I am pleased to dedicate this essay to Prof. David E. Aune. I first encountered David early in my graduate studies at The University of Chicago by noticing that his name appeared on the borrower’s card of every book I found in the library. I remember wondering if he had read every book from and about the ancient world. Then, I began to read his own publications and was further convinced of the comprehensiveness of his scholarship. I finally met David in person at a meeting of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research and was immediately taken by his friendliness and encouragement to a beginning scholar, and I have enjoyed our professional relationship ever since. After David left Saint Xavier University and I assumed the Biblical Studies position there, someone asked me if I had replaced David Aune. I responded, “No, but I have moved into his former office.” I had already discovered that David was not replaceable unless, of course, one possessed encyclopedic knowledge of the ancient world. Although I possess no such knowledge, I am pleased to dedicate this essay to someone who does.

2. Introduction

Studies of Pauline pneumatology demonstrate the methodological importance of contextualizing Paul’s pneumatological statements. In these studies, context includes not only the immediate literary context but also and more importantly the conceptual context of Paul’s statements about *pneuma*. Thus, James Dunn emphasizes the theological context of Paul’s pneumatological statements while Gordon Fee concentrates on the experiential and Friedrich W. Horn focuses on the
history-of-religions context of these same statements.\(^1\) The conclusions reached in these studies underscore the significance of context for understanding Pauline pneumatology. Dunn’s theological emphasis leads him to describe Paul’s conception of the Holy Spirit primarily as one of the three aspects of the beginning of salvation. Fee’s concentration on the experiential context predisposes him to portray Paul’s understanding of the Holy Spirit as God’s empowering presence. Horn’s focus on the history-of-religions context brings him to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit for Paul is both the functional and material (stofflich) down payment (Angel; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Rom 8:23). The works of Dunn, Fee, and Horn are representative of other studies on Pauline pneumatology that demonstrate the methodological importance of context.

The purpose of the present essay is not to evaluate the merits of these various contextual proposals but simply to introduce a contextual consideration that has yet to enter the discussion in any significant way.\(^2\) Ancient medical texts frequently present physiological conceptions of pneuma that provide a productive context for understanding Paul’s pneumatological statements. In particular, these texts present ways in which pneuma enters the human body and produces dynamic, rational, health-giving, and life-giving effects. Obviously, what these texts mean by pneuma differs from Paul’s conception of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the similarities between these texts and Paul’s pneumatological statements are striking and illuminating. Following a brief description of the physiological conception of pneuma in these texts, the present essay will describe some of the more interesting similarities between these texts and Paul’s statements about the Spirit.


\(^2\) An exception is Dale B. Martin’s *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Martin discusses many of the same medical texts as the present essay regarding the role of pneuma “in and around the human body” (p. xiii). He (pp. 21–25) has a concise discussion of the “pneumatic body” that correctly assesses pneuma as “a kind of ‘stuff’ that is the agent of perception, motion, and life itself.” Although working with similar medical texts, the present essay attempts neither to correlate this medical understanding with Paul’s higher-status, upper class opponents nor to limit the discussion to issues arising only in Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians.