

THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE SPHERICAL DATIVE

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636

Phone 508.775.8008

Noncommercial reproduction permitted

"If we believe in the Trinity, why do we ever pray to God 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'?" That was last Sunday's After-Coffee Discussion theme, set by (1) the questioner's agreement the Sunday before to present the question last Sunday & (2) the group's agreement to center last Sunday's discussion in the question. I came in (as usual) toward the end of the discussion, for earlier I couldn't have known how most helpfully to come in. To be helpful, the discussion had to be free to roam around inside (**in the sphere of**) the Trinity, which is plenty of room (so the discussion will spill over into next Sunday). Somebody remembered Augustine's saying your choice when there're three lamps lit in a room: you can see that the room's illuminated (God's unity), or look at the lamps (the Trinity), & that severally or together. But it turned out that the questioner was hung up not just on mediation as **action** (why can't we bypass Jesus in going to God?) but also on the preposition (why "**through**," & what does this mean in the doctrine & practice of prayer?).

Because Craigville Colloquy VIII ("The Holy Spirit in Creation, Truth, and Power") is coming soon (22-26 July 91), I've been noticing, in my daily readings in the Greek NT, the references to the Spirit, the range of prepositions to which the Spirit is object, & especially the spherical dative (with & without preposition). The grammatical-syntactical is only one of many perspectives on the Spirit, but it is one. And within it, the spherical dative is worth taking a look at. (No, you don't have to know Greek to understand this Thinksheet.)

1 Christian doctrine would be too complicated without the Trinity. Once you get the hang of trinitarian thinking, it's like having three Shaker pegs behind your door instead of one. You began with one (the Father), then found you had too much to hang up on one, so you added a second (the Son), then had still too much left over, so you put in the third (the Holy Spirit). That's what happened from below: faith holds it to be an exact correspondent with what was happening above, viz God was revealing himself as triune ("tri-une," "three-one")....You distribute your clothes (let's say) on three pegs: trinitarian thinking distributes "God" in eternity & in three temporal periods (sometimes called "dispensations"): Father time before Jesus, then ca.30 years of Son time, & since then Spirit time.

2 Putting it that starkly, it sounds like a relay race with three gods: the Father passes the baton to the Son, who ca.30 years later passes it to the Holy Spirit. But this sequential way of thinking is itself sort of an invisible Shaker peg: "time," being space-time, is not so simple as a straight line.

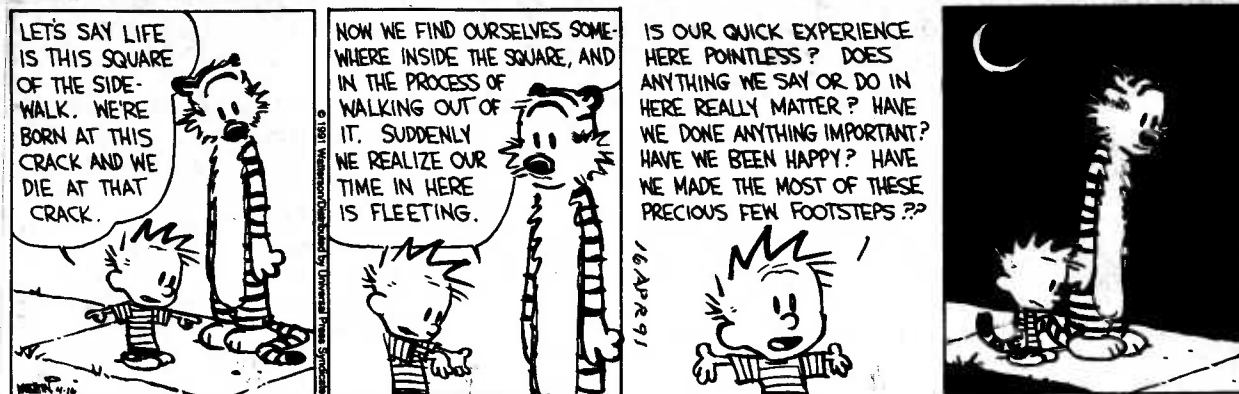
3 Now let's be bold enough to go for another distribution, viz of prepositions vis-a-vis the Persons of the Trinity. (It wouldn't be hard to justify saying the early Christian theologizing was a battle of the prepositions, but that's not important for our present purpose.) The world is **from** the Father-Creator, the first disciples were **with** the Son-Redeemer, & now the Son-Redeemer-Christ is **in** us as we live our personal & Christian-communal lives **in the sphere of** the Holy Spirit.

4 A nation's boundaries define **the space within which** the nation lives its "domestic" life. (Bush considers Iraq's boundaries more sacred than the lives of Iraqi Kurds & Iraqi Shiites: Saddam is Bush's man to maintain those 1922 boundaries, which all the contiguous nations also want maintained.) In the NT, what are the boundaries the Holy Spirit defines for us Christians? An inductive way of getting at this is to read all the contexts of the concordance references in which "in" precedes some expression for the Spirit. (Look up under "Spirit": "in" would drive you crazy.) Only then turn to your biblical dictionaries & theological texts. (Besides being more direct, inductive study is more fun.)

5 I could have defined for you "the spherical dative" from the start; but if you didn't know it when you read this Thinksheet's title, it's dawned on you by now, hasn't it? But to be formal about it, & in hope it'll clarify a bit further, here's a definition: The subcase presenting a person not as the destination or limit of an action

CALVIN AND HOBBS

by Bill Watterson



("I gave YOU a book," or "I gave a book TO YOU"), not as an instrument or accompanier or possession or reference, not as point located in space or time, not as an agent, but as a **sphere within which** the person is experienced.

Contrast the cartoon: (1) Like some compulsive, Calvin is momentarily stuck in one concrete sidewalk square which he's metamorphizing into time, the brief time "we" have on earth; (2) Calvin's philosophizing puts him & Hobbes into a flat time-box; (3) There's no sphere to explore, no capaciousness, but only a tiny, two-dimensional space, a flatland; (4) The cold, impersonal moon looks down on the dismal Schopenhauerian scene; (5) No love is available to this mood, for love is spherical: it is a grace-given space that delivers us from "time is fleeting" into timelessness and from "Have we been happy?" into the glorious freedom & roominess of "Am I making my beloved happy?"

Skip this GRAMMATICAL NOTE if grammar ain't your cupatea: Of Sanscrit's 8 cases+forms, almost all have disappeared in English (the forms, ie: of course the functions remain), 4 have disappeared in Latin, 3 in Greek (L.8.29f [Robertson.543] has "all eight cases," though only five case-forms). The old Greek dative, which was decaying in the NT period & has disappeared in Mod.Gk. (due mainly to the overuse of ἐν en (in, on, at, among, within: Moulton.1.280; p.103: this preposition became "a maid-of-all-work").

Now notice, at the beginning of this \$, that the spherical dative is something other than the seven subcases I listed before mentioning it. Here's a subtlety we don't have in English: to be "in Christ" is spherical dative because personal (personal relations being the heart & root of the dative--whose form, however, in late Greek, including the NT, absorbs the locative & instrumental functions, giving them a personal tinge).* The essential or simple dative comports well with, supports, Christian love: the dative of indirect object centers in the person for whom or in whose interest the action occurs....Close in meaning is the instrumental of agency word (one prepositionless Greek word) "[by the] Spirit" (Ro.8.14, Gal.5.18, et al).

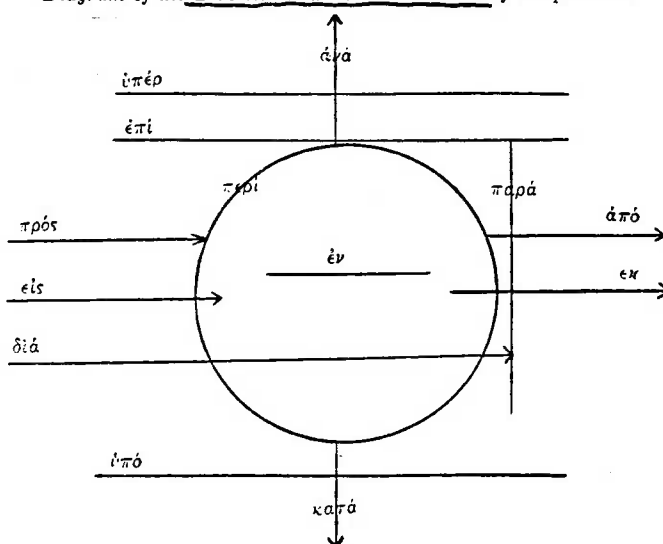
*Compare-contrast the locative impersonal "in the house."

Let's notice, next, that our preposition is psychovisually central among the dozen main NT prepositions (Dana & Mantey.113):

Please write in the English equivalents (you need no Greek to manage that!). Notice next the spirituality of our preposition: it's "the stillpoint in a moving world" (T.S.Eliot). This moves us out of our grammatical reverie into theological substance:

6 While Paul does sometimes use the spherical dative to express Christians' being "IN (the sphere of) the Spirit," he much more often--164 times!--says "IN (the sphere of) Christ." His mystical-practical mind used Greek more fluidly, much more poetically, than did the philosophers of his time; besides, the theologico-categorical distinctions a later Christian time found necessary were not in his mind. He could say "the spirit of God" (very often), "the spirit of the One who resurrected Jesus" (Ro.8.11; & two vv. previous, "the spirit of Christ"), "the spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil.1.19), "worship God in the spirit" (Phi.3.3), "the Holy Spirit of God" (but this is Eph.[4.30], which may be deuteroPauline), "the spirit of his [God's] son" (Gal.4.6),

Diagram of the Directive and Local Functions of Prepositions



& even "the Lord [Jesus] is the Spirit....the Lord who is Spirit" (2Cor.3.17f)....In Gal.4.6 NRSV, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our/your hearts, crying [as did Jesus in the Lord's Prayer] 'Abba! Father!'" Paul often speaks of his own spirit, & sometimes of his followers' spirits: would he make a distinction between this spirit-to-person relationship (of himself & his followers) & Jesus' spirit-to-person relationship? We're left to speculate, for he's about other business than satisfying our metaphysical concerns. So we can't make a neat match between his mystical-practical words & the Fourth Gospel's mystical-philosophical words (Jn.16.12-15 NRSV), The Spirit "will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears," taking "what is mine [Jesus']" to "declare it to you." Here "the Spirit of truth" is transmitter & guide. Further (v.7), he's Jesus' replacement "Advocate," whom Jesus sends to his disciples. (Aside: Here's the biblical base for the so-called *filioque* ["and the Son" in the sending of the Spirit?] controversy: in being unneat, the NT is unkind to theologians who hunger for neatness.)....Prepositions have directional & positional force. Paul: Since God has sent "the Spirit of his Son INTO our/your hearts," the Spirit is IN, WITHIN (the root meaning of this preposition), IN THE SPHERE OF, our/your hearts. In Jn., the message does not greatly differ, but the language & atmosphere are different. Communal "love" (in its special meaning in the Fourth Gospel & 1-3Jn.) is the evidence, to church & world, of the presence of the Spirit, who penetrates hearts-&-community, providing co-inherency of Christ & community & thus social coherence & testimonial unity (which evidences Christ's presence in the Spirit, parallel in Paul with the manifestation of "the gifts of the Spirit").

7 So in Paul, "in Christ" & "in the Spirit" are almost synonymous, enough so that a study of the former spherical dative helps us understand his use of the latter spherical dative. In his masterful monograph on the phrase, Deissmann* proved that it's original with Paul; but Sanday & Headlam's commentary on Romans (esp. Ro.6.11) "seems rightly to urge that the idea of the mystic indwelling originated with the Master's own teaching: the actual phrase in John 15.4 may be determined by Pauline language, but in the original Aramaic teaching the thought may have been essentially present" (Moulton.1.103). I conclude that the quality of interrelation between Jesus & his disciples could well have been described by him, as it is in the Jn.15 vine-&-branches analogy, as a **mutual abiding**--so much so that this is a mark, & should be a test, of the true church always & everywhere. Functionally, it matters not whether this reality is described as abiding in Christ or as living in/by the Spirit. But you're more apt to hear the former in an Eastern Orthodox church & the latter in a Pentecostal church.

* "Christ in me" means the exalted Christ living in Paul...and Paul is in Christ. Christ, the exalted Christ, is Spirit. Therefore, He can live in Paul and Paul in Him."* AIR is a familiar physical analogy: we live in its sphere, but also it is in us. Or is it more than analogy, since "air-breath" is the meaning of "spirit" in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, & (through Latin) English? *D&M.106

Again, a GRAMMATICAL NOTE: In calling this the spherical dative, I (along with at least a few other grammarians) am designating, by the noun, the FORM (the locative form having disappeared, surviving only in Sanskrit & Pali); &, by the adjective, the FUNCTION, which is locative (thus, D&M.86-8, "local dative": "locative of place" (spatial limits), "locative of time" (temporal limits), "locative of sphere,...a metaphorical use of the locative, but still exhibiting the root idea [viz, "within"]," eg "pure in heart" (Mt.5.8) & "strong in faith" (Ro.4.20).

Prepositions have root, resultant, & remote meanings. Note that "in Christ" is purely within our preposition's root meaning, viz "within." On an elaborate chart of "Prepositional Meanings Classified," D&M (p.114) show this spread: DIRECTION into, POSITION in, on, at, among, within, RELATION besides, AGENCY in, MEANS with, by means of, CAUSE because of, ASSOCIATION with, PURPOSE & *en* not used for this.....(Personal note on what I consider the clearest grammar of NT Greek, viz Dana & Mantey. In one seminary, Pres. Dana, when dying, asked me to teach his courses in his place; & in another, Mantey was the senior mentor on my ThD dissertation.)

8 Have you been inside a sphere, perhaps one of Buckminster Fuller's residential or greenhouse dymaxion globes? I was in the one at Epcot, & the feeling of majestic vastness reminded me of being in the 1939 World's Fair's "perisphere" & of being inside the world at the HDQ of the Christian Science Monitor. The last mentioned is the oldest & most impressive. What would the world & all its places look like if you could see it from the center of the earth? Well, at the HDQ you can experience this reversal of perspective. You look at Cape Cod, or wherever else you live, & you can feel the rest of the world wrapped around you--available to Cape Cod, & Cape Cod to any other place on earth. Now, that's spherical locative! Now imagine the sphere Jn. the Revelator was in when he "was in [the] Spirit in [on] the Lord's day [Sunday]" (1.10).

Note the double locative: (1) metaphorical, of sphere ("in [the] Spirit"), & (2) temporal ("in [on] the Lord's day [Sunday]." Friday night for the Jews is the entry into the special space-sphere called "Shabbat," as for Christians Saturday night is the preparation for the Lord's Day, Sunday. The week's day of worship assumes that the worshiper will enter this space of time "worshipfully," ie in "the spirit" (the intentional mood) of devotion. Note what happened to Jn. the Revelator when his heart was open to enter & be entered: revelation! (Rev.1.10 includes all three: Sunday devotion, spirit(ual) awareness, & hearing the Word.)....NRSV has "in the spirit," but fn. "Spirit." Ancient epigraphy, like modern German, could not distinguish "spirit" & "Spirit." Both the Holy Spirit & Jn.'s spirit are existentially involved: it's a mutual osmosis, our spirit open to entering into the sphere of the Spirit. REB takes a different tack: "On the Lord's day the Spirit came upon me." Cp. NIV: "I was in the Spirit."

9 In the Kingdom, in Christ, in the Spirit, in the Kingdom: three spheres, but also one (in parallel with the Trinity)....Our Lord's mutual abiding with his disciples was male bonding + spiritual communion. It was, as the Sermon on the Mount shows, a living together in the sphere of the come-coming Kingdom of God. Our Aramaic & Greek words mean not only God's Rule-Reign (kingSHIP) but also the sphere or territory of that kinging (kingDOM). While this distinction is a commonplace in biblical studies, its force is heightened by this Thinksheet's theme.

Jesus invited his contemporaries--invites us--into the sphere of an alternative reality, the Kingshipdom of God. When they gave themselves to his vision & him, their perspective on themselves, their world, & the future was radically altered. They now could see from the inside (cf. the CSM world), from above, & from beyond. And, losing many of their old relationships, they found new companions on the new way.

Always & everywhere, that is what radical conversion is & does. I can testify to its reorienting & shaping force (Wm. James' "twice-born," & Begbie's stories in the subsequent TWICE-BORN MEN).

10 Two romantic experiences interpret each other:

- (1) Radical conversion, which draws you into the sphere of a spiritual reality.
- (2) Falling in love, which draws you into the sphere of a sexual reality, viz the beloved.

In practice, the two are often transposed. "Love" becomes the heart of religion, & the beloved becomes god/dess--two forms of idolatry. But the two are neurologically-emotionally closely related--else the Song of Songs would never have sneaked into the OT canon, & the bakhti-love note would not be so strong in the Johannine church (Jn. & 1-3Jn.).

My point? Both experiences are spherical: the sphere is the best metaphor for representing how you feel & where you are when you've fallen in love or got radically converted. (Freud's "oceanic experience" well represents one emotional dimension here, viz being "at sea," away from the old moorings. But it's inadequate to describe radical conversion or falling in love, though I sometimes use it for the mystical mood in which one experiences undifferentiatedness & therefore also limitlessness,* in contrast to spherical experiencing. For the difference, think of the beloved's face v. "falling in love with love [is falling for make-believe].") *Cf. "space," on which I've done many Thinksheets.

Too, both forms of romantic experience are "catching," (you might say) evangelical. But note the contrast: While the lover's radiance attracts third parties, the experience itself is a two-person sphere; but the radiance of a radical conversion draws others into the sphere of the New Reality to which/whom the devotee has become a convert.

11 Another aspect of spherical experience is the sense of being watched. (Compare Jn. Bailey's THE SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD & Jaques Ellul's THE PRESENCE OF THE KINGDOM.) It's threat as "being watched" & promise as "being watched out for." It's the eye of God (in a triangle-pyramid) on the \$1 bill. It's the amateur VCR that recorded extreme police brutality on an L.A. street. It's police buggings of the Mafia, allowed yesterday in a Federal trial. It's Kurdish refugees dying on television & forcing Bush to reverse his no-enclaves policy in northern Iraq. And it's after-the-fact muck-rackers like Kitty Kelley on Nancy & Ronnie Reagan.

12 The Holy Spirit sphere of experiencing delivers from pettiness & selfishness & sets one's soul on what really matters, viz "righteousness, shalom, and joy" (Ro.14.17). "The new life under God's lordship has its power from the Holy Spirit & shows itself in...." (my translation of Zink's German paraphrase, *in loco*). Paul's three words describing what the believers are to do & be are so rich, so soul-lifting, mind-stretching!