

Preface to the Fortress Press Second Edition

How, according to the apostle Paul, does the Spirit enable religious-ethical life? By way of answer, the first part of this book challenges the “infusion-transformation” approach to Pauline pneumatology and ethics, which builds on a Stoic concept of the Spirit as a material substance. The second part of the book advances the idea that it is primarily through initiating and sustaining an intimate relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and with the community of faith that the Spirit transforms and empowers people for ethical living.

I am very happy that the two chief theses of this monograph¹ have been received with so much interest and positive feedback that the book has already gone into a second edition (WUNT II/283, Mohr Siebeck, 2013,² containing a number of corrections but the same pagination as the first edition). To my great joy this second edition is now published by Fortress Press as a paperback. I would like to express my gratitude to Neil Elliott and the editorial team at Fortress Press for their effort in bringing this edition of the book on its way.

One of the first responses to this study was a comparative review of Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s 2010 monograph *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* and my monograph.² Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s study appeared the same month that I was completing the manuscript of this book,

1. Cf. the two summary articles: V. Rabens, ‘Ethics and the Spirit in Paul (1): Religious-Ethical Empowerment through Infusion-Transformation?’, *ExpTim* 125.5 (2014), forthcoming, published OnlineFirst, June 5, 2013, DOI: 10.1177/0014524613492668; and ‘Ethics and the Spirit in Paul (2): Religious-Ethical Empowerment through the Relational Work of the Spirit’, *ExpTim* 125.6 (2014), forthcoming, published OnlineFirst, June 5, 2013, DOI: 10.1177/0014524613492672.

2. P. Orr, ‘Review of T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, and V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*’, *Them* 35 (2010), 452–55.

so I was able to start interacting immediately with this part of his work. Both studies appear to propose opposite approaches to Paul, particularly with regard to the apostle's view of the nature of the Spirit. As the subtitle of his monograph indicates, Troels Engberg-Pedersen reads Paul in a Stoic context and ascribes a material concept of pneu/ma to the apostle. The first part of my study critically examines this reading. For this reason, one or two reviews have interpreted my work as arguing the opposite, namely that Paul had an immaterial concept of the Spirit.³ However, while I was indeed subconsciously operating with a Platonist notion of pneu/ma during the initial stage of my research, I soon realized that this approach to Paul is inadequate. I have dealt with this interpretative option in detail in my excursus 'The Alleged Concept of the Spirit as Immaterial Substance', in which I argue that Paul's letters provide no evidence that the apostle operated with an immaterial concept of pneu/ma (pp. 82–86). As Paul does not discuss or evidently presuppose a particular ontology of the Spirit, I maintain that it is best to refrain from such claims regarding the nature of pneu/ma in Paul – whether immaterial or material.⁴

Likewise, I do not argue that all of Paul's statements regarding the reception of the Spirit are metaphorical.⁵ In section 2.1.1. I have discussed in great

3. E.g., M.P. O'Reilly concludes his review with the words: 'Rabens's relational approach is carefully argued and will be of particular use to specialists in Pauline pneumatology and ethics, although the implications of an immaterial Spirit will cause this study to be of interest to other specializations within Pauline studies in particular and biblical studies in general (e.g., cosmology, anthropology, soteriology)' (O'Reilly, 'Review of V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*', *RelSRev* 38 [2012], 21). Cf. G. Buch-Hansen, 'Review of V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*', *TRev* 108 (2012), 118; and M.D. Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*; BZNW 187 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 131–33, who appears to misinterpret my treatment of 1 Cor. 15:35–54 as suggesting that σῶμα πνευματικόν signifies an immaterial body (however, see 3.1 below, esp. p. 96 n.71).

4. Cf. Engberg-Pedersen's approach to Paul's view of God, which is almost identical to what I say about the nature of πνεῦμα in Paul: 'Then we can ask: if Paul accepted the Stoic argument for God's existence, did he also accept the specifically Stoic *ontology* of God, which connects God directly with the pneuma? No. There is no indication of this in Romans 1. Nor can I find any such indication elsewhere. It appears, therefore, that although he knew the Stoic argument for the existence of God, Paul simply understood God as an acting person without engaging in any further speculation about his ontological status. Or differently put: Paul's God was just the Jewish God. If that is the correct conclusion, it is probably also unlikely that there is any ontological underpinning in Paul for his understanding of the functional relationship of the pneuma with God' (Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 61). However, with regard to Paul's pneumatology, Engberg-Pedersen seems to buy into an 'either Platonic or Stoic' approach to Paul (e.g., *Cosmology*, 19) without considering the option that Paul does not discuss or clearly presuppose a particular ontology of πνεῦμα – although a detailed investigation of the relevant texts shows exactly this (see ch. 3 below, esp. pp. 119–20, and ch. 7, esp. p. 249).

5. Pace Buch-Hansen, 'Review of Rabens, *Spirit*', 118.

detail how one can detect and interpret figurative language in a given text. I have applied this methodology to a number of relevant passages throughout the monograph (esp. 1QH^a 15.6–7: pp. 43–54; Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19: pp. 82–86; 1 Cor. 12:13: pp. 96–119) – with different results! In the aforementioned excursus I explicitly oppose a binary interpretation of Paul’s Spirit-language as being necessarily *either* literal *or* metaphorical (pp. 85–86).

The history of interpretation of the New Testament, and especially that of Paul, is saturated with ‘either–or’ approaches: either Stoic or Platonic, either literal or metaphorical, and: either substance-ontological or relational. In the second part of my study I develop a fresh approach to Paul which is ‘relational’ but which is designed to overcome this latter dichotomy between ‘substantial’ and ‘relational’.⁶ ‘Relational transformation’ as we see it in Paul implies a ‘substantive’ dimension. I have argued that ‘believers can “hardly fail to be transformed by a living relationship with the life-giving God”⁷ which implies that Paul’s more “substantive language” has a place in our concept of the relational work of the Spirit in Paul’s ethics too. The adjacent pairs which are often conceived as opposites (i.e. relational versus substance-ontological transformation; [functional] empowering versus [ontological] transformation; new self-understanding versus a completely new self) thus converge in our concept of *transforming relationships*’ (p. 143). In a forthcoming publication I discuss in more detail what this implies for the current debate⁸ on theosis and deification in Paul.⁹

This monograph addresses the question of how the Spirit enables believers to live according to the values of Paul’s gospel. However, it does not provide an in-depth discussion of how the ‘form and content’ of Paul’s paraenesis is shaped by his pneumatology (although, see, e.g., pp. 237–39). For this reason, Stefan Schreiber makes the valid point in his otherwise positive review that my preliminary statement that the transferral into the realm of the Spirit would mean ‘*freedom from sin, the flesh, the law, the enslaving powers, etc., . . .*’ (p. 172) is

6. See esp. pp. 138–44. Pace F. Blischke, ‘Review of V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*’, *ThLZ* 137 (2012), 682.

7. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 344.

8. With regard to this discussion, see, e.g., B.C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria*; WUNT II/314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), who categorizes the different approaches to the role of πνεῦμα in human transformation of Engberg-Pedersen and me as ‘essential-transformative’ and ‘attributive’ deification respectively (p. 104). Cf. V. Rabens, ‘Review of D.M. Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed*’, *ThLZ* 138 (2013), 446–48. I also look forward to the dialogue at the sixth conference organized by the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas’ Eastern Europe Liaison Committee, to be held in Belgrade (25–31 August 2013), where we will discuss ‘The Holy Spirit and the Church according to the New Testament’ from ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ perspectives.

9. V. Rabens, ‘*Pneuma* and the Beholding of God – Reading Paul in the Context of Philonic Mystical Traditions’, in J. Frey and J.R. Levison (eds.), *Historical Contexts of the Early Christian Notion of the Spirit*; Ekstasis (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2014), forthcoming.

an unsatisfactory answer to the question of how ethical life relates to the Jewish Torah.¹⁰ This is particularly true given that Paul says that ‘the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:4). However, as this book has a slightly different focus, I provide a nuanced discussion of the believers’ relation to sin and flesh but not with regard to the law. The question raised by Schreiber is an issue for further research.¹¹

Finally, I am thankful that the theologian Mark Saucy has published a review article of the monograph which brings the results of this exegetical study into fruitful dialogue with the *topoi* of systematic and practical theology.¹² Such dialogue was also one of the aims of the recent *Festschrift* for Max Turner, who supervised the research which has been distilled into this monograph.¹³ Max was the first one to introduce me to the academic study of New Testament pneumatology nearly two decades ago (during an undergraduate course at London School of Theology), and I have been grateful for his model of dedicated scholarship ever since.

Jena, June 2013

Volker Rabens

10. S. Schreiber, ‘Review of V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*’, *BN* 152 (2012), 142.

11. The development of my thoughts on the relationship between Spirit and law in Paul can be seen in a forthcoming article on ‘The Spirit in Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians’, in K. Warrington and T.J. Burke (eds.), *A Biblical Theology of the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 2013), section 2.1., esp. n.10 where I draw on the work of my colleague at Ruhr University Bochum, J.-C. Maschmeier, *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus: Eine Kritik alter und neuer Paulus-perspektiven*; BWANT 189 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010).

12. M. Saucy, ‘How Does the Holy Spirit Change Us? – A Review Essay’, *JBPR* 4 (2012), 109–22. I too have pointed out some further theological implications of my model in V. Rabens, “‘Indicative and Imperative’ as Substructure of Paul’s Theology-and-Ethics in Galatians? A Discussion of Divine and Human Agency in Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia”, in N.T. Wright, S.J. Hafemann and M.W. Elliott (eds.), *Galatians and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), forthcoming. Apart from that, it is worth noting that this relational model of ethical enabling in Paul shares significant parallels with the theology-and-ethics of John’s Gospel and 1 John, as I have tried to show in V. Rabens, ‘Johannine Perspectives on Ethical Enabling in the Context of Stoic and Philonic Ethics’, in J. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann (eds.), *Re-thinking the Ethics of John: “Implicit Ethics” in the Johannine Writings*; Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics III; WUNT 1/291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 114–39.

13. I.H. Marshall, V. Rabens, and C. Bennis (eds.), *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (Cambridge/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). My own essay in this volume provides a hermeneutical reflection on the experiential nature of Paul’s pneumatology (‘Power from In Between: The Relational Experience of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in Paul’s Churches’, pp. 138–55).

Preface to the First Edition

This study, submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation at London School of Theology in 2007, is not just the result of my own efforts but it owes thanks to the support of many ‘significant others’. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my *Doktorvater*, Professor Max Turner, who first directed my attention to the need for a study of Spirit and ethics in Paul and for his friendly and insightful advice at the various stages of the research. I am also grateful for the encouraging feedback of my examiners Professor James D. G. Dunn and Professor Steve Walton. Additional thanks goes to Professor Jörg Frey for accepting my thesis into the WUNT monograph series. I am also grateful to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and the Mohr Siebeck team for their helpful assistance as well as patience – due to a busy lecturing job and then a change to a new position at Bochum University (which involved moving with the family to a different part of the country) this book appears two years later than originally intended. A number of important publications have appeared in the meantime, most significantly Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit*, which came out in the very month of the completion of the present book. In the light of this recent discussion I am thankful for the fresh perspectives on religious dynamics which I have gained in the context of my work with the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities ‘Dynamics in the History of Religions’ at Bochum University, which have inspired me to expand my treatment of the dynamics between Stoic ethics and Paul in the course of updating the manuscript of this book in April 2010.

Furthermore, I would like to thank those who have financially supported this research project. Thanks goes to my parents, Heike† and Jürgen Rabens, who have supported me – not just financially – both during my undergraduate studies as well as the at early stages of research life. I thank the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation for various scholarship awards and the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* and the Theological Faculties of the University of Tübingen for a full scholarship during the years of my work with the interdisciplinary *Graduiertenkolleg* ‘Die Bibel – ihre Entstehung und ihre Wirkung’ (2002–2005). Finally, I extend my thanks to the British New Testament Society travel fund committee for sponsoring my atten-

dance at various British New Testament Conferences. It was there, at the 2000 meeting at King's College London, that I first had the chance of presenting in a seminar paper my focal theory and several parts of the argument of this dissertation.

Since then I have had the privilege of being able to present the material of this thesis at a number of national and international theological conferences. Here particular thanks goes to the New Testament research seminars of Professor Hans-Joachim Eckstein, the bilingual Colloquium for Graduates (Prof. Otto Betz†, Prof. Hermann Lichtenberger and Dr. Scott Caulley), and the New Testament research conferences at London School of Theology.

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Special thanks goes to Dr. Annette Glaw and Dr. Helen Shephard for proof-reading the manuscript of this book, and to Dr. Cor Bennema, Dr. Annette Glaw, Dr. Burkhard Reis and Dr. Johannes Woyke for engaging with different parts of the thesis.

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Finally, most important has been the love and friendship of my wife Heike. She has walked with me through the majority of this part-time project, and she has not shrunk back from giving a lot of her time and energy so that this book could see its completion. I dedicate this study to her and to our two children, Lena and Thilo, who often have lit up my day.

Bochum, April 2010

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