

Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology In the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

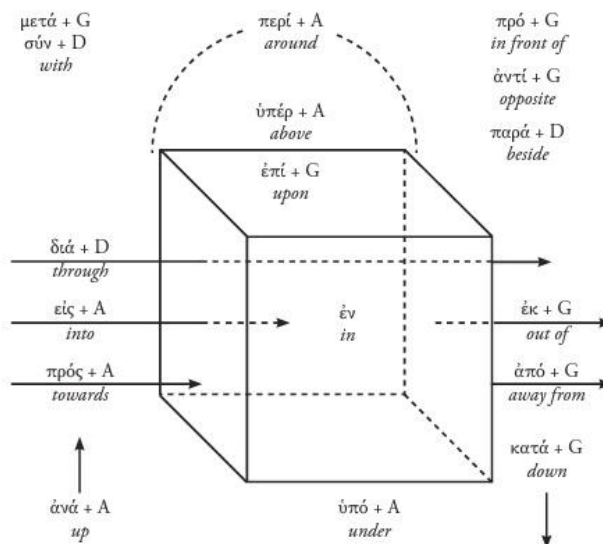
The subtitle of Harris’s volume should be taken with the utmost seriousness. This is a reference resource, not the sort of book a student would read through as though a novel or monograph. But the other element of the subtitle should also be taken seriously though the term ‘essential’ is too often flung about these days. This reference work is essential to the exegetical task. High praise indeed but thoroughly true. Exegetes of the Greek New Testament are required by their calling to clearly interpret the biblical text and without a thorough knowledge of the prepositions used in the New Testament that simply isn’t possible.

This is a study

... of numerous places in the Greek New Testament where prepositions contribute significantly to the theological meaning of the text. Prepositions in themselves do not carry theological meaning, but the way they are used invests them with theological import (p. 13).

Harris does a very fine job, then, in the opening chapter, of setting the scene for the study which follows. He includes a chart of proper prepositions (and this chart will be familiar to nearly every student of elementary Greek):

Diagram of the Spatial Meanings of the Seventeen New Testament “Proper” Prepositions



And methodological statements such as

With over 10,000 NT uses of the 17 'proper' prepositions – not to speak of occurrences of the 42 'improper' prepositions – there is clearly need for some limiting criteria to determine which seems worthy of special examination after the introductory observations about each preposition (p. 30).

H. then offers two overarching criteria

1. There are two or more possible ways in which the particular preposition or prepositional phrase has been or could be understood...

and

2. The particular prepositional use is deemed to be theologically significant... (p. 31).

The remainder of the first chapter also considers such methodological issues. In chapter two H. turns to a consideration of the 'Distinctive Features of Prepositional Usage in New Testament Greek' (pp. 33f). This chapter is a veritable primer on Greek prepositions and would be an ideal accompaniment to the introduction to beginning students of Koine Greek no matter which elementary grammar were used in class.

Harris here discusses, as well, possible Semitic influence on New Testament prepositional use. Chapter three then turns to 'Dangers to be Avoided in Any Examination of New Testament Prepositional Usage' (pp. 39ff). This chapter is extremely important and terribly necessary. Students of every level should be sure to read and heed it. I have personally observed over the years nearly all of the dangers Harris points out practiced in classrooms and pulpits. Would that those persons had had available this volume they could have spared their audiences many misinformed statements.

Chapters 4 through 20 are thorough treatments of the proper prepositions in alphabetical order (some treated along with others. Harris's explanations and examples are simply stellar.

Chapter 21 and those which follow discuss particular instances of special issues. So, Harris will here describe prepositions with the verb βαπτίζω (ch 21), prepositions with πιστεύω and πιστις (ch 22), 'improper' prepositions (ch 23) and finally 'notable uses of selected 'improper' prepositions' (ch 24).

The volume is concluded with a very helpful scripture index and an index of Greek words and expressions. What's useful about the scripture index is Harris's emboldening those passages that receive extensive treatment in the body of the text:

### *Philippians*

1:1	155
1:2	62
1:3–4	195
1:5	85, 243
1:9–11	92
1:10	90
1:13–14	203
1:21–22	203
1:22	150
1:23–24	203
1:23	170, <b>B1</b> , 201–2, <b>203–4</b>
1:25	203
1:29	210, 236, 237
1:30	125
2:1	167
2:5	123, 124, <b>126–27</b>

Bold faced page numbers are fuller treatments of the passages in question. The Greek index is also quite useful:

## Index of Greek Words and Expressions

αἷμα, 71, 79, 119–20	relation to εἰς, 64
αἰών, 94–97	relation to ἐκ, 57–58
ἄμα, 241–42	relation to ὑπό, 222
ἀμφί, 45, 179	ἀπό θεοῦ, 58–60
ἀνά, in compounds, 48	ἄτερ, 241, 243
NT uses, 45–46	ἄχρι(ς), 241, 243–44
ἀνά μέρος, 46	βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς, 226–28
ἀνά μέσον, 45–48	βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τινος, 228–29
ἀνάμνησις, 97–98	βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς Χριστὸν (Ἰησοῦν), 229
ἄνευ, 241–43, 253–55	βαπτίζεσθαι ἐν, 230
ἀνθ' ὧν, 49, 56	βαπτίζεσθαι ἐν/ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι, 232
ἀντί, basic idea and NT use, 49	βαπτίζεσθαι ὑπέρ, 225–26
expressing equivalence, 49–50	βαπτίζεσθαι ὑπό, 226
expressing exchange, 50	
expressing substitution, 50–51	
important NT uses, 51–56	

This volume – in its totality – is extremely helpful and equally useful. It should sit on every exegete's desk right next to Blass-Debrunner-Funk's *Grammar* and Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich's *Lexicon*. Furthermore, it should be referenced regularly.

Jim West  
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