

The Revelation of God as Father (2)

As was mentioned in the last issue of *Affirmation & Critique*, the revelation of God as Father in the Bible is progressive. Ascribing the designation *Father* to God implies that there is/are son(s) or child(ren). The father-son relationship occurs eternally as a relationship within the Trinity between the Father and the only begotten Son. However, God's desire is that He would have many sons manifesting and expressing His life and nature. The seeds of the revelation of God as Father are present in the Old Testament, developed in more detail in the New Testament, especially in the ministry of the Son and the apostles, and ultimately consummated in the experience of the believers through regeneration, transformation, and glorification to consummate as the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God the Father and His sons for eternity. In this issue we will look at the believers' experience of the Father, focusing on verses where the name *Father* is specifically mentioned. We will consider the operation of the Father in foreknowing, choosing, and selecting the believers in order to regenerate them by imparting His life into them for the reproduction of Himself in life, nature, function, and expression to be carried out in the living of the believers in oneness with Him. The reproduction of the Father in the believers is actually the reproduction of Christ the Son, who lived the Father's divine life in His human life on earth, as the Spirit indwelling the believers. The indwelling Christ as the Spirit enables us to live the Father's life in our human life (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21).

First Corinthians 8:6 could be considered a summary of the believers' relationship with the Father: "To us there is one God, the Father, out from (ἐκ) whom are all things, and we are unto (εἰς) Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through Him." The prepositions ἐκ as well as ἀπό and παρά indicate that the Father is the source, and the prepositions εἰς and πρός indicate that the Father is the ultimate destination of the believers in the process of God's salvation. This also matches the Son's process in His human living and His relationship with the Father.¹

The Father's Foreknowing, Choosing, and Predestinating of the Believers

The initiation of the process to make the believers sons began before the foundation of the world with the Father's

foreknowing, choosing, and predestinating of the believers unto sonship. All these actions are operations of the Triune God in which the Father plays a key role. According to Ephesians 1:3-6, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved. We were chosen to be holy (the same as the Father in His holy nature) and predestinated (προορίζω), or marked out beforehand, to be His sons. Being a son of God involves a process, which is indicated by the word *sonship* (υἰοθεσία)² and by Romans 8:29-30:

Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

These verses in Romans emphasize the consummation of the process. According to the Greek, the believers are marked out beforehand as conformed (σύμμορφος) to the image of the Son, with the adjective σύμμορφος focusing on the attainment of an expression, which is the same as the firstborn Son. This is confirmed by the use of the Greek aorist past tense in the word *glorified* (v. 30). In God's eyes the justified believers have been glorified; they have attained to the glorious expression of the Father.

First Peter 1:2 also indicates the Father's selection of the believers. We were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The process includes Christ's death with the shedding of His blood to accomplish redemption and His resurrection in which He became the life-giving Spirit to sanctify the believers' hearts unto the obedience of faith in His blood.

In addition to these verses that indicate the Father's choosing, John 15:16 and 19 indicate that the believers were chosen out of (ἐκ) the world and set (in the vine) to go forth and bear the fruit that should remain. Those who

are chosen remain in the world (17:11), but they are not of (ἐκ) the world; that is, their source is not the world (15:19; 17:6, 16). Indeed, the world is in opposition to the Father. The world (κόσμος) is a satanic system, which has systematized the things that God created to maintain human life on earth, substituting them for the Father, who is the source of these things. As a result, human beings seek their provision, protection, and pleasure from the world system instead of trusting in God the Father as the source of these things. Therefore, John charges the believers in his Epistles to not love the world nor the things in the world (1 John 2:15). He goes on to say, "If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever" (v. 15-17). However, the Father loves the world (not the system, but those caught in it) to such an extent that He sent His Son into the world (John 3:16) as the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14) to rescue people out of the world to the Father as the source and to become His children.

The Father's Regeneration to Reproduce Himself

Regeneration is an operation of the Triune God in which the Father, as the source of the divine life, imparts His life into us based on Christ's redemptive death and Christ's becoming the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. According to 1 Peter 1:3, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As Witness Lee states, "When Christ was resurrected, we, His believers, were all included in Him. Hence, we were resurrected with Him (Eph. 2:6). In His resurrection He imparted the divine life into us and made us the same as He is" (Recovery Version, 1 Pet. 1:3, note 7). The Father regenerated us through the living and abiding word (λόγος) of God (v. 23). The word testifies concerning the Lord Jesus that we would come to Him (John 5:39-40) and receive Him through believing into His name (1:12) to be begotten of (ἐκ) God (v. 13) and thus have eternal life (3:15-16). The Father also plays an important role in our coming to Christ. He gives us to Christ so that we will come to Him (6:37). We come to Him because the Father draws us (v. 44), we have heard and learned from (παρά) the Father (v. 45), and our coming to Him has been given to us from (ἐκ) the Father (v. 65).

Regeneration is applied to us by the Spirit. Our birth is of (ἐκ) the Spirit in our spirit (3:6). The Father is involved in

sending the Spirit in the Son's name (14:26), who is also sent by the Son from/with (παρά) the Father as the source. Indeed, the Spirit proceeds (ἐκπορεύεται) from/with (παρά) the Father (15:26). The Father gives the Spirit (Luke 11:13), and the Son sends the Spirit as the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4), which He received from the Father and poured out on the church as His Body (2:33). The Spirit functions both essentially (to impart the divine essence of the Father into the believers, John 20:22) and economically (as their outward empowering, Acts 2:2-4, 17-18).

As a result of the regeneration of the Spirit in our spirit, God becomes the Father of our regenerated human spirits (Heb. 12:9). He also becomes our heavenly Father (Matt. 5:48; John 20:17), enabling us to live a heavenly life on earth. This is reinforced by the word *regeneration*. While the noun *regeneration* (παλιγγενεσία) in Titus 3:5 literally means "again" (πάλιν) "born, or begotten" (γενεσία), with the sense of another birth in addition to our first, the verb ἀναγεννώ in 1 Peter 1:3 and 23 has both the temporal notion of "again" as well as the spatial notion of "up, or above." Ἀναγεννώ means literally "again" or

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"up" (ἀνά) "born, or begotten" (γεννώ). In addition, John 3:3 and 7 speak of being born anew, or born from above (ἄνωθεν).³ The use of the prefixes ἀνά and ἄνω in these compounds introduces a spatial notion into our regeneration and in our relationship with the Father. The

birth is from above; i.e., it is heavenly in nature, different from our earthly birth from our parents. The Father is addressed by looking up (11:41) and as being in the heavens (Matt. 6:9; 7:11; so also 5:16, 45; 6:1; 7:21; 10:32-33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19; 23:9; Mark 11:25-26). Our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48), forgiving (6:14), nourishing and caring (v. 26), knowing what we need (v. 32), planting us in the kingdom of the heavens (15:13), and chastising (18:35). The Lord Jesus indicated that He also was from above (ἄνωθεν, John 8:23; 3:31), the One who is in heaven and comes down out of heaven (v. 13), as the living bread of God (6:33, 41-42, 50-51, 58). He is the second man in resurrection, who is out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:47), as the Head of the new creation. We believers become part of the second man by regeneration; our origin is God, and our nature is heavenly.

The particle ἄνω (above) used with a number of verbs and noun phrases also indicates our heavenly status. We are born from the Jerusalem *above*, which is our mother (Gal. 4:26). This signifies the church in this age and the New Jerusalem for eternity, which comes down out of heaven from God (Rev. 3:12; 21:1-2, 10). God has called us

upward in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). We need to seek the things which are *above*, where Christ is (Col. 3:1), and set our minds on the things which are *above*, not on the things which are on the earth (v. 2).

Our Status—Children, Sons, Heirs, and Fathers

As a result of regeneration we become newborn babes (ἀρτηγέννητα βρέφη, 1 Pet. 2:2) and children of God (τέκνα) through the growth and maturation of the Father's life (John 1:12; 11:52; Rom. 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2, 10; 5:2), sons of God (υἱοί, Matt. 5:9; Luke 20:36; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26), sons of the Father (Matt. 5:45), brothers (ἀδελφοί) of the Firstborn (πρωτότοκος, Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-12; John 20:17), and heirs (κληρονόμοι) of God and joint heirs (συγκληρονόμοι) with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; 4:7; Eph. 3:6; Titus 3:7). The goal of the Father's regeneration is not simply that we would be His children and mature to be sons and even heirs, but that we would even become fathers, a reproduction of the Father's loving and forgiving heart, the same as our Father in function, bringing forth children in the divine life.

The apostles were such fathers, and they exhorted the believers under their care to become as they were. This is particularly manifest in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "Though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." It is implied as well in his addressing the saints in Corinth as his beloved children (v. 14; 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14).⁴ He exhorts them to become imitators of him (1 Cor. 4:16; cf. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6). He states in 1 Thessalonians 2:11, "Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying." Paul refers to Onesimus as his child, whom he had begotten in his bonds (Philem. 10), and to Timothy and Titus as his children (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Peter also refers to Mark as "my son" (1 Pet. 5:13).

John's function as a father is implied in his addressing the believers as his children (τέκνιά) generally (1 John 2:1; 4:4; 5:21; 3 John 4) and to the younger believers specifically (1 John 2:12, 28). John addresses the mature believers as fathers, which implies his desire that the believers would mature to become such fathers (vv. 13-14).⁵

Hebrews 2:13 indicates that the Lord Jesus is even a Father to the believers through His resurrection. It quotes Isaiah 8:18, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me" and applies this passage to the Lord Jesus in the context of His indwelling the believers in the church (Heb. 2:12). He also called the disciples children (τέκνα, Mark 10:24) and little children (τεκνία, John 13:33; παιδία, 21:5).

The three parables in Luke 15 unveil the saving love of the Triune God toward sinners. The third parable, that of the loving father (also known as the parable of the prodigal son), illustrates God the Father's love toward His sons, but it also indicates the inadequacy of the response of both sons to their father. In their ignorance of the father's loving and forgiving heart, one of the sons runs away and squanders his estate (v. 13), and the other remains in the father's house "slaving" for him but does not enjoy the father's house (v. 29). This parable illustrates a shortage in the response of believers to the Father in knowing Him and His desire in His economy. If believers would become a reproduction of the Father's loving and forgiving heart by being joined to the Son, who Himself was a reproduction of the Father by living a life of incorporation with the Father, and would dispense the Father's life into believers and unbelievers alike, there would be a great increase in the enjoyment of the Father's house. There is joy in heaven and in the Father's house over one sinner repenting (vv. 5-7, 9-10, 24, 32), and there is also no greater joy than that our spiritual children are walking in the truth (3 John 4). A number of other verses equate joy with the bringing forth of spiritual children (John 15:11; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thes. 2:19-20; 3:9; cf. John 16:20-24).

Our Status—Abodes and Fruit-bearing Branches

John's Gospel, particularly chapters 14 through 16, carries a similar notion of the reproduction of the Father. Through Christ's resurrection the believers become abodes in the Father's house and branches in the vine to go forth and bear much fruit, the reproduction of the Father's life embodied in the Son and imparted as the Spirit into others.

John 14 begins with a reference to the Father's house with many abodes, which are the believers (vv. 2, 23). The Lord Himself was an abode of the Father, testifying that He was in the Father and the Father was in Him as the source of His words and works (vv. 10-11). In order to increase the number of abodes in the Father's house, the Lord went to the Father through death and resurrection to prepare a place for us in God (vv. 3, 12, 28). His death removed the obstacles between us and God (sin, sins, death, the world, the flesh, the self, the old man, and Satan). He then returned in resurrection as the Comforter, the Spirit of reality, to indwell the believers as abodes of the Father and Son (vv. 16-18, 23, 28). On the day of resurrection the disciples came to know that He is in the Father, and they were in Him (who is in the Father), and He (who is in the Father) was in them (v. 20). The believers need to abide in Christ so that Christ, as the embodiment of the Father realized as the Spirit, can abide in the believers (15:4). In John 15 the action of abiding is associated with another image, that of the fruit-bearing branches abiding in the vine. The Father's role changes to that of the husbandman,

or farmer, tending the vine (the Son with the believers as the branches) by working the soil and pruning the vine to help it bear fruit. The corporate Christ is the vine, and the Father is the life source of the vine. As a result, the bearing of fruit glorifies, or expresses, the Father (v. 8). If we abide in the Son and the Son's words abide in us, we can ask the Father (in the Son's name) concerning fruit-bearing, and He will answer us (vv. 7, 16; 16:23-24). The fruit-bearing life issues in the Son's joy in us and in our joy being made full (15:11; 16:24). We have been chosen and set to go forth and bear fruit that the fruit would remain, or abide (μένω, 15:16). Keeping His commandments causes us to abide in the Son's love and to love one another (vv. 9-10, 12).⁶ This mutual love is the condition for the branches to bear fruit.

The Expression and Characteristics of the Father's Life

Chapters 5 through 7 of the Gospel of Matthew and 1 John emphasize the characteristics of the Father's life and nature in terms of the believers' expression of the Father.

In Matthew 5—7 the Lord Jesus frequently referred to the Father as “your Father” (i.e., the disciples' Father) and indicates that the constitution of the kingdom can be fulfilled only by those who are regenerated and live according to the Father's life. Indeed, Matthew 5 consummates with the key to understanding the three chapters: “You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (v. 48). The Greek word τέλειος has the sense of perfect and complete, full-grown, or whole, and implies being brought to a consummation, end, or goal (τέλος), at least as far as the believers are concerned. The Lord charges the disciples to let their light shine before men, so that they may see their good works and glorify their Father who is in the heavens (v. 16), to love their enemies, and to pray for those who persecute them, so that they may become sons of their Father who is in the heavens (vv. 44-45; cf. Luke 6:35), and to be full of compassion, even as their Father also is full of compassion (v. 36). The life of the Father is a hidden life, and the believers will be rewarded for their secret acts. The believers need to take care not to do their righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, they have no reward with their Father who is in the heavens (Matt. 6:1). They need to give alms in secret, so that their Father who sees in secret will repay them (v. 4). They need to pray by entering into their private room, shutting their door, and praying to their Father who is in secret, so that their Father who sees in secret will repay them (v. 6). They also need to fast to their Father who is in secret, and

their Father who sees in secret will repay them (v. 18).⁷ They should not be like the hypocrites, who make an open display in their asking (v. 8). They should forgive men their offenses, as their Father forgives their offenses (v. 14), especially when they are conscious of offenses during prayer (Mark 11:25-26).

First John mentions a number of characteristics of the divine birth. The ones who have been begotten of the righteous Father practice righteousness (2:29), and they do not practice sin because of the Father's seed abiding in them (3:9). The God who is love and who is the source of love enables those begotten of Him to love one another (4:7; 5:1). The human spirit that has been begotten of God overcomes the world (v. 4), and everyone who is begotten of God does not sin but keeps himself, and the evil one does not touch him (v. 18).

Coming to the Father and the Worship of the Father after the Lord's Supper

Another characteristic of the believers is that they are those who come to the Father. The Son brings us to the

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Father and is the way for us to come to the Father. In John 14:6 Jesus said that He is the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to (πρός) the Father except through Him. This, in the context of John 14, is to enter into God as our living dwelling place. Ephesians

2:18 states that through Him both Jews and Gentiles have access (προσπαγωγήν) in one Spirit unto (πρός) the Father. “Through God the Son, who is the Accomplisher, the means, and in God the Spirit, who is the Executor, the application, we have access unto God the Father, who is the Originator, the source of our enjoyment” (Recovery Version, note 4).

In their coming to the Father, the believers also receive many divine blessings from the Father. Some of the more common blessings, which come from (ἀπό) God our Father, are particularly mentioned in the greetings in the Epistles, such as grace and peace (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 2 Thes. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philem. 3), peace and love with faith (Eph. 6:23), and grace, mercy, and peace (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

A number of actions accompany this coming to the Father. The believers give thanks to the Father (Eph. 5:20; Col. 1:3, 12; 3:17; cf. Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 4; 1 Thes. 1:2; 2:13; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2:13, in which thanks are directed to God); they bow their knees to the Father in prayer (Eph. 3:14); they, in the spirit of

sonship and with the Spirit of His Son, cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6); they worship (προσκυνέω) the Father (John 4:21, 23-24), they fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3); they have an Advocate with the Father to restore fellowship broken by sin (2:1); they come to know the Father (vv. 13-14); with one mouth they glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6), and they pronounce Him blessed, or speak well (εὐλογητός), concerning Him (2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).

One environment in which the Father receives particular attention from the believers is after the Lord's table meeting and the Lord's supper. After the Lord instituted His table prior to His death, He led the disciples to sing a hymn, probably to the Father (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; cf. Heb. 2:12; Acts 16:25). Hebrews 2:12 is particularly striking related to this:

Hebrews 2:12 reveals a very particular worship to God. This is the worship to the Father by the Son, not only in the church but through the church and from within the church. He says, "I will declare Your name to My brothers." Then He changed brothers to a synonym, saying, "In the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise unto You." To sing praises to the Father is the worship to the Father, yet this is a very particular worship. This is the church, constituted with all the believers, worshipping God with Christ in them as the worshipping Person...The real worship the Father wants today is His Son worshipping Him from within all the believers as the church. This is quite deep. This is not just to have a worship with certain hymns and bowing of the head and kneeling down...The particular way revealed in the New Testament to worship God the Father is in Hebrews 2:12. This is what the Father wants—a genuine, real worship which is the worship of all the saints of God with the firstborn Son in them as the real worshipping Person. (Lee, *Elders* 15-16)

The hymn singing in this kind of worship should focus on two particular kinds of hymns:

We need to call hymns according to the Father's being. The Father's name was not revealed until the Lord Jesus came. He came to reveal the name of the Father (John 17:6, 26), the person of the Father. Thus, we have to call hymns according to the Father's person, the Father's being.

We also have to call hymns according to the Father's attributes, such as His love, His kindness, and His glory...His faithfulness, His greatness, His wisdom, His mercy...

We praise the Son according to His person and work, but there is no work with regard to the Father. We should praise the Father according to His being and attributes.

We have to differentiate and discern the hymns according to these two categories: the Father's being, what the Father is, and the Father's attributes. (Lee, *Basic* 41-42)

This singing of hymns by the indwelling Son in the believers is similar to the believers' crying of Abba, Father! In Romans 8:15 the believers who have received a spirit of sonship cry in this spirit, "Abba, Father!" and in Galatians 4:6 it is the Spirit of God's Son who is crying in our hearts, "Abba, Father!" This indicates that the regenerated spirit of the believers and the Spirit of God are mingled as one. *Abba* is an Aramaic word, and *Father* is the translation of the Greek word πατήρ. The first occurrence of such a term is recorded in Mark's Gospel when the Lord Jesus was praying to the Father in Gethsemane before His betrayal and crucifixion (14:36). Such an affectionate cry implies an intimate relationship in life between a genuine son and a begetting father, which characterizes the Lord's life on earth. The believers' mingled cry, "Abba, Father!" testifies to their union with Christ as the Son of God and that the Father's life embodied in the Son of God realized as the Spirit is being reproduced in the believers.

Being to the Glory of God the Father

The believers' consummate experience of God the Father is that they would be to the glory of the Father. Christ will come in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38), and the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43). The believers will enter into and become the Father's glorious expression for eternity, consummating in the New Jerusalem, which has the glory of God (Rev. 21:11).

Three of the deepest prayers in the Bible are related to this matter. In John 17 the Son prays to the Father to glorify the Son along with the Father in the Son's glorification (v. 5). Then He prays that the believers would be one in three aspects: in the Father's name (implying the impartation of the divine life) to be one even as the Father and the Son are (vv. 6-13), in the Father's sanctifying word to be one even as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father that the believers may also be in them (vv. 14-21), and in the divine glory to be one even as the Father and the Son are, with the Son in them and the Father in Him that they may be perfected into one (vv. 22-24). It is a prayer that the believers would correspond to God's righteousness (being justified unto life), holiness, and glory.

In Ephesians 1:16-23 Paul prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to the believers a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of their heart having been enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what

are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength, which He caused to operate in Christ in His resurrection, enthronement, subjection of all things under His feet, and giving Him to be Head over all things to the church, His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. The title *Father of glory* implies both the impartation of the Father's life in regeneration and the consummate expression of the Father through His many sons.

In Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul bows his knees unto the Father that He would grant the believers, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in their hearts through faith, that they, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that they may be filled unto all the fullness of God. Then he ends with a doxology: "To Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen."

Conclusion

The initiation of the believers' experience of God the Father begins before the foundation of the world with the Father's choosing and selection. In time it begins with regeneration to make them children of God so that they can mature as sons of God. The believers need to become the same as the Father in function, as fathers, imparting the divine life into those under their care, following the example of the Son and the apostles. As an abode in the Father's house, abiding in the vine (the corporate Christ), they bear fruit to glorify, or express, the Father and have their joy made full. They also live a life that expresses the Father—a loving, forgiving, compassionate, and hidden life. They keep coming to the Father as their source in thanksgiving, prayer, praise, crying, worship, fellowship, glorifying, and blessing. This is particularly manifested at the end of the Lord's table meeting in the hymn singing, in which the Son indwelling the believers leads the praise and worship to the Father. Eventually, the believers are glorified; they become the glorious expression of their heavenly divine source, the Father. To Him be the glory forever and ever! Amen!

by Roger Good

Notes

¹See my article "The Trinity and the Prepositions," which covers the Son's journey from the Father and back to the Father from the point of view of the use of Greek prepositions, in *Affirmation & Critique* I.1 (Jan. 1996): 50-52.

²See my article "Sonship or Adoption as Sons?" which speaks of sonship as a process, in *Affirmation & Critique* V.4 (Oct. 2000): 39-40.

³It seems that the word ἄνωθεν has a double sense in John 3. The Lord's speaking to Nicodemus may have been in Greek rather than in Aramaic or Hebrew, as Brown states: "We know of no Hebrew or Aramaic word of similar meaning which would have this spatial and temporal ambiguity" (130). Nicodemus understood a temporal and physical notion (entering into his mother's womb a second time, v. 4), whereas Jesus pointed him to the spatial and spiritual notion (a birth of the Spirit/wind related to the heavens, vv. 5-13).

⁴Paul addresses the believers in Galatia in the same way: "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19), but the image is that of a mother rather than a father.

⁵Some may cite Matthew 23:9, "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in the heavens," in contrast to this notion. However, it says not to call anyone father and does not deny that believers can function as fathers, especially in begetting spiritual children.

⁶The Epistles of John also mention abiding. The Word of eternal life that was heard from the beginning needs to abide in us so that we can abide in the Son and the Father (1 John 2:24); he who abides in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son (2 John 9). One who abides in love abides in God and God in Him (1 John 4:15-16).

⁷The pronouns in the giving of alms (v. 4), the praying (v. 6), and the fasting (v. 18) are all singular, indicating a personal and intimate communion with the Father.

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