

African Journal of Contextual Theology
 SIST, Attakwu – Enugu
 P.O. Box 9696, Enugu, Nigeria
ajct@sistenugu.com

Subscriptions

The *African Journal of Contextual Theology – AJCT* – (ISSN 2141-3037) is published annually. The subscription price is the following:

Nigeria: N500 per issue

Foreign: US\$20.00 per issue (including postage)

Payment may be made in cash or by cheque, payable to:

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu
Enugu, Nigeria

The issues are available from Spiritan International School of Theology (cf. address above).

Permissions

For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles / information from this journal, please visit www.sistenugu.com / SIST Journal.

All editorial correspondence should be sent to:

The editor-in-chief

African Journal of Contextual Theology

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: nwachukwums@gmail.com ; editorajct@yahoo.com

Advertising

Enquiries about advertising and requests for review of Books should be sent to:

The Editor – Advertising

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: ajct@sistenugu.com

Journal Logo: the logo of the Journal is the map of Africa and the SIST logo, with the symbolic depiction of the Holy Spirit and the book. The Holy Spirit inspires our studies (the book) and the context (Africa) in which we do theology.



All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means without prior written permission of Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu – Enugu, Nigeria.

Typeset, by SIST Publications.

Printed and bound by

Real Images

6 Bishop Ayogu Street,

Uwani – Enugu

08038814020, 07057422314

TWO

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS EFFECTIVE DIVINE POWER: THE WITNESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Philip Igbo, CMF

Introduction

This article seeks to survey the presence and activity of the Spirit (*rûah*) in the OT. From the dawn of creation the *rûah-yhwh* operates as the power by which God created the heaven and its hosts. The Spirit of God is not only a dynamic principle of creation, it also sustains creation. The divine *rûah* is the empowering Spirit (cf. Exod 31:3; Ezek 2:2; 3:12). The divine *rûah* appears as an occasional charismatic force that empowers selected persons, such as the judges and prophets, and endows them with extraordinary power, insight, wisdom etc. to accomplish specific tasks within the salvation history. The Spirit of God is generally understood as the force behind the prophetic activity. Many of the OT prophetic oracles were given under the inspiration of the Spirit. The divine *rûah* is active in effecting spiritual renewal of the people.

Rûah 'elohîm in the OT

The Hebrew word *rûah*, which is always translated by the Greek *pneuma*, has a very broad semantic range. The word is used first to denote wind or a breath of air. Secondly, it is used for the force that vivifies man – the principle of life or breath and the seat of knowledge. Finally, it indicates the life of God himself,

the force by which he acts and causes action, both at the physical and at the spiritual level.¹ Its root is *rwh* which most probably means to “breathe life,” “be refreshed,” or to “revive.” The fundamental idea is that the Spirit gives, holds, and sustains life.²

The word *rûah* occurs 378 times in the OT. The word is most of the time used as a feminine noun. This feminine gender here does not mean that the Spirit is feminine; it is only a grammatical gender. Western Semitic languages contain words cognate to the Hebrew *rûah*. These include the Ugaritic *rh*, “wind”; the Aramaic *rwh*, “wind, spirit”; and the Arabic *rih*, “wind”, and *ruh*, “vital breath”,³ which are both derived from *rāha*, “to blow”. In the Hebrew Bible the word *rûah* is used for both “spirit” and “wind.” This identification is understandable. The wind is powerful; it is irresistible in its force. It is also mysterious.

The LXX renders this word as *pneuma*, “wind, spirit” (264 times) and as *avemos*, “wind” (49 times). *Rûah* as a designation for the wind is necessarily something in motion with the power to set other things in motion.⁴ *Rûah* originally means “breath” strictly in terms of dynamic vitality. *Rûah* is conceived as the principle which gives life to the body; it is the breath of life, life giving force or vital force. The Spirit is also regarded as the seat

¹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, New York: The Crossroad Pub. Co., 2015, p.3.

² J. Moskala, “The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 24/2 (2013): p.23 (18-58).

³ E. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Diccionario Teologico Manual del Antiguo Testamento*, tras. R. Godoy, Madrid: Cristiandad, 1985, 2:914-915.

⁴ A. Albert; C. Westermann, “*rûah*, Spirit” in *TLOT* 3, 1971, p.1203.

of emotions, intellectual power, and the seat of rational and religious perception. It gives one insight into divine mysteries.⁵ The spirit is also regarded as the inner essence of God; this interpretation is based on the fact that this dynamic force issues from God. The *rûah* was for the Jews a force, a principle of action, that which causes (one) to act, a life-energy.

In the OT, the term *rûah* is sometimes used in reference to the "Spirit of God" (*rûah'elohîm*, Grk: *pneuma theou*) or "Spirit of the Lord" (*rûah-yhwh*, Grk: *pneuma kuriou*). The phrase *rûah'elohîm* (Spirit of God) appears 16 times in Hebrew, *rûah-yhwh* (Spirit of the Lord) 25 times, and *rûah qadoš* (Holy Spirit) 3 times (Ps 51:11 [13]; Isa 63:10, 11). The spirit is holy because it comes from God (who, by nature is holy); its reality belongs to the sphere of God's existence.⁶

Spirit as antithesis of Flesh

The *rûah* in the OT is not disincarnate. It is rather that which animates the body. Spirit stands for transcendent divine power, and in contrast with flesh (*bāšār*), which in the OT refers to man in his weakness and transitoriness (Isa 40:6). "Flesh" is the purely earthly reality of man and is characterized by the fact that it is weak and corruptible⁷: "The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit (Isa 31:3). Isaiah declares this in order to dissuade Jews from looking to the Egyptians for support.

⁵ F. Baumgärtel, "Pneuma, Pneumatikos," in *TDNT* 6, G. Friedrich (Ed), Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968, p.361.

⁶ Yves Congar, 2015, p.4.

⁷ Yves Congar, 2015, p.3.

Biblical authors speak of the Spirit as both omnipresent: “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps 139:7) and omniscient: “Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or as his counselor has instructed him?” (Isa 40:13). The *rûah* denotes God’s incorruptibility and sustaining power, his omniscience (Ps 139:7); his unfathomable power and wisdom as Creator (Isa 40:13). Isa 40:13 may be speaking of the *rûah’elohîm* as an active and life-giving force. By using *rûah* Deutero-Isaiah is not pointing to the agent of God in creation, but to the intelligent centre of the being of God himself.⁸

Often the divine *rûah* functions as the *alter ego* of Yahweh, dwelling in the midst of Israel like the divine glory (Hag 2:5).⁹ In a wide sense *rûah* is used to talk about God’s presence or activity in the world, or within human nature.¹⁰

The *rûah* as God’s Creative Power

The *rûah’elohîm* describes the creative action of God upon the chaos (*tohû*). The first biblical mention of “the Spirit of God” (Gen 1:2c) describes his role and function at creation. Here the P writer says that the earth prior to creation was a “formless void” (*tohû wabohû*) and the *rûah’elohîm* “swept/hovered (*merahepet*) over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2). The word *merahepet* (hovering) is used only here and in Deut 32:11 where it describes

⁸ M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” www.biblicalstudies.org.uk.

⁹ M. V. Van Pelt / W. C. Kaiser, Jr. / D. I. Block, in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, CD Rom Edition.

¹⁰ G. W. H. Lampe, “Holy Spirit” in *The IDB* 4, G. A. Buttrick (Ed), New York: Abingdon Press, 1962, p.626.

the care, protection, cover, and support of the little ones by an eagle (see also Isa 31:5). The word *merahepet* is a piel participle feminine singular of the verb *rāhap* – “to hover, fly, flutter”. *Rāhap* clearly refers to a vigorous motion in Deut 32:11. In Gen 1:2, it refers to the hard blowing of the wind.¹¹

The *rûah 'elohîm* is, not only an uncreated element, but also as a creating power (cf Isa 40:13; Ps 33:6; Job 26:13). Gen 1:2 presents God as author of life, without whom there is no life. God calls things into being by the agency of his word and the power of his life-giving spirit. Here God's Spirit creates life, thus changing an abiotic state of the earth to a biotic state of vegetable, animal, and human life by a divine command.¹²

The *rûah yhwh* (Spirit of God) is the active, dynamic creative principle (Gen 2:7), which gives physical life. Everything living, all physical life derives from this dynamism. The “breath,” “wind,” or “Spirit” of God is the creative power which brings life to the formless chaos in the beginning of all things (Gen. 1:2). The Psalmist says, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their hosts by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). Here in Ps 33:6, ‘breath’ of his (Yahweh’s) mouth (*rûah pîw*) is paralleled by ‘the word of the Lord’ (*bidbar yhwh* [‘*ādonāy*]).¹³

¹¹ Cf. P. Van Imschoot, “L’Esprit de Jahve, Source de Vie dan L’AT,” *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935, 490; quoted by M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” www.biblicalstudies.org.uk.

¹² R. Ouro, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2 Abiotic or Chaotic?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 38/1 (2000) p.67 (pp.59-67).

¹³ M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” www.biblicalstudies.org.uk.

The life giving power of the *rûah yhw* is underlined in Gen 2:4b-24 by the Yahwist writer. The Yahwist tells us that God, after having formed *'ādām* from the dust of the earth (*'adāmāh*) breathed into his nostrils the “breath of life” (*nišmat hayyîm*), as a result of which man (*'ādām*) became a living being (*nepheš hayyâ*, Gen 2:7). Man, therefore, is more than a God-shaped piece of earth. He has within him a divine element - “the breath of life” (*nišmat hayyîm*).

The *Rûah* as Sustaining Power

The Spirit of God is not only a dynamic principle of creation.¹⁴ The creative power of God is unfathomable and even mysterious.¹⁵ The Spirit of God creates, but also sustains creation. The author of Job says, “The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). The Psalmist says, “When you send forth your spirit, they are created....” (Ps 104:30). The verb used here (*bārā'*) is the verb which is used of God alone, creating. However, compared with v.29, “When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust,” it becomes natural to interpret the function of *rûah* in Ps 104 as vitalizing of what has already been created. *Rûah* in Ps 104:29-30 is used synonymously with *nišmah* (breath) in Gen 2:7, where this distinction between original creation and subsequent vitalizing is clear.¹⁶ If God withdraws his *rûah*, the *nešamah*, all

¹⁴ J. Moskala, “The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 24/2 (2013): p.27 (18-58).

¹⁵ F. Baumgärtel, “Pneuma, Pneumatikos,” in *TDNT* 6, 1968, p.366.

¹⁶ M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” www.biblicalstudies.org.uk.

flesh disintegrates into dust (Ps 104:29ff; Job 34:14f). In Ps 104:30 as in Isa 42:5, *rûah* is paralleled by *nišmah* and reflects the conception of Gen 2:7. It refers, not to the Creator Spirit, but to the vitalizing of what has already been created. It is this breath of God's life that "fills the world and holds together all things" (Wis 1:7; Isa 34:16).¹⁷

The Role of the Spirit in the charismatic leadership

The Spirit of the Lord is regarded as the source of the endowment of selected persons, such as the judges and kings, and guides or drives them to accomplish specific tasks within Israel's salvation history.¹⁸ He is the empowering Spirit (cf. Exod 31:3; Ezek 2:2; 3:12).

Exod 31:3 gives us the first explicit statement about the Lord filling a person with his Spirit. The Lord said about Bazalel: "I have filled (Heb. *male'*) him with divine spirit..." (Exod 31:3). What is stressed here is that Bazalel is endowed with specific abilities and four of the Spirit's gifts are enumerated - wisdom, understanding, knowledge and all kinds of skills."¹⁹

Moses is a model of Spirit-filled leadership. When the burden of leading the Hebrew people in their difficult journey through the desert became too heavy to bear, Moses complained to the Lord.

¹⁷ J. Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, London: SCM, 1997, p.24.

¹⁸ J. Breck, *Scripture in Tradition*, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, p.198; M. V. Van Pelt; W. C. Kaiser; D. I. Block, in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, CD Rom Edition; cf. G. W. H. Lampe, "Holy Spirit," in *IDB* 4, 1962, pp.626-627.

¹⁹ J. Moskala, "The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (JATS), 24/2 (2013): p.30 (18-58).

God responds to Moses' groaning by taking some of the spirit that is on Moses and putting it on the seventy of Israel's elders so that they could share the burden of leadership with him (Num 11:16-17; 11:25a). When the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied...." (Num 11:25b). Their prophesying, though a one-time and unique event, demonstrates that they have been set apart for a special work and equipped and empowered for it by God himself. The Spirit is like a fire which is not diminished when taken from Moses and given to others. The Spirit's fire spreads on. The intention of the text is to stress that the elders received the same Spirit as Moses and that they obtained the gift of leadership to assist him. They were commissioned and enabled by God to do this enormous task.²⁰

Joshua is referred to as "a man in whom is the Spirit" (Heb. *'iš 'asher rūah bô*), i.e., the spirit of leadership (Num 27:18). It is an explicit affirmation that of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in Joshua giving him the gift of wisdom and leadership. Deuteronomy 34:9 says, "Now Joshua son of Nun was filled [Heb. *male'*] with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him." The "spirit of wisdom" (*rūah hokmā*) in Deut 34:9 may be a case of a circumlocution and/or metonymy standing for the "Spirit" who gives or bestows wisdom...." In Isa 11:2, the Ideal King is said to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and endowed with the Spirit of wisdom.²¹

²⁰ J. Moskala, "The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures," *JATS* 24/2 (2013): p.30-31 (18-58).

²¹ J. Moskala, "The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures," *JATS* 24/2 (2013): p.33 (18-58).

The Spirit of the Lord not only empowers, but also authorizes a person for leadership of God's people in a more general sense (Deut 34:9; Judg 3:10; 11:29, etc.).²² In the early part of her history, Israel experienced the active *rûah yhw* in a remarkable way in the activity of her charismatic leaders - the Judges. These Judges were not necessarily judicial magistrates, but rather charismatic leaders or warriors aroused by God in the critical moments in Israel's history from the settlement in Canaan under Joshua until the establishment of the monarchy. The Spirit descended on the Judges, giving them ability and authority to lead, particularly at moments of crisis (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 12:29). "The Spirit of the Lord came upon" Othniel (Judg 3:10), Gideon (Judg 6:34), Jephthah (Judg 11:29), and Samson (Judg 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15). Samson's enormous strength is ascribed to the invasion of the Spirit (Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). The spirit is unfathomable and incalculable, distributing where and to whom he wills. Men hitherto disregarded, suddenly emerge as leaders under the work of the Spirit.²³ The judges, in particular, are represented as men whom the Spirit of God gifted with qualities that enabled them govern Israel and save her from her oppressors.

The activity of the Holy Spirit is evident in the life of the first two kings in Israel, Saul and David (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13, 14; 19:20, 23; 2 Sam 22:16; 23:2). It was explicitly said that Saul, at the beginning of the monarchy, was anointed (*māšeh*, 1 Sam 10:1) and empowered by the Spirit of God and prophesied

²² M. V. Van Pelt / W. C. Kaiser, Jr. / D. I. Block, in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, CD Rom Edition.

²³ F. Baumgärtel, "Pneuma, Pneumatikos," in *TDNT* 6, 1968, p.366.

(1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6), and his heart was changed under this influence (10:6, 9). Later in his kingship, when Saul disobeyed the divine injunction, the Lord expressly withdrew the Spirit of kingship from him and “an evil spirit” from the Lord (*rûah ra’ah me’et yhwah*) tormented him (1 Sam 16:14, 23a). This tragic change and strange phenomenon in Saul’s life is explained by the preposition “from” (*min*): the “evil spirit from the Lord” (*rûah ra’ah me’et yhwah*) came into king’s life and tormented him (1 Sam 16:14, 23a). One needs to understand the Hebrew thinking, which is in the background: what God allows is viewed as an action of God; what he permits is portrayed as coming from him (see. Job 1-2).²⁴

It is said explicit also about David that “the spirit of the Lord (*rûah-yhwah*) came mightily upon” him after Samuel had anointed him (1 Sam 16:13). The Spirit of the Lord inspired David to speak as he himself expressed it: “The spirit of the Lord speaks through me; his word is upon my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). From these instances one learns that the Spirit of the Lord can change lives, give a new heart and power, and stir people to speak and to actions. As the divinely chosen king of Israel, David was a Spirit-filled ruler.²⁵ Yahweh, himself refers to David as “a man after his (God’s) own heart” (*’iš kilbābô*, 1 Sam 13:14), the Lord’s anointed (*mešîhō*, *mešîha* - anointed, Ps 2:2). The liquid anointing symbolizes the divine spiritual anointing. This divine anointing provides the basis for David’s adoption as God’s son (Ps 2), hence the bearer of all subsequent messianic hopes (cf. Isa

²⁴ J. Moskala, “The Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures,” *JATS* 24/2 (2013): p.37 (18-58).

²⁵ G. W. H. Lampe, “Holy Spirit” in *IDB* 4, 1962, p.627.

11:2; 42:1; 61:1).²⁶ The expectations associated with the house of David point to the hope of a ruler - an eschatological Saviour-figure - pre-eminently endowed with the Spirit of the Lord. The coming king is the spirit ordained and authorized leader, endowed with three pairs of gifts, each described as "the spirit of wisdom" and "understanding" (*rûah hokmâ ûbînâ*), "counsel and might" (*rûah 'esâ ûgebûrâ*) and the "spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (*rûah da 'at weyir'at yhwh*, v. 2b). These are the credentials of the ideal ruler.²⁷

The Spirit of Yahweh in the Ministry of the Prophets

The *rûah* is a dynamically explosive force which comes from God to men and endows them with extraordinary power, insight, wisdom etc.,²⁸ and guides them to accomplish specific tasks within Israel's salvation history.²⁹ The activity of the Spirit in the OT is especially pronounced in the Hebrew prophecy. Both the

²⁶ Accordingly, the descent of the Spirit of God as a dove on Jesus at his baptism and the heavenly voice's declaration that the person baptized was "my Son, whom I love" (*hutos estin ho huios mou ho agapetos*) represent the divine affirmation of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One par excellence (Matt 3:16-17; Mk 1:10-11; Lk 3:22).

²⁷ G. M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, NIB 6, L. E. Keck (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, p.141.

²⁸ F. L. Moriarty, "Isaiah 1-39," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, R. E. Brown (Ed), New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, p.273; A. Albert/C. Westermann, "*rûah*, Spirit" in *TLOT* 3, 1971, p.1213.

²⁹ J. Breck, *Scripture in Tradition*, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, p.198; M. V. Van Pelt / W. C. Kaiser, Jr. / D. I. Block, in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, CD Rom Edition; cf. G. W. H. Lampe, "Holy Spirit," in *IDB* 4, 1962, pp.626-627.

OT and NT attest that the Holy Spirit was active in the prophets and that he spoke through them (e.g. Ezek 11:5; Mic 3:8; Zech 7:12; Acts 28:25). In various instances in the OT, it is said that the Spirit of God has come over someone (Num 24:2); or has rested on someone (Num 11:29; Isa 42:1; Ezek 11:5); or that the “hand of Yahweh” (*yad-yhwh*) has come over him and laid hold of him (2 Kgs 3:15; Ezek 1:3; 3:14, 22); or that the Spirit of revelation has descended upon him (Num 11:25 f; 2 Kgs 2:15; Isa 11:2; 61:1); or that God pours out his spirit upon man (Jl 2:28f). The Spirit of God is the source of inspiration for the prophets. Many of the OT prophetic oracles were given under the inspiration of the Spirit.³⁰

The prophet is usually regarded as a man inspired by God. In Hos 9:7, the prophet is aptly called a “man of the spirit” (*’iš hārûah*) i.e., “an inspired man.” They see things that do not lie in the domain of natural sight, realities invisible to ordinary mortals³¹ and hear things which human ears do not ordinarily receive (cf. Sir 48:12f). This happens because of the special unction of the divine Spirit at work in them.

Three of the prophetic books stand out in the discussion on the activity of the Spirit in the ministry of the Hebrew prophets. They are Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel. The word *rûah* occurs about 50 times in the book of Isaiah and 46 times in Ezekiel.

³⁰ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit*, vol 2, “Pneumatology,” Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998, p.27.

³¹ L Bouyer, *The Meaning of Sacred Scripture*, Indiana: The University of Notre Dame, 1958, p.9.

Isaiah foresees the coming of an ideal king from David's line whose reign will bring about the inauguration of a reign of idyllic peace, justice, and world-wide knowledge of Yahweh.³² The coming king is referred to metaphoric terms as a "branch" from the "stock of Jesse" (Isa 11:1). He is the spirit ordained and authorized leader.³³ He is endowed with the "spirit of the Lord" (*rûah yhwh*) (vv. 2-3a): "... the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2).

The first pair, "wisdom" (*hokmâ*) and "understanding" (*bînâ*), frequently appear together, not only in the wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 3:13, 19; 8:1; 10:13) but throughout the OT (e.g., Isa 10:13; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Ezek 28:4). The pair refers to practical wisdom that enables a ruler to handle political and judicial matters fairly.³⁴ Wisdom (*hokmâ*) is knowledge for practical action. Understanding (*bînâ*) is a capacity for discernment. The ruler needs both gifts if he is to make his decisions fairly, and judge with justice.³⁵ The second pair, "counsel" (*ezâ*) and "might" (*gubûrâ*), indicate both the skill to elaborate sensible plans and the ability to carry them through.³⁶ "Counsel" is the faculty of forming right decisions. In Isa 9:6, the messianic

³² F. L. Moriarty, "Isaiah 1-39," The Jerome Biblical Commentary, 1968, p.273.

³³ G. M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, NIB 6, L. E. Keck (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, p.141.

³⁴ G. M. Tucker, 2001, p.141.

³⁵ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 2nd Edition, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983, p. 255.

³⁶ J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, AB 19, Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 2000, p.264.

prince is called “Wonderful Counselor” (*pele’ yô’es*). The third pair, “knowledge” (*da’at*) and “the fear of the Lord” (*weyir’at yhwh*), refer to the ideal king’s piety. The focus is not “knowledge” in general, but knowledge of the Lord (Isa 11:9). Thus piety consists in acknowledgment of and reverence for the Lord. The fear of the Lord comes into play in the recognition of the rights of the weaker members of society. Remarkably, the fear of the Lord is itself “a gift of God.” The Spirit endows these gifts on the ideal King so that he will rule with justice. The result of this will be nothing less than paradise regained (Isa 32:15-18).

In their eschatological visions the prophets foresee a time when God will pour out his Spirit on his people in an unprecedented fashion. This liquid imagery occurs four times, always in the context of Israel’s restoration and covenant renewal (Isa 32:15; 44:3-4; Ezek 39:29; Jl 2:28 [3:1]). Isaiah foresees a time when God “will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring” which will make them spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams” (Isa 44:3-4). The language reflects the description of wellbeing in Isa 32:15-20. The effects of the outpouring of the spirit from on high is seen in the blooming of nature - the desert becoming a fertile field (Isa 32:15) and the dry ground transforming into a flourishing stream (Isa 44:3-4).³⁷ In each case, the pouring out of God’s Spirit represents the definitive act whereby the Lord claims and seals the restored Israel as his own covenant people. The Spirit of the Lord poured out on them serves as a permanent

³⁷ A. Albert/C. Westermann, “*rûah Sipirt*” in *TLOT* 3, 1971, p.1219.

witness of the "covenant of peace" and the "covenant of eternity".

The Role of the Spirit in the Ministry of Ezekiel

The role of the Spirit of God is pronounced in the ministry of Ezekiel more than in any other prophet. The role of *rûah yhwah* is repeatedly emphasized throughout the book: in Ezek 2:2 "The spirit entered me as he spoke to me"; in 3:24, "The spirit entered into me, and set me on my feet; and ... said to me"; in 11:5, "The spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me." A similar expression occurs in 8:1: "the hand of the Lord God fell upon me." The phrase, "the hand of the Lord" (*yad-yhwah*), occurs six other times in the book (3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). The 'hand of the Lord' is a metaphor for God's power.

Ezekiel's spiritually rich inaugural vision and the role of the Spirit in his ministry set him apart from the rest of Israel's prophets. This position receives further support when Ezekiel's prophetic visions are considered. "The spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezek 8:3). Whatever one makes of Ezekiel's statement, "the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven," he is unmistakably under the power and influence of Yahweh's Spirit.³⁸

Earlier Ezekiel had stressed that infidelity to God's law was the cause of the exile. Ezekiel, however, foresees a time when God

³⁸ C. Bowman, "The Spirit of God in the Ministry of the Old Testament Prophets," *Leaven* 12/3 (2004) p.4 (pp1-8).

will implant a new center of volition in the hearts of the people. Jeremiah had declared that God would make a “New Covenant” with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. With this covenant God would put his law within them, and “write it on their hearts” rather than on tablets of stone (Jer 31:33). Ezekiel took up this theme and declared that this end-time promise would be fulfilled through the sprinkling of water for purification. To a people whose loyalty to God is often divided, God promises to give a “new heart” (*leb hādāš*) and put a new spirit (*rûah hadāšâ*) within them and cause them to walk in “my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:22-32). God will remove “the heart of stone (*leb hā’eben*) from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (*leb bāšār*, Ezek 11:19f; cf. 36:26f). In this way, Ezekiel introduces something new to the understanding of the activity of the spirit. The spirit (*rûah*) becomes the center of human volition along with the heart (*leb*, Ezek 11:19).

Ezekiel underlines the role of the divine *rûah* in effecting spiritual renewal. From the beginning the Israelite religion is a “heart religion”. Jeremiah’s call for a circumcision of the heart in Jer 4:4 was not an innovation but a recollection of a notion expressed in Deut 10:16, where the appeal is made to the Israelites to “circumcise their heart.” Later in Deut 30:6, the divine role in this transforming work is emphasized: “the Lord your God will circumcise your heart ... so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul in order that you may live.” Ezekiel’s anticipation of a fundamental internal transformation (Ezek 36:22-32) effected by the infusion

of the divine *rûah* in the people rests upon ancient foundations.³⁹ The transformative and recreative power of the spirit of God (*rûah yhw*) is given prominence in Ezekiel 37:1-14.

The Spirit of God as Agent of Regeneration (Ezek 37:1-14)

Ezekiel lived through the greatest crises in ancient Israel's history. The destruction of the First Temple and the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians dealt a deadly blow on the Judahites. The cream of the people was exiled to Babylon (597–586 B.C.) and that meant a loss of independence of Judah. The exile had historical, political and theological ramifications. Not only were the people's physical lives disrupted, their faith was shaken as well.⁴⁰ The exile was the grave into which the people had been laid. If the nation was to rise again, this can only be by the reviving power of God's Spirit.⁴¹

Ezekiel was transported in the spirit into the middle of a valley that was full of dry bones (Ezek 37:1). The bones which the prophet saw are interpreted as representing "the whole house of Israel" (Ezek 37:11) in apparently hopeless condition in exile. Jerusalem had been destroyed, and Israel is dead in the true sense of the term.⁴² In 37:4, Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to prophesy over

³⁹ D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel," *JETS* 32 1989, p.40 (27-49).

⁴⁰ L. L. Bronner, "The Resurrection in the Hebrew Bible: Allusions or Illusions?" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 30/3 (2002).

⁴¹ C. Schedl, *History of the Old Testament*, Vol 4, New York: Alba House, 1972, p.425.

⁴² C. L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1969, p.212; W. H. Brownlee, *The Book of Ezekiel, The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, C. M. Laymon

the lifeless bones. i.e., to pronounce God's powerful word over the bones. As he prophesied, the bones came together, and there were sinews on them, and flesh came upon them. What was lacking in them was only the regenerative life force (the breath of life) in order to become living beings (Ezek 37:7f).⁴³ In v.9, Ezekiel is commanded again to "prophesy to the breath (*hinnābe' el- hārûah*), and summon it to come from the "four winds" (*me'arba' rūhôt*) to "breathe upon these slain, that they may live."⁴⁴ As he prophesied, the spirit of life came upon the bones and they came together.

The verb "to breathe" in v. 9 is from the root *nph* (*nāpah*). It is the same verb used in Gen 2:7 to describe how God, having formed a human body from the soil, breathed into its nostrils the breath of life.⁴⁵ Here, as in Gen 2:7, *rûah* is the animating principle. With the breath of life infused into them, the lifeless and dry bones are revived. The spirit of God which brings about the re-energization of the bones is a powerful creative force akin to that in Genesis 1.⁴⁶ The revival of the dry bones symbolizes

(Ed), Nashville: Abingdon, 1971, p.430; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol 2, London: SCM Press, 1965, p.234.

⁴³ J. K. West, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971, p.335.

⁴⁴ W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, p.508.

⁴⁵ K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, NIB 6, L. E. Keck (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, p.1500.

⁴⁶ L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC, 1998, CD Rom Edition; J. Breck, *Scripture in Tradition*, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, p.199.

revival of Israel to spiritual life.⁴⁷ Such a revivification is a form of national disinterment. It is a resurrection which consists concretely in the restoration of the “house of Israel.” It is a revival which is effected by God’s spirit.⁴⁸

Joel and the Democratization of the Spirit (Jl 2:28-32 (Joel 3:1f))

The outpouring of the Spirit of God on his people has been a recurrent theme in the OT prophecy. In the OT, one finds references to God’s spirit being present or falling on selected individuals, such as prophets or kings, but not on everyone.⁴⁹ Ezekiel announced that God would pour out his spirit “upon the house of Israel” (Ezek 39:29). Joel 2:28-32 (3:1-5, MT) takes this doctrine a step further.

Joel envisions a time when God will pour out his spirit on “all flesh” (Jl 2: 28-29): “afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” (Jl 2:28 [3:1, MT]). The particle “afterward” (*aharê*) in v. 28 is an adverb of time. Here *’aharê* points to an indefinite time of the fulfillment of this event. What Jl 2:28-32 says is that the “pouring out of the spirit of Yahweh” on all flesh is a sign indicating the nearness of the Kingdom of God. “All flesh” (*kol-bāšār*) refers, not exclusively to Israel, but to all people without

⁴⁷ C. L. Feinberg, 1969, p.213.

⁴⁸ R. M. Achard, Resurrection (OT), *ABD* 5, D. N. Freedman (ed), New York: Doubleday, 1992, 683 (680-684); L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel* 20-48, *WBC* 29, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1990, p.185.

⁴⁹ D. Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, *WBC* 31, B. M. Metzger (Ed), Texas: Word Books, 1987, pp.229-230.

exception, including Gentiles. Thus Joel envisions a widening scope in God's revelatory program through this diffusion of the Spirit. Num 11:24-30 says that when the Spirit of God descended upon the seventy elders and they all prophesied.⁵⁰ In Joel the hope expressed by Moses as recorded in Num 11:29, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them," is fulfilled. All would receive the Spirit regardless of age, sex, or social status;⁵¹ the Spirit will eliminate undue social distinctions.⁵² God's Spirit will empower all who are open to his leadership.

Joel 2:28 (3:1f) underscores the effect of the outpouring of the spirit on the people: The Spirit would motivate them to call upon him;⁵³ it will enable them "to prophesy" (*nb', ni.*), "to dream dreams" (*hlm halomôt*) and "to see visions" (*r'h hezyonôt*). The visions (*hezyonôt*) and dreams (*halomôt*) here are not a separate administration, but rather a part of the prophetic ministry given by the Holy Spirit. In the OT this possession of the Spirit by the whole people of God belongs to the sphere of eschatological expectation.

⁵⁰ C. A. Brandick, Interpretive Issues in Acts 2:14-21: Peter's Quotation of Joel 2:28-32," *Baptist Bible Seminary*, <http://www.wcbaptist.com>.

⁵¹ D. J. Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple Approach," *JETS* 40/1 (1997) p.16 (13-26).

⁵² A. Albert/C. Westermann, "*rûah* Sipir" in *TLOT* 3, 1971, p.1219.

⁵³ D. J. Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple Approach," *JETS* 40/1 (1997) p.15 (13-26).

Reading Joel 2:28–32 in the light of Acts 2:17–21

Of special interest is the manner in which the OT prophecies of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are seen to be fulfilled in the book of Acts. Joel 2:28–32 consists of the foundation of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17–21). A closer examination of Luke's usage of Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2 shows that Luke perceives the outpouring of the Spirit of God as an eschatological fulfillment of Jl 2:28–32.⁵⁴

One theological theme that arises from the Joel-Pentecost event is the inauguration of the eschaton. The Jewish eschatology sees the gift of the Spirit as one of the decisive marks of the new age. Certainly for the first Christians the gift of the Spirit was the decisive differentia which marked off the old dispensation from the new (Mk 1:8; Jn 7:39; Acts 2:17, 33; 19:2; Rom 8:9; 2 Cor 3:3, 6–8; Heb 6:4f).⁵⁵ The Pentecost was the doorway into the new age, the age of the Spirit, the new covenant, the Church. Luke regards the outpouring of the Spirit on the 120 disciples as the beginning of the outpouring on all flesh and the "last days" in which "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). In Acts the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the disciples gathered in Jerusalem was an affirmation that the kingdom of God has begun to break into human history. This new reality made its first appearance in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (Lk 11:20). Participation in this new age of the

⁵⁴ R.G. dela Cruz, "Luke's Application of Joel 2:28–32 in Peter's Sermon in Acts 2," <http://www.pctii.org>.

⁵⁵ J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, pp.46–47.

kingdom is offered to all who accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶ The seal of the Spirit confirms that the ethnic borders of Israel as the people of God have been sprung, as God's transforming power is felt all over the world.⁵⁷

Acts 2 also constitutes for Luke the formation of the Church.⁵⁸ The event of Pentecost marks the birth of the Church. The Holy Spirit upholds the Church's unity of sustained diversity.⁵⁹ The giving of spirit, the ability to prophesy and see visions, is a sign that fellowship with God has once again been restored.⁶⁰

The Spirit and the Church in Africa

The Holy Spirit is the Missionary. It was the Holy Spirit which created the platform for the first evangelistic crusade after Jesus' ascension. Jesus sent his disciples into the world to witness to the Gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the driving force which moved the early apostles to spread the seed of the Gospel outside the shores of Israel. As the apostles continued to preach the Gospel of Christ, God continued to add to their number (cf. Acts 2:47).

⁵⁶ E. Achtemeier, *The Book of Joel*, NIB p.327.

⁵⁷ M. V. Van Pelt / W. C. Kaiser, Jr. / D. I. Block, in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, CD Rom Edition.

⁵⁸ H. Hübner, "The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture," *Ecumenical Review* 41 (1989) 328–329; quoted by D. J. Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32: A Multiple Approach," *JETS* 40/1 (1997) p.22 (13–26).

⁵⁹ D. C. Augustine, "The Empowered Church: Ecclesiological Dimensions of the Event of Pentecost," in *Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, J. C. Thomas (Ed), Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010, p.159.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Book of Joel*, NIB p.326.

The Spirit is the same driving force that moved the first missionaries who evangelized Africa. Today the church in Africa has grown in number and quality. In response to the mandate of the Risen Lord to his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19), the African church has also taken the Gospel message to other parts of the world. This is expressed by the numerous sons and daughters from the African church carrying out various levels of missionary work in different parts of the world. This mission, carried out in the power of the Spirit, has the significant inclusion of God's passionate concern for the poor and the oppressed. Like the 'Servant of Yahweh' who is anointed with the Spirit of the Lord that he may "bring justice to the nations" (Isa 42:1, 4), the African church must demonstrate the power of God visibly, by rising against injustice and oppression in the social sphere.

Conclusion

The Spirit denotes God's essence, his omniscience and sustaining power. The *rúah'elohîm* is an active and life-giving force. It is used to talk about God's presence or activity in the world. The Spirit of God is the active, dynamic creative principle (Gen 2:7), which gives physical life, regenerates, and revitalizes people to a new spiritual life. The Spirit of God is not only a dynamic principle of creation; it also sustains and vitalizes what has already been created. It effects a radical revival of the spiritual life.