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ARTICLE

Πνεῦμα, Genealogical Descent and Things That Do Not Exist according to Paul

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Abstract

Several recent studies have proposed that according to Paul gentiles join Abraham's lineage in a quasi-physiological way by being infused with material πνεῦμα. This article assesses that proposal, finding it to be an inaccurate description of Paul's language and rationale, and sets forth an alternative proposal based on Romans 4 and Paul's descriptions of baptism. This alternative proposal is that Paul understood the forging of an Abrahamic and divine pedigree for gentiles to be a divine act of creation from nothing, that is concomitant with believers' proleptic death and resurrection in solidarity with the messiah.

Keywords: ethnicity; messiah; material pneuma; baptism; resurrection; 'in Christ'; Paul

1. Introduction

A half century ago, Arthur Peacocke, a well-known proponent of the compatibility of Christian theology with science, presaged the more recent interest being shown in ancient conceptions of πνεῦμα and their potential usefulness for redescribing the so-called participatory elements of Paul's thought. In Peacocke's 1971 *Science and the Christian Experiment*, he complains that 'apart from the direct biological connection, it is hard to see what sort of solidarity we might have with Christ .... Indeed the concept of solidarity seems too vacuous in any sense other than the biological.'[1] Peacocke therefore turns his attention to the role of πνεῦμα in early Christian thought. As conceptualised by Peacocke, πνεῦμα is that which 'is immanent in the created world ... the power and presence of God as he fulfils the potentialities of matter'.[2] The word 'matter' here signals the distinctiveness of Peacocke's account of solidarity with the messiah, for πνεῦμα is understood to be that which interacts directly with matter, particularly living matter, and thus makes possible a quasi-biological conception of what in previous generations had famously been called 'Christ-mysticism'.[3] C. F. D. Moule, reflecting on Peacocke's approach, grasps the nettle: '[Peacocke] is saying that little sense can be extracted from language which speaks of us as in Christ, but more from language which speaks of the Spirit as in us'.[4] This

[1] A. R. Peacocke, *Science and the Christian Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 172.
[2] Peacocke, *Science*, 173.
[3] See the foundational studies G. A. Deissmann, *Paulus: En kultur- och religionshistorisk skis* (Stockholm: Geber, 1910) and A. Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930).
[4] C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 49–50.

sentiment aligns closely with the tenor of several more recent discussions, the contours of which are as follows: there is a renewed interest in Paul's notion of solidarity with the messiah, particularly the messiah as 'seed of Abraham'; alleged spatial expressions of this solidarity reflected in Paul's uses of various prepositions have stimulated new hypotheses about the discourse(s) in which Paul is participating; there is an urge to provide an account of Paul's notion of solidarity that is less 'vacuous' and more 'biological'; and although it appears that Paul's understanding of χριστός does not supply what is needed for any such account, his understanding πνεῦμα perhaps does.

The concerns represented in this sketch of recent scholarship are all reminiscent of Peacocke's. Moreover, beyond these concerns, what has become prominent since the 1970s is a focused interest in how Paul understood ethnic identity.[5] Thus, determination to give a more concrete account of solidarity with Christ according to Paul is coupled with an effort to understand Paul not as the founder of a 'universal' religion in which ethnic distinctions are obliterated ('in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek'),[6] but as a Jew who remained a Jew yet had become convinced that some of the heritable benefits of his kinspeople bestowed by their tribal deity had now also been made available to pagans, who, importantly, remained pagans ('we are Jews by nature and not gentile sinners').[7] With these aims in mind, several scholars have recently set their hands to developing a hypothesis concerning the role of πνεῦμα in genealogical descent according to Paul, offering a 'realistic' account of gentile inclusion among Abraham's seed and the simultaneous preservation of distinct Jewish and gentile ethnic identities.[8] Caroline Johnson Hodge is to be given primary credit for this hypothesis.[9] Some of the premises of Johnson Hodge's argument, especially the materiality of πνεῦμα in Stoic and Pauline cosmology, also appear in the work of Dale Martin and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and her ideas are developed and applied further by Stanley Stowers and even more so by Matthew Thiessen.[10] However, to my knowledge Johnson Hodge is the first to work out a coherent theory of the role of material πνεῦμα in establishing patrilineal descent according to Paul. I will therefore describe Johnson Hodge's proposal in some detail before noting more briefly how Stowers and Thiessen have extended her ideas. I will then assess the hypothesis that Paul believed that the infusion of material πνεῦμα into gentile believers established

[5] In addition to the studies to be discussed presently, see P. Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2', *JTS* 42 (1991) 532–64; P. Eisenbaum, 'A Remedy for Having Been Born of a Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans', *JBL* 123 (2004) 671–702; D. K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); K. Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Culture: Theologizing in the Space Between* (LNTS 456; London: T&T Clark, 2013); and the recent collection K. M. Hockey and D. G. Horrell, eds., *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

[6] Gal 3.28. On Paul's thought as 'universal', see e.g. F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, his Epistles and Teachings* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003) II.125–6; and more recently D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 22–5.

[7] Gal 2.15. On this statement of Paul's as an ethnic stereotype, see D. Garlington, 'Paul's "Partisan Ἐκ" and the Question of Justification in Galatians', *JBL* 127 (2008) 567–89, at 572; cf. OG Ps 9.18; Jub. 23.23–4; 1 Macc 2.44; Ps. Sol. 2.1–2; Tob 13.6. On the English word 'pagan' as an ethnic term, see P. Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) 34–5.

[8] On Paul's 'realism', see S. K. Stowers, 'What Is "Pauline Participation in Christ"?', *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities* (ed. M. Chancey, S. Heschel and F. Udoh; Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2008) 352–71, esp. 354–6.

[9] C. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 67–77.

[10] See D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), esp. 21–5, 117–29; T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 19–37, 61–5; Stowers, 'What Is "Pauline Participation in Christ"?'; and M. Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 105–60.

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a genealogical, quasi-physiological, relation to Abraham such that pagans became 'real, material' seed of Abraham while simultaneously remaining gentiles.[11] In this assessment, it is not my aim to evaluate the proposal that Paul, like the Stoics, conceived of πνεῦμα as a material substance. This suggestion is a premise of the theory under scrutiny, but I do not adjudicate on whether that premise is correct. I thus grant that it is *possible* that Paul conceived of πνεῦμα as a material substance irrespective of whether in Paul's thought πνεῦμα plays the specific role in gentile inclusion among Abraham's seed that Johnson Hodge, Stowers and Thiessen propose.[12] My present concern is the relation between πνεῦμα, whatever its ontology, and genealogical descent according to Paul. I determine that the nature of this relation between πνεῦμα and descent in Paul's thought is not adequately explained by the hypothesis under review. Therefore, I conclude by offering an alternative account of Paul's understanding of the forging of Abrahamic descent.

2. Description

In her 2007 work *If Sons, Then Heirs*, Johnson Hodge brings together ancient medical conceptions of πνεῦμα, Stoic cosmology and what she sees as the linguistic features of a discourse of patrilineal descent to develop her account of gentile adoption into Abraham's family in Paul's thought. Concerning πνεῦμα, she observes:

> Medical and philosophical texts consider *pneuma* to be a physical entity, matter, and they often conceive of it as air or breath. Medical writers explain that *pneuma* is the vital substance of the body … the crucial procreative element … In its finest form, *pneuma* constitutes the very particles which make up the soul.[13]

Johnson Hodge goes on to describe a particular quality of πνεῦμα according to Stoic philosophy – its ability to blend with other substances. This blending, referred to as κρᾶσις, is explained by Chrysippus:

> Certain substances and their qualities are mutually coextended through and through, with the original substances and their qualities being preserved in such a mixture; this kind of mixture [Chrysippus] calls specifically 'blending' [κρᾶσιν]; … [S]uch a coextension of blended bodies occurs when they pass through one another, so that no part among them fails to participate in everything contained in such a blended mixture.[14]

Given this quality of πνεῦμα, Johnson Hodge deems it 'the perfect catalyst for joining peoples together', and in line with Martin and Engberg-Pedersen she proposes that this material conception of πνεῦμα is a feature of Paul's own cosmology.[15]

[11] The expression 'real, material' is that of Thiessen, *Paul*, 160.

[12] On the materiality of πνεῦμα, see the exchange between J. M. G. Barclay, 'Stoic Physics and the Christ-Event: A Review of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)', *JSNT* 33 (2011) 406–14; T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Paul's Body: A Response to Barclay and Levison', *JSNT* 33 (2011) 433–43; and J. R. Levison, 'Paul in the *Stoa Poecile*: A Response to Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford, 2010)', *JSNT* 33 (2011) 415–32.

[13] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 74–5.

[14] Alexander of Aphrodisias paraphrasing Chrysippus in *De mixtione* 216.14–218.6 (translation and Greek in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), I. 290–1 (translation), II. 288–90 (Greek)); also quoted in Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 75.

[15] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 75. Johnson Hodge does not return to the concept of κρᾶσις after this initial description, but, as discussed below, κρᾶσις is especially important for Thiessen in that it involves the complete blending of substances yet with each substance simultaneously 'maintaining its own character' (75).

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Turning to linguistic matters, Johnson Hodge suggests that two prepositions, ἐκ and ἐν, commonly appear in discourses of patrilineal descent to express the relation of progeny to progenitor. Thus descendants are said to be both 'from' and 'in' their ancestors. To illustrate the use of ἐκ in such descriptions, Johnson Hodge points to examples in Aristotle, Plato, Josephus, the Septuagint and Paul himself.[16] These examples are relatively clear, and the use of ἐκ in genealogical discourse is peripheral to our present concern. More relevant is Johnson Hodge's proposal concerning the use of the preposition ἐν in discourses of patrilineal descent. To illustrate the use of ἐν to express the relation between ancestor and progeny, Johnson Hodge adduces evidence again from Aristotle, who speaks of offspring being 'in the generator' (ἐν τῷ γεννῶντι) (*Gen. an.* 716a22); Philo, who describes what is preserved 'in the seminal principles' (ἐν τοῖς σπερματικοῖς ... λόγοις) (*Legat.* 55); Seneca, who discusses that which is 'in the seed' (*in semine*) (*Nat.* 3.29.2); and LXX Gen 25.23, where Rebecca is told, 'two nations are in your womb' (ἐν γαστρί σου). Johnson Hodge then turns to Paul's epistles, where she finds that two Pauline idioms, ἐκ πίστεως and ἐν χριστῷ, are best understood as expressions of patrilineal descent. She proposes that Paul uses the first expression, 'out of faithfulness', as a kind of wordplay 'to create a new discourse of kinship for gentiles in which they spring from the faithfulness of Abraham and Christ'.[17] What is of more interest here, because it involves a somewhat more complex and problematic claim, is Johnson Hodge's theory about Paul's 'in Christ' language. For this, Johnson Hodge looks to Paul's language in Gal 3.8, 14, where she perceives an illuminating analogy between Abraham and the messiah, according to which both are progenitors 'in' whom their posterity may be said to exist. Paul 'adapts this notion of descendants being "in" the patriarchs to create a way for gentiles to join Abraham's lineage by being "in" Christ'.[18] But how does being 'in Christ' create a way for gentiles to join Abraham's lineage? To explain, Johnson Hodge appeals to Stoic pneumatology as described above. Since for Paul, as for the Stoics, πνεῦμα is a material substance, 'the gentiles join Christ by taking his *pneuma* into their hearts, incorporating his substance into theirs. In this way, this procreative *pneuma* creates new kinship, and does so materially.'[19] The result of this is that 'the gentiles receive the ancestry of their new kin' and thus the messiah 'can serve as a link for them to the lineage of Abraham'.[20] In other words, to be 'in Christ' is to be 'in Abraham' because the messiah's πνεῦμα consists of the substance of Abraham, given that the messiah is a natural descendant of Abraham. To use Johnson Hodge's paraphrase of Gal 4.6 (to which we will return presently), 'Once God sends "the spirit of his son" into their hearts, the gentiles are now sons.'[21]

After Johnson Hodge's monograph appeared, Stanley Stowers published an essay in which he elaborates on her proposal in two ways. First, Stowers integrates into Johnson Hodge's hypothesis of patrilineal descent his account of Paul's messianology, which he had articulated earlier in his *A Rereading of Romans*.[22] In contrast to Albert

[16] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 80–1. Cf. Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 724a18; Plato, *Menex.* 237A; Josephus, *A.J.* 12.226; 1 Macc 12.21; LXX Gen 17.16; and Phil 3.5.

[17] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 80. This of course assumes a subjective reading of πίστις χριστοῦ, the literature on which is voluminous. The debate is not of immediate relevance here, but for a foray into the matter, see R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002^2) 249–97.

[18] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 94.

[19] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 75.

[20] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 105.

[21] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 72.

[22] For the relation between Stowers' work and Johnson Hodge's, see Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 190 n. 5; and Stowers, 'Participation', 369 n. 25.

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Schweitzer, whose work on Christ-mysticism Stowers generally admires for its 'realism', Stowers regards Jesus' messiahship as a specifically anti-climactic component of Paul's understanding of the Christ-event.[23] In dying, Jesus foreswears his Davidic messianic prerogatives, and this foreswearing constitutes his primary act of faithfulness.[24] This faithfulness in turn results in Christ's vindication at his resurrection wherein he is granted the divine πνεῦμα, the 'stuff' by which gentiles 'in Christ' gain entry into the physical lineage of Abraham.[25] Second, to clarify how possession of Christ's πνεῦμα effects Abrahamic pedigree for gentiles, Stowers looks to the notion of 'contiguity of substances: a matter of extension, identity, and contiguousness'.[26] This construct provides a materialist paradigm for conceptualising how gentiles' possession of Christ's πνεῦμα includes them in Christ's own genealogical identity. Because '[t]he same stuff makes Christ and believers contiguous', and because 'Christ participated in Abraham and shared his stuff', believing gentiles 'who come to share the pneuma of Christ ... share in this contiguity back to Abraham and are thus seed of Abraham'.[27]

Turning to Thiessen, there are three ways in which he also extends the work of Johnson Hodge.[28] First, Thiessen finds the aforementioned Stoic notion of κρᾶσις helpful for explaining how gentiles remain gentiles but also become seed of Abraham:

> The theory of *krasis* helps account for the way in which the *pneuma* provides a new genealogy for gentiles-in-Christ. Since *krasis* permits the perfect mixture of two substances, while allowing those two substances to retain their own distinctive aspects ... Paul's gentile believers do not become a new essence; rather ... their fleshly gentile identity is thoroughly mixed with, but distinct from, their identity as pneumatic sons of Abraham. The gentile-in-Christ now consists of two natures in one person, not one new composite nature in one person.[29]

Second, Thiessen appeals to Stoic cosmology to explain Gal 3.14, where, as Thiessen sees it, Paul equates the blessing of Abraham with the gift of πνεῦμα. Since πνεῦμα is not mentioned in the Genesis narrative, how could Paul have claimed this?[30] Thiessen's answer is that given a purported widespread belief in the ancient world that stars were comprised of πνεῦμα, the promise to Abraham that his seed would be like the stars was interpreted not only quantitatively but also qualitatively.[31] That is, Abraham's seed would not only be as numerous as stars, they would also be 'exalted like stars' by being comprised of πνεῦμα.[32] Third, whereas Johnson Hodge and Stowers do not distinguish clearly between Abrahamic descent and divine descent nor discuss how one relates to the other, Thiessen does offer such an account. Given associations in ancient literature between stars and semi-divine beings and given the astral quality of the πνεῦμα as understood by the ancients, the reception of the blessing of Abraham – the πνεῦμα which makes his heirs star-like – also 'divinises' Christ-followers, that is, makes them 'sons of God'.[33] In sum, 'genealogical descent from Abraham results in divine descent'.[34]

[23] On 'realism', see Stowers, 'Participation', 354–7.
[24] S. K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 37–8.
[25] Stowers, 'Participation', 362.
[26] Stowers, 'Participation', 357.
[27] Stowers, 'Participation', 358–60.
[28] For Thiessen's dependence on Johnson Hodge and Stowers, see Thiessen, *Paul*, 114.
[29] Thiessen, *Paul*, 114, 122; see also 217 n. 31, where Thiessen finds an illuminating analogy in the theory of dark matter's ability to penetrate ordinary matter without altering its qualities.
[30] On this question, see Thiessen, *Paul*, 130–2.
[31] See Thiessen, *Paul*, 135–40.
[32] Thiessen, *Paul*, 140.
[33] Thiessen, *Paul*, 155.
[34] Thiessen, *Paul*, 155.

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3. Assessment

There are other peripheral, though no less interesting, details and implications of the hypothesis with which Johnson Hodge, Stowers and Thiessen are working, and there are certainly insights worth affirming. However, this theory of πνεῦμα and descent also involves several difficulties: a linguistic issue of whether the uses of words in ancient genealogical discourse have been precisely described; an analogical issue of whether the comparison between Christ and ancestors in genealogical discourse is valid; and a logical issue of whether Paul's own lines of reasoning have been accurately represented.[35]

First, the linguistic issue specifically concerns Johnson Hodge's description of how prepositions are used in ancient discourses of patrilineal descent. I leave aside her account of how the phrase ἐκ πίστεως and its contrast term ἐκ νόμου operate in Paul's letters. Johnson Hodge's proposal about these expressions is ingenious – namely, that they are wordplays intended to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate means of inheritance – but it is not directly relevant to her account of how πνεῦμα ostensibly forges new ancestry for gentiles.[36] Instead, my query concerns the claim being made about the preposition ἐν: is the idiom consisting of ἐν with a personal object (which is Paul's usage in the relevant phrases such as 'in Christ') truly a typical expression of patrilineal descent? Upon closer examination, it appears not. In all of the examples of this purported usage adduced by Johnson Hodge (see above), the object of the preposition ἐν is not precisely the ancestor his- or herself, but rather a gonadic noun such as 'womb', 'loins' or 'seed'. The one exception to this is Aristotle's expression 'in the generator' (ἐν τῷ γεννῶντι) (*Gen. an.* 716a22). In this case, while it is true that the object of ἐν, the participle γεννῶντι, denotes the male parent (cf. 716a19–20), Aristotle's discussion pertains strictly to progenitors and next-generation progeny, not multi-generational pedigrees. Moreover, within the broader context of *De generatione animalium* the phrase ἐν τῷ γεννῶντι (which, significantly, is used only once in the entire treatise) appears to function as a technical expression of Aristotle's conception of the relation between the substance of the male parent and that of the offspring. Thus, later in the treatise he defines 'the generator' (τοῦ γεννήσαντος) as that 'which is in actuality what the material out of which the offspring is formed is potentially' (734b35).[37] The phrase ἐν τῷ γεννῶντι is not therefore a typical expression of patrilineal descent even for Aristotle, and its appearance in the example adduced by Johnson Hodge cannot support a theory of a widespread discourse of generation and ancestry in which descendants are commonly said to be 'in' their ancestors as such. In turn, this lack of evidence seriously erodes the plausibility of Paul using the phrases 'in Christ' and 'in Abraham' as expressions of ancestry.

This brings us to the second, analogical, issue. In Paul's thought, is Christ really comparable to an ancestor? The analogy Johnson Hodge draws between the phrases 'in Abraham' and 'in Christ' entails the notion that both Abraham and Christ function as ancestors in Paul's discourse, but Christ is not portrayed by Paul as the ancestor of those who are 'in' him. Johnson Hodge acknowledges this, admitting that 'the relationship between Christ and gentiles … is not expressed in terms of ancestor and descendants. Instead, Christ and the gentiles seem to be same-generation offspring of common ancestors'.[38] Stowers grants the same.[39] Neither, however, account for this problem in their schemata, and thus the linguistic analogy drawn between a purported discourse in

[35] An abbreviated form of the assessment which follows appears in J. T. Hewitt, *Messiah and Scripture: Paul's 'in Christ' Idiom in its Ancient Jewish Context* (WUNT II/522; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 82–3.

[36] On these ἐκ-phrases, see Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 79–91.

[37] Translation modified from Peck, LCL.

[38] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 105.

[39] Stowers, 'Participation', 360.

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which progeny are said to be 'in' their ancestors and Paul's 'in Christ' language fatally breaks down. Its viability would depend on the introduction of a second type of genealogical discourse in which siblings or same-generation cousins may be said to be 'in' one another because of shared ancestry. No evidence whatsoever is adduced for such a manner of speaking, however, and at this point the complexity of the hypothesis eclipses its explanatory power.

Finally, we come to the most crucial problem with the theory under review – inaccuracies in the representation of Paul's own logic. Specifically, the problem concerns the logical relationship between adoption and the reception of πνεῦμα as articulated by Paul in Gal 3.14 and 4.6. In Gal 3.14, Paul describes the purposes or results of Christ having 'becoming a curse', and he does so with two ἵνα-clauses. The first clause describes the granting of Abraham's blessing to gentiles, and the second describes the reception of πνεῦμα. These two clauses may be read as sequential or parallel, but in neither case is it tenable to claim that the second logically precedes the first, that the reception of πνεῦμα effects access to Abraham's blessing, access presumably reserved for his heirs. This, however, is just what is asserted by Johnson Hodge: namely, that the reception of πνεῦμα creates in gentiles the requisite status for enjoying the blessing of Abraham.

The logical issue I am raising is even more pronounced in Johnson Hodge's reference to Gal 4.6. There, Paul writes, 'and because (ὅτι) you are sons, God sent forth the πνεῦμα of his son into our hearts'.[40] Johnson Hodge, in her aforementioned paraphrase of the verse, ignores the subordinating conjunction ὅτι and directly inverts the logical relationship between the clauses, writing, 'Once God sends "the spirit of his son" into their hearts, the gentiles are now sons, and therefore heirs.'[41] Engberg-Pedersen attempts to defend this construal of Gal 4.6. He, like Johnson Hodge, contends that 'sonship proper was achieved through reception of the pneuma', and therefore he proposes a 'special interpretation' of the conjunction ὅτι in Gal 4.6 such that the sentence may be read, 'And *that you* are *sons*, God sent [πνεῦμα], etc.'[42] It remains unclear, though, how this construal of ὅτι would alter the logical relationship between the status as sons and the sending of πνεῦμα. Engberg-Pedersen paraphrases his translation, 'And proof that you are sons is the fact that God sent his *pneuma*', but this rendering is still premised on the status of sonship logically preceding the sending of πνεῦμα since the notion of proving something assumes an already established, and hence provable, state of affairs.[43]

Taken together, the linguistic, analogical and logical problems identified here suggest that the hypothesis of πνεῦμα and genealogical descent proposed by Johnson Hodge, Stowers and Thiessen does not accurately depict the way Paul conceived of the matter. Far from an exercise in pedantry, attending to details such as the precise objects of prepositions, the specifics of generational classification and the discursive functions of conjunctions is one of the primary ways of testing the explanatory power of a hypothesis

[40] Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[41] Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 72. Roughly the same paraphrase is repeated in P. Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel', *NTS* 56 (2010) 232–52, at 244.

[42] Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 229–30 n. 52 (emphasis original).

[43] Though Engberg-Pedersen makes no mention of it, this paraphrase is reflected in C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) 147. Moule merely asserts that '[t]he context clearly favours this sense', neglecting to explain said context. Moule points to Luke 13.2 as holding the clue to understanding the connotation of ὅτι in Gal 4.6, but in Luke, as Moule acknolwedges, 'ὅτι logically depends on δοκεῖτε' and so marks content of thought. No such verb demanding this connotation is present in Gal 4.6. On the interaction between theological concerns and the details of Paul's language in Gal 4.6, see F. Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HThKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder, 1977[3]) 274–6.

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about Paul's thought, for Paul's writings are the only immediate evidence for his thought that we have. In this case, that evidence is inadequately explained.

4. Alternative Proposal

Having offered this predominately deconstructive assessment, I would now like to construct an alternative picture of genealogical descent according to Paul. Thiessen, considering Romans 4, which is a major text for understanding Paul's view of Abrahamic descent, avers that 'in Romans 4 Paul does not elucidate the way in which ... faith forges this genealogical connection between gentiles and Abraham'.[44] Similarly, Stowers finds the depiction in Romans 4 of how gentiles 'come to share in a principle of kinship' to be 'notoriously fuzzy'.[45] While it may be that Romans 4 will not satisfy a demand for 'biological', 'realistic' or 'material' accounts of genealogical descent, that does not mean Paul has offered no explanation at all. Indeed, Romans 4 appears to be precisely the place where we find Paul explaining how it is that gentiles are made to be children of Abraham.

In Rom 4.17, Paul specifies Abraham's faith in God as faith in 'the one who makes alive the dead and calls the things that do not exist into existence' (τοῦ ζῳοποιοῦντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα).[46] This characterisation of God pertains clearly to the conception and birth of Isaac, and this is reflected in Paul's description in Rom 4.19–20 of the strengthening of Abraham's faith in God's promise of posterity despite the veritable death of his own body and Sarah's womb due to their age (Rom 4.19–20).[47] It is also clear that this same characterisation of God articulated in Rom 4.17 further pertains to Abraham's fatherhood of the gentiles. Thus, Paul also describes Abraham's faith in Rom 4.18 as his belief that 'he would be made the father of many gentiles according to what had been spoken'. And it is equally clear yet again that the characterisation of God in Rom 4.17 pertains also to God's raising of Jesus from the dead, for in Rom 4.24 Paul draws a comparison between Abraham's faith and believers' faith in 'the one who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord'. Paul's likening of believers' faith to Abraham's faith is evident in his use of the expression οἷς μέλλει λογίζεσθαι, '[us] to whom it will be reckoned', in Rom 4.24. This expression is patterned on the LXX Gen 15.6 expression ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ, 'it was reckoned to him', which is quoted in Rom 4.22. In LXX Gen 15.6 the implied subject of the passive verb ἐλογίσθη is Abraham's act of believing God (ἐπίστευσεν Αβραμ τῷ θεῷ), and the same implied subject is in view in Rom 4.22. Paul, then, in Rom 4.23–4, explicitly avers that LXX Gen 15.6 was not written solely on account of Abraham (οὐκ ... δι' αὐτὸν μόνον), but also on account of 'us' (ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς), namely, those 'who believe upon the one who raised Jesus the

[44] Thiessen, *Paul*, 108.

[45] Stowers, *Rereading*, 283–4.

[46] On the construal of ὡς ὄντα as equivalent to ὥστε εἶναι and thus denoting the consequence of God's calling, see LSJ s.v. ὡς B.III.1 and O. Hofius, 'Eine altjüdische Parallele zu. Röm. IV 17b', *NTS* 18 (1971) 93–4, at 93 n. 1. The issue of Paul's use of the participle rather than the infinitive is addressed in C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) I.244. Paul's characterisation of God here aligns closely in both conception and expression with Philo, *Spec.* 4.187: 'he called into being the things that do not exist' (τὰ ... μὴ ὄντα ἐκάλεσεν εἰς τὸ εἶναι); and 2 Bar. 21.4: 'the one who in the beginning of the world called (*daqrā*) that which did not yet exist' (translation A. F. J. Klijn in Charlesworth, *OTP*). Concerning the Syriac *daqrā* (from the root *qr'*), see Isa 48.13, where the related Hebrew קרא is used to denote the act of creating and is rendered in the Septuagint with καλέω (cf. M. Endo, *Creation and Christology* (WUNT II/149; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 75–6).

[47] As Paul describes it, these unpromising circumstances occasioned a strengthening of Abraham's faith rather than a dispute with God. On διακρίνω as 'dispute', see B. Schliesser, '"Abraham Did Not 'Doubt' in Unbelief" (Rom. 4:20): Faith, Doubt, and Dispute in Paul's Letter to the Romans', *JTS* 63 (2012) 492–522; and M. Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer* (2 vols., EKK 6; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2014–19), I.307. On 'birth from barrenness' also in Galatians, see J. M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) 417 n. 66.

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Lord from among the dead'. By appropriating the language of LXX Gen 15.6 to describe the 'us' of Rom 4.24, Paul has explicitly likened faith in the one 'who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist' to faith in the one who resurrected Jesus.[48]

In Romans 4, then, and despite Thiessen's and Stowers's opinions to the contrary, Paul has signalled quite clearly how a 'genealogical connection between gentiles and Abraham' is 'forged'.[49] It is forged by resurrection, by an act of creation from nothing. This is why Paul indicates that Abraham's belief that he should be the father of gentiles (Rom 4.18) is part and parcel of his belief in the God 'who makes alive the dead and calls the things that do not exist into existence'. Thus, gentiles are made heirs of Abraham when they pass through death into new life. It is therefore not surprising to find that Paul two chapters later, in Rom 6.1–11, expounds dying and rising with Christ. There, Paul articulates an expectation of future bodily resurrection akin to the messiah's (Rom 6.5) as well as what he regards as believers' present status of having already died and risen in solidarity with the messiah (Rom 6.11, 13). It is this latter notion – present inclusion in the messiah's death and resurrection – that is the creating and resurrecting God's act by which Abrahamic and divine descent are made realities. One might object by noting that Paul says nothing in Romans 6 of filial status. That is true. However, in Rom 6.6, 9 Paul characterises the result of dying and rising with the messiah as emancipation from slavery,[50] and in Rom 8.15 and Gal 4.7 Paul likens the status of having been emancipated to that of having been adopted. Moreover, Rom 8.18–23 confirms that Paul understands there to be a correspondence between resurrection and filial status. He envisions there an 'apocalypse of God's children' (Rom 8.19) at the final resurrection, a revelation curiously characterised as adoption, which is itself defined as 'the redemption of our bodies' (Rom 8.23).

Given the correspondence in Romans 4 between God's raising of the dead and the creation of Abrahamic heirs, and in light of Paul's description in Romans 6 of baptism as an entrance into the death and rising of Christ resulting in emancipation characterised elsewhere as obtaining filial status, Johnson Hodge is correct to describe baptism in Galatians as a 'ritual of adoption'. However, she and Thiessen are both incorrect to assume that the reason baptism is a ritual of adoption is because Paul understands it to entail the reception of πνεῦμα.[51] While it may be the case that reception of πνεῦμα upon baptism is depicted elsewhere in the New Testament, a concomitance of these two events does not feature in Paul's descriptions of baptism.[52] In Rom 6.3–4, Paul likens baptism to burial in the sense that it is a ritual of dying with Christ to rise with Christ, and there is nothing in the image of burial to suggest the infusion of πνεῦμα. In Gal 3.27, Paul pictures baptism as an enrobing, an image that could perhaps suggest the donning of πνεῦμα. But it is χριστός with which believers are enrobed so as to share in the messiah's identity as 'seed of Abraham'. There is no justification for glossing the image of being enrobed with χριστός with the notion of being filled

[48] Cf. B. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4* (WUNT II/224; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) 388. J. D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 213 claims that in Gal 3.13–16 'Paul's Jesus does not *manifest* Isaac. He *supersedes* him' (emphasis original). Whatever the validity of such a claim about Galatians 3, the same cannot be said concerning Romans 4. Instead, for Paul, the events surrounding Isaac and Jesus (birth and resurrection) *both* manifest the consistent creative and life-giving character of the God of Israel.

[49] Thiessen, *Paul*, 108.

[50] In Rom 6.6, the purpose (ἵνα) of the crucifixion of the old self is 'destruction of the body of sin', which is then glossed as 'no longer being enslaved to sin' (the genitive articular phrase τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν is epexegetical (cf. BDF §400.8; Phil 3.10; Rom 1.32)). The messiah's own liberation from death's dominion described in Rom 6.9 is the pattern to which Paul understands believers to conform in Rom 6.11 (cf. οὕτως).

[51] See Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 76; Thiessen, *Paul*, 111–12.

[52] Cf. Mark 1.9–10 par.; Acts 2.38.

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with πνεῦμα.[53] The language of enrobing and its specifically messianological emphasis must be allowed to stand.

As for Paul's expositions of baptism, this leaves only 1 Cor 12.13. There Paul writes, 'For in the one πνεῦμα we were all baptised into one body.' This would appear to support Johnson Hodge's and Thiessen's contentions that baptism consists of, or symbolises, the reception of πνεῦμα. An argument in favour of their view could perhaps be strengthened by Paul's subsequent statement in the same verse, 'and we were all made to drink of one πνεῦμα'. The problem with this reading of 1 Cor 12.13, however, concerns the meaning of Paul's idiom of being baptised 'in' (ἐν) something 'into' (εἰς) something. Paul uses this idiom of baptism only once more, in 1 Cor 10.2, where he writes of Israel that they were 'all baptised into (εἰς) Moses in (ἐν) the cloud and in (ἐν) the sea'. This is an enigmatic statement, but our concern is simply to observe the language Paul is using. The use of the prepositions in 1 Cor 10.2 matches the idiom in 1 Cor 12.13 of baptism ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι and εἰς ἓν σῶμα, that is, the messiah's body. Linguistically, in 1 Cor 12.13 and 10.2 baptism εἰς ἓν σῶμα corresponds to baptism εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν and baptism ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι corresponds to baptism ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, respectively. This latter linguistic correspondence between πνεῦμα on the one hand and 'cloud' and 'sea' on the other prevents us from too easily reading Paul's qualification of baptism with the phrase ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι as meaning that baptism amounts to the indwelling of πνεῦμα, that is unless we are prepared to understand Paul as imagining the Israelites being indwelt or infused by the cloud and sea. Moreover, Paul's uses of the preposition ἐν in these contexts describing baptisms would also explain why, when Paul *does* describe the reception of πνεῦμα in the latter half 1 Cor 12.13, he finds it necessary to switch from language of baptism ἐν ... πνεύματι to that of 'drinking' πνεῦμα.[54] Baptism and drinking in 1 Cor 12.13 are not therefore two descriptions of one thing, but rather two different things. This distinction between baptism and drinking is confirmed by Paul's movement in 1 Cor 10.4 from the Israelites' baptism into Moses to their drinking the same spiritual drink. These are two different events. Rhetorically, both images support Paul's point about unity (hence the repeated adjective 'one' and the invocation of the traditional formula regarding Jews, Greeks, slaves and freepersons). But the referent of the images is not identical.[55]

An instructive point of comparison for Paul's association of baptism ἐν ... πνεύματι with the Israelites' crossing of the sea is the evocation of this same pentateuchal narrative in Isa 63.11: 'he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people [asking], "Where is the one who brought them up from the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is the one who put in their midst (בקרבו, ἐν αὐτοῖς) his spirit of holiness?"'[56] It appears that here in Isaiah the cloud which accompanied the Israelites is interpreted to be God's holy רוח, πνεῦμα (cf. Isa 63.14). Such an interpretative tradition may have sanctioned the analogy Paul draws between πνεῦμα and νεφέλῃ when he uses the parallel phrases ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ and ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι to qualify the verb βαπτίζω.[57] Despite this similarity, there is also an

[53] *Pace* Thiessen, *Paul*, 111 and R. Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964) 29, who ignores the distinction between χριστός and πνεῦμα on the basis of his reading of 2 Cor 3.17, against which see J. D. G. Dunn, '2 Corinthians III.17 – "The Lord Is the Spirit"', *JTS* 21 (1970) 309–20.

[54] There πνεῦμα is straightforwardly the accusative object of ἐποτίσθημεν.

[55] *Pace* F. W. Horn, *Das Angeld des Geistes* (FRLANT 154; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992) 175, whose reading depends on a particular theory, based on Graeco-Roman medical discourse, of the nature of πνεῦμα but which takes into account neither the differences between Paul's manners of expression within 1 Cor 12.13 nor the linguistic correspondences between 1 Cor 10.2 and 1 Cor 12.3.

[56] In Hebrew the antecedent of the singular pronominal suffix of בקרבו is the singular צאנו, 'his flock', a collective noun, which explains the plural Greek pronoun αὐτοῖς.

[57] Note Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 5.1: 'What they supposed to be a cloud, Paul asserts is the Holy Spirit' (translation R. E. Heine). So too, apparently, did the prophet.

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important difference between 1 Cor 10.2, 12.3 and Isa 63.11. While Isa 63.11 explicitly describes the placement of πνεῦμα amongst the community of the Exodus (not, notably, within individual Israelites) using the prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτοῖς, Paul's diction is different, with πνεῦμα itself being the object of ἐν. Though this syntactical distinction is rather obvious, the difference between Isa 63.11 and 1 Cor 12.3 on this point serves to highlight the fact that, despite insistence that baptism amounts to putting πνεῦμα in gentiles, phrases such ἐν αὐτοῖς are conspicuously lacking in Paul's baptismal discourse.

What then does baptism ἐν … πνεύματι mean for Paul? It is admittedly difficult to understand the analogy between πνεῦμα and 'the sea and the cloud' that is implied by the corresponding phraseologies of 1 Cor 10.2 and 12.13. However, a possible explanation (corroborated by Isa 63.11) is that just as 'the cloud', that is, the manifestation of the divine presence, functions as a witness to Israel of God's judgement of death, which befell the Egyptians, and God's granting of safe passage for the Israelites through that judgement,[58] so comparably πνεῦμα functions as a witness to believers' passage through death in the messiah into the messiah's new life. Accordingly, in Rom 8.15–16 and Gal 4.6 Paul depicts πνεῦμα as witnessing to believers' divine familial status. Regardless of whether this interpretation is accepted, it is clear on the basis of the analogy between Paul's language in 1 Cor 10.2 and 12.3 that baptism ἐν … πνεύματι does not refer to the infusion of πνεῦμα into believers.[59]

There is an important final observation to be made about Paul's three descriptions of baptism in Romans 6, Galatians 3 and 1 Corinthians 12. While the imagery in each case differs, there is a constant across the three depictions in that baptism is always 'into' (εἰς) the messiah.[60] Thus, the significance Paul places on baptism is its embodiment of the incorporation of believers into the messiah. As integral as πνεῦμα is to Paul's thought, his emphasis lies on χριστός when discussing baptism, and πνεῦμα and χριστός are not to be conflated if we aim to understand Paul clearly.[61] Therefore, while I concur with Johnson Hodge that for Paul baptism is 'a ritual of adoption', I dissent from the notion that this is so because baptism depicts the infusion of πνεῦμα. Rather, the ritual consists of a unification with the messiah, especially in his dying and rising, with the effect of creating something new – namely, children of Abraham among the nations. This constellation of ideas corresponds to what Paul indicates in Romans 4 about how gentiles receive new lineage. It is not by infusion of πνεῦμα, but by being brought through death to life, by being brought out of non-existence into existence – precisely the sort of thing Abraham is said to have believed that God was able to do.

None of this is to imply that for Paul πνεῦμα is irrelevant to Abrahamic and divine descent. As argued by Thiessen, πνεῦμα is the blessing which is made available to Abraham's heirs.[62] Thus, the reception of πνεῦμα is the *result* of gaining an Abrahamic pedigree and therefore access to his blessing (Gal 3.14). The reception of πνεῦμα is also the result of gaining a divine pedigree. It is the gift that God gives his children (Gal 4.6). Further, πνεῦμα vehemently witnesses to believers to confirm this divine familial status (Gal 4.7; Rom 8.15). Additionally, possession of πνεῦμα is a guarantee of bodily

[58] Compare Tg. Isa. 63.11, where 'holy spirit' is rendered 'word of his holy prophets'.

[59] Thus G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (rev. edn; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 670: 'one is hard pressed to find an equation between baptism and the reception of the Spirit in Paul's letters …. [1 Cor 12.13] supports such a view *only* on the unsupported grounds that Paul himself makes such an assumption' (directed against Schnackenburg, *Baptism*, 84; emphasis original). See further C. Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (THKNT 7.2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982) 108, who discusses ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι as an instrumental phrase specifying the role of πνεῦμα in God's establishment of a corporate unity (hence the modifier ἑνί).

[60] The σῶμα of 1 Cor 12.13 is of course that of the messiah (cf. 1 Cor 12.12).

[61] *Pace* Fredriksen, *Paul*, 158.

[62] Thiessen, *Paul*, 107.

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resurrection (2 Cor 5.5) and thus indeed, as Thiessen proposes, a solution to bodily mortality.[63] According to Paul, on the one hand believers have died and risen in Christ, thus being created God's children, children of Abraham, and therefore recipients of πνεῦμα; but on the other hand believers await the future redemption of their bodies, the apocalypse of their divine familial status, and the same πνεῦμα that currently testifies to that status is also a first fruit of future bodily redemption (Rom 8.23).

Finally, I, in unison with my interlocutors, have thus far been speaking mostly indiscriminately of divine descent and Abrahamic descent as if they were interchangeable. They are not, however, and distinguishing between Abrahamic and divine descent is a matter of describing the logical relationship between the two in Paul's thought and the respective emphases he places on them. Concerning the logical relationship, I do not think it is correct to say, as Thiessen does, that one type of descent results in the other. He contends, 'For Paul, genealogical descent from Abraham *results* in divine descent. Since Paul understands the promises to Abraham and to his seed to mean that they would become like the stars in a qualitative sense, then this promise requires that they become divine or semi-divine beings like the angels.'[64] In other words, as Thiessen understands it, divine descent is a component of the Abrahamic blessing, which is only available to Abraham's heirs, and therefore Abrahamic descent is logically prior to divine descent. Thiessen may be correct in his proposal that Paul has correlated the gift of πνεῦμα with the promise to Abraham of star-like seed because Paul, along with some of his contemporaries, understands that promise as a quantitative *and* qualitative statement.[65] However, this conception of πνεῦμα does not actually appear to be the basis of divine descent in Paul's thought. Paul is rather clear on why he thinks believers are sons and daughters of God, and his rationale for this has nothing to do with astral πνεῦμα. Instead, Paul's rationale has to do with the messiah, whom Paul regards as the seed of Abraham (Gal 3.16) and the son of God (*passim*). Because the messiah enjoys these statuses, those in solidarity with him do also.[66] Paul is not explicit as to why this dynamic of solidarity is a feature of his messianology, but it is evident that it is.[67] For instance, an emphasis on shared pedigree with the messiah is evinced by Paul's appropriation of a democratised reading of the oracle of 2 Samuel 7 in 2 Cor 6.18.[68] While in Rom 1.3–4 Paul uses a messianic interpretation of 2 Sam 7.12, 14 in his description of the messiah as God's 'son' born from the 'seed of David' and 'raised up' from among the dead,[69] in 2 Cor 6.18 we encounter a retrieval of 2 Sam 7.8, 14 not to describe the filial status of the messiah, but that of the messiah's people: 'I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' The logical relationship, then, between Abrahamic descent and divine descent in Paul's thought is that they are both statuses of the messiah, and therefore they are both statuses enjoyed by those in the messiah. One does not lead to or result in the other, rather they are concomitant aspects of solidarity with the messiah.

This concomitance does not mean, however, that Paul emphasises Abrahamic descent and divine descent equally. On this matter, there is a middle ground between positions

[63] Thiessen, *Paul*, 150–4.

[64] Thiessen, *Paul*, 155 (emphasis added).

[65] Thiessen, *Paul*, 135–40.

[66] See T. Morgan, *Being 'in Christ' in the Letters of Paul: Saved through Christ and in his Hands* (WUNT I/449; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2020) 197–201. Morgan frames this facet of Paul's thought in terms of the 'exemplarity' of Christ.

[67] For an extended discussion of how Paul's conception of messianic solidarity arises from his interpretation and appropriation of Jewish scriptures to describe his messiah, see Hewitt, *Messiah and Scripture*, 119–55.

[68] On the authenticity of 2 Cor 6.14–7.1, see N. A. Dahl, 'A Fragment and its Context: 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1', *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977) 62–9.

[69] See D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 80–1.

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such as that of Thiessen and, say, J. L. Martyn. Martyn contends that in Gal 3.26 Paul, by claiming that all believers are sons of God, is 'shifting the ground abruptly and fundamentally by speaking of descent from God through Christ' and thereby laying 'the foundation for putting descent from Abraham into second place, indeed for eventually eclipsing it in favour of descent from God'.[70] In reaction to this, Thiessen argues that Abrahamic descent is actually primary and results in the by-product of divine descent. Martyn and Thiessen are both mistaken to postulate that one kind of descent is the result of the other, and Martyn is mistaken to assume that Paul wishes to displace the importance of Abrahamic descent. It is more accurate, as I see it, to say that Paul affirms both types of descent as integral to his gospel for the gentiles, but places more emphasis on divine descent because of its particular future significance. Hence, in Paul's eschatological vision in Rom 8.18–25, what creation awaits is not the apocalypse of the seed of Abraham, but rather that of the children of God. But by no means is this to suggest that Abrahamic descent for Paul is nothing but a misguided obsession of his opponents in need of relegation to the shadows (per Martyn), for, according to Paul in Rom 4.13, God promises Abraham and his descendants that they will inherit the cosmos. Yet, the flow of Paul's thought from Romans 4 to Romans 8 suggests that, in the end, it is the revelation of divine sonship which will be the ultimate occasion of rejoicing for Paul.

5. Conclusion

This article began by noting the impulse among some scholars to give an account of Paul's thought that is less abstract and more concrete, even quasi-biological. For Arthur Peacocke, this was a theological concern to provide a conception of solidarity with Christ that was not 'vacuous'. For Johnson Hodge, Stowers and Thiessen, this same impulse arises from a historical interest aimed at undoing what they perceive to be the ill effects of popular theological parlance on our understanding of Paul in his own context. Thus, Thiessen contends that a 'spiritual/physical or spiritual/material distinction implies an unreal/real distinction – one that wrongly believes that Paul opposes biological descent … to a fictive descent', and so he instead attempts to describe Paul's understanding of gentiles' Abrahamic and divine descent as entailing 'a substantive, real change', a connection that 'is no less material or real than being sarkically connected to Abraham'.[71] Similarly, Stowers avers that 'the intelligibility for the language of participation' is at stake in his work, and Johnson Hodge aims to establish a rationale of what she considers to be 'a tangible, organic connection between Christ and the gentiles'.[72] Despite such claims, the theory under review, by simply moving πνεῦμα over to the material side of the dichotomy, has actually perpetuated the problem it is meant to address by implying that only that which is material, tangible and organic is substantive, intelligible and real. But must this be so? What if, as this article has aimed to demonstrate, Paul thinks of genealogical descent and the role of πνεῦμα (material or not) within a wholly different paradigm?

The alternative account of genealogical descent according to Paul proposed here is based on things Paul apparently considered to be quite real: creation and resurrection. And while Paul expected a bodily manifestation of resurrection for God's children at a later point in time, his belief in the inception of the resurrection of the dead in the raising of the messiah would have served as a concrete and embodied reference point for his understanding of how Abrahamic and divine descent was forged. Therefore, if our concern

[70] J. L. Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; London: Doubleday, 1997) 374–5.
[71] Thiessen, *Paul*, 112, 115, 120.
[72] Stowers, 'Participation', 353; Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 76.

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is to preserve a materialist realism of Paul's conceptions, I contend that nothing is lost in the proposal articulated here. The greater concern of historians and exegetes, though, should be to give an account of Paul's thought *according to Paul*, whether his ideas strike us as sufficiently real, substantive and intelligible, or not.

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