians 1:20. As a result of this growth and spread we are filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), and Christ becomes all in all (Col. 3:11).

Although the process of the Lord's human life resulted in Him completing His journey to (*pros*) the Father, this matter is not stressed very much in regard to the believers. However, *pros* occurs at least twice referring to our coming to the Father. We come to the Father through (*dia*) Christ, our way (John 14:6); and in Ephesians 2:18 the whole Triune God is involved, "for through [*dia*] Him [the Lord Jesus Christ] we both [the Jewish and Gentile believers] have access in [*en*] one Spirit unto [*pros*] the Father." Paul also bowed his knees unto (*pros*) the Father (3:14), and we worship (*pros-kumeō*) the Father in spirit and truthfulness (John 4:23). We also have peace (Rom. 5:1) and boldness toward (*pros*) God (1 John 3:21).

The use of the prepositions related to our experience indicates that our life is one of a mystical union in and with the Triune God. We are begotten of (*ek*) God through believing and being baptized into (*eis*) Christ. Through regeneration the Triune God and we coinhere, mutually indwelling each other. We are in (*en*) Him and He in us. We need to live, walk, and abide in Him and let Him live, abide, and make His home in us, allowing Him to spread into the faculties of our soul until this union is consummated with the glorification of our body. Through this process we are transformed into the same image and conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God until we become fully like Him in life, nature, and expression.

by Roger Good

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