The Spirit of Faith: A Comparative Study of Philo’s and Paul’s Reading of the Abraham Story

Klaus Vibe

PhD Thesis
MF Norwegian School of Theology
March 2018
Supervisor: Reidar Hvalvik
Table of Contents

Acknowledgments vi

Chapter 1. Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit 1

1.1 The Problem: Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit 1
1.2 Abraham according to Philo and Paul 6
1.3 Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment 16

Chapter 2. Philo’s Interpretation of Gen 15:6 and an Outline of the Part of This Study That Deals with Philo 25

2.1 Introduction 25
2.2 Philo’s Reading of Gen 15:6 – God’s Acknowledgement of Abraham’s Righteousness 25
2.3 Presuppositions and the Way Forward 32

Chapter 3. Abraham’s Path to Virtue according to De Congressu 37

3.1 Introduction 37
3.2 The Significance of Nature, Teaching and Practice for the Attainment of Virtue 38
3.3 The Encyclical Studies and the Effects of Education 44
3.4 The Relationship between the Encyclical Studies, Philosophy and Wisdom 48
3.4.1 The Significance of the Preliminary Studies and Philosophy for the Pursuit of Virtue 48
3.4.2 The Significance of Education for the Restoration of the Soul 53
3.4.3 Preliminary Summary 56
3.5 The Pious Perspective on the Lover of Learning’s Attainment of Virtue 56
3.5.1 The Virtues as God’s Gracious Presence in the World 56
3.5.2 The Effects of Divine Inspiration: Control of the Passions and an Enhanced Understanding of God as the Source of Human Virtue 60
3.5.2.1 Introduction 60
3.5.2.2 The Difference between Real and Imagined Pregnancy 61
3.5.2.3 Two Concurrent Perspectives on Sarah’s Affliction of Hagar in Gen 16:6 63
3.6 Summary 65

Chapter 4. Abraham’s Path to the Vision of God according to De Migracione Abrahami 71
4.1 Introduction ◦ 71
4.1.1 The Centrality of the Motif of Self-Examination ◦ 71
4.1.2 The Way Forward: The Aim and Structure of This Chapter ◦ 74
4.2 Philo’s Theological Rationale for His Rejection of Chaldeanism in Migr. 176–183 ◦ 74
4.3 From Self-Knowledge to Knowledge of God in Migr. 184–195 ◦ 78
4.3.1 The Basic Structure of Migr. 184–195 ◦ 78
4.3.2 The Nature of Abraham’s Inspiration in Migr. 190–191 ◦ 81
4.3.2.1 Different Models for Prophetic Inspiration in Greco–Roman Antiquity and in Philo’s Writings ◦ 81
4.3.2.2 A Comparison of the Inspiration Ascribed to Abraham in Migr. 34–35, 70–85, 190–191 and Her. 69–75 ◦ 84
Excursus on De Abrahamo 69–80 ◦ 88
4.4 Summary ◦ 90

Chapter 5. From Abram to Abraham and the Peculiar Greatness of the Sage – Philo’s Presentation of Abraham in De Mutatione Nominum ◦ 93

5.1 Introduction ◦ 93
5.2 Abram and Abraham ◦ 94
5.2.1 Abraham and the Souls in the Heavenly Sphere ◦ 94
5.2.2 Abram and Abraham in Light of Philo’s Threefold Classification of Mankind ◦ 96
5.3 From Abram to Abraham in De Mutatione Nominum ◦ 99
5.3.1 A Perfect Balance between Human Effort and Divine Grace? ◦ 99
5.3.2 Two Concurrent Perspectives on the Change of a Name in Mut. 57–76 ◦ 100
5.3.3 Abraham as the Creation of God Alone ◦ 103
5.3.4 Divine Inspiration and Human Capacity to Receive ◦ 106
5.3.5 The Peculiar Greatness of the Sage ◦ 109
5.4 Philo and the Notion of the Things That Are “Up to Us” ◦ 111
Appendix – Abraham’s Faith and Human Mortality ◦ 119

Chapter 6. Conclusion ◦ 123

6.1 The Abraham Story and the Gift of the Spirit ◦ 123
6.2 Divine and Human Agency in Philo’s Portrait of Abraham’s Path to Virtue ◦ 126

Chapter 7. The Abrahamic Promises and God’s Gift of the Spirit in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians ◦ 129
7.1 Introduction ◦ 129
7.2 Paul’s Argument in Gal 2:15−21 ◦ 131
7.2.1 Gal 2:15−21 in Its Literary Context ◦ 131
7.2.2 Justification and Righteousness in Gal 2:15−2:21 ◦ 132
7.3 The Abrahamic Promises and God’s Gift of the Spirit in Gal 3:1−4:11 ◦ 136
7.3.1 introduction ◦ 136
7.3.2 Righteousness, Faith, and the Spirit in Gal 3:1−14 ◦ 137
7.3.2.1 Righteousness, Faith and the Spirit in Gal 3:1−5 ◦ 137
7.3.2.2 What Does It Mean to Receive the Spirit of God? Some Preliminary Observations ◦ 140
7.3.2.3 Galatians 3:6−14: The Abrahamic Promises and the Gift of the Spirit ◦ 141
7.4 The Abrahamic Promises and the Gift of Inheritance ◦ 145
7.4.1 Galatians 3:15−18: The Gift of Inheritance on the Basis of the Promise ◦ 145
7.4.2 Righteousness and Life in Gal 3:19−25 ◦ 147
7.4.3 Galatians 3:26−4:7: Life in Christ and Life in the Spirit ◦ 150
7.4.4 Gal 4:8−11 and Gal 4:21−31: Getting Known by God and Being Born in accordance with the Spirit ◦ 156
7.5 Preliminary Conclusions ◦ 159
7.5.1 The Abrahamic Promise and the Gift of the Spirit ◦ 159
7.5.2 Preliminary Observations Regarding the Relationship between Divine and Human Agency ◦ 161

Chapter 8. Abraham and the Spirit of Faith in Paul’s Letter to the Romans ◦ 165

8.1 Introduction ◦ 165
8.2 Preliminary Issues ◦ 167
8.2.1 Romans 4 in Light of Rom 3:21−3:31 ◦ 167
8.2.2 Justification and the Gift of Christ in Rom 3:21−26 ◦ 168
8.3 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4 ◦ 169
8.3.1 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4:1−12 ◦ 169
8.3.2 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4:13−22 ◦ 172
8.4 Life in the Spirit according to Rom 6 and 8 ◦ 179
8.4.1 Preliminary Issues ◦ 179
8.4.2 Rom 6:1−11: The Actualization of the Christ Event through Baptism ◦ 181
8.4.3 The Actualization of the Christ Event through the Spirit ◦ 184
8.4.4 The Actualization of the Christ Event – So That You May No Longer Slave for Sin ◦ 185
8.4.5 Sanctification That Leads to Eternal Life – Thanks Be to God ◦ 188
8.5 Life in the Spirit according to Rom 8 ◦ 192
8.5.1 Introductory Remarks ◦ 192
8.5.2 The Spirit of Faith in Rom 8:1−17 ◦ 192
8.5.3 Romans 8:18–30: Waiting and Groaning in the Spirit ◦ 198
8.6 Conclusion ◦ 206
8.6.1 Abraham’s Children and the Gift of the Spirit ◦ 206
8.6.2 Divine and Human Agency in Rom 4–8 ◦ 208

Chapter 9. Concluding Discussions ◦ 215

9.1 The Abraham Story and the Gift of the Spirit – Philo and Paul in Conversation ◦ 215
9.2 Divine and Human Agency and the Question of Reciprocity ◦ 220

Formalities ◦ 223
Bibliography ◦ 223
Acknowledgments

At this stage of the project, I am glad to have the opportunity to express my thankfulness to the many people who have supported me along the way. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Professor Reidar Hvalvik who supervised my project from its initial stages to the end. From the first time we met I have enjoyed our conversations about my project, and my project has benefitted a lot from his careful readings and critical comments. I am especially grateful for his careful comments and critique in the final stages of the project, always being willing to walk an extra mile. I am also thankful for the many helpful comments I have received when I have presented papers at doctoral seminars at MF in Oslo. Not least for the response given at various stages by Professor Karl Olav Sandnes, who did his best to explain to me the importance of paideia in Philo’s writings, but also for the many helpful and encouraging comments given at these meetings by Dr. Nils Aksel Røsæg. Fellow and now former Ph.D.-students have also contributed to refining my project in many ways. I always want to thank Professor John M. G. Barclay for providing an opportunity for me to present a paper at a doctoral seminar at the department of theology and religion at Durham University, encouraging me to move on in my studies of Philo. A special thanks must be given to the three Professors in the examination committee, Karl Olav Sandnes, John M. G. Barclay, and Gitte Buch-Hansen, for clarifying many ways in which my work could be improved, just as I want to thank Professor Torrey Seland for reading a draft of my work on Philo. Grateful as I am for all that I have benefitted from all these people, the shortcomings that remain are all my responsibility.

I also want to express my gratitude to the Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus for providing financial support for the project, as well as to Professor Peter V. Legarth for the many encouragements to pursue these studies given not least in the early stages of the project. I also want to thank my friend and colleague, Associate Professor Morten Hørning Jensen, for numerous conversations along the way that have shaped my project and thinking in significant ways.
Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my wife Connie Lilleholt Vibe, who has supported me in my work from beginning to end. Your love and our three children, Ane, Marie and Mads, are a blessing, gift and inspiration that keep enriching my life.

Aarhus, August 2018

Klaus Vibe
Chapter 1. Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit

1.1 The Problem: Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit

In a study called “Abraham and the Promise of Spirit: Points of Convergence between Philo and Paul” Sze-kar Wan argues for the importance of Paul’s references both to the Spirit and to Abraham in his letter to the Galatians. Wan notes one question that continues to elude interpreters: “What gave Paul’s argument internal coherence and logical force? What was the conceptual framework that enabled him to juxtapose reception of the Spirit with the Abrahamic Promise, a juxtaposition made explicit in Gal 3:14, ‘... in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’” Wan acknowledges that scholars have referred to prophetic texts from the Hebrew Scriptures in order to explain the apparent equation of promise with reception of the Spirit, but concludes nevertheless that “at the end, however, the most probable author of the ‘promise’/ ‘Spirit’ equation is Paul.” However, according to Wan the questions remain: “Whence did it derive its persuasive force? Was there something within the realm of Jewish expectations which did associate the Spirit with the promises to Abraham?” and he suggests that “the answer might be found in the kind of Hellenistic Judaism that presented the patriarch as a mystic and the promises as attaining to true knowledge.” Philo’s portrait of Abraham “was clearly fashioned with...
an apologetic purpose, and its natural Sitz im Leben would seem to be the proselytization of Gentiles, just as his reference to Abraham’s faith in his description of Abraham as the first proselyte in De Virtutibus 212–219 reflects an obvious dependence on Gen 15:6. Correspondingly, Gen 15:6 plays an important role in Paul’s portrait of Abraham, and even though Paul does not describe Abraham’s conversion from paganism, he does place his account of Abraham in a discussion of the Galatians’ conversion (Gal 3:1; 4:9). Wan is careful not to jump to unwarranted conclusions and completes his study by drawing attention to the following similarities and differences between the two:

The two portraits of Abraham are of course painted on entirely different canvasses. Philo’s schema is based on the Hellenistic model of contemplation; Paul’s is eschatological. It is illegitimate to equate simplistically and haphazardly Philo’s “Wisdom of God” to Paul’s ‘Spirit,’ as if they were just different titles for the same figure. They assume altogether different roles in their respective schemata. The worthwhile point of comparison is how the promise of Abraham functions in both as a vital link between the patriarch and his descendants. As the content of God’s promise to Abraham and his descendants and as the energizer of lived experience in the here-and-now, this crucial link – Wisdom of God in Philo and Spirit in Paul – creates a homology between the life of Abraham and that of the believer. Not the content but the manner in which Philo and Paul appropriated

reference to works in which the term is used. Volker Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God: Reading Paul in the Context of Philonic Mystical Traditions” in The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity: Multidisciplinary Perspectives (ed. Jörg Frey and John Levison; Ekstasis 5; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 293–294 clarifies with a reference to the work of Hans-Christoph Meier that “both Philo and Paul share ‘a form of religiosity which has the immediate experience of divine reality as its center. This experience, which transcends everyday consciousness and cognition based on reason, is at the same time the experience of an intimate closeness to divine reality.’ As a result of such experiences of closeness to and participation in the divine, human beings are transformed. These two fundamental characteristics of mysticism (i.e., the beholding of God and the resulting transformation) will guide our investigation of Philo and Paul.” The problem with this approach is that it presumes that an encounter with the divine is something that transcends everyday consciousness and cognition based on reason. One cannot take for granted that Philo and Paul thought of divine revelation as something that transcends everyday consciousness and cognition based on reason – on the whole what does this actually mean? Moreover, Philo does not describe immediate encounters with God, as humans encounter God through the Logos, which does not transcend cognition based on reason. Yon-Gyong Kwon has contested the idea that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a widely held interpretation and asserts that “we get the impression that Paul’s reference to the Spirit in Gal 3:14 is related to the Abrahamic promise. He refers to this idea as a wide...
Abraham is what unites the two Hellenistic-Jewish writers. If this hypothesis is correct, there might have been a great deal more contact between Paul and Hellenistic-Jewish mysticism than hitherto assumed.\(^7\)

Hence, Wan points out that Philo and Paul shared that feature in common: that they both refer to the Spirit as the content of God’s promises to Abraham and they both describe the Spirit as the energizer of lived experience in the here-and-now that creates a homology between the life of Abraham and the life of the believer, even though Wan also contends that the Spirit assumes altogether different roles in their respective schemata. His study suggests nevertheless that it may be worthwhile to consider more thoroughly (a) how Philo and Paul describe the gift of the Spirit as being related to the Abraham story and (b) what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith, according to their respective writings/arguments. This is the starting point and objective of this study.

The relevance of Wan’s conclusion has, however, recently been questioned by Chee-chiew Lee for the following reasons: “(1) While Philo and Paul may be interpreting the same narrative, the similarity in the manner by which Abraham is appropriated is more formal than actual, since the content is starkly different. (2) The verbal parallels in Galatians 3 are nearer to the OT than Philo. (3) Paul’s interest is historical while Philo’s interest is mystical.”\(^8\) Lee focuses in her discussion on Philo’s interpretation of the passages from Gen 12:1–3 that specifically refer to the blessings of the Gentiles, i.e. Gen 12:3a+c. She draws attention to the interpretation of these passages that Philo presents in *Migr.* 109–117 and 118–127a; *Her.* 8–9; *Somn.* 1.176–178 and *QG* 3.42, 44. She rightly points out that Philo claims that “for Philo, the people of other nations may be blessed on account of a wise individual, when such individuals, who are blessed richly by God due to their righteousness, share their possessions with others, intercede for others, and influence others for the better by their good character.”\(^9\) It follows from this interpretation that the nations may be blessed indirectly through the life of a wise man. In that respect, Philo’s interpretation is markedly different from Paul’s, insofar as Paul refers to the Gentiles as being blessed directly by God (Gal 3:1–14). However, Philo’s and Paul’s interpretation of the promise of blessing given to Abraham

---

\(^7\) Wan, “Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit,” 224.


deserve a closer examination than the one made by Lee. One risks missing the mark if one focuses too narrowly on Philo’s interpretation of Gen 12:3a+c, at least if intends to clarify not only how Philo and Paul describe the gift of the Spirit as being related to the Abraham story but also what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith. Furthermore, Philo is not overly concerned with describing the blessing of the Gentiles (i.e. those who are blessed through the life of a wise man). Philo is much more concerned with describing God’s blessing of Abraham. One aspect of that blessing is that others will be blessed through Abraham, but that is only one (minor) aspect of the blessing that Philo is engaged in describing. Philo is primarily engaged in describing God’s blessing of Abraham and thus Abraham features in Philo’s writings as a particular type of soul (Abr. 52), that is, as a type of soul that is perfected through teaching. Philo’s description of the blessing of Abraham is therefore a description of the kind of blessing that is available to the kind of person that, like Abraham, is perfected through teaching. Philo makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in that respect, insofar as Abraham features in Philo’s writings as a type of soul and thus not as an example of a person with a particular ethnic identity. This means that there is no difference between the blessing given to Abraham and those given to those who are blessed like him. Hence, to compare Philo’s and Paul’s association of the Abrahamic promises and God gifts of the Spirit, it is necessary to focus on accounting for Philo’s description of Abraham’s experience of divine inspiration as a fulfillment of God’s promises.

Paul also seems to emphasize that there is continuity between Abraham’s experience and faith and that of contemporary believers. It should be granted, of course, that neither in Galatians nor in Romans does Paul describe Abraham’s encounter with the divine promises as something that involves an experience with God’s Spirit. Nevertheless, he does point out that contemporary believers are blessed with the believing or trusting Abraham (Gal 3:9), that the Abrahamic promise of blessing is a promise of the Spirit (Gal 3:14) and that the story of Abraham’s justification was written for “our sake”, for those who are about to be credited with righteousness as Abraham was credited with righteousness (Rom 4:24). It thus seems fair to assume that Abraham’s faith

---

10 This does not mean that Philo was completely uninterested in ethnic distinctions; after all, he describes Abraham as the first proselyte (Virt. 219) and he criticizes those who only appreciate the symbolic meaning of Scripture to such an extent that they suggest that the literal meaning can safely be dismissed (Migr. 89–93).
represents a prefiguration of the faith that now is associated with the gift of the Spirit. Hence, the question of who should be regarded as the legitimate children of Abraham was not only a question of who believed but also a question of who had received the Spirit of the promise.\textsuperscript{11}

Insofar as this study is concerned with discussing the role that the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe, this study is comparable to a part of Emma Wasserman’s study that focuses on Pauline anthropology. Emma Wasserman has suggested that “Philo’s discussions of God’s λόγος provide clues to understanding the role of πνεῦμα in Rom 8 where the πνεῦμα takes up residence inside Christ-believers.”\textsuperscript{12} She acknowledges important differences between Philo’s and Paul’s account of the πνεῦμα, but suggests nevertheless that

Philo’s indwelling λόγος and Paul’s indwelling pneumatic substance resolve certain logical problems with construing God’s intervention in human hearts and minds. Though Jewish traditions speak of God’s intervening to harden hearts or restore minds, Philo and Paul seem to assimilate this to Greek traditions of moral psychology and in so doing require some instrument by which God can punish and restore. This, I suggest, is basically the role ascribed to πνεῦμα in Rom 8 and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{13}

Wasserman’s suggestion is intriguing insofar as her suggestion is comparable to Wan’s proposal of a contact between Paul and the kind of theology/philosophy known from Philo’s writings. Wasserman’s work has recently been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to the role that the concept of participation in Christ assumes in Paul’s argument in Rom 6–8.\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless, her study suggests that a closer examination of Philo’s and Paul’s descriptions of the nature and the effects of God’s gift of the Spirit may be worthwhile. Wasserman does not discuss how Paul’s portrait of Abraham in Rom 4 relates to the argument in Rom 5–8.\textsuperscript{15} Neither is she concerned with

\textsuperscript{11} As stressed by Gordon Fee, \textit{God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul} (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 379. Whether or not Paul in Galatians makes a distinction between the blessing of the Jews and the blessing of the Gentiles will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{12} Emma Wasserman, \textit{The Death of the Soul in Romans 7} (WUNT 256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 142.

\textsuperscript{13} Wasserman, \textit{The Death of the Soul in Romans 7}, 143.


\textsuperscript{15} Wasserman argues, in line with a strong scholarly tradition, that the subject matter of Rom 4 in outline is different from the subject matter of Rom 5–8. Thus, Wasserman, \textit{The Death of the Soul in Romans 7}, 128–129: “Most readers find the subject matter and argument of Rom 1:18–4:25 very different from that of 5:1–8:39 and so distinguish chapters 1–4 and 5–8 as subsections of the letter. The bulk of Rom 1–4 addresses the situation of Jews and Gentiles in broad historical terms that explain and justify God’s ways of dealing with both, but chapters 5–8 focus on sin, death,
clarifying how, according to Philo, divine inspiration plays a crucial role for Abraham’s attainment of virtue. Hence, my study is distinct from Wasserman’s, insofar as it is triggered by the question of how a comparison of the ways in which Philo and Paul draw a connection between the Abraham story and God’s gift of the Spirit can cast further light on how their respective ways of thinking stand out from one another. This means that I am entering an ongoing scholarly discourse on the differences and similarities between Philo and Paul and their use of the Abraham story. I will thus give a short overview of some useful contributions to this debate.

1.2. Abraham according to Philo and Paul

Over the past few decades, several studies have discussed how Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story relate to one another. Here I will present some of the more recent contributions, beginning with Halvor Moxnes’ study from 1980. The studies presented here do not focus specifically on the question of the relationship between the Abrahamic story and God’s gift of the Spirit. Nonetheless, they are worth mentioning, because they can clarify some of the aspects of Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story that must be taken into account or perhaps needs to be addressed in considering the way that the Abraham story and contemporary experiences with the Spirit are related to one another in Philo’s and Paul’s respective writings.

Halvor Moxnes, in his study *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul’s Understanding of God in Romans*, drew attention to some of the things that Philo and Paul have in common in their portraits of Abraham. He observed that Paul in Rom 3 operates with a concept of God’s righteousness that puts God’s trustworthiness to the fore, and that Rom 4:17b and 4:18a refer to the circumstances where he was asked to put his trust in God (as attested in Gen 15:6 and referred to in Rom 4:3). He notes that we thus “find the same theme in v. 21 – Abraham was convinced that ‘God was able to do what he has promised.’ God stands behind his words!”

Furthermore, Moxnes contends that Paul’s argument in Rom 4 clarifies that “faith in God who ‘justified the ungodly’, raised the dead’, and ‘called the non-existent into being’ created a

and the law.” Much of the same goes for George H. van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). This work is also focused on identifying the anthropology underneath Paul’s argument and is much less interested in Philo’s and Paul’s portrait of Abraham.

community that in its existence reflected these acts by God.” According to Moxnes, Philo’s portrait of Abraham is also dominated by the themes that God’s promise is steadfast, that all things are possible with God and that Philo’s actual quotations of Gen 15:6 “are found in passages where Philo has focused on the promise made to Abraham.” Moxnes thus points out that Philo in Migr. 44, with a reference to Gen 15:6, “speaks of the promise of the new creation, i.e., the unity of the believer with God” which “in a real sense is a creation ex nihilo.” In this way, Moxnes draws attention to some of the things that Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story had in common, noting that both Philo and Paul refer to God’s promises as entities that intend the creation of a new reality. Other more recent studies have been keener on stressing the differences between the two contemporaries.

In his 1989 book Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts, G. Walter Hansen concluded from his survey of Jewish literature that Jewish accounts of Abraham were given within the framework of covenantal nomism. He argues that some texts (particularly the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Psalms of Solomon and Philo) “emphasize the priority of the covenant with Abraham over the Mosaic Law and interpret Abraham’s faith primarily in terms of a response to the covenantal promises” whereas other texts “interpret the Abrahamic covenant in terms of the Mosaic Law and view faith as a response of obedience to the Law.” In this way, Hansen acknowledges some amount of similarity between Philo and Paul (insofar as Paul also emphasizes the priority of the covenant) even if he eventually concludes that Paul belongs to an entirely different category than Philo.

Paul’s use of the Abraham story is more closely aligned to the first emphasis. However, his Christocentric reinterpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, his inclusion of Gentile believers within that covenant, his separation of the Mosaic law and exclusion of non-Christian Jewish lawkeepers from that covenant, and his understanding of faith as exclusively faith in Christ serve to highlight the fact that his portrait of Abraham must be seen in an entirely different category.

17 Moxnes, Theology in Conflict, 44.
18 Moxnes, Theology in Conflict, 155.
19 Moxnes, Theology in Conflict, 156.
20 G. Walter Hansen, Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 199.
21 Hansen, Abraham in Galatians, 199.
One might ask to what extent it is helpful to characterize Philo as belonging to an entirely different category than Paul. What does this actually mean? Nevertheless, it is worth considering whether or not Paul’s Christological interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant is something that makes his interpretation of the Abraham story substantially different, i.e. that his interpretation addresses an entirely different issue.

A number of other studies have stressed that Philo’s and Paul’s portraits of Abraham are different, insofar as Philo associates Abraham’s faith with virtue. Dieter Zeller’s study on grace in Philo and Paul helpfully clarifies some of the extent to which both Philo and Paul make use of the terminology of ancient gifting practices in their descriptions of God’s grace. However, according to Zeller, Philo’s and Paul’s appropriation of Abraham are very different. For “Paulus interessiert freilich an Abraham nur der Glaube. Bei Philon erschien dieser als eine heroische Tugend, die das intellektuelle Zum-Glauben-Kommen in Chaldäa, aber auch den Auszug aus diesem Land, das ἀπιστήσαι (Misstrauen) gegenüber dem Geschaffenen umfasst und die Grundlage für die anderen Tugenden bildet.”22 Paul’s picture of Abraham is very different, for “wider die gesamte jüdische Tradition, auch Philon, scheint Paulus Abraham als Sünder zu betrachten, zumal er ihn von vornherein im Blick auf die Rechtfertigung der Christen zeichnet.”23

Roy A. Harrisville III recognizes in his dissertation The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul some superficial similarities between Philo and Paul. He acknowledges some similarities between Philo’s and Paul’s concept of faith, but points out (with a reference to the work of Goodenough) that according to Philo, “faith was the goal of life whereas for Paul, it was but the ‘first step in achieving that goal.’”24 Hence, his final conclusion is very clear with respect to the question of any interdependence between Philo and Paul:25

---

22 Dieter Zeller, Charis bei Philon und Paulus (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990), 164.
23 Zeller, Charis bei Philon und Paulus, 166.
24 Roy A. Harrisville III, The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul: In the Footsteps of Abraham (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 84–85.
25 To be clear, in this thesis I am not attempting to demonstrate that Paul was dependent on Philo. I am interested in discussing similarities and differences between their appropriations of the Abraham story.
While looking at what similarities do exist between the two authors (their emphasis upon and praise of Abraham, his faith, Abraham as progenitor of the Hebrew race, etc.) it becomes apparent that the differences (concerning the law, righteousness, the concept of faith etc.) make it impossible for one to posit any dependence of St. Paul upon Philo for the former’s use and portrayal of Abraham.26

In other words, it is the fact that Philo describes faith as the goal of life (and therefore as virtue) that separates his portrait from Paul’s. Francis Watson draws a similar conclusion in his book Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith. Here, he points out that Philo, in his book De Abrahamo describes Abraham as a man of piety and that it is “this quality – ‘the highest and greatest of virtues’ – that he seeks to uncover in the various episodes from Abraham’s life discussed in the main body of the treatise.”27 Watson points out that “like Paul, Philo regards the statement about Abraham’s faith in Genesis 15:6 as the key to his entire life.”28 However, this fact does not wipe out the importance of the differences that do exist between their respective accounts of Abraham, for

Philo finds in Genesis 15.6 a general statement about Abraham’s entire life: ‘Abraham believed in God’, God was the object of his constant trust. But Paul claims that Genesis 15.6 speaks only of a single defining moment in Abraham’s life, when he gave credence to the specific divine promise, ‘Thus shall your seed be’ (v.5): it is this act of credence that constitutes Abraham’s righteousness before God. . . . If we ask who Abraham is apart from the promise, Paul’s answer is simply that he belongs to the company of the ‘ungodly’, whom God justifies and whose sins are therefore forgiven (Rom 4:5–8). In opposition to all eloquent eulogizing of his virtues, Abraham is understood as an unremarkable figure, who becomes remarkable only as the object of a divine promise that insistently reshapes his life by setting it in the light of the world’s eschatological future.29

Hence, Zeller, Harrisville and Watson stand united in defining Abraham’s faith as recounted by Paul as different from Abraham’s faith as recounted by Philo, because Philo describes Abraham’s faith as the highest and greatest of virtues. A few years later, Benjamin Schliesser reached a similar conclusion. In his treatment of Abraham’s faith in Romans, he points out that “the frequency of the stem πιστ- in Philo and the fact that he appeals to Abraham when talking about faith places him formally alongside Paul;” nevertheless he concludes that “despite some parallel

26 Harrisville, The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul, 88.
27 Francis Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 244.
28 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 250.
29 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 252.
ideas, the points of contact between Paul and Philo are rare.”30 This is due to the fact that Philo describes Abraham “as striving for the life of a noble Alexandrian Jew, having high societal, intellectual and moral aspirations.”31 Schliesser suggests that “Philo’s intellectualism and individualism his notion of achievement, the reduction to the psyche, and the placing of faith at the end of one’s relationship with God mark the most profound divergences between the two theologians.”32 In a footnote the nature of the divergence between Philo and Paul is further clarified:

One interesting passage should be noted in addition: Philo counters the claim of an interlocutor arguing that even the most unjust and impious (ἀδικωτάτος καὶ ἀσεβέστατος) would believe God’s word and declares that faith is the most perfect of virtues (Her 90–91). Reversing this thought, Paul depicts Abraham precisely as one who was in the realm of ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία (Rom 1:18; 4:5) and who escaped through faith – not through virtuous faith, but through faith in the God who justifies the ungodly.33

Two years later, Karl Olav Sandnes, in his book on the significance of education in ancient philosophy and theology, also stressed the difference between Philo’s intellectualism and Paul’s theology. Sandnes does not focus narrowly on comparing Philo’s and Paul’s appropriation of the Abraham story, but he uses Philo’s interpretation of the Abraham story as a stepping stone to a comparison of some fundamental aspects of Philo’s and Paul’s theology. Here, it is Philo’s portrait of Abraham as a figure who is perfected through teaching, – that is, as a figure who progressed from the encyclical studies to philosophy and virtue34 – that gives rise to his clarification of the differences between Philo and Paul. Sandnes concludes that

Philo includes encyclical studies in a sequential pattern incompatible with Paul. According to Philo, the teacher marks the beginning of προκοπή leading ἐπ᾽ ἄκρον τελειότητα. The latter is, however, only given by God; it is revealed wisdom (Fug. 172–73, 213). Philo here marks, in an incipient way, an awareness of a potential problem in addressing wisdom in sequential terms. But this never does come to fruition in Philo’s writings; he remains within a propaedeutic pattern. Paul turns the whole thing around; the propaedeutic argument, with its

---

implied sequential pattern of wisdom progressing toward Christian faith as its peak, is irreconcilable with Paul’s worldview.\textsuperscript{35}

Sandnes’ book clarifies a substantial difference between Philo’s and Paul’s portrait of Abraham, insofar as Philo describes Abrahamic faith as something that is embedded in a propaedeutic pattern. This is related to the fact that Philo regards true faith as the goal of life whereas Paul seems to associate faith with the beginning (Gal 3:1–5). The final work in this survey of the literature is John Barclay’s recent book, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, in which, like Wan, he draws attention to a similarity between the \textit{manner} in which Philo and Paul make use of the Abraham story. He clarifies that Philo highlights the significance of Abraham in characterizing the election of Israel and in representing the primordial journey toward the truth about God and the paradigmatic migration to virtue. Abraham is the teachable soul whose movement toward the truth about God and virtue is both intellectual and moral, and it is this movement that “made Abraham the father of Israel and the paradigm of proselytes: he is both founding father and model, because he begins the story with the precise characteristics in which it will continue.”\textsuperscript{36} Paul’s configuration is “very different” but nevertheless comparable to Philo’s, insofar as “here, too, there is no need to choose between his originating and his exemplary functions: Abraham is the father of Jews and Gentiles alike exactly in the way in which he and his offspring were constituted as bearers of the promise.”\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, Paul describes justification as being of faith, because when it comes to justification all human capital is disregarded, since

justification by faith marks both the goal (the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews) and the means (the disregard of the normal tokens of value). The programmatic Abraham story encapsulates both this means (through faith 4:1–8) and this goal (Jew and Gentile alike, 4:9–12). . . . The non-distinction between Jew and Gentile in faith makes sense for Paul not by a political principle of ‘equal access,’ nor merely by reference to the ‘many nations’ promised in the Abrahamic texts (cited later, in 4:17–18). It is explicable because the Abrahamic story is fulfilled as it began: in faith-dependence upon a divine decision irrespective of inherent human worth.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Sandnes, \textit{The Challenge of Homer}, 269–270.
\textsuperscript{37} Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 482.
\textsuperscript{38} Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 482–483.
Thus, Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story have in common that Abraham begins his journey with the precise characteristics with which he will continue. But how would Abraham’s faith-dependence upon a divine decision irrespective of inherent human worth then stand out from Abraham’s trust in God as recounted by Philo – apart from the fact that God values worth differently in Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the story of Abraham? This question seems to be worth asking if both authors assume that Abrahamic faith is something that cannot be isolated from God’s gift of the Spirit.

It should be evident from the survey given above that comparing Paul’s and Philo’s view of Abraham is not a novel idea. From the literature treated here, it evident that there are at least two aspects that scholars draw attention to when they want to describe how Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story stand out from one another, namely (a) Paul’s Christological interpretation of the Abrahamic promises and (b) Philo’s identification of faith with virtue. However, it may be worth asking whether these issues entitle scholars to characterize Paul and Philo as thinkers that belong to two entirely different categories and whether it is warranted to assume that the Spirit assumes entirely different roles in their respective schemata. Wan points out that Philo’s “Wisdom of God” should not be equated simplistically and haphazardly with Paul’s “Spirit”, as if they were just different titles for the same figure (cf. quote above). This is true, of course, insofar as no scholar wants to equate terms in a simplistic and haphazard manner. However, it is also a well-known fact that in the Hebrew Scriptures the Spirit of God is often associated with wisdom.39 In addition, Paul’s argument in Rom 8 makes it clear that he describes God’s gift of the Spirit as something that gives rise to a particular way of thinking (φρονέω) or a particular mindset (φρόνημα). Moreover, in a recent study, Volker Rabens has argued that Philo and Paul make use of the term υἱοθεσία in a comparable way. He points out that “while the very term υἱοθεσία is generally not used in Jewish literature, Philo is nonetheless a precursor of Paul in employing the concept metaphorically in De Sobrietate 55–56.”40 This Philonic text is about Abraham and Rabens clarifies its meaning in the following way:

39 See, for example, John R. Levison, Filled with the Spirit (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 34–86.
40 Volker Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God,” 296.
Being adopted (εἰσποιητός) is here seen as an equivalent to being a friend of God in whom he confides his thoughts and (secret) plans. God has become a father to Abraham, and Abraham enjoys the privileges of being his only son who shares in all God’s riches and goods (56). This state of being adopted as a son is presented as one of extreme happiness, and the human reaction is praise and worship of the heavenly Father (58). . . . We thus find in Philo the key elements of Paul’s argument in Romans 8:12–17: adoption and sonship of God, an intimate relationship with God, religious-ethical transformation, and the activity of the Spirit.  

Rabens’ study focuses primarily on describing the relationship between Philo’s work and 2 Cor 3:18. Nevertheless, it is on the basis of the parallels between Sobr. 55–56 and Rom 8:12–17 that he claims that “our thesis that Philo’s mystical theology provides a religious context for Paul’s presentation of the work of πνεῦμα in believers hence finds support when we look at the connection of filial intimacy, adoption, and the Spirit in both authors.”  Whether or not this is a valid conclusion cannot be settled here. However, it should be stressed that Rabens’ observation reveals that Philo and Paul share in common the fact that they make use of the term ιοθεσία in contexts where they are not only concerned with clarifying the meaning of the Abraham story (insofar as Gal 4:5–6 is a parallel text to Rom 8:15–16 and thus a part of the passages in Galatians where Paul clarifies what it means to be child of Abraham), but also with describing some aspect of religious-ethical transformation.

Theresa Morgan has recently argued that in the New Testament, Christian faith above all refers to relationships of trust between humans and God. In a comment on how the theme of trust has been addressed by the social sciences, she makes an interesting observation:

In principle, scholarship on trust distinguishes between trust as an emotion, a cognitive process, an action, a relationship, and an aspect of community, but in practice, theories tend to involve more than one aspect of it; in particular, it is hard to frame a sociological theory of trust without reference to individuals and the way they

---

41 Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God,” 297.
42 Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God,” 297.
43 Rabens specifies his views of the relationship between Philo and Paul in the following way: “The claim of this essay is not that the former is necessarily dependent on the latter. Nonetheless, together with other strands of Jewish-Hellenistic and Greco-Roman literature, the writings of Philo functioned as intertexts that formed part of the horizon of interpretation of Paul and his readers” (Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God,” 295). And Rabens claims that “methodologically speaking, one needs to oscillate between looking at Paul and at the potential religious contexts of his theology in order to find out whether he may have adopted one strand in particular. In this manner one avoids projecting the concepts of one particular philosophy on Paul on the one hand, and interpreting Paul in isolation from his historical context on the other hand” (ibid., 295 note 9).
think and feel. What modern scholars struggle to distinguish, Greek, Roman, Jewish and Early Christian sources rarely attempt to. We shall find *pistis*, *fides*, and their cognates constantly treated as simultaneously cognitive and affective, active and relational, and this will be a significant factor in the investigation of *pistis/fides* among all these groups.44

In other words, ancient writers often included more than one aspect in their descriptions of human faith. One may wonder what this implies for Paul’s description of Abraham’s faith as given in Rom 4. In addition, Morgan points out that “despite its traditional identification as one of the three ‘theological virtues’, the ethical aspects of *pistis* tend to be overlooked both in studies of *pistis* and in studies of ethics in the New Testament, where *pistis* is usually treated as one of the foundations of Christian life rather than as a moral issue on a par, for instance with chastity or the swearing of oaths.”45 One may thus wonder how wide the gap between the ethical faith of Philo’s Abraham and the Pauline trust in the one who justifies the ungodly really is. Nevertheless, care is still needed. It may be simplistic to assume that ethics can be equated with virtue. The concept of virtue may contain connotations that are not necessarily a part of the concept of Paul’s views on ethics, insofar as virtue in Philo’s portrait of Abraham is closely associated with philosophy.

Sandnes has clarified some of the ways in which Paul may be described as engaging the ancient discourse on virtue. In his book *The Challenge of Homer*, Sandnes engages the question of the extent to which there is a propaedeutic logic incorporated in Paul’s argument in Galatians, specifically in Paul’s description of the law as a παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:24. Even though Sandnes’ conclusion is negative, he ultimately describes Paul as a figure whose argument is to some extent determined by ancient presuppositions about the way virtue is achieved. Sandnes argues:

> In Gal. 5–6 Paul argues that virtue is achieved not by education, but by the Spirit. Virtue is mediated independently of both Law and education. Paul thus speaks from within the virtue-system, but alters it considerably; virtue is not taught, but inculcated by God. In the ancient virtue-system, virtue was a characteristic of the philosopher, ‘an activity engaged in by the very few who belonged to the leisure classes of society’. This is not so with the Spirit-generated virtues of which Paul speaks; they apply to Jews and Gentiles, male and female, masters and slaves all alike (Gal. 3.28; cf. 1 Cor. 12.13). The question of encyclical studies as a

---

preparation for virtue is not raised in Galatians, but appears implicitly in Gal. 5–6: Virtue has no human preparation.46

This description of Paul as a figure who speaks within the virtue-system but who also alters it considerably is both interesting and promising. If Paul should be described as a figure who speaks from within the virtue system, could it then not be that this fact has left its mark on his interaction with the Abraham story? The answer to that question depends much on how he reads the Abraham story, on how he draws a connection between the Abraham story and God’s gift of the Spirit and on how he describes the role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe.

Finally, it might be relevant to draw attention to Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s warning against referring to Paul’s apocalyptic convictions as something that precludes the idea that his thinking was shaped by other traditions as well. Engberg-Pedersen claims that it makes good sense to describe the Pauline concept of pneuma as an apocalyptic one, and that Paul’s thought thus becomes thoroughly apocalyptic. However, he also points out that we should reject the suggestion that “an ‘apocalyptic’ world-view was – almost by theological definition – different in type from any other world-view in the ancient world, whether ‘scientific’, ‘philosophical’, ‘magical’, or something else.”47 He therefore encourages “us” to “keep our minds open for any kind of comparison with Paul’s many contexts that may help us ascertain what his world actually looked like.”48 This may also encourage us to proceed here with a comparison of Philo and Paul.

Thus, in brief, this study takes as its starting point the fact that both Philo and Paul seem to associate the Abrahamic promises with God’s gift of the Spirit. It is on this background that I want to examine (a) how they describe the gift of the Spirit as being related to the Abraham story and (b) what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith. I want to suggest that such a comparison may cast light not only upon their

46 Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 262.
47 Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9. For instance, Paul’s description of the Spirit is clearly related to the apocalyptic theme of the two ages, insofar as he describes the gift of the Spirit as a “down payment” of the world to come (2 Cor 1:22).
respective readings of the Abraham story but also upon the way their respective philosophies/theologies relate to one another on a more general level.

The fact that this thesis is concerned with accounting for the role that the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe, suggests that it may benefit from an introduction to a recent discussion concerning the way divine and human agency were related to one another by ancient writers in the Second Temple period. This discussion can provide us with some useful concepts that may enable us to clarify what is at stake in Philo’s and Paul’s accounts of the lives that are determined by the gift of the Spirit.

1.3 Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment

As this study intends to discuss what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe, it may be useful to begin with some clarifying remarks regarding Philo’s and Paul’s accounts of the Spirit. Philo description of the Spirit is a part of his description of the divine powers and should be elucidated in light of the concept of the Logos. Philo represents a tradition “where the theological function of the powers . . . is that of making possible God’s action upon the world (creation) and in the world (providence) without compromising His transcendence.”49 Philo has a name for some (but not all) of God’s powers and it should be noted that “the various powers are closely linked among themselves so as to form a single fabric” and that “the complex of powers, in a general way, is included within the ‘super-power’, the Logos.”50 Hence, God’s extension of his powers appears as an aspect of the way God operates in the cosmos through the Logos. Philo presumes not only that God has given his Spirit to humans in creation, but also that humans may experience the Spirit as the prophetic Spirit in subsequent moments of inspiration. However, these subsequent moments of inspiration are moments in which humans are exposed to inspiration of the Logos, for which reason these subsequent moments of inspiration may be described as further extensions of the same power already mediated to humans in creation. The implications of this description of God’s gift of the spirit cannot be elucidated here. However, these brief introductory remarks are sufficient to give rise to the question of how Philo’s and

50 Radice, “Philo’s Theology and Theory of Creation,” 141.
Paul’s respective accounts of the nature of God’s gift of the Spirit may be compared, when Philo and Paul do not make us of the same conceptual framework.

The fact that the gift of the Spirit appears as a gift that bridges the gap between the divine and the mundane world suggests that their respective accounts may be elucidated from the perspective of recent discussions of how divine and human agency were related to one another in texts originating in Second Temple Judaism. This is so not least since these discussions offer a conceptual framework that enables students of Second Temple Judaism to compare different bodies of texts without projecting the concepts of one kind of literature on another. The question of the configuration of the relationship between divine and human agency in Paul and other contemporary writings was initially addressed by a number of studies published in an anthology titled *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*. A number of studies in this volume have facets in common with multiple studies published in its aftermath, in that they emphasize that Paul describes godly actions as genuine human actions, i.e., that human agency is not something that is overruled by the divine ditto. Engberg-Pedersen has, for example, stressed that in Paul’s writings, divine agency is concerned with generating a proper understanding of God in believers. It is on this basis that he identifies an overlap between divine and human agency in Paul, arguing that

the kind of knowledge we are talking about may be said both to be divinely generated and also – as a piece of genuine understanding – to be distinctly and intimately one’s own, without this requiring that it has also been

---

humanly generated. It is this special feature of knowledge underlying individual action and responsibility that explains why one may in their case speak of an overlap between divine and human agency. The human act of understanding is both one’s own and also one that meets God who has brought it about.\footnote{Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self, 130.}

It is important to note that the notion of overlap is not employed to obliterate a notion of human agency. To the contrary, the notion of overlap means that “God is responsible, but human beings are responsible too . . . Human beings are responsible because they themselves also act.”\footnote{Engberg-Petersen, “Self-sufficiency and Power,” 133.}

John Barclay makes use of the concept of “dual agency” in his description of how divine and human agency relate to one another in the letters of Paul, but he also stresses that this concept must be properly defined, for

\begin{quote}
It appears that human agency is the necessary expression of the life of the Spirit, and certainly not its antithesis; the two are not mutually exclusive as if in some zero-sum calculation. . . . Although in one sense we may speak properly of a ‘dual agency’, in non-exclusive relation, this would be inadequately expressed as the co-operation or conjunction of two agents, or as the relationship of gift and response, if it is thereby forgotten that the ‘response’ continues to be activated by grace, and the believers’ agency embedded within that of the Spirit. . . . Paul’s central theology of participation requires that human agency is reconceived without being abandoned, the self not merely relocated but reconstituted by its absorption within the non-coercive power of grace.\footnote{Barclay, “By the Grace of God I am What I am’: Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul,” 156.}
\end{quote}

I do not intend to say that there are no points of divergence between Engberg-Petersen and Barclay on these matters. I only want to point out that they both emphasize that divine agency should not be regarded as something that obliterates human agency. In his study \textit{Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism}, Kyle Wells does not use the language of overlap between divine and human agency, but he does refer to a number of passages in which Paul makes “divine and human agents effectively the subjects of the same act” and so he points out that “when we cry ‘abba’, the Spirit bears witness (Rom 8:15–16), and cries ‘abba’ (Gal 4:6). Divine and human agencies coincide in these effects.”\footnote{Wells, \textit{Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism}, 298. Wells also notes “the function of 1 Corinthians 15:10 and Galatians 2:19–20 is not to deny human agency, but to rule out the notion of autonomy, as well as to secure God’s agency as the foundation for Christian lives. But in Paul’s mind the agency of the Spirit reinforces rather than}
Body of Christ has stressed the importance of recognizing that Paul is speaking within what Miller describes as a classical account of agency. This implies that Paul’s argument in Rom 5–8 presumes “(1) a conception of human nature as it is, (2) a conception of human nature as it could be, and (3) imperatives coupled with virtues enabling one to get from the former to the latter.” Miller argues that in Paul, divine and human agency coexist in an essentially non-contrastive relationship. It is on this basis that he claims that “the fundamental way that Paul characterizes the relation of the Spirit to our agency is that of ‘helping,’” and that “Paul emphasizes . . . the duality of agency involved in getting to the good: both God and the human actor are involved.”

Most of these studies interact in one way or another with Kathryn Tanner’s work on God and Creation. A brief introduction to that work may be helpful to clarify how it is possible to maintain the position that divine agency does not necessarily obliterate human agency. Kathryn Tanner has sketched “a kind of typology of Greek ways of talking about the transcendence of divinity and its relation to the non-divine.” She points out that in Greek and Roman religion, and particularly in Greek philosophy, divinity refers to a kind of being distinct from others within the matrix of the same cosmos. Divinity is characterized as the most powerful, self-sufficient and unchanging being among the beings in the cosmos but is also described as

a distinct sort of being differentiated from others, like any other kind, within the same spectrum of being making up the cosmos . . . it is the sort of thing which can be said to be shared generically with specifying differences of degree. Divinity is attributed univocally, in other words, to the realm of Ideas, the World-soul of the Timaeus, celestial spheres and even human souls in so far as they are all characterized by rationality, permanence and stability in varying degrees of purity.

John Barclay has given the following explanation of how divine and human agency relate to one another when divinity is described as a sort of thing that is shared and hence related to human

---

58 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 35.
agency by kinship: “God and humanity are here within the same spectrum of being, and the agency of one is shared with the other, rather than standing in competition against it” and “although God may be said to be transcendent in a limited way – in superior power or range – the two agencies are in key respects equal and akin, since human agency is a portion of that of God.”

It is therefore what humans share with God that makes them effective as agents.

However, this is not the only way divinity is described in Greek and Roman religion and philosophy, for “in contrast to univocal characterization of divinity as a shared kind, divinity in Greek thought is often set off oppositionally, as a realm of eternal, changeless intelligibility, over and against the world as a whole characterized by the contrary predicates of becoming, uncertainty and instability.” This kind of thinking is represented in Plato’s theory of transcendent forms, and Tanner points out that

this contrastive manner of specifying divinity tends to become spatialized in Aristotle and in the movement historians call Middle Platonism: divinity is localized as First or Primary Being within a cosmological hierarchy and characterized in an exclusive way that sets it apart from everything else. Divinity and the rest of the world taken as a whole are viewed as logical contraries within a single spectrum; this forces an a priori separation of the two. . . . God must be insulated by a multiplication of intervening entities from the defilement that a direct relation with the non-divine would bring.

Hence, divine and human agency must be regarded as mutually exclusive categories. There is, however, also a third way of accounting for the transcendence of divinity and thus for the way divine and human agency relate to one another. Tanner describes this third way as something that was developed by Plotinus with the help of Plato’s description of the Good as given in his book The Republic. Here, divinity is described as something that is “the unparticipated ground of all Being and Knowing beyond any distinction between Being and Becoming, Pure Forms and the physical world.” The thought is that direct contrasts are helpful for distinguishing beings within the world.

---

64 Tanner, God and Creation, 40.
65 Tanner, God and Creation, 41–42.
66 Tanner, God and Creation, 42.
as we know it, but that the nature of God’s transcendence demands that “God must transcend that sort of characterization, too.”67 This kind of theological discourse avoids describing divinity as something that is related to human agency by kinship, – for in that case, God is not really transcendent –, just as it avoids making a simple contrast between divine and non-divine beings, for in that case, God’s transcendence is not sufficiently radicalized. The fact that God is not defined in contrast to this world ensures, however, that there is room for a notion of divine involvement with the world.

Divine involvement with the world need be neither partial, nor mediate, or simply formative: if divinity is not characterized by contrast with any sort of being, it may be the immediate source of being of every sort. Such an extreme of divine involvement requires, one could say, an extreme of divine transcendence. A contrastive definition is not radical enough to allow a direct creative involvement of God with the world in its entirety. A contrastive definition does not work through the implications of divine transcendence to the end: a God who transcends the world must also . . . transcend the distinctions by contrast appropriate there.68

One may therefore refer to God as the cause of human contingency, and hence “it is right and proper for a creature to claim action and being as his own,”69 insofar as divine and human agency do not compete with each other and insofar as there is no zero-sum cooperation between divine and human agencies. Or, in the words of Barclay, “God’s sovereignty does not limit or reduce human freedom, but is precisely what grounds and enables it.”70 However, the fact that God is radically transcendent means that he is also “radically distinct from human agency and not an agent within the same order of being or in the same causal nexus.”71

Here I want to emphasize that both the kind of discourse that defines divinity as something that is related to human agency by kinship and the kind of discourse that describes divinity in non-contrastive terms (and thus stresses the radicalism of God’s transcendence) can refer to God as the source of genuine human action. Both kinds of discourse refer to a divinity as a distinct sort of being differentiated from others and both maintain a notion of divine transcendence, even if this

67 Tanner, God and Creation, 42.
68 Tanner, God and Creation, 46.
must be defined as limited when God is described as a shared kind within the matrix of the same cosmos. When divine and human agency are related to one another by kinship it is what humans share with God that makes them effective as human agents,\textsuperscript{72} and hence ancient philosophers could argue that something is “up to us” precisely because “we” have something in common with God.\textsuperscript{73} Therefore, it must be maintained that the notion of divinity as a shared kind was not meant to undermine the notion of human freedom. The same goes for the kind of discourse that describes God’s transcendence in non-contrastive terms. Here, divine agency is similarly described as the source of human freedom. Hence, both discourses seek to maintain a meaningful concept of genuine human agency. This is true even if from an etic perspective it is possible to criticize the kind of discourse that describes divinity as a shared kind for not really being able to maintain an actual distinction between God and humanity.\textsuperscript{74}

In the next chapter, I will describe how Philo’s reading of the Abraham story will be engaged in this thesis. There are fewer texts to choose from in Paul’s letters. I will focus my attention on the arguments in Gal and Rom in which his reading of the Abraham story plays an important role and in which he is engaged in clarifying the role the Spirit assumes in Abraham’s children (3:29) or in those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith (Rom 4:12). Hence, I will focus my attention on (a) Gal 2:15–4:11 and 4:21–31 because, in these arguments, Paul not only describes the Spirit

\textsuperscript{73} Engberg-Pedersen defines the notion of the things “up to us” in the following way: “The notion [of the things up to us] played a crucial role in Greek moral philosophy from at least Aristotle onward as a way of capturing the basic perspective within which the moral philosophers spoke of virtue and vice, of praise and blame, of a self who deliberates, decides, acts, and is formed in his or her character in accordance with those other things, and finally of the self as responsible (for his or her deliberations and so forth). At the risk of being misunderstood, we may speak of a “self-determining self,” who by the use of the faculty of reason (viewed as formal capacity) comes to see and understand things and to feel and act in accordance with this. . . . Any page in the ethical treatises of Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicurus, the Academics, or the Sceptics presupposes it” (Engberg-Pedersen, “The Logic of Action in Paul,” 239).

\textsuperscript{74} Philip Clayton has drawn attention to an inherent problem in Platonism and Neo-platonism. He points to the centrality of the concept of participation in Platonic and Neo-platonic accounts of the relationship between God and the world. In this regard Clayton asserts: “The concept of participation is called on to maintain the connection of each individual with the One and to motivate its striving for reunification with the One; but it is also used in the context of explaining the independent existence of each thing, to the extent that it really exists . . . But whereas its usefulness for the first two tasks is beyond dispute, participation obviously does not answer the question of what it is that participates and how it is different from its source; hence it is useless for the third” (Philip Clayton, The Problem of God in Modern Thought [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000], 164). It is on this basis that Clayton points out that “there is a certain tendency in Plato . . . for the participator to disappear into unity with the form in which it participates” and it is in that connection that Clayton draws attention to “the tendency toward pantheism that is inherent in the concept” (ibid.: 164).
as the content of God’s promise to Abraham but also coordinates his views of the gift of the Spirit with his description of the children of Abraham, and on (b) Paul’s description of Abraham’s faith as given in Rom 4 as well as on accounting for the role that the Spirit assumes in the life of those who believe, as this is described in Rom 5–8.
Chapter 2. Philo’s Interpretation of Gen 15:6 and an Outline of the Part of This Study That Deals with Philo

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief sketch of Philo’s interpretation of Gen 15:6 (2.2), because this is a helpful way of sketching some fundamental aspects of Philo’s interpretation of the Abraham story. In a way, this is a means of beginning at the end. Philo describes the faith of Abraham attested in Gen 15:6 as Abraham’s reward for his quest for God. Abraham’s faith is evidence for his achievement of the queen of virtues, that is, for his reaching the goal of his life. Section 2.3 focuses on clarifying some of the underlying presuppositions that determines the proposed reading of Philo’s texts (2.3)

2.2 Philo’s Reading of Gen 15:6 – God’s Acknowledgement of Abraham’s Righteousness

It is worthwhile to begin with an introduction to Philo’s interpretation of Gen 15:6, as it can cast light on some of the fundamental convictions that determine Philo’s portrait of both Abraham and God. David M. Hay has identified six meanings of πίστις in Philo’s writings, namely pledge, evidence, loyalty, trust, belief and a minor category named other.75 Hay stresses that if pledge and evidence are combined “under an umbrella phrase like ‘objective ground for subjective faith,’ we have ninety-three cases or 59.6 per cent of all Philo’s uses of pistis.”76 However, faith as personal trust in God is, in Philo’s writings, particularly related to the faith of Abraham that is attested in Gen 15:6.77 God is described as the one who is faithful (Leg. 3. 204, Sacr. 93) and human faithfulness in religious matters is accordingly grounded in God’s faithfulness and trustworthiness (Abr. 273). It thus makes sense to trust in God, because he is the faithful and thus the trustworthy

77 Hay, “Pistis as ‘Ground for Faith’,” 464 note 11; see also Lindsay, Josephus and Faith, 61.
one. Below, I will draw attention to four aspects of Philo’s description of Abraham’s faith which all contribute to clarifying Philo’s understanding of Abraham’s faith and the way that faith and righteousness (virtue) are correlated in Philo’s presentation. It should be noted that the most extensive account of Abraham’s faith is given in Abr. 262–276. These passages refer to the literal Abraham and, as Samuel Sandmel has clarified, “the literal Abraham is depicted as perfected” whereas “the allegorical Abraham is the record of the process through which Abraham becomes the man of perfect piety and virtue.” The descriptions of Abraham’s faith as the queen of virtues that are given in reference to Gen 15:6 in Abr. 270 and Virt. 216, 218 reflect, in other words, the stage in Abraham’s development where he has received his new name – as recounted in Gen 17:5. This is the stage at which Abraham has become “completely transformed into the Sage, in possession of the archetypal virtue” and where “Abraham’s faith in God, the mark of his piety, is firmly established.” Philo’s references to Abraham’s faith in the allegorical commentaries do not necessarily refer to the same conceptualizations as do his references in Abr. and Virt. However, Abraham’s faith is consistently described as a mark of righteousness, and as such, as a mark of virtue. There are therefore many parallels between the faith ascribed to the allegorical Abraham and the faith ascribed to the literal Abraham. With this clarification in mind, I want to draw attention to four aspects of Philo’s description of Abraham’s faith, all of which help clarify Philo’s understanding of Abraham’s faith and the way that faith and righteousness are correlated in his presentation.

78 Philo describes Abraham’s faith in relation to Gen 15:6 in Abr. 262, 268, 273; Virt. 216, 218; Praem. 27; Leg. 3.228; Migr. 43–44; Her. 90–95; Mut. 177, 186, Deus. 4. No account of Gen 15:6 is given in the commentary series Quaestiones et Solutiones. In this series Philo presents his interpretation of Gen 2:4–28:9 and Exod 6:2–30:10 using the style of questions and answers. The series originally comprised 12 books, but only 10 have been preserved in an Armenian translation. Unfortunately, the commentaries given on Gen 11:26–15:6 have been lost. Quaestiones et Solutiones does, however, reveal some traits of Abraham’s faith, since it is affirmed that Abraham’s faith is a “trust in God in accordance with the word which He has earlier spoken” (QG 3.2), in QG 3:58 Philo points out that Abraham’s faith is “not ambiguous but is unhesitating, and partakes of modesty and reverence,” and in QG 4:17 Abraham is described as being protected from reprobation “by an unswerving and inflexible conviction of faith, for to him who has faith in God all uncertainty is alien.” All quotations from Quaestiones et Solutiones used in this thesis are taken from Philo, QG (Ralph Marcus, LCL).

79 The parts of De Abrahamo that are not devoted to allegorical exegesis are the primary source of the literal Abraham, but see also the summary of Abraham’s life given in Virt. 211–220. See Samuel Sandmel, Philo’s Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1971), 104–105.

80 Sandmel, Philo’s Place in Judaism, 141.

81 Sandmel, Philo’s Place in Judaism, 170.

82 For example, the literal Abraham lives in conformity with nature (Abr. 4–6, 275–276), but so does the allegorical Abraham (Her. 95).
Firstly, I want to stress that Philo interprets the phrase from Gen 15:6 ΛΧ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην as evidence of God’s acknowledgment of Abraham’s righteousness. In Leg. 3.228, Philo renders Gen 15:6 in the following words: “Abraham surely believed in God and was considered as righteous” (‘Αβραάμ γε τοι ἐπίστευσε τῷ θεῷ καὶ δίκαιος ἐνομίσθη). There is no room in Philo’s thinking to establish a contrast or tension of any kind between Abraham’s actual righteousness and God’s acknowledgement of Abraham’s righteousness. If Abraham had not actually been righteous, God would never have regarded him as such. Philo is committed to the biblical doctrine of divine impartiality and he finds evidence of God’s impartiality in God’s commitment to the principle of equality, which he describes as the flip side of God’s commitment to justice. God created the world in accordance with the principle of equality (Her. 129–166) and “he judged in just the same way about the little and the great, as Moses says, when he gave birth and formed each thing” (Her. 157). The God who loves justice (ὁ φιλοδίκαιος θεός) detests and hates injustice (ἀδικίαν βδελύττεται καὶ μεμίσηκε), the cause of strife and evil (στάσεως καὶ κακῶν ἀρχήν) (Her. 163) and the Lawgiver (Moses) thus never fails to welcome “equality, the nurse of justice” (ἰσότητα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τροφὸν) (Her. 163). Elaborating on this theme, Philo refers to four virtues that are particularly prominent for a legislator, namely the love of humanity (τὸ φιλάνθρωπον), the love of justice (τὸ φιλοδίκαιον), the love of goodness (τὸ φιλάγαθον) and the hatred of evil (τὸ μισοπόνηρον) (Mos. 2.9). Justice thus bids a legislator to honor equality and to judge each person in accordance with his worth/due (κατ’ αξίαν) (Mos. 2.9).

Hence, God considered Abraham to be righteous, because he truly was righteous. This is exemplified in Philo’s interpretation of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Philo calls this the greatest of Abraham’s actions (Abr. 167) and sees this action as an act of faith, for Philo describes the oath given by God to Abraham according to Gen 22:18 as an oath given in response to Abraham’s faith (Abr. 273). It is thus not surprising that Philo refers to the phrase “ἐπίστευσε τῷ
θεός” of Gen 15:6 as a little thing to be said, but a very big thing to be confirmed in action (Abr. 262). Philo sees Abraham’s action as an expression of Abraham’s faith in God and thus of Abraham’s righteousness. It is thus entirely appropriate that Abraham’s faith in God was counted to him for righteousness, for nothing is more just than to put one’s absolute trust in God (Her. 94). Faith in God is thus equivalent to righteousness and righteousness is equivalent to a life lived in conformity with nature (Her. 94). This is evidently true and it only appears as a paradox to those without faith.86 It is thus not surprising that Philo also describes Abraham as a man who lived in accordance with nature (Abr. 4–6, 275–276). It is as a consequence completely fitting that God regarded Abraham as righteous, for the believing Abraham was truly a righteous person.

Secondly it should be mentioned that Philo describes Abraham’s faith as “the queen of virtues” (Abr. 270; Virt. 216). This is Philo’s way of referring to Abraham’s faith as a super-virtue, which reflects Philo’s conviction that Abraham possessed generic virtue insofar as faith is the super-virtue that encompasses the rest of the virtues.87 In the same vein, Philo refers to Abraham’s faith as “the inheritance of happiness” (κλῆρος εὐδαιμονίας) (Abr. 268), which again corresponds to his description of Abraham’s faith as a divine reward (Praem. 27). Faith is the reward for and the result of Abraham’s pursuit of the virtue he ultimately gained through teaching. Abraham’s inheritance of happiness represents Abraham’s achievement of the ultimate goal of his life.88 Philo describes this as a result of Abraham’s transition from falsely considering the heaven and the universe as gods to firmly believing in the existence and providence of the one and true God (Virt. 214–216). This journey towards and achievement of a true understanding of God and the world makes Abraham the first and paradigmatic proselyte (Virt. 219).

86 Cf. Her. 95: τὸ δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ἀκόλουθον τούτο τῇ φύσει παράδοξον ἐνομίσθη διάτην τῶν πολλῶν ἀπιστίαν ἡμῶν.
87 Philo’s designation of one particular virtue as the leader that encompasses the rest of the virtues reflects a practice known from Plato and Aristotle, who respectively describe knowledge (ἐπιστημή) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) as the epitome of all the virtues; for references see Naomi G. Cohen, “The Greek Virtues and the Mosaic Laws in Philo,” SPhipho 5 (1993): 9–19. Cohen refers to ἡ θεοσεβεία as the virtue that Philo “again and again describes as being the queen of the virtues” (Ibid., 18); for examples, see Opif. 154; Fug. 150; Abr. 114; Spec. 4.134; Virt. 186. That Philo refers to both piety and faith as super-virtues is confirmed from Decal. 52 and Virt. 216. The fact that Philo apparently can juxtapose a cognitive concept like faith with the concept of piety, which was often defined as knowledge of the service of the gods, reflects his conviction that piety involves thinking properly about God. For this reason, he defines piety in sharp contrast to false accounts of God, see e.g. Opif. 170–172. For a helpful introduction to Philo’s view of piety and to how his use of the concept stands out from the way it was used in Greek philosophy, see Gregory E. Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues: Piety in Philo of Alexandria,” SPhipho A 18 (2006): 103–123.
88 For the notion of εὐδαιμονία as the goal of life in Greek philosophy, see Julia Annas, The Morality of Happiness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 42–46.
Thirdly, I want to stress that Philo describes Abraham’s faith in God as “a work of a celestial understanding” (ολυμπιου ἐργου διανοιας) (Her. 93). This is Philo’s way of stressing the intellectual greatness that underlies Abraham’s faith. Abraham’s unswerving faith in God establishes him as a friend of God (Abr. 273). This is further evidence of the greatness of Abraham’s insight, because the privilege of being a true friend of God is reserved for those who attain the vision of God in its purest form (Abr. 128–129). Abraham is thus – together with Isaac and Jacob – the forefather of the race that manages to see God. The patriarchs represent, in other words, the true Israel, insofar as Israel allegorically represents those who see God (Abr. 56–57). The attainment of the vision of God represents in this way the “topmost of happiness” (ἄκρος εὐδαιμονίας) (Abr. 58) in life. Faith is regarded as the result of the work of a celestial understanding and Philo is thus keen to stress that faith does not rely on dim reasoning and insecure conjectures (Leg. 3.228). It is therefore fully justifiable to contend that “Philo maintains a concept of faith emphasizing an intellectual acknowledgement of God.”

Fourthly, and finally, some attention should be given to Philo’s description of God as the objective cause for Abraham’s faith. In De Migratione Abrahami, Philo consistently characterizes the divine promises as gifts (δωρεαί) (Migr. 53, 70, 86, 106). Philo acknowledges that these gifts come in the form of a promise, but favors the word gift nevertheless. The fact that the gifts are given in the form of a promise is a testimony of Abraham’s faith (Migr. 43), because he thought (νομίσασα) that the things that are not present should be regarded as already present (ήδη παρειναι τα μη παροντα) because of the steadfastness of the one who gives the promise (δια την του υποσχομενου βεβαιοτητα πιστιν) (Migr. 44). A Gift and a promise amount to the same, because

89 The fact that Abraham gained the vision of God in its purest form separates him from souls with lesser gifts. Abraham sees God as the existent one, whereas lesser gifted souls only recognize God as the beneficent or as the governing one (Abr. 124–130). These paragraphs should be read in light of ancient notions of friendship, see Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” JSNT 27.4 (2005), 465–492, 485–489. Philo refers in Post. 13 to the yearning for the vision of God as a yearning for an established faith (βεβαιοτατην πιστην).
90 The educational overtones of this phrase will be clarified further in chapter 3.
91 Both Abr. 58 and Leg. 3.228 are best taken as signaling the difference between gaining indirect knowledge of God based on reasoning and gaining direct knowledge based on a vision or the inspiration of God.
92 Lindsay, Josephus and Faith, 67.
93 I read the phrase δια την του υποσχομενου βεβαιοτητα πιστιν as a reference to the steadfast faithfulness of God. Hence, I follow the translators of the Loeb-edition, pace C. D. Yonge, The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged (New Updated Edition; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 257, who reads the phrase as a reference to Abraham’s faith in the one who gave the promise. Philo finds divine promises in many places in Scripture. As we will see in the
of the one who made the promise. Philo thus sees Abraham’s faith as something that is in sharp contrast to human self-confidence and pride. Hence, in Abr. 263 he rhetorically asks: “for in what else must one trust?” He immediately follows up on this question by dismissing the value of putting one’s trust in authority, honor, wealth, noble birth or good health (Abr. 263). Authority, glory, and honor cannot be trusted, because they are basically unstable (σφαλερόν in Abr. 263 and σφαλερώτατον in Abr. 264), and in Abr. 266, Philo points out that it is not fitting to take pride (μέγα φρονεῖν) in the things of the body, since man is consistently surpassed by the animals when it comes to bodily performance (Abr. 266) and health (Abr. 267), and since even statues and the like can have more beauty than human beings (Abr. 267). Philo thus concludes that only faith in God is a trustworthy and reliable good (μόνον ὅ.AdapterView变速καὶ βέβαιον ἡ πρὸς θεὸν πίστις) (Abr. 268; cf. also Deus. 4). Faith is thus that which causes man to stand firm in a tumultuous world (cf. Conf. 31–32). God is the objective ground for subjective faith and God should thus be regarded as the rational and ultimate reason for Abraham’s faith. Furthermore, trusting in God or trusting in worldly affairs is a matter of either/or, for “the one, who has put his trust in these things, disbelieves in God, while the one, who disbelieves these things, has put his trust in God.”

The conviction that only faith in God is a trustworthy and reliable good is related to the conviction that God is essentially good. Faith is thus the characteristic of the soul that “has placed itself upon the cause of all things, the one who is also able to do all things but who only wills the best.” Faith is basically a confession of faith in the existence, goodness and providence of God. Because faith

next chapter, Sarah’s words to Abraham in Gen 16:2 should be regarded as a divine promise, and the name of Abraham’s brother, Nahor, is similarly described as a divine promise, insofar as it means “rest of light” and insofar that this means that he will receive a share of wisdom (Congr. 44). Similarly, the promise of Isaac is a promise that Abraham will become good by nature (Somn. 1.162). Isaac means “laughter” and Philo claims that it is a synonym of the best of good emotions (ὁ συνώνυμος τῆς ἀριστῆς τῶν εὐπαθειῶν, 131), which means that Abraham will not only become wise but also completely free from sinful passions.

94 ὁ μὲν ἐκεῖνος πεπιστευκὼς ἀπιστεῖ θεῷ, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστῶν ἐκεῖνος πεπιστευκεῖ θεῷ (Abr. 269).
95 ἔφιδρυμένης τῷ πάντων αἰτίῳ καὶ δυναμένου μὲν πάντα, βουλομένου δὲ τὰ ἄριστα (Abr. 268).
96 See also Virt. 216, where Philo relates the notion of God as cause to the notion of divine providence. Philo is fundamentally in alignment with Plato in this understanding of God. Plato insists that only good things can be attributed to God; see Resp. 379a-e. Cf. the words of Cleanthes in Hymn to Zeus 3: “Not a single deed takes place on earth without you, God, nor in the divine celestial sphere nor in the sea, except what bad people do in their folly. But you know how to make the uneven even and to put into order the disorderly; even the unloved is dear to you” (Johan C. Thom, Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus [Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 40). For a helpful account of the significance of this view of God in Philo’s writings, see Orrey W. McFarland, God and Grace in Philo and Paul (NovTSup 164; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 34–36.
is a conviction of divine goodness and providence, faith in God can also take the form of trust and hope in the fulfillment of the promises of God (*Migr.* 43–44 and *Mut.* 177), and since God is the faithful one, it is only fit for humans to trust most firmly in the things that God has promised (*Abr.* 275).

In conclusion, it should be stressed that the fact that Philo describes Abraham’s faith as the queen of virtue and as equivalent to the inheritance of happiness says something about the way faith and action are configured in Philo’s argument. Virtue and happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*) were, in antiquity, inseparably associated with living and doing well. Every action and every choice was thought to be aiming at some good and those who had reached virtue and happiness were those who were able to orient all their actions and choices towards their final good, that is, towards their happiness. Happiness was therefore thought of as an active rather than a passive state. Virtue was a stable state that enabled the virtuous to consistently live and act well. This state could be reached if individuals made it their habit to choose and act wisely and well. This does not involve notions of unmindful or mechanistic actions. Julie Annas describes virtue as a disposition that requires choice:

> Thus a virtue is a disposition involving choice in two ways. It is built up from repeated choices and the development of habits of choice. . . . The second way in which choice enters into a disposition which is a virtue is that not only does it result from choices, but it is on each occasion exercised in making a choice. . . . The disposition is not a causal force making me choose; it is the way I have made myself, the way I have chosen to be, and in deciding in accordance with it, I endorse the way I have become.97

This means that the distinction between faith and action is arbitrary in a context where faith is regarded as a virtue. That Philo also considered Abraham’s virtue as the culmination of a process will be clarified in the following sections. The fact that he thought of Abraham’s virtue as something that manifested itself in a particular way of life is especially evident from his description of Abraham’s kindness to men. This is reflected in his description of Abraham’s dispute with Lot over land (*Gen* 13:5–12) in *Abr.* 208–216 and his description of Abraham’s courage in connection with his victory over the four kings (*Gen* 14) in *Abr.* 225–235.

---

2.3 Presuppositions and the Way Forward

This investigation rests on the conviction that “Philo saw himself first and foremost as an exegete of Mosaic scripture, and that a sound way to start understanding him is to begin at the level of his exegetical expositions.”98 It is well attested that Philo must be recognized as a key player in an Alexandrian exegetical tradition99 and it is in this vein that Gregory Sterling has suggested that Philo “operated an advanced school of exegesis in his home or in a privately owned building.”100 It has proven difficult to establish the chronological relationship between any of Philo’s commentaries or writings in general, but it seems likely that the Allegorical Commentaries were meant for the most advanced audiences, that the Quaestiones et Solutiones presuppose a familiarity with the Pentateuch perhaps gained from participation in the activities of the synagogue and that the Exposition of the Law addresses a circle of readers with little or perhaps even no prior knowledge of the Pentateuch.101

Philo consistently portrays Abraham as a kind of soul who gained virtue through teaching and this present study takes this fact as its starting point. Philo describes Abraham as a kind of soul who managed to attain virtue and faith in God by means of education. Abraham’s attainment of virtue thus reflects the result of his progression from encyclical studies to studies of philosophy and his progression from philosophy to wisdom. Three stories from Genesis predominate in Philo’s portrait of Abraham as a soul who gained virtue through teaching. The significance of the encyclical studies for Abraham’s path to virtue, faith, and knowledge of the true God is clearly articulated in (a) Philo’s interpretation of the story of Abraham’s mating with Hagar prior to Sarah’s pregnancy with Isaac as recounted in the beginning of Gen 16, b) Philo’s interpretation of Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to Haran and from there to Canaan as recounted in the

beginning of Gen 12 and finally c) in Philo’s interpretation of Abraham’s change of name from Abram to Abraham as recounted in the beginning of Gen 17. 102

Three allegorical commentaries are devoted to these stories, namely De congressu (Gen 16:1-4+6), De Migratione Abrahami (Gen 11:31 and 12:1–4+6), and De Mutatione Nominum (Gen 17:1–5, 15–21). My examination of the way Philo describes Abraham’s attainment of virtue in these treatises will be pursued on the assumptions that firstly they possess a thematic unity 103 and secondly that “the allegorical Abraham is the record of the process through which Abraham becomes the man of perfect piety and virtue.” 104 All three commentaries, in other words, are concerned with accounting for different aspects of Abraham’s attainment of virtue. Other texts from Philo’s writings will be consulted insofar as they can illuminate the texts on which I particularly focus in this study.

However, Philo’s emphasis on describing Abraham as a kind of soul who gained virtue through teaching is not the only central motif in his portrait of Abraham. There is another facet to his description, namely the idea that wisdom (and thus virtue) springs from inspiration. This conviction is very clearly articulated in Philo’s interpretation of the Abrahamic promises as presented in De Migratione Abrahami. He devotes the first half of the treatise (Migr. 1–126) to Gen 12:2–3 and the five gifts that God promises Abraham. The first gift (the promise of the land) is defined as the higher realities that can be reached if people dissociate themselves from the body (Migr. 7–12) and this

---

102 See Ellen Birnbaum, “Exegetical Building Blocks in Philo’s Interpretation of the Patriarchs,” in From Judaism to Christianity: Tradition and transition: A Festschrift for Thomas H. Tobin, S.J. on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday (ed. Patricia Walters; NovTSup 136; Leiden Brill, 2010), 69–92, 78: “Philo provides ample indications of the ways in which he viewed Abraham in the role of a learner. Most of these indications cluster around complex interpretations of three incidents in Abraham’s life: 1) his mating with Hagar, in accordance with Sarah’s instructions, prior to his conception of Isaac with Sarah (Gen 16:1–6); 2) his departure from Chaldea to Haran and then to Canaan, where God appeared to him (Gn 11:31, 12:1–7); and 3) the change of his name from Abram to Abraham (Gn 17:5).” See also Moxnes, Theology in Conflict, 130: “In Philo’s exposition, two events in Abraham’s life were more important than others. The first was his departure from Mesopotamia to go to Canaan (Gen 11–12), the other occurred when God changed his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17).”

103 Sterling, “‘Philo Has Not Been Used Half Enough’: The Significance of Philo of Alexandria for the Study of the New Testament,” PRSt 30 (2003): 251–269, 258: “Philo attempted [in the allegorical commentaries] to connect his exegetical treatments into an unbroken chain. The result is that there is a thematic unity in most of these treatises.”

104 Sandmel, Philo’s Place in Judaism, 141. See also, more recently, David M. Hay: “the main theme of his preaching [in the Allegorical Commentaries] is not the need for conversion . . . but rather the means of turning to God, the barriers people encounter when they try to grow closer to God, and the stages of spiritual progress,” (“Philo of Alexandria,” in Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism [ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and M. A. Seifried; WUNT 2/140; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 357–380, 365).
gift is associated with the additional promise of divine presence (31–35), in Migr. 53–69, it becomes clear that the second promise or gift (“I will make you a great nation”) should be interpreted as a promise of being drawn near to God (Migr. 56–59), whereas the third promise (“I will bless you”) is interpreted as a promise of a share in the logos of God (Migr. 70–85). The fourth promise (“I will make your name great”) is interpreted as a promise of virtue not only by reputation but also in reality (Migr. 86–105), whereas the fifth promise (“you will be blessed”) is interpreted as a promise of true blessedness in contrast to apparent blessedness, which means that Abraham receives the promise that he will become essentially good or good by nature (Migr. 106–108). Finally, Philo makes it clear that these promises or gifts should be regarded as the prizes (τὰ ἄθλα) that will be given (δωρεῖται) to the one who will become wise (τῷ γενησόμενῳ σοφῷ) (Migr. 109). In other words, the Abrahamic promises are interpreted as promises of wisdom and thus of virtue.

In Migr. 176–195, Philo gives a summarized account of Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to the promised land and here it becomes unmistakably clear that wisdom is gained from divine inspiration. However, this is not a new thought, it is presumed all along. In fact, in Philo’s reading of the Abraham story divine inspiration is the means through which divine and human agency are related to one another. Hence, to clarify how divine and human agency are related to one another in Philo’s reading of the Abraham story, it is necessary to clarify how Abraham’s life is affected by divine inspiration.

The three treatises that I particularly focus on in this study represent Philo’s primary exegesis of the stories from the Book of Genesis that predominate in his portrait of Abraham as a soul who gained virtue through teaching. This means that in these treatises, Philo engages the stories for their own sake and not for the sake of their potential to cast light on some other biblical text. Below, I will

\[\text{105}\] Similarly, the conviction that wisdom is mediated by means of inspiration is explicitly articulated in Congr. 38, 132. One could also draw attention to the argument in Mut. 1–42 where Philo argues that the words from Gen 17:1 “I am your God” means that Abraham had been made by God alone and therefore belongs to “those who have been made ferocious as they are possessed with divinely inspired madness” (οὐτοὶ τὴν ἐνθεον μανίαν μανέντες ἐξηγιώθησαν) (Mut. 39; cf. also Mut. 128–129).

\[\text{106}\] Primary exegesis refers to Philo’s interpretation of the biblical text, the meaning of which he is trying to uncover. Secondary exegesis refers to the texts he calls upon in order to explain the meaning of the text of his primary interest. Philo does not intend to give the final and definite interpretation of the allegorical meaning of Scripture, since that would give his exegesis the same status as Scripture itself. For two helpful studies on the structure of the Allegorical Commentaries, see David Runia, “The Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises: A Review of Two Recent Studies and Some Additional Comments,” VC 38 (1984): 209–256 and David Runia, “Further Observations on the Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises,” VC 41 (1987): 105–138. See also John Dillon, “The Formal Structure of Philo’s Allegorical
focus on clarifying how Philo makes a connection in these treatises between divine inspiration and the attainment of virtue, and thus on examining what role the divine Spirit assumes in the life of Abraham. For the sake of the present discussion, I am therefore not concerned with giving a full account of Philo’s interpretation of the biblical stories that he engages in these treatises. In addition, I will not be giving an extensive account of the various steps that Abraham’s progression towards virtue involves, as I am more interested in accounting for the way Philo describes Abraham in De congressu, De Migratione Abrahami, and De Mutatione Nominum as a kind of soul that moves from being engaged in encyclical studies to becoming a man of wisdom, i.e., to becoming a man in whom faith in God, the mark of his virtue, is firmly established.


107 Philo’s interpretations of these biblical passages in Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin do not contain the rather extensive accounts of the way in which divine inspiration leads to wisdom and how wisdom manifests itself in the lives of those who attain it. In his exposition of the biblical stories referred to above that are given in Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin, Philo does not stress the idea that faith and piety consists in ascribing all good things to God. This may indicate something about the intended readers of both series.

108 Sandmel, Philo’s Place in Judaism, 141–185 gives a detailed account of the stages of Abraham’s progression towards virtue. Sandmel structures his portrait of the allegorical Abraham thematically pointing to five stages in the development of the progressing soul, (a) the body, (b) sense-perception, (c) reason, (d) natural philosophy and (e) the intelligible world. For a more recent account of the different stages in the Philonic Abraham’s progression towards virtue, see Geert Roskam, On the Path to Virtue: The Stoic Doctrine of Moral Progress and its Reception in (Middle-) Platonism (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy 1/ 33; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 173–179.
Chapter 3. Abraham’s Path to Virtue according to De Congressu

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss Philo’s description of Abraham’s path to virtue as presented in the treatise De congressu. Among the allegorical commentaries that are devoted to texts about Abraham this is the one in which the significance of the encyclical studies come most to the fore. Philo consistently presents Abraham as a kind of soul that is perfected through teaching. It is therefore helpful to begin with the treatise in which this motive is dominant. It is evident from Philo’s description of Abraham’s path to virtue that Abraham cannot attain virtue apart from academic engagement with the encyclical studies. Modern readers may regard this as an arbitrary interpretation of the story of Abraham, but Philo presents Abraham’s path to virtue as a reflection of the kind of soul that Abraham was and represents. This perception of Abraham is assumed throughout the entire treatise and is connected to other contemporary assumptions about the significance and effect of education that should be regarded as important backdrops to Philo’s description of Abraham’s path to virtue in this treatise. This is not the treatise in which Philo most explicitly clarifies how God’s gift of the Spirit plays a role in Abraham’s path to virtue. Nonetheless, it must also be emphasized that Philo’s account in this treatise of Abraham’s path to virtue can only be properly understood if one recognizes (a) that the lover of virtue’s zeal for virtue springs from inspiration and (b) that Philo describes the classroom as something that not only facilitates learning but also inspiration.

This chapter begins (3.2) with an introduction to the way that Philo relates the Abraham story to an ancient discussion of the significance of nature, teaching, and virtue for the attainment of virtue. Here it becomes clear not only that Abraham’s zeal for virtue originates in divine inspiration but also that Abraham’s nature is depicted as the locus through which God is operating in his soul. From there I move on (3:3) to a description of ancient ideas about the significance and effects of education that to a significant degree shape Philo’s argument in De congressu. I then turn (3:4) to accounting for the way Philo incorporates these ideas into his account of Abraham’s path to virtue. In the next part of this chapter (3.5) I move on to describe what I have termed the “pious perspective” on Abraham’s attainment of virtue. Even though Philo clearly maintains that Abraham was perfected
through teaching, he also maintains that Abraham was ultimately perfected by God. The results of the reading of De Congressu presented here are finally summarized in 3.6.

### 3.2 The significance of Nature, Teaching and Practice for the Attainment of Virtue

Before we engage with Philo’s argument in De Congressu, we need to say a few things about how Abraham features in Philo’s writings. Philo describes Abraham as a lover of learning (ὁ φιλομαθής). As a lover of learning, he has an innate longing for learning and for virtue (Congr. 63–64). This is due to the way he was created by God (Leg. 3.83). Philo describes God’s creation of humans as an event that is accompanied by divine inspiration and he refers to this event as something that meant to remedy a mind that has suffered degeneration. Philo maintains not only that the earthly man of Gen 2:7 in accordance with his mind is closely related to the divine Logos (πᾶς ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν ὑκείωτα λόγῳ θείῳ) (Opif. 146), as he is a fragment, copy or ray of the logos itself (τῆς μακαρίας φύσεως ἐκμαγεύων ἢ ἀπόσπασμα ἢ ἀπαύγασμα γεγονώς) (Opif. 146), but also that the man first fashioned was the bloom of the human race and that none of his descendants had attained a similar bloom (Opif. 140). According to Runia, Philo’s earthly man and heavenly man are best described as two ethical positions and that the heavenly man ultimately represents “man as he really is, i.e. as he should and can be when the cares of the body have entirely fallen away.”

David Runia has stressed that Philo’s earthly man and heavenly man are best described as two ethical positions and that the heavenly man ultimately represents “man as he really is, i.e. as he should and can be when the cares of the body have entirely fallen away.”

Gitte Buch-Hansen, elaborating on Runia’s description of the nature of the earthly and the heavenly man, has clarified that in Philo’s outline of man’s path to truth

> the divine generation of νοῦς in ordinary man, which we also find in the Timaeus, is displaced to the position of the first generation and identified with the event of Gen 2:7, in which moulded man has God’s breath blown into him. Prophecy is understood as a second and higher form of generation (δευτέρα γένεσις), and it is through this that the heavenly mind-set, which is in accordance with God’s image (Gen 1:27), comes into being. In this way, the two men demarcate the range of human possibilities.

---

109 For a helpful account of how Philo describes this process of degeneration, see Kooten, Paul’s Anthropology in Context, 287–292.
110 David Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 337. Philo’s argument in Leg. 1.31–42 and his elaboration of the difference between the earthly mind and the mind of the heavenly man will be given more attention in chapter 5 below.
Hence, the creation of the earthly man or mind is the creation of something that through prophecy can be led to truth. Buch-Hansen has clarified how Philo’s account of the difference between the earthly and the heavenly man reflects a turn to pragmatism in contemporary Stoic discussions regarding the path to virtue. Given the rarity of the wise man, late Stoicism was “characterized by a growing interest in intermediate phenomena such as the person in progress (ὁ προκόπτων) and his appropriate acts (τά καθήκοντα).” The wise man who had grasped the idea of the highest good did not need precepts (τά καθήκοντα) to decide what to do. Consequently, Stoic philosophers differed with respect to the question of the usefulness of precepts for moral progress and the question of the extent to which philosophy should be concerned with teaching precepts. Some Stoic philosophers (like Seneca) defended the usefulness of the precepts, arguing that “in the long run, the training of the mind in moral behaviour through instructions served the metamorphosis of attitude,” just as Philo points out that the precepts of Moses offer the not-yet perfect person a safe way to virtue. This means that on the one hand Philo claims that, in the end, virtuous behaviour presupposes the right attitude of mind, and this, he argues, is found with the mind-set that recognizes Noah’s find, namely that ‘all things in the world and the world itself is a free gift and acts of kindness and grace on God’s part’ (Leg. 3.77f). The person who acknowledges that his whole being and faculties are God’s gift and who acts out of gratitude in whatever he does will always act rightly. On the other hand, the commandments in Moses’ law are identified with the ‘preceptorial department’ of philosophy – or in Philo’s designation, the intermediary classes, where the study of the indifferents of natural duties may help the intermediary mind of the progressing man and, step by step, guide him on his way to virtue.

Philo’s portrait of Abraham reflects this trend in late Stoicism, as Abraham features in Philo’s writings as a progressing soul that reaches virtue. Abraham’s pursuit of virtue reflects his nature and the way he was created by God (Leg. 3.83). This description of Abraham is compatible with the way Philo clarifies God’s rationale for giving the divine breath to the earthly man, as he points out that God, who is fond of giving (φυλόδωρος ὢν) gives good things to all (ὁ θεὸς χαρίζεται τὰ ἁγαθὰ πάσι) even to those who are not perfect (καὶ τοῖς μὴ τελείοις), thereby summoning them to

---

113 Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 156.
a partnership with and a zeal for virtue (προκαλούμενος αὐτοῦς εἰς μετουσίαν καὶ ζῆλον ἄρετῆς) (Leg. 1.34). Hence, God has created no soul barren of good (ἀγονὸν οὐδεμίαν ψυχὴν ἐδημούργησεν ἀγαθοῦ) even if it is impossible for some to make use of it (κἂν ἡ χρήσις ἀδύνατος ἐνίος ἦ αὐτοῦ) (Leg. 34). Philo describes inspiration as a summoning to a partnership with and a zeal for virtue. The participle προκαλούμενος can be translated as both summoning or calling on and enticing, and both aspects are probably within the scope of Philo’s argument in Leg. 1.34.¹¹⁶ Divine inspiration is both something that summons to virtue and something that makes humans aspire to or long for virtue. Correspondingly, Philo points out that according to the laws of allegory the story of Abraham’s migration from Chaldea is a story of a virtue-loving soul (Abr. 68) in search of the true God, clarifying that Abraham was driven by his love or zeal for virtue. As a lover of learning Abraham was gifted with a nature that aspires to learning and virtue; however, the lover of learning is not endowed with generic virtue from the moment of birth. Virtue only becomes generic as the lover of learning moves from the encyclical studies to philosophy and from philosophy to wisdom or consummated virtue. As we will see in the following chapters, this interpretation of Abraham does not prevent Philo from describing Abraham as a kind of soul that attained virtue as a result of divine inspiration.

Philo is not engaged in describing the historical Abraham in the allegorical commentaries. Here, Philo identifies Abraham as a type of soul that gained virtue through teaching. This is presumed whenever Philo refers to Abraham in De congressu, De Migratione Abrahami, and De Mutatione Nominum. In Abr. 52–55 he refers to different types of persons and puts Abraham in perspective with respect to the types of souls that are represented by Isaac and Jacob. Here the patriarchs are presented as kinds of souls (τρόπους ψυχῆς) that are all well formed or of good quality (ἀστείους ἅπαντας) (Abr. 52). But whereas Isaac represents the kind of soul that acquires virtue through nature and Jacob the kind that acquires virtue through practice, Abraham represents the kind of soul that pursues virtue through teaching (τὸν ἐκ διδασκαλίας ἐφιέμενον τοῦ καλοῦ) and is hence defined as a symbol of virtue attained through teaching (σύμβολον διδασκαλικῆς ἄρετῆς). Philo stresses the prominence of the patriarchs by drawing attention to the name of the nation that is named after them. The nation named after the patriarchs is Israel, which is a reference to those

¹¹⁶ See LSJ on προκαλέω.
who see God (Ἰσραήλ ὅπερ ἔρμηνευθέν ἐστιν ὄρων θεόν) (Abr. 57). This is an important passage, insofar as it links the descendants of Abraham to the vision of God. As it will become clear in the next chapter, the vision of God is not something that can be reached apart from the gift of inspiration. God’s gift of the Spirit is thus no less defining for Abraham’s children or for the people of Israel in Philo’s writing than it is in Paul’s.

Philo’s description of the patriarchs as types of souls reflects an ancient discussion of the significance of teaching, nature and practice for the achievement of virtue. Philo stresses that all three patriarchs possessed all three qualities, but that each one of the patriarchs had one predominant quality (Abr. 53). These three qualities are in Abr. 53 described as being interdependent in the sense that each predominant virtue is dependent on the assistance of the others. It is not clear in Abr. 53 that these qualities are ranked in any order of priority. Nature, teaching and practice are, however, clearly related in a well defined order of priority in Somn. 1.159–170. In this text Philo describes the three patriarchs as figures that signify three different ways to pursue virtue, and here he argues for Isaac’s superiority to Abraham and Jacob on the basis of the fact that in Gen 28:13 (LXX) God says to Jacob, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Israel” (Somn. 1.159). This divine self-description, Philo argues, signifies that Abraham (and Jacob) stand in need of the two divine powers, governance and kindness, signified respectively by the titles Lord and God, whereas Isaac only requires God’s kindness (Somn. 1.162). These differences between the patriarchs also relate to their need for external guidance in their pursuit of virtue. Whereas Abraham had teaching as his guide, and Jacob exercises and practices, Isaac was only guided by a nature that listens and learns from itself (Somn. 1.168).

---

117 Plato discusses this in the dialogue named after the ancient sophist and relativist Protagoras; see Prot. 318A, 320B, 323DE, see also Meno 70A; Aristotle touches this discussion in The Nichomachean Ethics ii.1–3; X.ix.1–10; see also Diogenes Laertius, Lives VII 91–93 and Plutarch’s treatise Εἰ διδακτόν ἢ ἀρετή/ Can Virtue be taught and Pseudo-Plutarch, De Libris Educandis. For a helpful introduction to the ancient discussion, see Birnbaum, “Exegetical Building Blocks in Philo’s Interpretation of the Patriarchs,” 74–75.

118 Harry A. Wolfson claims that Philo stands out from Aristotle and the Stoics by stressing the significance of all three approaches, see H. A. Wolfson, Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 2:197. In that respect Philo is aligned with Pseudo-Plutarch in De Lib. Educ. 2b. Quintilian stresses that both nature and education is needed for the attainment of eloquence (Inst. 2.19.1–3).

119 In Mut. 85–88, Philo similarly distinguishes Abraham from Isaac by describing Abraham as one who has another for his teacher, whereas Isaac is naturally virtuous and perfect.

120 Isaac is described as having a nature that listens to itself (αὐτήκοος – Somn. 1.168) and which is learning from itself (αὐτομαθής) (Somn. 1.168). Interestingly all three patriarchs are described in a similar way in Abr. 6. Here these
Philo describes Isaac as perfect from birth. Isaac was not bettered by the instruction of a ruler (ὑπὸ νουθετούσης ἀρχῆς) (Somn. 1.162), but only in accordance with the grace bestowed on him (κατὰ τὸ χαρίζεσθαι) (Somn. 1.162). This meant that “he was born good and perfect from the outset because of the gifts that had been showered upon him from above.”

It should be noted here that Philo in Somn. 162–168 describes Isaac from two different perspectives. On the one hand Isaac is described as one who acquired goodness because of the gifts raining from above in the form of the perfect nature graciously given to him from birth (Somn. 1.162), whilst on the other hand he is described as one who listens to no other than himself (Somn 1.168). The fact that Isaac listens to no other than himself does not mean that his virtue was obtained apart from God; it only means that his virtue was obtained apart from any external guidance. God is responsible for Isaac’s perfection, for Philo points out that the self-taught race arises by no human effort at all, but only through divine inspiration (Fug. 168). The self-taught race is here likened to self-grown crops. Such crops can only be said to be self-grown in the sense that they have no need of human attention; the truth of the matter is that they are actually sown and brought to perfection by God (Fug. 170). This enables Philo to distinguish between Abraham and Isaac, for whereas Abraham was taught by man, Isaac was taught by God, for that which is taught requires a long time to learn, while that which comes by nature is both quick and in a sense timeless, and the one has man as his teacher, while the other has God (Fug. 169). There is therefore an overlap between Isaac being self-taught and his being perfected by God. This supports Charles A. Anderson’s assertion that a number of paragraphs from Philo’s

adjectives are applied to the patriarchs in order to stress that they lived in accordance with the law of nature. This is striking, since in De Abrahamo Philo sees Abraham as a man who achieved virtue by means of teaching (cf. Abr. 52 quoted above). Apparently, he did not consider this as necessarily involving being taught by any other, since this is what is denied with respect to all three patriarchs in Abr. 5. Birnbaum suggests that this is related to the fact that Abraham in De Abrahamo not only represents one who is made perfect through teaching, but also “represents one of the unwritten laws and thereby exemplifies obedience to the Mosaic Laws even before they were written” (Birnbaum, “Exegetical Building Blocks,” 77).

διὰ τὰς ὁμοθετίας ἀνωθεν δωρεὰς ἀγαθός καὶ τέλειος εξ ἁρχῆς ἑγένετο) (Somn. 1.162). For a similar interpretation of Isaac, see Somn. 2.10–11 in which Philo stresses that Isaac did not need any baby food; although in Sobr. 8 Philo stresses that Isaac stopped drinking milk at the age of seven. The fact that Isaac is perfect by nature means for Philo that he was free from the passions (ἀθανατία). Similarly, Isaac represents the best of all the stoic good emotions, that of joy, because his name means laughter; see Mut. 131. Philo stresses that this emotion is God’s creation; cf. Leg. 3.219; Det. 123–124.

This is reflected, Philo asserts, in the fact that Hebrew mothers (according to Exod 1:9) give birth without the help of midwives but in cooperation with nature alone (Fug. 168).
writings presume an overlap between the self (φύσις) and God in their description of man’s pursuit of virtue. Anderson concludes on this basis that “φύσις bears a two-sided definition: it stands for the intrinsic character of the Isaac-soul and the operations of God in that soul. Thus, Philo places natural endowment and divine inspiration under φύσις. God imparts virtue, even if phenomenologically it appears to come entirely naturally from within a person.” This corresponds to the fact that Philo in Abr. 53–54 not only defines the natures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as graces (χάριτες) but also as powers (δύναμεις). This means that human virtue or human longing for virtue should be regarded as a manifestation of divine inspiration and ultimately as a manifestation of divine agency.

In so far as the three patriarchs represent three different ways of pursuing virtue Philo clearly stresses the superiority of the way represented by Isaac. His acknowledgement of Isaac’s superiority does not keep him from also stressing the interrelatedness of the three approaches to virtue, for as there then are three ways of life that lead to wisdom, it has come about that the virtue achieved by teaching and the virtue achieved by practice are related to one another. Philo describes the virtue that comes by practice as the offspring of that which comes by means of teaching. Similarly, the virtue that comes by nature is related to that which come by teaching and practice, insofar as it has been laid as a foundation and as a root for all (Somn. 1.169). This means that both Abraham and Jacob share an element of Isaac’s nature. Thus, they can be described as having in them an inherent potential to become like Isaac. In Deus 92–93 Jacob, the Practiser, is accordingly referred to as someone who eventually found eternal wisdom without trouble and hard labour (καμάτου χώρις και πόνου) (Deus 92). This corresponds to Philo’s description of Jacob in Migr. 28–33. Here, he refers to Jacob’s migration from a dwelling with the objects of sense-perception to a dwelling in the land of wisdom, and he describes this as Jacob’s attainment of the

124 Anderson, Philo of Alexandria’s Views of the Physical world, 118.  
125 See Anderson, Philo of Alexandria’s Views of the Physical world, 116, note 89 in which he points out that in Somn. 1.169 “φύσις is simultaneously foundational and highest in value” and thus claims that W. Völker “overlooks this text and, therefore, too rigidly separates passages where φύσις is foundation and those where it is the consummation of virtue.”
Isaac-nature. The Isaac-nature can, in other words, both be described as the root of the achievement of virtue that comes through teaching and practice and as the goal of those who pursue virtue through teaching and practice.

It is therefore not surprising that Philo stresses that it was Abraham’s zeal for piety that prompted him in the first place to begin his migration out of Chaldea (Abr. 60–61). This migration represents the virtue-loving soul’s quest for God (Abr. 68). This proper nature is also the basis for the achievement of virtue in a more specific sense for those, who, like Abraham, achieve virtue by means of teaching. Teaching can only be successful if a proper nature is there to receive the things that are taught, for “everything which is heard or taught is built upon a nature fit for receiving instruction (παιδείας) as if upon a foundation laid in advance, and everything is useless when a nature is not there in advance” (Mut. 211). These fundamental convictions regarding the kind of soul that Abraham represents reveal that even though Philo portrays Abraham as kind of soul that is perfected through teaching, this does not then mean that the soul is perfected without the agency of God. However, it is equally clear from Philo’s description of Abraham’s path to virtue – as given in De Congressu – that the perfection of the soul is also something that involves hard (human) work.

3.3 The Encyclical Studies and the Effects of Education

De congressu is the allegorical commentary devoted to texts concerning Abraham in which the significance of the encyclical studies comes most to the fore. It is therefore fitting to begin this section with a number of introductory remarks about the way education was regarded in the

---

126 These paragraphs are essentially interpretations of Gen 12:1. Philo’s characterization of Jacob in Migr. 28–30 applies to Abraham too. The inherent potential to reach the Isaac-nature does not eliminate every difference between the patriarchs. Philo describes the patriarchs as receiving different rewards (Praem. 27) and similarly points to a difference in the degree of perfection reached by Abraham and Jacob by pointing to the curious fact that Abraham after receiving of a new name was never again called Abram, whereas Jacob’s name constantly alternated between Jacob and Israel (Mut. 81–88).

127 The pursuit of piety represents the pursuit of virtue insofar as piety in Philo’s writings represents the queen of virtues in Spec. 4.147 and Praem. 53. Hence, Philo is able to describe both piety (εὐσεβεία) and faith as the queen of virtues (Abr. 270). It is therefore not surprising that Paul can describe faith in God as something that involves acquaintance with piety (γνώσις εὐσεβείας) (Abr. 268).

128 πάντα τὰ ἀκούσματα καὶ μαθήματα ἐποικοδομεῖται καθάπερ θεμελίων προκαταβεβλημένω φύσει παιδείας δεκτικῇ φόσεως δὲ μὴ προὐπαρχούσης ἀνωφελῆ πάντα (Mut. 211).
Greco-Roman world.\textsuperscript{129} Henri I. Marrou’s description, from the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, of education in antiquity paints an image of a relatively well developed educational system consisting of three levels of education: primary, secondary, and higher learning.\textsuperscript{130} Marrou’s thesis has recently been criticized for assuming a regularity that cannot be sustained.\textsuperscript{131} Teresa Morgan has argued that it is important to distinguish between different types of evidence, or more precisely between evidence from literary sources and evidence from papyri, understood as fragments of papyrus, ostraka, wooden tablets and pieces of parchment. Literary sources like Cicero, Quintilian, Seneca, Plutarch and Philo all come from the highest strata of society, while the papyri stem from a lower social stratum. The literary sources “assume that pupils have access to every level of education whether their aim is to practice rhetoric philosophy or anything else” whereas the “papyri give us a glimpse of a more pressured world, where educational and, no doubt, financial resources were limited.”\textsuperscript{132} Regional and local differences (e.g., city vs. countryside) notwithstanding,\textsuperscript{133} it is possible to distinguish between the three different levels of education without subscribing to Marrou’s overly generalized account.\textsuperscript{134} Firstly, pupils needed to learn to read and write.\textsuperscript{135} Secondly, they needed education in grammar, literature, geometry, astronomy and the principles of music and logic. The

\textsuperscript{129} See Theresa Morgan, \textit{Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds} (Cambridge Classical Studies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24: “certainly, as I shall try to show, the Romans adopted, adapted and promoted the pattern of literate education developed in the Hellenistic kingdoms with very few changes in either its content or form. It is on these grounds that in this study I generally discuss Hellenistic and Roman literate education as a single phenomenon.”

\textsuperscript{130} See Henri I. Marrou, \textit{Histoire de l’education dans l’antiquité} (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1948). Morgan in \textit{Literate Education}, 67–68 refers to Marrou’s thesis as “the curricular model” according to which “a set of collection of exercises existed in a set order, and pupils did them all, diverging only at the end to become orators or philosophers. In many accounts this ‘curriculum’ is hedged about with all sorts of other institutions, such as universal education for boys and even girls, fixed ages of entry and exit from school, designated school buildings and state controls.” For a recent critique of the idea of the existence of a fixed curriculum, see Erkki Koskenniemi, “Philo and Classical Education,” in \textit{Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria} (ed. Torrey Seland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 102–128, 110–111.


\textsuperscript{132} Morgan, \textit{Literate Education}, 65; see also 45–46, 50–52.

\textsuperscript{133} Stanley K. Stowers, \textit{Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity} (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 32: “The standard account of Greek and Roman education gives it three stages: elementary school, secondary with the \textit{Grammaticus} as teacher, and rhetorical training. For several reasons this account is seriously misleading. First there was great local variation depending upon available resources and needs, especially outside the major cities.”

\textsuperscript{134} See also Tor Vegg, \textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen} (BZNW 134; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 74–75: “Im Nachhinein lässt sich eine solche Dreigliederung zwar konstruieren, doch ich vermunte, dass dies weit davon entfernt ist widerzuspiegeln, was in hellenistischer Zeit der Normalzustand war. Hier soll statt dessen von Fächern, Ausbildungs- oder Schultypen (oder auch vom ‘Sitz im Leben’) die Rede sein. . . . Jenseits lokaler Variationen und sozialer Unterschiede war es wohl üblich, dass man nach dem Erlernen von Lesen und Schreiben die weiteren Fächer bei anderen Lehrern hatte.”

\textsuperscript{135} Sometimes pupils from the upper classes learned to read and write at home (see Stowers, \textit{Letter Writing}, 32).
third level of education was reserved for the study of rhetoric and philosophy.\textsuperscript{136} The Greek word ἐγκυκλιός means circular, complete (like the circle) or ordinary and common and ἐγκυκλιός παιδεία refers thus to general education\textsuperscript{137} that served to provide pupils with the knowledge they needed to proceed to the more important fields of learning, like those of rhetoric or philosophy.\textsuperscript{138} The encyclical studies were thus regarded as preparatory and preliminary; they were not considered as a goal in themselves (at least not for the elitist writers behind the literary sources – the less privileged ordinary man may have considered things differently), but rather as useful for the pursuit of higher learning.\textsuperscript{139} Education in general and the higher learning in particular aimed at a cultivation of the virtues.\textsuperscript{140} Virtue and autonomy were pursued as the highest goal in life and education played a key role in that respect, under the assumption that the fully educated person was able to live wisely and without a need of guidance of others.\textsuperscript{141}

Teresa Morgan has drawn attention to the way education was regarded in the Greco-Roman world as a vehicle for cognitive development. On a general level, Morgan points out that education was thought of as the thing that “fundamentally alters the quality of the mind, and it is this which really makes the difference,” and that “the only way in which the mind can be altered in this radical and necessary way is by acquisition of literacy.”\textsuperscript{142} In addition Morgan points out that “the pupil has five

\begin{footnotesize}
  \begin{enumerate}
    \item Morgan, \textit{Literate Education}, 33–39. Philo uses the term ἡ μέση παιδεία as a term for learning skills more advanced than the ability to read and write, see for instance Mut. 228, 255 and Congr. 142–145.
    \item See the paragraph on ἐγκυκλιός in \textit{LSJ} and Vegge, \textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen}, 235–239. Morgan, \textit{Literate Education}, 63 suggests that those who learned grammar but did not proceed to rhetoric may have formed an intermediate status-group in terms of education.
    \item Philo’s arguments reflect an ancient philosophical discussion of the proper use of good things (the verb χράομαι occurs in the beginning of \textit{De Congressu} in \textit{Congr.} 3, 5, 11, 15, 19, 24). Plato, for example, stressed in a discussion of the use of rhetoric that the proper use of rhetoric relies on knowledge of justice, just as doctors, shipbuilders and other specialists rely on knowledge about their field in order to use their skills for the good. Here, Philo stresses that encyclical studies must be used for the good, that is, for the sake of virtue. For a helpful introduction to the topos of the proper use of good things in ancient philosophy, see Christian Gnilka, \textit{XPΗΣΙΣ: Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur I: Der Begriffs des “rechten Gebrauchs”} (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), 29–43.
    \item For the relationship between virtue and autonomy, see Morgan, \textit{Literate Education}, 260–264.
    \item Morgan, \textit{Literate Education}, 131. Such a view of education has its own inherent implications as demonstrated by Sandnes, \textit{The Challenge of Homer}, 67: “Seen from this philosophical perspective, true education becomes a matter for the few only. Philosophers, not common people, are capable of becoming good.”
  \end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
natural faculties, which together measure his ability to be educated and form his contribution to his education: memory, speech, reason, the ability to imitate and a tendency to virtue. Of these, virtue and reason are both means and ends of education, while memory and imitation are only means.”

Reason naturally represents a necessary prerequisite of education, but the presence of reason in a pupil was not considered as sufficient in itself. Reason needed to be nurtured in order for the pupil to be able to reach his or her inherent potential. Morgan points out that reason was often referred to as a divine spark and, in aptly way, claims on this basis that “paradoxically, it takes a spark of divinity to be fully human. It also takes education.”

The reading and memorization of gnomic sayings about virtue and virtuous actions ultimately served to alter the mind, as these sayings were considered to be absorbed by the pupil due to his or her innate tendency to virtue. This innate potential for and tendency to virtue was thought of as being shaped in accordance with the virtue expressed in the sayings. For Quintilian, for example, this means that “there is an unbridgeable gap between the educable and the ineducable. . . . The difference between the educable and ineducable child is that the latter has no prospect of bearing fruit.”

These matters cast significant light on some of the things discussed in the previous paragraph. Philo’s description of the virtue-longing nature as the root of the human achievement of virtue reflects the convictions accounted for by Morgan, just as Philo’s description of the Isaac-nature as the goal of Abraham’s progress towards virtue demonstrates the ideal of autonomy, insofar as Isaac represents the nature who does not require teaching or external guidance. Similarly, Quintilian’s reference to the unbridgeable gap between the educable and the ineducable casts its own light on Philo’s pointing out in Mut. 211 that “everything which is heard or taught is built upon a nature fit

---

143 Morgan, Literate Education, 246.
144 Morgan, Literate Education, 247.
145 See Morgan, Literate Education 249: “For Quintilian too the tendency to virtue is part of human nature: ‘for providence gave this gift to men, that they prefer what is good’. . . . The pupil is described as having an instinctive understanding of the meaning of good and bad. When, therefore, he is presented with gnomic quotations, which inform him about what is good and bad, he simply absorbs them, and is potential capacity takes shape as a specific ethical code.” The human mind was accordingly described with different images, like that of soft wax in need of impressions, unwritten tablets, and uncultivated soil. These pictures are widespread in Philo’s writings, see Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 62–64. See also Vegge, Paulus und das antike Schulwesen, 301: “Die Menschen sind von der Natur aus so verschieden, dass z.B. ein von Natur her begabter jemandem mit jahrelanger Ausbildung überlegen bleiben kann. Die Natur kann aber fast immer durch Bildung veredelt und verbessert werden. . . . Ein gebildeter Mensch hat seine Anlagen durch Bildung veredelt oder verfeinert.”
146 Morgan, Literate Education, 247.
for receiving instruction (παιδείας) as if upon a foundation laid in advance, and everything is useless when a nature is not there in advance,” just as the notion of human reason as a divine spark is easily recognized in Philo’s writings in his description of the human mind as being closely related to the divine Logos.147 In the next section, I will discuss the way Philo in De congressu describes the relationship between the encyclical studies and philosophy, on the one hand, and the relationship between philosophy and virtue, on the other. I will also broach how Philo in De congressu describes virtue as a gift that ultimately comes from God.148

3.4 The Relationship between the Encyclical Studies, Philosophy and Wisdom

3.4.1 The Significance of the Preliminary Studies and Philosophy for the Pursuit of Virtue

De congressu is an allegorical commentary on Gen 16:1–6. The whole treatise is devoted to the significance of the encyclical studies for the attainment of wisdom. The relationship between these two poles in Abraham’s life is most clearly articulated in Congr. 1–23 and 71–88 and Philo stresses most clearly that Abraham’s attainment of virtue should be ascribed to God in 122–130 and 153–180, but this idea is arguably also present in Congr. 1–23. These passages are therefore also the ones that I will focus on in this chapter. Philo’s interpretation of this scriptural passage (Gen 16:1–6) reflects an affinity between his interpretation of the Sarah-Hagar story and a current interpretation of the figure of Penelope in Homer. In Homer, a number of suitors attempt to win Penelope’s heart because of the delay of Odysseus’ return, but since the suitors failed in their attempts, they had to accept the company of Penelope’s mistresses. Pseudo-Plutarch interprets this story allegorically, with the result that Penelope comes to represent virtue, whereas the maidservants represent the encyclical studies.149 In De congressu, Philo makes use of this tradition in a similar way, but in Philo’s interpretation it is Sarah who represents virtue, whereas it is Hagar who represents the encyclical studies.

147 “Every man, in accordance with the mind is allied to the divine logos having come into being as an imprint, a fragment or an effulgence of that blessed nature” (πᾶς ἀνθρωπὸς κατὰ μὲν τὴν διάνοιαν ὑπεκώνται λόγῳ θείῳ, τῆς μακαρίας φύσεως ἐκμακραγέναι ἢ ἀπόσπασμα ἢ ἀπαύγασμα γεγονός) (Opif. 146); see also Mut. 223, Det. 83, 90, Praem. 163, Plant. 18, Spec. 3.207, Her. 57. For further discussions of Philo’s Psycho-Physiology, see Gretchen Reydam-Schils, “Philo of Alexandria on Stoic and Platonist Psycho-Physiology: The Socratic Higher Ground,” in Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy (ed. Francesca Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 169–195.

148 For a more general account of the significance of Greek education in Philo’s thinking, see Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 68–78.

149 See De Liberis Educandis, 7 D–E.
studies. Since De congressu is an allegorical commentary to Gen 16:1–6, the persons spoken of—these include Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham—represent minds pursuing learning and virtue (Congr. 180). Abraham represents the lover of learning (ὁ φιλομαθής, Congr. 16), whereas Hagar and Sarah are respectively described as the beginning and advanced student: “the word spoken is not of women, but of minds, on the one hand of the mind training in the preliminary studies on the other of the mind eagerly pursuing the palms of virtue” (Congr. 180).

The preliminary studies (τὰ προπαιδεύματα) were, as we have just discussed, generally speaking referred to as preparatory teaching necessary for the study of more essential matters like philosophy and rhetoric. Philo’s allegorical interpretation in De Congressu of the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah reflects this conviction, insofar as the encyclical studies (Hagar) are described as necessary for the lover of learning’s achievement of virtue (Sarah). As Philo asserts, “for we are not up to this time able [ικανοὶ] to receive the offspring of virtue, unless we first meet with her handmaiden, and the handmaiden of wisdom is the art that comes through the preliminary studies of the school course” (Congr. 9). It should be noticed that wisdom and virtue are used almost interchangeably in this paragraph, and that Philo stresses that the type of soul that gains wisdom or virtue through teaching must start with the encyclical studies in order to reach his or her goal. Philo stresses the significance of the encyclical studies in several places in this treatise and even refers to the encyclical studies as inevitable and necessary for the pursuit of virtue, for the one who acquires wisdom from teaching (φρόνησις ἐκ διδασκαλίας) will not reject Hagar, as the acquisition of the preliminary studies is entirely necessary (πάνυ γὰρ ἀναγκαῖα ἢ τῶν προπαιδευμάτων κτήσις) (Congr. 24). Philo’s conception of the encyclical studies as having the potential to pave the way

151 See Congr. 16, 68, 74, 111, 125 and 126. It is somewhat surprising that Philo refers to Abraham as the lover of learning, since Philo for example in Gig. 60–63 makes a virtue of characterizing Abram as the lover of learning and Abraham as a man of God.
152 οὐ γὰρ περὶ γυναικῶν ἔστιν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διανοεῖ, τής μὲν γυμναζομένης ἐν τοῖς προπαιδεύμασι τῆς δὲ τούς ἀρετῆς ἄθλους διαθλούσης.
153 οὐ γὰρ ἔσμεν ἱκανοὶ δέξασθαι πιστικόν ἀρετήν, εἰ μὴ πρότερον ἐντύχοιμεν αὐτῆς τῇ θεραπαινίδι. θεραπαινίς δὲ σοφίας ἢ διὰ τῶν προπαιδευμάτων ἐγκύκλιος μουσική.
154 These are just two examples of how Philo describes the preliminary studies as a necessary precondition for the achievement of wisdom or virtue. Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 72 draws attention to Philo’s description of the encyclical studies as the outer doors of a house (Congr. 23), as the suburbs of a city (Congr. 10), as a road leading to the goal, which is virtue (Congr. 10), as having the relationship of a vassal to a king (Congr. 18), as milk preceding solid food (Congr. 19), as Egypt compared to the promised land (Congr. 20), as sojourners compared to residents (Congr. 24).
for the lover of learning’s acquisition of virtue reaches full expression in his description of the nature of the encyclical studies.

In Congr. 20–23, Philo deduces the nature of the lower instruction (ἡ μέση παιδεία – Congr. 20)\(^{155}\) from an allegorical interpretation of Hagar’s Egyptian origin and significance of her name. He identifies the allegorical meaning of the name Hagar as “sojourning” (‘’Αγάρ τοῦτο δὲ ἐρμηνευθέν ἔστι παροίκησις) (Congr. 20). Hagar is sojourning, because the encyclical studies are connected to knowledge, wisdom and virtue (ἐπιστήμη, σοφία, ἀρετή) (Congr. 22) in a manner similar to the way that the sojourner is connected with native citizens. They are related but also hold a different status. Philo continues on the theme of the allegorical interpretation of Hagar’s Egyptian origins. Egypt refers to the body, the vessel of the soul (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀγγείον) (Congr. 21) and the encyclical studies are wholly dependent on the faculties of the senses, for it is necessary (ἀνάγκη) that the one who takes pleasure (ἐγχορεύοντα) in the encyclical studies (ταῖς ἐγκυκλίοις θεωρίαις) is attached (προσκεκληρῶσθαι) to the earthly and Egyptian body (τῷ γεώδει καὶ Αἰγυπτίῳ σώματι). This kind of soul is in need of eyes (χρηζοντα όφθαλμῶν) in order to see and read (ὡς ἱδεῖν καὶ ἀναγνώσαι) and of ears and the other senses in order to examine each of the sense-perceptible things (ἐκαστον τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀναπτύξαι) (Congr. 20).

De Congressu 20–23 is one of several passages in Philo’s writings that reflect Plato’s encomium of sight in Tim. 47A–C. Plato argues that humans, through the contemplation of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, can manage to stabilize their minds.\(^{156}\) De Abraamo 156–164 is the most extensive among the passages from Philo’s writings that reflect Tim. 47A–C and it is perhaps also the passage in which the relationship between sense perception (primarily sight) and philosophy is stressed the most. Here Philo points out that the significance of sight is subordinated to the significance of light, insofar as light makes sight possible. It is by means of sight that humans can contemplate the contents of the world, such as the planets, the earth, living creatures, seas with

\(^{155}\) For ἡ μέση παιδεία as a synonym for the encyclical studies, see Borgen, Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time, 164.

\(^{156}\) By the time of Philo this theme had become a commonplace in Hellenistic Philosophy; see David Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 270–276.
their tides etc. (Abr. 159). The contemplation of these phenomena will naturally prompt the gazing mind to pose philosophical questions concerning the created/uncreated and finite/infinite nature of the phenomena observed. Observation will ultimately lead the spectator to considerations about the nature of the creator of the world and about who the creator is in accordance with his essence (τίς ὁ δημιουργός κατ' οὐσίαν) (Abr. 163) and the creator’s intentions with the creation of the world (Abr. 162–163). It is therefore clear (ἐξ οὗ ἐστίν) that wisdom and philosophy have received their beginnings from nothing other (ἅπ' οὐδενὸς ἐτέρου) than the things within us that originate from sight (τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ὅρασεως), the queen of the senses (τῆς ἡγεμονίδος τῶν αἰσθήσεων) (Abr. 164).

This idea of the interdependence between contemplation of the sense-perceptible world and philosophy is also maintained in De congressu, but here it is described as an interdependence between the encyclical studies and philosophy. In Congr. 15–18, Philo focuses on the usefulness of the preliminary studies in his description of grammar, music, geometry, dialectic and rhetoric and he describes these studies as generating a zeal for virtue.157 Philo points out, for example, that grammar will enable the student to study literature, which will produce intelligence and a wealth of learning (νόησιν καὶ πολυμάθειαν) (Congr. 15) and enable the student to despise empty imaginations, because the student, through the study of literature, is introduced to the calamities of the heroes and demi-gods (Congr. 15).158 Similarly Philo claims that geometry will produce a zeal for justice (δικαιοσύνης ζῆλον ἔμπουσθαι) as it sows the seeds of equality and analogy (ἰσότητος καὶ ἀναλογίας ἐμβαλλόμενη τὰ σπέρματα) in the soul that loves to learn (εἰς ψυχὴν φιλομαθὴ) (Congr. 16)159 so that eventually “we will become familiar with the royal virtues through the subjects” (Congr. 18).160 The preliminary studies have this potential because they are like the sojourner. Hagar is, as we saw, by interpretation a “sojourner” (Congr. 20), whereas Sarah is the native born (Congr. 22). As a sojourner Hagar, i.e. the representative of the preliminary studies, enjoys an amount of partnership (κοινωνία) with Sarah or virtue (Congr. 22). In Congr. 139–150, Philo refers to the

157 Cf. the use of the verb χράομαι in Congr. 3, 5, 11, 15, 19 and 24.
158 Cf. Sac. 78–79 and Abr. 23.
159 For the relationship between equality and justice in Philo’s thinking, see J. M. Bassler, Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 59; Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1982), 78–82.
160 διὰ τῶν ὑπηκόων ταῖς βασιλίσιν ἅρπτας γνωρισθησόμεθα (these are subjects in the sense that they can be subjects of a queen.)
relationship between sense perception and knowledge in a similar manner. In these paragraphs Philo broadens out the perspective to comprise the relationship between the preliminary studies and the pursuit of philosophy, with the result that the preliminary studies are highlighted as necessary for the pursuit of philosophy. The mind (ἡ διάνοια) is the eye of the eye (ὁφθαλμός ὁφθαλμῶν), the hearing of the hearing (άκοη ἀκοής) and sense of each of the senses (ἐκάστης τῶν αἰσθήσεων αἰσθησίας) because it makes use of each of these (χρωμένη ἐκείναις) and it passes judgment on the natures of the things studied (δικάζουσα αὐτὴ τὰς φύσεις τῶν ὑποκειμένων) (Congr. 143), for that which mind is to sense-perception (ὁ γάρ νοῦς πρὸς αἰσθησιν), knowledge is to art (τοῦτ’ ἐπιστήμη πρὸς τέχνην ἐστί) (Congr. 144). A few paragraphs later, Philo explains that geometrical figures like triangles, polygons and circles are the discoveries of geometry, whereas philosophy is concerned with the nature of the point and the line (146–147). Philosophy is, however, not only concerned with abstract knowledge about the nature of things, but also with the achievement of wisdom. In Congr. 79, Philo claims that the pursuit of knowledge aims not only to achieve an abstract understanding of the true nature of things, but also to acquire wisdom. Wisdom can be differentiated from knowledge of the true nature of things, because wisdom leads to a virtuous life and to the control of the passions, for “philosophy teaches control of belly, and control of the parts below the belly, and control of the tongue.”

---

161 See Mendelson, Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), 3: “Techne i in Philo may denote various arts, such as that of the painter, the sculptor, the performer, or the charioteer... . . . In view of the wide diversity of these uses, it is no wonder that Philo should introduce modifiers when techne refers specifically to the encycia. Thus, mesai technei in Congr. 143–44 clearly denotes the encyclical disciplines.”

162 Philo’s description seems to reflect a Platonic distinction between ideal archetypes and the particular images of the archetypes that are manifested in the world and that are perceived by the senses (cf. Philo’s argument in Mut. 146). These matters are captured by the mind. The mind is of a different kind compared to other parts of the soul, insofar as the mind consists of the same substance as divine natures such as the stars, which are minds in their purest forms, and it is the only thing in humans that is imperishable; see Deus 46–47 and Gig. 7. In Congr. 141 Philo adopts a Stoic definition of the difference between art (τέχνη) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη); see Philo, De congressu (F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL), 580. Philo appears to be indebted to both Plato and Stoics, insofar as he is both concerned with determining the true nature of things and with gaining wisdom, i.e., the art of living well. For a helpful introduction to the distinction between art and knowledge in Greek philosophy, see Richard Perry, “Episteme and Techne,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2014 Edition) (ed. Edward Z. Nalta) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-technethe/ Congr. 139–150 also reflects ancient ideas about a hierarchy of knowledge; see Wolfson, Philo, 2:3–11, and Mendelsohn, Secular Education, 33–38.

There has been some discussion in Philonic scholarship concerning the relationship between philosophy, wisdom and the Torah in Philo’s thinking. The salient point here is that wisdom, and particularly the life of wisdom, is presented as the goal of philosophy and that the life of wisdom is identical with a virtuous life lived in accordance with a proper attitude towards the passions. These thoughts clearly reflect ancient views and ideals of education and they clearly imply a hierarchical view of knowledge. Education is regarded as the vehicle that generates understanding. Students must begin with the most basic learning and from there make their way towards mastering the philosophical truths through which they eventually may reach their final goal, namely wisdom in the form of a virtuous life. In *De Congressu*, this is also described as the process that leads to true adulthood.

### 3.4.2 The Significance of Education for the Restoration of the Soul

In *De Congressu*, Philo describes the lover of learning’s progression towards the life of wisdom as a progression towards a life as an adult. The encyclical studies possess a key role for the achievement of true adulthood, as true adulthood can only be reached by means of proper education. Philo makes it clear that pursuit of the preliminary studies can only begin when the student is actually ready. Philo stresses this in *Congr.* 81–88, in which he expresses this thought by means of an allegorical interpretation of Gen 16:3. Philo takes notice of the fact that it is stressed in Gen 16:3 (LXX) that Sarah gives her handmaid Hagar to Abraham not immediately after his arrival to Canaan, but only after he had dwelt there for ten years (*Congr.* 71, 81). Philo interprets this peculiar fact as a description of a limited period of time in the life of the lover of learning, as Egypt is a symbol of passion, whereas the land of Canaan is a symbol of vice (*Congr.* 83). Egypt and Canaan, respectively, represent two distinct ages, namely the age of childhood and the age of adolescence, for these are by nature homelands; passion, or Egypt, is the homeland of the age of childhood (πατρίς παιδικῆς ἡλικίας), whereas Canaan, that is vice, is the homeland of the age of adolescence (πατρίς ἠβώσις

---

164 Wolfson stressed the significance of *Congr.* 79–80 in his argument for the subordination of philosophy to the Torah (wisdom according to Wolfson); see Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:149–154. David Winston points out, however, that it was quite common among Stoic thinkers in Philo’s days to distinguish between philosophy and wisdom with the result that wisdom in Philo’s thinking represents philosophy consummated; see David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria, the Contemplative Life, the Giants and Selections* (London: SPCK, 1981), 24–26. Runia positions himself somewhere in between these viewpoints by defining the Hebrew Scriptures as the indispensable touchstone for determining what the highest philosophy is. This implies that the Hebrew Scriptures are regarded as philosophical writings, reflecting a distinct view of the task of exegesis; see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, 535–541.
ἡλικίας) (Congr. 85). Furthermore, the age of adolescence represents the age at which man experiences both virtue and vice. For as the age of childhood is gone and the age of adolescence arrives, the twin qualities of virtue and vice (τὸ δίδυμον, ἀρετή καὶ κακία) emerge and “we” come to know both (ποιούμεθα τὴν κατάληψιν ἀμφοῖν). Certainly, we choose or prefer one or the other (ἀἱροῦμεθα πάντως τὴν ἐπέραν), with those of good natural disposition (οἱ εὐφυεῖς) choosing virtue, and those of the opposite disposition (οἱ ἐναντίοι) choosing vice (Congr. 82).

It is at this stage of human development that education becomes important and it is here that Abraham is introduced to the encyclical studies. Philo draws on his own experience in his interpretation of Gen 16:3. Philo, like Abraham, never forgot that virtue was also the real goal of the preliminary studies. He therefore never became heavily embroiled in any of the subjects of the preliminary studies (Congr. 73–78) and he, like Abraham, pursued the encyclical studies for the sake of virtue (Congr. 79–80). The fact that the encyclical studies are described as the remedy for the maladies of the age of adolescence reveals that the attainment of virtue should be regarded not as a matter of gaining mere knowledge, but rather as a matter of realizing one’s human potential. Those of good nature will in due time (symbolized by the perfect number 10 in Congr. 82) come to a longing for lawful instruction (νομίμου παιδείας . . . εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν ἐρχόμεθα) (Congr. 88).

Philo’s description of the development of the virtuous soul in Congr. 81–88 is roughly compatible with the description in Her. 293–299, in which Philo sketches four stages in life that must be passed in order to attain a restoration of the soul (ἀποκατάστασιν ψυχῆς) (Her. 293). The four stages are defined as childhood, adolescence, the age of philosophy, and the age of perfection. The age

---

165 Philo probably refers in these paragraphs to the Sophists, whom he considered as those who mastered the words but not the deeds (Congr. 67). For a fuller treatment of Philo’s view of the Sophists, see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (SNTSMS 96; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18–112. Regarding Philo’s view of the pitfalls of the encyclical studies, see Mendelsohn, *Secular Education*, 42–46, and for an evaluation of Philo’s own relationship to the educational system, see Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, 83–112 as well as Koskenniemi, “Philo and Classical Education,” 119–121.

166 It is worth noting that in Congr. 88, Philo defines the longing for education as a longing for lawful instruction. This clearly reflects Philo’s conviction that the Law of Moses represents the real paideia, that is, that the Law of Moses represents the truly beneficial philosophy; see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 77–78. This longing for lawful instruction is equivalent to the longing for virtue, for Philo describes the Mosaic Laws as expressions of the virtues; see Cohen, “The Greek Virtues and the Mosaic Laws in Philo,” 9–19.

167 In Opif. 103–105 Philo describes the stages of life with the help of a tenfold scheme. Here perfection is reached in the eighth stage. For another description of the stages in the development of the virtuous soul, see Sacr. 15–16.

168 In Congr. 19, Philo contrasts the milky food of infancy with more solid foods meant for later stages in life and identifies the preliminary studies as the food, which is meant for the soul of childhood (τῇ ψυχῇ παιδικάς) (Congr. 19) whereas perfect food is appropriate for true men (πρεπούσας ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀληθῶς) (Congr. 19). See also Agr. 9.
of philosophy is defined as “the healing” (Her. 298), which is followed by the age of perfection in which the soul is immovably established in virtue and in which the soul has turned away from sinning (ἀποστραφέα τού διαιμαρτάνειν) and has been displayed as an heir of wisdom (κληρονόμος ἀποδείκνυται σοφίας) (Her. 298). Quis rerum divinarum heres sit 293–299 expresses a similar view of philosophy, whereby philosophy is the discipline that leads to wisdom, which can be defined as consummated philosophy or consummated virtue.169 This description is roughly compatible with Philo’s description of the different life stages in Prob. 160. In this text, the age of childhood is defined as the time for milk, followed by the time for soft food, defined as the guidance through the encyclical studies. This is followed by the time for solid food, which refers to the time for philosophy, and is finally succeeded by the mode of existence characterized by the reaching of manhood (ἀνδρωθεῖσα) (Prob. 160). Manhood is, in good Stoic manner, and with an explicit reference to Zeno, defined as living in accordance with nature (Prob. 160).170

Philo would, of course, not see any contradiction at all between a life in accordance with nature and a life lived in accordance with the Law of Moses, since he regarded the patriarchs themselves as living laws, that is, as men who followed the natural law, and whose lives therefore were equivalent with a life lived in accordance with the written Law of Moses (see Abr. 4–6).171 For the lover of learning, however, such a life is reached by means of education, firstly by means of the preliminary studies and secondly by means of superior learning, i.e. by means of philosophy. It should be recognized that Philo claims that proper education causes the restoration and the healing of the

---

171 In these paragraphs Philo depicts the patriarchs as following the Stoic ideal of living in conformity with nature, as he does in Mos 2.48. In Abr. 60–61 he describes Abraham as following the Pythagorean ideal of “following God,” while in Opif. 142–44 he describes the telos of human living in Platonic terms as “becoming like unto God.” This terminological flexibility is probably an expression of Philo’s conviction that devotion to the Mosaic Law enabled man to fulfill the telos of human living as it was described in Greek philosophy; see Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato 461–67. Recent work on Philo’s view of natural law makes the point that Philo is unique in identifying three concepts of higher law (νόμος φύσεως – the law of nature; ἄγραφος νόμος – the unwritten law; and νόμος ξενόφυσος – the living law) as a unity, and in being able to describe precisely what is and what is not in accordance with natural law. This precise definition of the content of natural law is possible, because the Mosaic Law is a reasonable and true copy of the law of nature; see John W. Martens, One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law (Boston: Brill, 2003), 83–101.
human soul. Becoming educated is, in other words, not only a matter of attaining adulthood – it is a matter of becoming truly human.  

### 3.4.3 Preliminary Summary

Abraham represents in *De Congressu* the lover of learning who achieves consummated virtue by means of teaching, i.e., via the preliminary studies and philosophy. Consummated philosophy leads to a life in wisdom or consummated virtue – in other words a life in accordance with nature. Philo’s description of the lover of learning’s path to virtue is deeply embedded in ancient convictions about the significance of education. Education is simply the sine qua non for the lover of learning’s achievement of wisdom or virtue. It is therefore fully justifiable to conclude that Philo “embraces a view of education whereby the truly virtuous life by necessity is reserved for the elite.” However, Alan Mendelson suggests also that Philo is able to describe things from different perspectives, and hence “from a philosophical point of view, Philo appropriates the elitism of Platonic educational theory with little modification. . . . When Philo introduces a theological perspective, however, he departs from Plato’s elitism.” It is to this theological perspective that we now turn.

### 3.5 The Pious Perspective on the Lover of Learning’s Attainment of Virtue

#### 3.5.1 The Virtues as God’s Gracious Presence in the World

It is beyond the scope of this investigation to give an exhaustive review of the significance of the Logos in Philo’s thinking. However, it may be argued that Philo’s description of Sarah has much in

---

172 Philo appears in this way to be representative of the view Morgan ascribes to Quintilian and Pseudo-Plutarch respectively: “The tendency to reason on its own, however, does not guarantee full human status. Even the uneducated child who has reason is likened to agricultural land which has to be worked. . . . [Pseudo-Plutarch’s] point here seems to be that the aim of life is to live virtuously and wisely, that we are predisposed by our nature to these things, but that education is needed to cultivate them” (Morgan, *Literate Education*, 247, 248).


175 The same goes for the philosophical background for Philo’s concept of the Logos. Peter Frick has, however, with references to the works of H. Horowitz, David Winston and David Runia in a helpful and succinct way described the philosophical background for Philo’s view of the Logos as “a synthesis of Platonic and Stoic thought. Arising from the
common with his description of God, and that this can be explained on the basis of his convictions regarding the relationship between the Logos and the virtues. In order to clarify these matters, it would be helpful to begin by referring to David Runia’s description of three levels in which the Logos is related to the world. The Logos is firstly related to the world as the place of the noetic cosmos. This is the Logos as the plan or model for the visible cosmos. In this way, it can be referred to as ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς, τὸ παράδειγμα, ἀρχέτυπος ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν (Opif. 25). For Runia, this is “the noetic aspect of the Logos.” The Logos as the place of the noetic cosmos can also be defined as the transcendent aspect of the Logos. Secondly, the Logos is related to the world as the instrument of the creation. Here “the Logos is employed by God the creator as the instrument (ὄργανον) through or with which (δι' οὗ or ὑ) he creates the cosmos. The Creator does not enter into direct contact with matter, but employs the Logos as cutter (τομεύς), which he wets like a sword so that it can perform its task with skill and precision.” Thirdly, and in this context perhaps most importantly, the Logos functions in Philo’s thinking as a replacement for the cosmic soul of Plato’s Timaeus. This entails that “the Logos is assigned the function of representing the immanent presence of the divine in the cosmos” and that the Logos “may thus be regarded as the instrument of God’s never-ceasing creative activity and maintenance of the cosmos.” It is on this third level

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 447.

---


---

Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria [TSAJ 77; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], 74 note 60. Frick also points attention to David Winston, Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria, 15 who points out that the Logos “could readily be assimilated to the ‘word of God’ in Scripture, which had been rendered in the Septuagint by the term logos.”

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 447.

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 447.

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 447.

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 447.

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 448.

---

Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 448. Runia points out that “the Stoic had transmuted Plato’s cosmic soul into their Logos and the ‘modernized’ concept passed into Middle Platonism” (ibid., 449). The description given here of the levels of the Logos and their respective relationships to the cosmos reflects the tension between God’s transcendence and immanence, which consistently occurs in theistic accounts of the concept of God as these accounts attempt to describe the relationship between God and creation. It is beyond the scope of this investigation to give an independent treatment of this problem. However, the basic problem and Philo’s solution to it have been described in the following ways: “God is always utterly transcendent above the world as he is always utterly immanent in the world. There can be no exclusion of one over the other and no metamorphosis of one into the other. Any such transformation imperils the very idea of Philo’s concept of God as being both wholly transcendent and immanent” (Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, 59). David Runia describes in general terms the Logos as “that aspect or part of the divine that stands in relation to created reality” and contends that “through the doctrine of the Logos God can be said to be immanent in the universe which he created without the affirmation of his transcendence being put at risk” (Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 449, 450). David Winston asserts that “Philo thus
of the Logos that God is working through his beneficent and legislative or punitive powers and the virtues should similarly be regarded as a reflection of the presence of the divine Logos in the world.

That this is related to Philo’s view of the virtues can be seen from his account of the Logos as given in Leg. 1.43–72 and Somn. 2.241–244. In Leg. 1.43–47 Philo explains the meaning of the phrase “God planted a paradise in Eden” (Leg. 1.43; Gen 2:8). He immediately dismisses the thought that God actually planted anything in the world, for not even the whole cosmos would be a piece of land and dwelling place worthy for God, since he is his own place (Leg. 1.44). Philo therefore identifies paradise with virtue, with the result that the planting of paradise described in Gen 2:8 really refers to the planting of virtue in Eden (Leg. 1.43). Later, Philo explains the meaning of the river in the garden, which eventually separates itself into four distinct rivers. Philo identifies these four rivers as the four cardinal virtues, prudence (φρόνησις), self-control (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) (Leg. 1.63). Philo sums up the significance of the words from Scripture that a river comes out from Eden to water paradise by asserting that “river’ is generic virtue, that is, goodness. This comes out from Eden, that is the wisdom of God, that is the Logos of God” (Leg. 1.65).182

It follows from this description of virtue that generic virtue flows from the Logos and that the singular virtues flow from or originates from generic virtue. It would therefore be a matter of gross impiety to ascribe virtue to one self.183 In Somn. 2.242–243 Philo similarly identifies the mother-river of Gen 2:10 as the Logos that is separated into four heads which again are identified as four virtues. This is interpreted in light of the words of Psalm 64:10 (LXX), according to which the river of God is full of water, and in light of the words of Psalm 45:5 (LXX), according to which the strong current of the river makes the city of God glad (Somn. 2.245–246). The city is subsequently identified both as the whole cosmos – for the stream of the river overflows everything (πάντα διὰ πάντων –

182 Ποταμὸς ἡ γενική ἐστιν ἅρετη, ἡ ἁγαθότης, αὐτὴ ἐκφορεύεται ἐκ τῆς Ἑδέμ, τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίας ἢ δὲ ἐστιν ὁ θεοῦ λόγος (Leg. 1.65).
183 Philo makes this point unambiguously clear in Leg. 1.48–49.
Somn. 2.247) and as the soul of Sage, “for in one sense he calls the cosmos a city of God . . . and in another sense he calls the soul of the Sage a city of God, in which God is also said to walk about as in a city, for I will walk, he says, in you and I will be your God” (Somn. 2.248).184

In Leg. 1.61–62 Philo accounts for the ways the Logos operates within the cosmos via an allegorical interpretation of the significance of the trees in Eden. Here, Philo explains that the mind receives all kinds of impressions both good and shameful and that these impressions causes either virtue or vice to spread in the soul. Whenever the mind receives the stamp of virtue, it becomes the tree of life (which Philo in Leg. 1.59 has identified as generic virtue), whereas whenever it receives the impression of wickedness, it becomes the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Leg. 1.61). In Leg. 1.62 Philo clarifies that this reception of impressions takes place whenever people are forming images (ὑπάρχουσι φαντασιούμενοι) of the things that pertain to virtue (τὰ ἁρετῆς). Such a person is overwhelmed by the virtues and that person’s life is changed accordingly. It is natural to think that Philo’s words mirror ancient convictions regarding the potential of education to actually develop pupils’ minds.185 This is confirmed from the text itself, insofar as Philo in Leg. 1.61 points out that the dominant part (τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν) is all-receptive (πανδεχές) and resembles wax (ἔοικε κηρῷ) that receives (δεχομένῳ) all kinds of impressions both good and shameful (καλοὺς τε καὶ άσχρούς).

This comparison of the human mind with the waxed wooden tablets used in ancient education is a well-known topos in ancient philosophical writings, whereby teaching was often compared to the making of impressions on wax.186 The fact that this description of the forming of images in the mind of the things that pertain to virtue is given in a context in which the virtues are described as being organically related to the Logos reveals that the classroom experience should be regarded as an experience of divine intervention. The reception of the virtuous impressions that are mediated by teaching should be viewed as the reception of a portion of the divine Logos, which is God’s way of

184 πόλιν γὰρ θεοῦ καθ’ ἕνα μὲν τρόπον τῶν κόσμων καλεῖ . . . καθ’ ἔτερον δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ σοφοῦ, ἥ λέγεται καὶ ἐμπεριστατεῖν ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἐν πόλει: ‘περιπατήσω’ γὰρ φησιν ‘ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ἔσομαι ἐν ὑμῶν θεός’ (Somn. 2.248).
186 See also Mut. 211–212, here Philo compares the educable nature with wax, which – in marked contrast to nature unfit for learning – is actually able to receive the impressions stamped upon it and to preserve these impressions in the memory.
being present in the cosmos.\footnote{See Zeller, Charis bei Philon und Paulus, 88, 89 who with a reference to Fug. 141 concludes that “the Bewegung auf Got hin ist also immer schon überholt von einer Gegenbewegung von Gott her . . . Die χάριτες signalisieren dies Entgegenkommen Gottes.”} This description of the virtues correlates neatly with Philo’s more general description of the Logos, according to which the Logos should be regarded as God’s way of bestowing goodness on the universe and humanity.\footnote{See Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, 17–20.} Philo’s description of the Logos clarifies how Philo can maintain that (a) even though virtue is gained from teaching it is ultimately given by God and (b) that divine inspiration reaches its apex as humans ascribe all good things to God.

### 3.5.2 The Effects of Divine Inspiration: Control of the Passions and an Enhanced Understanding of God as the Source of Human Virtue

#### 3.5.2.1 Introduction

Philo’s description of the relationship between the Logos and the virtues reveals that there is an intimate connection between the logos and the virtues. Whenever the mind is exposed to virtue or reason it is exposed to the Logos and thus to divine inspiration. Hence, Philo refers to virtue as something that springs from divine inspiration and virtue must therefore be regarded as a gift from God. In De Congressu Philo argues not only that virtue is something that comes from God, but also that virtue is something that manifests itself in the acknowledgement that virtue and all other good things come from God. Those who reach perfection know that their virtue and all other good things must be ascribed to God. Hence, virtue is something that ultimately manifests itself in a certain attitude towards God, i.e., in an acknowledgement of dependency on the grace of God.

Philo reads Gen 16:1–6 allegorically as a description of the relationship between the mind engaged in the encyclical studies (Abraham as related to Hagar) and the mind that is well acquainted with wisdom (Abraham as related to Sarah). In the beginning of the treatise Abraham is described as someone who is married to Sarah, but who is not yet ready to receive her offspring. In Congr. 1, 2, 6, 9, 11, 12 Philo refers to Sarai (Σάρα), whereas in the rest of the treatise he refers to Sarah (Σάρρα). Sarai (Σάρα) refers to ruler of me (ἀρχή μου) and ruler of me only (ἀρχή ἐμοῦ μόνου – Congr. 2). Hence, Sarai refers to virtue in me, which means that at this stage virtue is only personal and not generic. At a later stage, Abraham will be able to receive offspring from Sarah, i.e., he will be able...
to receive generic and imperishable virtue. Abraham represents the lover of learning (ὁ φιλομαθής) (Congr. 16), who is eager both to learn and to attain virtue (Congr. 63) and Sarah represents the inherent virtue that spurs Abraham to take Hagar as his wife (Congr. 71).

At the beginning of his treatise, Philo stresses that at this stage Abraham’s virtue is undeveloped and hence not generic. To gain virtue in a generic form, the mind must first be exposed to the learning that comes from the encyclical studies and thereafter to the learning that comes from philosophy. Sarai is therefore the wisdom (φρόνησις) (Congr. 2) or reason (λογισμός) (Congr. 63) that spurs the lover of learning to seek knowledge first from the encyclical studies and later from philosophy. Philo makes it clear that he is engaged in describing types of human minds (Congr. 180), but his description of virtue as something that flows from the Logos itself suggests that the human soul’s exposure to the doctrines of learning should be regarded as an exposure to divine inspiration as well. But how does this exposure to learning (or to virtue or to the Logos) affect the life of the learner? We have already seen that Philo believes that the soul that gets exposed to the doctrines of philosophy will learn control of the belly. i.e., control of the passions that are associated with childhood and adolescence (Congr. 80–88). There is more to say. Philo points out that philosophy not only teaches (ἀναδιδάσκει) control of the belly (ἐγκράτειαν γαστρός) but also control of the tongue (ἐγκράτειαν γλώττης) (Congr. 80). These things are desirable in themselves but have only reached their intended goals if they are pursued for the sake of the honour and pleasure of God (εἰ θεοῦ τιμῆς καὶ ἀρεσκείας ἐνεκα ἐπιτηδεύοιτο) (Congr. 80). Hence, virtue (and thus divine inspiration) does not only manifest itself in the killing of the passions, but also in a concern for the glory of God. This point is hammered home in two passages in De Congressu, namely Congr. 122–130 and 153–180 to which we now turn.

### 3.5.2.2 The Difference between Real and Imagined Pregnancy

In Congr. 122–130, knowledge is described as something active and conceiving and as prompting pregnancy. Philo is led to this description by the fact that Abraham went in to Hagar (Gen 16:4; Congr. 122). He compares this with Judah (Gen 38:18), another lover of learning, who was eager to investigate the unexplored virtue represented by Tamar behind her veil, and who therefore went

---

190 See Cher. 7–8 for Philo’s clarification of the significance of the name Sarai and Sarah.
into her with the result that “she conceived” (Congr. 126). The lover of learning naturally longs for
learning, but Philo similarly describes the art of science as a power that drags the lover of learning
to itself and the learner therefore wants to have an instructess (Congr. 127). The paragraphs (128–
130) immediately following this statement make it clear that Philo is concerned with accounting for
the conception of virtue. Philo takes pain to stress that virtue must be regarded as coming from
God, even though it is gained from teaching. This is clear in Congr. 127–130 from his critique of
teachers of the preliminary studies. Philo claims that these teachers often demand huge fees just as
they often excluded poor but gifted students who had a longing for learning (Congr. 127).191 He also
criticizes these teachers for considering themselves to be the sole reason behind the students’
attainment of learning. Philo describes this as a matter of having in the womb (τὸ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχειν’),
of becoming swollen (οἰδεῖν) and of having been puffed up (τετυφῶσθαι) (Congr. 128). This
description prompts Philo to distinguish between those who fancy that they have conceived virtue
themselves and those who are actually pregnant, but who ascribe their pregnancy to God. Those
who are puffed up use fine phrases (σεμνομυθοῦσιν) as they ascribe to themselves (ἐαυτάς ἐπιγράφουσαι) the choice and birth (την ἁγίας καὶ γένες), whereas those who desire to receive
(αἱ λαμβάνειν ἄξιοῦσαι) concede or confess (συνομολογοῦσι) that they have nothing from
themselves (μηδὲν οἰκεῖον ἐξ οὐ ἀυτῶν ἔχειν) and they push away from themselves the greatest evil,
self-love (φιλαυτίαν) as they attain (καταλαμβάνουσαι) the seeds (τὰ σπέρματα) and the offspring
(τὰς γόνας) that are watered (ἐξωθεὶν ἄρδομένας) upon them from without (Congr. 130).192

191 Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 60–61 refers to Sextus Empiricus, according to whom the teachers of the
preliminary studies exaggerated their own significance. This critique echoes a general condescending attitude among
the elite towards teachers of the encyclical studies. See also Vegge, Paulus und das antike Schulwesen, 241–242 who
points to Epicurus, the Cynics, and some philosophers of the early Stoa in order to exemplify a critical attitude of
philosophers towards the encyclical studies. Raffaella Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic
and Roman Egypt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 59–65 gives a historical estimation of the social status
of teachers and draws attention to the opposite point of view, that is, to the fact that some teachers struggled to get
students to pay for their education.

192 Philo makes a similar point with respect to the progressing man in Leg. 3.136. Here he points out that it is
necessary (δεῖ) that the soul confesses (ὁμολογοῦσαν) that (ὅτι) it is not its own strength or power (οὐχ ἢ ἐξ ὑπής ἀυτὴς οὐδὲ ἢ δύναμις) that has acquired the good (περιεποίησε τὸ καλὸν), but rather the one who has given (ὁ χαρισάμενος) the love of the good (τὸν ἐρωτά). Philo can even claim that the proper attitude to virtue is a matter of
either atheism or piety. In Leg. 1.48–49 he stresses that it is fitting for God (πρέπει τῷ θεῷ) to plant and to build
(φυτεύειν καὶ οἰκοδομεῖν) the virtues in the soul (ἐν ψυχῇ τὰς ἀρετὰς) (Leg. 1.48). The mind is self-loving and atheistic
(φιλαυτὸς καὶ ἄθεος) when it supposes itself (οἰόμενος) to be equal to God (ὁσος εἶναι θεῷ) (Leg. 1.49).
Philo claims that virtue is gained when people are acted upon from without, that is, when people are acted upon by God. This implies that God is depicted as the creator and father of the virtuous mind and that humans are depicted as passive actors that receive their form from God. Those who consider these matters differently ascribe their choice and attainment of virtue to themselves. The fact that Philo wants to ascribe both the choice and birth of virtue to God reveals that every dimension of the human acquisition of virtue must be ascribed to God. This is equally clear from his concluding interpretation of Gen 16:6, by means of which he rounds off the argument of the entire book.

3.5.2.3 Two Concurrent Perspectives on Sarah’s Affliction of Hagar in Gen 16:6

In Congr. 153, Philo begins to explain the significance of the words of Gen 16:6 (LXX) “Look the servant girl is in your hands, make use of her as it may be pleasing to you, and Sarah mistreated her.” Philo interprets Sarah’s mistreatment of Hagar as a reference to the toil that necessarily accompanies the acquisition of learning. This is also the reason, Philo claims, that the unleavened bread in Deut. 16:4, which represents the feast of the soul, is described as the bread of mistreatment (Congr. 161), just as it is the reason that the statutes of the law were given in Marah. Marah means “bitterness” and this reflects the fact that injustice is pleasant, while just-dealing is painful (Congr. 163). This is the reason that some people lose heart in their attempted unlearning of the passions, while others struggle successfully through the contest of life (Congr. 163–165). Philo stresses, however, the significance of the fact that the water in Marah was sweetened (Exod 25:25). This means on the one hand that the victory in the contest of life does not come about by means of unaided toil (Congr. 166), and on the other hand, that the reference to the toil that succeeds in the contest of life should be regarded as a reference to the nature which is fond of learning and a lover

---

193 Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 179–197 has drawn attention to how Philo’s interpretation of Gen 2:7 in Leg. 1. 31–42 has in common with the Aristotelian theory of epigenesis that reason is described as something that supervenes from the outside. According to the Aristotelian theory of generation, the female principle provides the material, whereas the male principle provides that which forms the material into its shape. The fact that Philo describes God as the one who inbreathes reason and in so doing gives form to the human mind means that “God becomes the ultimate male who only has the role of the begetter. . . . human beings become fully born through a continual development in which the maternal matter is subjected to the formative forces of the male sentient soul, the divine breath of reason, and ultimately the divine spirit of prophetic inspiration” (ibid., 193). Philo’s references to human passivity seems therefore to be given in contexts in which Philo is concerned with describing the fundamental nature of human lives; humans are creatures that ought to be defined as those who are acted upon and formed by God.
of the good. Hence, it is not mere toil that brings victory in the contest of life, for Moses says that
the water was sweetened “and sweet and pleasant toil is by another name called love of labor. For
the sweet thing in toil is desire and longing and zeal and love of the good” (Congr. 166).

Thus, Philo stresses that the victory in the contest of life or in the battle against the passions is not
won easily. This battle can only be won by means of hard work or toil — and not only by toil, insists
Philo, but by toil that has been sweetened, which in turn is another way of referring to the zeal and
love of the good. Thus, victory in the contest of life is won by the qualities of zeal and love of the
good. This cannot be taken as signifying anything other than the nature that desires and loves the
good. In the context of Philo’s interpretation of Abraham, this must be taken as a reference to the
nature of Abraham. This fact corresponds to Philo’s comment in Congr. 82, referred to above that
the well-disposed nature chooses virtue rather than vice. Even more importantly, Philo adds yet
another perspective to the fact that Sarah mistreated Hagar.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that God should be regarded as the implicit and actual agent
behind the unlearning of the passions. In Congr. 170–174, Philo interprets Sarah’s mistreatment of
Hagar in light of the words of Deut 8:2, according to which God made the people of Israel weak with
famine. Philo immediately rejects the literal understanding of Deut 8:2 as an outright impious
thought with a reference to one of his axiomatic ideas, namely the essential goodness of God, “for
God is good and cause of good things, benefactor, savior, a foster-father, a wealth-bringer and
generous, as he has driven away wickedness from the holy boundaries” (Congr. 171). Thus, God
because of his essential goodness, cannot be thought of as the author of any actual affliction or
famine. Deuteronomy 8:2 must therefore be interpreted allegorically as a reference to the
unlearning of the passions with the result that

the ‘she mistreated’ is equivalent with the ‘she disciplined’ and ‘she admonished’ and ‘she encouraged’ and that
the ‘he expose to famine’ is not equivalent with ‘he brought about a want of food and drink,’ but that ‘he brought

194 γλυκὸς δὲ καὶ ἡδύς πόνος ἔτέρω ὀνόματι φιλοπονία καλεῖται. τὸ γὰρ ἐν πόνῳ γλυκὸ ἔρως ἐστὶ καὶ πόθος καὶ ζῆλος
καὶ φιλία τοῦ καλοῦ (Congr. 166).
195 ἀγαθὸς γὰρ καὶ ἀγαθῶν αἴτιος, εὐεργέτης, σωτὴρ, τροφεύς, πλουτοφόρος, μεγαλόδωρος, κακίαν ὄριον ἱερῶν
ἀπεληλακώς (Congr. 171).
about a want of pleasures and desires’ both fears and sorrow and misdeeds and in general all, which is works of either vices or passions. (Congr. 172)

In summary, Philo presents two interpretations of the fact that Sarah mistreated Hagar. On the one hand, the mistreatment of Hagar is viewed as a reference to the toil that is associated with learning. This is not unaided toil, but toil that is pursued by the kind of nature that is filled with a desire, longing, zeal and love of the good. On the other hand, it is interpreted as a reference to the fact that God brought about a want of pleasures or desires in Hagar, that is, in the mind involved in the preliminary studies (Congr. 180). It follows from Philo’s interpretation of Gen 16:6 not only that victory in the contest of life is gained by the qualities of zeal and love of the good, but also that the victory is given by God. In fact, the first point seems to prove the latter. These two perspectives on the lover of learning’s achievement of virtue are compatible if one remembers that the virtue-loving nature in Philo’s writings represents both the intrinsic character of the soul and divine inspiration as well as divine operations in the soul. Hence, Philo maintains that God imparts virtue even if it appears to the naked eye as though virtue comes from within human beings themselves.

3.6 Summary

In De Congressu Philo clearly articulates the idea that Abraham represents the kind of soul that moves from being engaged in encyclical studies to becoming a man of wisdom. Abraham is presented as the lover of learning who attains virtue by means of education. As a lover of learning he also qualifies as a lover of virtue and a lover of the good. In other words, Abraham was in possession of a nature that had the potential of being taught. He thus appears in De congressu as an example of a man who moves from being enrolled in the encyclical studies to being engaged in philosophy and who ends up as man of wisdom, that is, as a wise man who had attained virtue in a consummated form. Philo’s presentation of Abraham’s attainment of virtue reflects an ancient view

196 τὸ μὲν “ἐκάτωσε” ἰσον ἐστι τῷ ἐπαιδευσε καὶ ἐνουθέτησε καὶ ἐσωφρόνισε, τὸ δὲ “λιμῷ παρέβαλεν” οὐ σιτίων καὶ ποτῶν εἰγάσαστο ἐνδεικτικα, ἀλλ’ ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν φόβων τε καὶ λύπης καὶ ἀδικημάτων καὶ συνόλως ἀπάντων διὰ ἕκακῶν ἐστιν ἢ παθῶν ἔργα (Congr. 172).

197 Philo leaves out the theological perspective on the passage in his allegorical interpretation of Gen 16:6 in QG 3.24. Here the affliction is described as mirroring of the fact that encyclical studies are subordinated wisdom and that wisdom is capable of using the encyclical studies in a proper way. On the whole is it worth noticing that the divine perspective on Gen 16:1–4 and 6 that is prominent in De congressu is virtually absent in Philo’s exposition in Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin. It only comes to the fore in the literal interpretation of Gen 16:1 in which the pregnancy of Sarah is ascribed to the work of divine power (QG 3.13).
of education known from the writings of several contemporary thinkers, and his account of Abraham’s path to virtue reflects the view that education was a vehicle for the restoration of the human soul.

Nevertheless, Philo also takes pain to articulate the idea that Abraham’s virtue should be regarded as something that comes from God. Abraham’s God-given nature not only pursues virtue but also has the potential for being taught and for being formed in accordance with what it is taught. The lover of learning gets exposed to virtue through education and accordingly attains virtue from the things that he or she is taught. But this exposure to virtue should also be regarded as exposure to God, or more precisely, to the Logos of God, insofar as the virtues represent the presence of the Logos in the world. Hence, God is not only the giver of the nature that longs for virtue but also the one that forms that nature in accordance with the virtue that it longs for. Philo describes the lover of learning as someone that is exposed to divine inspiration both from within and without. Abraham’s path to perfection is thus presented as a paradigmatic expression of what divine inspiration implies and entails. Divine inspiration is described as something that both operates from within the human soul and from outside the human soul. As the lover of learning is exposed to teaching, his innate potential is brought to completion. However, this innate potential is itself something that derives from inspiration and hence completion is something that is gained as two forms of divine inspiration – the one that engages the lover of learning from within and the one that engages the lover of learning from without – are joined to one another.

Philo’s portrait of Abraham’s path to perfection reflects the fact that divine inspiration is the vehicle through which the human mind is formed in accordance with God’s will. His portrait in De Congressu of Abraham’s path to virtue reveals that the progressing soul experience divine inspiration in two successive stages and that the second stage is configured as a kind of divine impregnation. Gitte

198 Kooten, Paul’s Anthropology in Context, 293 suggests that “instead of describing Philo’s soteriology as ‘educational’, it is perhaps more appropriate to call it a ‘psychological soteriology’, which aims at the formation of the soul.” Philo’s argument in De Congressu suggests that Philo’s soteriology was clearly both educational and psychological.

199 This corresponds to Kyle Wells’ observation that: “in many cases humans are dependent upon God, not only because their agencies are grounded upon his own generative energies, and not only because human agency represents a share in divine agency, but also because his agency is necessary to bring their endeavours to fruition” (Wells, Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism, 205).
Buch-Hansen mentions that “about this final impregnation of the mind by God’s spirit, Philo says that it is a kind of generation that has ‘no mother, but only a father who is (the Father) of all’ (QE 2:46)” and that “in fact, the δευτέρα γένεσις is a divine autogenesis in which the mind created by God’s inbreathing is further fertilized by His spirit. In this sense, it is also a monogenesis.”

At the same time, one may also point out that divine inspiration is pictured as something that manifests itself in human agency, insofar as it manifests itself in human longing and yearning and in human acts of making choices. But how do divine and human agency then relate to one another? And is it then possible to talk about human agency in any real or meaningful way?

It might be too early to answer these questions definitively at this stage of this examination. However, it may be noticed already that divine agency or divine inspiration is not configured as something that bypasses human understanding. Divine inspiration is configured as something that enables the progressing soul to realize something about God, namely that God is the cause of all good things. This is the reason that divine agency manifests in human agency, i.e., in human choices and human convictions about God. The fact that humans are acted upon by God – both from with and from without – means that humans are passive in the sense that they are being formed by God in accordance with his will. However, this process does not manifest itself in human passivity. To the contrary, it manifests itself in human activity, i.e., in virtue, which should not be characterized as a passive state. Hence, the fact that God is the only Father of human virtue means that God is described as the Father of human agency. Hence, Philo’s argument in De Congressu suggests not only that divine and human agency are related to one another by kinship but also that God is the one who causes humans to pursue and attain virtue.

Nonetheless, for now, it must suffice to observe that Philo takes pain to stress that the impious mind ascribes its acquisition of virtue to itself, whereas the pious mind ascribes it to God. Hence, in De Congressu Philo stresses that those who gain virtue in consummated form not only gain control of the belly, but also acknowledge that virtue and all good things come from God. This is therefore the defining mark of the fully inspired and righteous mind that it acknowledges its own dependence on

200 Buch-Hansen, it Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 193. Cf. QE 2.46 LCL note f “So the Greek frag., ἡ δὲ ἀνάκλησις τοῦ προφήτου δευτέρα γένεσις ἐστι τῆς προτέρας ἁμέλεως.”
God. This means not only that virtue must be ascribed to God, but also that divine inspiration is something that causes the human mind to ascribe virtue to God. It follows from this description that humans are righteous insofar as they acknowledge that all good things come from God. It is therefore only those who are humble and not puffed up that are truly righteous and who can claim virtue as their own. It would therefore be a gross mistake to describe Abraham’s attainment of virtue as a purely human achievement. Those “who have in the womb” falsely ascribe their choice of virtue to themselves. It follows from this description that even the human choice to pursue virtue must be ascribed to God. This is so, because Philo configures divine inspiration not only as a call to partnership with virtue, but also as a gift of a zeal and longing for virtue. Hence, Abraham’s pursuit of virtue reflects the good shape of his nature and thus his choice of virtue must be ascribed to God, because his pursuit of learning and virtue is prompted by his virtue-loving nature, which itself is not only a gift of creation but also of inspiration.

In brief, it may be summarized that divine inspiration is configured as something that affects human desires and longings, spurring humans to pursue wisdom and virtue. It is also configured as something that affects human understanding, as it manifests itself in the human acknowledgement of its own dependency on God. Finally, divine inspiration is configured as a gift of divine power, as the natures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob themselves are defined not only as graces (χάριτες) but also as powers (δύναμεις) (Abr. 53–54). Philo’s tendency to describe divine agency as an extension of God’s own power is neatly expressed in Abr. 59, in which Philo makes use of the topos that compares the attainment of virtue through education to climbing to the top of a mountain. Philo makes use of this topos in a telling way. He points out that the steep roads are toilsome and slow and that many things pull the climbing person in the opposite direction. However, this does not matter much when God who has made the soul dependent on his powers (ἐκ τῶν αὐτοῦ δυνάμεων ἀνακρεμάσας τὴν ψυχὴν) by a mightier drawing (ὁ λειτοματῶτερα) draws the soul to himself (πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπισπάσηται) (Abr. 59). In other words, the road to virtue is laborious. The top can only

---

201 This was a common topos in antiquity, see Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 33–36 and Morgan, Literate Education, 262.
202 This image of divine “drawing” has precedence in Greek philosophical literature, beginning with Homer who depicts Zeus as the one who is able to draw the whole world up on a golden chain (Il. 8.19). Plato describes inspiration as divinity moving the poets like a magnet (Ion. 533D-E). For Neo-platonic interpretations of Homer’s depiction of Zeus’s golden chain, see Robert Lamberton, Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and Growth of the Epic Tradition (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 9; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 271–273.
be reached by those who are willing to work hard to reach it. Even so, whenever a person reaches the top, it is because God has drawn that person to the top, or more precisely, because God has drawn that person to himself. In the next chapter, we will focus our attention on Philo’s description of the process whereby humans (particularly Abraham) are drawn to God himself.
Chapter 4. Abraham’s Path to the Vision of God according to De Migratione Abrahami

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Centrality of the Motif of Self-Examination

De Migratione Abrahami is an allegorical commentary on Gen 12:1–4 and 6. The first part is devoted to Gen 12:1–3. The call in Gen 12:1 to depart from one’s country and kindred is interpreted as a call to depart from the body and sense perception (Migr. 9–10). Philo interprets the promises referred to in Gen 12:1–2 as the five gifts (cf. Migr. 70, 127) that the departing Abraham will receive as a result of his migration. The first promise, the promise of the land, represents in many ways the end destination of the entire migration and it thus becomes clear that the migration will lead to a contemplation of the perfect good, a change of the soul, and the acquirement of goodness, i.e., the particular virtues and the practices that accord with these and, ultimately, immortality (Migr. 36). The first part of the treatise (Migr. 1–126) expounds on the nature of the gifts whereas the second part is devoted to an exposition of Gen 12:4 and 6. This part of the treatise focuses (by virtue of the references to Abraham’s travelling in Gen 12:4 and 6) on Abraham’s journey. Interestingly, the reward for the departure is now referred to in good Socratic manner as an acknowledgement of one’s own ignorance. To think that one knows nothing (τὸ γὰρ μηδὲν οἶεσθαί εἰδέναι) is the perfection of knowledge (πέρας ἐπιστήμης), insofar as only one is wise (ἐνὸς ὄντος μόνου σοφοῦ) i.e., the one who is also the only God (τοῦ καὶ μόνου θεοῦ) (Migr. 134).

It should be stressed that Philo describes Abraham’s migration from Chaldea as a call to self-examination. In Migr. 8 Philo ascribes the famous Delphic oracle (γίνωσκε σεαυτόν) to Moses when he admonishes his readers to: “evermore know yourself as also Moses teaches many times saying: pay attention to yourself.”203 Abraham’s migration is thus interpreted as a migration from self-knowledge to knowledge of God and the significance of the encyclical studies is thus stressed because of its ability to drive the lover of learning to a state of self-examination. Philo takes notice

203 πάντα τὸν αἰῶνα γίνωσκε σεαυτόν ώς καὶ Μωυσῆς πολλαχοὶ διδάσκει λέγων ‘πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ’ (Migr. 8).
of the fact that Abraham in Gen 12:6 is described as travelling through the land (Migr. 216). This is interpreted as a reference to the pursuit of knowledge that is prompted by the love of learning, for the love of learning (τὸ φιλομαθές) is inquiring and curious (ζητητικόν καὶ περίεργον) by nature (φύσει) (Migr. 216). The love of learning has an appetite for all that there is to be seen and heard (216) and this appetite ultimately drives the lover of learning to an examination of himself, to an examination of the role of the mind in relation to the senses, and to an examination of the nature of the senses themselves (219). The lover of learning is in that way prompted to consider the nature of life in the body and to consider the nature of the passions, how the passions can be remedied and how virtue and noble emotions can prevail (Migr. 219). The reasoning here is close to the reasoning in Abr. 164 and Congr. 143–147. Philo stresses that this involves education, for the fact that Abraham took possession of Schechem (Gen 12:6) means that Abraham engaged himself in the toil of education (παιδείας πόπον) in which the one who is to be perfect (τὸν μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι τέλειον) must (ἀναγκαῖον) engage himself (κεχρῆσθαι) (Migr. 223).

The implications of Philo’s departure from Chaldea and the actual migration from self-knowledge to knowledge of God are, however, most fully articulated in Migr. 176–195. This is, therefore, the passage that I will pay particular attention to in this chapter. Here, it becomes clear that Abraham’s migration culminates in the vision of God. This vision comes about as a result of divine inspiration. However, this raises two questions about the nature of Abraham’s inspiration that need to be addressed in the following section. How did divine inspiration affect Abraham’s mind and what did Abraham come to see?

Before we move on to discuss the significance of this passage it is worth pointing out that already in Migr. 2, Philo refers to God as the one who wants (βουληθεὶς) to cleanse the human soul (τὴν ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴν καθήραι) and who therefore gives it first (πρῶτον αὐτῇ δίδωσιν) an inclination towards full salvation (ἄφορμήν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντελῆ), namely an inclination to migrate from three places (τὴν ἐκ τριῶν χωρίων μετανάστασιν): the body (σώματος), sense perception (αἰσθήσεως) and speech (λόγου τοῦ κατὰ προφοράν). The translators of the LCL-edition,

204 In Migr. 72, Philo claims that many may have good reasoning but find themselves betrayed by their speech, which he explains as an expression of the fact that they had not finished the encyclical subjects (τὴν ἐγκύκλιον οὐκ ἐκπονησάντες), just as the goal of Abraham’s migration is described as the reaching of the age at which there is no need of milk nor need to be fed and reaching the state in which studying, toiling and practicing have come to an end (Migr. 28–31).
Interestingly, translate ἀφορμήν in Migr. 2 as “starting point.” There is nothing wrong with this translation, but the word ἀφορμήν may well have been carefully chosen by Philo, insofar as it carries two meanings, those of “inclination” and “starting-point.” It is likely that Philo chose this word, because he saw the inclination towards salvation as the starting-point of the migration out of Chaldea, or, as it is phrased in Migr. 2, as the starting-point for full salvation. Philo begins his treatise with a reference to God as the initial cause of Abraham’s migration. Moreover, Philo stresses in Migr. 118–124 that God is the one who completes this inclination towards virtue. Philo is concerned here with describing the healing effects of the righteous mind on the province of the senses in the soul (119 and 124) as well as on the people who live in the proximity of the righteous person (120–121, 124). He stresses that it is because of God’s promise (the promise that others will be blessed through Abraham) that Abraham pleads with God for the citizens of Sodom. In Migr. 122 Philo, interprets Abraham’s plea for the citizens of Sodom as Abraham’s way of testing the goodness of God (πεπειραμένος τῆς ἐν ἄπασι τοῦ θεοῦ χρηστότητος). Philo claims that this test convinced (πεπίστευκεν) Abraham that God would always pity even the smallest relic of virtue (μικρὸν τι λείψανον ἀρετῆς). Philo compares this small relic of virtue to a live coal covered with ashes (ὠσπερ ἐμπύρευμα) (122) and claims in 123 that just as the smallest smoking spark may kindle into a flame when it is breathed upon and thus kindle a big pile of wood, so (οὕτω) the scanty good (τὸ σπάνιον ἁγαθὸν) will become (γίνεται) much expanded (πολὺ χεόμενον) by the kindness of God (ἐπιφροσύνη θεοῦ). In other words, it takes more than a divine spark to become fully human, that is, to reach one’s full potential.

205 Philo, Migr. 2 (F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker).
206 See the paragraph on ἀφορμή in LSJ.
207 This is probably related to Philo’s appreciation of the Stoic idea that the sage alone is the ideal ruler; see Mut. 148–152 in which Philo endorses the idea that blessings flow from the presence of a virtuous ruler. He explicitly refers to the Stoic idea that the Sage alone is king in Sobr. 57, Migr. 197 and Somn. 2.244.
208 Generally speaking, Philo describes ἐπιφροσύνη θεοῦ as God’s beneficial and gracious care, see for example Abr. 117–118, 235, Her. 278, Migr. 123, 171, Ios. 37, Mos 1.85, 132, 211, Mos 2.5, 32, 58, 154, 261. See also Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, 16: “in its primary intention there is thus an evident parallelism between the expression θεοῦ ἐπιφορμήν and πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ.” God’s thoughtfulness is thus another expression for God’s providence.
be much expanded. In Migr. 118–124 Philo stresses that divine inspiration has a healing effect on the province of the senses. This is Philo’s way of claiming that divine inspiration leads to a restoration of the proper use of the body. In the following, we will examine the fairly detailed account in Migr. 176–195 of how divine inspiration effects a restoration of the human mind.

4.1.2 The Way Forward: The Aim and Structure of This Chapter

The following examination of Migr. 176–195 begins with a description of the Chaldean beliefs Abraham took leave of as he began his migration (4.2). Philo argues that Chaldeanism amounts to impiety, because it does not acknowledge God’s providence. These preparatory steps form the basis of an examination of the paragraphs in De Migratione Abrahami (184–195) that are the most descriptive of Abraham’s move towards God as a matter of self-investigation (4.3). Having described the basic structure of these paragraphs (4.3.1), I move on to consider the nature of the inspiration that is attributed Abraham in Migr. 190–191 (4.3.2). This examination begins with an introduction to different ways in which ancient thinkers described the effects of inspiration (4.3.2.1). This introduction to ancient models of inspiration paves the way for a closer examination of the nature of the inspiration described in Migr. 190–191. This takes the form of a comparison of Migr. 190–19 with other paragraphs from Philo’s writings that associate Abraham’s migration in Gen 12:1–4 with divine inspiration (4.3.2.2). Finally, the most important results of the investigation in this chapter are summed up in 4.4.

4.2. Philo’s Theological Rationale for His Rejection of Chaldeanism in Migr. 176–183

In Migr. 176, Philo reminds the reader of the fact that Abraham migrated from Chaldea to Haran (Migr. 176–177; cf. Gen 11:31). This reminder gives rise to a rather lengthy description of Chaldeanism. Philo does have something positive to say about Chaldeanism, since the Chaldeans had developed great skills in astronomy and genealogy and had described the universe as a perfect symphony in line with the laws of musical proportion (Migr. 178). This positive description corresponds to his description in Congr. 50, in which Chaldeanism is defined as the “queen of

210 The language of breathing upon something should be interpreted as pneumatological language because of Gen 2:7.
sciences” (βασιλίδα τῶν ἐπιστημῶν).“ In Congr. 51–53, Philo defines three kinds of people. The best kind is, of course, Israel, because Israel means “seeing” and refers to the people who manage to see God. The second best kind of people are the Chaldeans, who see that the heaven and the stars move in accordance with the truest music, whereas the skeptics, who are not concerned with the things perceived by the senses, but only busy themselves with meaningless discussions, are considered the least admirable. Positive affirmations with respect to Chaldeanism similarly appear in Gig. 60–63. Here, Philo associates Abram and Chaldeanism with the heavenborn man as well as with the pursuit of the encyclical studies. Nevertheless, the beliefs associated with Chaldeanism are ultimately rejected. These beliefs are associated with impiety, because “these [the Chaldeans] suspect that this visible cosmos is alone in existence, either itself being God or containing God in itself, the soul of the whole” (Migr. 179) and because Chaldeanism teaches that there is no cause of anything apart from the phenomena, and “that the circuits of the sun and the moon and the other stars assign for each of the existent things both the good things and the opposite” (Migr. 179). David Runia points out that it would be wrong to identify Philo’s description of Chaldeanism with any particular philosophical school and has summarized the doctrine of the Chaldeans in the following way:

Its chief feature is clearly a denial of anything that transcends physical reality and is purely intelligible . . . the Chaldeans accept the cosmos as an ordered (and divine) whole, without attributing its existence to a higher cause. It is not the same as a Stoic immanentist theology, because there is not even a single logos pervading and ordering all things. The cosmos and the internal sympathies of its parts are regarded as a law unto themselves. Divine providence is absent, and in some texts Chaldeanism comes close to be equated with a kind of astrological fatalism.213

211 οὕτωι τῶν φαινόμενον τούτων κόσμων ἐν τοῖς οὐσίοις ὑπετόπησαν ἐίναι μόνον ὡς θεόν ὰντα ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ θεόν περιέχοντα, τὴν τῶν ὅλων ψυχήν.
212 ἀλλ’ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων αἱ περίοδοι τά τε ἀγαθά καὶ τά ἐναντία ἐκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων ἀπονέμουσι. David Runia has clarified that Philo’s description of God as the highest cause is influenced by the Aristotelian and Peripatetic tradition and their reference to God as the first cause. Runia also argues that Philo’s description of God’s providence is particularly marked by Philo’s reading of Plato’s Timaeus, that the description of God as the true being or as the existent one is derived from the Platonist tradition and that Philo’s stressing of God’s presence and agency in the world by means of his powers was shaped by ideas flourishing among the Stoics (see Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 434–436). See also Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, 26: “It is a painstaking if not an impossible task to determine with any precision how in Philo’s thought the teaching of Scripture correlates to a specific philosophic dogma; moreover, such a clear separation of sources might disregard Philo’s main intent of showing the compatibility of biblical Judaism with Greek Philosophy.”
Philo sketches his own view in Migr. 180–183 in opposition to the beliefs of Chaldeanism. Here, he points out that Moses endorses the view that the cosmos is both one and created (Migr. 180), but that Moses claims that neither the cosmos nor the soul of the cosmos should be thought of as the primal God (ὁ πρῶτος θεός), just as the revolutions of the stars should not be thought of as causes of the things that happen to men. To the contrary, Moses teaches that “the complete whole is held together by invisible powers, which the creator has stretched out from the ends of the earth to the limits of the heaven thereby beautifully providing that the things well bound will not be untied” (Migr. 181). Philo stresses that when Moses speaks of the God in heaven above and on earth below (Deut 4:39), no one should think that he speaks of God in his essence (κατὰ τὸ εἶναι) (Migr. 182). Moses’ reference in Deut 4:39 to the God in heaven above and on earth below should accordingly be understood as a reference to “his power in accordance with which he has established and ordered and regulated the whole” (Migr. 182). This power is in the proper sense goodness (αὕτη δὲ κυρίως ἐστὶν ἀγαθότης) (Migr. 183) and the power that brings things that do not exist to birth (τὰ μὴ ὄντα εἰς γένεσιν ἄγουσα). In other words, the world is not left alone; to the contrary, it is created and taken care of by the goodness of God. The problem with Chaldeanism is that it leaves no room for divine providence; it considers the cosmos as an autonomous law unto itself with no external causes apart from the laws of the cosmos itself. Philo thus describes Chaldean doctrines as doctrines that “have filled human life with much impiety”

214 ἀλλαν συνέχεσθαι μὲν τὸ δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἀφότους δυνάμεις, ἡς ἀπὸ γῆς ἐσχάτων ἄχρις οὐρανοῦ περάτων ὁ δημιουργός ἀπέτεινε, τοῦ μὴ ἀνεθῆκα τὰ δεδεμένα καλῶς προμηθευόμενος.

215 δύναμιν δ’ αὐτοῦ, καθ’ ἣν ἔθηκε καὶ διετάξετο καὶ διεκόσμησε τὰ άλλα. Cf. the description given above in 3.5.1 of the Logos as God’s immanent presence in the cosmos and the notion of the Logos as God’s never-ceasing creative activity and maintenance of the cosmos.
The distinction between God’s essence and his existence is fundamental in Philo’s understanding of God and it reflects the conviction that God is utterly transcendent and yet immanently involved in human affairs. This double description of God has recently been described as an expression of Philo’s indebtedness to the Hebrew Bible that both “clarifies the gap between God and mankind” and “speaks of God’s creative and providential action.” Philo’s emphasis on the transcendence of God should in any case be seen as “a matter of safeguarding the otherness of God.” This distinction between God in his essence and God in his existence has important philosophical consequences for Philo’s understanding of God. God in his fullness is only known by God. Philo accounts for the validity of this distinction in connection with his interpretation of Exod 33:13–33. Moses’ request to see God’s glory is recounted as Moses’ request to see God in his essence (Spec. 1:41). But not even Moses has the capacity to receive such a great gift. He is therefore only allowed to see the things that come in the wake of God (Fug. 165), insofar as “all things coming in the wake of God are apprehensible to the earnest man, while he Himself alone is inapprehensible” (Post. 169).

216 See also Runia, “The Beginnings of the End,” 291.
217 See Frick, Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria, 41. See also Scott D. Mackie, “Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, Or the Existent one?” in SPhilo 21 (2009), 25–47, 46–47 who has recently referred to Philo’s “ambivalence about the possibility of seeing God and uncertainty of a mystical experience that is ultimately inscrutable.”
220 See Spec. 1:41–50; Fug. 165; Mut. 7–9 and Post. 169.
221 πάνθ’ ὁσα μετ’ τον θεόν τῷ σπουδαίῳ καταληπτά αὐτός δὲ μόνος ἀκατάληπτος. Cf. John Dillon, The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism: 80 B.C. to A. D. 220 (London: Duckworth, 1977), 155: “At Somn. 1. 67, for example, God is described as ‘unnamable’ (akatononomastos) and ‘unutterable’ (arrhétos) and incomprehensible under any form (kata pasas ideas akatalëptos), none of which terms are applied to God before his time by any surviving source. The question thus arises as to whether Philo is responsible for introducing the notion of an ‘unknowable’ God into Greek thought. I find it difficult, however, to credit that a man like Albinus (in chap. 10 of his Didaskalikos) is influenced by Philo. There is no indication that any of the schools of Platonists ever read Philo.”
Even privileged creatures like Moses can never reach full knowledge of God, since the human race firmly belongs to the created reality.

Philo maintains the distinction between divine essence and divine existence in his description of God in *Migr*. 180–183, when he explicitly denies that it is God in his essence (κατὰ τὸ ἐίναι) (182) that is described in Deut 4:39. However, God is not prevented from being immanently involved in the affairs of the world. In fact, he is intimately involved by means of his invisible powers, because the cosmos is held together by invisible powers that have been stretched out by God (*Migr*. 181). This must be seen as a reference to the divine Logos through which the cosmos is held together because of God’s goodness and providence (*Migr*. 181). Nevertheless, God in his essence remains utterly unknowable, for He is “before all the created, advancing outside the created realm as an account is given in nothing of the things coming after him” (*Migr*. 183).

These matters are ultimately important for the interpretation of Philo’s account of Abraham’s vision of God.

### 4.3 From Self-Knowledge to Knowledge of God in *Migr*. 184–195

#### 4.3.1 The Basic Structure of *Migr*. 184–195

Having refuted (in *Migr*. 176–183) the Chaldeans’ view of God Philo turns to a closer examination of Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to Haran, which he interprets as a migration from self-knowledge to the knowledge of God. In *Migr*. 184–195, this journey is described three times, firstly in 184–186, secondly in 187–193 and thirdly in 194–195. The first section describes the journey in a rather general way. The second section describes it as something that comes about as a result of divine inspiration, whereas the third section has a rather summarizing character. Philo

---

222 It is therefore a matter of κατάχρησις (Post. 168) to say that God is visible. Κατάχρησις refers to “the extension of the meaning of a word beyond its proper sphere,” (Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [New York, Boston, Cincinnati: American Book Company, 1920], 677.) Language suggesting the visibility of God should therefore not be taken literally but should rather be seen as a reference to the divine powers (Post. 167–168). Philo stresses similarly in *Mut*. 12 that the divine name “the Lord of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” should not be taken as God’s proper name (οἶνοματι κυρίω). This is also described as a matter of κατάχρησις (*Mut*. 13), but this κατάχρησις is a gift from God to the race needing a name as they approach God in prayer (*Mut*. 13). For a more extended discussion of Philo’s use of catachresis in light of other uses in ancient Greek literature, see Runia, “Naming and Knowing: Themes in Philonic Theology,” 82–89.

223 For further discussions of the philosophical implications of Philo’s distinction between God’s existence and God’s essence, see Runia, “The God of the Philosophers,” 213–215.

224 πρὸ γάρ παντὸς τοῦ γεννητοῦ, ἐξω βαίνων ἐκείνου καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐμφαρμόμενος. Philo refers also to God’s transcendence when he asserts that God is his own place. See also *Leg.* 1.44; *Sobr.* 63, *Conf.* 136–139 and *Somn.* 1.184–185.
admonishes his readers in _Migr._ 184–186 to come down from the contemplation of the heavens, not in order to pass review of the earth, rivers, seas, plants and animals, but in order to examine themselves and their own human nature (ἐαυτοὺς καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν ἐρευνᾶτε) (185). There is no reason to doubt that Philo in this way gives his own interpretation of the famous Delphic oracle, not least since this oracle γίνωσκε σεαυτόν is rendered explicitly in _Migr._ 8. Philo affirms that a proper self-knowledge can lead to a knowledge of God and of his works ( _Migr._ 185), for by means of self-knowledge man will be able to see that just as there is mind in man there is mind in the universe, and just as the mind controls every part of man, so does God guide and control the universe providing not only for the worthy things (προμηθούμενος οὐ τῶν ἀξιονικοτέρων αὐτὸ μόνον) but also for the things considered minor important ( _Migr._ 186). Gaining knowledge of the existence of God thus amounts to becoming convinced of the goodness and providence of God.

In _Migr._ 187–193, this applies more specifically to Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to Haran. Haran signifies the place of sense perception ( _Migr._ 187), for Haran is interpreted as hole and serves in this manner as a symbol for the openings in the body used for sense perception. The call to move to Haran is therefore really a call to gain knowledge of the nature of each of the senses. This is in order to prepare the migration from Haran – a migration Philo describes as one “announcing not mortality but immortality” (οὐ θάνατον ἀλλ’ ἁθανασίαν καταγγέλλουσαν) ( _Migr._ 189). This clearly reflects the undertaking of the lover of learning as this is described in _Migr._ 219, but in these paragraphs, Philo makes it clear that this undertaking of the lover of learning paves the way for divine inspiration. This inspiration can take place as the mind in deep sleep ( _Migr._ 190) withdraws from the realm of the senses (ἀναχωρήσας . . . τῶν αἰσθήσεων) and all the other things

---

225 For a survey of the role of the Delphic oracle in the history of ideas, see Pierre Courcelle, _Connaiss-Toi Toi-Meme: De Socrate à Saint Bernard_ (3 vols.: Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974–1975); for Philo’s use of the oracle, see this survey 39–43. Philo refers even more explicitly to the famous oracle from Delphi in _Somn._ 1.58. Here, Philo associates the oracle with Terah who represents self-knowledge itself and who is described as the “Socrates among the Hebrews.” The problem with Terah is that he never moves on from himself towards God, something Philo recognizes from the fact that Terah died in Haran (Gen 11:32; _Somn._ 1.48). Terah therefore truly represents Chaldeanism, because the Chaldeans are identified as those who busy themselves with the topic of the senses (_Somn._ 1.53). Abraham is described as being different from Terah, since his self-knowledge caused him to despair, which again caused him to move on towards God (_Somn._ 1.59–60). The significance of a proper relationship to oneself was an important topic for ancient ethical theorists; see Richard Sorabji, _Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation_ (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2000), 244–252. John T. Fitzgerald, “The Passions and Moral Progress: An Introduction,” in _Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought_ (ed. J. T. Fitzgerald; Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies; London: Routledge, 2008), 1–25, 15 refers to self-examination as the “sine qua non for any progress in virtue.”
associated with the body (καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὃσα κατὰ τὸ σῶμα) and begins to converse with itself (ἐαυτῷ προσομιλεῖται ἃρχεται) as it is fixing its eyes on truth as in a mirror (πρὸς κάτοπτρον ἀφορῶν ἀλήθειαν). When this happens, the mind is inspired (ἐνθουσιᾷ) through prophetic dreams (διὰ τῶν ὅπειρῶν μαντεῖας). This can, however, also happen during a person’s waking hours (Migr. 191) when the mind has been possessed by one of the principles in accordance with philosophy (ἐκ τινος τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν κατασχέθεις θεωρημάτων). This is furthermore described as the coming of the mind to a strict vision of the noetic realm (πρὸς τὴν ἀκριβῆ θέαν τοῦ νοητοῦ) and as something that happens to the eye of the soul (τὸ ψυχῆς ὁμμα) to whom God has given to see the noetic things (ὧ νοητὰ βλέπειν ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός).

Interestingly, Philo refers to this experience as something that can be learned and describes the experience itself as a kind of educational situation, for he claims that those who have learned (μαθόντες) to effect a divorce from the mortal realm (ἀπόλευψιν τοῦ θνητοῦ χρηματιζειν) will move on to be educated (παιδευθήσεσθε) in the glories with respect to the uncreated (τὰς περὶ τοῦ ἀγεήτου δόξας) (Migr. 192). In Migr. 194–195, Philo sums up this argument by stating that Abraham’s migration away from Chaldean beliefs involves three steps: an abandonment of Chaldean beliefs, a consideration of one’s own existence, and the final move towards God. Philo refers to this last step as something that takes place when the mind has cut open the way away from itself (ἀνατεμὼν ὁδὸν τὴν ἀφ’ αὐτοῦ) in the hope of coming to contemplate the Father of the whole (πατέρα τῶν ὅλων κατανοῆσαι). The experience accounted for in these paragraphs is an experience that involves divine inspiration that aims at the lover of learning’s attainment of a vision of God. The fact that Philo can also refer to this experience as a possession of philosophical principles means that the vision of God is described as the ultimate goal of philosophy. The vision of God is, however, not a vision of God in his essence. It is rather a matter of becoming convinced of the existence and the goodness of God. This interpretation is confirmed from a closer examination of the way Philo accounts for Abraham’s prophetic inspiration in these paragraphs.
4.3.2 The Nature of Abraham’s Inspiration in Migr. 190–191

4.3.2.1 Different Models for Prophetic Inspiration in Greco–Roman Antiquity and in Philo’s Writings

As early as 1938, W. Völker claimed with reference to the work of E. Brehier that Philo had two views regarding the role of the mind (νοῦς) during the ecstatic experience: “Nach der einen bedarf es nur der Reinigung und Läuterung des νοῦς, nach der anderen dagegen seiner völligen Unterdrückung und Vernichtung.” Roughly 50 years later, in an important study of the nature of Mosaic prophecy in Philo’s writings, David Winston similarly directed attention to the existence of two diverse conceptions of ecstatic prophecy in the ancient Greek tradition as well as in Philo’s writings. Winston describes these two conceptions with the words “the one radical, the other considerably milder.” Winston clarifies the nature of the radical conception of prophecy with a reference to Plato’s description of the nature of Pythia’s ecstasy at Delphi and clarifies the nature of the milder concept of prophecy by referring to Plutarch’s different descriptions of the same phenomenon in Delphi. In Phaedrus, Plato distinguishes between the things that were uttered by the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona when they were inspired and the things of little worth that were uttered “when they have been in their right mind.” In Timaeus, Plato claims that “no man achieves true and inspired divination when in his rational mind.” and in Ion 534c–d Plato mentions, regarding poets and prophets alike, that “for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his ministers . . . in order that we who hear them may

---


227 Cook, On the Question of the “Cessation of Prophecy” in Ancient Judaism, 90 claims that “sometimes he [Philo] seems to use the terms ‘prophet’ and ‘prophecy’ more in line with a Hebrew mind-set, while at other times he seems to use the terms with more of a Greek slant, . . . Philo is thus true to his Jewish heritage in that he sees true prophecy as fundamentally involving an encounter with God.” Runia stresses that Philo’s presentation of Moses as a prophet is marked both by Greek and Jewish elements, see David T. Runia, “Philo and Middle Platonism Revisited,” in SPhiloA 5 (1993), 112–140, 130.


229 Plato, Phaedr. 244B, LCL.

230 Plato, Tim. 71E, LCL.
know that it is not they who utter these words of great price, when they are out of their wits, but that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them.”

The second and milder form of ecstatic prophecy is prominent in Plutarch’s description of the Prophetess in Delphi. Plutarch asserts with respect to the prophecies in Delphi that: “as a matter of fact, the voice is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, nor the metre, but all these are the woman’s; he puts into her mind only the visions, and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this.”

The lesson to be learned from these quotations is, in Winston’s words, that “clearly, Plutarch’s theory of ecstatic prophecy envisages no displacement or dissociation of the human mind” and “while he [Philo] has adopted the more radical form of Greek ecstatic prophecy as his model with regard to the prophecies of Abraham and Balaam (Her. 264–66; Mos. 1.274–291), this is not the case with the predictive prophecies of Moses.”

John R. Levison has sketched “a typology of Philonic references to the inspiration of the divine spirit.” Like Winston, Levison refers to Philo’s description of Abraham’s ecstatic inspiration as it is given in connection with an interpretation of Gen 15:12 in Her. 264–266 and QG 3.9, and there is no reason to doubt that these paragraphs reflect a notion of prophecy that corresponds to that which Winston describes as radical. Most interestingly, Levison identifies certain similarities and differences between Philo’s account of his own ecstatic experience as given in Migr. 34–35 and his

---


232 De Pyth. Or. 397C (F. C. Babbit, LCL).

233 Winston, “Two Types of Mosaic Prophecy,” 53.


235 See also Philo’s description of the inspiration of Balaam as this is accounted for in Mos. 1.273–284 and the description of effects of inspiration as this is given in Spec. 1.65, 4.49. The paragraphs in Her. 264–265 are a part of a longer interpretation of Gen 15:12 given in Her. 249–266. Here, Philo interprets Gen 15:12 in light of Plato’s description of the four kinds of madness in Phaedr. 244A–245C in order to show that Abraham experienced the best form of madness/inspiration (ἀριστη ἐνθεος) (Her. 249), which is defined as possession (κατοκωχή) (Her. 249) and madness (μανία – Her. 249). This best form of inspiration is then clarified furthermore in Her. 264–266 and here it becomes clear that this form of inspiration involves an eviction of the human mind. This interpretation of the ecstasy ascribed to Abraham in Gen 15:12 (LXX) corresponds to Philo’s interpretation of the same passage in QG 3.9 in which Philo contends that this ecstasy “is nothing else than the departing and going out of the understanding . . . For when the mind is divinely possessed and becomes filled with God, it is no longer within itself, for it receives the divine spirit to dwell within it” (QG 3.9 [Ralph Marcus, LCL]).
interpretation of Abraham’s ecstasy in Gen 15:12 as this is given in Her. 264–265. In Migr. 34, Philo reports how on some occasions he must give up writing about philosophical issues because he has found the mind to be ineffectual (εὐρὼν τὴν διάνοιαν ἀπρακτος). At other times (Migr. 35), however, Philo claims that he is suddenly filled with thoughts (πλήρης ἐξαιρής . . . ἐνθυμημάτων) that invisibly fall upon him like snow and that are sown in him from above so that he has become filled with corybantic frenzy (κορυβαντίαν) due to the possession of inspiration (ὑπὸ κατοχής ἐνθέου). The result is that Philo refers to himself as being unknowing of everything – the place, the people around him, himself, as well as the spoken and written things, due to his enjoyment of light (φωτὸς ἀπόλαυσιν) (Migr. 35). Levison identifies the following similarities between Philo’s own experience and the experience of Abraham as accounted in Her. 264–265: (a) a loss of consciousness, (b) the suddenness of the arrival of the inspiration expressed by the word ἐξαιρής in Migr. 35 and implied by the word ἐξοικίζεται in Her. 265, and (c) the salient aspect of light that accompanies God’s presence in prophetic ecstasy. According to Levison, these three common characteristics “suggest a relationship between Philo’s descriptions of both his experience and the experience of prophets.”236 There are, however, important differences between the two experiences as well. Philo’s autobiographical account does not describe any displacement of reason by the divine spirit with the result that the idea of the eviction of the mind is absent. Levison suggests that this reflects the conviction that “inspiration is said to descend from above and impart, above all, wisdom.”237

A comparison of Migr. 190–191 with two other texts (one from De Migratione Abrahami and one from Quis Rerum Divinarum Haeres Sit) in which Philo similarly associates Abraham’s migration

---

237 Cf. Levison, “Inspiration and the Divine Spirit,” 284: “Migr. 34–35 situates his [Philo’s] experience within the Alexandrian wisdom tradition, for it parallels the conception of the descent of the divine to impart wisdom in WisSol 9:17: ‘Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?’” Recently the inspiration of the Isaac nature has been described in the following terms: “Philo insists . . . that the Isaac-nature is marked by the enhanced exertion (not abandonment) of human reason” and “in this inspired state . . . the mind comes out of ecstasy and is brought to a place of supra-rationality. In this place, the aspirant’s mind is able to grasp the unseen realities of God, namely that he is both one and the many who impregnates the aspirant’s mind and soul with knowledge of these realities” (Jang Ryu, Knowledge of God in Philo of Alexandria, (WUNT 2/405; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 211, 213).
from Chaldea in Gen 12:1–4 with an experience of some kind of prophetic inspiration suggests that this moment of inspiration (Migr. 190–191) also aimed at imparting wisdom.  

### 4.3.2.2 A Comparison of the Inspiration Ascribed to Abraham in Migr. 34–35, 70–85, 190–191 and Her. 69–75

In Migr. 70, Philo is concerned with accounting for the meaning of the blessing that is promised to Abraham in Gen 12:2. Philo interprets the words “I will bless you” as meaning “I will give you a laudable word” (“εὐλογήσω σε,” τοιτέστιν ἐπαινετὸν λόγον δωρήσωμαι) (Migr. 70). He points out that this laudable word has two aspects – the word in the mind, which is like a spring, and the word in utterance, which is like the stream flowing from the spring (Migr. 71). The promise of blessing is another way of expressing a promise of the divine Logos. Philo clarifies the implications of this interpretation of the promise of the blessing by referring the reader to Exod 4:10–17, in which Moses receives Aron, the Logos in utterance (τὸν προφορικὸν λόγον – Migr. 78), as spokesperson. Philo interprets this event as a description of how Moses received the thoughts of God and refers particularly to the words of Exod 4:15 LXX “καὶ ἔρεις πρὸς αὐτόν καὶ δῦσεις τὰ ρήματα μου εἰς τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ.” Philo explains that these words are equivalent to the phrase “you shall prompt him the thoughts, which are not different from divine words and thoughts. For without the prompter the word will not be spoken and mind is the prompter of word as God is of mind” (Migr. 80–81). God is therefore the prompter of the mind that prompts divine thoughts and words. Human understanding is described as being given a share in divine rationality and this gift generates some degree of overlap between divine and human understanding. This gift of a

---

238 For a fuller account of Philo’s descriptions of the attainment of the vision of God, see Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo’s Thought* (Brown Judaic Studies 290/ Studia Philonica Monographs 2; Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1996), 61–127.

239 Philo alludes in these paragraphs to the doctrine of the *Logos endiathetos* and the *Logos prophorikos*. This doctrine distinguishes between internal logos and uttered logos. Humans are described as reasoning within themselves in their mind by virtue of the former, whereas they express their thoughts and internal reasoning by virtue of the latter. The two are closely related, as Philo’s image of the relationship between the spring and the stream strongly suggests. For the significance of the distinction between the internal and the uttered logos, see Adam Kamesar, “The Logos Endiathetos and the Logos Prophorikos in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the Iliad,” *GRBS* 44 (2004): 163–181, 163.

240 One should not be confused by the fact that Philo suddenly refers to Moses. This is a good example of primary and secondary exegesis; the primary exegesis in this example represents Philo’s interpretation of Gen 12:3 whereas his secondary exegesis of Exod 4:15 is given in order to further explain the meaning of Gen 12:3.

241 ὑπηχήσεις αὐτῷ τὰ ἐνθυμήματα ἃ ρημάτων καὶ λόγων ἀδιαφορεῖ θείων. ἄνευ γὰρ τοῦ ὑποβολέως οὐ φθέγξεται ὁ λόγος ὑποβολεύς δὲ λόγου νοῦς, ὡς νοῦ θεός.
share in divine understanding is generated by divine inspiration and is as such generated by God. This rational element of divine inspiration is stressed in Philo’s somewhat conclusive remark in Migr. 84, in which he points out that it is the prophetic race that interprets the things of God and that this happens under a form of inspiration (ἐνθέω κατοκωμῇ τε καὶ μανίᾳ).

A similar picture emerges from a closer examination of Migr. 190–191. One may notice that Philo refers to Abraham in Migr. 190 as a recipient of prophetic dreams and that this signifies a difference between Philo’s own experience as recounted in Migr. 34–35 and Abraham’s experience as accounted in Migr. 190. However, the difference is of little importance. Prophetic dreams were not described in antiquity as a phenomenon that precluded activity of the mind. To the contrary, dreams were often described as a vehicle for the provision of divine revelations. The reference in Migr. 190 to Abraham as a recipient of prophetic dreams suggests that Philo’s clarification of the nature of prophetic dreams as given in Somn. 1.1–2 and Somn. 2.1–4 can cast light on the question of the nature of Abraham’s inspiration in Migr. 190–191. Philo refers in these passages from Somn. 1 and 2 to three treatises and three different kinds of dreams. A recent study has clarified how Philo in De Somniis classifies the dreams in Genesis by phenomenology and by the clarity of the message they convey. Philo contends that the dreams sent by God are perfectly clear in themselves, whereas the extent to which they are comprehended depends on the degree of perfection of the soul of the dreamer. Philo presumes in these treatises a Stoic threefold classification of dreams, even though he modifies the classification to make it fit his own material. In Somn. 1.2, he refers to the second kind of

242 Philo similarly stresses the significance of divine revelation in his clarification of the nature of the wise and understanding people in Migr. 58–59, for here (Migr. 59) he claims that “this is the defining mark of great people, that to draw near to God, or that to which God draws near” (οὗτος ὁ ὄρος ἐστὶ τοῦ μεγάλου λεώ, τὸ τῷ θεῷ συνεγγίζειν ἢ ὡς θεός συνεγγίζει). See also Abr. 80 in which Philo clarifies that Abraham did not see God, but that he was on the contrary seen by God. That is, Abraham only saw God because God allowed himself to be seen, i.e., God revealed himself.

243 Dream oracles also known as incubation oracles were well-known in the ancient Mediterranean world, see Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 25–27. Dreams may not necessarily be associated with sleeping. In Matt 1:20 Joseph is portrayed as dreaming while he was thinking.

244 The treatise concerning the first kind of dreams has been lost, whereas Somn. 1 deals with the second kind of dreams, and Somn. 2 the third kind.


246 According to the Stoic classification one kind of dreams comes directly from the gods. A second kind originates from contact with immortal beings that fill the air through which the human soul is connected with the universal mind.
dreams as an experience in which the mind seems to be both possessed and inspired (κατέχεσθαί τε καὶ θεοφορεῖσθαι δοκεῖ) as it is being moved out of or away from itself (συγκινούμενος ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ) with the mind of the whole (τῷ τῶν ὦλων). Philo similarly refers to the second kind of dreams (in Somn. 2.2) as a phenomenon in which “our” understanding (ημετέρας διανοίας) is being moved along (συγκινούμενης) with the soul of the whole (τῇ τῶν ὦλων ψυχῇ). He stresses in both paragraphs that divine inspiration generates knowledge of the things to come. In Somn 1, Jacob’s dream of the heavenly ladder is described as the vehicle for the generation of a vision of God as the charioteer of all things and as the one who holds everything together (Somn. 1.157). Philo clearly depicts Jacob’s experience as being akin to Abraham’s experience. Philo stresses in the beginning of his treatise that Jacob’s vision came about as a result of an initial move to Haran that Jacob needed to make in order to reach the Logos itself (Somn. 1.4). Philo interprets the words in Gen 28:11 “he met a place” (ἀπήντησε τόπῳ) (Somn. 1.61) as a reference to Jacob’s coming to the Logos (Somn. 1.61–64) and affirms explicitly in Somn. 1.70 that Jacob’s move to Haran, that is, to sense perception from which place he was moved to the logos should be regarded as equivalent to the experience of Abraham (Somn. 1.70). This description of Jacob’s experience is confirmed by the fact that Philo in Migr. 190 refers to Abraham’s prophetic dreams as something that enabled him gain true knowledge of the things to come (τὰς περὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἀψευδεστάτας) (Migr. 190).

The fact that Philo in Somn. 1.2 and Somn. 2.2 speaks of the soul of the whole indicates that he refers to the third level of the Logos (cf. paragraph 3.5.1 above). The “soul of the whole” refers in this case to a concept akin to the “world soul” of Plato’s Timaeus. Philo thus describes God’s immanent presence in the cosmos and his never-ceasing creative activity and maintenance of the cosmos. Thus, it is by means of God’s immanent Logos that the mind in the ecstatic experience is

and through which the dreamer gains understanding of causal concatenations of things as well as of the future, whereas the third kind of dreams originates in the human soul itself; see Tovar, “Philo of Alexandria’s Dream Classification,” 69–71.

247 Cf. Philo’s description of Abraham in Abr. 70.

248 Philo points out that place can refer firstly to a space filled with material form (Somn. 1.62), secondly to the divine Logos (ὁ θεός λόγος) (Somn. 1.62), and thirdly to the Deity as its own place, that is, to God in his essence (Somn. 1.64). The one that has come to the Logos has not come to God as he is (Somn. 1.66). Philo’s description in Somn. 1.63–64 of God as the one that contains everything without being contained by anything bears a strong resemblance to Philo’s account in Migr. 177–183.
moved to the place identified as the Logos itself. The term cosmos noetos comes closest to further defining this place. The migration to Haran is in Somn. 1.46 described as something that provides for an existence “in the noetic city,” (ἐν τῇ νοητῇ πόλει) and in Somn. 1.188 Philo points out that access to the noetic cosmos (ὁ νοητὸς κόσμος) is gained from the world perceived by the senses (ἀπό τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ) so that the one is a gate to the other (πύλη τις οὖν ἐκείνου). 249 This corresponds to the fact that Philo refers to Abraham’s experience as something that enabled him to come to a vision of the noetic (πρὸς τὴν ἀκριβὴ θέαν τοῦ νοητοῦ) (Migr. 191).

Finally, something must be said about Philo’s interpretation of Gen 12:1 in Her. 69–70. Philo is concerned with describing the identity of the heir of divine and incorporeal things. Philo finds the answer to the question of the identity of the heir in the words of Gen 15:4 LXX: ὃς γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ σοῦ ὁ ἄνωτος κληρονομήσει σε (Her. 68). It may be the occurrence of the verb ἐξέρχομαι in Gen 15:4 that prompts Philo in Her. 69–70 to interpret the words from Gen 15:4 in light of Gen 12:1, which Philo, as we have seen already, understands as a call to undertake a migration from oneself towards God. 250 In Her. 69–70, Philo describes this migration in a most interesting way. The migration is described as beginning with an experience of a desire to be an heir of the good things of God, to which one should respond by leaving not only the world perceived by the senses (τὴν αἰσθησιν . . . καταλίπτης) but also by fleeing from oneself (ἄλλα καὶ σαυτὴν ἀπόδραθι) and by departing out of oneself (ἐκστηθι σεαυτῆς) like (ὥσπερ) those who are possessed (οἱ κατεχόμενοι) and filled with corybantic frenzy (κορυβαντιῶντες) because they have been inspired and possessed by God (βακχευθεῖσα καὶ θεοφορηθεῖσα). The inspired mind is no longer in itself (οὐκέτ’ . . . ἐν ἑαυτῇ), as it has been driven along (σεσοβημένης) and gone into madness (κάκιμεμηνιῶς) by heavenly love (ἐρωτι οὐρανίως) and has been taken up by the one who truly exists and as it has been dragged upwards to himself (καὶ υπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ὄντος ἡγμένης καὶ ἀνω πρὸς αὐτὸ εἰλκυσμένης).

---

249 This corresponds to Philo’s explanation in Migr. 189, according to which an exact knowledge of the sense-perceptible world paves the way for a departure from this world in order to reach immortality. Cf. Winston, “Two Types of Mosaic Prophecy,” 56: “Philo did not need the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis, since for him the human mind was an inseparable fragment of the divine Logos, and all that it required in order to attain to the intelligible Forms was the initial stimulus of sense perception, which formed a kind of gateway into them (Somn. 1.187–88).”

250 Cf. Birnbaum, The Place of Judaism, 88: “The Biblical words, ‘come out of,’ then, lead Philo to talk about the mind leaving itself behind. One can easily see how he [Philo] might be moved to talk here about ecstasy which means, literally, a standing outside.”
Philo claims in *Her.* 74–75 that the call to depart from oneself should be regarded as a call to dedicate one’s gifts of thinking to God the source of all accurate thinking. This is a matter of being taken away from the world perceived by the senses to the world perceived by thinking, i.e. the noetic cosmos (*Her.* 75) and of having one’s own perspective on reality aligned with truth, or God’s perspective. As a result of this alignment with truth, or God’s perspective on reality, the body, sense and speech are dedicated and attributed to God (*Her.* 73) and hence God is acknowledged as the true and actual source of all accurate thinking.251

**Excursus on De Abrahamo 69–81**

Recently, Scott D. Mackie has argued, partly in opposition to David Winston, that sometimes the mystic vision of God leads to a state beyond the realm of cognition. Mackie makes the point that Philo refers to the human mind as the locus of the mystic ascent and that Philo repeatedly insists that mystic visions only reveal God’s existence and not his essence. He argues that this has led some scholars “to equate the *visio Dei* with ‘achieving a rational awareness of God’s existence’” with the result that “nature and reason are highlighted, while super-natural and suprarational elements are minimized.”252 Mackie claims that some texts are problematic for such an account of Philo’s descriptions of the mystic vision of God. Mackie refers to *Opif.* 69–71, *Praem.* 43–46, *Contempl.* 11–12 and *Ebr.* 145–152 as examples of texts that are best interpreted as signaling experiences in which individuals transcend the sphere of cognition.253

In addition, in another study Mackie has suggested that Philo occasionally describes the vision of God as something that is best described as an intermediary free vision of God. Mackie refers to *Abr.* 79–80 as an example of a text from the *Exposition of the Law* series in which “Philo portrays the vision of God as occurring without the intervention or presence of intermediaries.”254 *De Abrahama* 69–81 can be regarded as a parallel text to *Migr.* 176–195 and it is worthwhile to take a

251 Cf. Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism*, 88, note 78: “Philo goes on to explain that the mind leaving itself behind signifies that the mind recognizes the limits of its own abilities and acknowledges God as the true source of its abilities (*Her.* 74–75).”


brief look on this text (Abr. 69–81) to consider if it really describes an intermediary free vision of
God, as this might suggest that Abraham’s experience is described as something that transcends
the sphere of cognition. In De Abrahamo these paragraphs represent Philo’s allegorical
interpretation of Abraham’s migration from Chaldea. According to the literal interpretation given
in Abr. 60–68, Abraham’s migration is performed by a man of wisdom. But according to the
allegorical interpretation, the migration is performed by the virtue-loving soul searching for the
true God (Abr. 68). Philo follows the same pattern in Abr. 69–81 as he does in Mig. 176–195,
inssofar as he begins by reproaching Chaldeanism for identifying the created with the Creator and
by describing the virtue-loving soul as moving from Chaldea – i.e. from a contemplation of the
cosmos – to Haran – interpreted as sense-perception – and from Haran to the vision of God. There
are, however, several reasons for concluding that Philo in Abr. 69–81 is engaged in describing
Abraham’s migration to the noetic aspect of the Logos. He points out that the Chaldean Abraham
did not have knowledge of any “harmonious and intelligible order” (εὐάρμοστον καὶ νοητὴν
φύσιν) (Abr. 77). But having changed his habitation, Abraham recognized that the cosmos (τὸν
κόσμον) is dependent or obedient (ὑπήκοον) and not self-governed (αὐτόκατορα), but governed
by the Cause, that is, the one who has made it (ὑπ’ αἰτίου τοῦ πεποιηκότος) (Abr. 78). Philo’s
reference to a harmonious and noetic order (εὐάρμοστον καὶ νοητὴν φύσιν) should almost
certainly be taken as a reference to the noetic aspect of the Logos, and Philo’s account in Abr. 69–
81 can accordingly not be taken as signifying an intermediary free encounter with God. These
paragraphs should thus be regarded as a description of Abraham’s encounter with the Logos. This
is confirmed by the use of the terms seeing and comprehending as synonymous in these
paragraphs. Philo claims in Abr. 79 that God has made his own nature known (τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν
ἐδειξε) to the soul that came into his presence, to the degree that (καθ’ ὡσον οἶδον) the beholder is
able to see (ἤν ἴδεῖν τὸν βλέποντα). Philo stresses (Abr. 80) that this is the reason that we are not
told that the wise man saw God (οὐχ ὅτι ὁ σοφὸς ἔδειχε θεόν), but rather that God was seen by the
wise man (ἄλλ’ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὤφθη τῷ σοφῷ). This is important, Philo claims in Abr. 80, because it
reflects an important axiom, namely that it was impossible (ἤν ἀδύνατον) that any one (τινα) by
himself (δι’ αὑτοῦ) should be able to comprehend (καταλαβεῖν) the Existent One (τὸ ὅν) in
accordance with truth (πρὸς ἀλήθειαν) if the Existent One (ἐκείνου) had not uncovered (μὴ
παραφῆναντος) and made himself known (ἐαυτὸν ἐπιδείξαντος). Thus, seeing God (ἰδεῖν θεόν) is
synonymous with comprehending God (θεόν καταλαβεῖν). *De Abrahomo* 79–80 should thus not be taken as an example of a text in which Philo refers to a sort intermediary-free vision of God. Neither should the experience be accounted for as something that means that the realm of cognition has been transcended. The fact that Abraham attained a vision of God amounts, in other words, to the fact that Abraham came to realize that God is the cause of the world and as such the one that provides for its welfare.

### 4.4 Summary

Philo’s argument in *De Migratione Abrahami* is a sweeping testimony about the extent to which he regarded the Abraham story and the Abrahamic promises and God’s gift of the Spirit as being related to one another. He regarded the Abrahamic promises in Gen 12:1–3 as promises of virtue and therefore of inspiration, as virtue presumes wisdom and wisdom presumes inspiration. In a summary of the results from the comparison of the experiences described in *Migr.* 70–85, 190–191 and *Her.* 69–70, three things should be observed. Firstly, Philo describes the migration of Abraham recorded in Gen 12:1–4 as involving some kind of ecstatic prophetic inspiration, which appears to be similar to his own experience as recounted in *Migr.* 34–35, insofar as both kinds of prophetic inspiration impart wisdom or knowledge of God. Secondly, Philo did not see this ecstatic inspiration as causing any erasure of the human mind or understanding. To the contrary, thirdly, Philo describes Abraham’s prophetic inspiration as causing a migration of the human mind to the noetic cosmos (*Her.* 75). Abraham’s prophetic experience as accounted for in *Migr.* 70–85, 190–191 and *Her.* 69–70 thus gives rise to a realization of unshakeable truth. This realization of unshakeable truth is reached, because divine inspiration is described as effecting some kind of migration of the human mind to the noetic aspect of the Logos, through which the inspired person is enabled to apprehend unshakeable truths. There is accordingly a clear linkage between Abraham’s initiation into the noetic aspect of the Logos and his realization that God is the existent one and the one who takes care of the cosmos and provides for its welfare (*Migr.* 190–191, 194 and *Somn.* 1.157–159). These texts, therefore do not describe Abraham’s vision of God as involving an intermediary–free encounter with God, nor do they portray Abraham as being moved to a realm beyond cognition. Philo refers in *Migr.* 190–191 to divine inspiration as the power through which human rationality is moved to the divine rationality, on the basis of which the
human mind comprehends the deepest truth, namely that God is both creator and provider of the cosmos.

Divine inspiration therefore features in *De Migratone Abrahami* as the determinant factor through which complete salvation is gained. In this treatise salvation is defined as the healthy state of mind and body that ultimately results in immortality (*Migr.* 36). For if the mind remains healthy and unharmed (ἐὰν γὰρ ὁ νοῦς ἄνοσος καὶ ἀπήμων διατελῇ), it will make use (χρήται) of all its healthy tribes and powers (φυλαῖς τε καὶ δυνάμεις ἄγιανοίςας), that is, of all the things that belongs to the realm of the sense-perception (ταῖς καθ' ὁρασία καὶ ἀκοὴν) and thus also to the realm of pleasures and desires (ταῖς κατὰ τὰς ἡδονὰς τε καὶ ἐπιθυμίας) (*Migr.* 119). Hence, the renewed or inspired mind will make proper use of the body that has become healthy as result of the inspiration of the mind. It is not only the righteous person that will benefit from this proper use of the body, for in truth the righteous person is a pillar of humanity (ἐρευσμα τού γένους τῶν ἄνθρωπων) (*Migr.* 121). In fact, this righteous person lives a very godlike life, “for all that he himself has, he gives in abundance as he brings these things to the common stock for the benefit of those who make use of it.”255 This reflects the fact the inspired person has received the divine mindset, for as Philo argues: the things the righteous person does not have himself, he asks of God, who much like the righteous person shares his goods with humanity, as “he is the one who having opened his heavenly treasury let all kind of good things shower and snow upon humanity” (ὁ δὲ τὸν οὐράνιον ἀνοίξας θησαυρὸν ὀμβρεῖ καὶ ἐπινίφει τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἀθρόα) (*Migr.* 121). Hence, Philo clearly describes divine inspiration as something that endows the inspired person with a divine mindset that enables that person to make proper use of the body, and thus also as something that prompts the inspired or righteous person to live a godlike life. This is so because divine inspiration effects a reconstitution of the human mind that causes it to acknowledge that God is not only the God who has created the cosmos, but also the one who cares for his creation and provides for its welfare. The fact that Philo so strongly emphasizes that divine inspiration generates understanding reveals that he is engaged in describing something that involves human agency, as he is engaged in describing how humans come to understand the fundamental truth about the world and their own existence. Moreover, the fact that Philo describes divine inspiration

255 ὅσα μὲν αὐτὸς ἔχει προφέρων εἰς μέσον ἐπ' ὠφελεία τῶν χρησμομένων ἄφθονα δίδωσιν – *Migr.* 121.
as something that gives to a particular mindset that humans share with God suggests strongly that
divine and human agency are related to one another by kinship. In the next chapter, I will consider
how these things are coordinated in Philo’s writings with a notion of the nature of human
freedom, as this is an important, not least for the question of how divine and human agency relate
to one another.
Chapter 5. From Abram to Abraham and the Peculiar Greatness of the Sage – Philo’s Presentation of Abraham in De Mutatione Nominum

5.1 Introduction

As we already seen, Philo does not hesitate to stress the significance of the encyclical studies in his description of the lover of learning’s acquisition of virtue. We have also seen in De Migratione Abrahami that self examination is depicted as something that culminates in a divine inspiration that causes the human understanding to be aligned with the divine Logos so that humans realize the truth about God, the world and themselves. In this chapter, I want to focus on Philo’s description of Abram’s reception of his new name, Abraham, and specifically on the way this is described in the treatise De Mutatione Nominum. Furthermore, this chapter will focus on considering how Philo is able to maintain the position that virtue is gained from teaching as well as from God. My primary goal is not to settle the question whether virtue should be described as something that is acquired by human strivings or as something that is given by God. Rather, my intention is to consider how Philo can maintain both positions. Even if De Mutatione does not contain an elaborate account of how divine inspiration makes its impact on the human mind, like the account given in Migr. 175–195, then it is clearly presumed all along that virtue should not only be regarded as an outcome of learning but also of divine inspiration (see for example Mut. 38, 113, 120, 128, 136 and 203). In this chapter I hope to show not only that Philo describes divine inspiration as something that leads Abraham to the state of perfection in which he acknowledges that God is the cause of all good things, but also that Philo describes God and divine inspiration as the determinants that causes that humans receive something that essentially belongs to God, for which reason virtue must be ascribed to God.

Philo’s description of Abraham’s reception of a new name is related both to his perception of souls in the heavenly sphere and to his threefold classification of mankind. With this in mind, I will begin by putting Philo’s interpretation of the change of Abram’s name in perspective with his description of the souls in the heavenly sphere (5.2.1) and to his threefold classification of mankind (5.2.2). Moreover, there are three passages in De Mutatione Nominum that in different ways refer to Abraham’s attainment of virtue as something that must be ascribed to God. These are (a) Philo’s
argument that the sage is created by God alone (Mut. 1–46), (b) his description of Abram’s reception of a new name (Mut. 57–76) and (c) his description of the peculiar greatness of the Sage (Mut. 130–156). I deal with these passages in section 5.3 and begin by placing Philo’s description of Abraham’s reception of his new name in perspective to both older and more recent discussions about the relevance of the term “synergism” in relation to Philo’s thinking (5.3.1). From there I move on to (5.3.2) a clarification of the way in which Philo describes Abraham’s reception of a new name from two different perspectives in Mut. 57–76, both, as something Abraham obtained through learning and as something that he received from God. These matters are then discussed in relation to Philo’s extended argument in Mut. 1–46 that the Sage should be regarded as the creation of God alone (5.3.3) and in relation to the way that Philo describes God in De Mutatione Nominum as a God who gives to those who are worthy – that is, to those who have the capacity to receive (5.3.4). From there I move on to (5.3.5) a discussion of the passage in which Philo accounts for the peculiar greatness of the Sage. Finally (5.4), I suggest that these different perspectives on Abraham’s attainment of virtue can be held together if they are elucidated from the perspective of Philo’s appropriation of the ancient notion of the things “up to us.” This chapter ends (5.5) with an appendix concerning Philo’s description of Abraham’s brief moments of doubt.

5.2. Abram and Abraham

5.2.1 Abraham and the Souls in the Heavenly Sphere

Abram represents the lover of learning (φιλομαθής) whereas Abraham represents the Sage (Gig. 60–63). This description of Abraham is both related to Philo’s description of the heavenly souls and to a threefold classification of mankind that frequently appears in his writings. Philo refers occasionally to Abraham in contexts that are markedly influenced by Plato’s description of preexisting souls in Phaedr. 245–250 and Resp. 10.617. Philo describes the air or the ether as filled with immortal souls (Somn. 1.135; QG 3.10) and refers to these souls as being of different kinds. The purest souls never leave the air and are never brought into contact with mortal bodies. The other philosophers, says Philo, identify these as demons (Somn. 1.141; Gig. 16) or heroes (Plant. 14), whereas Moses describes them as angels (Somn. 1.141; Plant. 14). However, some of these souls descend because of their earthward tendencies and thus becomes bound to mortal bodies. These are lovers of the body (φιλοσώματοι, Somn. 1.138) and they get caught in a body as if in a
stream (Gig. 13; cf. Plato, Tim. 43A). Others descend for other reasons in order to return in due
time to the air from which they came from (Somn. 1.138; Gig. 13; Plant. 14). Some of the
ascending souls eventually fall back into an existence in a mortal body, whereas others will abide
permanently in the air after the return to the heavenly sphere (Somn. 1.138). In Sacr. 5 Philo
points out that Abraham became equal to the angels as he left his mortal life.

The souls who were caught in the stream were those who were heedless of wisdom (σοφίας
ήλόγησαν) and those who surrendered themselves (ἐκδόντες ἑαυτούς) to unstable and fortunate
affairs (ἀστάτοις καὶ τυχηροῖς πράγμασιν). These unstable and fortunate affairs are not related to
the mind but rather to the body (τὸ σῶμα) or to things even more devoid of life such as glory
(δόσαν), wealth (χρήματα), offices (ἀρχάς) and honour (τιμάς) (Gig. 15). Those who return to
the air, on the one hand, are souls of those who have genuinely pursued philosophy (ψυχαὶ τῶν
ἀνόθως φιλοσοφήσαντων) and who studied in order to die to the life of the body (τὸν μετὰ
σωμάτων ἀποθῆκεν Βίον) (Gig. 14). The Sages belong to this latter category and Philo stresses
that the Sages are only sojourners in this world. Sometimes, the sojourning souls of the Sages are
described as being virtually unaffected by the visit into mortal existence (Conf. 77–78). At other
times, however, the soul of the wise man is described as being subjected to slavery in the body
(QL 3.10), whereas at other times Philo describes the body as an outright enemy of the soul
(Leg. 3.71–72). Philo refers to Abraham as one of the Sages and invokes
the words of Abraham in
Gen 23:4 (LXX): “I am a stranger and sojourner with you” (Conf. 79; QG 4.74). This status was
something Abraham had to achieve. Abraham was not born as a Sage; he was born as a
progressing man and it was as a progressing man that he managed to become a Sage.

---

256 Philo gives different accounts of the fact that souls descend into a mortal existence. Some souls descend because of their love for the body (Somn. 1.138), whereas others descend with the purpose of giving terrestrial regions a share in wisdom (QL 4.74). For a thorough introduction to Philo’s view of the preexistent souls in light of Middle Platonism, see David Winston, The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 43; New York: Doubleday, 1979), 25–28. Winston claims that Philo regards the descending of the souls as “an impenetrable mystery” and that “Philo vacillates and simply retails to his readers the various explanations, which he found before him in the Middle Platonic tradition” (Winston, The Wisdom of Solomon, 28).

257 According to Abr. 262–263 Abraham refused to put his trust in such things.

258 David Runia points out that Plato has a somewhat less pessimistic view of the body in Timaeus than in Phaedo and notes that Philo also had positive things to say of the body, recognizing it as a temple for the rational soul (Opif. 137) and describing good health and freedom from disease as a blessing from God (Praem. 119–122); see Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 321–322. Cf. also Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” 408: “if the body is thus not to be neglected or compromised in any way, neither is it to be allowed to become the central focus of human concern or to usurp the higher dignity reserved for the rational element.”
5.2.2 Abram and Abraham in Light of Philo’s Threefold Classification of Mankind

Philo’s descriptions of different kinds of preexisting souls and his description of the meaning of the names Abram and Abraham are related to his account of three different kinds of human beings. At times, he operates with a tripartite classification of mankind. This is occasionally related to his account of Abraham’s path to virtue, because Abraham represents the class of men who transcend from one class to the other. This tripartite classification of mankind can be found in *Leg.* 1.88–94 and *Her.* 45–46. It is related to the more fundamental distinction between the heavenly man Philo found described in Gen 1:26–27 and the earthly man he found described in Gen 2:7. One important characteristic of the heavenly man of Gen 1:26–27 is that he has virtue of himself and therefore neither needs nor benefits from being taught (*Leg.* 1.92). Philo claims that the man who is described in Gen 1:26–27 as having virtue from himself is also the man who is described in Gen 2:15 LXX with the words καὶ ἔλαβε κύριος ὁ Θεός τὸν ἀνθρωπόν ὃν ἐποίησε καὶ ἔθετο αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ. Somewhat surprisingly, Philo distinguishes between this man and the man referred to in Gen 2:7–8, and accordingly he reads Gen 2:15 as another description of the man featured in Gen 1:26–27. Philo’s description of the man of Gen 1:26–27 is related to the description of three different kinds of human beings given in *Leg.* 1.93–94. Here Philo contends that prohibition (ἡ ἀπαγόρευσις) concerns wrongdoings (περὶ ἁμαρτημάτων) and is therefore addressed to the bad man (πρὸς φαῦλον), exhortation (ἡ παραίνεσις) is given to the man in the middle (πρὸς τὸν μέσον), which is the man who is neither good nor bad (τὸν μήτε φαῦλον μήτε σπουδαῖον), whereas the perfect man (ὁ τέλειος) does not stand in need (δεῖται) of any of these things (οὐδενὸς τούτων). There is no doubt that the perfect man referred to in these paragraphs should be regarded as a reference to the man of Gen 1:26–27. Philo refers thus in *Leg.* 1.92–94 to these three kinds of men: the heavenly man, the man in the middle, and the bad man. The

---

259 Mendelson refers to Philo’s indebtedness to the Stoic distinction between the Sage and the ordinary man. In contrast to the Sage, the ordinary man does not achieve emotional and ethical perfection without a struggle. The Stoics referred to the ordinary man who strives for perfection, as the progressing man (ὁ προκόπτων). This kind of person struggles for virtue and is in need of some rules to guide him on his way to perfection. The fact that Stoics could describe both Socrates and Plato as progressing men illustrates how rare the Stoics considered the Sage to be; for further reading, see Mendelson, *Secular Education,* 47–48. For the origin of the idea of the progressing man (ὁ προκόπτων) in Stoicism and its place in Philo’s writings, see Carlos Lévy, “Philo’s Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (ed. Adam Kamesar; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 146–175, 164–167 and Roskam, *On the Path to Virtue,* 197–219.

260 See *Leg.* 1.43–55, 88.

heavenly man is designated as a Sage insofar as he is referred to as a wise man (ὁ σπουδαῖος, ὁ τέλειος). Accordingly, it is possible on the basis of Leg. 1.93–94 to distinguish between the Sage, the man in the middle and the bad man.

Philo similarly describes different kinds of human beings in Her. 45–46. In this text Philo distinguishes between three kinds of life, (a) a life that looks to God, (b) a life looking to created things, and (c) a life on the borderline between the two. The life that looks to God seems to refer to the life of angels, for they have never descended to an earthly existence and have never been associated with the body, whereas the life looking to created things has never thought of rising from this existence (Her. 45). The mixed life is that which is often inspired and possessed by God and guided by the better order, but which often turns back as it is drawn by the worse (Her. 46).

It is possible on the basis of these texts to sketch the three following different kinds of existence: (a) the existence of the heavenly man of Gen 1:27, who is comparable to the Sage as well as to the angels who have never descended to a mortal existence, and who requires no teaching and moves instinctively towards virtue; (b) the progressing man, who can benefit from exhortation, and who can be attracted both to the life of wisdom and the life of folly, and who can transcend from being a progressing man to being a Sage; and (c) the bad man, who is only concerned with his bodily existence and who does not seek to be free from it, and who is out of pedagogical reach.

---

262 See Mendelsohn, Secular Education, 49: “As in the case of the Stoic Sage, the immaterial man does not need external rules, for he possesses virtue instinctively.” See also Sang Meyng Lee, The Cosmic Drama of Salvation: A Study of Paul’s Undisputed Writings from Anthropological and Cosmological Perspectives (WUNT 2/276; Tübingen: Mohr siebeck, 2010), 113–115. Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 146–154 identifies a hierarchy of psychological dispositions in Leg. 92–94. This approach enables her to identify more nuances in Philo’s presentation than those sketched here.

263 The “mixed life” refers to the prokopton (see Mendelson, Secular Education, 49) and bears some resemblance to Philo’s description of the practicer, Jacob, in Somn. 1.151–152; here Philo points out that the wise (σοφοί) have received the Olympian and heavenly region (τὸν ὀλύμπιον καὶ οὐράνιον κόσμον) to live in (οἰκεῖον), whereas the bad (κακοί) have received the innermost places in Hades (τοὺς ἐν Ἀιδώς μυχούς), and that the practicers (ὁ ἀσκητὴς) climb up and down as though on a ladder, as they are either drawn up by the better (ὑπὸ τῆς κρείττονος μοίρας ἀνελκτόνοι) part or they are drawn in the opposite direction by the worse part (ὑπὸ τῆς χείρονος ἀντισπόμενοι) (Somn. 1.151–152).

264 This classification could be further refined, as there is a difference between the ordinary man, who remains an ordinary man all of his life (Bezael serves as the prime example of this kind of existence), and the kind of person who manages to become a Sage, of which Abram is the prime example; see Mendelsohn, Secular Education, 76–79. Cf. also Mut. 211 in which Philo compares those with a nature not receptive of instruction with an oak or mute stone, that is not capable of learning anything. Nimrod serves as the archetype of this last category; see Gig. 65, but see also Her. 78–79.
This classification is compatible with that given in *Gig.* 60–63 and here it becomes clear how Abram and Abraham fit into the system. In this text, Philo stresses the significance of education and distinguishes between earth-born, heaven-born and God-born human beings. The earth-born men are those hunting for pleasures of the body (οἱ θηρευτικοὶ τῶν σώματος ἡδονῶν) (*Gig.* 60), whereas the heaven-born men are the craftsmen, the learned and the lovers of learning (τεχνίται, ἐπιστήμονες, φιλομαθεῖς) (*Gig.* 60), whose minds pursue the encyclical studies as well as all the other arts (τὰ ἐγκύκλια καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀπασίας τέχνας) (*Gig.* 60), just as they train their minds in the intelligible things (ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς) (*Gig.* 60–61). In addition, to these kinds of people or these kinds of minds, Philo refers to the men of God. These are priests and prophets (ἱερεῖς καὶ προφῆται) (*Gig.* 61) who have stepped beyond the sense-perceptible sphere and migrated to the noetic cosmos (εἰς τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον ματανέστησαν) (*Gig.* 61) as they have been registered as citizens (ἐγγραφέντες) in the commonwealth of the imperishable and incorporeal ideas (ἀφθάρτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν πολιτείᾳ) (*Gig.* 61). The fact that the men of heaven train themselves in intelligible things is best taken as a reflection of their engagement in the encyclical studies. It does not mean that they leave the realm of the sense-perceptible world for this is reserved for priests and prophets (*Gig.* 61). The pursuit of the encyclical studies belongs to the realm of the senses, for the encyclical studies require bodily organs and faculties.265 Interestingly, it is also possible for the progressing man to gain knowledge of God. However, in this case, knowledge of God is an indirect form of knowledge in which the cause of the knowledge of the encyclical studies is seen as though through a reflection or as in a mirror (*Fug.* 213). This reflects the fact that the progressing soul cannot draw directly from the well of wisdom (*Fug.* 202).266

265 Cf. Philo’s description of the encyclical studies in *Congr.* 141–150.

266 In *Leg.* 3.97–99 Philo presents the teleological argument for the existence of God. Here he argues — in line with the Stoics — from an analogy between artificial things and nature. Just as one cannot enter a house or a city without getting an idea of the artificer, one cannot enter the world without getting an idea of its maker. At the end of *Leg.* 3.97–102, Philo sums up the differences between Moses and Bezalel: “the one [Moses] is receiving the impression of God from God himself, the Cause, but the other [Bezalel] comprehends the Artificer by means of reasoning (ἐξ ἐπιλογισμοῦ) as from a shadow of created things” (*Leg.* 3.102). H. Wolfson has identified three variations of the cosmological argument of the existence of God in Philo’s writings, in addition to the teleological argument. All four are, however, mutually related, insofar as all arguments can be described as arguments from causality; see Wolfson, *Philo,* 2:73–93; see also Frick, *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria,* 45–46. For further information regarding the cosmological evidence for God in its ancient philosophical context, see Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon,* 253.
Abram means “lofty father” (πατήρ μετέωρος) (Gig. 62) and represents the mind that reaches the studies of the supra-terrestrial regions of the cosmos (Gig. 62). However, Abram represents the progressing man who becomes a Sage and Philo thus claims that when Abram had been bettered (ὅταν βελτιωθείς) (Gig. 63) he was destined to be called by a new name insofar as he has become a man of God, which is reflected in the words of Gen 17:1 (LXX) “I am your God” (Gig. 63). Philo stresses that God is God for Abraham to a special degree (ἐξαιρετον) (Gig. 64) and in accordance with grace (κατὰ χάριν) (Gig. 64). Philo does not spell out in De Gigantibus what this implies. Yet, this is an important subject matter in De Mutatione Nominum.

5.3 From Abram to Abraham in De Mutatione Nominum

5.3.1 A Perfect Balance between Human Effort and Divine Grace?

The question of the presence of synergistic notions in Philo’s writings has recurrent from time to in the last 100 years of Philo research. In the beginning of the 20th century, it was not uncommon to ascribe to Philo a view of faith as an act of will. W. Völker reacted against such a description. He acknowledged that Philo could describe faith as an “ἔργον des Menschen.” However, Völker pointed out that Philo could also describe faith as the result of divine enlightenment of the soul. These matters prompted Völker to conclude: “Wenn er es auch nicht ausdrücklich sagt, so darf man es doch vermuten, dass er beides nach Art seiner synergistischen Haltung aufeinander bezieht.” Dieter Zeller reacted against such a description of Philo’s thinking and referred to the apparent conflict between Philo’s simultaneous stressing of the significance of human endeavor and of divine intervention by saying: “Der gegenteilige Eindruck ist nur Schein. Das ist die Konsequenz der Allwirksamkeit des Schöpfers, dass jede anscheinende Tätigkeit des Menschen zum Guten in Wahrheit Gottes in creatio continua ist.” More recently, John Barclay has followed suit by stressing that “Philo stresses the causative dynamics of grace to the extent that, in deepest reality, or at least at its ultimate stages of ascent, the soul is represented as inactive or passive to avoid any

268 Völker, Fortschritt und Vollendung, 243.
269 Völker, Fortschritt und Vollendung, 243.
270 Zeller, Charis bei Philon und Paulus, 72.
implication of synergism.” This apparent consensus between Zeller and Barclay has, however, even more recently been challenged by Scott D. Mackie, who claims that “though many passages support Barclay’s thesis that divine agency is solely responsible, in just as many others Philo emphasizes the role of vigorous human striving in the vision of God.” This is not least the case in connection with the “the first person of faith, Abraham” who “is characterized as possessing a ‘fire of yearning . . . resolutely eager to seek the One, not pausing until he received clearer visions . . . of his existence’ (Virt. 215–216).” Mackie concludes that “expressions of strict monergism are found in both the Exposition (Abr. 80; Praem. 45–46) and the Allegory (Ebr. 145–146, 152; Migr. 34–35; 169–171), while passages mentioning human effort and cooperation appear in all three series: the Exposition (Abr. 107, 119–132; Spec. 3.1–6; Virt. 215–216; Praem. 36–40), the Allegory (Post. 13; Mut. 81–88), and QGE (QG 4.2, 4–5, 8; QE 2.51)” and “that this ambivalence about the effectual means of the noetic ascent and vision of God reflects Philo’s own viewpoint and experience.” Mackie’s findings correspond in many ways to what I have repeatedly stressed above. Philo consistently emphasises the significance of both human effort (with respect to education) and divine grace. The question is, however, whether this should be understood as ambivalence with respect to concepts like monergism and synergism. In the following section, I argue that Philo’s argument in De Mutatione Nominum does not reflect any ambivalence about the effectual means of the noetic ascent and human attainment of virtue and that Philo’s appropriation of the notion of the things “up to us” can illuminate how he could maintain the position that human attainment of virtue must be ascribed exclusively to God even when it is gained from teaching.

5.3.2 Two Concurrent Perspectives on the Change of a Name in Mut. 57–76

In this paragraph, I will discuss how within the same section of text Philo is able to move from one perspective to another in his account of a single event. In Mut. 57–59, Philo refers to Abram’s reception of a new name as a reflection of the truthfulness of the words from Gen 17:4 (LXX) “my

---

271 J. M. G. Barclay, “‘By the Grace of God I am what I am’: Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul,” in Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment, 140–157, 157. Barclay similarly describes the ultimate stages of the ascent to the vision of God as being a state “where the soul comes to its limits and experiences the pure agency of God” (ibid. 146).


covenant is with you.” Philo observes that there are many kinds of covenant (διαθήκης πάμπολλα) that assign gifts and bounties (χάριτας καὶ δωρεὰς ἀπονέμοντα) to those who are worthy (τοῖς ἄξιοις) (Mut. 58), but that the best kind is the one in which God has made himself the portion of those who receive the covenant (κλῆρον ἀποφήνας τῶν λαμβανόντων ἕαυτόν) (Mut. 59). These kind of people are those whom he considers as worthy of another appellation (οὕς προσρήσεως ἕτερας ἥξιωσε) (Mut. 59).275

Furthermore, Philo stresses in Mut. 57–76 that the account in Gen 17 of Abram’s reception of a new name should not be regarded as a trivial example of a man who changed his name. As also seen in Gigg. 62, Cher. 4 and Abr. 81–84, Abram is interpreted as meaning “uplifted father” (μετέωρος πατήρ) (Mut. 66) which Philo views as a reference to Abraham’s past as astrologer and investigator of supraterrestrial phenomena (Mut. 67), whereas Abraham is interpreted as meaning “elect father of sound” (πατήρ ἐκλεκτὸς ἡχοῦς). Philo claims that this should be regarded as a reference to the stream of speech which flows from the mind of the wise (Mut. 69). This means that Abram represents the lover of learning (ὁ φιλομαθής) (Mut. 70) or the star-gazer (μετεωρολέσχης) (Mut. 70), whereas Abraham represents the lover of wisdom (ὁ φιλόσοφος) or simply the wise (ὁ σοφὸς) (Mut. 70). Therefore, one must not think that God simply bestows a change of name, when in fact he bestows an improvement of character (ἡθῶν ἐπανόρθωσιν) (Mut. 70). Philo describes this as a matter of divine gift-giving (χαρίζεσθαι τὸ θεῖον) (Mut. 70). It reflects the fact that God displays and designates Abraham as a wise man (σοφὸν καὶ ἀπέδειξε καὶ ἤνόμασεν) (Mut. 71), and that God had called him to partnership in virtue (ἐπί τὴν μετουσίαν καλέσας ἄρετής) (Mut. 71).

This divine gift is described as resulting from Abram’s progression from nature studies to philosophy and from philosophy to virtue. This is comparable to the account given in De Congressu. In De Mutatione Nominum, nature studies are described as having no real value if they do not lead to the acquisition of virtue (Mut. 73). Philo presumes that Abram’s existence as a student of heavenly phenomena leads him to philosophy, as Philo moves swiftly from a description of Abram’s preoccupation as a student of heavenly phenomena to a description of his pursuit of philosophy.

275 This is another example of the fact that covenant for Philo refers to the gifts of God; See Grabbe, “Covenant in Philo and Josephus,” 252–253.
He subscribes to the common ancient description of philosophy as embodying the studies of physics, logic and ethics. He presumes that there is a mutual relationship between the three disciplines and that the establishment of ethics is the goal of philosophy; it is assumed that in philosophy the physical and logical undertaking (τὴν φυσικὴν καὶ λογικὴν πραγματείαν) (Mut. 75) must (δεῖν) be brought to bear on ethics (ἐπὶ τὴν ἡθικὴν ἀναφέρεσθαι) by means of which the character is bettered (ἡ βελτιοῦται τὸ Ἥθος). Philo summarizes the event in Mut. 76 when he asserts that literally (λόγῳ) this is about the change of a name (περὶ τοῦ μετονομασθέντος), but in fact (ἔργῳ) it is about the progression from nature study to ethical philosophy (περὶ τοῦ μεταβαλόντος ἀπὸ φυσιολογίας πρὸς τὴν ἡθικὴν φιλοσοφίαν). This means that the account of Abram’s reception of a new name is actually an account of moving (μεταναστάντος) from the study that is concerned with this world (ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ τὸν κόσμον θεωρίας) to the knowledge of the Maker of the world (πρὸς τὴν πεποιηκότος ἐπιστήμην) from which Abram acquired piety the best of possessions (ἐξ ἦς εὐσέβειαν, κτημάτων τὸ κάλλιστον, ἐκτήσατο). The change of Abram’s name denotes, in other words, that he had managed to progress from the encyclical studies to philosophy and from there to consummated virtue (εὐσέβεια).277

It is striking to observe how swiftly Philo in these paragraphs moves from a divine to a human perspective on the event described in Gen 17:4. Philo claims that Abram’s reception of a new name

276 Philo embraces the ancient threefold division of philosophy into ethics, physics, and logic. In Agr. 14 and Mut. 74–75 he uses the image of a field, in which the trees and plants refer to physics, in which the fruit or crops refer to ethics and the fence around the field refers to logic (cf. also Leg. 1.57). This image goes back to Diog. Laert. 7.40, see Julia Annas, “The Sage in Ancient Philosophy,” in Anthropine sophia (ed. Francesca Alesse and Gabriele Giannantoni; Napoli: bibliopolis, 2008), 11–27.

277 Philo considered Abraham’s path to virtue as superior in comparison to Jacob’s, since Abraham’s path to virtue involves philosophical studies. Abraham’s superiority is claimed in Mut. 84 in which Philo draws attention to the peculiar fact that Jacob was called Jacob even after his name had been changed to Israel, whereas Abraham is never referred to as Abram after he had received his new name. Michael L. Satlow, “Philo on Human Perfection,” JTS 59 (2008): 501–519, 515 explains the relationship between gaining virtue through practice and teaching in the following way: “Philosophy seems to be the superior path, as it involves an ontological change in the way that the soul deals with the passions.” Philo referred both to piety and faith as super-virtues (Decal. 52 and Abr. 270, Virt. 216). Wolfson suggests that Philo was inspired by Proverbs 1:7 in ascribing the role of leadership to the virtue of piety, since piety in Greek philosophy is never described as a primal virtue, even though it is associated with doing justice to the gods in the sense of having the knowledge of how to serve the gods. Wolfson suggests that Philo was prompted by the association of faith with justice in Gen 15:6 to consider faith in God as on par with piety – that is piety in the sense of doing justice to God; see Wolfson, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 2:208–18. Sterling, however, points to theocentric nature of Philo’s thinking as the primary background for his characterization of piety as the queen of the virtues; more specifically, Sterling points to the wording in Decal. 52: “The supreme source of all that exists is God; just as piety is (the supreme source) of the virtues” (Sterling’s translation) (Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues,” 121).
reflects the fact that Abram’s soul had been bettered. This betterment of the soul is, however, simultaneously described as a gift from God and the result of a successful completion of a kind of educational program. The question is whether or not this should be characterized as a reflection of Philo’s ambivalence about the effectual means of the noetic ascent and vision of God.

5.3.3 Abraham as the Creation of God Alone

In *Mut.* 1–46, Philo addresses the part of Gen 17:1 (LXX) according to which the Lord was seen by Abraham and according to which the Lord said to him “I am your God.”

In *Mut.* 2 Philo points out that the man in the middle (ὁ μέσος) is always hastening (σπεύδει ἀεὶ) to the top (πρὸς ἀκρότητα) making use of (χρώμενος) his gift from nature (φύσεως εὐμορίᾳ) and that it is with respect to such a person (ὃ) that Moses says that the Lord of all was seen (ὁφθήναι τὸν τῶν ὅλων κύριον). The fact that Philo stresses the significance of proper nature and makes use of the motif of the climb to the top simply underscores that Philo interprets the life of Abraham in light of ancient ideals of education. This is another example of Philo’s ability to stress the significance of human effort. As the argument unfolds it becomes clear that Philo in this way portrays Abraham as a progressing man striving for perfection. Philo claims that it is clear from Scripture that God relates to the bad person (ὁ φαύλος) or the foolish or ignorant person (ὁ ἄφρων) (*Mut.* 23), represented by the Pharaoh – *Mut.* 19–22) as Lord; God relates to the progressing man (represented by Abram) as God (*Mut.* 23) and to the perfect man (represented by Moses) as the Lord God (*Mut.* 23). These subtle differences signify different relationships to God. In *Mut.* 24, Philo points out that the bad man is mastered by God as by a Lord (ὡς ὑπὸ κυρίου) so that he may live in fear, whereas the progressing person (τὸν προκόπτοντα) is benefitted (εὐεργετεῖσθαι) as by God (ὡς ὑπὸ θεοῦ) in order that (ὅπως) the progressing person may reach perfection (τελειότητος ἐφίκηται) through these benefits (ταῖς εὐποιίαις).

---

278 It is a peculiar fact that the mss. of *De Mututatione Nominum* quotes Gen 17:1 (LXX) as if God spoke to Abraham, even though the LXX and the storyline in *De Mututatione Nominum* demands that it is Abram who is addressed; see the analytical introduction in Philo, *Mut.* (F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL), 128, note a. This peculiar fact probably reflects Philo’s conviction that Abraham at this stage had reached perfection, on the basis of which he was just about to receive a new name.

279 This is somewhat at odds with Philo’s description in *Somn.* 1.159–170. Here Philo stresses on the basis of Gen 28:13 that Abraham, as a man who gained knowledge by instruction, is in need of both of the divine powers, governance and kindness, whereas Isaac, as the superior character, is only in need of divine kindness. However, compare this with the telling remarks of David Runia: “Philo is claiming that every time we speak of God by means of his names, we are not speaking of Him as He really is, but invariably in terms of His relationality, via the powers, towards that which is
the perfect person is both guided as by the Lord (ὡς ὑπὸ κυρίου) and benefitted (εὕεργετεῖσθαι) as by God (ὡς ὑπὸ θεοῦ).

The divine names are not proper names. God is utterly transcendent, utterly unknowable and not even his proper name is revealed to man (Mut. 8–14). The biblical terms θεός and κύριος should therefore be regarded as substitutes for God’s proper name (Mut. 13, 14). These signify ways in which God relates to the world; the name θεός signifies God’s creational activity and κύριος God’s ongoing governance of the world. The fact that Abraham in Gen 17:1 is addressed by God with the words ‘I am your God’ reveals that God is the creator of Abraham, so that the phrase ‘I am your God’ is equal to the phrase ‘I am Maker and Artificer’ (Mut. 29). This peculiarity prompts Philo to clarify the extent to which it is appropriate to claim that God is the creator. In Mut. 30–31 Philo asserts that God did not form the soul of the bad man, for wickedness is hateful to God; neither did God form the soul in the middle by himself alone (δι’ ἑαυτοῦ μόνου). Philo justifies this statement with a reference to the words of Gen 1:26 “Let us make man after our image.” This means that if one receives a bad form (εἰ δέξεται φαύλον τύπον) it will seem to have been made by another (ἐτέρων φαίνηται δημιουργία), whereas if one receives a good form (εἰ καλὸν) it will appear as a piece of work of the one who is the craftsman of beautiful and good things alone (τοῦ τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν μόνων τεχνίτου).

This is an important paragraph, because it clarifies how Philo wants to deny that God holds a share in the existence of evil. It also clarifies that Abraham’s achievement of perfection should be ascribed to God. Philo thus draws the conclusion in Mut. 31 that this is certainly a wise man

other than Him.” This allows some flexibility with respect to the use of divine names, for “Philo, of course, finds it quite impossible and quite unnecessary to achieve consistency and correctness in the use and non-use of God’s names,” (Runia, “Naming and Knowing,” 80).

280 Philo refers to these names/powers of God in several places, see for instance Cher. 27–28; Sacr. 59; Plant. 86; Her. 166 and Abr. 124–125. Philo’s description of these names/powers reflect the fact that “the activities of God are knowable, even though God himself is not,” (Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria, 92). As substitutes for God’s proper name, these two appellations can be said to “correspond to that which, depending on circumstances, appears as aspect, manifestation, instrument, or attributive of the divinity, namely God’s ‘potencies’ (dunameis),” (Mireille Hadas-Lebel, Philo of Alexandria: A Thinker in Jewish Diaspora [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 184).

281 ὥστε τὸ ἐγὼ ἐίμι θεός σας’ ἵνα σαί ἐστι τῷ ἐγὼ εἰμὶ λοιπης καὶ δημιουργός) (Mut. 29.

282 Philo’s reluctance to ascribe evil phenomena to God actually goes so far that he refrains from endowing evil as such and evil phenomena in the world any real ontological status, see Alan Mendelson, “Philo’s Dialectic of Reward and Punishment,” SPhilo 9 (1997): 104–125, 111–113.
(πάντως οὐν σπουδαῖος ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν) to whom God says (ὡς θητοί): “I am your God” as he had received (λαχών) the soul as a piece of work crafted by the Maker alone (ποιητοῦ μόνου) without the co-operation of others (ἀνευ συμπράξεως ἑτέρων). In this, Philo claims, Scripture is teaching what it is teaching so often, namely that God is the Maker of only good and wise things (ὅτι μόνων ἀγαθῶν καὶ σοφῶν δημιουργός ἐστιν) (Mut. 32). Thus, Abraham is a progressing man who has reached the state of perfection and this implies that he has been created exclusively by God.

Human virtue is therefore the result of God’s creational activity and not of human efforts made apart from God. As the argument develops, it becomes clear that Philo describes divine inspiration (Mut. 38) as something that causes the creation of a divine mindset in the inspired person. In Mut. 39, Philo moves on to interpreting the words from Gen 17:1 (LXX), εὐαρέστει ἑμῶν ἐμοῦ and he interprets this phrase as a call to do good to all people under God’s watchful eye (Mut. 39–40). In this way, humans will win honor in both the created and the uncreated sphere (Mut. 45). This way of living is an imitation of God, for it belongs to the well-formed man to be in the footsteps of God (προσήκει τὸν ἀστεῖον ὁπαδόν εἶναι θεοῦ), “for it [the welfare of creation] is a concern for the ruler of all and the father of the created” (μέλει γὰρ τῷ πάντων ἠγεμόνι καὶ πατρὶ τοῦ γενομένου) (Mut. 45).283

This clarification – that Philo is concerned with describing the creation of a particular mindset – is important, as it reveals that he is concerned with describing the effectual means of the creation of a divine mindset in human beings. Here he points out that this mindset is established in humans by God alone, as humans acquire learning. This is not a matter of ambivalence about the effectual means of the noetic ascent, it is rather something that follows logically from Philo’s view of God, i.e., from the fact that God’s presence in the cosmos is organically associated with the presence of the Logos. It follows from this description of God that the divine mindset can only be established in human, insofar as they are exposed to the wisdom that is associated with the logos of God. Philo is not ambivalent about the effectual means of the creation of the divine mindset in human beings, as this is something that can only be established by God. For most people, the divine mindset is acquired by hard work, i.e., by the acquisition of learning. This does not mean that the

283 This divine mindset reflects God’s nature as creator and thus the goodness of God. For if God before creation was sufficient in himself, why did he then create the cosmos (διὰ τί οὖν ἐποίει τὰ μὴ ὄντα;)? There can be no other reason than the fact that God is good and loves to give (ὅτι ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόδωρος ἦν) (Mut. 46).
mindset is not established exclusively by God. It simply means that the mindset is established by means of divine inspiration which is inseparably associated with the wisdom that comes from learning. The passivity referred to in some of Philo’s accounts of the final stages of the noetic ascent reflects his convictions regarding these final stages. These stages are not characterized by the toil that is associated with the acquisition of learning. Rather these final stages are characterized by the fact that humans have reached the goal, i.e., the stage at which their minds are completely aligned with the Logos, for which reason they no longer need to toil to understand. It can be presumed that humans are disposed towards virtue, as this is how humans have been created by God. The fact that not all are able to attain perfect knowledge does not reflect God’s preferential option for the wise. It only reflects the fact that some (in fact most of us) only have a limited capacity to receive.

5.3.4 Divine Inspiration and Human Capacity to Receive

As we have seen already (in paragraph 3.2 above), in *Leg.* 31–42, Philo describes human zeal for virtue as something that originates in divine inspiration. Philo’s argument in *Leg.* 1:31–42 can arguably also cast light on Philo’s argument in *De Mutatione Nominum*. In these passages, he asks why God deemed the earthly and body loving mind worthy of the divine breath? (διὰ τί ἥξιωσεν ὁ θεὸς ὅλως τὸν γηγενῆ καὶ φιλοσώματον νοῦν πνεῦματος θείου) (*Leg.* 1.33). There can only be one reason, namely that God gives good things because he loves to give (φιλόδωρος ὃν ὁ θεὸς χαρίζεται τά ἀγαθά) (*Leg.* 1.34). God’s gift of the divine breath is not given in response to human virtue and hence *Leg.* 33–34 pictures God as one who – at this stage at least – gives to those who are not worthy, as there is no correspondence between God’s gift of the divine breath and the body-loving mind (φιλοσώματον νοῦν). However, the argument in *Leg.* 31–42 is interesting for

---

284 As stressed by Barclay, “By the Grace of God I am what I am,” 147: “although Jacob quintessentially works and wrestles to be the προκόπτων on the upward journey, the critical moment is when God, in his mercy, allows him to pass over into the state of Israel (the one who sees God) or into the state of Isaac, that is, rest (*Sacr.* 42; *Migr.* 26–33). . . At this point, human labour, toil and effort are useless and must wholly cease: it is precisely without work that the goods of the land are inherited (Deut. 6.10–11), for the nature of the self-taught and the nature of rest is divine, ‘arising not by human designs, but by a divine ecstasy’ (οὐκ ἀνθρωπίναις ἐπινοοῖς, ἀλλ’ ἐνθέω μανίᾳ, *Fug.* 168).”

285 See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 228: “Since no boundary can be placed around God’s bounty, at least some of God’s gifts will pass to the unworthy as well as the worthy, the insignificant as well as the important (*Sacr.* 124; *Leg.* 1.33–34; *Migr.* 186). At the same time, since humans are inevitably sinful, God’s benevolence extends to the unworthy, otherwise no one would receive anything other than condemnation (*Deus* 70–76). Thus, in certain respects, and at certain levels, God does give to the unworthy, but Philo is generally anxious to justify this anomaly.” The argument in *Leg.* 33–34 is comparable to the argument in *Deus* 104–108 that clarifies God’s rationale for the creation of the world.
other reasons as well. Firstly, it should be noted that Philo points out that God is the giver, that the human mind is the receiver and that πνεῦμα is what is given and therefore also received (Leg. 1.37). Secondly, he asserts that a union of the three comes about (ἐνωσις γίνεται τῶν τριῶν) as God has extended the power that proceeds from himself through the mediating breath of the Spirit (τείναντος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν διὰ τοῦ μέσου πνεύματος) (Leg. 1.37). Thirdly, divine inspiration is the determinant that prompts humans to seek knowledge of the nature of God, for the human mind would never have dared rising to such lofty heights if God had not drawn it to himself (εἰ μὴ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ἀνέσπασεν αὐτὸν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν), as far as it is possible for the human mind to be drawn up (ὡς ἐνῆν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν ἀνασπασθῆναι) (Leg. 1.38). It follows from this description that the human mind has a certain capacity that cannot be exceeded and that God has more to give than humans can obtain (cf. also Post. 143). Fourthly, Philo points out that this gift of divine inspiration makes humans responsible to God (Leg. 1.33−34). The gift of inspiration means that God has created no person barren of virtue or the good (ἄγονον οὐδεμίαν ψυχὴν ἐδημιούργησεν ἀγαθοῦ) even if it is impossible for some to make proper use of it (κἂν ἡ χρῆσις ἀδύνατος ἐνίοις ἦ αὐτοῦ) (Leg. 1.34). It follows from this description that God cannot be blamed for a human lack of acquaintance with virtue (Leg. 1.35). This argument may be described as providing the basis not only for the claim that the human acquisition of virtue must be ascribed

and in which Philo argues that not even the cosmos in all its greatness can be judged worthy of God’s grace (Deus. 106). Hence, Philo’s account of God’s creation of man and of the cosmos indicates that at the most basic level humans are unworthy of God’s gifts. This is not jeopardized by that fact that God is most often described as someone who gives to those who are worthy, i.e., to those who have the capacity to receive, since Philo stresses that this capacity itself stems from God. Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” JSNT 27 (2005), 465–492, 470 refers to Deus 104–108 as an example of how Philo clarifies that “creation was a singular act of generalized reciprocity, which most appropriately suits God: ‘to be beneficent was incumbent upon His blessed and happy nature’. To be God means to bestow unmerited blessings and to act in according to the ‘solidarity extreme.’” The concept of generalized reciprocity stems from Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton Press, 1972), 185–230. He points out that “‘generalized reciprocity’ refers to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given, and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned” (ibid., 193−194). Altruistic is best taken as another word for selfless or unselfish, as he also points out that “the span of social distance between those who exchange conditions the mode of exchange” from which “it follows that close kin tend to share, to enter into generalized exchanges, and distant and nonkin to deal in equivalents or in guile” (ibid., 196). It follows from this description that gifts given in accordance with the pattern of generalized reciprocity are extended to the immediate kin. Hence, the concept is not able to fully account of the pattern described in neither Deus 104–108 nor Leg. 1. 33−34, as both texts emphasize the difference or distance between the giver and the recipient of the gift. However, the concept may prove itself helpful with respect to explaining Philo’s descriptions of subsequent gifts of inspiration, as these gifts presuppose an amount of kinship between the giver and the recipient of the gift, a kinship that can be presupposed because of the breath extended to humans in creation.
to God but also for the claim that virtue is gained whenever humans strive for God and whenever humans have the capacity to conceive the truth about God.

The implications of this description of humanity can be seen in Philo’s argument in De Mutatione Nominum. The description given in this treatise of the bad man is a description of a kind of person with a very limited capacity to receive God’s gifts. Pharao functions here as the archetype of the bad man (Mut. 19) and the Egyptian kingdom is thus presented as a kingdom of terror defined by the values of the pleasure-lover (ὁ φιλήδονος) who only lives for the arousing and exciting of the passions, which this kind of person should have tamed rather than aroused (see Mut. 166–173). Philo refers in this manner to the kind of human souls (περὶ ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν) whom God did not consider worthy of the same care (ἄς οὐ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐπιμελείας ἤξιοκε) (Mut. 18) as others and the bad man is thus regarded as being fit only to groan and live under the fear of the punishment of God (23). In Mut. 205, Philo refers to those who have the same mind as Balaam as those who refer to their minds and senses as the sole cause of the things that happen among men. He describes this group of people as those who have had the reproductive parts of the mind crushed or who have completely cut off their minds (τεθλασμένοι τὰ γεννητικὰ τῆς διανοίας τελεῖως ᾦ καὶ τελείως ἀποκοπέντες οἱ τὸν ἰδίον νοοῦ). It follows from this description that moral competence is something that can be lost. The problem is not that God does not want to give to these kind of people, but rather that their souls have a limited capacity to receive, since (ἐπειδὴ) it is easy (ῥᾴδιον) for God to give the most and the greatest gifts (πλεῖστα καὶ μέγιστα), but it is not easy for us (ήμιν οὐκ ἐμπορές) to receive (δέξασθαι) these proffered gifts (τὰς προτεινομένας δωρεάς) (Mut. 218). One may indeed have the noble wish to take pleasure (ἐγχορεύειν) in the fullness of

286 The regime of the pleasure-lover is vividly and horrifyingly described in Mut. 169–174. For a useful account of the role of the “pleasure-lover” (φιλήδονος) in Philo’s writings, see Sandnes, Belly and Body, 113–117.
287 This description of the bad man probably reflects the ancient philosophical conviction that the virtue of things is found in the fulfilling of its function, cf. Plato, Resp. 368A–370C and Aristotle, Pol. I.i.16–21. Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 147–148 points out regarding the bad man in Leg. 92–94: “He is not bad in the sense that he does not obey the law’s injunctions and prohibitions; this he does. His badness resides in the motive that he has for observing the commands; he obeys because this is the best thing for him to do. Thus, his concept of the good is in no way related to the content of the law, but concerns his personal benefits alone.”
288 This description echoes Philo’s description of the people guilty of excessive self-conceit in Sacr. 54. Cf. Buch-Hansen’s description of the man in the middle (ὁ μέσος): “On the one hand, he has been given the potential for intellectual and emotional development. At least in principle . . . he has the possibility for coming to terms with truth and becoming a god-like, heavenly man; thus, a continuity between the two exists. On the other hand, he is inclined to fall, which prevents him from reaching his destination” (Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit that Gives Life, 130).
the virtues (τῶ πλήθει τῶν ἀρετῶν), but it is appropriate to be content if just one of the virtues is attained, be it sound judgment (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία), justice (δικαιοσύνη), or love for humanity (φιλανθρωπία) (Mut. 225). Philo stresses that God is not a small-minded God who is only willing to give to the chosen few. Philo’s God is the generous giver, who is concerned with giving to both high and low, for the powers of the existent one arrive (τὰς τοῦ ὄντος φθάνειν δυνάμεις) for the benefit (ἐπ’ εὔεργεσίᾳ) not only of the distinguished people (μὴ μόνον τῶν ἐνδόξων) but also of those who seem to be more hidden or of a lower reputation (καὶ τῶν ἀφανεστέρων εἶναι δοκούντων). God gives (χάριζεται) in accordance with the estimations of the soul of each (πρὸς τὰ τῆς ἐκάστου ψυχῆς σταθμήματα) (Mut. 232).

The notion of a limited human capacity to receive serves to safeguard God from any responsibility for human inadequacy. God can therefore not be blamed whenever humans fail to reach perfection. Nevertheless, Philo’s description of Balaam reveals also that God should be regarded as the cause of the human acquisition of virtue. The fact that it is only the wise few that are able to acquire virtue in its fulness does not mean that these people indulge themselves in boasting. Indeed, they know better, and their knowledge makes them humble. This distinctive view of the human acquisition of virtue is arguably an important backdrop to Philo’s description in De Mutatione Nominum of the peculiar greatness of the Sage.

5.3.5 The Peculiar Greatness of the Sage

What is it that makes the Sage such an admirable figure? In De Mutatione Nominum Philo comes up with a somewhat paradoxical answer. The greatness of the Sage consists not only in the fact that he or she takes pleasure in the fullness of the virtues. The greatness of the Sage consists rather, and somewhat paradoxically, in his or her recognition of his or her own nothingness, on the basis of which he or she happily ascribes all virtue and all good things to God. Philo clarifies these matters in connection with his interpretation (Mut. 130–147) of God’s promise to Abraham that he will have offspring also from Sarah (Gen 17:16 LXX): “I will give you a child from her.” This

289 Mackie, “Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: Means,” 154 claims: “Human achievement and status are determinative in [QG] 4.8, as Philo implies his exegesis of the visionary aspects of the theophany would be incomprehensible to ‘uninitiated and unworthy’ people.” The reading offered here suggests that worthiness is not so much related to human achievement as it is to the human capacity to receive.
marks the transition in the treatise from the part that deals with the change of Abram’s name to the part that recounts the promise of the birth of Isaac (Mut. 130). Philo begins his interpretation of this phrase by pointing out that in order to give in a proper sense (κυρίως), one must give something that belongs to oneself (Mut. 131). It is on this basis that “Moses registers God as the father of the virtue-loving mind” (τὸν γε θεὸν ἀνδρα τῆς φιλαρέτου διανοίας Μωυσῆς ἀναγράφει) (Mut. 132). Isaac is synonymous with joy, the best of the good emotions (ὁ συνώνυμος τῆς ἀρίστης τῶν εὐπαθειῶν, χαρᾶς) (Mut. 131) and Philo thus refers to the words of Sarah (wisdom) in Gen 21:6, “the Lord has made laughter for me” as being equal to (ἴσον τῷ) “He formed, He fabricated, He begot Isaac” (τὸν Ἰσαάκ διέπλασεν, ἐδημιούργησεν, ἔγένησεν) (Mut. 137).

What must be stressed here is not only the fact that Philo ascribes all virtue to God, but the fact that Philo refers to this idea as a kind of esoteric knowledge that belongs to the Sage alone. Philo finds support for this idea in Sarah’s words from Gen 21:6 (LXX), whoever hears these things will rejoice with me. This suggests, Philo asserts, that there are few (ὀλίγων ὄντων) who have had their ears opened for the reception of the holy words (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν τούτων λόγων ὑποδοχήν) that (ὡς) to sow and give birth to the good things (σπείρειν καὶ γεννᾶν τὰ καλά) is a peculiar work of God alone (μόνου θεοῦ ἔργον ἵδιον) (Mut. 138). Philo claims that to these words all the others have become deaf (πρὸς οὓς οἱ ἄλλοι κεκώφηνται) (Mut. 138). To know and confess such things (τὰ τοιαῦτα γινώσκειν καὶ ὁμολογεῖν) belongs to the intelligent and wise men (ἔστι σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν), not to the insignificant (οὐκ ἀσήμων) (Mut. 140).

Abraham’s laughter in Gen 17:17 should therefore be regarded as an expression of Abraham’s godliness.290 When, in response to the divine promise, Abraham fell on his face and laughed, his countenance was mournful yet his heart was smiling (Mut.154).291 Abraham falls in order to prove (εἰς πίστιν) that he is not boasting (τοῦ μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν), an act that he refrains from because of his knowledge of the nothingness of mortality (διὰ κατάγνωσιν τῆς θνητῆς οὐδενείας) (Mut. 140).

290 Philo attempts in this way to acquit Abraham from any allegations of moral imperfection, see also his interpretation of Abraham’s faith in Mut. 188 and his interpretation of Gen 12:10–20 in Abr. 91–98.
291 This is in marked contrast to the life of the worthless man, whose life is full of sorrow, even if he wears a smiling face (Mut. 169).
111

On the contrary, Abraham laughs as a confirmation of his piety (εἰς εὐσεβείας βεβαιώσαι) because he knows (διὰ τὸ νομίζειν) that God alone is the cause of graces and good things (μόνον χαρίτων καὶ ἀγαθῶν τῶν θεῶν αἴτιον) (Mut. 155). The words from Gen 17:17 “he fell and laughed” (πεσὼν οὖν ἐγέλασεν) signifies therefore not that Abraham had fallen from God (οὐκ ἀπὸ θεοῦ) but that he had fallen from himself (ἀλλὰ ἀφ᾿ ἐαυτοῦ); in other words, he fell (ἔπεσε) away from his own self-conceit (ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας οἰησεώς) (Mut. 175). Abraham could have puffed himself up. However, he is truly a Sage, and accordingly he knows that all virtue and all true knowledge come from God and thus he refrains from boasting. The greatness of Abraham consists in his acknowledgement of the grace of God as the cause of all good things. The logical consequence of this confession is, however, a confession of mortal nothingness (155). These things go together – if all good things come from God, nothing good comes from man. This was the confession of the believing Abraham and this confession was his crown of happiness. How this description of the greatness of the Sage correlates with Philo’s view that virtue is gained from teaching (and therefore not separable from human effort) can perhaps be explained from the way the notion of the things “up to us” is appropriated in his writings. The fact that Philo refers to God in Mut. 131 as someone who gives something that belongs to himself suggests that this would be a helpful approach.

5.4 Philo and the Notion of the Things That Are “Up to Us”

A. A. Long’s study “Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action” is a helpful entry point to the discussion pursued here of the way in which Philo makes use of the notion of the things that are “up to us.” Long draws attention to the fact that some of the inherent tension

---

292 Virtue consists in a non-boastful attitude with respect to one’s own abilities. This corresponds to Philo’s description of faith as the opposite of thinking highly (μέγα φρονεῖν) of human abilities in Abr. 266; see also Migr. 134.

293 In QG 3.55 Philo remarks that Abraham also fell because of an excess of divine ecstasy and points to a vision “through which he [Abraham] knew more certainly Him who always stands firm, and him who naturally bends and falls” (Philo, QG 3.55 [Ralph Marcus, LCL]).

294 This is in marked contrast to those who because of excessive self-conceit consider themselves as the cause of the good things that happen to them (Sacr. 54). Philo similarly refers to Abraham’s confession of being earth and ashes in Gen 18:27 and points out that such a confession is the necessary prerequisite for man’s coming into the presence of the Maker (Her. 29–30). Hans Dieter Betz sees these texts as belonging to the Delphic ethical tradition of self-knowledge; see H. D. Betz, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Seiner “Apologie” 2 Korinther 10–13 (BHT 45; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), 128–129.

295 Abraham’s confession therefore comes close to the confession attributed to Noah in Leg. 3.78. See Zeller, Charis bei Philon und Paulus, 111 who refers to the “Dankbares Bekenntnis zur Gnade als höchste Tugend.”
between freedom and determinism in the Stoic system is due to the Stoic presentation of reality through bifocal lenses: “The world is one and many; it is God and his parts. There is an eternal perspective and a human viewpoint. At one moment, it is necessary to view the totality and interconnexion of all events; at another time attention must be given to a particular fragment of this totality.” However, the interconnection of all events does not rule out some amount of human autonomy. Long refers to Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus*, according to which bad men’s evil actions are not planned by God. Long explains this as an expression of Cleanthes’ way of thinking of God “as an absolute power, embracing all things and uniting good and evil. Yet evil actions are not planned by God in his identity as an omnipotent ruler.” The Stoic presentation of reality through bifocal lenses means that the world can be regarded “as nothing but the activity of the all-pervasive pneuma. Yet, logos, the causal principle is inside the individual man as well as being an external force constraining him.” Hence, “to describe man as nothing more than a necessary condition for the fulfilment of God’s plan is misleading. For man is a particular logikos, a subordinate partner of the gods, a rational being in his own right.”

The Stoics argued that all events are necessary in the sense “(1) that something must act when it is prompted by external causes, and (2) how a thing acts in consequence of external causes is necessarily accordant with its nature.” This means that human action is determined by both external and internal causes (i.e., the ethical quality of the human nature). But the fact that humans have no choice but to act in accordance with the external and internal causes does not mean that humans have no freedom to act as humans. The fact that human action is determined by internal causes means that human character determines human action, and this means that not only are the basic human instruments of activity fated, in the sense that man cannot fail to act via impulse and assent. But the individual’s character, which prompts his behaviour, is also determined since it follows from his particular nature and upbringing. Hence the causal sequence which finally issues in an act of will can be traced back both to the environment and the nature given at birth. This does not mean that men do not

---

genuinely will their actions. But it does mean that an act of will is not independent of character and the causes which go to form that.\textsuperscript{301}

This is not the place to discuss the extent to which the Stoics managed to solve the tension between the interrelatedness of all things and human freedom to act;\textsuperscript{302} however, their description of man as a particular logikos that genuine will its own actions enabled them to maintain that something is after all “up to us.” Here it must be considered how Philo appropriated the notion of the things that are “up to us.” There are good reasons for suggesting that Philo’s interpretation in \textit{Leg.} 1.31-42 of Gen 2:7 reflects the way he appropriated the notion of the things that are “up to us.”\textsuperscript{303} For in these passages he stresses that divine inspiration is God’s way of extending the power that proceeds from himself, which corresponds to his description of God in \textit{Deus} 47-50, a passage that clearly reflects his appropriation of the notion of the things that are “up to us.”

In \textit{Deus} 47-50, Philo is engaged in a discussion about man’s superiority to animals and here he refers to man’s possession of a mind as the thing that distinguishes humans from the animals. Philo refers here to the father who gave birth to the mind (αὐτην ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ) as the one who judged it worthy of freedom (ἐλευθερίας ἥξιωσε), and as the one who let it go unrestrained (ἀφετον εἶασε) as he had loosened (ἀνείς) the chains of necessity (τὰ τῆς ἀνάγκης) and as he had bestowed (δωρησάμενος) upon it (αὐτῇ) a portion (μοῖραν) of the possession that most fittingly belongs to himself (τοῦ πρεπωδεστάτου καὶ οἰκείου κτήματος αὐτῷ), namely the exercise of free will (τοῦ ἐκουσίου).\textsuperscript{304} God’s gift of the portion that most fittingly belongs to himself is nothing

\textsuperscript{301} Long, “Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action,” 187 (my emphasis).
\textsuperscript{302} Long summarizes the Stoic challenges and the Stoic position in a helpful way: “There remains the problem of the causal nexus, and doubtless the Stoics were too ready to keep their cake and eat it. The demands of teleology and providence, combined with pantheism, impose an undeniable strain on the credibility of their ethics. Yet the universal causal principle is present to man, however, little in his own logos: he ‘makes history as well as being history’s product’. His logos is equal in quality to all the divine which is outside. And it constitutes a unique substance whose identity is unaffected by external events. A man can be free, can act as a man, if and only if the external movements of his body follow from a decision which reconciles his own will and moral choice to what is necessarily the case” (Long, “Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action,” 193–194).
\textsuperscript{303} See also Buch-Hansen, \textit{It Is the Spirit That Gives Life}, 123–130 who points out how Philo’s description in \textit{Leg.} 1.31–42 of God’s extension of his own power reflects a Stoic understanding of the powers that make up man’s mind.
\textsuperscript{304} In \textit{Gig.} 24–25, Philo points out that the gift of a portion of the Spirit of wisdom is not comparable to what happens when men cut something away, such that the original piece is diminished; it should rather be compared to what happens when fire is taken from fire. For even if a fire should kindle a thousand torches, it is still as it had been and is
less than human freedom. Man has thus naturally received blame (εἰκότως ψόγον ἔσχεν) for the things he has purposely done wrong (ἐφ’ οἴς ἐκ προνοίας ἀδικεῖ) (Deus. 47). Hence, the human soul (ἡ ἀνθρώπου ψυχή) may, as it ought, experience accusation (κατηγορίας ἄν δεόντως τυγχάνοι) because it has received (δεξαμένη) the faculty of voluntary movement (τὴν ἑκούσιον κίνησιν) from God (παρὰ θεοῦ) and because in this way (κατὰ τοῦτο) it has particularly (μάλιστα) become like him (ὁμοιωθεῖσα αὐτῷ) and has been liberated (ἐλευθερωθεῖσα) from necessity (τῆς ἀνάγκης) (Deus 48). The command to choose between life and death given in Deut 30:15, 19 reflects thus that humans have knowledge of good and the opposite (ἐπιστήμονες τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων) and that they are obligated (ὀφείλουσι) to choose the better before the worse (πρὸ τῶν χειρόνων αἱρεῖσθαι τὰ κρείττω) (Deus 50).

Philo draws a similar conclusion in Leg. 1.31–42. Here, he points out that the words of Gen 2:7 imply not only that God has created no person that is barren of virtue or the good, but also that God is not to blame when humans make themselves guilty through unrighteous actions (Leg. 1.34–35). The same point is made in Fug. 79–80. Here, Philo affirms that humans are responsible for deliberate sins, for it is correct to say (ἀξιόν λέγειν) that none of the misdeeds (οὐδὲν τῶν ἀδικημάτων) that are done with forethoughts or purposely (ἐκ προνοίας) happen (γίνεσθαι) as a result of God (κατὰ θεόν). These things happen rather (ἀλλὰ) as a result of us ourselves (καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἀὐτούς). This is because the treasuries of evil things (ὁἱ τῶν κακῶν θησαυροί) are in ourselves (ἐν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς) and the treasuries of good things are only with God (παρὰ θεῷ οἱ μόνων ἀγάθων) (Fug. 79).

In sum, Philo refers to God’s gift of inspiration as something that enables humans to act as free and responsible agents. This enables him to maintain the position that humans are responsible for their own misdeeds. But he also describes this gift of inspiration as a gift of a portion of what not diminished at all. This metaphor reveals that Philo describes the gift of the Spirit as a gift of something that belongs to God; those who receive a portion of the Spirit of God receive something that makes them akin to God. In Abr. 6, Philo refers to the (perfect) patriarchs as examples of those who committed no guilty action by their own free will and who, if they by chance was led to something wrong, appeased God through prayers and supplications. This is well captured by Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” 380: “Philo’s meaning, then, is that insofar as man shares in God’s logos, he shares to some extent in God’s freedom. That this is only a relative freedom is actually emphasized by him when he says that God gave man such a portion of his ‘as man was capable of receiving’ and that was liberated ‘as far as might be’ (Deus 47–48; cf. Her. 186; Somn 2.253). Yet this relative freedom, in Philo’s view, is sufficient for
belongs to God, and this enables him to maintain that human acquisition of virtue must be ascribed to God alone. Buch-Hansen has described the implications of Philo’s reasoning in *Leg.* 1.31–42 in a helpful way when she claims that “through his inbreathing of mind into man, it is God who has stretched the power of ἡς πνεῦμα (τείναντος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἀφ’ ἐαυτοῦ δύναμιν) and who through ἡς πνεῦμα encompasses the individual man or his mind. In this way, a unity between God, His πνεῦμα and man’s mind is established. Consequently, whenever man recognizes the source of his mental power and discerns truth, it is always the work of God.” Hence, humans may be described as those who have the capacity to will and to assent. However, this is a capacity they have received as they have been encompassed by the power of God’s πνεῦμα, i.e. insofar as they have become a subordinate partner of God and as such rational beings in their own right.

Apparently, Philo was so engaged in defending the thesis that God should be credited for human acquisition of the good that he at one point seems to be willing to question the validity of the doctrine of the things that are “up to us.” At least this is the impression one gets from the way he interacts with this idea in a fragment of the lost *Legum Allegoriae* 4. In the fragment, Philo claims:

> For strictly speaking, the human mind does not choose the good through itself, but in accordance with the thoughtfulness of God, since he bestows the fairest of all things upon the worthy. For two main principles are with the Lawgiver, namely, that on the one hand God does not govern all things as a man and that on the other hand he trains and educates us as a man. Accordingly, when he maintains the second principle, namely that God acts as a man, he introduces that which is in our power as the competence to know something, will, choose and avoid. But when he affirms the first and better principle, namely, that God acts not as man, he ascribes the powers and causes of all things to God, leaving no work for created being but showing it to be inactive and passive . . . But if selections and rejections are in strictness made by the one cause, why do you advise me, legislator, to choose life or death, as though we were autocrats of our choice? But he would answer: Of such things hear a rather elementary explanation, namely, such things are said to those who have not yet placing the onus of moral responsibility on man and clearing God from any blame for man’s sins (Fug. 79–80; Op. 149).”

307 Buch-Hansen, *It Is the Spirit That Gives Life*, 128. Buch-Hansen describes this as Philo’s way of circumventing the Stoic idea of the process of *οἰκείωσις* according to which “the πνεῦμα of the sage’s mind was stretched (*εύτονία*) to encompass the whole world. Through this development, an appropriation (*οἰκείωσις*) of the world to the sage self took place” (ibid., 128).
been initiated in the great mysteries about the sovereignty and authority of the Uncreated and the exceeding nothingness of the created.³⁰⁸

Kyle B. Wells has recently warned against interpreting the fragment of *Leg.* 4 as an expression of Philo’s “denial of human agency” because this “would stand in contrast to what he affirms throughout his writings.”³⁰⁹ Wells prefers to speak of a relativization of human agency and suggests a way in which the two principles can be reconciled. Hence, he claims that “in so far as all human agency is a kind of borrowed divine agency, all human acts are divine acts in which humans passively participate. Nevertheless, the fact that they do partake in the divine causal power makes them an active though subordinate partner of God.”³¹⁰ This explanation is promising in many ways, as it corresponds well with many of the observations made in this paragraph. But it cannot hide the fact that in this fragment Philo seems to be repudiating an idea he elsewhere endorses. The fragment is best explained, I think, as Philo’s repudiation of a strawman argument. The notion of the things that are “up to us” is presented in *Leg.* 4 as something that approximates a notion of complete human autonomy whereby virtue simply is ascribed to humans themselves, an idea that Philo repeatedly and enthusiastically rejects throughout his writings.³¹¹ However, Philo’s arguments in *Leg.* 1.31–42 and *Deus* 47–50 suggest that his own thinking was more closely aligned with the way the idea in fact was configured in Stoicism than his argument in *Leg.* 4 seems to suggest.

Barclay suggests with respect to Philo’s argument in the fragment from *Leg.* 4 that “it appears that Philo’s principles of divine causation and divine grace can occasionally go so deep as to treat all ethical injunctions and corresponding claims of human virtue as no more than a useful rhetorical pretence.”³¹² These principles of divine causation are worth a closer look, as they may cast light on how Philo can refer to humans as those who are essentially passive. In *Cher.* 124–130, Philo

---

³⁰⁸ The Greek text can be found in J. R. Harris, *Fragments of Philo of Judaeus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886), 8. Here I quote from David Winston’s slightly modified version of Drummond-Wolfson’s translation given in Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” 378. Winston uses this fragment as a stepping stone to a well placed critique of Wolfson’s conviction that Philo advocated for a God-given absolute free will, see Wolfson, Philo, 2:432–456.


³¹¹ This is not the only instance in which Philo compares his own “nuanced” position to a biased description of a Stoic position. See Buch-Hansen, *It Is the Spirit That Gives Life*, 152–157 who shows how Philo aligns himself with the nuanced Stoic position on the usefulness of precepts, only to launch it as a critique of “Stoicism.”

³¹² Barclay, “By the Grace of God I am what I am,” 146.
elaborates how God can be described as the cause not only of the creation of the world but also of human virtue. Here he argues that the very fact that God possesses everything means that everything must be acknowledged as a gift from God. It is exactly the conviction that God possesses everything that prompts Philo in Cher. 124–130 to refer to God as the cause of everything and to the divine logos as the means through which divine offspring is engendered in the human soul.

In these paragraphs, Philo relies on Aristotle’s definition of four causes, namely the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause and the final cause. Aristotle presents his account of the four causes in Physics 194b16–195a26 and Metaphysics 1013a24–1013b3, insisting that a well-developed theory of the four causes is needed if one wants to give a successful account of the existence of any given part of reality. Moreover, Aristotle offers a teleological explanation of the four causes, i.e. an explanation that focuses on the end or the telos of a creational process in which the final cause refers to the purpose of the given object. In Aristotle’s explanation the material cause refers to the purpose of the object, the formal cause to what it is going to be and the efficient cause to the source that effected the change. The final cause refers – as mentioned above – to the purpose of the creational process. In Cher. 124–130 Philo similarly offers a teleological explanation of the four causes, just as he translates Aristotle’s explanation of the four causes into the questions of “by whom, from what, by means of what and because of what.”

Philo’s account of the four causes does not correspond exactly to Aristotle’s account. Philo refers to God as the cause “by whom” the world was made, to the four elements as the elements “from which” the world was created, to the divine logos as the instrument (“by means of what”) through which the world was created and, finally, to the display of the goodness of the creator as the reason (“because of what”) for the creation of the world (Cher. 127).

315 τὸ ὑπ’ οὗ, τὸ ἐξ οὗ, τὸ δι’ οὗ, τὸ δι’ ὅ (Cher. 125). Philo’s account in these paragraphs should be seen as an example of prepositional metaphysics, which refers to the practice, frequently found in both Middle and Neoplatonism, of using prepositional phrases to express the causes required for an object (and especially the cosmos) to come into being” (Runia, Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato, 171–74). See also G. E. Sterling, “Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christological Hymns,” SPhiploA 9 (1997): 219–238.
Here it must be emphasized that in Aristotle’s definition of the four causes, the material cause is also understood as the passive cause. In *Cher.* 127, Philo refers to the four elements as the material cause. But he is also engaged in repudiating the mind that falsely concludes that it obtained something through God (cf. Gen 4:1), for which reason he points out that “those who claim that they procure something for themselves through God interprets the cause, that is the Maker, as instrument, and the instrument, that is the human mind, as cause” (*Cher.* 127). This suggests that the human mind is regarded as the instrument. But Philo also refers to the Craftsman (ὁ τεχνίτης) as the one who gives rise to (ὁ ἐργαζόμενος) the impact of the powers, both of body and soul (τὴν πλήξιν τε καὶ τῶν σώματός καὶ ψυχῆς δυνάμεων) (*Cher.* 128). It follows from this description that humans (or the human mind) are not only described as the means through which God procures something; they are also described as the object that is formed in accordance with the will of the Craftsman, and hence humans are also described as the material, and by implication, passive cause.

Philo’s reference to human passivity in *Leg.* 4 is best interpreted, I think, if it is interpreted as a fundamental anthropological statement about human nature, as he is concerned in this fragment with referring to God as the source of all good things. His reference to human passivity corresponds then to his description in *Cher.* 124–130 of human beings as the material cause that by the creational agency of God can become a living and virtuous soul. Humans may indeed become active agents, but this does not change the fact that in their essence they represent the material cause, i.e. the material that is formed by the great Craftsman in accordance with his purpose and will. This is the proper way of speaking not only of God but also of man. This is the reason that Philo concludes his argument in *Cher.* 124–130 with a reference to the words of Exod 14:13 (LXX): “‘Stand fast and see the salvation, the one from the Lord, which he will accomplish for you’ through which Moses teaches

---

316 Aristotle’s explanation of the four causes is related to his theory of generation. For a helpful introduction to Aristotle’s theory of generation, see Buch-Hansen, *It Is the Spirit That Gives Life*, 179–183. In brief: “In the generative process, the female provides the material and passive cause, while the male provides the three active causes, form (λόγος), purpose (τέλος) and the initial motion (effect)” (ibid., 183).

317 οἱ δὲ φάσκοντες διά τοῦ θεοῦ τι κεκτήσατι τὸ μὲν αἴτιον ὄργανον τὸν δημιουργόν, τὸ δ’ ὄργανον αἴτιον τὸν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν ὑπαλαμβάνουσι (Cher. 127).

318 The translation in the LCL-edition is therefore very helpful: “the Craftsman it is who brings to bear on the material the impact of our forces, whether of soul or body” (Philo, *Cher.* 128 [F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL]).
that not through God but from Him as Cause is salvation attained” (Cher. 130). Philo’s overall argument may be said to be coherent if it is recognized that he consistently refers to the powers that God extends to humans as powers that not only enable humans to choose virtue, but also as powers that cause humans to choose virtue. The implications of this account of Philo’s argument for the question of how divine and human agency relate to one another will be addressed in the following concluding discussion. These discussions will also serve as a conclusion to this chapter.

Appendix – Abraham’s Faith and Human Mortality

Philo deals with Gen 17:17 in Mut. 175–200 and with the fact that Abraham fell and laughed when God promised him that Sarah would give birth to their son. Philo’s discussion in these paragraphs of the significance of Gen 17:17 is revealing for his understanding for the nature of Abraham’s perfection and faith. Philo offers two explanations of the peculiar fact that Abraham fell and laughed. Both interpretations serve, of course, to protect Abraham against allegations of doubt or disbelief; the first explanation gives nevertheless room for some (very brief) moments of doubt. Philo notices that in Gen 17:17 (LXX) it is said that Abraham’s doubt occurred to him in his mind (τῇ διανοίᾳ) (Mut. 177) and his doubt was therefore not expressed by his mouth. This means that Abraham’s moment of doubt was so brief that it never reached the mouth. It was, in other words, only a fleeting thought that disappeared as quickly as it occurred (Mut. 178). Prolonged doubt is not consistent with Moses’ words in Gen 15:4, 6 according to which Abraham clearly believed in God’s promise of a son (Mut. 177–178).

This corresponds to the fact that it would amount to blasphemy to suggest that Abraham believed without any shadow of doubt, for in that case Abraham’s faith would not be any different from the faith of God (Mut. 181). The difference between God and man is that God is not a compound being, since he is a single nature (ὁ θεός οὐ σύγκριμα φύσις ὑπὸ ἀπλῆ) (Mut. 184). Man is, however, composed of more than one ingredient (τὸ ἐκ πλειόνων συνεστῶς) and some of man’s nature is bound to mortality. Virtue is therefore never strong of foot in the mortal body (οὐκ ἔστι .

---

319 στῆτε καὶ ὄρατε τὴν σωτηρίαν τῆν παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἣν ποιήσει ψυχὴν, ἑκδιδάσκων ότι οὐ διὰ τὸ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἡ αἰτία τὸ σωτήρησαι (Cher. 130).

320 Philo does describe Abraham as having doubts; see for example, Abr. 100–112 and Leg. 3.85. In Her. 100, Mut. 177–180 and QG 3.56, however, Philo rejects the idea. According to his argument in these passages Gen 15:6 can be regarded as the prooftext that rules out the possibility of doubt; see Moxnes, Theology in Conflict, 157–158.
. . ἡρτίπους ή ἐν θυμήῳ σώματι ἁρετῆ (Mut. 187). Hence, even though Abraham believed in God, he believed as a man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος πεποίητευκεν) (Mut. 186). Abraham’s brief moment of doubt thus only reflects the weakness that is the peculiar characteristic of the mortal (τὸ ὀσίου τοῦ θητοῦ - Mut. 186). Thus, Abraham believed in God, but only as a man. His greatness is reflected in the fact that his doubt only took the form of a fleeting thought.

Philo also offers a second explanation for the fact that Abraham fell and laughed. According to the second explanation, Abraham’s laugh reflects his astonished joy of receiving the gift of joy, the best of good emotions (Mut. 188). As Philo moves on to interpret Gen 17:18 (in Mut. 201), he claims that Abraham was moved by a twofold feeling, namely trust towards God and distrust towards the created (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεόν πίστιν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ γενητὸν ἕπιστίαν) (Mut. 201). In

---

321 This passage reflects Philo’s fondness of a bipartite understanding of the human soul; see Winston, “Philo of Alexandria on the Rational and Irrational Emotions,” in Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; London: Routledge, 2008), 202: “In Middle Platonic fashion, Philo adopted the Platonic tripartition of the soul (cf. Plato, Tim. 69–70), although this was construed as a fundamentally bipartite dichotomy of the rational and the irrational, with the affective part (πνευματικόν) subdivided into spirited (δυναμικόν) and appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν) (Leg. 2.99; 3.115–18; Agr. 30; Her. 167, 185, 232; Congr. 26; Spec. 4.92–4; QG 2.33). When his biblical exegesis demands it, however, Philo freely utilizes the eightfold Stoic division of the soul, again within the bipartite framework that contrasts the undivided rational commanding faculty (ἡμελητικόν) and the irrational five senses along with the faculties of speech and reproduction (Opif. 117; Agr. 30; Mut. 111; Abr. 29).” See also Lévy, “Philo’s Ethics”, 2009, 155 “the problem is that almost all of the ancient theories of the nature of the soul are found in Philo’s works, with a distinct predominance of the Platonic and Stoic doctrines.” Lévy suggests on the basis of Mut. 10 that “Philo represents a philosophical culture imbued with skepticism with regard to the possibility of even having any certainty about the nature of the soul.” (G. Reydams-Schils contends that this skepticism “allows Philo to rise above controversies among the different philosophical schools. Hence, he has the flexibility to choose a soul model based on the exegetical demands of the Scripture passage at hand” (G. Reydams-Schils, “Philo of Alexandria on Stoic and Platonist Psycho-Physiology: The Socratic Higher Ground,” in Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy [ed. Francesca Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 170–71).

322 The fact that the Sage lives in the body also means that the Sage is familiar with two forms of existence. The Sage cannot simply live a contemplative life. This can be compared with Philo’s description of the temporary nature of the prophetic inspiration as this is accounted for in QG 4.29. Here Philo maintains that “the one who is begotten and brought into being is not wont to be God-possessed always, but when he has been divinely inspired for some time he then goes and returns to himself.” The inspiration cannot be permanent, for “it is necessary that the most pure and luminous mind should be mixed with the mortal (element) for necessary uses” with the result that when the pure mind “ceases to be inspired, after its enthusiasm it returns to itself and reflects upon its own affairs and what is proper to it. For piety and love of man are related virtues.” Christian Noack, Gottesbewusstsein: Exegetische Studien zur Soteriologie und Mystik bei Philo von Alexandria (WUNT 2/116; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 144 thus concludes: “Das vollkommene Leben besteht also aus zwei Existenzformen: Die eine ist die Beharrlichkeit in der Tugend, das praktische Leben, in denen Wort und Tat übereinstimmen, die andere ist die poetische Schau Gottes, also das contemplative Leben.” In Gig. 24–31 and 47–55, Philo makes a distinction between the masses and the Sage (Moses). Thus, whereas the masses may experience brief moments of inspiration, the Spirit cannot abide these due to the constraints of life in the body (24–31), Moses, however, enjoys the Spirit’s abiding presence (47). Hence, the Sage enjoys the Spirit’s abiding presence even if the Sage cannot spend all of his life in contemplation of divine truths.
that case, Abraham’s laugh reflects the joy and faith that characterized his life as a Sage (cf. Philo’s description of Abraham as a Sage in Abr. 269). 323

323 Teresa Morgan has drawn attention to the fact that the fragility of pistis/fides was often stressed in ancient descriptions of relationships of trust. She rightly draws attention to the fact that Philo in QG 3:1–10 describes Abraham’s faith as the faith of a mortal, for which reason Morgan points out that “no part of the story needs more attention than the idea that Abraham, from within his relationship with God, doubted, was reassured with words and proofs, trusted, was deemed just, and made a covenant that established Israel as a land and a people” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 184).
Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 The Abraham Story and the Gift of the Spirit

From Philo’s perspective Abraham’s life’s story was essentially written by the Spirit. The Abraham story is therefore essentially a story about the work of the Spirit in the lives of the kind of soul that Abraham represents. Philo interprets the Abrahamic promises as promises of the wisdom and virtue that cannot be attained apart from inspiration. The promises given to Abraham in Gen 12:1–3 are defining for Abraham’s life and indicate the direction of his life’s journey, which culminates in the inheritance of the promised land, interpreted allegorically as the inheritance of wisdom. Philo defines Abraham as a type of the kind of soul that manages to see God. In that respect, Abraham functions as a representative of Israel, as Israel is identified as those who see God. Moreover, Philo depicts Abraham as a type of soul that is perfected through teaching, i.e. as a type of soul that is perfected through the acquisition of learning, first from the encyclical studies and subsequently from philosophy. This characteristic of Philo’s portrait of Abraham places his portrait firmly within an ancient virtue discourse wherein the acquisition of virtue is inseparably tied to acquisition of philosophy. This does not mean that virtue is acquired apart from God. Far from it – Abraham’s zeal for virtue stems from the way he was created by God and the inspiration he received in creation. Philo describes this inspiration as an extension of God’s power through which the human mind receives a portion of what essentially belongs to God and through which the human mind is firmly placed on the path that leads to virtue. The lover of learning is perfected insofar as he or she moves from the encyclical studies to philosophy and from philosophy to wisdom or consummated virtue. But humans are not left alone with themselves and their schoolbooks. On his path to virtue the lover of learning is acted upon by God both from within and from without. He is acted upon from within insofar as God’s own power is something that operates within his own nature. He is acted upon from without, as he is confronted with reason through which his mind is further and further aligned with the Logos.

Philo maintains that God is present in the cosmos through the Logos and that God’s Logos takes hold of the human mind whenever humans are confronted with learning and virtuous impressions. This means that Philo describes the classroom (i.e., the learning experience) as a place in which
God intervenes to fully restore the human mind that had been only provisionally restored in creation. Philo describes God as being present in the cosmos through the Logos and students as being encountered by the divine Logos as they acquire learning, indicating not only that divine inspiration is inseparably associated with rationality but also that humans are inspired to the same degree as their minds are aligned with reason. The human mind is fully restored whenever it is fully aligned with reason or with the values of God, and as a lover of learning Abraham reaches this state through the acquisition of learning. As Abraham has reached the state at which his mind is fully aligned with divine truth, he gains full control of the passions and begins to live a truly virtuous life. Righteous living springs from a righteous mind and a righteous mind can be attained through the acquisition of learning. This does not mean that virtue is gained apart from God or apart from divine agency, as being exposed to learning or philosophy amounts to being exposed to divine inspiration.

Philo describes divine inspiration as something that gives birth to a particular mindset, i.e., a particular view of God and a corresponding way of life. In exceptional cases, like Isaac’s, this mindset is fully developed from birth. Abraham was not in such a favorable position from birth. Hence, he needed to migrate from the sense-perceptible world to the noetic cosmos so that his mind could become fully enlightened or fully aligned with reason, which is to say, the Logos or the values of God. As Abraham migrates from Chaldea to the promised land, he gets fully inspired and fully aligned with divine truths and values. When he is fully inspired, he begins to live with the mindset that he has received from God. This divine mindset manifests itself in (a) the conviction that God is not only the one who has created the cosmos but also the one who provides for its welfare and in (b) a concrete way of life in which God’s generosity is imitated and in which God’s blessings thus begin to flow to the society in which the inspired and accordingly righteous mind or person lives. It follows from this description that divine inspiration is something that deeply affects the way humans live, causing them to think and act in a certain godlike way.

It is characteristic for Philo’s portrait of Abraham’s path to virtue that divine inspiration is configured as something that seizes and takes possession of the human mind. But it is a peculiar kind of possession, for it is a kind of possession that propagates the conviction that God is good,
just as it is a kind of possession that enables humans to live the life they themselves want to live. Divine inspiration is therefore not only something that reveals the truth about God’s providence but also something that causes the human mind to be aligned with the divine Logos and thus to endorse the values of God. Consequently, divine inspiration causes God’s values to be internalized in the inspired person so that she begins to endorse the truths that are revealed to her. Philo describes divine inspiration as a propagation of the Logos and as such as a propagation of a portion of what essentially belongs to God. Moreover, Philo describes God’s extension of his own power as an extension of something that draws humans to God, albeit in its own peculiar way, namely by internalizing God’s values in the human soul, causing it to move towards God by its own free will.

The fact that Philo describes the gift of inspiration as a gift of a portion of God’s own power means that divine inspiration has a reconstituting effect on the human mind and thus on every other aspect of human existence. Abraham may be an example of type of soul that is perfected through teaching, but this does not mean that he is not perfected by God. Teaching not only exposes the pupil to learning, it also exposes the pupil to the kind of inspiration that restores the human mind, causing it to trust in God. Philo is painfully aware of the fact that trust in God is a difficult thing to acquire. Whenever humans only come close, it is because they do not have the mental capacity to fully comprehend the extent of God’s grace. The goodness of God is therefore something that can only be fully appreciated by the gifted few. One might describe this as a reflection of Philo’s dependence on ancient elitist convictions about an organic relationship between philosophy and virtue. One might also describe this as a reflection of Philo’s view of God. He could not conceive of God as someone who was not aligned with truth and he could not conceive of truth as something that was not aligned with reason. Moreover, he was convinced that God could be known through the logos, which he considered as God’s gracious way of being present in the cosmos. It goes almost without saying that such a God can only be truly appreciated by those who have a fitting intellectual capacity.

Philo’s portrait of Abraham does reflect ancient convictions by which virtue was inextricably associated with philosophy. However, his portrait of Abraham reflects also the conviction that God
is good, rational and therefore not only trustworthy but also someone from whom one could expect to receive only good gifts; not to mention the conviction that this God is not to be blamed for human inadequacy. Modern readers of Philo do not have to choose between the elitist intellectual philosopher from Alexandria and the brave defender of the goodness of God, as these two alternatives should be regarded as two perspectives of the same mind.

6.2 Divine and Human Agency in Philo’s Portrait of Abraham’s Path to Virtue

Philo describes divinity as something that is generically shared. In creation humans are gifted with a portion of what essentially belongs to God and no human being is therefore barren of virtue. Philo describes this inspiration that is given in the act of creation as an extension of the power that proceeds from God, just as he refers to human freedom as something that humans have received as a portion of the possession that most fittingly belongs to God himself. Humans receive the things that belong to God in such a way that these things become their own, for which reason they may fittingly be described as those who have something in common with God. Philo can describe the inspired mind as a miniature version, so to speak, of the divine Logos itself, for just as there is a mind that controls the cosmos, so there is a mind that controls the body (Migr. 176-195). This does not mean that humans are controlled such that they are left with no will of their own. Humans have received a portion of God’s freedom in such a way that it has become their own, for which reason they want and will as does God. The fact that Philo can compare God’s gift of inspiration with a gift of fire from fire reveals that the inspired person is configured as someone who has received a share in something that is truly divine. Hence, humans can be described as effective agents in so far as they have something in common with God. It follows from this description that in Philo’s writings divine inspiration is described as something that encompasses and takes hold of the human mind, causing it to be aligned with the mind or Logos of God. Whenever humans are zealous for (and hence moving towards) virtue, they are driven by the portion of the Logos that they have received from God. This does not mean that they have no will of their own, it only means that God’s will has become their own will, and that God’s freedom has

324 This should not be mistaken as some kind of apotheosis. It only means that the human mind has been fully aligned with reason or God’s logos. Philo considered the thought of apotheosis as the most grievous impiety, making the stunning claim that God could sooner change into a man than man could change into God, see De Legatione ad Gaium 118. Hence, even though Philo presumes that divine inspiration propagates something to humans that humans henceforth share with God, then he did not think of this in terms of apotheosis.
become their freedom. They freely choose to pursue virtue, because this is what they want and what they are zealous to do. However, the fact that they make these choices is itself due to the fact that they have received something from God that essentially belongs to God himself.

Philo describes divine inspiration as something that propagates a portion of something that essentially belongs to God. This indicates not only that God’s transcendence is presumed to be of a limited kind, but also that divine and human agencies in key respects are equal and akin, as human agency is described as a portion of divine agency. However, it must be emphasized that this definition of God’s transcendence describes God in his existence, that is, the divine logos. God in his essence is utterly transcendent. Hence, Philo describes God as a being that is immanently transcendent and radically transcendent at one and the same time. This is fairly important, not only because it means that privileged creatures like Moses or Abraham will never reach full knowledge of God, but also because this is Philo’s way of stressing that humans are creatures that belong to the created reality. This is true, even if humans are defined as those who have received a portion of what essentially belongs to God. As a devout Jew, Philo was as engaged as anyone in defending the conviction that God was the Creator of the cosmos and hence essentially different from created reality. Philo does indeed describe human acquisition of consummated virtue as something that comes about as the result of a divine autogenesis, because virtue is something that is acquired as the mind created by God’s inbreathing is further fertilized by the divine Spirit itself. However, here it must be stressed that the mind created by God’s inbreathing is always something that exists as a union between God, the Spirit and the human mind. Divine autogenesis will therefore always manifest itself in the birth of human agency. Wells, therefore, rightly affirm that in Philo’s writings “divine and human agency are non-contrastive and related by kinship,” not only because humans are described as those who have received something they have in common with God’s logos but also because divine agency is not configured as something that diminishes or obliterates human agency.

However, Kyle Wells’ statement that “it is as if God and the human are both fully engaged in a work up to a certain point, at which time human agency falls out and God is the sole agent

325 See John Barclay’s description of the kinship model referred to in paragraph 1.3 above.
326 See note 200 above.
327 Wells, Divine and Human Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism, 205.
involved in bringing the work to completion,” needs to be qualified. If divine agency is defined as something that encounters human agency through the medium of divine inspiration, then divine agency must be defined as a causing and enabling agency, for which reason it should not be defined as something that causes human agency to fall out. Philo describes divine inspiration as something that enables humans to understand the fact that God provides for the welfare of the cosmos. Divine inspiration is something that embeds human understanding in the divine understanding. It is something that causes humans to reason like God and hence not something that causes human agency to fall out. It is likely that the deeper mysteries that Philo mentions in Leg. 4 refer to the secret that is only fully appreciated by the Sage: namely, that God is not only the one that enables humans to choose virtue, but also the one that causes humans to choose virtue.

Ultimately, Philo’s interpretation of Gen 16:6 in De Congressu is very clarifying. Here, he argues not only that the contest in life is won by the nature that longs for virtue but also that this means that virtue must be ascribed to God. Hence, Philo refers to the success of the virtue-loving soul as something that proves his most fundamental conviction, namely that all good things come from God. Abraham’s acquisition of virtue may therefore be described as something that comes about as a result of human agency, as Abraham acquired virtue from learning. But this kind of human agency only exists as created agency, i.e., as human agency that has been encompassed and hence energized by the power of the Spirit, for, essentially speaking, Abraham is the material and by implication the passive cause, just as, essentially speaking, God is the ultimate Cause that creates the virtuous soul in accordance with his purpose and will. However, as a fully created and virtuous being, Abraham has a will of his own – a will that is fully aligned with God’s. Humans hasten towards the top by their own free will, because they are drawn to God by God himself. This is not a contradictory proposition. This is what happens when humans are encompassed by the power of the Spirit.

328 Wells, Divine and Human Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism, 205.
329 The exception that proves the rule may be Her. 264–266 in which Philo ascribes to Abraham an experience of the best form of ecstasy that completely wipes out human understanding. However, this understanding of divine inspiration is not predominant in Philo’s portrait of Abraham’s path to virtue.
Chapter 7. The Abrahamic Promises and God’s Gift of the Spirit in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

7.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Chee-Chiew Lee has disputed Sze-kar Wan’s suggestion that Paul’s juxtaposition of the reception of the Spirit with the Abrahamic promise could have been influenced by traditions like the one that is reflected in Philo.330 Lee herself has developed a suggestion originally made by Richard B. Hays, namely that the words of Isa 44:3 (LXX) (ἐπιθήσω τὸ πνεύμα μου ἐπὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου καὶ τὰς εὐλογίας μου ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα σου) provide a partial answer to the question of the basis for Paul’s association of the Abrahamic promises and God’s gift of the Spirit.331 Lee draws attention to a number of noteworthy references and allusions to the Abrahamic promises in Isaiah332 and claims on this basis that “we may conclude that the Spirit is not only the means of restoring the Sinai-covenantal blessing in Isa 44:3, but also ultimately the means of realizing the Abrahamic blessing for the nations.”333 She establishes the connection between Isa 44:3 and the Abrahamic promises by virtue of references to the Abrahamic promises given elsewhere in Isaiah.334 It is unclear whether this text played any role in the formation of Paul’s interpretation in Galatians, but even if it did, then that would not mean that his views of the relationship between the Abrahamic promises and God’s gift of the Spirit could not have been shaped by other contexts as well. Nevertheless, the text from Isaiah is interesting, insofar as it suggests that at some point in history the gift of the Spirit will become something that defines Abraham’s children. There is no reason to doubt that Paul understood the gift of the Spirit as an eschatological gift, insofar as he not only describes the gift of the Spirit as

332 More precisely, Isa 41:8, 48:18–19, 51:2, 60:21–22 and 61:9, see Lee, Blessing of Abraham, 120.
333 Lee, Blessing of Abraham, 194. The argument is much in line with Morales, The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel, 109–110.
334 The text of Isaiah points out that the promise is given to “Jakob, my servant Israel” (Isa 44:1), who, of course, is defined as the offspring of Abraham (Isa 41:8). Kwon, Eschatology in Galatians 115 note 44 claims that this text [Isa 44:3] “has nothing to do with the Abrahamic promise.” Kwon refers to a number of promises of the Spirit in the prophetic tradition (Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 11:9; 36:26; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–32) and claims that “the prophetic passages seem a better choice than the Abrahamic tradition in which no reference is made to the future bestowal of the Spirit” (Kwon, Eschatology in Galatians, 116).
being organically related to the resurrection of Christ (Rom 8:11), but also refers to the gift of the Spirit as a down payment of the life of the world to come (2 Cor 1:22). This does not, however, mean that his views of the Spirit could not have been shaped by other traditions that were not shaped by similar eschatological expectations. After all, Rom 8 is also the chapter in which the Spirit is associated with some sort of wisdom or phronesis (8:5–6).

Lee claims that “the reception of the Spirit by those who believe in Christ is the evidence that they have received the blessing of Abraham – their present justification before God.”\textsuperscript{335} That may be true, but that is hardly a full account of what it means to receive the Spirit. Coming from Philo’s portrait of Abraham’s path to virtue, one is inclined to ask how justification and the gift of the Spirit relate to one another. In Philo’s portrait of Abraham, these matters are closely interrelated. Philo stresses that God is a God who loves justice and therefore only justifies the righteous. Hence, Abraham was justified because he truly was righteous, or perhaps better, because he had been made righteous by God. One may then ask whether there is anything in Paul’s argument in Galatians that suggests that justification and divine inspiration are related in a similar manner. Would Paul then, (somewhat like Philo), describe faith as evidence of a renewed or changed heart, mind or spirit and hence as the mark of what he considered as a truly righteous person? These questions may be answered positively if Paul’ description of the work of the Spirit in the lives of those who believe is comparable to the way these things are described in Philo’s writings.

With these questions in the back of my mind, I will focus in this chapter on accounting for (a) how Paul describes the Abraham story in Galatians as being related to God’s gift of the Spirit and for (b) what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe. These matters are closely related in the argument that runs from Gal 2:15–4:11. For that reason this chapter will predominantly focus on these passages. I will do this by working my way through Paul’s argument, aiming to answer these two questions as comprehensively as possible. It may be that Paul’s argument in Galatians is most helpful with respect to answering the first question, whereas his argument in Romans is more helpful with respect to answering the second. Nonetheless, it should

\textsuperscript{335} Lee, The Blessing of Abraham, 197.
be possible to deduce something also from the argument in Galatians about the role that the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe.

7.2. Paul’s Argument in Gal 2:15–21

7.2.1 Gal 2:15–21 in Its Literary Context

Galatians is best read, I think, if Gal 1:1–10 are regarded as the letter’s opening statements and if the argument introduced in 1:11 is viewed as the beginning of the body proper of the letter. The astonishment expressed in 1:6–10 functions thus as a replacement of the thanksgiving section that typically appears in the beginning of Paul’s letters. Paul begins the body of the letter in 1:11–12 by announcing what he wants his readers to know; with 1:1 and 1:10 forming an inclusio in the letter’s opening with its corresponding emphasis on Paul’s allegiance to Christ.\(^{336}\) Philip Esler has clarified some of the key issues at stake in 1:11–2:14 by pointing out (a) that Paul’s gospel was constituted not solely by a collection of ideas about the redemptive work of Christ but also by the embrace of essential ways in which the message was contextualized, and (b) that Paul’s narrative account in 1:11–2:14 is marked by a competitive Mediterranean challenge-and-response culture in which honor is regarded as a central good.\(^{337}\) In other words, Paul defends his gospel by challenging other interpretations of it (1:6–9). The narrative in 1:11–2:14 is marked by a striking number of references to the gospel in the form of the noun τό εὐαγγέλιον (1:11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14) and the verb εὐαγγέλιζω (1:8, 9, 11, 16 and 13). The narrative is accordingly marked by a concern to preserve both the truth of the gospel (2:5) and a proper conduct in accordance with the truth of the gospel (2:14). Paul thus portraits himself as championing a gospel that does not concede to demands for the circumcision of gentiles (2:1–10), just as he stresses that his gospel must be contextualized by a mutual sharing of food and wine by Jews and Gentiles (2:11–14).\(^{338}\) The narrative section pictures Paul as a man deeply committed to this gospel and as a person, who does not refrain from using confrontational language in his relations to notable figures such as


\(^{338}\) I thus concur with Philip Esler, who considers the meal referred to in Gal 2:11–14 as an Eucharistic in nature in which the participants shared food, wine and vessels, see Philip Esler, *Galatians*, 93–116.
Peter (2:14).³³⁹ Whatever was at stake regarding the the Antioch incident Mark Nanos is surely correct in concluding that the ones advocating circumcision objected to a claim that was implied by the table fellowship, namely that the Gentiles were “social equals, righteoused ones by God on the same terms as the Jewish participants.”³⁴⁰

7.2.2 Justification and Righteousness in Gal 2:15–2:21

Philip Esler has argued that Gal 2:11–14 is best accounted for as an inclusio in which Paul “announces that Peter stands condemned in v. 11 and then provides just this rationale for the condemnation in v. 14.”³⁴¹ Hence, the argument in 2:15—21 does not supply the condemnation of Peter expected from 2:11 and is accordingly best read as either “a generalized theological reflection of the broad issues at stake written for the benefit of his Galatian audience”³⁴² or perhaps better as an introductory transition to the argument beginning in 3:1.³⁴³ In either case 2:15–21 is the passage that leads to the argument in which Paul deals with the Abraham story (3:1–4:11) and the passage is at any rate thematically related to the argument that follows. Hence, it makes good sense to begin with this passage, even though there are no explicit references to either the Spirit or to Abraham in 2:15–21. Paul’s reference in 2:15 to the distinction between the native Jews and sinful Gentiles suggests that his argument is concerned with determining who should be regarded as righteous. This is not particularly surprising in light of the literary context from which Paul’s argument proceeds, i.e. his account of the Antioch incident.

³³⁹ See Esler, Galatians, 93–116 for a fuller account of the view that Paul endorses full table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in Gal 1–2. There are different views of what was precisely at stake in the Antioch incident. In particular see James D. G. Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-18),” and Mark D. Nanos, “What Was at Stake in Peter’s “Eating with Gentiles” at Antioch?” both in The Galatians Debate (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 199–234 and 282–318 respectively.

³⁴⁰ Nanos, “What Was at Stake,” 316.


³⁴³ See also Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians (WBC 41; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1990), 80–81 who argues that 2:15–21 “should not be considered just as part of Paul’s speech to Peter, though it springs immediately from that, but as the summary of all that Paul has argued in 1:11–2:14 and as the introductory transition to 3:1–4:11.” For a different account of the structure of Galatians, where 1:11–2:21 are regarded as a threefold narrative section and 3:1–4:11 as a threefold argumentative section, see Oakes, Galatians, 26–27.
Nanos’ phrase “righteous ones by God” (quoted above) reflects the well-known problem that “whereas in Greek the verb dikaioo and the noun diakaiosune are linguistically cognate, most of the verbs and nouns by which these terms have been translated are not.”  

J. Louis Martyn remarks that “to be sure, one can compel the verb to draw on the noun, translating dikaioo ‘to make righteous,’ ‘to declare righteous,’ ‘to rightwise,’ and even ‘to righteous’” but notices in the same vein the “weighty liability” that these suggestions “are at home either in the language of the law – where ‘to justify’ implies the existence of a definable legal norm – or in the language of religion and morality – where ‘righteousness’ implies a definable religious or moral norm.”

Therefore he suggests that the verb “to rectify” and the noun “rectification” are used instead, because “these are words that belong to a single linguistic family (rectus facio), and they are words that are not commonly employed either in our courtrooms or in our religious and moral institutions.” Furthermore, Martyn claims, this practice corresponds to the fact that “the subject Paul addresses is that of God’s making right what has gone wrong.”

Martyn’s reading has been criticized for not being justifiable on the basis of the meaning of the verb δικαιοσθαι. Thus John Barclay points out that “the verb δικαιοσθαι both in Hellenistic Greek and in the LXX has a fairly consistent meaning: to be thought, or adjudged, ‘righteous;’” hence “to be ‘righteous’ does not mean to be ‘saved,’ but it means to be worthy of the divine gift of salvation” and “‘righteous’ is thus a standard label for those who are fit for salvation.” What is at stake in Gal 2:16 is therefore that “Peter and he [Paul] realize that God reckons as ‘righteous’ those whose lives are marked by faith in Christ.” Hence, Gal 2:16 refers to what Peter and Paul both know, namely that “a person (ἄνθρωπος, any person, Jew or Gentile) is not considered ‘righteous’ on the basis of Torah-observance, but on the basis of faith directed toward (and arising

---

345 Martyn, Galatians, 249–250.
346 Martyn, Galatians, 250.
347 Martyn, Galatians, 250.
348 John Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 375, 377. See also Philip Esler, Galatians, 175: “In the end, there is no sign of Luther’s imputed righteousness in Galatians (the ‘declaratory’ or ‘forensic’ meaning), nor does it have an ‘ethical’ sense. Paul’s aim in this letter regarding righteousness was to sever it from the competing Israelite outgroup where it had hitherto lodged as a most positive feature of their social identity and to claim it for his own congregations.”
349 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 377.
from) what happened in Christ."³⁵⁰ It follows from this description that being justified is equivalent to being regarded as righteous and is thus not equivalent to being saved.³⁵¹

The fact that Paul in the same verse (2:16) can claim that man (ἄνθρωπος) is justified διὰ πίστεως and that “we” are justified ἐκ πίστεως suggests that the phrases should be regarded as synonymous.³⁵² Moreover, Paul’s use of the prepositional phrases διὰ πίστεως and ἐκ πίστεως seems to suggest that faith is the instrument, cause or agent by which or on the basis of which justification is granted.³⁵³ Barclay points out that the verb δικαιοῦσθαι was most often used in order to declare someone to be righteous and that in Galatians the verb “applies to people who have been changed.”³⁵⁴ In that case, Paul may be concerned with describing the Galatian believers as a group of people that he regarded as righteous, acknowledging not only that their lives had been changed, but also that their righteousness was challenged by a group of advocates of

³⁵⁰ Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 373. See also Peter Oakes, Galatians, 90.
³⁵¹ “Since ‘to be recognized as righteous’ is to be considered a worthy recipient of salvation, but not itself to be saved, there is no implication that Jews outside of Christ thought that they could achieve salvation by Torah-observance.” . . . “Two interpretative misjudgments lead to this erroneous reading: (1) that δικαιοῦσθαι means ‘to be made righteous’ (a causative meaning impossible to justify from Greek usage, Jewish or non-Jewish, pace Martyn, Galatians, p. 265); and (2) that ‘to be righteous’ means in itself to be saved” (Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 377 and 377 note 71).
³⁵² This seems to undermine Stowers’ attempt to demonstrate that Paul’s use of these prepositional phrases reflects the fact that “Greeks used dia and ek to distinguish the essential generative from the instrumental supportive role” (Stanley K. Stowers, A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles [New haven: Yale University Press, 1994], 241). Stowers’ argument is made with respect to Paul’s argument in Romans, but he does draw conclusions with respect to Gal 3:22 as well (cf. ibid. 241). There are good reasons for suggesting that the righteousness language applied in 2:16–17 should be regarded as forensic language. This does not mean that Paul’s righteousness language always should be regarded as some kind of judicial language Gal 3:6 and Rom 4:3–6, for example, are dominated by a financial metaphor. The fact that Paul’s argument in 2:16 (and Rom 3:21–26) echoes the words Ps 142:2 (LXX) suggests that Gal 2:16 should be interpreted as some kind of forensic language. Peter Oakes seems to acknowledge this even if he ultimately rejects the idea: “However, the only points in Galatians that suggest lawcourt ideas for dikaiōθαι are the unstated context of Ps 143:2 . . . and the hope of future righteousness in Gal 5:5. Neither is very compelling, especially since . . . the tense of dikaiou̱tau̱r in 2:16 is present, not future, as we would expect if it were about acquittal before God at a future judgment” (Oakes, Galatians, 83). However, Paul’s argument in Rom 3:21–26 suggests that this is exactly the point he seeks to make, i.e., that God’s eschatological judgment has been pronounced already now, in the present. Something similar is probably the case in Gal 2:16. These facts do not mean that the verdict could not have been understood as a recognition of a real change in human beings.
³⁵³ The prepositions διὰ and ἐκ with genitive are comparable to the extent that both hold a locative, temporal and an instrumental meaning, see Stanley Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament (2nd ed.; Biblical Languages Greek 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 148–150 and 154–156. It is the instrumental meaning that suggests itself in Gal 2:16. Porter describes the instrumental meaning of διὰ and ἐκ respectively in the following way: “Instrumental use of διὰ is similar to instrumental use of the dative (often with ἐν), and even causal use of διὰ with the accusative; and the instrumental use of ἐκ overlaps with the locative use of ἐκ to indicate origin or source. If something is the origin or source of something, it may often be possible to say that it is the instrument, cause or agent by which something comes about . . . Rom. 5:1 δικαιωμένες . . . ἐκ πίστεως (being justified . . . by faith), a frequent pattern of Pauline usage” (ibid: 149, 149–150, 155, 156).
³⁵⁴ Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 378 note 74.
circumcision (Gal 5:2−12). Paul may therefore be concerned not only with describing God’s justification as something that is given apart from works of the Torah and therefore apart from worth, but also with arguing that the Galatian believers should be regarded as truly righteous. One may then ask what, according to Paul, it would mean to be righteous. Barclay answers that question by pointing out that “what God recognizes as ‘righteous’ is a life marked by faith in Christ, a life created by, and oriented to, the Christ event.” In this chapter I want to consider whether Paul’s reading of the Abraham story in Galatians can clarify how the life that is marked by faith in Christ has been shaped by the gift of the Spirit.

However, before we move forward, we must say a few things about what it means to have faith in or to put one’s trust in what God has done through Christ. In Gal 2:17 Paul points out that justification is sought in Christ, presumably referring to the Christ event (2:20−21). In that respect, the words in 2:17 appear to be comparable to the words in Rom 3:24 in which Paul refers to justification as something that is given through the redemption in Christ Jesus (δικαιούμενοι . . . διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). It follows from this description that faith seems to be centered on trusting the redemptive significance of the death of Christ, and justification seems thus to be given on the basis of trust in the saving significance of the death of Christ.

Theresa Morgan has recently stressed that both Philo and Paul configure faith in terms of a relationship of trust. She argues that relational trust is the most important characteristic of faith in the letters of Paul, pointing out that “pistis, in linguistic terms, is an action nominal, encompassing both active and passive meanings of its cognate verb (such that, for instance, both ‘trust’ and ‘trustworthiness’, ‘credit’ and ‘credibility’ are always implicated in it).” Moreover, she argues

---

355 This description of justification as something that is given apart from worth relies on John Barclay’s recent work on gift-language in Paul. Barclay has demonstrated how “it is normally emphasized in antiquity that gifts should be given generously but selectively; care should be taken that the gift is given to suitable, worthy, or appropriate recipients” but also that “a perfect gift could be figured as one given without condition, that is, without regard to the worth of the recipient” (Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 72−73). Hence Barclay argues that “to consider ‘works of the law’ the criterion of worth (ie., ‘righteousness’) is to assume the validity of a symbolic capital that has been shown to count for nothing before God. To make the Gentiles ‘Judaize’ is to invest in that symbolic capital, but ‘we know’ in Christ that this is not what God considers as valuable” (ibid., 383).

356 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 384.

357 Moreover, Paul seems to refer to Christ as the object of faith in Rom 10:11 and early Greek interpretations like those of Origenes and Chrysostom assume that the phrase should be read as an objective genitive construction, see R. Barry Matlock, “Saving Faith: The Rhetoric and Semantics of πίστις,” in The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies (ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 73−89.

358 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 273.
that “Paul’s overall concern in this passage [Gal 2:15–21] is how human beings are to achieve a relationship of dikaiosunē with God”359 and that “It is precisely the fact that Christ is both faithful to God and worthy of God’s trust, trustworthy by human beings and trusted by them, that enables him to take those who pisteuein into righteousness.”360 Christ’s death on the cross is therefore the event that enables humans to achieve a relationship of dikaiosunē with God, meaning not only that it enables the Galatians to stand in a relationship of trust in and obedience to God361 but also that the Galatians thereby become Abraham’s children (3:7) and children of the promise (4:28).362 Moreover, this means that in the Pauline concept of faith there is a certain interplay between a propositional and a relational aspect.363 It follows from this description that faith is characterized by an interplay between certain convictions about God and Christ on the one hand and human trust and loyalty to God and Christ on the other. The question is how this is described as relating to God’s gift of the Spirit.

7.3 The Abrahamic Promises and God’s Gift of the Spirit in Gal 3:1–4:11

7.3.1 Introduction

Gordon Fee has suggested that one should regard the declarative imperative in 3:7 as a kind of thesis statement for the whole argument (3:1–4:11). Fee finds support for this suggestion from the two conclusive statements in 3:29 (ἀρα) and 4:7 (ὡστε). This suggests that the entire argument is addressing the question: “‘Who are Abraham’s true children, thus heirs of the promise?’” 364 This

359 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 268.
360 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 274.
361 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 180: “Dikaiosunē in the Septuagint (and the New Testament) is typically understood as the quality of respectful acknowledgment and obedience towards God which characterizes the human being who stands in a proper relationship with God, and as such is often translated ‘righteousness’ rather than ‘justice.’”
362 See Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 278.
363 Morgan clarifies this relationship in the following way in a comment about faith in 1 Thessalonians that is illuminating also for Paul’s argument in Galatians: “We saw repeatedly in the last five chapters that wherever relationships of trust exist, beliefs are also involved. To trust people we must, more or less explicitly or self-consciously, believe things about them, while our beliefs are themselves based on trust, and so on in an infinite regress. We can therefore take for granted that belief is involved in some way wherever pisteis language occurs in the New Testament. . . . These passages [1 Thess 4:13–14; 1:10; 5:9–10] do not encompass all the propositional claims about God, Christ, or humanity in this letter, but they include the two, that Christ died for us and that he was raised from the dead, which are fundamental to the first Christians, unique to them, and definitive of them” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 227). In Gal 2:20 Paul refers to his belief that the son of God loved him and gave himself for him.
certainly makes sense in light of the narrative in 1:11–2:14. Fee suggests furthermore that the argument in Gal 3 combines evidence from Genesis and Deuteronomy to show that the “coming of Christ has meant the end of the observance of the law, and therefore, as with Abraham, that the gift of righteousness rests on faith for Jews and Gentiles alike” and that “the crucial experiential evidence that both of these are true is the indwelling, empowering presence of the Spirit.”

Hence, the concern of the argument in 3:1–4:11 is similar to the concern of the argument in 2:15–21, i.e. both sections are concerned with defining who should be regarded as righteous or as members of the Abrahamic family.

Thus far, Paul has – according to the reading proposed above – responded to the question of the identity of the righteous by pointing out that humans (ἀνθρωπος – 2:16) are justified through faith. This suggests that it is those who have been justified through faith that should be regarded as sons of Abraham. The question that must be pursued in this chapter is how the identity of Abraham’s children is associated with God’s gift of the Spirit and how the gift of the Spirit affects the lives of those who believe. Paul’s argument in 2:15–21 suggests that this is closely related to the question of status, as the phrase “having been justified on the basis of faith” should be regarded as equivalent to the phrase “having been regarded or reckoned as righteous on the basis of faith.” But that does not preclude that Paul refers to divine justification as a divine recognition of a mind, heart or spirit that has been renewed by or aligned with the Spirit of God.

**7.3.2 Righteousness, Faith, and the Spirit in Gal 3:1–14**

**7.3.2.1 Righteousness, Faith and the Spirit in Gal 3:1–5**

Paul’s concern with the relationship between a proper beginning and a proper completion (3:3) suggests that his argument is related both to his reference to the false gospel in 1:6–9 and the...

---

μαθεῖν ἀφ’ ὑμῶν, see Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), 39–49, who argues that the argument is about the relationship between life in the Spirit and the keeping of the law. Cosgrove notices that justification is not mentioned in Gal 3:1–5 and he accordingly argues that the interest of the argument in 3:1–14 lies elsewhere. It is, however, not clear that the interest of the argument ever is severed from the question of the nature of the identity of Abraham’s children and hence not from the question of who should be regarded as righteous.


366 N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 944–946 emphasizes that justification implies that a new status has been granted to those who believe.
demand for circumcision referred to in 5:2–12, not least since beginning in the Spirit (3:3) must refer to the reception of the Spirit mentioned in 3:2, just as his reference to completion is most naturally related to the demand for circumcision mentioned in 5:2–12.\textsuperscript{367} The fact that Paul in 3:1–5 contrasts beginning in the Spirit with completing in the flesh suggests that Paul is not concerned with clarifying two human alternatives.\textsuperscript{368} This contrast should be taken as a reference to the difference between being ruled either by the flesh or by the Spirit of God. The pursuit of completion in the flesh (3:3) is therefore equivalent with the pursuit of completion “on your own,” that is, apart from the Spirit or apart from Christ.\textsuperscript{369} This is the reason that Paul in 6:1–15 describes the pursuit of circumcision as a way of investing in the flesh. For the gift of the Spirit is given apart from the law, that is, apart from the sphere of the Law and thus also apart from the criteria of the Law.

The flow of Paul’s argument in 2:15–21 and 3:1–5 indicates that human attainment of righteousness is closely related to the reception of the Spirit. In 2:21 Paul claims that if righteousness was through the law, Christ would have died in vain. The alternative to righteousness granted through the law is thus righteousness granted through the death of Christ (2:21) or through faith (2:16). In 3:1–5 Paul works with the same dichotomy between faith and the death of Christ on the one hand and works of the Law on the other. The argument is concerned with substantiating the difference between receiving (ἐλάβετε) the Spirit ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως (3:2) on the other. The significance of the phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως can be accounted for in different ways. There are good reasons for

\textsuperscript{367} Given that Paul’s opponents should be regarded as Christ followers (for instance on the basis of Paul’s reference to another gospel in Gal 1:6–9), the comments of Longenecker, Galatians, 106 are helpful: “the strategy of the Judaizers was not to deny the importance of faith in Christ for salvation, but to affirm the necessity for Gentiles to accept at least the minimal requirements of the Mosaic Law for filling out their commitment to God and perfecting their Christian lives.” See also J. Louis Martyn, Galatians, 289–294.

\textsuperscript{368} See Martyn, Galatians, 287: “Does Paul intend to refer to two human alternatives – to be observant of Law or to listen – or does he speak in the first line of a human act and in the second line of an act of God, thus referring in the proper sense to an antinomy that has arisen in the dawn of the new creation . . .?”

\textsuperscript{369} See the recent account of the meaning of flesh in Paul’s letter given in Craig S. Keener, The Mind of the Spirit: Paul’s Approach to Transformed Thinking (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2016), 101–103, not least the following part of the account: “Paul often uses ‘flesh’ as weaknes but also goes somewhat further, yet in a way consistent with some Jewish circles’ development of the language. Unlike some other early Jewish sources, the Dead Sea Scrolls develop the sense of weakness in a moral direction, including susceptibility to sin, a sense that the equivalent Greek term often bears in Paul” (ibid., 102–103). In Rom 8:5–9 associates life in the flesh with a certain kind of mindset that is opposed to that of the Spirit of God.
reading the second genitive as a genitive of direction or purpose and thus for translating the phrase “through the message that elicits faith.” Richard N. Longenecker has suggested that the fact that the prepositional phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (3:2) in 2:16 was contrasted with the phrases διὰ πίστεως and ἐκ πίστεως indicates that ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως “has something of a similar significance for Paul,” for which reason the preposition ἐκ in the phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως seems to refer to the “source or basis for, in this case the source or basis for justification (as in 2:16).”

It should be granted, of course, that there is no reference to justification in 3:1–5, as Paul is concerned with reminding the Galatian believers of how they initially experienced the gift of the Spirit. However, the fact that Paul’s argument in 3:1–5 is marked by the same dichotomy that characterizes the argument in 2:15–21 suggests that in 3:1–5 he is concerned with clarifying an issue that is closely related to the issue he has just dealt with in the preceding passage. Scholars have thus suggested that in Gal 3:1–5 Paul refers to the Spirit as the experiential evidence of the Galatians’ present status as being justified. Gal 3:1–5 may thus be read as Paul’s way of

---

370 Martyn, Galatians, 286–289 is particularly helpful with respect to this question. It follows from Martyn’s analysis that in Gal 3:2, “Paul is not asking the Galatians which of two human acts served as the generative locus in which they received the Spirit, a decision on their part to keep the Law or a decision on their part to hear with faith. . . . The generative context in which the Spirit fell upon the Galatians was not their act of commencing observance of the Law; it was God’s act in the revelatory proclamation of Jesus Christ suffering crucifixion, the act by which God kindled their faith” (ibid., 288, 289). See also Oakes, Galatians, 104: “Also, if we cast our eye forward to what Paul is about to do with pistis language in 3:6–9, it looks even more likely that akōē pisteōs is a message about trust, or that brings trust.” Pace David J. Lull, The Spirit in Galatia: Paul’s Interpretation of Pneuma as Divine Power (Dissertation Series – Society of Biblical Literature 49; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 120: “Paul presupposes that a person first of all must choose which sphere to belong to, that of the flesh or that of the Spirit. This is implied by the missionary activity and his concept of receiving the Spirit by faith in what was preached.” The comment made by Theresa Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 275, is perhaps the most helpful: “At Galatians 3.1–2 Paul asks the Galatians rhetorically whether they received the Spirit from works of the Law or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. This could mean, ‘through what you heard about pistis’, ‘through pistis created by what you heard’, or ‘through pistis in what you heard’. We should probably take Paul, here and in verse 5, as deliberatively equivocating between all three, in order to emphasize that the moment of hearing and the moment of accepting the kerygma are indistinguishable, and that was decisive for the establishment of their pistis.”

371 Longenecker, Galatians, 102. See also Oakes, Galatians, 104 who similarly recognizes the apparent overlap between being recognized as righteous and becoming a recipient of the Spirit: “God’s considering the gentiles as righteous on the basis of trust turns out to be another way of talking about the gentiles’ reception of the Spirit via the message of trust.”

372 Gordon Fee argues that Paul is concerned with the clarifying the identity of Abraham’s children, that the gift of righteousness rests on faith and that the gift of the Spirit is the crucial evidence that it is those who believe that should be regarded as the children of Abraham (Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 379). In this respect Fee’s argument is akin to the argument of Chee-Chiew Lee, The Blessing of Abraham, the Spirit, and Justification in Galatians, 197 who argues that “the reception of the Spirit as the evidence of present status of justification is first mentioned in Gal 3:2, 5, and the Spirit in relation to beginning (ἐναρχομαι) and completing (ἐπιτελέω) of the status of justification is first hinted at in Gal 3:3.”
reminding the Galatian believers that righteousness is granted on the basis of faith (2:21). The fact that justification is granted as a gift of grace given apart from works of the law (2:16) would then reflect the fact that the Spirit is given precisely as such a gift, i.e., as a gift given apart from works of the law. Justification would then not only be God’s recognition of the life that is marked by faith in Christ, but also God’s recognition of the life that is marked by God’s gift of the Spirit, insofar as faith is inevitably associated with the gift of the Spirit. The question, then, is how the gift of the Spirit affects the lives of those who put their trust in the message of the cross (3:1). This question may arguably be elucidated from the comparable argument in 2 Cor 11:1–6, as this passage seems to suggest that Paul describes the reception of the gospel as something that affects the constitution of the human spirit.

7.3.2.2 What Does It Mean to Receive the Spirit of God?

Some Preliminary Observations and Questions

The meaning of the phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως is often pursued through some interaction with Paul’s argument in Rom 10:16–17. However, the question of what it means to receive the Spirit is perhaps better elucidated if Paul’s argument in Gal 3:1–5 is compared to his argument in 2 Cor 11:1–6. These passages are worth comparing, insofar as the situation that prompts Paul’s appeal to his fellow believers in Corinth is comparable to the situation that prompted his appeal to the Galatians. In both cases, he refers to some people who preaches another gospel than his own (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–9). Moreover, his argument in 2 Cor 11:1–6 seems to suggest that the preaching of the gospel (or of another gospel) results in the reception of a particular kind of S/spirit. Paul’s words in 2 Cor 11:4 (εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει . . . ἥ πνεῦμα ἐτερον λαμβάνετε) seems to reflect a comparable situation to the one described in Gal 3:1–5, insofar as he in both passages seems to presume that the preaching of his or another gospel is associated with the reception of a certain kind of S/spirit. This raises the question about the nature and the identity of the S/spirit that comes along with the preaching of Christ or of “another Christ.” It seems natural, perhaps, to interpret the πνεῦμα referred to in 2 Cor 11:4 as a reference

373 See, for example, Martyn, Galatians, 286–289.
to the human spirit. In that case, Paul seems to think that the preaching of a different gospel affects the configuration of the human spirit, albeit in a negative way.  

But what would that mean for the interpretation of the argument in Gal 3:1–5? It seems natural to interpret Paul’s description in 3:1–5 of the Galatians’ reception of the Spirit as a reference to their reception of the divine Spirit. But how does the reception of the divine Spirit then affect the configuration of the human spirit? And what are the implications of these matters for the question of how Paul describes the life that is marked by faith in Christ? These questions are closely related but cannot be answered at this stage of the reading of Paul’s argument in 2:15–4:11. At this stage it must suffice to ask whether these considerations are relevant for the interpretation of Paul’s argument as it unfolds in 3:6–4:11.

**7.3.2.3 Galatians 3:6–14: The Abrahamic Promises and the Gift of the Spirit**

Paul draws out the consequences of his argument in 3:1–5 in 3:6–7, stressing that consequently the Galatians know (γινώσκετε ἄρα) that it is those of faith that are Abraham’s children, just as (καθώς) Abraham’s example shows (Gal 3:6; Gen 15:6). This clearly suggests some amount of continuity between the point made in 3:1–5 and the one made in 3:6–9. But what is it that Paul is trying to substantiate? Galatians 3:7 clearly suggests that Paul aims at substantiating that it is those of trust who should be regarded as righteous. But Paul’s argument seems to substantiate more than that, insofar as it clarifies that the believing Gentiles are blessed with the believing Abraham (3:9), and insofar as this blessing refers to the gift of the Spirit (3:14). In that case the argument in 3:6–9 is not only proving that faith is the basis or means through which justification or righteousness is attained, but also that the Gentile believers’ reception of the Spirit (3:1–5) is in accordance with the promises that God gave to Abraham (3:9, 14). In that case Paul’s argument in

---

375 Cf. Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, (2nd edition; WBC 40; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 521: “πνεῦμα, ‘Spirit,’ will be the effects of Christian living seen in outward deportment: their attitude to living before the congregation betrays a spirit in contradiction of Paul’s strength-as-weakness (ἀσθένεια) teaching and practice.”

376 This relationship between the argument in 3:1–5 and 3:6–9 is perhaps also indicated by the question in 3:5. Cosgrove discusses the significance of οὖν when this particle is used in connection with questions (cf. 3:5). He discusses the ways in which this particle appears with questions both in the New Testament and in contemporary Greek and concludes that “the evidence suggests that when used with questions οὖν is characteristically illative . . . and may in some cases be at the same time resumptive, depending on the structure of the content” (Cosgrove, The Cross and the Spirit, 47). See also the discussion in Oakes, Galatians, 104.
3:6–7 draws attention not only to the correspondence between the basis for Abraham’s and the Galatians’ justification, but also to the correlation between the present experience of the Galatian believers and God’s promise to Abraham.

Paul is referring to the promise of the blessing of the nations (Gal 3:8; cf. Gen 12:3 and 18:18) and the structure of Paul’s argument in 3:1–14 suggests that this blessing is closely related to the Galatians’ experience of the Spirit. This again indicates that Paul’s argument in 3:6–14 is not only intended to substantiate the claim that the Abraham story reveals that faith is the basis or means through which justification or righteousness is attained (3:6), but also to support the idea that the Abrahamic promise of blessing should be regarded as a promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:7 clearly suggests that Gen 15:6 is invoked to clarify that it is those who believe who are the sons of Abraham.377 It is interesting to notice that in Gal 3:8 Paul almost juxtaposes justification with blessing. This does not mean that justification and blessing should be regarded as identical concepts, but it does suggest that these concepts belong together, and that Abraham’s children are not only defined as those who are justified on the basis of faith but also as those who have been blessed. Paul points out that contemporary believers are blessed with Abraham (3:9) and clarifies in 3:10–14 some of the implications of being blessed with Abraham.378 Here Paul makes reference to the Deuteronomic curse pronounced on those who disobey the Torah (Deut 27:26; 28:58; 30:10). He fails to refer to the promises of life given in Deut 28:1–14 and 30:15–16, which corresponds well with the claim made in 3:10a.379 Galatians 3:11a can hardly be described

---

377 Cf. Oakes, Galatians, 115–116 is clarifying here: “In all of Galatians except 5:22, Paul clearly uses pistis in some very specific sense that certainly does not carry the general idea of religious faith. For Paul, the Israelites of the Bible did not have the opportunity to exercise trust in the sense that Paul had in mind. In Gal 3:6, Abraham is not trusting God in a general sense but is trusting promises by God that, for Paul, are promises of the coming of Christ and the gentile mission (3:8, 14, 16). For everyone other than Abraham, the opportunity to trust in these things essentially comes with the arrival of Christ.” This does not, however, mean that Abraham’s faith is described as something that is completely unique in comparison with all former descriptions of faith, insofar as in the LXX Abraham’s faith is described in terms of a relationship of trust, see Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 178–174.

378 This fact stresses the relevance of Kwan’s observation that the gift of the Spirit creates a homology between the life of Abraham and that of the believer, see quote above p. 2.

379 Deuteronomy 28 itself is, however, not very optimistic with regard to Israel’s pursuit of life. See Francis Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 430: “In this lengthy chapter, an exposition of the blessings consequent upon disobedience (vv. 1–14) is far outweighed by the exposition of the curses that will befall a disobedient nation (vv. 15–68).” The reference to τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου in Gal 3:10 connects the reference to Deut 27:26 in Gal. 3:10 to other texts in Deuteronomy (28:61; 29:19, 20, 26; and 30:10), see Roy E. Ciampa, “Deuteronomy in Galatians and Romans,” in Deuteronomy in the New Testament: The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel (ed. Maarten J. J. Menken and
as contrastive to 3:10 and is thus probably best translated: “and because no one is justified before God by means of the law it is evident that the righteous will live on the basis of faith.” The themes of blessing and curse are evidently interrelated in Gal 3:10–14 and these themes are easily coupled to Hab 2:4, insofar as Hab 2:4 clarifies that the righteous will live and insofar as life was generally regarded as the outcome of the blessings of God. Paul, therefore, seems to be describing the righteous as those who have been blessed and therefore received life throughout the entire argument in Gal 3:6–14.

Consequently, the argument in 3:11 seems to demand that the one who has been justified through faith is also the one who has received life. The fact that this is intimately related to Christ’s death on the cross (3:13) suggests that Paul refers to the life of those who have been redeemed from the present evil age (1:3–4). Campbell is therefore right in concluding that “the ‘life’ being spoken of is the eschatological life of the age to come.” The fact that Paul refers to justification before God (3:11 παρὰ θεῷ) suggests that the question of status and eschatological judgment is within the horizon of his argument. However, Paul also stresses that Christ became a curse “for us” by his death on the cross through which he redeemed “us” (3:13) from the curse of the law, just as he stresses that Christ became a curse for “us” so that in Christ the blessing of

Steve Moyise; Library of New Testament Studies 358; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 99–117, 102: “Furthermore, in these other texts ‘the book of the law’ is associated with the threat – and indeed certainty – that the law’s curse presents the destiny of the entire people, and not just individual law-breakers.”

If δὲ in 3:11 is regarded as a connective conjunction it makes best sense to regard the ὅτι phrase in 3:11a as a subordinate causal clause. If δὲ is regarded as a contrastive conjunction then the ὅτι phrase in 3:11a is best accounted for as a substantival clause functioning as the subject for the implicit verb. Since 3:11a is not contrastive in its content in comparison to 3:10 I prefer to regard the ὅτι phrase in 3:11a as a subordinate causal clause. This reading was championed by Frank Thielmann, Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 127–128. Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 406 refers to a growing number of supporters of this reading.


See Esler, Galatians, 165–169.

Andrew H. Wakefield, Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul’s Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1–14 (Academia Biblica 14; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 170 grants that the verb ζάω may have eschatological overtones but claims with a reference to Gal 2:19–20 that “this eschatological life, however, is a life that Paul carries out in the flesh” so that “when ζάω next occurs in the letter, in the paired citations from Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5, it should therefore come as no surprise if ζήσεται, with or without eschatological overtones, refers primarily to carrying out life rather than gaining it.” However, the fact that Paul in Gal 2:16 alludes to Ps 142:2 (LXX) to which he also alludes in Rom 3:20 suggests that eschatological judgment is never dissociated from his argument.
Abraham is now available to the Gentiles (3:14a) and so that “we” may now receive the promise of the Spirit (3:14b). This is something that has already happened to those of faith; the promised eschatological life is therefore also described as something that is experienced here and now and hence Paul is also engaged in describing a particular way of life.\footnote{Rightly stressed by Wakefield, \textit{Where to Live}, 167–171.}

Pauline scholarship has been engaged in discussing how the two ἵνα clauses in 3:14 relate to one another. Ben Witherington III, for example, has clarified the relationship between the two ἵνα clauses in 3:14 in the following way:

Clearly enough the first clause refers to what the Gentiles get. It is quite possible that the second clause refers to what the Jews get since Paul says ‘in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit’. It is true to say that the blessing of Abraham, namely inclusion of the nations in the people of God by faith, comes to the Gentiles through or with the reception of the promised Spirit. . . . Nevertheless, if Paul is being consistent in his use of ‘we’ in this passage, Paul will be seeking to emphasize that Christ’s death not only opened the door for the Gentiles to receive the blessing but for Jews to receive the Spirit, just as had already said the Galatian converts did at 3.5.\footnote{Ben Witherington III, \textit{Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 240.}

It follows from this reading that Jews and Gentiles have in common that they receive the Spirit even if the “we” should be taken as a reference to Jewish believers.\footnote{See also Rodrigo J. Morales, \textit{The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel}, 114: “both clauses [the two purpose clauses in 3:14] are the result of Christ’s redemptive act, but the first clause describes (primarily) the outcome for the Gentiles – they have at last received the blessing of Abraham – and the second clause describes (primarily) the outcome for Jewish Christians – they have at last received the Spirit for which they had longed.”} Paul’s argument in Galatians is, however, not marked by a substantial differentiation between Jews and Gentiles (cf. ἄνθρωπος in 2:16). Furthermore, the way the arguments in 3:1–5 and 3:6–14 relate to one another suggests that Paul sought to establish a connection between God’s promise to Abraham and the Galatians’ present experience of the Spirit. These aspects of his argument indicate that the Gentiles are juxtaposed with the “we” in 3:14b.\footnote{Rightly stressed by Fee, \textit{God’s Empowering Presence}, 380: “What is crucial for Paul is his interpretation of the ‘fulfillment’ of the ‘promised blessing’ in terms of their experience of the Spirit (v.14).” See also Wakefield, \textit{Where to Live}, 140 who helpfully points out: “even though there is no grammatical or syntactical parallelism between the citation of Gen 15:6 and Gal 3:14b, there is a certain structural parallelism at a deeper level. . . . Abraham is granted righteousness because he has faith in God; we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Pace Cosgrove, \textit{The}}
which Abraham’s eschatological offspring are defined as those who have received God’s gift of the Spirit as well as in light of Paul’s argument in Galatians where he is concerned with arguing that the Galatian believers should be considered as members of the Abrahamic family. It follows from this description that there are good reasons for suggesting that the two clauses essentially refer to the same thing. Paul would then in 3:6–14 be championing the conviction that not only are humans justified on the basis of faith, but that God’s gift of the Spirit is also defining in terms of what it means to belong to the Abrahamic family and that this proves that the Gentile believers in the Galatian assemblies should be regarded as fully-fledged members of the Abrahamic family.

It follows from this description that Philo and Paul have it in common that they both define Israel or Abraham’s children as the people of the Spirit. But whereas Philo has a rather narrow interpretation of the promise of the blessing of the nations, Paul seems to juxtapose that particular promise with the promise that “we” will receive the Spirit (3:14b). It is, of course, still an open question whether Philo and Paul had comparable views regarding the role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe, even if the similarities between Paul’s arguments in 2 Cor 11:1–6 and Gal 3:1–5 seem to suggest that he considered divine inspiration to be something that affects the constitution of the human spirit. The next section will focus on elucidating how Paul in 3:15–18 draws a connection between the gift of Spirit and the promise of the land.

7.4 The Abrahamic Promises and the Gift of Inheritance

7.4.1 Galatians 3:15–18: The Gift of Inheritance on the Basis of Promise

Yon-Gyong Kwon gives several reasons for his view that nowhere in Galatians does Paul actually claim that the Spirit should be seen as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. Kwon argues that the only ground for inferring that the Spirit should be seen as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic

---

Cross and the Spirit, 49: “the central focus of the passage is not how a person becomes justified. . . . in verses 6–9 the justification theme provides simply a link in an argument whose interest is not justification per se but how one shares in ‘the blessing’.”

389 See also Theresa Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 375: “Christ rescued us, not only from our sins in general, but from the ‘curse of the law’, so that the blessing of Abraham could be extended to the gentiles through Christ, so that we [that is, everyone], ‘might receive the promise of the spirit διὰ τέσσερας πίστεως’ 3.13–14.” The square brackets are original. See also Esler, Galatians, 175: “In spite of views to the contrary, it is probably best to take these two clauses beginning with ‘in order that’ (hina) as alternative ways of saying the same thing, like the similar example at Gal. 4:4–5.”
promise “is the proximity of the ‘promise of the Spirit’ in 3:14b and the discussion of the Abrahamic ‘promise’ in 3:16 onwards.”\textsuperscript{390} This causes him to ask: “Does Paul then brings these two promise phrases close to each other (v. 14b and v. 16) in order to make a subtle yet radical and innovative claim that the Spirit means the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of the land?”\textsuperscript{391} Kwon does not consider this option likely, because he sees the Abrahamic promise of the land as a well-established tradition for Jews of Paul’s time. Kwon acknowledges that for the Jews of Paul’s time, the Abrahamic promise of the land “had already come to be understood as eschatological and universal, but the core of the ‘land’ remained solid” and thus “the historical constraint must have been too great to allow such a ‘precarious’ equation allegedly present in 3:14b.”\textsuperscript{392} It is, however, not difficult to find resources in Paul’s letters that can explain how Paul could make a link between a promise of the land and a promise of the Spirit. Paul’s description of the Spirit as seal (2 Cor 1:22) and his reference to the first fruits of the Spirit (Rom 8:23) reflects the conviction that the Spirit represents a down payment on the world to come,\textsuperscript{393} just as his argument in 1 Cor 3:21–23 indicates that he considered the promise of the inheritance of the cosmos (Rom 4:13) as a promise that had been fulfilled already, at least in a preliminary way.\textsuperscript{394} Hence, it is far from unlikely that Paul could refer to the promise of the land as something that is contained in the promise of the Spirit.

The promises of the land given to Abraham and his offspring (Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7) resonate in Paul’s reference in Gal 3:16 to the promises given to Abraham. This is confirmed from the fact that the argument in 3:15–18 clarifies that God has given (κεχάρισται) the inheritance through the promise (ἐξ ἐπεαγγελίας – 3:18). It is therefore hardly surprising that the recipients of the promise later on are described as heirs in accordance with the promise and hence as heirs through God (3:29; 4:7). We have already seen that the Christ event has been described as something that assures not only that the Gentiles will be blessed but also that “we” may receive the promise of the Spirit (3:13–14) and that this was Paul’s way not only of describing the Galatian believers as fully-fledged members of the Abrahamic family but also of defining the Abrahamic family as the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{390} Kwon, \textit{Eschatology in Galatians}, 109.
\textsuperscript{391} Kwon, \textit{Eschatology in Galatians}, 109.
\textsuperscript{392} Kwon, \textit{Eschatology in Galatians}, 110.
\end{footnotesize}
people of the Spirit. Christ plays a key role in God’s fulfillment of his promise in Paul’s arguments in both 3:13–14 and 3:16. There are strong reasons for suggesting that Paul’s reference to the promises (3:16) should be interpreted as a reference to the promise of blessing that Paul has referred to already in 3:8. In 3:14a, Paul points out that the blessing of Gentiles is granted in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ), which at first sight seems as a step forward from the position taken in 3:8, in which Paul has referred to the blessing as something that will be given in Abraham (ἐν σοί). But as Richard B. Hays has pointed out with a reference to the work of N. A. Dahl, the link between 3:14a and 3:16 is supplied by the words of Gen 22:18 (LXX) καὶ ἐνευλογήθησονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. Hence, it was fairly easy for Paul to move from a description of the blessing in Abraham to a description of the blessing in Christ, “since the Genesis texts, as he points out in verse 16, address the blessing to Abraham καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου” for which reason Paul “takes the blessing of Abraham himself as a prefiguration of the blessing which will be fulfilled, as Gen 22:18 indicates, only in the ‘seed’.”

Consequently, according to Paul’s reading of the Abraham story, God has promised that the nations will be blessed in Abraham (3:8) and in Christ (3:14a, 16).

It follows from this reading of the Abraham story that the Gentiles who are in Christ can be counted as members of the Abrahamic family and hence as recipients of the blessing originally promised to Abraham. This enhances the body of evidence that suggests that Paul made a connection between the Abrahamic promise and God’s gift of the Spirit, insofar as the argument in 3:26–4:11 reveals that the Spirit assumes a crucial role in the lives of those who are in Christ. However, before we continue with Paul’s description of these matters in 3:26–4:11 we need to say a few things about the way the concepts of righteousness and life are related to one another in 3:19–25.

7.4.2 Righteousness and Life in Gal 3:19–25

The question posed in Gal 3:19 is not surprising in light of the preceding argument made in 3:1–18 (3:15–18 in particular). What was the purpose, if any, of the Law, if the inheritance was given by means of the promise (ἐξ ἔπαγγελίας and δι’ ἔπαγγελίας) (3:18) and if the Law cannot add anything to the will that was ratified 430 years before the law was given (3:17)? The argument in

---

Gal 3:19–25 stresses that the Law only had a temporary role to play. It was supposed to fulfill its role only until the offspring came to whom the promise was given (Gal 3:19). This is also implied by the description of the Law as a disciplinarian (παιδαγωγὸς), whose work by its very nature is temporary. Whatever it means that the Law came for the sake of transgression (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν), the overall point of the argument seems to be that the Law plays no role with respect to the question of what it means to be righteous.

But Paul’s argument suggests that the question of the nature of righteousness is closely related to the work of the Spirit. The argument in Gal 3:19–20 could give rise to the suggestion that the Law is against the promises of God (3:21). This false deduction is countered in Gal 3:21 by an ascription of different purposes to the law and the promises respectively: “for if a Law had been given which was able to make alive then righteousness would indeed be on the basis of the law.” The underlying assumption seems not only to be that the Law was not given with the purpose of giving life, but also that the promise has the capacity of bestowing life. Hence, Gal 3:21 makes the claim that the promises of God have the capacity to endow life, whereas the law does not. This corresponds to the argument in Gal 3:22–23, in which Paul claims that the Law (ἡ γραφή) has imprisoned all things under sin (3:22) for which reason “we” were held in custody confined under the law before faith arrived (3:23) so that the Law functioned only as a παιδαγωγὸς for a limited period of time. Whatever one makes of these assertions about the Law, Paul clarifies the grander purpose by means of two ἵνα-clauses that clarify that the Law was conferred “in order that the promise could be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe” (Gal 3:22) and “in order that we might be justified on the basis of faith” (3:24). The fact that both ἵνα-clauses follow comparable assertions about the Law suggests that the clauses are best accounted for as parallels. The arguments in 3:19–21 and 3:22–25 are comparable insofar as both arguments

396 See de Boer, Galatians, 240, who with a quote from Ernest deWitt Burton points out: “A paidagōgos was ‘a slave employed in Greek and Roman families to have general charge of a boy in the years from about six to sixteen, watching over his outward behaviour and attending him whenever he went from home, e.g. to school.” The implication of the argument is that the situation of those involved is no different from the situation of a slave, see Trevor J. Burke, Adopted into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor (New Studies in Biblical Theology 22; Nottingham: Apollos, 2006), 85–86.

397 ἡ γραφή can here only be taken as a reference to the Law. It can certainly not be taken as a reference to the promise.

398 Both Paul’s reference to the Law as the entity that imprisoned all things under sin (3:22) and his reference to the Law as a παιδαγωγὸς (3:23) stress the aspect of custody.
deny the Law the ability to grant righteousness (3:21) or justification (3:24). Moreover, both arguments seem to draw a connection between righteousness and eschatological life. Even if this connection between righteousness and eschatological life is only explicitly articulated in 3:21, it is surely implied in 3:22–25 as well, not least since the two ἵνα-clauses have that in common that they describe a release from imprisonment, either from the imprisonment under sin that was inflicted by the Law (3:22) or from the imprisonment from the hegemony of the Law (3:23–25).

One may argue with Kwon that the argument in 3:19–22 only refers to the reception of the promise and hence not to the reception of what has been promised.399 However, there are good reasons for sticking with what Kwon himself defines as the consensus view,400 i.e. for claiming that Paul describes God’s promises as at least partially fulfilled, as Paul clearly assumes that the Galatian believers have been made alive.401 Paul’s reference to the role of making alive (3:21) makes it highly likely that Paul refers to an activity that should be ascribed to the Spirit, insofar as “the role of ‘making alive’ in biblical usage is almost exclusively that of God or of his Spirit.”402 It follows from this description that those who have been made alive are also those who are justified and hence those who have received righteousness. Justification and righteousness are therefore also in this section of Paul’s argument in 3:1–4:11 closely related to the work of the Spirit. The question, therefore, that must be pursued in the following section is in which way the gift of the Spirit affects the life of those who believe. So far, we have seen that Paul not only describes God’s

400 Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians*, 126 note 83.
401 Kwon’s description of what he defines as the consensus view is actually very helpful: “This verse [Gal 3.21] is commonly interpreted in the sense that by believing in Christ the believers receive the ‘promise’, namely, ‘what has been promised’. For some who connect the passage to 3:14, this statement refers primarily to the reception of the Spirit by the believers at the time of their conversion. Or for others, it means the receiving of the benefits promised to Abraham and now realized in Christ such as justification, sonship, inheritance, etc.” (Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians*, 126).
402 James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 154. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 398 is particularly helpful here: “That, after all, is quite the point of his [Paul’s] (recent) argument with the Corinthians in 2 Cor 3:1–11. The problem with Torah is that it was not accompanied by Spirit; therefore it became death-dealing, not life-giving. The new covenant, however, is a covenant of Spirit over against the covenant of mere letter (= Torah observance) – in fulfillment of the new covenant passages in Ezekiel 36 and 37, where the Spirit is specifically referred to as the one who ‘gives life.’ Such a view of things almost certainly stands behind the language of v. 21.” See also Morales, *The Spirit and Restoration of Israel*, 106: “This verse [3:21] is crucial, in that Paul explicitly states what the problem with the Law is and why his followers should not submit to it: it has no power to give life. By contrast, the Spirit, as expressed in 6:8 as well as other Pauline epistles, leads to eschatological life.” Fee argues against a.o. E. P. Sanders that it is not entirely correct that ‘to give life’ and ‘to justify’ are nearly synonyms here. . . . Paul does not use δικαιώ, but ζωοποιεώ, a word he has recently tied to the work of the Spirit in a context over against the Law” (Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 398 note 111).
gift of the Spirit as being in continuation of the Abrahamic promises but also that the life that God recognizes as righteous may be described not only as a life that is marked by faith in Christ but also as a life that is marked by the vivifying work of the Spirit. The comparability between Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 11:1–6 and Gal 3:1–5 indicates that Paul considered the gift of the Spirit as effecting a reconfiguration of the human spirit, something he apparently considered as equivalent to effecting vivification (3:21).

In 3:26–4:11, Paul ceases making explicit references to righteousness and justification. However, the fact that Paul continues not only to make use of some of the same pivotal prepositional phrases (such as διὰ τῆς πίστεως and ἐν Χριστῷ) but also to make reference to the promise (3:29) suggests that he is concerned with describing the same reality as he has described all along, i.e. the reality that is associated with the gift of the Spirit. In 3:26–4:11 he returns to making explicit references to the gift of the Spirit. In the following paragraphs I want to consider (a) how Paul’s description of participation in Christ can be related to his description of the gift of the Spirit and (b) what this means for the question of what role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe.

7.4.3 Galatians 3:26–4:7: Life in Christ and Life in the Spirit

In Gal 3:26 the theme of inheritance is maintained if not intensified (3:29; 4:6–7). Inheritance is associated with participation in Christ, but Paul also stresses that Jews and Gentiles alike (3:26, 28) all are sons of God on the basis of faith (3:26). Believers are described as being one in Christ (3:28), as they all belong to Christ and they thus belong to Abraham’s offspring and are as such heirs in accordance with the promise (κατ’ ἐπαγγέλιαν κληρονόμοι – 3:29). Moreover, in 3:27 Paul refers to baptism as the event that gave the Galatians access to life in Christ and Paul’s argument makes it clear that life in Christ is intimately linked with life in the Spirit. There are different ways of accounting for the significance of Paul’s language of participation with Christ. E. P. Sanders addressed the issue in the following way:

It seems to me best to understand Paul as saying what he meant and meaning what he said: Christians really are one body and Spirit with Christ, the form of the present world really is passing away, Christians really are being changed from one stage of glory to another, the end really will come and those who are in Christ will
really be transformed. But what does this mean? How are we to understand it? We seem to lack a category of ‘reality’ – real participation in Christ, real possession of the Spirit – which lies between naïve cosmological speculation and belief in magical transference on the one hand and a revised self-understanding on the other. I must confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here.\textsuperscript{403}

Others have referred to Paul’s participatory language as metaphorical language, signifying a sense of belonging to Christ and Christ’s \textit{ekklēsia},\textsuperscript{404} while others have explained it in the light of ancient notions of a material Spirit.\textsuperscript{405} The fact that Paul refers to baptism as an event in which believers have clothed themselves with Christ suggests that Paul’s language of participation should – to some extent at least – be regarded as metaphorical language. Stanley Stowers has stressed that Paul’s participatory language should be explained from his pneumatological language and laments that “there has been little recognition that apocalyptic did not explain (that is, provide a context for) the central idea of participation.”\textsuperscript{406} Stowers argues that a notion of “a hierarchy of qualities of substances is central to the discourse” and thus that Spirit should be understood as a “refined, qualitatively higher substance with its own power of movement and intelligence.”\textsuperscript{407} Romans 8:9–11 suggests that Stowers is right in arguing that Paul’s participatory language should be explained from his pneumatological language. This fact suggests that Paul’s notion of participation in Christ is related to the apocalyptic theme of the two ages, as Paul in Rom 8:23 refers to the Spirit as the first fruits of the Spirit, indicating that his views of the Spirit are related to the apocalyptic idea of the two ages.\textsuperscript{408} However, this does not preclude the idea that Paul’s views of the nature of the work of the Spirit could have been shaped by other traditions as well.\textsuperscript{409} Paul’s

\textsuperscript{403} E. P. Sanders, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}, 522–523.


\textsuperscript{406} Stowers, “What is ‘Pauline Participation in Christ’?” 353.


\textsuperscript{408} As acknowledged by Stowers himself, who points out that “even if Christ alone has arisen from the dead, the Spirit of God and of Christ will allow a foretaste of the life to come” (Stowers, \textit{A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 257.

\textsuperscript{409} See note 47 above. Thus, for instance, Paul may not only be describing the gift of the Spirit as a down payment of the life of the world to come but also as something that causes the human heart or spirit to be aligned with the Spirit of the Son.
views of what it means to be in Christ, in the Spirit or to live in the eschatological age may thus also have been shaped by traditions like the ones referred to by Stowers.

Udo Schnelle has clarified the implications of Paul’s words about baptism in Gal 3:26–28 in the following way, stressing not only some of the metaphorical aspects of Paul’s argument but also that the baptized receives a new kind of being (sein):

According to this description, the phrase “in Christ” signifies the place in which sonship is realized and baptism is thus the means through which union with Christ is established. Schnelle refers to a Spirit-mediated (geistgewirkte) relationship with God that is not only appropriated by believers in baptism but that also justifies (begründet) their new status of the believer. The phrase “in Christ” refers, therefore, to a given (geschenkte) real or ontological (seinshafte) union between Christ and the baptized, which reflects the fact that believers have been encompassed (umschlossen) by Christ. The English translation of the first edition of Schnelle’s book paraphrases the phrase in which Schnelle refers to a real or ontological (seinshafte) union between believers and Christ. This is quite understandable, for what does it means to be united ontologically with Christ?

Others have suggested that Paul’s description of the union with Christ that is appropriated through baptism refers to a movement “into the sphere of Jesus’ own intimate and obedient

---

relationship to God.” Similarly, scholars tend to interpret the reference to Abba in Gal 4:6 and Rom 8:15 as a reflection of Paul’s familiarity with the Jesus tradition. Just as scholars tend to describe these passages as Paul’s way of describing believers as those who have been adopted into the family of Abraham and God and therefore into a covenant relationship with God, which corresponds well with Morgan’s description of faith as a relationship of trust with God.

It is more important for our investigation to notice that Volker Rabens has tried to explain the effect of the gift of the Spirit by drawing attention to the fact that Gal 4:6 “specifies that the Spirit of God’s son is given ‘into our hearts,’” claiming not only that “this suggests that ‘the reality of God’s adoption/acceptance reaches to the motivating and emotive centre of the person’” but also that this “Spirit-shaped, filial relationship with God characterized by love and intimacy empowers believers ethically.” That may be true, and the fact that Philo is able to describe the privileges of sonship in a somewhat similar way does seem to establish a religious context in which God’s gift of the Spirit was associated not only with sonship and adoption, but also with religious-ethical transformation.

---

412 Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 62 and Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (2nd rev. ed; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 234. See also Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 437, who notes that “the sonship is one shared with Christ” and that “its character as patterned on Christ’s sonship and shared with Christ, is indicated not least by the Spirit-inspired prayer ‘Abba! Father!’” Paul’s description of the spirit-mediated sonship may have covenantal overtones, see Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 298: “The formalizing of relationship that is essential to the covenant concept also underlies the theme of filiation that runs through the bible. Israel, in the covenant, is adopted as God’s son; believers, in the new covenant, are similarly adopted.” Macaskill relates this matter to the question of the significance of Paul’s notion of union with Christ in the following way: “To be united with Jesus, to be in him, is to be in the covenant through his representative headship. Thus, it is to be in a condition of covenantal communion with God, with the covenant-fulfilment of Jesus serving as the grounds for our own communion. The concept of righteousness is linked to this. . . . The righteousness of God is a description of his character-in-covenant” (Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 238).

413 Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, 234: “the only other occurrence of the ‘Abba’-cry in the New Testament is recorded to be that of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Mk 14:36). As one can assume that Paul was aware of this tradition, it seems reasonable to interpret Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 as a deliberate echo of this expression of Jesus’ relationship to his Father.” See also Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 193 note 52: “Wenham, *Paul 277–80 deduces from the use of ‘Abba’ in Romans 8 (cf. Mark 14:36) that Paul knew the Gethsemane story. It could be equally argued, on the basis of the close link between Spirit and sonship in Rom. 8:15–17 and Gal 4:6–7, that Paul knew an account of Jesus’ baptism and anointing (Mark 1.10–11 pars.).”


416 Rabens refers here to Dunn, *Galatians*, 219–220.


418 Rabens, “Pneuma and the Beholding of God,” 293–298.
However, Rabens’ description of the similarities between Philo’s and Paul’s description of the filial relationship between God and humans that is established by the gift of inspiration does not sufficiently account for Philo’s view of divine inspiration as something that affects human understanding.\(^{419}\) Comparably, it must be emphasized that in Paul’s writings the heart is not only the motivating and emotive center of humans, it is also the locus of thinking.\(^{420}\) Moreover, in 1 Cor 2:9–12. Paul seems to assume that the heart and spirit are synonymous concepts. Paul draws on the words of Isa 64:3 that refer to the human heart as the locus of human thinking (2:9), using these words from Isaiah as a stepping stone to a description of the human spirit as the locus of knowledge of human affairs (2:11).\(^{421}\) This corresponds to the fact that in Rom 11:8 Paul refers to the (human) spirit of stupor which is a phrase that originates in a chapter from Isaiah in which there is no clear distinction between the human heart and the human spirit,\(^{422}\) just as Paul seems to be able to use the concept of mind (ψυχή) and spirit synonymously, as he maintains not only that believers have the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9) but also the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).\(^{423}\) Stowers and Engberg-Pedersen have described the Spirit in Paul not only as an entity that has its own power and intelligence (Stowers) but also as an entity that mediates a proper knowledge of

\(^{419}\) Rabens draws attention to several passages from Philo’s writings in which different figures come to see God (\textit{Sobr.} 55–56; \textit{Post.} 12–13; \textit{Leg.} 3.101; \textit{QE} 2.51; \textit{Migr.} 34–36 et al. He claims that these visions of God can be described as representing “a mystical union with God” (Rabens, “\textit{Pneuma and Beholding of God},” 299) and asserts that “Philo describes the effects of Spirit-worked ‘coming near God in a kind of family relation’ as a religious-ethical transformation that results in further closeness and likeness with God” (ibid., 297); he refers to “the three elements of our model of the mystical work of the Spirit,” namely “inspiration by the Spirit, an intimate encounter with God, and advancement of strength and well-being of the mind or soul (and body), that is, transformation” (ibid., 303) and he concludes on this basis that “it seems that neither the (visual) encounter itself nor its effects could be reduced to a mere impartation of cognitive insights. Rather the entire religious-ethical life of the believer is transformed” (ibid., 303). Even though Rabens acknowledges that cognitive insights are gained through inspiration, he favors descriptions ‘like closeness and likeness with God’ and “intimate encounters with God.” It seems as if his dependence on the term mystical union disables him to see that Philo describes visions of God as something that causes the human mind to be aligned with the divine mind (the Logos) and that this is the basis on which humans become able to live a virtuous life. The Sage can live a virtuous life, because he knows how he is supposed to live.

\(^{420}\) The heart figures frequently in the Pauline letters as the locus of thinking and yearning, see e.g. Rom 9:2; 10:1, 6, 8, 9, 10; 1 Cor 4:5 7:37; 14:25.

\(^{421}\)Heart and spirit appear quite frequently as synonyms in Israel’s Scripture. M. V. Van Pelt/W. C. Kaiser, Jr/D. I. Block,” \textit{n.n.,} \textit{NIDOTTE} 3:1070–1078, 1075: “In 21 instances, רוח and the nom \textit{lbb, heart,} occur as synonyms.” Strangely enough the article only lists Ps 77:6[7]; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26–27; Ps 51:10[12]; Isa 65:14 and Dan 5:20 as examples. The following passages could also be added to the list: Exod 35:21; Deut 2:30; Ps 51:7; 78:8; Is 57:15 and Ezek 21:7.

\(^{422}\) Isa 29:10 refers to the spirit of stupor whereas Isa 29:13 refers to the human heart as being far away from God.

\(^{423}\) In both 1 Cor 2:16 and Rom 11:34 Paul quotes from Isa 40:13 LXX where the Hebrew נפש already has been translated with the greek ψυχή, as noticed by Marie E. Isaacs, \textit{The Concept of the Spirit: A Study of the Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament} (Heythrop Monographs; London: H. Charlesworth, 1976), 74–75.
God. These observations are helpful insofar as they make sense of Paul’s description of the Spirit as something that affects the constitution of the human heart (Gal 4:6), mind (1 Cor 2:9–15) or spirit (Rom 8:14–15), emphasizing that divine inspiration is something that affects human understanding.

In this connection, it must be emphasized that in Gal 4:6 Paul refers not only to the Spirit as the Spirit of the Son of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ) but also to the Spirit that acts in a Son-like manner, insofar as it relates to God as Father. If the argument in 2 Cor 11:1–6 is comparable to the argument in Gal 3:1–5, then it may be suggested that, just as the preaching of a different gospel affects the constitution of the human spirit in a negative way, so too the preaching of the Pauline gospel affects the constitution of the human spirit in a positive way, ensuring that humans (i.e. the human spirit) begin to relate to God as father. It may be objected that Paul in 4:6 refers to the Spirit of the Son and not to the human spirit, just as Paul in the parallel text in Rom 8:15–16 refers to the Spirit of Christ as a Spirit that bears witness with (συμμαρτυρέω) the human spirit as they both cry Abba Father. Nevertheless, it is striking to observe how Paul refers to the Spirit’s Abba cry as something that his readers were assumingly familiar with. The Spirit’s Abba cry must have been something that he and his readers knew from experience, for which reason he must have interpreted a human phenomenon as a manifestation of God’s gift of the Spirit. Hence, whereas Paul’s wording in Rom 8:15–16 suggests that he wanted to maintain a distinction between the divine and the human spirit, his argument in Gal 4:4–6 suggests that the divine and human heart or spirit have been unified to such an extent that they for all practical purposes must be regarded as one. This may also be the reason that he in Gal 2:20 refers to himself as someone who no longer lives, but who nevertheless lives, trusting in God’s son who loved him and gave himself for him. Paul’s life is something that is constituted by the presence of Christ, which manifests itself not only in Paul’s trust in the work of Christ (2:17, 20) but also in the conviction that God is his

424 See Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self, 128–129.
425 Paul’s reference to the Spirit in the human heart may reflect the influence of Ezek 36–37 and may be something that may help explain the fact that Paul can associate righteousness and vivification (Gal 3:19), see Levison, Filled with the Spirit, 254–255, 270–271.
426 Horn claims that this is a phenomenon that stems from the devotional practice in worship services in the Pauline assemblies (Horn, Das Angeld des Geistes Friedrich W. Horn, Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur Paulinischen Pneumatologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 409–411). See also Larry Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Christ in Earliest Christianity (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 173–176.
Father (4:4–6). The fact that Paul’s argument in Gal 4:4–6 suggests that the divine Spirit and the human spirit are united in the way they relate to God indicates that he describes divine inspiration as something that causes the human spirit to be aligned with the divine Spirit, for which reason Paul is able to ascribe the Abba cry not only to the Spirit of the Son but also to the spirit of the believer. Hence, divine inspiration seems to be described as something that effects a reconstitution of the human heart or the human spirit, causing it to relate to God in a proper way, i.e., causing it to relate to God in the manner of the Spirit of God’s Son.

This might suggest that Paul in Gal 4:4–6 is describing a union between God, the heart and the Spirit of the Son that is comparable to the union of God the Spirit and the mind that Philo refers to in Leg. 1.37, not least since Philo describes divine inspiration as something that effects that the human mind is encompassed by divine Spirit, for which reason humans not only acknowledge that God is the one who provides for the welfare of the cosmos but also begin to live their lives in accordance with the pattern of grace that manifests itself in God’s providential love. It follows from this description that Schnelle’s references to a new kind of being that constitutes itself in Christ (in der Taufe konstituiert sich das neue Sein in Christus) and to a real union between Christ and believers that is granted in baptism (in der Taufe geschenkte seinshafte Beziehung zwischen Christus und dem Getauften) through which believers have been encompassed (umschlossen) by Christ may be appropriate, insofar as they are taken as references to what happens as the human heart or spirit is encompassed by the Spirit of the Son. Paul would then be describing the gift of the Spirit as something that causes the human spirit to be aligned with the Spirit of the Son, for which reason his description of union with Christ would be a description of a union between the divine and the human spirit that manifests itself in the cry, Abba Father.

7.4.4 Gal 4:8–11 and Gal 4:21–31: Getting Known by God and Being Born in accordance with the Spirit

Troels Engberg-Pedersen has proposed that “Galatians 3–4 articulates a theory of the reception of the pneuma” and that “the basic feature of the theory – that faith results in reception of pneuma – is stated in 3:2, 5 and 14b” but that a “slightly more complicated version of the theory that also brings in sonship is stated in Gal 3:26–4:7”. He therefore concludes: “Thus the proper sequence is
in fact this: faith, baptism, reception of the pneuma, sonship (and being ‘in’ Christ and ‘one’ in him).”

One might perhaps add justification as the final link of the chain to the list of events sketched by Engberg-Pedersen. This seems to be the implications of Paul’s words in 1 Cor 6:11 in which he points out that the Corinthians have washed themselves (ἀπελούσασθε) and that they therefore have become sanctified (ἡγιάσθητε) and justified (ἐδικαιώθητε) in the name of Jesus. This passage not only links justification to baptism but also describes justification as something that is associated with sanctification. In that case, justification is something that is given to those whose life has been changed or transformed by the gift of Spirit that is mediated through baptism; the concept of justification seems therefore to be referring to God’s recognition of what has been made right. Paul’s argument in Galatians thus suggests not only that it is the human heart or the human spirit that has been made right or changed but also that this is what God recognizes as righteousness.

As Paul’s argument in 3:1–4:11 draws to a close, he clarifies that the Galatian believers have become heirs through God (διὰ θεοῦ). That they were justified on the basis of faith (3:26) apparently means that they have become heirs through the agency of God (4:7). According to Paul’s argument the stakes are high. The problematic he is engaging is a matter either of staying on the course that runs in accordance with the beginning and hence in accordance with the Galatians’ initial experience with the Spirit, or of returning to slavery under what he defines as poor and weak elemental spirits (τὰ ἀσθενή καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα) (4:10). Interestingly, Paul concludes his argument by clarifying that what the Galatians have experienced is a matter of having come to know God. Moreover, he does this in a way that resembles Philo’s description of Abraham’s experience of the vision of God. Paul points out that the Galatians had come to know God (γνώντες θεόν), correcting himself that they have become known by God (γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ), whereas Philo emphasizes that we are not told that the Sage saw God (οὐχ ὥσπερ ὁ σοφὸς ἔϊε θεόν) but that God was seen by the Sage (ὁ θεός ὥφθη τῷ σοφῷ) (Abr. 80).

428 See Engberg-Pedersen, “The Logic of Action in Paul,” 250–251: “In Gal 4:9 the Galatians had already come to know God. Indeed, they had been known by him or given knowledge (of God) by God.” Martyn reads Gal 4:9 as an example of how Paul circumvents the Teachers that preach religion: “Presumably, the Teachers are enticing the Galatians by speaking of a state of perfection that can be achieved by ascent to true knowledge of God in the life of law observance (3:3). In a word, the Teachers are preaching a religion (eusebeia) that takes the metaphorical form of a ladder. . . . When Paul corrects himself in midsentence, then, he formulates a polemic against the Teachers’ religious message.
This suggests not only that sonship is associated with knowledge of God, but also that this is something that is conveyed by revelation and hence by God’s gift of the Spirit.

That sonship is associated with the work of the Spirit is confirmed from Paul’s interpretation of the Sarah–Hagar story in 4:21–5:1. Here sonship is described as something that is gained through God’s creative action. The argument is addressed to “those who want to be under the law” (4:21) and Paul draws attention to the well-known fact that Abraham had two sons, one with Hagar and one with Sarah. This fact is interpreted allegorically (ἀλληγορούμενο) (4:24) as a reference to the two covenants. Hagar is identified as Mount Sinai, who bears children to slavery (εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα – 4:24) and who is identified as the present Jerusalem (συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν ἱερουσαλήμ) (4:25). Sarah is identified as the Jerusalem above, and thus she is described as free and as “our mother” (4:26). The references to Hagar and the present Jerusalem are best taken as references to those of the law (4:21), whom Paul previously has characterized as being under a curse (3:10) as well as to being in a sort of slavery (4:1–5). Sarah is identified as the Jerusalem above, which should be taken as a reference to the eschatological Zion representing the Christ-believing community, not least since Ps 87 refers to Jerusalem as the mother of God’s own and since Isa 66:7–11 refers to Zion as a mother in labor that brings forth a son. 429 The Hagar-Sarah allegory in Galatians thus “conflates two Jewish traditions: the first, that of Sarah, the barren freeborn wife of Abraham, who was destined to be mother of nations; the second, that of the holy city Jerusalem, the eschatological Zion, who symbolically is the mother of God’s own.” 430 Thus, those who belong to the offspring of the free woman belong to the eschatological Zion.

Here it will suffice to note that the argument in Gal 4:21–31 describes the contrast between Sarah and Hagar as a contrast between divine and human agency, as Paul points out that Hagar’s child was born in accordance with the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται), whereas Sarah’s child was born through a promise (δι’ ἐπαγγελίας) (4:23). This should be read as a contrast between divine and

The antidote to ignorance of God does not lie in our acquiring knowledge of God (religion). It lies, rather, in God’s act of knowing us (the foundation of theology; cf. Jer 30:21; Psalm 139)” (Martyn, Galatians, 412–413). In that case, Paul’s argument may be directed against a position that have something in common with the position articulated in Abr. 80. 429 See Christl M. Maier, “Psalm 87 as a Reappraisal of the Zion Tradition and Its reception in Galatians 4:26,” CBQ 69. (2007): 473–486.
430 Longenecker, Galatians, 215. For a helpful introduction to the Hagar-Sarah story in Second Temple Judaism, see ibid., 200–206.
human agency, for in 4:28–29 Paul clarifies not only that the Galatian believers are children of the promise in accordance with Isaac (κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἔστε) (4:28) but also that he is talking about the difference between being born in accordance with the flesh (ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθείς) (4:29) and being born in accordance with the Spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα). The preposition κατὰ combined with the accusative can carry the meaning “as a result of.”

431 That the preposition κατὰ carries these connotations in Gal 4:23, 28–29 is suggested from the biblical context that resonates in these verses. Isaac’s birth was, after all, a result of God’s miraculous intervention (a fact similarly stressed by the reference to Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27). The arguments in 4:23 and 28–29 correspond in this way to the fact that Paul already has described the heirs in accordance with the promise (κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι) (3:29) as heir(s) through God (κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ) (4:7). Inheritance is something that comes about from being born in accordance with the Spirit. This is a miraculous birth that may fittingly be described as a new creation (6:15). It follows from Paul’s argument in Gal 3:26–4:11 and 4:21–5:1 that inheritance and Abrahamic sonship is not only a matter of being born by God but also a matter of coming to know God or being known by God; ultimately, it is a matter of having one’s heart or mind aligned with the Spirit of the Son.

7.5 Preliminary Conclusions
7.5.1 The Abrahamic Promises and the Gift of the Spirit

In this chapter, I have (with the help of Theresa Morgan) argued that in Galatians faith is depicted as a feature of a relationship of trust. Relationships of trust presuppose some amount of reciprocity between the two parties that constitute the relationship. The notion of reciprocity was also a prominent feature of ancient convictions about gifts. John Barclay has clarified how Paul, also in Galatians, refers to God’s grace as God’s gift.

432 For instance, this is reflected in Gal 2:21, as “‘for nothing’ (δωρεάν) is another word from the gift-domain; the adverb had developed this meaning from the recognition that a gift could not guarantee a return, and thus might be characterized as ‘to nil effect.’ It would be a travesty of God’s gift if the Galatians were to make it, in this sense, δωρεάν by refusing its transformative effects.” Even so, it seems as if the gift of the

431 Cf. Matt 19:3; Gal 2:2 and Phil 4:11 in which κατὰ can be translated with the phrase “on the basis of” or “as a result of.”
432 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 332 note 2.
Spirit is something that itself produces the proper response, insofar as the gift of the Spirit is something that manifests itself whenever humans relate to God in a proper way, i.e., whenever humans relate to God as their Father.433

In Galatians, Paul’s interaction with the Abraham story is introduced by an argument about justification (2:15–21) and the gift of the Spirit (3:1–5). I have argued that in Galatians Paul defines Abraham’s eschatological offspring as those who have received God’s gift of the Spirit and that he is concerned with clarifying that the Galatian believers have the right to be a part of this eschatological Abrahamic family. The promise of blessing is therefore defined as a promise of the Spirit that ensures that the Gentiles have received a share in the blessing promised to Abraham. Philo and Paul seem therefore to both refer to the gift of the Spirit as something that defines Israel (Philo) or the children of Abraham (Paul). But whereas Philo maintained a distinction between those who were blessed like Abraham and those who were blessed through Abraham (i.e., through the presence of the righteous person in society), Paul did not operate with such a distinction. Paul maintained that those who were blessed in accordance with the promise of the blessing of the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18) were blessed with Abraham (Gal 3:9) and like the rest of the Abrahamic family (3:14).

Moreover, Paul seems not only to refer to the gift of the Spirit as something that encompasses the human heart or the spirit and therefore as something that manifests itself in a new way of relating to God, but also to refer to justification as God’s recognition of the life that is marked by faith in Christ, which in Galatians is defined as the kind of existence that has been subject to the vivifying work of God’s Spirit (3:21). Hence, Paul’s argument in 2:15–4:11 is concerned with showing how the Galatians have received the Spirit, and with the Spirit, a proper relationship with God, which serves as the basis for their membership in the Abrahamic family and therefore for their justification.

However, it should also be maintained that Paul describes justification as something that is given without regard to worth, insofar as this means that Paul in Galatians is concerned with denying

433 The implications of this observation will be discussed in the final concluding discussions below.
“that Torah-observance makes a person a fitting beneficiary of divine gifts, since no one is (or will be) considered ‘righteous’ on that basis” and insofar as Paul in Galatians is concerned with substantiating that “the saving gift has already been given in Christ, without regard to worth, and that God considers ‘righteous’ those whose new lives, evidenced in faith, have been generated from the Christ-event (2:19−20).”

The fact that these new lives, evidenced in faith, are not only directed towards what God has given in Christ (2:17) but also marked by God’s gift of the Spirit (3:1−5) suggests that faith is not only something that attests the incongruity of God’s grace as manifested in the Christ event and the way God distributes his Spirit, but also something that reflects a renewed or vivified heart or spirit. This is something that corresponds well with Morgan’s description of faith as a relationship of trust, whereby faith is characterized by an interplay between propositional and relational aspects. This is the kind of duality that characterizes Paul’s concept of faith. It is something that marks the misfit between believers and the gifts they receive from God, but it is also a proper attitude that reflects the renewing work of the Spirit. This new life in the Spirit is constituted by the gift of the Spirit, for which reason Paul’s self-description as someone who is crucified with Christ and hence no longer lives (2:20) seems to reflect his conviction that his new life in Christ was something he had by virtue of the presence of Christ, which had been given to him in the form of the gift of the Spirit of the Son (cf. Rom 8:9–10).

7.5.2 Preliminary Observations Regarding the Relationship between Divine and Human Agency

There are at least three reasons that suggest that Paul defines the gift of the Spirit as a new creation. The first is that the concept of a new creation (Gal 6:16) appears in the context of a final warning against circumcision/completion in the flesh, which in Galatians has been described as something that is contrary to the gift of the Spirit (3:1−5). Second, Gal 3:21 more than suggests that it is those who have been made alive that should be considered as righteous. This indicates that Paul considered the new life of those who believe to be the result of divine creation; this is

---

434 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 378 (italics original).
435 This language of misfit is inspired by Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 486. It will be further discussed in paragraph 8.3.1 and 8.3.2 below.
not particularly surprising, as in a Jewish context the gift of the Spirit is inevitably associated with God’s creational activity, either original (Gen 1–2) or new (Ezek 36–37). Finally, the concept of creation features as a predominant theme in Paul’s reading of the Hagar-Sarah story, according to which sonship comes about as the result of a miraculous divine intervention that is mediated by the Spirit. These creational overtones suggest also that Paul intends to describe genuine human lives, i.e. lives marked by genuine human agency, and hence that he is not describing lives in which human agency has been incapacitated by the invasion of God’s overarching power. This seems to be confirmed from the final argument in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Here (6:7–8), he does not refrain from ascribing real significance to human strivings, as he encourages his readers to sow in the Spirit so that they may reap eternal life from the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit seems here to be described as something that enables humans to invest even more in the Spirit and there is nothing in Paul’s argument that suggests that he did not regard this investment as something that involves genuine human actions.

My reading of Paul’s argument in Galatians suggests also that the gift of the Spirit is described as something that causes the human heart or the human spirit to be aligned with the Spirit of the Son. Paul does not describe the Spirit as something that is given to humans in creation. The gift of the Spirit is therefore not something that is generically shared.\(^{436}\) Paul describes the gift of the Spirit as something that is associated with the preaching of Christ crucified and as something that ultimately is given in baptism. Moreover, Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 5:11–21 suggests that it is indeed reasonable to correlate the concept of new creation with the gift of the Spirit and hence with the notion of participation in Christ and the idea of the human spirit’s alignment with the Spirit of the Son. Paul’s radical statement in 2 Cor 5:17 is worth mentioning. Here, he points out both that if anyone is in Christ there is new creation (εἰ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις) and that the old things have passed away (τὰ άρχαὶ παρῆλθεν) and new things have come (γέγονεν καινά). Paul does not make use of pneumatological language in this passage (2 Cor 5:11–21). It should be

\(^{436}\) Levison draws attention to a number of passages from Paul’s letters (Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 2:11; 5:5, 7:34, 14:14–16, 32 and 2 Cor 7:1) that he refers to as “vestiges of the Israelite and early Jewish convictions that the holy spirit with which God has endowed human beings is the locus of virtue” (Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 238). However, he also points out that “while early Christian literature, then, may contain vestiges of the belief that the human spirit is the locus of life and virtue, these remnants are few and decidedly more ambiguous than comparable Israelite and early Jewish texts. They are subsidiary conceptions which have been supplanted by an overwhelming belief that the truest filling with the spirit is a later gift, a subsequent endowment of believers” (ibid., 247).
noted, however, that Paul’s argument is determined both by the notion of participation in Christ (5:14–16, 21) and by the idea of an alignment between believers and Christ. Thus, in 5:20 Paul claims that “we” are ambassadors for Christ (‘Υπὲρ Χριστοῦ πρεσβεύομεν) as God is making appeals through “us” (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παράκαλούντος δι’ ἡμῶν) and that “we” pray on behalf of Christ (δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ). The logic of the argument is, of course, determined by the verb πρεσβεύομεν. However, the fact that Paul refers to God as one who makes appeals through his ambassadors and the fact that Paul refers to himself as praying on behalf of Christ suggest that Paul not only presumes that Christ and believers are aligned with one another in the the Spirit but also that this idea has been correlated with his views of what participation in Christ implies.

Moreover, this correlation of ideas corresponds well with the fact that Paul seems to presume that Christ is being formed in those who are born in accordance with the Spirit (Gal 4:19).

I have suggested that Paul’s description of the relationship between God, the Spirit and the human heart bears resemblance to the way Philo describes the relationship between God, the Spirit and the human mind. If Paul’s understanding of the work of the Spirit is comparable to Philo’s, then he would not only be describing the divine inspiration as something that enables humans to invest in the Spirit, but also as something that takes hold of the human heart or spirit, causing it to relate to God in a proper way and hence to invest furthermore in the Spirit. There is no reason to make final conclusions at this stage of our investigation. In the next chapter we will consider not only how Abraham’s faith and righteousness are described in Romans 4 but also how Paul’s portrait of Abraham can be related to the account given in Rom 5–8 of the life that is marked by the gift of the Spirit.
Chapter 8. Abraham and the Spirit of Faith in Paul’s Letter to the Romans

8.1 Introduction

It must be granted, of course, that there are no explicit references to the work of the Spirit in Romans 4. Paul focuses on the promise of descendants (Gen 17:5 and Rom 4:17; Gen 15:5 and Rom 4:18) and does not make any explicit reference to the gift of the Spirit. However, Paul configures his argument in such a way that the story of God’s justification of Abraham appears as something that was written “for our sake” (δι’ ἡμᾶς), for “us” to whom righteousness is about to be credited as it was credited to Abraham (3:24). Paul also describes the Abrahamic promises in such a way that they appear to refer to something that involves the work of the Spirit. Even though Paul in Rom 4 focuses on God’s promises of descendants from many nations (4:17–18), in 4:13 he also clarifies that the promise given to Abraham was a promise of inheritance of the world (τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτῶν εἶναι κόσμου). Ernst Käsemann has clarified how the “inheriting the earth” is a technical formula that occurred with reference to Israel in Jub. 19:21; 22:14; 32:19 and in Sir 44:21, but which underwent a process of development with the result that it eventually was “applied apocalyptically to the future world.”437 This final stage is represented in 2 Bar. 14:13; 51:3; 4 Ezra 7:119, and is also reflected in 1 Cor 6:2 and Hebr 1:2. It is also presupposed in Rom 4:13.438 However, two qualifications must be made in order to clarify how this allegedly technical formula is adopted in Rom 4:13: (a) it should be acknowledged – according to N.T. Wright – that within the context of Paul’s letter to the Romans Rom 4:13 “looks ahead, . . . to the majestic prophecy of 8.17–30, in which ‘the inheritance’ will indeed be ‘the world’, but the world renewed, reborn through the coming convulsion of birth-pangs,”439 and (b), it should be acknowledged – in this case, according to Robert Jewett – that “the present tense verb in 1 Cor 3:21–23 makes clear that he [Paul] considers this inheritance to be a matter of current experience among converts.”440

437 Käsemann, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980) 120. See also Niels A. Dahl, Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1977), 129: “At this point Paul endorses an exegetical tradition from Jewish eschatology. But unlike his Jewish predecessors, Paul does not hope for political power in an earthly kingdom. For Paul, the promise guarantees participation in Christ’s universal reign.”

438 Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, 120–121.

439 Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 366.

440 Robert Jewett, Romans, 325.
Moreover, Paul’s arguments in Rom 4 and 8 suggest that his description of Abraham’s faith in chapter 4 is coordinated with his description in 8:18–30 of the lives of God’s children who have received the Spirit of Sonship (8:15–17), as both Abraham’s life and the lives of contemporary believers are described as being characterized by waiting and expectation of God. Likewise, it is reasonable to compare Rom 4:17–20 to Gal 4:21–5:1.\footnote{See, for example, Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 489 note 107: “Here [Rom 4:17] and in the verses that follow there are close conceptual parallels to the celebration of the ‘barren woman’ and the children birthed from ‘the Jerusalem above’ in Galatians 4:26–27.”} In Gal 4, Paul makes reference to Sarah in order to describe the people that were born not only δι’ ἑπαγγελίας (4:23) but also κατὰ πνεῦμα (4:29). This reference to the work of the Spirit (4:29) is best interpreted as reference to the creative agency of God, which makes Paul’s argument in Gal 4:29 comparable to his argument in Rom 4:17–20, insofar as in both instances he interprets God’s promises as something that are fulfilled by the creative agency of God.

It thus seems reasonable to suggest that it is presumed in the argument in Rom 4 that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises is something that involves the creative work of God and the Spirit. Hence, membership in the Abrahamic family is also described in Romans as something that involves God’s gift of the Spirit, for which reason the Spirit is also described in Romans as something that defines the Abrahamic family.

This chapter aims first to clarify how Paul describes Abraham’s faith in Rom 4, arguing that his argument in Rom 4 is comparable to his argument in Gal 2:15–4:11 insofar as in both arguments he not only depicts God as a God who extents his gifts to the unworthy but also describes faith as an attitude that reflects a proper relationship to God. Thereafter, I focus on clarifying what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith, suggesting that Paul’s description of the role of the Spirit is comparable to Philo’s, in that Paul also seems to picture the Spirit as effecting a kind of possession that causes humans to adjust their lives in accordance with the will of God.
8.2 Preliminary Issues

8.2.1 Romans 4 in Light of Rom 3:21–31

Paul’s interpretation of the Abraham story in Rom 4 does not appear in a vacuum. In particular it is related to the immediately preceding passage (3:21–31). A few observations with respect to the relationship between 3:21–31 and 4 may clarify something about the nature of Paul’s interpretation of the Abraham story. The literary relationship between Paul’s argument in Rom 3:27–31 (or 3:27–4:1 or 3:27–4:2) and the rest of Rom 4 has been accounted for in different ways. Stanley Stowers has argued that Rom 3:27–4:2 should be regarded as another dialogue with the interlocutor originally addressed in a diatribal manner in 2:17–29, and again in 3:1–9. The fact that both Rom 3:28 (a reply) and 3:31 (a question) are in the first plural suggests, however, that 3:27–31 should be regarded as rhetorical questions and replies posed by Paul himself. Many scholars recognize a certain thematic relationship between Rom 3:27–28 and 4:1–8, on the one hand, and between 3:29–30 and 4:9–12 on the other. Douglas Campbell has suggested that the argument in 3:27–4:25 is structured in such a way that the claims in 3:27–28 are discussed more fully in 4:2–8, the claims in 3:29–30 are elaborated in 4:9–12, those of 3:31 are elaborated in 4:13–16a and the argument of 4:1 are discussed in 4:16b–22. It seems fair to say that the thematic relationship between 3:27–30 and 4:9–12 is stronger than that between 3:31–4:1 and 4:13–22. Hence, it seems simpler to view the entire chapter (Rom 4) as a response to the final question and reply given in 3:31. Paul’s account of Abraham’s justification in Rom 4 can therefore be read as Paul’s way of clarifying that the eschatological revelation of God’s righteousness (3:21) is attested by the law and the prophets.

In addition, Thomas Tobin has drawn attention to a number of parallels between Rom 3:21–26 and 3:27–4:25 that are worth noting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Righteousness apart from the Law</th>
<th>3:21</th>
<th>3:28; 4:6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

442 See Stowers, A Rereading of Romans, 231–237.
443 Thus, Thomas H. Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 143 note 46.
Tobin seems on this basis justified in claiming that “these extensive parallels make clear that Paul is dealing with the same issues throughout this section,” just as Longenecker seems justified in concluding that Rom 4:1–24 is Paul’s way of illustrating “all that he has said about ‘righteousness’ and ‘faith’ by the example of Abraham.”

8.2.2 Justification and the Gift of Christ in Rom 3:21–26

Romans 3:21–26 is definitely one of the most compressed passages in the Pauline letters; thus, this is not the place for a detailed analysis of the passage. It should be stressed, however, that the passage presents justification as the outcome of the Christ event, insofar as justification in 3:24 is referred to as something that is given by grace and through redemption in Christ (δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ). The adverb δωρεὰν and the dative τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι reflect the fact that the Christ event and justification are described as incongruous gifts, as argued in recent academic works. This means that “God’s action in Christ is no calibrated reward for the godly, or merciful protection of the faithful few, but a gift of utter incongruity, showing no correspondence with the worth of the recipients.” This does not imply that the gift was not supposed to be returned, for, as Barclay puts it “Paul perfects the incongruity of the gift (given to the unworthy) but he does not perfect its non-circularity (expecting nothing in return). This divine gift in Christ was unconditioned (based on no prior conditions) but it is not unconditional (carrying no subsequent demands).” The Christ event is therefore not depicted as a gift that is given to those who have the proper symbolic capital that made them fitting recipients.

---

445 Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Context, 126.
446 Tobin, Paul’s Rhetoric in its Context, 126.
448 See Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 474.
449 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 474.
450 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 500.
of the gift, and hence “to speak of πίστις or πιστεύειν is to register a state of bankruptcy by every measure of symbolic capital.”451 This description appears to be compatible with Morgan’s description of God’s righteousness as something that not only manifests itself in the Christ event, but also as something that initiates a relationship of trust between God, Christ and believers.452 It follows from these descriptions that the Christ event and the proclamation of the Christ event initiate a reciprocal relationship between God and believers. Faith is therefore never disassociated from the realm of obligation, even if it comes about as a result of God’s unconditional gift.

8.3 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4

8.3.1 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4:1–12

The fact that Philo describes Abraham’s faith in God as the end station of Abraham’s progression towards virtue, and furthermore describes Abraham’s faith as evidence of Abraham’s successful acquisition of righteousness (virtue), urges us to focus on Paul’s description of the relationship between faith and righteousness in Rom 4. Peter Stuhlmacher’s reading of Rom 4 stresses the forensic dimension of Abraham’s righteousness, describing God’s reckoning of righteousness in terms of forgiveness for transgressions and sin,453 whereas scholars associated with the new perspective on Paul have described Abraham’s righteousness primarily in the terms of covenant membership.454 Fresh ground has arguably been broken by those who point out that Paul describes God’s grace as a gift, and by Theresa Morgan, who has described faith in terms of a relationship of trust.455

Benjamin Schliesser and John Barclay have recently pointed out how the center of gravity or focal point of Rom 4 has been described differently in Pauline scholarship. Some scholars identify this

451 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 486.
452 See Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 290: “God trusts Christ (by implication) to act as an expiation for human sins. Christ is faithful and obedient towards God and very possible also towards the human beings whose acquittal he makes possible. Human beings put their trust, probably in both God and Christ, though verse 22 does not specify. Through the dikaiosunē of God, the bilateral pistis of Christ, and their own pistis the faithful are made dikaioi.”
454 See, for instance, N. T. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1002–1007.
center as Paul’s description of the justification of the ungodly in Rom 4:4–6, whereas others identify it in the description of Abraham as forefather of both circumcised and uncircumcised (4:9–16). The problem becomes acute in 4:1, which has been translated in at least four different ways. Here we need to focus our attention on the question how faith and righteousness are correlated in Rom 4. In 4:3–8, Paul underscores the idea that righteousness is not something that is credited to anyone’s account as a payment for work. Paul stresses that in contrast to the things that are credited as a gift (κατὰ χάριν), work is credited with a salary, in accordance with one’s due (μισθὸς κατὰ ὀφείλημα) (4:4). Paul’s comparison of these two systems highlights the idea that righteousness is credited as a gift (κατὰ χάριν), which implies that faith is credited as righteousness “to the one who does not work but who believes in the one who justifies the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). This description of Abraham correlates with the description of David whom Paul describes as a man who blesses the person “to whom God credits righteousness without works” (ὁ θεός λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων). N. T. Wright has stressed that the phrase “the ungodly” refers to nations who will be blessed through Abraham. In that case, justification is something that is given without regard to ethnic symbolic capital, i.e., without regard to a life lived in accordance with the norms of the Torah. This aspect of God’s justification is certainly

---

456 See the helpful introductions in Benjamen Schliesser, Abraham’s Faith in Romans 4, 317–321 and Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 479–483.

457 See Stanley Porter, The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 103. Richard B. Hays’ well-known suggestion that Rom 4:1 should be translated “What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham (to be) our forefather according to the flesh?” (Richard B. Hays, The Conversion of the Imagination [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005], 67) is flawed, however, since it suggests that forefather is a predicate. The problem is, however, that τὸν προπάτορα has a definite article, which does not fit a predicate, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Paul and the Stoics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 363 note 3 as well as Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 483 note 88. I concur thus with those who defends the following translation: “what then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh have found? It is unlikely that κατὰ σάρκα should refer to a time before Abraham believed, insofar as there is not any temporal markers in the text, pace Eun-Geol Lyu, Sünde und Rechtfertigung bei Paulus: Eine Exegetische Untersuchung zum paulinischen Sündenverständnis aus soteriologischer Sicht (WUNT 2/318; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 244: “Abraham hat nach dem Fleisch – nämlich vor dem Glauben durch seine Werke – nichts zum Rühmen vor Gott gefunden.”

458 It is not necessary to see Paul’s argument as an argument against Jewish ethnocentrism (cf. James Dunn, Romans 1–8 (WBC 38A; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1988), 200–201), nor as Paul’s reaction to the soteriology of Second Temple Judaism (cf. Simon Gathercole, Where is Boasting, 244). Neither is it necessary to see Paul’s argument as directed against a human tendency to pride (cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, Romans [Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1998], 217). The theme of boasting is most easily explained as recoil from the gift-language that dominates the argument from 3:21 onwards.

459 See, for example, N.T. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1004: “Paul is saying that, when God promised Abraham this massive family, that he would ‘be father of many nations’ (Genesis 17.5, quoted in 4:17), this required that of Abraham the faith that God would indeed ‘justify the ungodly’ not himself and his physical family, who were in that sense ‘godly’, but the nations outside, who were by definition not ‘godly’.”
within the horizon of the argument, insofar as Paul in 3:28 has clarified that man (ἄνθρωπος) is justified apart from works of the Law. However, it would probably be a mistake to define the ungodly too narrowly, as referring to a specific group of people. If Rom 4 clarifies that God’s righteousness as revealed in the Christ event is in fact attested by the Law and the prophets (3:21), then the ungodly could be a taken as a reference to everyone (πάντες) (3:23). It would then hardly be surprising that Paul’s argument in 4:3–8 suggests that justification is something that involves forgiveness, as David here appears not only as a figure to whom righteousness is credited, but also as a figure, who has been forgiven.461

Peter Stuhlmacher draws a somewhat problematic conclusion, claiming that “for Paul, ‘faith’ is no longer understood as obedient fear of God, but as the gift of a relationship with God, as he was revealed in Christ.”462 To be sure Paul describes faith as a “gift of a relationship with God, as he was revealed in Christ,” but this should not be regarded as something that is essentially different than an obedient fear of God. It might be that Stuhl- macher refers to the sort of fear of God that springs from uncertainty about one’s salvation,463 but fear of God is also a biblical term for faith that Paul is fully conversant with (2 Cor 5:11–21). Paul’s description of God’s grace as a gift indicates that grace is configured as something that establishes a reciprocal relationship between the giver and the recipient of the gift. The divine gift is not given to those who have some sort of corresponding worthiness that explains the rationale for the gift, or that perhaps enables the recipients to benefit from the gifts of God.464 This is confirmed from the fact that “the circumcision

460 See Robert Jewett, Romans: A Commentary (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 314: “In view of Paul’s prior use of ἀσεβεία in the 1:18 and his subsequent use of ἄσβης in the confessional citation of 5:6, both of which refer to a universal human condition of arrogant rebellion against God, it seems inappropriate to construe it here as ‘idolatry’ or ‘sinner’ in the technical sense of violating the Torah. Either of these options would restrict the bearing of Abraham’s example to either the Gentile Christian or the Jewish Christian side of the Roman congregations.”

461 Paul’s argument is occasionally accounted for as an example of the interpretative technique gezerah shavah, which refers to an argument by analogy, See Benjamin Schliesser, Abraham’s Faith in Romans 4, 350.) See also Francis Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 171: Abraham himself, elsewhere the outstanding scriptural exemplar of piety, is here assimilated to David, the scriptural exemplar of the forgiven sinner (vv. 6–9).

462 Stuhlmacher, Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 73.

463 For a review of the extent to which this idea has dominated Christian theology and Pauline scholarship, see Magnus Zetterholm, Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 60–90.

464 Cf. Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 485 and 486: “Romans 4:4 presumes this common ancient contrast between pay and gift, using μισθός in the sense of ‘pay’ . . . However, both pay and gift were characterized in antiquity by correspondence, pay as a recompense for work, gift (generally) as fitting the recipient’s worth . . . But Paul takes here a second step, configuring χάρις as an undeserved gift. He could have contrasted pay, the recompense of labor characteristic of people at lower social levels, with gift, an ennobling act of friendship, marking the value of the
of Abraham took place after the blessing of Genesis 15:6, which thus was operative without regard to that distinctive mark (4:9–10).” But, as Barclay also points out, “Paul perfects the incongruity of the gift (given to the unworthy) but he does not perfect its non-circularity (expecting nothing in return).” The argument in 4:3–8 may therefore be described as sowing the seeds of something that will be unfolded as the argument proceeds. Faith may indeed be associated with the beginning of the journey of faith (cf. Gal 3:1–5), but it is also something that characterizes the journey itself.

Barclay takes pain to stress the incongruity of God’s grace and to correlate his description of Abraham’s faith with this particular view of grace. Hence, he contends that

the term χάρις is perfected as an incongruous gift, so that the opposite to pay-for-work is here not gift-to-the-worthy but a startling expression of non-correspondence: ‘for the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness’ (4:5). We encounter again the Pauline presumption that to talk of God in relation to gift is to speak of divine action wholly at odds with worth, drastically contrary to all conditions of fit: to ‘justify the ungodly’ is the very opposite of ‘just reward.’ . . . Abraham’s faith thus marks not the fit but the misfit between Abraham and the righteousness accredited to him by God.

However, as the argument develops in Rom 4, Paul seems to change the perspective from which he describes Abraham’s faith. This change of perspective gives rise to the question how Paul’s description of Abraham’s faith stands out from Philo’s.

**8.3.2 Faith and Righteousness in Rom 4:13–22**

It is not necessarily obvious that Rom 4:13–22 should be regarded as one coherent passage. The structure of the text is differently accounted for in the commentaries. It can be argued, however,

recipient: on these terms, it would have been possible to represent Abraham as not (demeaningly) ‘paid,’ but (nobly) ‘rewarded,’ his virtues fittingly recognized by divine gift.”

467 Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 486. Cf. also ibid., 486 note 101: “The breadth of the category ‘works’ signals that God’s act of justification takes place in the absence of any form of righteousness ‘righteousness’: thus to ‘credit righteousness (4:6) is equivalent to ‘not crediting sin’ (4:8). Later, Paul will broaden the categories still further (9:6–12, 16) in order to rule out every conceivable form of human capital.”
that the theme of the promise is prominent throughout Rom 4:13–22 and that this binds the passage together in an overall unity. Paul begins his argument by stressing that the promise that Abraham was going to inherit the cosmos was not given διὰ νόμου but rather διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως (4:13), arguing in 4:16 that the promise was given ἐκ πίστεως in order to ensure that the promise was given as a gift and hence in accordance with grace (κατὰ χάριν). This reflects Paul’s concern to secure his description of God’s gift from being entangled by the demands of the Torah. As in Galatians, Paul describes God’s gift as something that is mediated to believers in the form of a promise. This serves Paul’s purpose well, not only because it clarifies why it is appropriate to respond to God’s grace with faith, but also because the promise – like the gift – aims to establish a reciprocal relationship between the promiser and the recipient of the promise.

Paul stresses that Abraham believed in the promise in accordance with what had been said (κατὰ εἰρημένον) (Rom 4:18) and his description of Abraham as a man who was strengthened in faith (ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει) (Rom 4:20) is given in a way that clarifies the creative potential of the promise. For the verb ἐνεδυναμώθη is modified by two aorist participial phrases, namely δοὺς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ and πληροφορηθεὶς ὅτι ὁ ἐπήγγελται δυνατός ἐστιν καὶ ποιήσαι (Rom 4:20–21). Francis Watson has accounted for the dynamics of promise-making in a way that clarifies a central feature of Paul’s argument in Rom 4:20–21. He points out that

belief is the response intended in the divine promise itself – as with any other promise. For the act of promise-making to occur at all, a promise must be regarded by its addressee as credible; and it is the responsibility of the promiser to ensure the credibility of his or her promise. A promise must ensure its own credibility because its intention is to establish a relationship between promiser and addressee based on the addressee’s confidence in the future action on his or her behalf declared in the promise.  

---

468 Moo, The Epistle to the Romans (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996, 272. The argument does seem to make a shift in emphasis in 4:16 and 4:19. Romans 4:13–15 gives important clues about what was actually promised, whereas Abraham’s role as forefather for both Jews and Gentiles is stressed in 4:16–18, while the nature of Abraham’s faith is described more clearly in 4:19–21, see also Barclay, Paul and the Gift. 488 note 106. See also Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 118: “The word ‘promise’ is the connecting link in vv. 13–25.”

The participial phrase πληροφορηθεὶς ὅτι ἐπήγγελται δυνατός ἐστιν καὶ ποιήσαι suggests that Abraham was strengthened in faith, because he was filled with the conviction that God was able to fulfil his promises. Hence, it appears that the promise functions as something that generates a relationship of trust between God and Abraham. It is worth noting that unlike Philo, Paul does not give a philosophical explanation for the references to Abraham’s doubt that occur in the Genesis narrative (Gen 15:2; 17:17). He pays no attention at all to these passages and even points out that Abraham did not doubt the promises of God (Rom 4:20–21), as he kept believing, hoping against hope (4:18). Theresa Morgan has similarly emphasized that the relationship between Abraham and God originates in the promise.470 However, she also claims that “Paul’s commentary [previously described as Paul’s midrash on Gen 15:6 in Romans 4] conveys the impression that Abraham’s pístis is the beginning of his relationship with God. God makes an approach, promising that Abraham will become the ‘father of many nations’ (4:18).”471 This seems to be confirmed from the fact that Paul in 4:17–18 moves from a reference to Gen 17:5 (4:17) to a reference to Gen 15:5 (Rom 4:18), indicating that Abraham had been trusting God for several years.472

This has important implications for the interpretation of Paul’s argument in Rom 4:13–22. As a result, Paul stresses that Abraham was justified on the basis of his enduring trust in God, as in 4:22 Paul explicitly points out that this was the reason (díο) that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness (ἔλογισθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην).473 Thus, if we return for a moment to 4:13, and

---

470 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 296: “Abraham’s pístis is not presented as a leap in the dark; it is a response to God’s approach and promise to him. And pístis empowers him (4:20), though to do what, beyond giving glory to God, Paul does not say.”

471 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 296.

472 Douglas Campbell has convincingly clarified the way Gen 17:5, 15:5 and 15:6 are correlated in 4:17–22. In 4:17, Paul draws attention to Abraham’s faith in the promise given in Gen 17:5. This faith is, however, immediately (Rom 4:18) correlated with Abraham’s faith in the promise given by God in Gen 15:5. “In effect, then, this similarity and linkage push Abraham’s attitude of hopeful trust in God’s promise back thirteen years. By the time God speaks in Genesis 17:5, Abraham has been trusting in hope for well over a decade. The implication is that he will continue to do so as Genesis 17:5 is spoken to him, that promise merely adding the further information that he will thereby be the father ‘of many nations’ . . . So Abraham’s trust is thereby extended over time and a symmetry between Genesis 17:5 and 15:6 is further enhanced” (Campbell, The Deliverance of God, 743).

473 As it has been helpfully clarified by Campbell, The Deliverance of God, 744: “After this breathless accumulation of clauses dramatizing Abraham’s trust, it seems entirely plausible for Paul to state that ‘therefore’ (díο) δικαιοσύνη was given to him’ (this being another echo of Genesis 15:6) . . . God seems to gift Abraham his paternity in response to his extraordinary fidelity, and Genesis 17:5 has thereby been subsumed within and elaborated Genesis 15:6. Moreover, to add anything to this short story of extraordinary trust and its reward – if we do notice its oversimplifications – now seems somewhat gauche. This would detract from Abraham’s heroism, to which God responds graciously as promised.”
hence to Paul’s claim that the inheritance of the cosmos was given to Abraham and his seed through the righteousness of faith (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως), then it follows from the way the argument unfolds in 4:13–22 that the promise of the inheritance of the cosmos, promised to those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith, presumes the existence of a relationship of trust between the God who proved himself trustworthy and Abraham who therefore put all his trust in God.

Now the question is how Paul’s account of justification by faith as given in 4:3–8 can be coordinated with the one given in 4:13–22. Whereas in 4:3–8 Paul describes divine justification as something that is extended to the ungodly and unworthy, in 4:17–22 he refers to God’s promise as something that generates a faith that manifests itself in a relationship of trust between God and Abraham (4:17–22) to which Paul refers as the reason for God’s justification (4:22). Scholars tend to stress different aspects of Paul’s argument in 4:17–22. For example, Stanley Stowers reads the passage as a description of Abraham’s faithfulness.

God did not require Abraham to keep a code of specific commandments as a prerequisite for accepting him. God’s approach required Abraham’s trust in the divine promises in a way that ensured Abraham’s faithfulness to the hopes embodied in the promises. Specifically, in spite of his being too old to procreate, Abraham was circumcised, and Abraham and Sarah had sexual intercourse because of God’s promise. This was Abraham’s faithfulness: Not lawkeeping but acting as circumstances required in light of God’s promise . . . Abraham’s initial trust upon hearing God’s promise should not be separated from his continuing faithfulness, which allowed him and Sarah to conceive and bear Isaac. The faith has no independent status in isolation from the faithful acts.474

Barclay, on the other hand, claims that Stowers’ reading “requires key additions to the text (‘Abraham’s act of faithfulness was, first, simply to trust in the promise and then to have sexual relations with Sarah,’ p. 230) and misconstrues 4:4–8 and 4:17–22, which emphasize not the congruity but the incongruity between the action of God and human capacity.”475 It is true that the argument in 4:17–22 stresses the difference between divine and human capacity and hence that “Romans 4:19–22 expounds the character of Abraham’s faith in ‘the God who gives life to the

474 Stowers, A Rereading of Romans, 228.
475 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 489 note 108.
dead’: since Abraham’s age and Sarah’s barrenness approximate to ‘death’ (4:19), faith amounts to the declaration of incompetence, or total dependence on the competence of God (4:20–22).”

But what are we to do with the fact that Abraham is also described not only as a person who did not waver in his trust in the promises of God but also as a person who held on to God’s promises for many years, and the fact that Paul stresses that this is the kind of faith that is credited as righteousness (4:22)?

Francis Watson has thematised the difference between Paul’s argument in 4:1–12 and 4:13–22, pointing out that in 4:1–12, Gen 15:6 is “discussed with relatively little attention to its immediate context,” whereas in 4:13–22 “the text is reconnected to the divine promise that precedes and occasions it in Genesis 15:5.” Most importantly, Watson observes “Abraham and God are characterized differently in the two parts of the chapter,” for while “in vv. 13–25 the object of Abraham’s belief is the God of the promise,” in vv. 1–12 “Abraham believes in the one who justifies the ungodly.” Watson describes this as a “two-sided characterization of the divine being and action, and of the human being (anthropos, v. 6) in the light of it.” He therefore points out that in 4:13–25, “Abraham’s belief was reckoned as righteousness not because of an arbitrary divine decision but because belief is the response intended in the divine promise itself.”

This seems to me to be a helpful observation, as the divine justification attested in 4:22 does not appear as arbitrary as that attested in 4:3–8. Barclay’s description of Abraham’s faith as something that amounts to the declaration of incompetence, or to a total dependence on the competence of God, may prove itself important in such a scenario, as Philo’s reading of the Abraham story has taught us that such a declaration of total dependence on the competence of God may be a

---

476 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 489. Moreover, it is worth noting that Philo refers to Abraham’s acknowledgment of his own dependency on God’s grace as the defining mark of his attainment of virtue.

477 Francis Watson argues in his reading of Paul’s argument in Rom 4 that “Genesis 15.6 is the fundamental and unsurpassable soteriological statement that Paul finds in the Abraham narrative . . . Those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham believe as he did, in the sense that they believe in the same God: the God of the promise who is also the God of the life-giving action that fulfils the promise” (Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 217). But believing like Abraham does not only amount to believing in the same God. Believing like Abraham also involves abiding faithfully in the relationship of trust with God that has been initiated by the promise of God.

478 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 170.


480 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 172.

481 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 217.
characteristic of a proper relationship to God and hence as something that qualifies as righteousness. Paul’s description of Abraham as someone who believed in the God who gives life to the dead and who calls upon the things that do not exist as if they did (θεοὶ τούτων ζωοποιοῦντος τούς νεκρούς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα) (4:17) does not appear as essentially different from Philo’s description of Abraham as someone who thought (νομίσασα) that the things that are not present should be regarded as already present (ἤδη παρεῖναι τὰ μὴ παρόντα) because of the steadfastness of the one who gave the promise (διὰ τὴν τοῦ ὑποσχομένου βεβαιότητα πίστιν) (Migr. 43).

Moreover, Philo stresses in De Migracione Abrahami the significance of self-knowledge for Abraham’s success in his pursuit of virtue. He stresses not only that pursuit of self-knowledge is the starting point for Abraham’s path to virtue (Migr. 8), but also that the one who has attained virtue in a consummated form embodies a Socratic kind of self-knowledge. Hence, the one who realizes that only God is wise has reached the goal of the pursuit of knowledge (τὸ γὰρ μηδὲν οἴσθαι εἰδέναι πέρας ἐπιστήμης ἐνός ὄντος μόνον σοφοῦ του καὶ μόνον θεοῦ) (Migr. 134). At first glance, perhaps, this appears to have only little in common with the reading Paul performs in Rom 4. However, the fact that Philo describes faith as something that involves not only a negative recognition of one’s own lack of competence, but also a positive recognition of the competence of God may suggest that Abraham is depicted as a righteous person in Rom 4:13−22, as a declaration of total dependence on the competence of God may be a hallmark of righteousness.

It follows from this account of Paul’s argument in Rom 4 that in Paul’s reading of the Abraham story, faith appears as a kind of Janus head. From one perspective, it reflects the fact that God is a God who extends his gifts to the unworthy. From another perspective, it reflects a proper relationship to God. Hence, Paul’s understanding of Abraham’s faith appears to have something in common with Philo’s understanding of Abraham’s faith even if Paul’s reading is rooted in a

482 See also Philo’s description of the peculiar greatness of the Sage in Mut. 130–155 according to which Abraham’s greatness consists in his belief that God is the sole source of virtue.

483 Craig Keener has recently described Abraham’s faith as attested in Rom 4 as “a sense that recognizes the accurate, divine perspective on reality and acts accordingly” (Craig Keener, The Mind of the Spirit, 44). Keener’s reading gains strength from the fact that he allows Paul’s description of reckoning in Rom 4 to be illuminated from Paul’s description of reckoning in Rom 6:11. Faith seems, then, to reflect the fact that humans have had their perspective on life aligned with the perspective of God.
different understanding of the nature of God grace. In the following paragraphs we will discuss to which extent the same is true for Paul’s description of the role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who follow in footsteps of Abraham’s faith.

Paul concludes his argument in Rom 4 by drawing a parallel between Abraham’s faith in God and contemporary faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4:23–25). He claims that the story of the justification of Abraham was written also for “our sake us to whom it [righteousness] is about to be credited, us who believe in the one who raised Jesus from the dead, who was handed over because of our transgression and who was raised for our justification” (Rom 4:24–25). In this way, Paul makes it clear that there is an analogy between the faith and justification of Abraham and the faith and justification of contemporary believers. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that there is an amount of overlap between Paul’s description of the life and faith of Abraham and his description of the life and faith of those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith. This thesis is concerned not only with clarifying how Philo and Paul draw a connection between the Abraham story and God’s gift of the Spirit, but also with clarifying the role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe. This is the question I will focus on addressing in my reading of Rom 5–8, even though the section that deals with Rom 8 also will draw attention to some points of similarity between Abraham’s faith as recounted in Rom 4 and the life of the children of God as this is described in Rom 8. The rest of this chapter will predominantly focus on Paul’s argument in Rom 6 and 8, as this is where Paul is engaged in describing life in Christ and life in the Spirit.

---

484 See Westerholm, “Righteousness, Cosmic and Microcosmic,” in Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthrpos in Romans 5–8 (ed. B. Gaventa; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2013), 21–38, 23. See also Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, 217: “The dead to whom God gives life are in the first instance Abraham and Sarah themselves (cf. v.19), and this establishes a crucial analogy between Abraham’s faith and Christian faith in the God “who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (v.24).” Pace Campbell, The Deliverance of God, 754: “Abraham’s πίστις is impossibly strong and enduring – unwavering in the face of unbelievable promises over many years – because Paul’s portrayal is affected by an underlying narrative of Christ. It is not something to be emulated – a hopeless project! – but rather to be participated in.”
8.4 Life in the Spirit according to Rom 6 and 8

8.4.1 Preliminary Issues

Before we engage Paul’s argument in Rom 6 and 8, we need to say a few things about the passages that precede the argument that takes form in Rom 6. Firstly, it should be noted that the structure of the argument in Rom 5:1–5 reveals that there is an organic relationship between justification and the gift of the Spirit. The clauses in 5:3–4 have a kind of parenthetical character. For some reason or another Paul includes in Rom 5:3–4 a reference to suffering in his description of life in the state of grace (5:1). Nevertheless, the argument in 5:4–5 resumes the theme of hope that was introduced in 5:2. Hence, 5:1–5 refers to justification as something that means that believers stand in a relationship with God that is characterized by peace and hope, but Paul also refers to the life of the justified as a life that is associated with an experience of the Spirit, insofar as the hope that springs from justification (δικαστηθέντες) (Rom 5:1–2) is confirmed by the gift of the Spirit that is associated with this justifying act of God (5:5). Paul describes this state as a state that is characterized by a boasting in the hope of the glory of God (καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ). This hope of the glory of God is best interpreted as the hope of redemption of the body from perishability (8:23), as also seen in Rom 8:21 in which he refers to redemption from the bondage to decay (ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς) as a hope of reaching “to the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ) for which creation as well as the children of God both wait and hope (8:23–24). Abraham may be described as sharing this hope of the glory of God, insofar as the promise of the inheritance of the cosmos is interpreted as a promise of eschatological life and Paul points out that this hope will not put contemporary believers to shame, because the love of God has been poured into “our” hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to “us” (5:5). It is worth noting that the genitive in the phrase ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ can be interpreted both as a subjective and an objective genitive. The immediate context (Rom 5:6–9) suggests perhaps that the phrase should be read as a subjective genitive, even if Paul also speaks of human love of God (8:28).\(^{485}\) However, the phrase may also be

\(^{485}\) See Engberg-Pedersen, “Gift-giving and Friendship,” 32–33. This reference to the spirit that has been given to “us” is an example of language “drawn from the colourful draught of Ezekiel 36–37.” Levison, Filled with the Spirit, 254. Furthermore, Levison draws attention to 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5 and sees it as the early church’s way of “transforming the vision of corporate re-creation into an expression of individual re-creation” (ibid.).

\(^{485}\) The ὅτι clause in Rom 5:5b is causal and states the reason for the main clause (5:5a) in which Paul asserts that hope will not put believers to shame.
accounted for as a deliberatively ambiguous phrase in which case Paul may be referring to the gift of the Spirit as God’s extension of his love to the human heart that causes the human heart to love God in return.\footnote{See Wallace, \textit{Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament} (Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 121: “Thus, contextual considerations seem to indicate that the gen. is subjective: ‘the love which comes from God has been poured out within our hearts.’ However, the fact that this love has been poured out \textit{within} us (as opposed to simply upon us or toward us) suggests that such love is the source for a reciprocated love. Thus, the gen. may also be objective. The idea would then be: ‘The love that comes \textit{from} God and that produces our love \textit{for} God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”}

Paul’s references to “the grace of God” (ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ) and “the gift in the grace of the one man Jesus Christ” (ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῆς τοῦ ἕνος ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (5:15) is best accounted for as his way of describing the Christ event as an event that not only breaks the hegemony of sin and death but also inaugurates the reign of grace and Christ (Rom 5:17, 21).\footnote{This description of the Christ event is in line with ancient notions of the gift, see Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 497: “The language of ‘reigning’ (βασιλεύω) figures grace as a counteracting power whose authority replaces that of sin; far from offering a license for sin, the Christ-gift establishes an alternative regime of power. . . . Paul locates the content of that power in the resurrection life of Christ (6:1–14), but he also draws on the ancient assumption that gifts are vehicles of power, creating obligations and allegiances through their very character as gift.”}

Hence, when Paul refers to the Christ event as an event that breaks the hegemony of sin, he refers to the Christ event as something that inaugurates the reign of grace that enables humans to accommodate their lives to the will of God. Barclay has described the difference between the reign of death and the reign of grace as something that cannot be fully accounted for as a difference between something lesser and something greater, as “the difference is not just that between the lesser and the greater; it is also, and more strikingly, a matter of \textit{reversal},” meaning that the “recreative dynamic is again the hallmark of χάρις (cf. 4:17), creating life out of its opposite, death (5:21).”\footnote{Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 496.} It follows from this description that life is not given as a reward and that the recreative dynamic of grace inaugurates a new kind of life. The question that must be pursued in the following sections is how this recreative dynamic of grace manifests itself in the lives of those who believe, or more specifically how this dynamic of grace is described as something that manifests itself in a life lived in the power of the Spirit of God.
8.4.2 Rom 6:1–11: The Actualization of the Christ Event through Baptism

In Rom 5:12–21 Paul has clarified that the Christ-event is as an event that breaks the hegemony of sin and death and inaugurates the reign of grace and Christ (Rom 5:17, 21). The question that has not been answered in Paul’s argument is how people get access to the place where grace and life reigns.\(^{489}\) Life and death features as key themes in Rom 5:12–6:11, but these thematics are never dissociated from the thematic of a righteous life, as the inferential particle οὖν in 6:12 makes unmistakably clear (cf. also 5:17, 19–21).\(^{490}\) Thus, the argument in 6:1–11 explains how the outcome of the event of the cross is mediated to and actualized in the life of contemporary believers. Consequently, as in Galatians, Paul’s argument in Romans suggests that the outcome of the Christ event is ultimately actualized in the lives of those who believe through the rite of baptism.

In Rom 6:1–11, it becomes clear that Christ died and was raised in order that believers may participate in his resurrection life and Paul describes this as a matter of being justified from sin (6:7).\(^{491}\) It is thus through baptism that humans move from the realm of death to the realm of righteousness, grace and life. The rhetorical question posed in Rom 6:1 indicates that the argument is heading towards ethical instruction. The real transition to ethical instruction begins in 6:11 in which the letter’s first imperative appears.\(^{492}\) Paul’s rhetorical question in Rom 6:1 is probably triggered by his description of the interrelationship between the increase of sin and the abundance of grace (Rom 5:20).\(^{493}\) Not surprisingly, Paul does not endorse the logic of the question. It is more surprising (perhaps) how he responds to it. Udo Schnelle has helpfully pointed


\(^{490}\) Not fully articulated by Søren Agersnap, *Baptism and the new Life: A Study of Romans 6:1–14* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1999), 237: “Whereas in the Letter to the Romans the key-concept so far has been ‘righteousness’, it now becomes ‘life’ confronted with ‘death’. There is a connection between the two benefits of redemption, and there is a gradual transition. . . . But from now on life and death become the crucial opponents.”

\(^{491}\) Moo’s commentary to Rom 6:7 is helpful, concluding that “it is likely that ‘justified from sin’ means ‘set free from [the power of] sin’” (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 377). The bracketed parentheses are original.


out that “Kreuz, Auferstehung, und Taufe verhalten sich nicht nur wie Ursache und Folge, sondern in den Wirkungen ist das Ursprungsschehen ständig präsent.” Hence, Paul describes the cross and the resurrection of Christ as present realities in the lives of those who undergo the rite of baptism. He stresses that baptism to Christ (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστόν) is baptism to the death of Christ (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν) (6:3) and that this involves a participation in the death of Christ is clear, as the baptized are described as having been buried with Christ through baptism (συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτισμῶς) (Rom 6:4), as having become fused with Christ in a death like his (σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοίωματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ) (6:5) and as having been crucified with Christ (συνεσταυρώθη (Rom 6:6). At any rate, the reason that believers are fused with Christ in a death like his is unambiguously articulated, insofar as Paul makes it clear that the old man has been crucified in order that the body of sin may be brought to an end or be made ineffective (ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) “so that you no longer slave for sin” (τοῦ μηκετί δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) (6:6). It is commonplace to interpret the phrase τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας as a reference to “man as belonging to the age ruled by sin.” However, the genitive is best interpreted as an attributive genitive, prompting a translation like “sinful body.” Moreover, “the subjunctive is used to grammaticalize potentiality,” suggesting that Paul raises a concern for something that is not necessarily fully actualized. However, it seems unlikely that Paul would suggest that the body is inherently sinful, for which reason it seems best to interpret the phrase as a reference to the body that is tending towards sin. In Rom 14:23, Paul points out that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin, indicating that sin is something that should not be dissociated from human action. Being under sin (3:9; 7:14) appears therefore as equivalent to being in your

494 Schnelle, Paulus: Leben und Denken, 346.
495 Macaskill points out that Paul speaks of “the sacrament as functioning within the Spirit’s operation as a real event of union, but also maintains that baptism is “a ceremony of formalization, truly meaningful as an event within the context of the individual’s relationship of faith to Jesus” and a “ceremonial or formal identification of the believer with Jesus as the covenant representative who has died under the curse of the law and risen to new life” (Union with Christ, 196). See also Hartman, ‘Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,’ 69: “Romans 6:1–14 is obviously based on the belief that baptism makes the saving act of the past topical and effective in the present.”
496 Dunn, Romans 1–8, 320. See also Jewett, Romans, 402–404.
497 Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 87.
498 Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 463.
499 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 121 is helpful, claiming that “in order to avoid the reading that Paul has condemning everything that the body does (i.e., all its acts – which would be to commend suicide), the grammar of the ‘body’ to which the practicers belong must be at least that it tends towards sin, or at most that it is inherently sinful. The latter is ruled out since we have seen plenty of evidence that shows that in the Spirit holy bodily acts body are not only possible but normative.” I assume that there is one “body” too many in this phrase. Miller refers to Chrysostom as an ancient precursor of this reading.
sins (plural) (1 Cor 15:17) or to a life in accordance with the sinful passions (τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) (Rom 7:5). It follows from this description that union with Christ is something that effects the creation of a new reality in which sin is no longer the defining constituent of the lives of these new-created individuals. Being liberated from sin (6:18) would then be equivalent to being liberated from the kind of existence in which sinful actions are the inevitable consequence of what it means to be a human being.

In 5:12–21, Paul had argued that via Christ, righteousness and life have broken through into cosmos in order that grace may reign through righteousness to eternal life (5:21). This is a hegemony that stands in absolute opposition to the hegemony of sin and death. In Rom 6:10 Paul points out that Christ died to sin once and for all (ἐφάπαξ) so that he now lives exclusively for God (ὅ δὲ ζῇ, ζῇ τῷ θεῷ). Baptized believers should by virtue of their union with Christ reckon themselves as dead with respect to sin and as alive with respect to God (6:11). In other words, Paul describes baptism as the event through which the reign of grace (the outcome of the Christ event) (5:21) is actualized in the lives of those who believe. But there is more to say about the way the reign of grace is actualized in those who believe, as Paul’s description seems to indicate that this is something that is experienced in the Spirit.


In Rom 7:15–17 Paul makes a distinction between the action of the I and the action of sin, stressing that outside Christ sin determines human lives to such an extent that they are not even able to understand their own actions. For a brief but helpful introduction to how the concept of sin has been understood in Pauline scholarship, see Joseph R. Dodson, The ‘Powers’ of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans (BZNW 161; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 20–23. Dodson shows how Pauline scholars tend to follow either Rudolf Bultmann – who defines sin in an anthropological sense as that which people do, or Ernst Käsemann, for which reason these scholars define sin as as a cosmic, spiritual or demonic power. Dodson argues that scholars have reached a stalemate, drawing attention to the problem that “when deciding whether a certain term is used as a rhetorical device or as a power, it is difficult to make this distinction, which presumes such a distinction existed in the mind of the original author. Can scholars say with confidence that an author thought far enough through an expression to understand it either as a rhetorical device, a power, or a rhetorical device representing a power?” (ibid., 23 note 136). Therefore, Dodson decided to evaluate “the evidence in a different light – that of its purpose within the overall use of personification in the work to which it belongs” (ibid., 24). His conclusion is helpful and in line with the reading proposed above, suggesting that “it is possible, however, that Paul also feels the need to use personification to explain sin and righteousness in terms his readers understand because some of them continue to abide in sin. He may therefore be implying that ‘they were constantly prone to live as though still slaves of sin, still ruled by the desires of this mortal body.’ [here quoting Dunn, Romans 1–8, 355] . . . Therefore, the personifications of Sin and Death are used for explanatory purposes so that this picture of them as enemy tyrants makes them seem more real, concrete and personal in order to help the church fight these immoral passions which are fought down now that the people have been redeemed” (ibid., 138). Moreover, Dodson draws attention to Leg. All. 3. 193–194 “where Philo speaks of Folly who guides the chariot of passions” (ibid., 138).
8.4.3 The Actualization of the Christ Event through the Spirit

In his recent study, Colin D. Miller argues that Paul develops the nature of the righteous life “in a manner consonant with a classical account of human action.”\(^{502}\) He claims that it “is difficult to find a study that does not see in Rom 6–8 human bodies overtaken by some sort of quasi-demonic or spiritual force that heavily determines them in a way that makes them less than genuine actors.”\(^{503}\) From there he proceeds by affirming that coupled with such a view . . . is a particular view of the nature of participation with Christ that is supposed to be Paul’s solution to the problem of sin and the mechanism of ‘righteousness’ (however configured exactly). Here the interpretive options range from the notion of a realistic/mystical participation with Christ to a simple imitation of Christ’s behavior. The former is a normal part of the ‘cosmic powers’ reading sketched above, since only by being united with Christ himself in some realistic way could one ever hope to defeat such formidable adversaries.\(^{504}\)

As an alternative to this reading of Paul’s argument, Miller prefers to refer to participation in Christ as “participation by practice” which manifests itself in “(1) participation in Christ’s death by killing the body’s passions, (2) participation in Christ’s resurrection by subsequently living in the newness of life, and (3) participation in Christ’s resurrection by receiving new bodies at the eschaton” and this means that “we participate in Christ by what we do.”\(^{505}\) No matter what Paul may have thought about the role of demonic forces in the lives of those outside of Christ, one may still wonder what kind of person would be engaged in participating in Christ by what he or she does,\(^{506}\) not to mention what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who participate in

\(^{502}\) Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 99.

\(^{503}\) Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 99. Cf. also Emma Wasserman, “Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Rom 6–8,” JSNT 30.4 (2008), 387–415, 402: “Most scholars have understood sin in Rom. 6–8 as a kind of quasi-demonic or apocalyptic body that has invaded the person from outside its body.”

\(^{504}\) Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 100.

\(^{505}\) Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 112.

\(^{506}\) As seen above, in Gal 4:10 Paul describes the alternative to life in Christ as a life in slavery to the elemental spirits. In 2 Cor 4 Paul is engaged in describing the transition from darkness to light and it is clear from the context that he is referring to a transition to life in the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17–18; 4.13). Here he claims that the thoughts of those who do not believe (τὰ νοηματα τῶν ἀνίστων) have been blinded by the God of this age (ὁ θεὸς τοίνυν αἰώνος τούτου), just as he claims that the God who originally commanded light to shine out from darkness has shone in the hearts of those who believe to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ). In Romans Paul refers to God as the one who hands humans over to a depraved mind so that they do improper things (εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα – 1:28). In 2 Cor 4:4 it is the thoughts (τὰ νοηματα) (NRSV: “minds”) that are blinded by the god of this age, just as the light commanded forth by God is said to be shining in the hearts to give knowledge of the glory of God. It is clear from the literary
Christ by what they do. In 6:4 Paul asserts that “we” were buried with Christ through baptism “in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father so we, too, may walk in the newness of life” (6:4). The phrase in the newness of life (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς) is best taken as a reference to life in the Spirit, as it is comparable to the phrase in Rom 7:6 in which Paul refers to the newness of the Spirit (ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος). It is thus through being united with Christ through baptism that one is led to life in the Spirit.

In Rom 6, Paul stresses that life in Christ manifests itself in a new way of walking (περιπατέω – 6:4; 8:4). In this new way of walking, believers identify themselves with the Christ event, for just as Christ died to sin to live exclusively to God (6:10) so believers are supposed to regard (λογίζομαι) themselves as dead with respect to sin and as alive to God (6:11). It follows from this description that baptism is configured as an event that prompts humans to think (and, by implication, live) in a new way. Paul describes this new life for God as a life that leads to sanctification and ultimately to eternal life (6:19, 22). The question that must be pursued below is what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the new life believers are expected to live.

8.4.4. The Actualization of the Christ Event – So That You May No Longer Slave for Sin

Paul claims that “our old man” has been crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin may be destroyed or may be made ineffective (καταργέω) “so that we no longer slave for sin” (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) (6:6), just as Paul expects that baptized believers will begin living with Christ (6:8).507 The fact that believers have received the Spirit does not mean that there is nothing left for them to do. Believers need to align their minds and bodies with the values of the Spirit so that they do not use their bodies as weapons of unrighteousness (6:13). Therefore, Paul reminds

context of 2 Cor 4 (2 Cor 3:17−18) that the knowledge of the glory of God is not only something that is mediated by the Spirit (ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος) but also something that effects a gradual transformation of believers that Paul also hints at in Rom 8. See Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians (WBC 40; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2014), 215: “This process of ‘transformation’ (μεταμορφόμασι; cf. Rom 12:2) is gradual and progressive, from one stage of glory to yet a higher stage, climaxing in the goal reached in Rom 8:17, 29, 30.” However, all these references to demonic forces do not prove that sin should be defined as a demonic force. See also the discussion in Stephen Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and his Critics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 393–397.

507 It is worth noting that “rather than temporal values, the future form grammaticalizes the semantic (meaning) feature of expectation” (Stanley E. Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament, 44).
his readers that they must regard themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11). There remains a question as to the extent to which the argument assumes that the body of sin has been entirely eradicated.\footnote{I consider the discussions in Engberg-Pedersen, \textit{Paul and the Stoics}, 231–239 to be genuinely helpful. My view may best be elucidated through a few comments on a quote from this book: “(a) In baptism the ‘old man’ \textit{has been} crucified with Christ in order to make the body of sin inoperative so that the baptized person will no longer slave to sin (6:6); and (b) there still is a need to make this \textit{come about completely and finally}. For it makes excellent sense to say that (a) in baptism a person has come to identify himself as one who lives for God through Christ Jesus, one who no longer sees his individual, bodily being as the locus of normativity, but (b) there is also a need to make this identification absolutely complete so that the body of sin will eventually be made entirely inoperative as such a locus. This reading takes something away from the finality of saying that in baptism the ‘old man’ \textit{has been} crucified – but not much” (ibid., 231). This description corresponds well with the fact that Philo, who describes Abraham as an essentially Stoic Sage, feels the need to clarify the difference between Abraham’s and God’s faith. However, Philo also points out that most humans should be satisfied with less than perfection. Paul clearly presses towards perfection (Phil 3:12), urging his readers to follow this example (3:17). It does not necessarily follow that Paul pursued to become like Philo’s Abraham; it may be argued that love could never settle for less than perfection, as love does no wrong to a neighbor and as love fulfils the Law (Rom 13:10). See also the discussion in Craig S. Keener, \textit{The Mind of the Spirit}, 42: “For Paul the Messianic time had come, and sin and the evil impulse had already been proleptically defeated. The matter was not yet complete, but believers already had more than their own efforts to depend on.” The discussion in Miller, \textit{The Practice of the Body of Christ}, 121–122 is similarly helpful in my opinion, not least when he points out that “the apparent tension here between the habit of the good and still needing to strive against the bad is a common one in ancient virtue ethics. How can it be that we still have to strive for the good if our bodies are habituated for it? The answer has to be that the sinful tendency of the body, though able to be severely contained, is never quite done away with. And Paul knows this and has a solution for it: the gift of an entirely new body, made of different, pneumatic material (1 Cor 15)” (Miller, \textit{The Practice of the Body of Christ}, 122 note 57).} Paul is not engaged in a philosophical discussion about the eradication or moderation of passions, which seems to correspond to the fact that he elsewhere seems able to allow room for some more or less pleasant feelings.\footnote{See Craig S. Keener, \textit{The Mind of the Spirit}, 39: “Paul is plainly not a Stoic who wants to eradicate passion, even by virtue of the new creation. Paul’s surviving letters reveal that he does not oppose all desire, or unpleasant emotion (1 Cor. 7:5, 7; 2 Cor. 7:5; 11:28; 1 Thess 3:1, 5).” Cf. Engberg–Pedersen, \textit{Cosmology and Self}, 176: “Paul had used a number of basic ideas in Stoic ethics (together with a large number of other, non-Stoic ideas derived from other corners of Paul’s context) to articulate his own message, which was, of course, not just a Stoic one.”} However, what must be stressed here is that whatever happens in baptism, it is something that has consequences for the way one considers oneself. Stowers has captured this logic in a helpful way:

In baptism, Paul is asking his gentiles to imagine themselves making that break from the fleshly level to the life of the world to come. Even if Christ alone has arisen from the dead, the Spirit of God and of Christ will allow a foretaste of the life to come. Since sin and slavery to passion characterized the old, in identification with Christ’s breakthrough these gentiles are to imagine themselves living lives free from sin’s dominion, obedient to God.\footnote{Stowers, \textit{A Rereading of Romans}, 257–258. See also Engberg-Pedersen, \textit{Paul and the Stoics}, 229: “in Paul’s view it [baptism] was indeed also a matter of the understanding, in fact a piece of self-identification, on the part of the baptized person: coming to think of oneself as one who is dead to (the body of) sin and living for God in and through Christ Jesus (6:11).”}
The language of reckoning (6:11) was also applied in Rom 4 and it has recently been suggested that 6:11 should be interpreted as Paul’s way of encouraging his readers to align their views of themselves with God’s view.\textsuperscript{511} Paul’s argument could, then, reflect a tradition where self-knowledge is regarded as an important vehicle for change.\textsuperscript{512}

Miller insists that Paul does not say “that there is some sort of evil cosmic force that no longer controls the church but rather that . . . the passions of the body no longer holds sway over it”\textsuperscript{513} and Emma Wasserman has suggested that Paul’s argument was influenced by a Platonic discourse that stressed the rational part of the soul’s ability to master the passions. She argues that “Paul uses certain Platonic traditions in Rom. 6–8 and that these are at the heart of his thought of sin.”\textsuperscript{514} This implies that “like these writers [Plutarch, Galen and Philo] Paul uses sin to stand for the irrational passions and appetites that operate as an evil counter-ruler within the soul. Platonic discourse explains sin’s attributes and functions throughout Rom. 6–8 where it similarly rules (6:12), enslaves (6:13, 18, 20; 7:14), makes war (7:23), imprisons (7.23) and kills (7.10, 11, 13).”\textsuperscript{515} According to Wasserman this means that

Paul works with a concept of mind or reason that in principle is capable of opposing the passions and appetites. Romans 6.12–14 assumes a conception of a mind formerly enslaved to sin (cf. Rom. 1.18–32) that has recently been liberated from its servitude by God’s intervention. This history is also in view throughout 6.15–23, where the rule of sin and the rule of God are developed as antithetical forms of enslavement. Romans 7–8 elaborates further on this former enslavement to sin (7.7–25) and the new option God has made available through Christ

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{511} See Keener, \textit{The Mind of the Spirit}, 45: “In Romans 4 God has reckoned righteousness to Abraham’s account, and thus to the account of those, who like their spiritual father, believe. Now in his next use of the term, climaxing a discussion of new life in Christ accomplished by God (Rom 6:1–10), Paul urges believers to ‘reckon’ themselves the way God has reckoned them (6:11).”}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{512} Insofar as the Spirit assumes a role in this act of self-examination or self-identification, one may assume that those who engage themselves in such an act focus on the things God has given them in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 2:12). See again Keener, \textit{The Mind of the Spirit}, 52: “The mind of faith, the mind that trusts in Christ, recognizes a new identity, in which the past is forgiven and one’s bodily impulses do not set one’s own agenda. In today’s language, Paul would presumably allow that the old triggers may remain, yet he would insist that those who count themselves dead with Christ (Rom 6:11) can choose not to react to these triggers, which do not belong to their fundamental identity. In the sight of the true judge, one is justified by Christ and therefore may live from one’s new identity defined in him.” Keener’s way of phrasing is helpful insofar as it recognizes a forensic dimension in Paul’s argument in Rom 5–8.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{513} Miller, \textit{The Practice of the Body of Christ}, 106.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{514} Emma Wasserman, “Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Rom 6–8,” \textit{JSNT} 30 (2008), 387–415, 388.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{515} Wasserman, “Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Rom 6–8,” 388.}
Wasserman’s suggestions are interesting, not only because they indicate that Philo and Paul held comparable views of sin, but also because they trigger the question of what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the life in which the passions no longer hold sway over the body. On the basis of the account given in the previous chapters of Philo’s portrait of Abraham’s path to virtue, it must be stressed that if Paul’s description of God’s gift of the Spirit is comparable to that which we have encountered in Philo’s writings, then Paul would not only be referring to God’s gift of the Spirit as something that provides a new option, he would also be referring to the gift of the Spirit as something that takes hold of the human heart or spirit, causing a new desire and a new yearning to sprout in the human soul, manifesting itself in a new way of life. Moreover, the victory in the fight against the deeds of the body would then be described not only as something that involves genuine human actions and yearnings but also as something that is given and caused by God.

8.4.5. Sanctification that Leads to Eternal Life – Thanks be to God

Paul clearly expects that those who have died with Christ will also live with Christ (6:8). He describes this as a matter of presenting oneself and one’s limbs to God as instruments for righteousness. This is soteriologically significant, not only insofar as he describes the presenting of one’s limbs to righteousness as something that leads to sanctification (ἁγιασμός) (6:19) but also insofar as he claims that as believers have been freed from sin and become slaves to God, they have the fruit that leads to sanctification (τὸν καρπὸν εἰς ἁγιασμόν) that eventuates in eternal life.

516 Wasserman, “Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Rom 6–8,” 404
517 A comparable view of sin is not the same as an identical view of sin. Paul may have had his own views of what sinful passions (Rom 7:5) imply. Moreover, it is not necessary to assume, in order to draw a parallel between Philo’s and Paul’s descriptions of the role the Spirit assumes in the lives of those who believe, that Paul’s argument in Rom 6–8 presupposes that the human soul is configured in accordance with the pattern of a tripartite platonic soul. In my view Paul’s argument simply assumes that the human spirit that has been endowed with the divine Spirit is able to address the deeds of the body in a new and more powerful way than the human who is subject to the hegemony of sin. Philo was very flexible with respect to his views of the nature of the human soul (see note 321 above), but he never fails to identify virtue with a life in accordance with reason or a life in accordance with hegemony of the inspired mind. In addition, as shown by Buch-Hansen (Buch-Hansen, It Is the Spirit That Gives Life, 105–108), Philo’s work should not be situated in an unmediated dialogue with Plato as “the Plato with whom Philo is in dialogue is mediated through the Stoic doctrines of physics, emotions and epistemology. During this span of time, Plato’s myth became the battleground for the philosophical discussions of the best way to truth” (ibid., 106–107).
518 As suggested by Wasserman, cf. note 13 above.
(τὸ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον) (5:22). Paul’s argument clearly presumes that a drastic change has occurred. This is clearly articulated by the two aorist passives participial phrases in 6:22 (ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας . . . δουλωθέντες τῷ θεῷ), revealing that Paul presumes some kind of relationship between the indicative and the imperative tied to one another by means of the proper judgment of the mind (6:11). Engberg-Pedersen has described this as something that reflects “a state in human beings which is an inner one that makes them participate actively and willingly in these events as a result of an understanding on their part which they have made their own, namely, by coming to identify themselves . . . with God (through Christ).” I agree with this description. But I also want to ask: what kind of person would actually do that, or perhaps more specifically, what kind of role would the Spirit assume in this process? It must be granted, of course, that Rom 6 does not contain any explicit references to the Spirit. However, it must also be stressed that there are several passages in Rom 6 that suggest that these things happen as an outcome of divine agency; moreover, these passages may provide clues to the question of what kind of role the Spirit assumes in the life of those who believe.

[519] Miller acknowledges that a drastic change has occurred, but his description gives the impression that this change is simply synonymous with resisting the impulses of the passions. See Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 110–111: “He [Paul] goes on and establishes that this ‘death’ is part and parcel of baptism: ‘those of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, into his death we were baptized. Through baptism, therefore, we have been buried with him into death’ (6.3). Importantly, no longer obeying the passions is being aligned with the act of baptism into Christ. Of course . . . many theories about the nature of this ‘participation with Christ’ have been advanced. But our previous exegetical work allows us to see that an obvious way that the baptizands participates with Christ’s death is through her practices. Since the Christians in Rome no longer obey their passions they are said to have ‘died to sin’ and it is this dying that Paul takes up and unifies with Christ’s death.” Later in his book (in his reading of Romans 8) he confirms that he thinks that the Spirit is given in baptism (ibid., 119–120), but he does not draw significant conclusions from that in his reading of Paul’s argument in Rom 6. In the reading of Rom 8 proposed below, I will discuss Miller’s description of significance of God’s gift of the Spirit.

[520] See Engberg-Pedersen, Paul and the Stoics, 233: “Paul may speak in both the indicative and the imperative moods and there is no intrinsic problem in this. On the contrary, just because everything takes place within the logical category of the understanding, the use of the imperative, construed as stating a reminder, even presupposes the indicative.” Wasserman, “Paul and the Philosophers,” 410 claims: “On my reading, the ‘already’ statements refer to the renewed capacities of reason and the ‘not yet’ warn that the passions and appetites continue to threaten. A Platonic model of the soul obviates the already—not yet tension because all of the embodied soul’s faculties are still operative even if reason manages to subdue the passions and appetites.” Even so, Paul’s grammar of the Spirit may involve an eschatological distinction between the “already” and the “not yet,” as Paul also refers to the gift of the Spirit as a down payment of the world to come (2 Cor 1:22). However, that does not mean that Paul cannot describe the Spirit as assuming a role in the lives of those who believe, which is comparable to the one Philo ascribes to the Spirit.

[521] Engberg-Pedersen, Paul and the Stoics, 236.
For example, having stressed the importance both of aligning one’s view of oneself with God’s view (6:11) and of presenting one’s limbs to God as weapons of righteousness (6:12–13), Paul assures his readers (γάρ) that sin will not reign over them for they are under grace (6:14).522 Apparently, Paul was convinced that grace would ensure that his readers would in fact present their limbs to God as weapons of righteousness. It is hard not to read Paul’s words in 6:14 as an echo of his reference to the grace that will reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ (5:21).

There is a similar pattern in 6:15–18 in which Paul addresses the same question originally mentioned in 6:1. The Roman believers cannot go on sinning as if nothing has or will happen, for they are slaves to whomever they present themselves, either to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness (6:16). In other words, obedience matters. However, Paul’s argument flows into a thanksgiving to God who has made the Romans obedient by heart to the type of teaching to which they were committed, which means that they in fact already have been freed from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (6:17–18). Again, when Paul describes the difference between his readers’ former and present lives in 6:19–21, he proceeds by asserting that they have been freed (by God) and have become slaves to God (ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ), for which reason they have the fruit that leads to eternal life, for which reason, apparently, Paul concludes the argument by affirming “for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our lord” (6:23).

The relationship between 6:22 and 6:23 has been accounted for in different ways. Chris VanLandingham suggests that in 6:23 “Paul attempts to present a succinct summary statement that is also antithetical to the first half and omit the details of the quid pro quo relationship just established between obedience and eternal life.”523 This suggestion conflicts with the pattern

522 The γάρ in 6:14 suggests that κυριεύσει should be read as a temporal futurum, indicating that the reign of sin will not come to pass in the lives of those in Christ, see Jewett, Romans, 411. See also James Dunn, Romans, 339: “the future must be a temporal future . . . a promise of what will certainly be for believers when they fully and finally share in Christ’s resurrection (cf. Knox). But it is not merely a tantalizing promise; rather it is a promise already being enacted by the grace and righteousness, that is, by enabling from God.” Pace Fitzmyer, Romans, 447 who sees it as a prohibitive futurum.

observed above, i.e. with the fact that Paul gives thanks to God for the obedience he requests. Miller claims that at first sight Rom 6:23 seems to support “the usual (ultimately incoherent) soteriological readings of Paul in which unrepentant sinners are justly condemned for what are genuinely their own misdeeds, but repentant sinners are given eternal life completely free of any responsibility.” This is problematic, he claims, insofar as the “entire imperative force of this section speaks against this.” Instead, it should be recognized that

Χάρισμα . . . simply means ‘gifted thing,’ and so we can render v. 23b ‘but what God gives is eternal life.’ There is therefore a contrast to be noted between ‘wages’ and ‘gift’: the former costs and the latter is free. But this does not name two ways to salvation, one of which involves an account of ‘works’ and one which does not. It simply names the respective ends of the sinful life and the holy life. One ends in death and one ends in eternal life.

Miller’s reference to the respective ends of the sinful and the holy life is helpful, but what does it mean for the gift to be free? Barclay has clarified that the divine gift in Christ was unconditioned insofar as it was not based on prior conditions, but that it was not unconditional in the sense that it carried no subsequent demands. Barclay also points out that eternal life may also be described as a gift, as Paul does not configure obedience as something given to God to elicit another gift, but rather as something that ought to be ascribed to the resurrection life of Christ that operates in the life of those who believe. This seems to be the reason why not only are obedience and eternal life described as being organically related to one another but also why obedience is something that Paul ascribes to the power of grace (6:14) and hence something for which he gives thanks to God (6:17). It follows from this description that eternal life is not only the τέλος of a life lived in righteousness, but also a gift, as eternal life is the outcome of a life encompassed by the presence of the resurrection of life of Christ. The question that must be considered below is not only how Paul relates the resurrection life of Christ to the gift of the Spirit, but also how this resurrection life manifests itself in the lives of those who believe.

---

524 In addition, Paul’s configuration of the gift presumes also that God gives first, i.e., God’s gifts are not given in response to anything given in advance, see Rom 11:35–36.
528 See Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 500.
8.5 Life in the Spirit according to Romans 8

8.5.1 Introductory Remarks

Miller acknowledges that his reading of Rom 6–8 has much in common with Wasserman’s reading as presented in the book The Death of the Soul in Romans 7, because she reads Rom 6–8 “as treating the topic of human action and ‘transformation’ that has or should happen in a person’s way of life as upon entering the church.” Nevertheless, he also criticizes her work by claiming that “in her critique of the usual reading of these chapters she swings entirely and unsustainably in the other direction and ends up, actually, with no notion of ‘real’ participation at all.” Wasserman on the other hand, suggests that “Philo’s discussions of God’s λόγος provide clues to understanding the role of πνεῦμα in Rom 8 where the πνεῦμα takes up residence inside Christ-believers.” It is not my intention here to mediate between Miller and Wasserman, but I do want to consider whether Wasserman’s suggestion regarding Philo’s discussions of God’s λόγος and the role of πνεῦμα in Rom 8 may in fact provide what Miller asks for, i.e. that the concept that he defines as “real participation” be allowed to play a role in our interpretation of Rom 8.

8.5.2 The Spirit of Faith in Rom 8:1–17

In Rom 6:4, Paul points out that baptism is supposed to lead the baptized to walk in the newness of life. The phrase for “newness of life” (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς) is comparable to the phrase “newness of the Spirit” (ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος) that occurs in Rom 7:6. Romans 7 lies outside the scope of this study. I agree with Miller as he points out that “Rom 5:12–7:6 depicts, that is, the church as it should be – holy and just – while in Rom 7:7–25 something is wrong.” Here it will suffice to state that Rom 7:7–25 depicts life apart from the gift of the Spirit, or the resurrection life of Christ, as we must stay focused on Paul’s description of life in the newness of the Spirit. This is the focus

---

530 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 102.
531 Wasserman, The Death of the Soul in Romans 7, 142.
532 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 114.
533 Romans 7:7–25 is one of the most disputed texts among Paul’s letters. The fact that Paul in 7:14 refers to the I as someone who is sold under sin seems to be irreconcilable with Paul’s description of the believer as someone who has been liberated from sin (6:18). Moreover, above I have argued that in Rom 6 Paul describes the life of the newly created individual as a life in which sin is no longer a defining constituent, for which reason sinful actions is no longer the inevitable consequence of what it means to be a human being. This seems to be in sharp contrast to Paul’s description of the life of the I described in Rom 7:7–25. For a different reading, see Dunn, Romans 1–8, 374–412.
point of Rom 8, and here Paul begins his argument by pointing out that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1). This is so, because the law of the spirit of life has redeemed those in Christ from the law of sin and death (8:2). I believe Ben Witherington has captured the meaning of Rom 8:2 in a useful manner when he asserts: “Here Paul does indeed speak of two laws, not one law seen from two perspectives, and it is most natural to translate *nomos* in both instances as ‘rule’ or ‘principle’. In neither case is the reference to the Torah. Having been set free from one ruling force in one’s life, which led to sin and death, one has come under the authority of another.”

The argument in Rom 8 proceeds from a passage in which *νόμος* refers to a power that is distinguished from the Mosaic law (7:23).

The references to law in Rom 8:2 is thus best taken as references to something else than the Mosaic Law. The two genitives in the phrase *νόμος* τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς can thus be accounted for as an epexegetical (τοῦ πνεύματος) and as a qualitative genitive (τῆς ζωῆς) and the entire phrase can thus be translated in the following manner: “the ruling force, which is the Spirit who is characterized by life, has redeemed us from the ruling force of sin and death.” It follows from this interpretation that the gift of the Spirit should be regarded as a gift of life, which Paul in 8:11 defines as the resurrection life of Christ. This new life is not described as something that lies in the distant future. It is a life that is lived already in the present (even if there is a future dimension as well; 8:10). The gift of the Spirit leads to a new attitude towards the deeds of the body and hence to a new kind of life that holds the promise of eternal life (8:13). Consequently, Paul draws a contrast in Rom 8:4–8 between those who walk in accordance with the Spirit and those who walk in accordance with the flesh. This walking metaphor refers in Romans to an existence in Christ (Rom 6:4), which is contrasted to an existence in the Law (7:6) as well as in the flesh (8:4).

---

534 Ben Witherington, *Paul's letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 211. Pace James Dunn who sees both references to the law in Rom 8:2, that is, the reference to the law of the Spirit of life and the reference to the law of sin and death, as references to the Mosaic Law, see Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 416–418. My reading of Paul’s argument suggests that the ruling force, which led to sin and death, should be identified as the sinful passions themselves.

535 See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 474–477 for a helpful discussion.

536 See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 475, note 28.


538 See Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 418: “The association of ‘Spirit’ and ‘life’ is, of course, deeply rooted in Jewish thought of man’s dependence for the breath/spirit of life wholly on the Creator (e.g., Gen 6:17; Ps 104:29–30; Ezek 37:5; Tob 3:6; 2 Macc 7:23). The link is equally fundamental to the earliest Christian theology, particularly of Paul and John (Rom 8:2, 6, 10, 11, 13; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 6:8; John 4:10, 14; 6:63; 7:38–39; 20:22), and brings to expression the basic Christian claim that God has now (eschatological now) begun through the Spirit to fulfil his original creative purpose in making man.”
Miller has drawn attention in a helpful way to the manner in which Paul makes use of the φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός and φρόνημα του πνεύματος antithesis in 8:4–8. Miller emphasizes that “the φρόνημα/φρονέω family of words is most often used of virtues that are directed towards certain ends” and “that the φρόνημα-family of words contains in Paul’s grammar a significant notion of the telos of human action is confirmed in [Rom 8] v. 7. He says literally that ‘the fleshly prudence is death, but the pneumatic prudence is life and peace.’ There can be little doubt that from the foregoing context that these are the ends of a particular way of life.”

If so, Paul is engaged in describing a kind of people that live with a particular kind of mindset that they have received from the Spirit.

It is clearly presumed that life in the Spirit is regarded as an outcome of the Christ-event to which Paul refers in 8:3 and which took place in order that (ἵνα) the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in “us” (8:4). Paul’s description of the flesh in 8:7 makes it understandable that the Roman believers cannot be described as being in the flesh, for which reason they ought to be described as those who are in the Spirit (8:9). Hence, Paul’s argument in Rom 8 seems to be concerned with describing the particular way of life that follows in the wake of the φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος (8:6), i.e., ultimately the kind of life that follows in the wake of the gift of the Spirit.

Interpreters of Rom 8:1–14 have struggled with determining whose S/spirit Paul refers to in this passage, particularly perhaps in 8:9–11. Indeed, this difficulty has manifested itself in the way the

540 Paul describes the Law as being fulfilled in one commandment, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Rom 13:8), but he also urges his readers to clothe themselves in Christ and make no provision for the flesh in order to satisfy its desires (cf. ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἑπιθυμίας) (Rom 13:14). In Ebr. 87 Philo describes the Sage as someone who makes much provision for the flesh and blood and of all the things that belong to the body (σαρκῶν καὶ σώματος καὶ πάντων ὀσμά δὸξει ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν). This makes good sense, insofar as he has defined these things as the things that belongs to the encyclical studies (Ebr. 33–34), which means that he is engaged in describing the Sage as some who is engaged both in Philosophy and the physical sciences, that is, both in philosophy and politics (Ebr. 91).
541 See Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 506: “At issue is what he [Paul] calls φρόνημα (the mindset) – either of the flesh or of the Spirit (8:6–8) – which governs the body while being expressed not outside or behind it, but precisely in the physical deployment of its ‘organs.’” Wasserman refers to Plato’s Republic (Rep. 9.574c–575a) according to which “the leader of the appetites is personified as a lawless ruler that commands other passions, implying that it has a mind that plots an evil appetitive coup,” suggesting that such analogies may “help to explain why Paul speaks of thinking according to the flesh in verse 5 and attributes φρόνημα to the flesh in verse 6. Read this way, ‘the intelligence of the flesh’ (τὸ γὰρ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός) means the intentions and plans of lower faculties that continue to threaten the mind” (Wasserman, The Death of the Soul in Romans 7, 139).
passage has been translated in various Bible translations.\textsuperscript{542} Jewett refers to a “bewildering variety of interpretive suggestions,” noticing that some translators take “spirit” as a reference to “the human spirit enlivened by Christ” while “others insist that both the context and the reference to ‘life’ require that only God’s Spirit be in view here.” However, Jewett also points out that this is “a false dichotomy because Paul frequently speaks of the apportioned divine Spirit given to believers as if it were now a human possession.”\textsuperscript{543} This is a helpful observation that is compatible with Wasserman’s suggestion that Philo’s discussions of the λόγος provide clues to understanding the role of the Spirit in Rom 8. Moreover, this observation may prove itself helpful with respect to the question of the identity of the S/spirit in Rom 8:9–11. It may be argued that this difficulty can be resolved if it is acknowledged that Paul in Rom 8 is engaged in describing the human spirit that is intimately linked with the divine Spirit, i.e., the human spirit in its union with the divine. If so, the argument assumes that the gift of the Spirit provides not only a certain kind of wisdom but also a certain kind of yearning or aspiration. It follows from this description that the person in Christ or in the Spirit is disposed to adjusting his or her life towards a certain end, which Paul defines as life and peace (8:6). Hence, when Paul’ refers to the φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος he is referring to the φρόνημα of both the divine and the human spirit, as these have been aligned with one another. The gift of the Spirit is then not something that overrides the human will, but something that operates within the human will, ensuring that the gifted person himself or herself approves of the wisdom that comes along with the gift of the Spirit. It follows from this description that the gift of the Spirit is something that disposes individuals to accommodate their lives to the values and aspirations of the divine Spirit and that this is something that they do themselves, even if it is the Spirit that causes them to do so.

But how, then, is one supposed to interpret 8:10–11, in which Paul seems to refer to the divine Spirit? Miller suggests that “the Spirit that comes inseparably with just practice (righteousness) progressively vivifies the body as it dies to sin, ‘replacing’ that old corrupt flesh slowly as it is transformed more and more toward the perfection it can only receive in the eschatological

\textsuperscript{542} See Moo, \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, 492. See also Dunn, \textit{Romans} 1–8, 431: “Against the older view that πνεῦμα = human spirit (SH) the strong consensus of modern commentators is that πνεῦμα = Holy Spirit; the context is dominated by πνεῦμα = Spirit of God = Spirit of Christ (vv 9–11); and the link between divine πνεῦμα and ζωή is too firmly established (not least in v 11) to permit any real doubt on the issue.”

\textsuperscript{543} Robert Jewett, \textit{Romans}, 491.
This reading seems at first glance to be challenged by the fact that Paul in 8:10 does not refer to the body as dying but as something that is dead. Miller’s suggestion seems to correspond better to the words in 8:13 in which Paul refers to the killing of the deeds of the body. Miller’s reading can stand, I suggest, if dead in 8:10 is interpreted as meaning bound to die, which makes sense, as the argument in Rom 8 does not presume that the body is actually dead. In such a case, the phrase τὸ μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν (8:10) would refer to the body of sin (6:6) that not only has been crucified — for which reason it is bound to die — but that also continuously must be put to death (8:13), for which reason the phrase διὰ ἁμαρτίαν probably should be interpreted as a reference to the body’s propensity to sin. It follows from this description that he body is bound to die (8:10; cf. also 6:12), whereas the Spirit is life. Consequently, as Paul makes the claim that the Spirit is life (8:10), he is indeed referring to the Spirit of God, as he subsequently defines the Spirit as the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (8:11). However, he is referring to the Spirit that dwells in you (8:11) or is intimately linked with the human spirit, for which reason he is referring to the Spirit that manifests itself in human agency, i.e., in lives that are engaged in killing the deeds of the body. This is the reason that Paul can say that God will give life to “your” mortal body through the Spirit that dwells in “you” (8:11). This gift of vivification is something that has already begun (cf. also Gal 3:21), even if it is not fully completed prior to the coming of the eschaton.

As noted above, Miller criticizes Wasserman for not having any notion of real participation in Christ. Miller’s own understanding of what real participation in Christ implies comes to the fore in his reading of Rom 8. Here, he claims that “the Spirit is indeed something that is given at baptism,

544 Miller, Practice of the Body of Christ, 123.
545 See Ulrich Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer 2. Teilband (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1980), 132: “Also ist in 8,10 ‘der Leib’ im Sinne von ‘Leib der Sünde’ (6.6) bzw. ‘Sündenfleisch’ (8.3) aufzufassen; und das Totsen des Leibes bedeutet: unsere Zugehörigkeit zum ‘Leib der Sünde’ ist aufgehoben; die Sünde hat ihr Kraft in unserer leibhaftigen Tatwirklichkeit zu bestimmen verloren.” Barclay points out that in 8:10 Paul does not refer to the sinfulness of believers: “That this cannot mean their sinfulness as believers is indicated by the fact that they are now ‘dead to sin’ (6:11) and ‘freed from sin’ (6:19) in being enslaved to God” (Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 502, note 15). However, this is not the only possible reading of the argument in Rom 6, as Paul points out that believers should consider themselves to be dead with respect to sin (6:11). Paul also urges his readers not to let sin rule in their deadly body (6:12a), which seems to be synonymous with letting the desires of the body rule in their lives (6:12b). The fact that believers are supposed to put to death the deeds of the body (8:13) suggests that believers have not been freed from the sinful desire of the body. Hence, having been freed from sin (6:19) probably means having been freed from the kind of existence in which sinful passions function as a ruling power. Those who are subject to the sinful passions are also subject to the sinful tendencies of the body, whereas those who are subject to the ruling power of the Spirit can put to death the sinful tendencies of the body.
but as the hortatory nature of vv. 4–9 makes clear, it is also something that must be continually practiced.” Therefore, Miller reads ἄγονται (8:14) as a medium, suggesting that Rom 8:14a should be rendered in English with the phrase “as many as conduct themselves by the Spirit of God,” arguing that this “would parallel the dual agency involved in the command to “put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (v. 13);” it follows from this description that “the Spirit is viewed in terms of something that can be practiced, something with which the church can cooperate” and that “such cooperation is evident again in the claim that this same Spirit ‘co-testifies’ with our spirit . . . that we are sons of God (v. 16b).”

One might interject, here, that Paul may be assuming that the gift of the Spirit is something that takes hold of the human spirit, causing the human spirit to align itself with the values of the divine Spirit. The human spirit would then itself endorse the values of God even if this endorsement is something that must be ascribed to the presence of the Spirit and hence something that is ultimately caused by God. The gift of the Spirit would then not only be described as a gift that enables humans to choose God; it would also be described as a power that causes humans to make that choice themselves. In such case, it would hardly be necessary to choose between the medium and the passive interpretation of ἄγονται in 8:14, as the people that are led by the Spirit will also conduct themselves by the Spirit. Those who are led by the Spirit will themselves put to death the deeds of the body, because the Spirit causes them to do so, as the Spirit, so to speak, has convinced them of the value of its own values.

It follows from this description that the spirit of sonship (πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας), that Paul’s refers to in 8:15, should be accounted for as a

Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 119. Miller also notes that “[Rom 8] v.9 has a shade of warning to it: ‘if indeed you still have the Spirit of God you received in baptism – if you’ve not done anything to lose it” (ibid., 119). See also Engberg-Pedersen, “The Logic of Action in Paul,” 248: “Individuals are [in Rom 8:5–13] also located within each of two spheres, both in the abstract (Rom 8:5, 8) and as an indicative fact about Paul’s Roman addressess (Rom 8:9a). So is there any room here for an individual self to whom it is up whether to be in the flesh (Rom 8:8) or in the spirit (Rom 8.9)? indeed there is. Paul’s indicative statements (Rom 8:9–11) constitute the background to other statements with an imperatival force (Rom 8:12–13) . . . It is in fact up to the Romans themselves to decide whether they are in the flesh or in the spirit. How so? By their acts.”

Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 124. I find this description of the Spirit as something that must be practiced helpful, as it emphasizes the fact that the gift of the Spirit is a gift of a mindset, i.e., a particular view of God and a corresponding way of life. This exemplifies how closely the indicative is configured as being related to the imperative, moreover, it exemplifies that life in the Spirit is not only a gift, it is a gift of a particular way of life.

Cf. Wells, *Grace and Agency in Second Temple Judaism*, 297: “In Rom 8:3–4, those who actively walk according to the Spirit have the requirement passively fulfilled in them. This describes in miniature the substratum of Gal 5:13–6:10, where the fruit of the Spirit is realised precisely as believers actively walk (περιπατέω) and are passively led (ἄγονται) by the Spirit (5:16, 18, 25).” The same seems to go for Rom 8:13–14.
reference to the human spirit that is intimately linked with the divine Spirit, for which reason it relates to God in the same manner as the Spirit of the Son (8:16). Hence, it hardly makes a difference whether it is the Spirit of the Son that cries Abba Father (as in Gal 4:4–6) or whether it is also the human spirit (as in Rom 8:15–16), as the argument presumes that the human spirit is intimately linked with the divine Spirit to such an extent that they can be described as one.

Paul concludes his argument in 8:1–17, by assuring his readers that they are heirs insofar as they are children (8:17). This means that his argument not only flows into the same kind of reassurance as the argument in Gal 3:1–4:11 (see especially 3:29; 4:7), it also proceeds by thematising the topic of inheritance which similarly features as a prominent theme in the argument in Galatians. Moreover, Paul’s argument in Rom 8 confirms what we have seen already in Galatians, namely that God’s or Abraham’s children are defined as the children of the Spirit. The fact that Paul here introduces the theme of inheritance corresponds furthermore to what we have seen already, namely that Rom 4:13 looks ahead to 8:17–30 in which the theme of the inheritance of the cosmos is introduced anew. Finally, just as Abraham in Rom 4 is described as someone who waited patiently on the fulfilment of God’s promise, so in 8:18–30 are contemporary believers described as a kind of people that wait and expect that the cosmos will be renewed. There are therefore good reasons for seeing 8:18–30 as a description of the contemporary destiny of those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith (4:12). In the following paragraph, more attention will be devoted to the question whether the Spirit is depicted as something that takes hold of the human spirit, causing it to be aligned with the Spirit of the Son.

8.5.3 Romans 8:18–30: Waiting and Groaning in the Spirit

There are good reasons for suggesting that Paul in Rom 8:18–25 describes the lives of the children (8:19) as a mirror of Abraham’s faith as recounted in Rom 4. In 8:24–25 Paul describes the lives of

---

549 For a thorough account of the many similarities between Paul’s argument in Gal 3:26–4:11 and Rom 8, see Friedrich W. Horn, Das Angeld des Geistes, 394–399.
the children as a life in hope. In that hope they were saved (8:24); moreover, they put their hope in what they could not see and hence they are described as those who wait with patience or endurance for their hope to be realized. This description is clearly comparable to Paul’s description of Abraham in Rom 4, who believed in hope against hope (παρ’ ἐλπιδα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι) and who waited for many years for God to fulfil his promises. In Rom 5:5 Paul assures his readers that their hope would not be put to shame, as the love of God had been poured out in their hearts through the gift of the Spirit. Hence, hope is associated with the presence of the Spirit, for which reason Paul is also engaged in 8:18–30 in describing the hope of those who have received the Spirit in their hearts. Moreover, Paul points out that life in hope is a life characterized by groaning, clarifying some of the extent to which his grammar of the Spirit is determined by his theology of the cross.551

Friedrich W. Horn has stressed that the Abba cry that Paul refers to in 8:16 “ist gerade kein inneres, auf das Individuum begrenztes Zeugnis, sondern vollzieht sich worthaft im Gottesdienst” and that “dieser Ruf äussert sich akklamatorisch, nicht aber als inneres Sprechen des Geistes im Menschen.”552 There are good reasons for suggesting that the Aramaic word Abba originates in the first Christ-believing assemblies.553 However, it does not necessarily follow that the Abba cry solely belongs to a liturgical setting. Paul seems to be engaged in describing the lives of those who are led by the Spirit (8:14) and who therefore center their lives on life and peace (8:5–6). Moreover, there is nothing in the context that suggests that he is engaged in addressing a liturgical situation. Therefore, the argument seems to assume that the Abba cry is something that simply characterizes the lives of those who believe.

551 Horn claims not only that Paul’s description of the Spirit as down payment (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5) should be regarded as “das Sachanliegen der pl Pneumatologie” but also that “dennoch für Pl Gegenwart und Zukunft nicht einfach wie auf einer Zeitschiene voneinander abzugrenzen. Vielmehr finden sich Verschränkungen, insofern endzeitliche Erwartungen in gegenwärtigen Erfahrungen als partiell gegeben behauptet werden. Zugleich aber wird das, was als proleptische oder antizipatorische Heilserfahrung anmuten möchte, in einem Kontext gestellt, der durch und durch von der Kreuzestheologie bestimmt ist (vgl. etwa Phil 1,20f.; 2. Kor 4,7; Röm 8,35f). Mit dieser Zuordnung vermag Pl festzuhalten, dass die Gabe des Geistes nie den menschlichen Versuch einer Apotheose eröffnen kann, sondern in Ambivalenzerfahrungen als Kraft zu erkennen” (Horn, Das Angeld des Geistes, 389, 423).

552 Horn, Das Angeld des Geistes, 409, 411.

553 See Larry Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ, 173–176.
However, Horn also helpfully points out that in the New Testament the verb κράζειν is often used to describe the cry of demons or angels (Mark 1:23; 3:11; 4:41; 5:5, 7; 9:26; Luke 9:39; Acts 16:17; Rev 10:3), suggesting that Paul in 8:16 refers to a divinely inspired uttering. Horn concludes on this basis that “von diesen Belegen insgesamt ist eine Nähe von κράζειν zum dämonischen oder geisterfüllten Sprechen angezeigt (vgl. bereits das zum Enthusiasmus hin offene ἄγονται in Röm 8.14),” for which reason the “Abba-ruf ist also eine Akklamation, die der Geist selber bewirkt (Gal 4,6), die in der Kraft des Geistes gesprochen wird (Röm 8,15).” Moreover, Miller affirms that his own reading “presses against the notion that Paul speaks of pneuma in terms of possession, but the simple point that the spirit acts as qualifier is the same regardless.” However, it should also be noted, Miller claims, that “everything Paul says presumes both the church’s responsibility to act and that such an act is genuinely human. This is a key difference between Paul’s grammar of the pneuma and, again, something like demon possession (or a heavy-handed notion of possession by God’s Spirit for that matter).” Miller does not refer to any contemporary sources that could support his correlation between possession language and his reading of Paul’s grammar of the Spirit, just as Horn does not clarify the implications of comparing the Abba-cry with the cries of demons, angels, or the Pythia in Delphi. However, as we have seen, Philo makes ample use of possession language or possession terminology in his descriptions of his own and Abraham’s experience of divine inspiration. Here, divine inspiration is most often configured as something that takes hold of the human mind. This causes the human mind to be aligned with the wisdom conveyed by the Spirit, for which reason the inspired mind henceforth manifests itself in a new kind of life, i.e., in the life of the Sage who cares for the world in a manner that is comparable to the way God cares for the world. In most of Philo’s descriptions of Abraham’s experience of divine inspiration, divine inspiration is not described as something that bypasses human understanding, even though Philo is both able to describe divine inspiration as something that enhances human

554 Cf. also Horn, Das Angeldes Geistes, 411: “So entspricht es der profanen Verwendung: Plut. Pyth 438b von der Pythia; Hipp, Philos V8, 40 vom eleusinischen Hierophanten; Jos, Ant II 117 vom Propheten Jeremias.”
555 Horn, Das Angeldes Geistes, 411.
556 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 131.
557 Miller points out that “for Paul, as for someone like Chrysostom or Aquinas as the notes show) it appears that the more hard, human work is done, the more the Spirit participates in that work and makes it ever more fruitful – precisely because part of having the Spirit is a disposition to act in a certain way. In this way, Paul’s grammar of the Spirit also comes close to the classical language of virtue: a virtue is a state of the soul that tends to make its body act in a certain way” (Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 131).
understanding (as in *Migr.* 176–195) and as something that wipes out human understanding (as in *Her.* 264–266). Divine inspiration is therefore most often described as both something that takes hold of the human mind and something that enhances human understanding and hence something that subsequently manifests itself in a particular way of life. It remains to be seen whether or not such an understanding of the work of the Spirit can cast light on Paul’s argument in Rom 8:18–30.

In 8:18, Paul clarifies (γάρ) some of the implications of his preceding description of life in the Spirit, claiming that this life manifests itself in a certain kind of reasoning. Paul writes in the first singular (λογίζομαι), but the argument clearly presumes that the outlook presented is normative for the readers as well. Hence, the children of God reason that their present experiences of suffering are not comparable (οὐκ ἤξια τὰ παθήματα) to the glory that is to be revealed to them, for which reason they hope and wait for the implications of sonship to be fully realized, i.e., for their bodies to be redeemed (8:25). Paul stresses that believers have only received the first fruits of the Spirit, for which reason their present lives are characterized by a sighing or groaning (στενάζομεν) as they wait (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι) (8:24) for their hope to be realized. Interestingly, Paul points out that the Spirit sighs in a comparable way (Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ) (8:26).⁵⁵⁸ Fitzmyer claims that the sighs of the Spirit (στενάγμοις ἀλαλήτοις) (8:26) “have nothing to do with human sighs in prayer, even those which Paul himself calls *arreta rhemata*, ‘inexpressible words’ of some human being in ecstatic rapture (2 Cor 12:4). The ‘sighs’ are those of the Spirit and cannot be expressed in human terms,” even though Fitzmyer also claims that “in genuine Christian prayer, however, ‘the holy Spirit itself sighs within us, with us, and even over us; thus through his Spirit God himself

---

⁵⁵⁸ Dunn, *Romans* 1–8 is most helpful here: “The reference back [Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ] is clearly to v 23, πνεῦμα being the immediate link word. The phrase in itself does not specify how closely similar are the phenomena being compared; . . . But at least the construction does imply that in v. 23 the groanings are part of the expression of the Spirit’s presence (that is, a fundamental feature of the eschatological tension) and not simply a regrettable or accidental byproduct.” Fitzmyer does not mention the phrase at all (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 516–520). Jewett, *Romans*, 521 note 131 points out: “That the verb στενάζω (‘groan’) should be supplied is advocated by Schlier, 268, and Cranfield, 1:421, but its absence from v. 26a and the awkwardness of placing the divine spirit under the curse of futility render this option implausible.” However, the fact that the Spirit sights (8:26) does not necessarily reflect the fact that the Spirit is placed under a curse. It could simply mean that the Spirit feels solidarity with the children who groan.
assists in supporting the needs of his creatures’ (Michel, Brief and die Römer, 273). But how would Paul then know of the Spirit’s intervention on behalf of the saints (ὑπὲρ ἄγιων) (8:27)?

Horn claims that the “στεναμοὶ ἁλάλατοι sind . . . die Gemeindegebete, speziell die glossolalen Gebete.” This seems more likely, especially in light of Paul’s reference to inexpressible words in 2 Cor 12:14. The question is how such a reading of Rom 8:26 corresponds to the way in which Paul’s argument proceeds in 8:27. Paul’s reference to the one “who searches the hearts” reflects biblical language of God (1 Sam 16.7; 1 Kgs 8:39; 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 7:11; 17:3; 139:1; Prov 15:11) and hence is best accounted for as a reference to God. Most commentators seem to interpret the phrase τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος (8:27) as a reference to the divine Spirit, arguing with a reference to 1 Cor 2:10−11 that God knows the mind of the Spirit. However, the phrase was last used in Rom 8:6, for which reason it would make sense to consider if Paul uses the phrase in similar way in 8:27. Kooten has made this suggestion, claiming that “it is the Spirit who, because he is in breathed in man’s highest constituent part as the Spirit/spirit of life, knows what is going on in this human, restored spirit or mind, the mind of the saints, on whose behalf the Spirit prays.”

559 Fitzmyer, Romans, 518–519.
560 See Horn, Das Angeldes Geistes, 418: “Diese Aussage findet sich im NT nur an diese Stelle, und sie hat auch keine direkten Entsprechungen in der alt.-jüd. Literatur.” Cf. also Fitzmyer, Romans, 518 who himself claims that “nowhere in the OT or in pre-Christian Jewish writings does one find the idea of the holy Spirit as an intercessor. It is, then, a Pauline novelty.” This fact seems to suggest that it is something that Paul claims on the basis of his own experience.
561 Horn, Das Angeldes Geistes, 419. See also the long discussion in Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 575–576.
562 It is not necessary to define this experience as something that only take place in the setting of the service. The experience accounted for in 2 Cor 12:14 does not seem to presume the setting of a service in one the Pauline assemblies. Philo also describes himself as having experienced moments of inspiration in a private setting, Migr. 34–35). Jewett points out that the phrase στεναμοὶ ἁλάλατοι bears some resemblance to Plutarch’s description of the oracle at Delphi, arguing that “while some form of charismatic expression is implied, a direct link with glossolia may be unlikely” (Jewett, Romans, 523).
563 Pace, Kooten, Paul’s Anthropology in Context, 386: “The text simply speaks of ‘the one who searches the heart’ (ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας) and this subject is best taken to be the Spirit.” However, Paul’s phrase is stock biblical language and hence suggests that he is referring to God.
564 Fitzmyer, Romans, 519; Dunn, Romans 1–8, 479; Jewett, Romans, 525;
565 Kooten, Paul’s Anthropology in Context, 386.
It is common biblical wisdom that God has an interest in what is going on in the human hearts, for which reason the one who searches the hearts (8:27a) ought to be identified as God. However, as we have seen already, Paul seems to use heart and spirit synonymously, for which reason the phrase τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος could be interpreted as a reference to the heart or the spirit that has been endowed with the divine Spirit (as in 8:5–6). This reading seems at first glance to be challenged by the fact that Paul describes the Spirit as pleading on behalf of or for the sake of the saints (ὑπὲρ ἄγιων). However, this challenge can be overcome if it is recognized that Paul here refers to the mind or spirit that has been endowed with the divine Spirit. Hence, the one who searches the hearts knows the mind of the spirit (τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος), i.e., the mind and thus the thoughts of the believer, because the divine Spirit has taken hold of the human spirit and transformed its sighs (8:23) into inexpressible sighs to God, i.e., into prayerful sighs in accordance with the will of God (8:26–27).⁵⁶⁶ It therefore makes good sense to affirm with Horn that "das eigentliche Objekt der Hilfe [τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἁσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν] sind folglich die Glaubensäußerungen der Glaubenden, ihr Gebet (Röm 8,26; Phil 1,19), ihr Dienst (2. Kor 13,10)."⁵⁶⁷ These utterings of faith (die Glaubensäußerungen) in the context of Rom 8 are best defined as moments of inspiration that manifest themselves in divinely inspired prayers which in turn manifest themselves in inexpressible sighs (στεναγμοίς ἠλαλήτοις) to God.⁵⁶⁸

If this reading of Rom 8:26–27 holds, then the divine Spirit assumes the same role throughout the entire chapter, i.e. the role of the one that aligns the aspirations of the human heart or spirit with the aspiration of the divine Spirit itself. Paul would then not only be assuming that the Spirit enables humans to live with a God given mindset and hence with a certain wisdom and outlook on

⁵⁶⁶ Philo is also able to ascribe a state of groaning to the Israel soul as long as it is in bondage in Egypt (Lin. 90–93). This kind of soul is wont to cry out loud to God the only saviour (πρὸς τὸν μόνον σωτῆρα ἐκβοήσῃ) to redeem it into freedom (εἰς ἔλευθερίαν αὐτήν ἐξέληται) (Lin. 93). Philo associates groaning with sorrow and refers to sorrow as something that is experienced through the senses. This means that the excellent mind (ὁ σοιουδάος καὶ κακαθαρμένος νοῦς) grieves the least (ἐλάχιστα ἄγιε) as the senses afflict this kind of person the least (ηκίστα γὰρ ἐπιτίθενται αὐτῷ αἱ αἰσθήσεις), whereas passion is abundantly present in the foolish person (τῷ ἄφρονι περιπτεῦει τὸ πάθος) (Leg. 3.200).

⁵⁶⁷ Horn, Das Angeldes Geistes, 417.

⁵⁶⁸ See also Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 586: "Rather than seeing praying in the Spirit (‘tongues speech’ if you will) as some sort of mindless activity, Paul sees it as a highly significant expression of prayer. In it the believer can take special encouragement even in the midst of present exigencies (weaknesses, suffering, endurance), for the Spirit is praying in keeping with God’s will and with ‘inarticulate groanings’ that God himself well understands . . . It is likely that this experience of inexpressible sighs is comparable to the experience of unspeakable words (ἀρρητὰ ῥήματα) that Paul refers to in 2 Cor 12:4 as taking place in some form of ecstatic experience.
life (φρόνησις) but also that the Spirit from time to time could intervene in the lives of believers in moments of inspiration of a more dramatic kind, transforming their sighs into prayerful sighs in accordance with the will of God. It is probably not possible to determine with certainty what kind of inexpressible sighs Paul is talking about in 8:26, but the fundamental point seems to be clear enough: the Spirit is described as aligning the sighs of believers with the will of God, transforming these sighs into prayers in accordance with the will of God.

As noted above, Miler stresses that Paul’s argument in Rom 8 presumes the believer’s responsibility to act, that such an act is genuinely human and that the Spirit is viewed in terms of something that can be practiced or something with which the church can cooperate. This understanding of Paul’s grammar of the Spirit also manifests itself in Miller’s reading of Rom 8:26–30. Firstly, Miller argues that God should be identified as the subject of συνεργεῖ in 8:28. Miller finds support for this interpretation in the manuscripts 46, A, B, 81 sa, for which reason God also should be referred to as the subject of all the rest of the verbs in 8:29–30. Secondly, he contends that

συνεργεῖ is close to a synonym of συναντιλαμβάνεται and should be rendered ‘works with’ or ‘cooperates.’ Moreover, since there is a dative candidate for the indirect object of συνεργεῖ, we should make use of it. Thus τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν names the party cooperating with God. Paul emphasizes, then, the duality of agency involved in getting to the good: both God and the human actor are involved. What Paul says here is that ‘God cooperates with those who love God in all things toward the good (ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν).

569 See the long discussion in Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 575–586.
570 These moments of inspiration must be distinguished from Philo’s subsequent moments of inspiration, as they do not appear to be crucial links in a sequential pattern. However, Paul seems to be familiar with ecstatic expressions of the presence of the Spirit and this is something he had in common with Philo.
571 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 128.
572 Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 129. Miller may arguably be stretching the evidence, emphasizing that τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν names the party cooperating with God. Paul seems to be more concerned with defining God as the one who cooperates with those who love God. Moo contends that this rendering is problematic, insofar as “‘for those who love God, God works’ is awkward; we would not expect the object of the participle to become the subject of the main verb” (Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 528 note 113). But apparently the scribes of some of the best manuscripts (46, A, B) did not consider it awkward. I guess this suggests that what “we” consider as awkward is not necessarily a good parameter for evaluating what is in fact a likely reading.
Moo refers to “what may be the most straightforward reading of the clause: ‘all things work together for the good,’ calling attention to the underlying premise that “it is the sovereign guidance of God that is presumed as the undergirding and directing force behind the events of life” for which reason “it does not finally matter all that much whether we translate ‘all things work together for good’ or ‘God is working in and through all things for good.’” However, the verb used (συνεργέω) usually indicates the one with whom the subject of the verb works by means of a dative. I therefore prefer Miller’s reading of Rom 8:28, not least because this reading also seems to fit better with the way Paul describes the work of the Spirit throughout the entire chapter. But what does it then mean that God cooperates with those who love him in all things and what kind of duality of agency does Paul then presume? Miller stresses the believer’s responsibility in that the Spirit is something that continuously must be practiced, for which reason Paul’s argument in Rom 8 has a shade of warning. However, it seems to me that Paul’s argument rather has a shade assurance than a shade of warning, at least if one considers the way his argument in Rom 8 proceeds. As Miller recognizes himself, God is the subject not only of the verb in 8:28, but also in “the rest of verbs in the paragraph (through v. 30).” It should be noticed that the argument in 8:29–30 functions as the object of the verb οἴδαμεν in 8:28. Hence, Paul argues that “we” know that God works with his children in all things and that his children therefore will be conformed to the image of the Son of God and hence not only justified in the presence but also glorified in the future. This is so certain a fact that Paul can make use of the aorist tense (οὗς ἐδικαίωσεν τούτους καὶ ἐδοξάσεν) (8:30), giving the impression that this has indeed already happened. Miller’s emphasis on human responsibility is appropriate. I believe it is a part of Paul’s argument (cf. Rom 8:13). However, Paul’s endorsement of human responsibility was given within a framework in which the Spirit is configured as a redeeming power that causes humans to freely act in accordance with the will of God, such that Paul describes divine inspiration as something that takes hold of or seizes the human spirit or heart, i.e., as a power that ultimately causes humans to love God (8:28). Hence, the fact that God works with those who love God in all things

573 Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 528.
574 Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 528.
575 See συνεργέω in the LSj.
toward the good means that such people aspire toward the good and hence adjust their lives accordingly, for which reason they bear fruit and ultimately receive eternal life.

As Paul’s argument in Rom 8 draws to a close, he rhetorically asks: He, who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how would he not also with him give us everything? (8:32). This rhetorical question serves Paul’s argument well. It stresses the fact that life in accordance with the will of God is indeed something that must be ascribed to God. However, this rhetorical question may also represent the conviction that in Paul’s mind gives birth to the mindset that adjusts its life in accordance with the Spirit, i.e., the conviction that in Paul’s mind gives birth to the mindset that he has described in Rom 8. In that case, Paul’s rationale may be comparable to Philo’s, as he maintains that virtuous behavior presupposes the right attitude of mind, which is found in the mindset that recognizes that God is source of all good things. If this suggestion holds, then Paul is reminding his readers of God’s gift in Christ, being convinced that such a reminder would prompt his readers to adjust their life in accordance with the Spirit. What kind of duality of agency is presumed in the argument in Rom 8 will be discussed in the concluding paragraphs.

8.6 Conclusion

8.6.1 Abraham’s Children and the Gift of the Spirit

My reading of Rom 4 suggests that Paul’s portrait of Abraham is marked by a certain duality that also characterize Paul’s argument in Galatians. Paul’s portrait of Abraham is marked by the conviction – based on his convictions regarding the Christ-event – that God is a God who extends his grace to everyone. This is the reason that Paul is able to refer to God as a God who justifies the ungodly. But Paul also emphasizes that Abraham’s faith represents an example of contemporary faith, indicating that his portrait of Abraham represents a portrait of a person whose life has been shaped by God’s gift of the Spirit, which explains the fact that Abraham is portrayed in 4:13–22 as embodying some of the same characteristics as the children that wait with endurance for the redemption of their mortal bodies. This is related to the fact that Paul stresses that “we” are justified like Abraham, as “we” believe in the one who raised Jesus from the dead (4:24). Thus, even though Paul does not make any explicit references in to Abraham’s experience of the Spirit,

577 See note 115 above.
he does configure Abraham’s faith as a prefiguration of contemporary faith, i.e., the life that is marked by faith in Christ and hence also by the gift of the Spirit of Christ. This explains why it is possible not only to identify important common characteristics between Abraham’s faith and the faith described in Rom 8:18–30, but also to identify important common characteristics between Paul’s description of the children of Abraham in Gal 3:26–4:11 and the children of God in Rom 8:18–30. It follows from this description that Paul’s readings of the Abraham story as attested in Galatians and Romans share a common feature in that they identify Abraham’s children as the children of the Spirit and that they describe the effects of the gift of the Spirit in a comparable way.

Through baptism, humans have access to life in Christ or life in the newness of the Spirit. This union with Christ through the Spirit is something that sets a new path for the lives of the baptized, as they are set at the path such that their bodies are used as weapons of righteousness. Therefore, they are no longer supposed to let the deeds of their bodies rule their lives, as they have been redeemed from the hegemony of sin to life under the reign of grace (5:21). They have been set on the path of sanctification that ultimately leads to eternal life (6:22–23). This path of sanctification involves the putting to death the deeds of the body and hence it is configured as something that involves genuine human agency. However, Paul’s also gives thanks to God for his readers’ obedience to the form of teaching to which they were committed (6:17), just as he concludes his argument in Rom 6 by assuring his readers that eternal life is a gift from God.

These two perspectives – that life in Spirit is something that involves genuine human agency and is something for which God must be thanked – can he held together if these two perspectives are elucidated from the perspective of Paul’s grammar of the Spirit. In Rom 8, the gift of the Spirit is described as something that causes the human spirit to relate to God in a manner akin to the way the Spirit of the Son relates to God. Moreover, in Rom 8 the Spirit is configured not only as something that gives humans the ability to choose to put to death the deeds of the body. The gift of the Spirit is also configured as something that takes hold of humans, such that they are best described as those who are led by the Spirit, for which reason they also put to death the deeds of
the body. This duality manifests itself in the fact that Paul incites his readers to put to death the deeds of the body (8:13), just as he refers to believers as those who are led by the Spirit (8:14).

As Horn has clarified, Rom 8:14 indicates that the gift of the Spirit is configured as a kind of possession. Philo’s accounts of Abraham’s and his own experience of inspiration may prove themselves helpful here. Most often, Philo configures divine inspiration as something that enhances human understanding, ensuring that the human mind is aligned with the divine, i.e., with the Logos. However, he is also able to describe Abraham’s experience of divine inspiration as something that involves a loss of conscience (Her. 264–266). A similar kind of duality seems to characterize Paul’s description of the work of the Spirit. On the one hand, the Spirit is described as conveying a certain kind of wisdom (φρόνησις); on the other hand, the Spirit is configured as something that can take hold of the human spirit, causing it to utter sighs that apparently are best described as inexpressible sighs or unspeakable words. However, in both cases, the Spirit is described as the power that aligns the human spirit with itself or with the will of God.

8.6.2 Divine and Human Agency in Rom 4–8

My reading of Paul’s argument in Rom 4–8 suggests that Paul emphasizes not only that the Spirit dwells in those who believe, but also that the Spirit causes the human spirit to be aligned with the divine Spirit itself. Paul describes the gift of the Spirit as something that conveys wisdom and knowledge of the will of God (Rom 8:5–6; 1 Cor 2:12; 7:39), just as he seems to be describing the believer as someone whose heart or spirit is encompassed by the divine Spirit. For this reason, the human spirit is aligned with the divine Spirit and hence conformed with the truth and values that the divine Spirit reveals and conveys. Moreover, Paul seems to be describing the gift of the Spirit as something that ensures that the human spirit relates to God in the same manner as the Spirit of the Son relates to God (8:15–16).

It follows from this description that as humans receive God’s Spirit, they receive something that they accordingly have in common with God. Hence, believers are described as those who live with the mindset of the Spirit of God’s Son. Believers can claim this mindset as their own, insofar as it is something they have received as their own, as their heart or spirit has been encompassed by the
Spirit of God. This divine mindset that believers share with God is something that is constituted by the encompassing presence of the Spirit. The mindset that believers have in common with God is something that involves a certain knowledge of the will of God (Rom 12:1–2) and something that manifests itself not only in the way believers relate to God as their Father (8:15–16) but also in the patience with which they wait for God to fulfill his promises (8:18–30); nonetheless, it is also something that believers can rightly claim as their own insofar as it is something they have received from God.

In Paul’s letters, the Spirit is not configured as something that is generically shared, as the gift of the Spirit is mediated through baptism and not in creation. Neither is divine inspiration configured as something that turns believers into demi-gods. Rather, the gift of the Spirit is configured as something that causes humans to have something in common with God. It means that they – because of the encompassing presence of the Spirit – reason, think and act like Christ (Phil 2:5). Hence, being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:30) involves being conformed or aligned with the values that characterizes the Spirit of Christ. Paul stresses that believers have something in common with God, but he also stresses that there is a difference between the divine and the human spirit, clarifying that the divine spirit is poured out in the hearts of those who believe. One may ask, however, to what degree of precision this union between God, the Spirit and the human heart or spirit ought to be described. Here, it will suffice to affirm that Paul describes the Spirit both as something that is intimately linked with the human spirit and which dwells and operates within the human spirit or heart, for which reason the gift of the Spirit is not configured as something that obliterates human agency.578 This union between the divine and the human spirit thrives and flourishes in the created reality and hence is also something that

578 Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self, 66 describes the relationship between the divine and the human spirit in this way: “‘the pneuma itself’ ties together believers and God extremely closely while also emphasizing their difference. It is God’s own pneuma – but it enters into contact with the pneuma of human beings.” It is beyond the scope of this study to decide whether or not Paul presumes the Spirit to be a material Spirit. The usefulness of the notion of the material Spirit has been problematized by Volker Rabens, The Holy Spirit and the Ethics of Paul. On this subject, see also Buch-Hansen, It is the Spirit That Gives Life, 87–88: “in his book Physics of the Stoics, Sambursky draws attention to the fact that the principles – λόγος and God – were not only occasionally made corporeal and identified with constructive fire and πνεῦμα, the opposite tendency to dematerialize the πνεῦμα in terms of pure power was found as well. . . . In the doxographical account of classical Stoic positions, this tendency to dematerialize the πνεῦμα in terms of powers (δυνάμεις) and causes (αἰτίαι) is documented. In Sextus Empiricus’ treatise Adversus mathematicos, [she quotes Math. 9.75–76] the πνεῦμα seems to have been wholly absorbed into the concept of power.”
manifests itself in genuine human action. Hence, it seems that what Wells affirms with respect to Philo – that “divine and human agency are non-contrastive and related by kinship” – holds for Paul as well. Divine agency is not configured as something that obliterates human agency. To the contrary, it is configured as something that manifests itself in human agency, reflecting the conviction that it is what humans have in common with God that makes them effective agents in the world.

Engberg-Pedersen has clarified how Paul in 1 Cor 1:4–9 not only “very strongly emphasizes God’s agency in relation to the Corinthians, employing a whole string of passives,” but also in 1 Cor 1:10 he makes use of the phrase ἡτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι (which Engberg-Pedersen translates “but be rather yourselves reformed”), for which reason Engberg-Pedersen points out that

Paul is speaking of progression following on some form of regression, but apparently he did not feel that type of language to be in any conflict with the earlier idea that God and Christ will strengthen them until the end. There is no opposition here, but neither is there ‘cooperation’; rather, the two types of agency lie side by side and are so intimately connected that one may wonder whether they do not, in final analysis, come to the very same thing.

It follows from this description that Engberg-Pedersen finds room for notions of progression and regression in Paul’s writings, which corresponds well with Paul’s description of himself in Phil 3:12–16. It does not necessarily follow that Paul presumes that believers are moving towards the kind of restoration of the soul that is attested in Philo’s description of Abraham’s path to virtue. Paul seems to be moving towards perfection because perfection is associated with love. In 1 Cor 13, he points out that as the perfect comes, the partial will pass (1 Cor 13:10), clarifying that

579 Wells, Grace and Agency in Second Temple Judaism, 205.
580 Kyle Wells makes use of the concept of integrity, explaining that this implies that it is possible “to speak of the human agent as a genuine human cause in the created order because its agency is neither compromised nor diminished by the influence of other agents,” for which reason he affirms that “in both [Qumran and Paul] the integrity of the human agent is ultimately maintained” (Wells, Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism, 16, 308). I am not sure that this kind of precision should be maintained in accounts of how divine and human agency relate to one another in Paul’s letters. It seems better to me simply to affirm not only that Paul describes divine inspiration as something that effects that humans have something in common with God, but also that this is not described as something that obliterates human agency. I acknowledge that the claim that divine and human agency are non-contrastive and related by kinship gives rise to questions regarding the integrity of the respective agents. However, I am not convinced that these questions can be fully answered. See also note 582 below.
prophetic gifts and speaking in tongues will pass, whereas faith, hope and love will abide (13:13) as love never ends (13:8). Hence, perfection seems to be pursued because love will never settle for less.

More importantly, perhaps, Engberg-Pedersen’s description appears to be helpful, insofar as Paul does seem to describe divine inspiration as something that causes humans to reason like God and hence to align themselves with the will of God, for which reason it can be difficult to distinguish sharply between divine and human agency. However, Philo’s writings have taught us that this does not mean that God cannot be referred to as the ultimate cause, i.e., as the one who causes humans themselves to reason like God and hence to align their lives with the will of God. Engberg-Pedersen points out that God is responsible, but that human beings are responsible too. This is true, but God’s responsibility is of a different kind than that of human beings, as God’s responsibility manifests such that God is the one who causes humans to align their lives with the values of the Spirit. There are texts that suggest that Paul describes God in such terms. Paul’s description in Phil 1:6 of the God who began a good work in believers and who will complete this work until the end (Phil 1:6) and Paul’s description in Phil 2:13 of the God that works within believers such that they both will and work for his good pleasure (Phil 2:13) immediately commend themselves. The same goes for Paul’s reference to the grace of God as the real agent behind the fact that Paul worked harder than the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10).

582 Hence, Philip Clayton’s observation regarding an inherent problem in Platonic and Neo-Platonic accounts of the concept of participation in God is relevant also with respect to Philo and Paul. (see note 74 above). This does not mean that Philo’s and Paul’s writings represent a kind of thinking according to which God’s transcendence is solely thought of in immanent-transcendent terms. Both Philo and Paul presume that God acts on humans both from without (by the extension of his power through the gift of the Spirit) and from within (through the presence of the Spirit within those who believe). It follows from this description that their description of God’s interaction with the world reflect the kind of tension between God’s transcendence and God’s immanence that characterizes theistic accounts of the concept of God (see note 181 above).

583 Cf. note 55 above.

584 My reading is compatible with the one proposed by Engberg−Pedersen, as he points out with respect to 1 Thess 2:13 that “we are given a picture of something coming from God that is active within believers, in and through their faith” and as he points (this time in a summarizing paragraph) that “Paul’s strong and exclusive emphasis on God’s agency in generating the proper knowledge must not be taken to obliterate the other result we have also reached: that the knowledge generated in this way in human beings by God is also distinctly their own, or in other words, that when they do have this knowledge, then they are aligning themselves (and of course also being aligned) with God” (Engberg−Pedersen, “Self-sufficiency and Power,” 131–132, 134). My reading proposes that Philo’s description of divine inspiration as en extension of God’s power can cast further light on Paul’s grammar of the Spirit, for which reason I want to emphasize that God is the one who causes humans to align themselves with God.
1 Thess 5:16–24 ought to be mentioned as well. Here, Paul articulates a number of things that the Thessalonian believers should do (5:16–22); however, the argument flows not only into a prayer to God that he may sanctify them entirely, keeping them blameless at the day of Christ, but also into an assuring announcement that “faithful is the one who calls you, who will also do it” (5:24). Hence, God will keep them blameless at the day of Christ, assumingly by making it such that the Thessalonians will align their lives in accordance with the instructions given in 5:16–22. Hence, Paul does not describe divine agency as something that obliterates human agency, but he also refers to God as the one who will make sure that they will in fact be blameless on the day of Christ.

These perspectives can be held together if it is acknowledged that the gift of the Spirit is configured as something that seizes or takes hold of human beings, thus causing them to adjust their lives to the will of God. For this reason, it is appropriate to refer to the gift of the Spirit as the gift of God’s empowering presence. However, it is a non-coercive kind of power, i.e., it is a redeeming kind of power that enables humans to live the kind of lives they themselves want to live. It is also a kind of power that, from time to time, takes hold of humans in a more dramatic way, causing them to utter inexpressible sighs that they allegedly do not understand themselves. Paul describes this as an expression of the Spirit’s solidarity with the groaning of the children of God and hence as an expression of divine assistance in an unstable world, an assistance that not only enables believers to patiently wait for God’s fulfilment of his promises but that also ultimately keeps them on the path to final glorification. Hence, the Spirit that gives rise to a life in accordance with the mindset or wisdom of the Spirit is also the Spirit that takes hold of humans in a more dramatic way, causing them to utter inexpressible sighs in prayer to God. Even so, in this latter case, the Spirit is also described as the power that ensures that the lives of believers are aligned with the values of God, as the Spirit is described as that which causes humans to utter inexpressible sighs in accordance with the will of God. It follows from this description that throughout Rom 8, the gift of the Spirit is configured as something that takes hold of humans, causing them to align their lives with the will of God. Hence, the concept of dual agency is

585 πιστὸς ὃ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.
586 Cf. The title of Gordon Fee’s work referred to above.
relevant, even when divine and human agency can be described as being so intimately connected that one may wonder whether they do not in the final analysis come to the very same thing. This is so since human agency is configured as something that is grounded in and ultimately caused by the encompassing presence of the Spirit.
Chapter 9. Concluding Discussion

9.1 The Abraham Story and the Gift of the Spirit – Philo and Paul in Conversation

The reading of Philo’s and Paul’s appropriation of the Abraham story proposed above suggests that Wan is justified in claiming that the promise of Abraham functions in Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story as a vital link between the patriarch and his descendants, because the Spirit as the content of God’s promise and as the energizer of lived experience in the here-and-now creates a homology between the life of Abraham and the life of the believer. Yet, are these two portraits of Abraham also painted on two entirely different canvasses? In the introduction we identified two issues that scholars have referred to as substantial differences between Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story. These were Paul’s Christological interpretation of the Abrahamic promises and Philo’s identification of faith with virtue. G. Walther Hansen has argued that Paul’s Christo-centric reinterpretation of the Abrahamic covenant means that Paul’s portrait of Abraham must be described as belonging to an entirely different category than Philo’s. This conclusion appears to me to be both correct and in need of qualification. On the one hand, Paul’s convictions regarding the crucified Christ are not easily reconciled with Philo’s portrait of God and salvation. On the other hand, Paul’s Christo-centric interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant also appears to be a pneumatological interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, as the Abrahamic promises are fulfilled in Christ and therefore also realized in the experience of the Spirit. From this perspective, Paul’s reading of the Abraham story has more in common with Philo’s than Hansen suggests, not only because both Philo and Paul interpret the Abrahamic promises as promises of the Spirit but also because they describe the nature of the work of the Spirit in comparable ways.

Similarly, it must be considered to which degree Philo’s identification of faith and virtue makes his reading of the Abraham story distinct from Paul’s. Both authors identify Abraham’s faith in God as an example of an unwavering trust in God, a trust that recognizes that the promised things that are not yet present should be regarded as though they are already present because of the steadfastness of the Author of the promise. Both authors refer to the recognition of one’s own dependency on the grace of God as a hallmark of faith and hence of righteousness, for which reason they both depict Abraham – and those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham’s faith – as
someone who ought to be regarded as righteous. Both authors describe faith as something that involves not only a recognition of the frailty of mortality, but also a recognition of God’s capacity to create out of nothing, for which reason Philo describes Abraham as an individual who recognizes his own unworthiness, as he reaches the apex of his journey towards virtue or the vision of God. Similarly, both Philo and Paul describe justification as God’s recognition of the attitude that looks to God for help and salvation, thus describing faith as an attitude of a renewed mind or heart that manifests itself in a relationship with God. This relationship can fittingly be characterized as a relationship of trust. Finally, it should also be mentioned that both Philo and Paul interpret the Abrahamic promises as promises that are fulfilled as God extends his Spirit to humans, describing the effects of God’s extension of the power of the Spirit in a comparable way. Both authors refer to God’s gift of his Spirit as something that takes hold of the human mind or spirit, causing the mind or spirit to be aligned with the Spirit’s perspective and values, ultimately giving rise to a particular way of life in accordance with the phronesis that follows in the wake of the gift of the Spirit.

It follows from this description that both Philo and Paul define Israel, Abraham’s children as the people of the Spirit. The fact that Philo and Paul not only have a comparable understanding of some of the chief characteristics of faith, but also coordinate their description of this kind of faith with a comparable account of the nature of the work of the Spirit suggests that the similarity in the manner in which Abraham is employed is not only formal.

To what degree, then, is it appropriate to maintain that Paul “speaks from within the virtue-system” but also “alters it considerably” and to what degree does that make Paul different from Philo? Philo was presumably better educated than Paul and demonstrates a much stronger grasp of the Greek philosophical tradition. Nonetheless, they seem to have breathed much of the same air, not least since they describe not only Abraham’s faith but also role the Spirit assumes in the life of those who believe in comparable ways.

---

587 Paul’s argument in Rom 9–11 reveals that this is not the only thing he has to say about Abrahams Children.
588 Pace, Lee as referred to in paragraph 1.1 above.
589 Sandnes, The Challenge of Homer, 262.
However, Paul’s reading of the Abraham story distinguishes itself from Philo’s, insofar as Paul’s story does not include a ladder (as referred to by Martyn) or a propaedeutic or sequential pattern (as referred to by Sandnes). Paul does not elaborate on how human character can be bettered through the repetition of right choices by the will, or how a proper education can facilitate a betterment of the human soul. Neither does he describe life as a journey that ends in the state in which an individual has become fully human, or in which the human soul has become fully restored. Paul seems, in other words, not to be concerned with giving a classical account of how virtue is attained. Nonetheless, Miller seems to be right in arguing that Paul’s grammar of the Spirit also comes close to the classical language of virtue in which virtue is a state of the soul that tends to make the body act in a certain way, not least because a constituent element of having the Spirit is having a disposition to act in a certain way. Hence, Paul may not be describing faith as a virtue in the classical sense of the word, for which reason faith is not described as the culmination of a process of character development; nonetheless, he does describe faith as a manifestation of the gift of the Spirit that manifests itself in a certain mindset and hence in a particular way life. With these qualifications in place, one may argue that Philo and Paul both adjust their grammar of the Spirit in accordance with their views of God. Hence, one may say that Philo and Paul respectively Judaizes and Christianizes the virtue system, or, more specifically, that they both redefine what virtue implies. From this perspective, it appears that Philo and Paul share the characteristic that they both speak from within the virtue-system and both alter it, if not considerably, then at least to some degree.

Paul describes God as someone who extends his Spirit to those who receive the message of the cross, thus articulating his conviction that God is a God who extends his gifts to those who are not worthy of his gifts. Philo also knows the God who extends his gifts to those who are not worthy. According to Philo, this God manifests himself in the creation of the cosmos as well as in the extension of the divine breath (Gen 2:7) to the mind that loves the body, just as this view of God shines through in his description of the peculiar and paradoxical greatness of the Sage.

590 See note 428 above.
591 See note 35 above.
592 See Miller, The Practice of the Body of Christ, 131.
593 I am using the term “Christianize” to clarify how Paul’s grammar of the Spirit was formed by his convictions about Christ, and hence not to clarify that Paul was a Christian and not a Jew.
Nonetheless, this is something that can only be truly appreciated by the worthy, i.e., by those who have the intellectual capacity to comprehend the truth about God, for which reason Philo is also familiar with the God who extends his gifts to worthy, i.e., to the fitting recipients of his grace. This may be explained as a reflection of Philo’s dependency on an ancient coordination of education and virtue, as clarified by Sandnes, or it may be explained as an example of how Philo’s view of God’s grace was determined by an ancient convention for gift-giving whereby gifts were supposed to be given strategically to those who were worthy of the gift, as this has been clarified by Barclay. However, it may also be explained as a reflection of Philo’s view of God.

In other words, the ways in which Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story are distinct from each another may also be elucidated, I propose, if it is recognized that where Philo could not conceive of God apart from the divine Logos, Paul could not conceive of God apart from God’s son, Jesus Christ. This is the reason that Philo correlates the notion of worth with the notion of the capacity to receive in De Mutatione Nominum, clarifying that the capacity to receive is a matter of the capacity to conceive. Philo’s God extends his gifts to both high and low. Nonetheless, his grace can only be truly appreciated by those who have the capacity to conceive the truth about God. This is the case not because God does not want to give, but because not all have the intellectual capacity to conceive the extent of God’s grace. This is something that fits well with an ancient alignment of education and virtue as well as with an ancient convention for gift-giving whereby gifts are supposed to be given to those who are worthy. However, this notion also fits well with a conviction that God cannot be apprehended apart from the Logos.

Paul, for his part, describes God as the one who raised Jesus from the dead (Gal 1:1), for which reason God is defined from the perspective of the Christ event. The Christ event revealed a God who gave his Son (Gal 2:20; Rom 8:32) even for his enemies (Rom 5:6, 8). Hence, Abraham represents not only the righteous man who truly recognizes his own dependency on the grace of God, but also the one who trusts in the God who extends his gifts to the ungodly. For this reason, I have compared Paul’s concept of faith with a Janus head, as faith from one perspective reflects

---

594 See Martyn, Galatians, 85: “Paul’s identity is given in the fact that God has sent him, and God’s identity is here given by his having raised Jesus from the dead. . . . this one God has now identified himself by his act in Jesus Christ, making that act, indeed, the primal mark of his identity.”
the fact that God is a God who extends his gifts to the unworthy, but from another perspective reflects a proper attitude towards God that qualifies as righteousness. One crucial difference between Philo’s and Paul’s respective accounts of Abraham and the nature of the work of the Spirit manifests itself in the fact that Philo describes God from the perspective of the wisdom that manifests itself through the Logos, whereas Paul describes God from the perspective of the wisdom that manifested itself on the cross (1 Cor 1:18–25). These two respective starting points manifest themselves in two remarkably similar and remarkably different accounts of the nature of the gift of the Spirit.

Philo describes the Sage as living in accordance with the pattern of grace that manifests itself in God’s providential care for the cosmos. This is the pattern of grace that is revealed through the Logos, for which reason it is also the pattern with which humans are aligned as they are inspired by God. Paul defines God’s identity from the perspective of the event of the cross, for which reason he also defines the Spirit of God as the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6). This identity of the Spirit of God manifests itself in the believer’s cry of “Abba” and in his or her life in accordance with the mindset of Christ (Phil 2:5), for which reason the life of believers is shaped after the pattern of the cross (Phil 2:5–11). Moreover, it manifests itself in the groaning of the children of God, i.e., in the fact that the Spirit associates itself with the groaning of the children of God, turning the groaning of the children into a sighing for God in accordance with his will. Scholars have looked in vain for a precedence for this latter description of the Spirit of God in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Jewish tradition, for which reason this description of the work of the Spirit possibly stems from Paul’s own experience. However, this description of the nature of the work of the Spirit may also exemplify some of the extent to which the grammar of the Spirit is defined by the grammar of God and the pattern of his grace. Paul describes the mindset of Christ (Phil 2:5) or the spirit of faith (2 Cor 4:13) as something that is inextricably associated with a life in suffering for the benefit of those in need (Phil 2:6–11; 2 Cor 4:12). From this perspective, it is not particularly surprising that Paul can describe the Spirit as sighing in solidarity with the cosmos and the children of God.

Hence, Philo and Paul both align their respective views of the nature of inspiration with their respective views of God and the pattern of God’s grace. Thus, Philo defines the goal of life in terms
of being conformed to the image of the Logos, whereas Paul defines it in terms of being conformed to the image of God’s Son. Philo describes the Logos from the perspective of his Jewish belief that God is the creator and provider of the cosmos, whereas Paul describes God and God’s Spirit from the perspective of the death and resurrection of God’s Son.

Both writers lived and breathed in a world in which the question of the attainment of virtue was vividly discussed. Philo and Paul differ in many respects, but they seem to share the characteristic that they both were engaged in redefining the pattern of a virtuous life. Moreover, they seem to pursue their goal from the same starting point, i.e., from the perspective of their respective views of God, as they both align their grammar of the Spirit with their grammar of God and the Pattern of God’s grace. This is so since they both maintain that a constituent element of having the Spirit is having a disposition to act in a certain way. Future research concerned with clarifying the degree to which Philo’s and Paul’s views of what virtue implies are distinct from one another may begin by comparing how Philo’s description of the Sage’s imitation of God (see e.g., Mut. 46; Virt. 165–169) stands out from Paul’s description of his own and his fellow believers’ imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 2–3).

Here, it may be concluded that Philo and Paul may be compared from several different and equally valid perspectives. If they are compared from the perspective of ancient views of education, one might emphasize their different views on the importance of education. If they are compared from the perspective of ancient conventions of gift-giving, one might emphasize their different views of the significance of worth. If they are compared from the perspective of God’s gift of the Spirit, one might emphasize the difference between associating the Spirit with the wisdom of the Logos on the one hand and the wisdom of the cross on the other.

9.2 Divine and Human Agency and the Question of Reciprocity

The question of how divine and human agency relate to one another in Philo’s and Paul’s reading of the Abraham story have been addressed in the concluding paragraphs above. I have concluded

---

that divine and human agency are noncontrastive and related to one another by kinship in both Philo’s and Paul’s writings. Moreover, there is a discernible tension in both Philo’s and Paul’s writings between the notion of the Spirit as an extension of God’s power and the fact that the potential of this power is not always fully realized in the life of those who are affected by it. Philo explains this fact by drawing attention to the limited capacity of some individuals to receive and conceive the gifts from God. Paul, on the other hand, does not seem to be able to explain this problem, indicating that the Galatians’ regression leaves him confused and perplexed (Gal 1:6; 4:20). Regression is not easy to explain when you are convinced that God will complete the work he has already begun. Regression may be explained, of course, with a reference to the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:13–21). However, this does not explain the fact that the extension of God’s power (Gal 3:5) apparently does not bear its intended fruits (4:12–20).

Moreover, I have more than once – with a reference to the work of John Barclay – drawn attention to the fact that in no context does Paul describe God’s gift as something that was not meant to be returned, noting that Paul also seems to be describing the Spirit as the agent that produces the proper response to God’s gift. One might ask how such an expectation of return makes sense if it is God who produces the response the gift demands. This question may also be addressed to Philo, as he argues that divine gifts ought to be returned with thankfulness (Plant. 130–131; Virt. 165), not least since Philo describes divine inspiration as a divine fertilization of the Spirit given in creation.

From one perspective, one could explain this as a reflection of the fact that Philo and Paul lived and breathed in a world in which language of grace was understood as the language of the gift, for which reason they would not be inclined to describe God’s gift as something that was not meant to be returned. This would be true, of course, but it would not explain how it makes sense to maintain a notion of reciprocity if the expected response is produced by the one who gives the gift. To my knowledge, Philo and Paul have not addressed this problem. This is probably because they did not consider it to be a problem, as they both describe God as the author or cause of genuine human action. The fact that God is the author or cause of human action does not mean

\footnote{Cf. Barclay’s description of Gift and reciprocity in the Greco-Roman world in Barclay, \textit{Paul and the Gift}, 24–52.}
that human action is not genuinely human. Thankfulness may very well be one’s own, even if it ultimately must be ascribed to the gift or the one who gave the gift. Nonetheless, thankfulness is also something that is one’s own. Ultimately both Philo and Paul describe faith as a reflection of the fact that God has revealed the pattern of his grace to those who believe in such a way as to capture the mind or heart of these individuals, causing them to be thankful and to trust and imitate the pattern of grace that they have come to see. This revelation of the pattern of God’s grace may manifest itself in the conviction that God is the creator of the cosmos as well as the one who provides for its welfare, or it may manifest itself in the conviction that in Christ God has revealed his love for his enemies. Either way, the conviction is something that springs from God’s extension of the Spirit that takes hold of human hearts or minds, causing them to be genuinely thankful to God and to adjust their lives in accordance with the pattern of grace revealed to them. However, the fact that God is the author of the response does not mean that it is not also their own, just as human action can be free even when it is expected or even required.
Formalities
Abbreviations follow The SBL Handbook of Style. Biblical quotations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. The Greek text of the New Testament is quoted from Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th edition. Quotations from Philo are taken from the Loeb-edition; translations of Philo are my own unless noted otherwise.

Bibliography
Primary Sources


**Dictionaries**


**Secondary Sources**


Calabi, Francesca. *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*. 
Dodson, Joseph R. The ‘Powers’ of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and


———. “Pistis as ‘Ground for Faith’ in Hellenized Judaism and Paul.” Journal of Biblical Literature


Lamberton, Robert. *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the*


Termini, Christina. “Philo’s Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism.” Pages 95–123 in *The
———. The Death of the Soul in Romans 7. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 256.


