

# Power from In Between: The Relational Experience of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in Paul's Churches

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Max Turner concludes his *magnus opum* on Lukan Pneumatology, *Power from on High*, with the words: "Both restoration and mission . . . lie at the heart of Lukan pneumatology: the 'Power from on High' may not be truly felt unless we are willing to be committed to both."<sup>1</sup> Turner is hence convinced that, according to Luke, the work of the Spirit encompasses and empowers the entire breadth of Christian life, from its inception to its multiplication. And he believes that this power may be "truly felt." In this essay I want to ask whether this conclusion could also apply to Paul. How are we to envision the work of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts in Paul's churches, and, moreover, is it appropriate to speak in this regard of spiritual *experiences* or perhaps even "true feelings"? One of the results of this inquiry into the experiential side of New Testament pneumatology will be that, as in Luke-Acts, the Spirit in Paul is "Power from on High." However, it seems that the way in which this empowering is experienced can be best understood by employing the notion of *power from in between*. That is, the actual endowment with power from *on high* is experienced in Paul's churches as the Spirit's drawing people *nearby* – to God and to one another.

One of the most outstanding proponents of the experiential dimension of early Christian pneumatology emphasized by Turner was Hermann Gunkel. Writing more than a hundred years before Turner, Gunkel in his groundbreaking dissertation *The Influence of the Holy*

1. Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 455.

*Spirit* places the experiences of the Spirit at the center of early Christian spirituality. In addition to this emphasis on experience, Gunkel is of the opinion that all later readers of the ancient reports of these experiences need to put themselves in a position of “feeling” or “living” the early Christian pneumatics’ inner states after them. Only then can the readers understand that these reports are based on the immediate experiences of the enthusiasts themselves who have sensed a foreign being inside themselves.<sup>2</sup>

However, within New Testament scholarship this emphasis on the possibility or even necessity of emotionally experiencing the indwelling Spirit is a matter of debate. For instance, in his *Identity and Experience in the New Testament*,<sup>3</sup> Klaus Berger rejects the view that early Christians had an emotional spirituality as a historical anachronism. According to Berger, the “new creation” (dying in baptism and newness of life, cf. Rom. 6:4; 12:2) is for Paul not a matter of emotions and inner experiences. For Paul, spirituality has nothing to do with this kind of psychology. Rather, he considers feelings, emotionality, and particularly the human ability for striving, to be inherently suspicious. In this way, Paul is a real opponent of the “modern union between pietism and psychology.”<sup>4</sup>

Friedrich Wilhelm Horn’s criticism of Gunkel is even more intimately related to the question of how to interpret the early Christian reflections on pneumatic experiences. Horn is opposed to Gunkel giving spiritual experiences precedence over the doctrine of the Spirit. He claims the opposite: the early Christian statements regarding the Spirit are primarily dogmas and not reflections of experiences.<sup>5</sup> Gunkel had justified this division in the following way: “In order to evaluate pneumatic experiences we must first of all sharply distinguish the *experience*

2. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), pp. IV, 80-81; Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 1-8.

3. Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), translation of Klaus Berger, *Historische Psychologie des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991).

4. Berger, *Identity*, p. 128; cf. pp. 129-33.

5. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, *Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur paulinischen Pneumatologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), p. 15.

of the pneumatic himself from the *interpretation* given it by him or his observers. Such interpretation varies according to the cultural epoch and religion of the evaluator.”<sup>6</sup> Horn fundamentally disagrees with this position and rightly points to the interdependence between observance and interpretation of an experience.<sup>7</sup> This interdependence, which is central for understanding pneumatic experiences, will be the object of close scrutiny in the next section. On the basis of our findings we will then turn to the religious-historical context of Pauline pneumatology and, finally, to Paul and his churches themselves.

## I. Experience and Interpretation

Gunkel speaks of pneumatic experiences, of events and their interpretations. How do these concepts relate to each other? One possibility of differentiating is provided by the following definition by Gerd Theissen: An event (*Erlebnis*) is an individual experience (*Erfahrung*), and an experience is the processing of recurring events. Both are subject-related, dependent on perception and dependent on interpretation. They are subject-related because they are accessible to an individual person (or inter-subjective if others share the same experience). They are dependent on perception because they are a matter of sensory perceptions which are received by human beings.<sup>8</sup> Most important for our discussion, however, is the fact that experiences are dependent on interpretation, because, alongside the sensory perceptions, a pre-structuring cognitive interpretation is part of the experience. “Perception is always perception of an object ‘as’ something, of a table as a ta-

6. Gunkel, *Influence*, p. 5, his italics (see Gunkel, *Wirkungen*, p. VI); cf. pp. 13-14, et al.

7. Horn, *Angeld*, p. 14.

8. Gerd Theissen, *Erleben und Verhalten der ersten Christen: Eine Psychologie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), p. 111. Theissen defines religious experience as “(1) contact with a reality that transcends the everyday world, which (2) is spontaneously interpreted as valid and intentional, which (3) has the power to build community and (4) motivates for action” (p. 114). However, see Werner H. Ritter, “Was meint Erfahrung? Versuch einer Verständnisbestimmung im christlichen Kontext,” *MTZ* 61 (2010): 34, who points out that experiences of self-transcendence (*Selbsttranszendenz*) can in principle happen to everyone and need not be religious experiences as such. Experiences of self-transcendence usually become religious experiences in the context of a particular framework of interpretation and a concrete community that shares these experiences (*Erfahrungsgemeinschaft*).

ble, of a human being as a human being. We match the inflowing data of the senses spontaneously with patterns and cognitive schemes which are coded in our brain so that every perception contains interpretations: We assimilate the data of the senses into the world as it is interpreted by us.”<sup>9</sup> Since religious experiences are feelings and events in which religious patterns of interpretation are effective, it is necessary to examine these religious patterns of interpretation more closely. In this way a positivistic epistemology of starting with “facts” and “events” can be avoided, against which Horn justifiably warns.<sup>10</sup>

Focusing on doctrine to the exclusion of the dimension of experience, on the other hand, may lead to being in danger of projecting one’s own (modern) horizon of interpretation in a positivistic way onto the ancient world.<sup>11</sup> In the next section we will see that the theological and religious-historical framework of interpretation of the early Christian discourse on the Holy Spirit suggests that the Spirit-texts which relate an experiential dimension should by and large indeed be understood to be a reflection of tangible experiences. For a “Spirit-reception” without the dimension of experience would, considering this religious-historical background, not have been comprehended as such. However, we will first of all show from the example of two Pauline texts and some further considerations that even Paul’s argumentation on its own presupposes an experience of the Spirit and that it is thus not merely a theoretical reflection of early Christian theology produced by the eschatological awareness of the early church.<sup>12</sup>

9. Theissen, *Erleben*, p. 112 (“Wir assimilieren die Sinnesdaten an eine von uns ge-deutete Welt”); cf. pp. 113-18; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit: Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1969), pp. 98-124. See further Ulrich Barth, “Was heißt ‘Vernunft der Religion’? Subjektphilosophische, kulturtheoretische und religionswissenschaftliche Erwägungen im Anschluss an Schleiermacher,” in *Der Gott der Vernunft: Protestantismus und vernünftiger Gottesgedanke*, ed. Jörg Lauster and Bernd Oberdorfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 200-203, and the discussion in part 3 of André Munzinger’s essay, pp. 347-53 in the present volume.

10. Horn, *Angeld*, p. 21.

11. Apart from that, one also needs to note that experiences can transcend the boundaries of one’s interpretative horizon. So, e.g., the so-called Damascus Road experience in Acts 9. While we interpret everything new that we encounter according to existing cognitive structures (“assimilation”), these cognitive structures continue to be modified through such encounters (“accommodation”).

12. Thus, however, Horn, *Angeld*, pp. 15, 109, 172, who even disputes the experiential character of the reception of the Spirit in Gal. 3:1-5.

In the course of his argumentation in his letter to the Galatians – in which Paul tries to convince his audience that they have become part of the church of God through Christ and not through works of the law – Paul asks the Galatians if they have received the Spirit through the works of the law or through believing the gospel (Gal. 3:1-5). This argumentation can only be persuasive if the Galatians can indeed recall receiving the Spirit. However, that this memory is tied to a tangible experience comes explicitly to the fore through the way in which Paul connects in parallel “receiving the Spirit” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως; [v. 2]) and “experiencing so much” (τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ; [v. 4]). The Spirit-reception was, therefore, a “great experience.” In the subsequent sentence it is listed together with powerful deeds brought about by God (“does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you . . . ?” [v. 5]).<sup>13</sup> Paul advances a similar argument in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6, where he refers back to the experience of the Spirit in the same foundational way: “For *we know*, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, *because* our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also *in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction*; . . . And *you became imitators* of us and of the Lord, *for* in spite of persecution you received the word with *joy inspired by the Holy Spirit*.”

Also Berger affirms the possibility of experiencing the Spirit – and this reveals a certain tension to his earlier statements regarding Christian spirituality and the new creation. However, he emphasizes that the power which Christians receive from God does not usually become perceptible as emotion or sentiment but manifests itself in concrete deeds. These deeds reveal themselves particularly in the realization of genuine fellowship among Christians. “Here, above all, is where the empirical dimension of Christianity is to be found. This is also why Paul gives such great attention to the works of Christians. The reality of faith for Paul is not primarily to be found in a subjective state of feelings but quite decisively in an experience that is distinct and verifiable.”<sup>14</sup> According to Berger, Spirit-wrought works thus lead to Christian fellowship, and this fellowship is a truly verifiable experience. I endorse this view. However, it seems to be unnecessary to reject the no-

13. Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Geisterfahrung im Leben des Christen,” in R. Schnackenburg, *Maßstab des Glaubens: Fragen heutiger Christen im Licht des Neuen Testaments* (Freiburg: Herder, 1978), p. 180.

14. Berger, *Identity*, p. 204.

tion of a “subjective state of feelings” because actions usually trigger emotions. If these actions are Spirit-wrought, then the emotions are at least secondarily Spirit-wrought or provoked by the Spirit. This applies particularly to fellowship since fellowship does not exist without (fellowship-)feelings (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*). In these interpersonal interactions human beings are involved in their entirety, including their emotions. Moreover, Berger lists a multitude of early Christian experiences of the Spirit, of which the majority clearly have emotional components: peace, praise and singing songs (including glossolalia), scriptural interpretation, joy (“the emotional counterpart to all kinds of desire [cf. Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:19-23]”<sup>15</sup>), the power to resist (e.g. adverse political powers), abolition of differences between human beings, the groaning of the Spirit, the experience of charisms, etc.<sup>16</sup>

We can thus establish a “both and” with regard to the contrasting pairs discussed above (i.e. “primarily experience or primarily doctrine” and “primarily deeds or primarily emotions”) — experience and interpretation are interdependent and belong together in the same way as actions and emotions. Such a balanced approach should also be applied to yet another alleged opposition: According to Bultmann, who is building on Gunkel, Paul knows two different concepts of (the work of) the Spirit. Namely, on the one hand the Spirit is seen as a *disposition* which all Christians have received in baptism, and on the other hand it is seen as an *actual power* given now and again, seizing a human being for the occasion and enabling her to accomplish extraordinary things. According to the first understanding of the Spirit, all Christians are pneumatics. According to the second understanding, only those who possess the Spirit in a special way are pneumatics (thus contradicting what Paul says elsewhere, i.e., that all gifts of the Spirit are of equal value [1 Cor. 12-14]).<sup>17</sup>

However, as we shall see in more detail in Part 3 of this article, the spectrum of the work of the Spirit in Paul is not divided into two different concepts of the Spirit or two types of bearers of the Spirit. Every Christian is entitled to the diverse spectrum of spiritual manifestations for every Christian is a pneumatic, even if there are different gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 8; etc.). However, it is crucial for Paul that all dimen-

15. Berger, *Identity*, p. 200.

16. Berger, *Identity*, pp. 199-201.

17. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952), vol. 1, pp. 157-63. Cf. the critique by Theissen, *Erleben*, pp. 119-20.

sions of the work of the Spirit manifest themselves primarily in the community and, moreover, serve the formation and deepening of this very community. According to Paul, the empowering work of the Spirit is, therefore, deeply relational (“power from in between”): The Spirit is experienced as bringing about relationships, because the Spirit facilitates a vivid connection to God (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 2:9-11) and places the individual into a loving fellowship with fellow believers (cf., e.g., Gal. 4:4-7; 1 Cor. 12:7-27). At the same time, the quality of these experiences is both the empowerment for and the measure of loving togetherness in the community. Through the Spirit-wrought experience of loving relationships Christian life is thus determined by the Spirit with regard to both empowerment and ethos.<sup>18</sup>

The realization that the experience of love and fellowship is a life-transforming event is also certified by modern psychological research.<sup>19</sup> More important for our study, however, is the fact that this insight has a broad foundation in biblical literature.<sup>20</sup> Paul too stands firmly within this tradition.<sup>21</sup> For example, in Philippians 2:1 we find a list of sources of strength for the life of the church: encouragement in Christ, consolations

18. For more details, see Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), chs. 4 and 6. This relational approach to the empowering of religious-ethical life can be differentiated from that of “infusion-transformation” as represented by the work of Horn and Engberg-Pedersen which is based on a Stoic concept of πνεῦμα as a physical substance (see the discussion in Rabens, *Spirit*, chs. 1-3). For a brief comparison of these two approaches, see the comparative review by Peter Orr of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and my *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, in *Themelios* 35 (2010): 452-55.

19. See, e.g., Robert A. Hinde, *Towards Understanding Relationships* (London: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 4, 14, 273, 326; John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), pp. 119-36; Hugh LaFollette, *Personal Relationships: Love, Identity, and Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 89-90, 197-99, 207-9; Ludwig Stecher, *Die Wirkung sozialer Beziehungen: Empirische Ergebnisse zur Bedeutung sozialen Kapitals für die Entwicklung von Kindern und Jugendlichen* (Munich: Juventa, 2001), pp. 249-50; Phillip R. Shaver and Mario Mikulincer, “Attachment Theory, Individual Psychodynamics, and Relationship Functioning,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships*, ed. A. L. Vangelisti and D. Perlman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 251-71.

20. Cf. the overview in Reinhold Boschki, “Beziehung” als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik: Grundlegung einer dialogisch-kreativen Religionsdidaktik (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 2003), pp. 239-60.

21. Cf. Rabens, *Spirit*, pp. 135-38.

tion from love, fellowship in the Spirit, and affection and sympathy. “Love builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1) – this is the experience of those who are loved by God and who share this love (8:3; cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-5; 1 Thess. 3:12-13). Even in the face of persecution the church is empowered by the love of Christ from which no-one can separate her (Rom. 8:35, 39). The church can conquer these adversities through him who has *loved* her (8:37; cf. Phil. 4:13). This transforming power of love works not only on the “vertical” but also on the “horizontal” level of relationships: Paul builds on this “power from in between” when he, for instance, writes to the Romans that he longs to meet with them personally, “so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine” (Rom. 1:11-12; cf. 2 Cor. 2:2-4; 3:2-3; Phlm. 20).

The spirituality that Paul conveys to his churches builds firmly on these relational experiences. And the Spirit plays a central role in this. The Spirit draws believers closer to God and fellow human beings as we will see in the exegesis below. Textual analysis will show, further, that the dualism of pneumatic experiences in Paul postulated by Bultmann cannot be upheld. Rather, also in the continuous disposition of having received the Spirit, people are “seized” and transformed by the Spirit (as Bultmann had put it with regard to the special moments of the work of the Spirit). In order to “trace” (*nachspüren*) this dimension of spiritual life in Paul’s churches, we will, in contrast to Gunkel, at first endeavor a religious-historical contextualization of Paul’s pneumatology. In the next section we will therefore examine whether the pneumatological reflections and expectations in the religious context of Paul’s churches are not only dogmatic assertions but are based on or imply an experiential dimension. It will be shown that the relational model of the work of the Spirit presented above was clearly anchored in these religious traditions which could be accessed by Paul and his churches. They have thus provided a potent horizon of reception and interpretation for the early Christian experience of the Spirit.

## **2. The Horizon of Interpretation of the Early Christian Experience of the Spirit**

Against which religious-historical background should we interpret the early Christian formulations which mention experiences of the Spirit?

This question is part of a wider complex of questions which has occupied New Testament scholarship since its beginnings. Namely, should one comprehend Pauline Christianity against a Jewish or rather against a Hellenistic background? After decades of spirited disputes it has become increasingly clear that Judaism and Hellenism were not two hermetically sealed spheres, and that Paul was a man of both worlds.<sup>22</sup> Paul's churches were part of this hybrid world too, but they were potentially more at home in Greco-Roman culture because, unlike Paul, they were not trained as Pharisees in the study of the Hebrew Bible and thus not as firmly rooted in the Jewish faith. Hence, one could assume that they would draw on Hellenistic concepts of πνεῦμα when attempting to describe spiritual experiences.

However, an extensive examination of Greco-Roman literature reveals that these writings provide only very few direct links for the early Christian statement "God has given us the Spirit."<sup>23</sup> According to the teaching of the philosophical school in which πνεῦμα plays a special role, namely the Stoa, everything and everyone "possesses" πνεῦμα. This is due to the fact that, in Stoic philosophy, πνεῦμα was understood as a physical principle that permeates the entire cosmos and holds it together. No comparable distinction was made between divine and human S/spirit<sup>24</sup> as this seems to be presupposed in Pauline texts like Romans 8:16 ("it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit") and 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 (πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου/πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>25</sup> In

22. On the former, see especially Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM Press, 1974), and on the latter Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

23. See the more detailed treatment in Volker Rabens, "Geistes-Geschichte: Die Rede vom Geist im Horizont der griechisch-römischen und jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur," *ZNT* 25 (2010): 46-55.

24. Seneca's "holy spirit that indwells within us" (*Ep.* 41.1) is no exception to this rule, for he explains a little later that this spirit is the God-given human soul that human beings should live in accord with (41.8-9).

25. John R. Levison has recently ventured to establish a stronger continuity between human and divine s/Spirit in biblical literature (*Filled with the Spirit* [Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009]; see the critique of this point by Max Turner, "Levison's *Filled with the Spirit*: A Brief Appreciation and Response," *JPT* 20 [2011]: 193-200, and Levison's reply in the same issue). This endeavor is to be welcomed also with regard to Paul, for it is both feasible as well as theologically attractive to imagine that for the apostle there was only one metaphysical entity behind his various Spirit-

Stoicism, the human spirit is a fragment of the all-pervading world-pneuma, which can also be referred to as “divine” (e.g. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.19). Paul, however, uses a different concept when he speaks about “the Spirit of his Son” who is sent by God into the hearts of the believers (Gal. 4:6). As the presence of God and presence of Christ the Spirit bears personal traits and is “received.”<sup>26</sup>

locutions – i.e., all of them refer to the same divine Spirit in different manifestations. However, it appears that explicit evidence which would speak for this interpretative option is missing from Paul’s letters. The most straightforward reading of 1 Cor. 2:11 and Rom. 8:16 even seems to suggest the opposite: In 1 Cor. 2:11 Paul says that only the human spirit that is within the human being (πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; cf. 1 Cor. 14:14: πνεῦμα μου) knows what is truly human, and that only the divine Spirit (πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ) comprehends what is truly God’s. So, at least on a linguistic level Paul clearly distinguishes both entities. However, the more interesting question in our context is what happens to the πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου when a person “receives” the πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ. Neither 1 Cor. 2:11 nor Paul’s other πνεῦμα-texts provide a systematic answer to this question. Nonetheless, what he says in Rom. 8:15-16 certainly contradicts the Stoic concept of *toning up* the soul through philosophy – developing its muscles, assisting its use of its own capabilities more effectively, etc. (Seneca, *Ep.* 15; cf. 6.1 where Seneca uses *anima*, not *spiritus*). Rom. 8:15-16 does not depict the human spirit as being “topped up” or “increased.” Rather, Paul speaks about *receiving* the Spirit (ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας, v. 15). More importantly, if the referent of τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν in verse 16 were the same as that of αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα, one wonders for what reason Paul uses these *two separate* expressions (which are not equated with ἔστιν, as κύριος and πνεῦμα in 2 Cor. 3:17) when he says αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἔσμεν τέκνα θεοῦ (Rom. 8:16; cf. v. 26). It is clear from the preceding verses that αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα refers to πνεῦμα θεοῦ/πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας (vv. 14-15). However, if τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν would refer to the same (divine) Spirit too, the meaning of “testifying *with/to*” of συμμαρτυρέω is lost. This would become even more problematic if Deut. 19:15 was in the background of Paul’s use of συμμαρτυρέω (“Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses [δύο/τριῶν μαρτύρων] shall a charge be sustained”).

The distinction between human and divine s/Spirit conveyed in these two verses should certainly not be overdrawn, but it should preserve us from speaking about the identity of the two, or even a “fusion” – a view championed 140 years ago by Pfleiderer (Otto Pfleiderer, *Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1877], vol. 1, pp. 213-16). On the anthropological and literary presuppositions of Paul’s notion of human beings being “indwelted” by the Spirit, see Rabens, *Spirit*, pp. 82-86, 138-44. For an alternative interpretation of 1 Cor. 2:11 and Rom. 8:16, see Desta Heliso’s article in the present volume (“Divine Spirit and Human Spirit in Paul in the Light of Stoic and Biblical-Jewish Perspectives”).

26. This is not to say that Paul had a fully developed concept of the Spirit as a “person.” Cf. the discussion in Volker Rabens, “The Development of Pauline Pneumatology: A Response to F. W. Horn,” *BZ* 43 (1999): 177-78; Max Turner, “Trinitar-

However, the discontinuity between the former life and the invasive work of the Spirit expressed in Paul's letters is more in tune with the experiences and expectations regarding the Spirit reflected in early Jewish literature and the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. While the (Hellenistic) Jewish context of interpretation of Paul's letters should not principally be played off against a Greco-Roman one, close examination shows that Paul interprets the early Christian experiences of the Spirit by and large in the tradition of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Judaism. As far as we can see from today's perspective, Paul's churches followed the apostle in adopting this horizon of interpretation.<sup>27</sup>

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ian' Pneumatology in the New Testament? – Towards an Explanation of the Worship of Jesus," *ATJ* 57/58 (2002/2003): 167-86; Jörg Frey, "Vom Windbrausen zum Geist Christi und zur trinitarischen Person: Stationen einer Geschichte des Heiligen Geistes im Neuen Testament," *JBTh* 24 (2009): 121-54.

27. As far as we can tell, only in his dialogue with the church at Corinth there appear to have been tensions between Paul and his audience regarding the interpretation of spiritual experiences. The Corinthian overrating of ecstatic experiences may have had its background in the ideas of inspiration surrounding the oracles of Delphi and Dodona (on this tradition, see Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, pp. 154-57; more generally on the situation in Corinth, see, e.g., Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000], pp. 40-41). Apart from that, although we do not have evidence for this, it cannot be ruled out from the perspective of the reception of Paul's letters that Paul's Spirit-language, as for instance the image of being made to drink of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13c), evoked associations of Stoic pneumatology in Paul's audience. Erlemann even thinks that this is what Paul deliberately intended to do. However, he does not provide detailed evidence for his view (Kurt Erlemann, "Die Rezeption des griechisch-hellenistischen πνεῦμα-Begriffs im Neuen Testament," in *Geschehen und Gedächtnis: Die hellenistische Welt und ihre Wirkung. Festschrift für Wolfgang Orth zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. J.-F. Eckholdt, M. Sigismund, and S. Sigismund [Münster: LIT, 2009], 297; however, see the more elaborate work of Engberg-Pedersen and my critique of it, as mentioned in note 18 above). Generally speaking, however, the philosophic language and conceptual world of Stoicism fundamentally differs from that of Paul. This is also true for the ancient medical texts (on which, see Troy W. Martin, "Paul's Pneumatological Statements and Ancient Medical Texts," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. J. Fotopoulos [Leiden: Brill, 2006], pp. 105-26, and the discussion in Rabens, *Spirit*, pp. 99-101). Furthermore, the proponents of these approaches would need to provide evidence that Stoic and medical pneumatology was part of the general education of the members of Paul's churches (and not just of the educated elite), and that they would, over and above that, be able to fill the logical gaps between the role of πνεῦμα in Stoic physics and ancient medicine on the one hand and Paul's Spirit-language on the other.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit — the presence of YHWH — is characterized by *charismatic-prophetic* as well as religious-ethical expressions of life. According to the biblical narratives, prophets could show signs of ecstasy when the Spirit of YHWH came upon them.<sup>28</sup> The Scriptures prophesy that in the future there will be a powerful intensification of the presence of the Spirit which will be accompanied, for one thing, by charismatic-prophetic phenomena. Against exactly this background early Christianity interpreted the events of Pentecost as *experiences of the Spirit*. For his international audience at the event, Peter explains Pentecost in the following way: “Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose. . . . No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy’ [Joel 3:1-2]” (Acts 2:15-18).

Moreover, also an intensification of the *ethical-religious* effects of the Spirit was foretold for the future of the people of God. A central text within this prophetic tradition is Ezekiel 36:26-28 (cf. Isa. 44:3-5): “A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” In this prophecy the relational work of the Spirit mentioned above is clearly suggested. It is even more dominant in the early Jewish traditions based on the promises in Ezekiel 36-37 (1QS 4.20-21; *Num. Rab.* 9.49; *Sotah* 9.15; etc.). For instance, in the book of *Jubilees* 1.23-25 it is foretold that God will create in his people a H/holy S/spirit and that the souls of the recipients of the Spirit will hold on to God and his commandments, that he will be a father to them and they sons to him and that he will love them.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the author of *Testament of Judah* 24.2-

28. E.g. Judg. 14:6: “The spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he tore the lion apart barehanded as one might tear apart a kid.” Cf. 15:14; etc. On the correlation of the Spirit coming upon people and prophecy, see, e.g., 1 Sam. 10:6: “Then the spirit of the LORD will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person.” Cf. 10:10; 19:20; Num. 11:25; 24:2-3; 2 Chron. 20:14-15; etc.

29. On the reference to S/spirit in this verse, see the discussion in Rabens, *Spirit*, pp. 164-65, and Heliso, “Spirit,” pp. 163-64 in this volume.

3 notices a connection between Spirit-endowment, an intensification of both the experience of God's presence and of community as a "family of God," and ethical life in the sense of Ezekiel 36: God will pour out the Spirit of grace, the recipients of the Spirit will truly be God's children, and they will walk in his commandments. Besides numerous other early Jewish texts which deepen this connection between Spirit-wrought, vibrant spirituality and ethical life (e.g. Philo, *Leg.* 1.33-39; *Opif.* 144; *Gig.* 54-55; IQH<sup>a</sup> 6.12-14; 8.19-20; 20.11-14),<sup>30</sup> also Paul places himself and his churches within this tradition of interpretation. In the next section we will see further how closely Paul integrates the charismatic-prophetic dimension with the ethical work of the Spirit.

### 3. The Relational Experience of the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in Paul's Churches

For Paul and the early Christian churches it is clear: "We have received the Spirit" (Gal. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:12; 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:5; Rom. 8:9, 15). In accordance with the horizon of expectation and interpretation unfolded above, Paul presents charismatic-prophetic and ethical-religious expressions of life as effects of the Spirit. We have already seen that the reception of the Spirit as it is referred to in 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 and Galatians 3:1-5 had distinctive dimensions of experientiality. Moreover, Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 12:7 that the manifestation of the Spirit (φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος) is given to *everyone* in the church. The spectrum of these "charismatic phenomena," the χαρίσματα (gifts of grace), is expanded by Paul to include not only the prophetic impressions mentioned in Joel 3:1-3 but also a multitude of further gifts (see 1 Cor. 12:8-10). As these gifts are given to everyone, that is, to men and women of different social statuses alike, the work of the Spirit has a distinctively egalitarian ethos (cf. Joel 3:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:12-17).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, a number of the gifts of the Spirit appear to be "common human gifts" (natural abilities or *Schöpfungsgaben*, cf. Gen. 2:7) – at least they fall outside the sphere of the "ecstatic" thus labeled by Gunkel: wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8), service, teaching,

30. See the textual analysis in Rabens, *Spirit*, ch. 5.

31. Cf. Michael Wolter, *Paulus: Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2011), pp. 179-80, 323-27; Hildegard Scherer, *Geistreiche Argumente: Das Pneuma-Konzept des Paulus im Kontext seiner Briefe* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2011), pp. 257-59.

and exhortation (Rom. 12:7-8). However, Paul nonetheless attributes these gifts to the same one Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12).<sup>32</sup>

Spiritual gifts played an important role for the experience of God and of Christian fellowship in Paul's churches. According to Paul, when spiritual gifts are exercised in a community-promoting way, visitors from outside the church will interpret this as a sign of the presence of God: "God is really among you" (1 Cor. 14:24-25). This is significant for our epistemological investigation of the early Christian statements concerning spiritual experiences, because this line of reasoning gives a foundational value to experience. From the experience of someone who enters the church and experiences how the gifts of the Spirit are exercised, a theological deduction is being made ("God is really among you"). This deduction is of course to some extent dependent on a pre-conceived interpretative framework. Nonetheless, also this very interpretative framework (which Paul ascribes to the visitor) is one in which the presence of God is believed to be a tangible and experiential phenomenon. In accordance with this line of argumentation, Paul likewise believes that this same Spirit (of Christ) leads people on to confess Christ as "Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3).

For Paul, the cooperation and togetherness in the church that develops through exercising spiritual gifts implies that every member of the community is "edified," that is, she is strengthened and empowered for religious-ethical life (12:7; cf. the parallel in 10:23-24). As mentioned in Part 1, Spirit-inspired relationships as "power from in between" shape ethical life not only in respect to its empowerment but also in respect to its "form and content," that is, its ethos. Paul elucidates this effect of exercising spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14. He emphasizes that a positive experience of Christian fellowship is only possible if spiritual gifts are used in love and consideration for the fellow believers. Love (ch. 13) is at the center of Paul's chapters on the Spirit and spiritual gifts (chs. 12 and 14). According to 1 Corinthians 14:28-31, the Spirit even shapes the actual structure of the individual interpersonal interactions within the community. Paul says that "if there is no one to interpret, let them [i.e. those who speak in tongues] be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God" (v. 28). The Spirit is thus able to inspire greater sensitivity to others in the community. People need to

32. See the detailed exposition in Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts – Then and Now*, rev. ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), ch. 15.

listen to one another in order to be built up (cf. vv. 29-30). Again, the result of this Spirit-inspired dynamic is that “all may learn and all be encouraged” (v. 31).

According to the testimony of the Pauline letters, practicing the gifts of the Spirit belonged to the “daily church life” of the early Christian movement (1 Cor. 14:26; Rom. 12:5-8). However, next to the gifts of the Spirit, further spiritual experiences were characteristic for Paul’s churches. The experience of spiritual gifts created identity and community – but so did also the individual as well as communal experience of being (a) child(ren) of God. This is, first of all, a soteriological dimension of the work of the Spirit, for the Spirit is the “Spirit of adoption as sons” (πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας, Rom. 8:14-16). The Christians in Rome were pulled out of slavery and fear and were moved into the family of God through the Spirit of the Son (8:9, 15). In this way, moreover, the work of the Spirit of “sonship and daughtership”<sup>33</sup> not only marks the initiation into (“adoption”) and the finalization of Christian life (“glorifying” and “revealing,” 8:17-27) but determines all of Christian spirituality in the present. The new identity as children of God has, on the one hand, a cognitive dimension in the sense of a new self-understanding. On the other hand, however, it is shaped by the continual experience of the Spirit-wrought crying “Abba! Father!”<sup>34</sup> “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (8:16). These Spirit-induced experiences also include emotions. For one thing, this is revealed through the notion of “crying” (κράζομεν). Moreover, through the contrast with fear (8:15) Paul expresses that the relational experiences described here are those of love and intimacy (cf. 5:5; Eph. 3:14-19).

This interpretation of the work of the Spirit as creating relational intimacy is rooted in a tradition-historical framework of interpretation in which the father-child relationship functions as a motif for how God relates to his people. In the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish literature God is characterized as a loving and caring father (or mother, cf. Isa. 49:15-16; 66:13). Here are two examples which represent a wealth of literary evidence:<sup>35</sup> In Hosea 11:1, 3-4, YHWH’s attitude to Israel is described

33. In 8:15-16 Paul moves explicitly from υιοθεσία (v. 15) to τέκνα θεοῦ, thus including women.

34. Cf. Gal. 4:6, where it is the Spirit himself who “calls” (κράζον).

35. See, e.g., Deut. 1:31; 7:7-8; Ps. 27:10; 68:6; Jer. 31:9; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 17.35-36; 4 Ezra 6.58; *Jub.* 2.20; 19.29; *T. Job* 40.2; Philo, *Sobr.* 55-57; *Conf.* 145.

in the following way: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms. . . . I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. . . .” Similarly, *Joseph and Aseneth* 12.8, 15 expresses an intimate relationship between God and believer: “For (just) as a little child who is afraid flees to his father, and the father, stretching out his hands, snatches him off the ground, and puts his arms around him by his breast, and the child clasps his hands around his father’s neck, . . . and rests at his father’s breast, . . . likewise you too, Lord, stretch out your hands upon me as a child-loving father, and snatch me off the earth. . . . [15] What father is as sweet as you, Lord, and who (is) as quick in mercy as you, Lord . . . ?”

The interconnection of Spirit-wrought sonship of God and ethical life in Romans 8:12-17 follows the tradition of Ezekiel 36-37, *Jubilees* 1, *Testament of Judah* 24 etc. mentioned in Part 2. In fact, in the case of Paul one can even speak of an intensification of one aspect of this tradition. This intensification concerns the causal connection between the “power from in between” and ethical life: Paul grounds his implicit request in 8:13 to put to death through the Spirit the “deeds of the body” (πνεύματι τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε) in the experiential reality of the Spirit leading (8:14), freeing from fear, enabling to cry “Abba” (8:15) and bearing witness to one’s being a child of God. This line of reasoning is indicated through the employment of the causative conjunction “because” (γάρ) at the beginning of both verses 14 and 15. Paul can describe the Spirit in verse 13 as an instrument (πνεύματι) for fighting temptations, because the indicatives of the Spirit’s relational work in the following verses enable (and require) such ethical behavior. Thus, we see once again that the quality and character of these Spirit-wrought experiences of love and fellowship function as empowerment (“power from in between”) as well as criteria for living as children of God (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).<sup>36</sup>

It should be noted that in spite of the wealth of his positive accounts of the experience of the Spirit as “power from in between,” Paul does not fall into the trap of triumphalism as it appears to have been the case with a number of Corinthian church members (cf. 1 Cor. 2-3; 12-14).<sup>37</sup> Romans 8 thus unravels a further, perhaps unexpected dimen-

36. On the interpretation of Rom. 8, 2 Cor. 3, and further texts supporting this thesis, see Rabens, *Spirit*, pp. 171-242.

37. Cf. note 27 above.

sion of the work of the Spirit: The Spirit is also present in all the experiences of weakness, fear, and oppression to which the whole of creation is subject. However, the Spirit does not merely function as a means of rescue. Rather, the Spirit comes into all “bondage to decay” and longing for freedom (8:21; cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-15). “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit of God identifies and shows solidarity with creation in an almost incarnational way, because the Spirit articulates on behalf of the world the experience of incompleteness and fragility in a depth that the world itself cannot express (“sighs too deep for words”). Thus, the Spirit comes into and has an effect on the entire breadth of human experience.

#### 4. Conclusion

The experiences of the Spirit described in Paul’s letters display a broad spectrum. A division of these experiences into ordinary experiences of daily life on the one side (i.e. continuous Spirit endowment), and momentary experiences of the extraordinary on the other side (i.e. being seized by the Spirit in ecstasy), is not suggested by the Pauline writings in the way it was proposed by Bultmann and others. Rather, exercising spiritual gifts was part of the daily life of the early Christian movement. In addition to this sign of endowment with the Spirit, the statement “you have received the Spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8:15) was based on nonverbal, identity-forming experiences of the Spirit of the Son (8:15: crying “Abba! Father!”; 8:16: the Spirit, together with the human spirit, bearing witness of one’s being a child of God). These individual and communal experiences of the love and closeness of God also include emotions. They are the empowerment of as well as the standard for spiritual life. The power from on high experienced in Paul’s churches is thus the Spirit’s drawing people close to God and to one another, and this “power from in between” can indeed “be truly felt.”

It is important to take into account the interdependence of experience and (framework of) interpretation when trying to fathom early Christian pneumatology. The religious experiences of the early churches were interpreted against the backdrop of (biblical) prophecies and expectations. These were developed further into propositions and

dogmas which incorporated these experiences (cf. Acts 2:15-21, 38). On the one hand, experience could inspire teaching (cf. Acts 10:44-48), and, on the other hand, teaching could correct practice (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19-20; 1 Cor. 12-14). We have seen that the declaration “God has given us his Spirit” is best interpreted in the context of the early Jewish horizon of expectation as a statement of experience. Within this tradition it was impossible to separate the Spirit from works of power, from prototypical gifts and religious-ethical effects (Joel 3; Ezek. 36-37; etc.).<sup>38</sup> It is hence precarious to comprehend the early Christian affirmations that they have received the Spirit as a mere postulation without experiential foundation. Paul’s letters give evidence of the opposite: argumentations such as Galatians 3:1-5 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 presuppose and explicate the experiential dimension of the reception and work of the Spirit.

In Paul’s churches the work of the Spirit was a communal experience. However, it could not be reduced to group dynamics but also had a “private” dimension (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 14:18-19, 28). The work of the Spirit served the edification of the individual *and* the community (1 Cor. 12:7; cf. Eph. 4:11-16). While Paul’s reflections on the work of the Spirit have provided many stimuli for Christian spirituality throughout the ages, this communal dimension of the experience of the Spirit in Paul’s churches can be one of the lasting inspirations for spiritual life in the present times of globalization and postmodernity where many people long for the experience of community and “connectedness.”<sup>39</sup>

38. Cf. Turner, *Power*, chs. 3-5.

39. For further ideas on how Paul’s pneumatology can inspire spirituality today, see Marlis Gielen, “Löscht den Geist nicht aus, verachtet prophetische Rede nicht!” (1Thess 5,19f): Zur Grundlegung einer christlichen Spiritualität bei Paulus,” in M. Gielen, *Paulus im Gespräch – Themen paulinischer Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009), pp. 131-57, and Volker Rabens, “Mein neues Leben: Predigt zu Römer 8,1-2.9,” *TbGespr* 35 (2011): 36-42. On the role of experience in early Christianity as well as church history, see further the helpful overview in James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2006), ch. 9.