

The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament and Its Influence on Pauline Thought

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1. Introduction

The understanding of God as Father is at the very centre of Israel's religion as presented in the Old Testament. In periods of crisis, Israel would appeal to the divine paternity in her quest for deliverance. This idea is also at the centre of the presentation of the History of Salvation in the New Testament. Jesus, who is at the centre of that history, is identified as the Son of the Father, and he actually accomplishes his role because of that status as the Son of the Father (Luke 1:32; John 6:27,40; 8:36; Rom 1:3-4; 8:29; Gal 4:4-7; Heb 1:2,5; 5:5; 7:28). The influence of this idea of God as Father helps to understand the different contours of Pauline thought. In recent years, scholars have been on the quest for what could be considered as the theological centre of Pauline thought.¹ Significantly, the theme of the Fatherhood of God has not featured prominently in these discussions, as emphasis has been laid on other themes such as righteousness, faith, justification, reconciliation, participation, etc. The present study does not claim to answer the difficult question of the centre of Pauline theology, but it argues that the understanding of God as Father is one of the most influential ideas at the background of the whole fabric of Pauline thinking. This understanding of God ties together various threads of his theologizing apostolate and shows powerfully his Old Testament roots. The theme also helps to make Paul's teaching very relevant to the contemporary society.

2. Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament

The term "father" is a terminology associated with human beings and it is usually applied to masculine persons. The identification of God as father in the biblical text must be seen on the level of anthropomorphic use of language. But this does not diminish the depth of the meaning communicated in the use of that terminology. There are some scholars who tend to see it today as an antiquated anthropomorphism and wish that it be dropped in response to new philosophical understandings of divine nature. However, one can hardly avoid anthropomorphic language as long as one gets on reading the biblical text. The important thing is to be aware that the text uses images to express deeper ideas.

2.1 Use of the Term "Father" in the Old Testament

The word "father", in its Hebrew form *'āb*, occurs over 1,200 times in the Hebrew Bible,² and it is applied to different categories of persons. These applications reveal the basic understanding of the term in these texts. In these applications, father is used in the following senses: a. one who begets or gives life; b. one who occupies a position of authority, such as an older man (1 Sam 24:12), a teacher or prophetic master (2 Kgs 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), a priest (Judg 17:10; 18:19), protector (Ps 68:6; Job 29:16; Sir 4:10; Isa 22:21); c. ancestor or grandfather (Gen 28:13; 49:29); d. founder of a group, guild or occupation (Gen 4:20; Jer 35:6,8; cf. 1 Macc 2:549; e. a counsellor (Gen 45:8; see also 1 Macc 2:65; 11:32); f. creator.³

¹ See Joseph Plevnik, "The Centre of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 51 (1989) 461-478; ID, "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 65 (2003) 554-567.

² E. Jenni, "*'āb* father," *TLOT* 1, 1-2.

³ See H. Ringgren, "*'ābh*," *TDOT* 1, 7-8.

2.2 The Attribution of Fatherhood to God in the Old Testament

The application of fatherhood to God in the Old Testament must be seen in the sense of the begetter of life. This basic idea ties together all the ideas associated with the divine paternity. From this basic idea, one can discuss the divine paternity from two perspectives: direct attribution of fatherhood to God and indirect attribution of fatherhood to God.

2.2.1 Direct Attribution of Fatherhood to God

There are three contexts in which the title father is applied to God. These include: the personal names, as father of the people or nation, and as father of the king.

a. God as Father in Personal Names: The first context in which God is referred to as father is in personal names. These names may have varying interpretations, but the more obvious ones are: *abiyahu* – YHWH is my father; *abner/abiner* – my (divine) father is a lamp, etc.⁴

b. God as Father of the People: The second context of the application of fatherhood to God is as father of the people or nation. Many texts come into view here. First, God is likened to a father who has compassion on his people (Ps 103:13), a father who reproves the child as a wisdom teacher (Prov 3:12). Secondly, YHWH is posited as the father of Israel who figures as his firstborn (Exod 4:22; see also Deut 32:6; Hos 11:1; Isa 1:2; 45:9-11; 63:16; Jer 31:9).

In many texts, the people of Israel are regarded as children of YHWH, either in the singular or in the plural (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; 32:5,6,19; Isa 1:2,4; 30:1,9; 43:6; 63:8; Jer 3:14,19; 4:22; 31:9,20; Hos 2:1; 11:1). In Deut 14:1-2, there is the parallel identification of Israel as *banim* (children) of YHWH (14:1) and as *'am qādōsh* (14:2). H. F. Fuhs interprets this parallelism as implying that the Israelites are holy because they are YHWH's children and his family.⁵ This view would imply that Israelites were already YHWH's children before becoming holy, that is, the identity as children is logically prior to the identity as holy ones. But that raises the problem of explaining the basis for their identity as YHWH's children. A contrary position argued here is that the identity as holy ones is prior to the identity as children. In other words, Israelites are YHWH's children only because they constitute a *qōdesh* (holy) or *'am qādōsh* (holy people). That is actually the logic of Deut 14:1-2:

"You are children to YHWH your God. You must not gash your heads or shave your foreheads for the dead. For you are a holy people to YHWH your God and he chose you to become his *segullah* people from all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

The particle *ki* in 14:2 unites the ideas in the two verses, making v. 2 a subordinate clause to v. 1 which is the main clause. The identity as YHWH's children is because Israel is a holy people, which itself is a result of the election as YHWH's *s^egullâh* people (treasure people). Here Deuteronomy unifies the themes of sonship and holiness under the umbrella of election.⁶ Israel is referred to as YHWH's *'am nahalah*,

⁴ For details, see Dana M. Pike, "Names, Theophoric," *ABD* 4,1018-1019.

⁵ According to Fuhs ("Heiliges Volk Gottes," 151.) "Die Israeliten sind YHWH's Kinder, seine Familie und insofern 'heilig'."

⁶ The word *segullah* is related to two Akkadian lexemes, *sikiltu*, meaning "private property", and *sukallu*, meaning "court official" or "minister of a king". Most scholars consider *s^egullâh* as the Hebrew cognate of the Akkadian *sikiltu* because of the sense of "private property". For this interpretation, see H. Wildberger, "*s^egullâh*," *TLOT* 2, 791-793; R. D. Patterson, "*sgl, s^egullâh*," *TWOT* 2 (1980) 617; E. Carpenter, "*s^egullâh*," *NIDOTTE* 3 224.

meaning “a people of YHWH’s inheritance” (Deut 4:20)⁷ and *‘am s^egullâh* “a treasure people” (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). Both titles are semantically equivalent as expressions of Israel's special relationship with YHWH.⁸ The main feature here is the idea of election, since a special part of the same kind of property is chosen.

The Deuteronomic theology of election finds its clearest expression in Deut 7:6-8 where the election is attributed to YHWH's love for Israel, a love theme that is also expressed in the election theology of the Prophets. Israel's history begins with YHWH's love and is guided by this love which is called *‘ahabat ‘ôlām* (everlasting love) as in these words: "With an everlasting love I have loved you; because of this I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jer 31:3; cf. Isa 54:8). This is in line with Hos 11:1: "While Israel was a child I loved him and from Egypt I called my son." The logic here is that love comes first, then election, the consequence of which is sonship.

The link between election and sonship is also seen in Isaiah where the Servant is frequently identified as the chosen one (Isa 41:8-9; 42:1; 43:10; 44:1-2; 45:4). There is an identity between YHWH's children (*banim*) in Isa 43:6 and his chosen Servant in 43:10. In Isaiah 65 where the plural is used, YHWH's chosen ones (65:9,15,22) are also called his Servants (65:8,9,14,15) and his people (65:10,19,22), and they are the designated dwellers on his holy mountain (65:9,25). In 65:23 these chosen servants of YHWH are called *zera' bekôrê YHWH*, a phrase which may be rendered as "a race of YHWH's firstlings". A similar idea is found in Hosea where YHWH's identity as Israel's maker (Hos 8:14) is linked to the fact that Israel's ancestors were found as first-fruits by YHWH in the desert (Hos 9:10; cf. Deut 32:10). By reason of the election, Israel becomes YHWH's first-born son, an idea that is expressed in Exod 4:22 and Jer 31:9,20.

In Jer 2:3 Israel is described as a *qōdesh* (a holy entity) for YHWH, being the first-fruits of his harvest.⁹ According to the law, the first-born is holy and belongs to YHWH, a law valid for both the first-born of humans (Exod 13:2,13,15; 22:28; Num 3:13) and of plants and animals (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Lev 23:10; Num 15:20,21; Deut 15:19; 26:2,10; Ezek 20:40; 44:30; 48:14). The holiness of the first-born entitles him to act as priest (Num 3,12-13), a fact that shows Israel's role as priest among the nations. Israel's expected mode of being in the world is aptly expressed by the term *qōdesh* (a holy entity). In a joint study, M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz point out that in Priestly works Israel's holiness comes as a result of God's presence in her midst, while in non-Priestly works holiness is a direct consequence of Israel's election.¹⁰ In either way, the attribute of *qāḏôsh* (holy) belongs to YHWH alone and is acquired only by being dedicated to him, a dedication which makes one to become a sacred thing or *qōdesh*. As B. J. Schwartz points out, the expression *anshê qōdesh* in Exod 22:30 is better understood as "people who constitute a *qōdesh*", meaning, a people who belong to YHWH as his special possession.¹¹

In the light of these facts, some clarifications become necessary: 1. Everyone who becomes a *qōdesh* (holy entity) for YHWH becomes his son or daughter, and thus a member of his family. From this perspective, YHWH's children are as many as his holy ones. 2. One can say that the community of YHWH's children is formed only around the sphere where YHWH manifests his presence, and this explains the central position

⁷ For more on this, see Luke E. Ijezie, *The Interpretation of the Hebrew Word ‘am (People) in Samuel-Kings* (European University Studies, series XXIII Theology, 830; Bern: Peter Lang, 2007) 128-129.

⁸ There are 8 occurrences of *s^egullâh* in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17; Ps 135:4; Qoh 2:8; 1 Chr 29:3), and in these contexts, it expresses Israel's relationship with YHWH, except in Qoh 2:8 where the reference is to a royal treasure and in 1 Chr 29:3 where it identifies a special royal property of gold and silver dedicated by the king for use in the temple. In all these occurrences, *s^egullâh* is used in the sense of that part of one's property which is dedicated for special use. Cf. Wildberger, “*s^egullâh*,” *TLOT* 2, 791-793; J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Waco, Texas 1987), 262.

⁹ See H. F. Fuhs, “Heiliges Volk Gottes”, in *Unterwegs zur Kirche. Alttestamentliche Konzeptionen* (ed. J. Schreiner) (QD 110; Freiburg 1987) 152.

¹⁰ M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (eds), *Purity and Holiness. The Heritage of Leviticus*, (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Leiden 2000) 10.

¹¹ See B. J. Schwartz, “Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions,” in *Purity and Holiness. The Heritage of Leviticus*, 47-59.

of Zion. One of the central themes of Isaiah 40-66 is the repopulation of the destroyed city of Zion, and here the city is considered as Mother (49:14), while YHWH functions as the Husband of Zion (Isa 54:5; 62:3-5).¹² All Zion inhabitants are consequently children of Lady-Zion and children of YHWH. However, the group will be joined by other "step children" who will be integrated into the fold, thus leading to the full restoration of Zion-Jerusalem in her motherly splendour (49:20-21; 51:17-23; 54:1-17). In this new state of affairs, all nations¹³ who gather to worship YHWH in Zion will be assigned to Zion as adopted children (see Ps 87:4-7), thus making Zion the Mother of the universal children of YHWH.

c. God as Father of the King: The third context of the direct application of fatherhood to God is in reference to the king who is considered as the son of God. The point is that the notion of filiation to YHWH is intrinsically connected with the phenomenon of holiness, such that, as one becomes a *qōdesh* one automatically becomes a son or daughter of the Deity. This explains why the king is considered a son of God, being a holy person (*qōdesh*) himself by the nature of his office.

It is said of the king in Ps 2:7: "You are my son, today I have begotten you". The begetting is localized in time as "today" which refers to the day of the king's enthronement as YHWH's own elected king on mount Zion, the holy mountain (Ps 2:6). This is called the adoption formula by which the Davidic king is adopted as a son of God upon his enthronement. See also Ps 89:27; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron 28:6. The king becomes God's son by the very act of being crowned king. This is part of the divine promise to David, through the prophet Nathan, that David's son would be adopted as God's son: "I will be his father and he shall be my son" (2 Sam 7:14; cf. Ps 89:26). This was seen as the covenant between YHWH and David. The Davidic king therefore becomes the begotten son of God on the day of his coronation. This ideology of divine sonship guarantees the stability of the Davidic dynasty as well as the divine assistance of the kingship. According to Gerhard von Rad, "unlike in Egypt where the king is physically begotten by the deity, Israel never understood the king's sonship to God mythologically; instead it took it in the sense of an historical legal act, in virtue of which the king was summoned into a quite special relationship *vis-à-vis* Jahweh."¹⁴ The relationship carries with it many legal rights. As von Rad points out, the Davidic king, in his status as son, sits at God's right hand (see Ps 110:1). Thus, he has the prerogative of power over all other kings. The status as son of God also gives him the right of inheritance, and this divine right entitles him to lord it over other nations.

One recurrent point in this discussion is the relationship between holiness and filiation to God. The filial status is achieved through holiness. To be holy is to be a child of God. This is the basic Old Testament idea of YHWH's children.

2.2.2 Indirect Attribution of Fatherhood to God in the Old Testament

¹² For discussion on this imagery of Zion-Jerusalem as wife, see K. P. Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Library Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville 1994) 165-204; U. Berges, "'Ich bin der Mann, der Elend sah' (Klgl 3,1). Zionstheologie als Weg aus der Krise", *BZ* 44 (200) 18-19. Cf. J. F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison", *JSOT* 44 (1989) 88-107.

¹³ But according to D. E. Hollenberg ("Nationalism and 'the Nations' in Isaiah XL-LV", *VT* 19 [1969] 23-36), Deutero-Isaiah's use of foreign nations is a veiled reference to the foster children of Israel, whom the Servant would invite to return. According to him, these nations are designated variously as "the coastlands", "the peoples", "ends of the earth", "kings", and "queens". Hollenberg distinguishes three groups which Deutero-Isaiah associates with Israel: a. the Servant; b. the rest of Israel apart from the Servant; c. the lost Israelites living among the nations. The first group is the remnant constituting the righteous Israel and who, thus, would play the Servant role of restoring the rest of the population. The second group does not have the righteousness of the Servant, but they retain their Israelite identity and have been forgiven of their sins. The third group, described by Hollenberg as "crypto-Israelites", consists of those who have forsaken their Israelite identity by identifying with the nations and their gods, thereby losing their national purity. These are thus regarded as foster children. See Hollenberg, "Nationalism," 25-29, 35-36.

¹⁴G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I (Original in German, Munich 1957; London 1975) 320

The basic definition of father is one who begets or gives life. Included in this is also the role of caring and defending that life. From this perspective, one can theologically explain God's fatherhood from different parts of the Old Testament even when the title father is not directly used.

a. God as father of all created things – the fact of creating is an act of fathering. In this sense, the Creator of all things is by that fact the father of all things. The implication is that all things have the right to claim God as their father.

b. God as father of Adam – Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. In this way he is the son of God. This point is later mentioned in the genealogical table in Luke 3:23-38, where Adam is referred to as the son of God (3:38). In Genesis, Adam is presented as the father of all humans. This entitles all humans to call God Father wherever they live and in whatever religion or race. In this way, the book of Genesis directly or indirectly recognizes the universality of God's Fatherhood.

3. Influence of Divine Fatherhood on Pauline Thought

A very good way to understand Paul's understanding of the Fatherhood of God is to note the fact that he equates God as Father, and frequently uses Father and God interchangeably (Rom 1:7; 8:15; 15:6; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:24; 2 Cor 1:3; 6:18; Gal 1:4; 4:6; Eph 1:17; 4:6; 1 Thess 3:13). This is best expressed in 1 Cor 8:5-6 where he says "Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as in fact there are many gods and many lords; yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." For Paul here, there is only one God and he is the Father of all things. Jesus Christ is presented as the one who mediates all things in creation.¹⁵ Jesus mediates to the world the presence of the Father. This he does because he possesses the Spirit of the Father. The Spirit plays a pivotal role in Paul. The Spirit is presented as the gift of the Father, which he gives to humans to make them share in the Son's experience of Abba. Romans and Galatians are based on this theme. According to Jürgen Moltmann, "The Spirit of God the Father becomes the Spirit of Christ, and Christ's history in the Spirit becomes *the history of the Spirit of Christ*."¹⁶ A brief discussion of a number of Pauline texts may clarify the Pauline perspective on the Fatherhood of God.

3.1 Rom 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Letter to the Romans is judged by many commentators as the most elaborate and most systematic exposition of Paul's theology. In it one finds a synthesis of many ideas presented in fragmentary forms in other letters. In the opening of the letter, Paul regards his apostolate as that of preaching the gospel of God (*euangelion theou*). By God, here, he means the Father. According to him, this "gospel" was already promised through the prophets in the Old Testament. By this Paul draws the continuity between this new gospel and the Old Testament. What Paul means by "gospel of God" here is actually God's intervention in Christ.¹⁷ This intervention is concretised in the raising of Jesus from the dead. This was the action of the Father. So Paul's preaching is about the action of the Father. This point is developed in all the letters. In fact, he sees his apostolate as that of preaching "the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1). According to Paul, the

¹⁵ Jan Lambrecht, *Collected Studies on Pauline Literature and on the Book of Revelation* (AnBib 147; Rome 2001) 65.

¹⁶ J. Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology. Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 311.

¹⁷ See Douglas Moo, *Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 42-43.

Father shows his love for humanity by giving his Son (Rom 5:8-10; 8:32), and this gift is the only hope for salvation (Rom 5:8-10; 8:32-39; 1 Thess 5:9-10). All these go to show what is regarded as the theocentric nature of Pauline Christology.¹⁸

Another significant point of this opening section of the Letter to the Romans is the identification of the spirit of holiness as the principle that constitutes Jesus as Son of God with power (1:4). This spiritual transformation occurs through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This text is a difficult one for interpreters as it appears to give the impression that Jesus became the Son of God only through the resurrection. The text can, however, be understood in the sense that the resurrection revealed Jesus in his power as the Son of God.¹⁹ This status as Son is as a result of the Spirit of holiness which Jesus possesses. One notes here the close relationship between the two themes of holiness and Sonship. The Sonship of Christ is based on his possession of the Spirit of holiness from the Father. One recalls that in the Old Testament, the holiness of persons makes them God's children, and the king's identification as son of God is based on his holy status acquired through coronation. In the same way, Paul sees Christ's Sonship as based on his possession of the Father's Spirit which is the Spirit of holiness. This idea plays a central role in the elaboration of Paul's thinking.

3.2 Rom 8:14-17

In Romans 8, Paul develops his theology of life in the Spirit. His basic argument is that the Spirit is the agent of renewal and recreation. The Spirit is the principle of holiness, and the concept of filiation is based on the possession of this Spirit (Rom 8:14-17). According to Paul, all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (8:14). This point is also elaborated in Gal 4:6. In saying this, Paul equates the status of Christians with the same status ascribed to the Israelites in the Old Testament, where they are frequently designated as children of YHWH (Exod 4:22-23; Deut 14:1; Isa 1:2-4; Jer 3:19; Hos 11:1). With the possession of the Spirit, the believer's relationship to God is not as a slave but as a child, having been set free from the status of slavery and fear (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:7). This relationship to God is not a natural one through physical begetting but is obtained by self-identification with the Christ through the Spirit. The great consequence of this new status is what Paul calls the Abba experience, which is the experience of God as a personal Father. It is an experience of a deep sense of intimate union and confidence. Only the Spirit can effect such a situation. Thus the possession of the Spirit is the experience of God as Father. It is also the experience of Christ as both Brother and Lord. It is an experience of membership of a great divine family, the confines of which are limitless. The Abba experience is a profound experience of being part of an immense universe of security and tranquility. It is a sense of being finally at home. In this way Pauline theology embodies the Old Testament in an extraordinary way.

Just as the Israelites were entitled to YHWH's own heritage as a result of their filial status, similarly the filial adoption to God endows Christians with legal rights as children in God's house. Thus, Christians have full rights as inheritors in God's house, being full members of God's family. They are co-heirs with Christ who is the Firstborn of many brothers. This idea is also developed in Gal 4:4-7: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God."

The Spirit of God, thus, marks believers out as the children of God. This spiritual separation is by definition a state of holiness. Here the Old Testament link between holiness and divine sonship is furthered. This is clearly expressed by Paul in 2 Cor 6:17-18: "Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them,

¹⁸ Plevnik, "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," 562.

¹⁹ See Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988) 46-47.

says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

4. Contemporary Relevance of God's Fatherhood

The theme of God's Fatherhood meets with many challenges in the contemporary world. A number of such may be articulated.

1. There are some in the contemporary society who tend to deemphasize the idea of the Fatherhood of God, treating it as an anthropomorphism that has become outmoded. The fact that God is Spirit makes it difficult for such currents of thought to confidently limit him to the human category of father. The argument sounds too abstract as most human approaches to God remain cultural and anthropomorphic. The Fatherhood of God is central to concept of God in most world religions, including African Traditional Religion. The Hebrew religion is no exception to this. The understanding of God as Father remains a fundamental aspect of the biblical faith. It is a theme that helps one to understand the different contours of the biblical text, and the idea runs through the whole Bible. Without the understanding of the role of fatherhood in the biblical text, one can hardly understand the real import of the Christ event.

2. Many today regard the application of the term father to God as a reflection of a patriarchal society that is no longer in consonance with modern principles of gender equality. Sometimes, there is the tendency to emphasize the maternal qualities of God. In fact, some scholars today regard God as both Father and Mother.

3. On the social level, the crisis of family values has also affected the attitude to fatherhood. The prevalent trend in single parenting and the increasing practice of same sex unions have tended to deemphasize the idea of fatherhood. All the exalted notions of the role of the father are no longer considered tenable by such social currents.

4. Despite all these ideological approaches to the issue of fatherhood, the attribution of universal Fatherhood to God is a powerful weapon to unite people in a world marked by various forms of rancour and exclusivist ideologies. In a country like Nigeria, with challenges of religious pluralism and religious conflict, the idea of a common Fatherhood of God can become a powerful basis for reconciliation and unanimity. The basic Old Testament position is that holiness is the fundamental feature that makes one a child of God. In Pauline theology, this holiness is transmitted through the Spirit. Thus, as the Spirit blows wherever it wills, one can say that every human person moved by the Spirit is a child of God irrespective of belief system or ideology.

5. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted a very important nuance in the understanding of God as Father in the Old Testament and its influence on Pauline thought. One can hardly understand Paul today without paying good attention to his explicit and implicit ideas about the Fatherhood of God. Paul bases his teaching on the Old Testament understanding of holiness as the spiritual condition for divine sonship. While in the Old Testament such holiness is expressed by ritual separation from the world, in the Pauline text, the Fatherhood of God is experienced through the agency of the Spirit.