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Interpreting Ezekiel's Ruach in an African Theological Context: African Pneumatology as a Hermeneutical Lens for Understanding Ezekiel's 'Spirit' Motif

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INTERPRETING EZEKIEL'S *RUACH* IN AN AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT:

AFRICAN PNEUMATOLOGY AS A HERMENEUTICAL LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING

EZEKIEL'S 'SPIRIT' MOTIF

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ABSTRACT

Ezekiel has often been called 'the prophet of the spirit' due to his surpassing use of the term רוח, whose symbolic range embraces meteorological phenomena, the anthropological principle of life, a theological principle of divine apparitions, or experiences of divine presence. However, hardly any study exists which relates Ezekiel's רוח motif to contemporary pneumatologies of the African biblical-faith communities which, akin to Ezekiel's רוח symbolism, portray a worldview of axiomatic divine- human interrelation in existential life. The thesis of the present study is that the Ezekielian רוח motif conveys a polysemous symbolism which, nonetheless, accentuates an overarching *leitmotiv*; the רוח symbolism signifies a paradigmatic shift, in ancient Israelite understanding of divine- human interrelation, from visible manifestations and experiences of כבוד־יהוה mediated through cultic rituals and confined to cultic shrines to unmediated manifestations and experiences of divine presence, neither confined to cultic shrines nor necessarily limited to particular guilds of the Israelite societal leadership.

Moreover, the study posits that the pneumatological worldview of the African communities of biblical faith is an apt hermeneutical lens for understanding Ezekiel's רוח symbolism and that the experiences of the Ezekielian exilic community prefigure dynamic equivalents in the pneumatological context of the African communities of biblical faith. The present study is therefore an attempt to read Ezekiel's רוח symbolism utilizing African pneumatology as a hermeneutical lens. A reader- response theory of biblical interpretation, in which textual meaning emerges from the interaction between the text, read in its socio- historical setting, and the reader in his or her socio- cultural world, is employed utilizing biblical inculturation as a strategy which contextualizes the hermeneutical process by bringing the reader's interpretive interests and life concerns into the task of biblical interpretation.

The study begins with an exploratory study of the book of Ezekiel in its historical context in the Hebrew Bible. This entails a critical review of the Ezekielian corpus in contemporary scholarship as well as an exegetical analysis of רוח symbolism in the Hebrew Bible in order to situate the Ezekiel's רוח in its socio-historical and canonical context. The study then examines critical features of African pneumatological worldview which constitute hermeneutical linkages, or bridgeheads, between Ezekiel's רוח symbolism and African pneumatology. The study shows that the Ezekielian רוח motif critically informs the African biblical-faith pneumatology while, as a corollary, the African pneumatological worldview illumines and, indeed, serves as an apt hermeneutical lens for understanding the Ezekielian רוח symbolism. The hermeneutical import of the Ezekielian רוח symbolism, as understood in the African pneumatological context, is that divine presence is experientially feasible in existential life without the necessity of any ecclesial

or ritual mediation. As the writer of the biblical book, *Acts*, affirms, "God … is not far from each

one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 27- 28).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ezekiel has often been referred to as "the prophet of the spirit" due to his surpassing use of

the term רוח whose nuanced symbolism is variously interpreted as wind, storm wind, breath of

life, the dynamic power of Yahweh, the human faculty of understanding, the human inward

disposition of feeling and emotion or the moral will or the mind, the world of the divine, the

agency of animation, the agency of inspiration, or the power of God at work in the created

world.[1] M. V. van Pelt and others observe that:

> Since רוח has such a broad range of meanings, it is difficult to capture its semantic
> breadth with a single term or phrase …what is invisible is difficult to define … the
> invisible essence of רוח is known primarily by its effect on the visible world, by which we
> can then attempt to perceive its essence. Thus רוח is a term representing something

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[1] Daniel I. Block reckons that Ezekiel uses the term רוח no less than fifty-two times. Idem, "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of רוח in the Book of Ezekiel," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989), 28. In comparison, the relatively larger prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, notably Isaiah and Jeremiah, use the term רוח fifty times and eighteen times, respectively. The *Book of Twelve* also uses the term רוח thirty-two times. See also Pamela E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life: The Expanding וח in Ezekiel," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30 (2004), 161; Katheryn P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, The New Interpreters Bible VI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 1116; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1- 24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 27- 49; John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 136- 37; K. W. Carley, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets* (SBT Second Series 31; Naperville: Allenson, 1974), 25; Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 109- 111; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25- 48* (trans. J. D. Martin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 566- 68; and Steve A. Wiggins, "Tempestuous Wind Doing Yahweh's Will: Perceptions of the Wind in the Psalms," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 13 (1999), 3- 23.

unseen in order that the visible effect of this invisible force might be adequately apprehended.[2]

The latter part of the above description tendentiously portrays רוח as an incorporeal entity. Daniel Block likewise portrays רוח as a power or agency of God; "the רוח is the power of God at work among humankind; it is creating, animating, energizing force. The רוח can hardly be identified as none other than God himself."[3]

However, given the wide semantic range of the term, רוח could as well be a conceptual construct symbolizing more than an actual entity or power. In the book of Ezekiel, רוח is often depicted in relational terms; in a number of cases it symbolizes an axiomatic interaction between the transcendent world of divinity and the phenomenal world of creation. Ezekiel often experiences רוח as the "hand of Yahweh."[4] For example:

היה היה   דבר ־יהוה אל־יחזקאל ... וחהי עליו שם יד־יהוה ... ותבא בי רוח כאשר דבר אלי

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[2] M.V. van Pelt, W. C. Kaiser, and D. I. Block, "רוח ," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. W. A. vanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 11.

[3] D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 49.

[4] The expression יד־יהוה "hand of Yahweh," is often used in the Hebrew Bible to designate an aspect of prophetic experience. See, for example, J. J. M. Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh" in *The Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 95. However, as J. J. M. Roberts notes, there is no general consensus in scholarship as to the precise nature of the experience. While some scholars argue that the expression is simply a metaphor for an extraordinary experience generally ascribed to the intervention of Yahweh, others, plausibly the majority, posit that the "hand of Yahweh" is a reference to an ecstatic experience of divine presence. For example, Johannes Lindblom argues that "the prophets understood very well that the hand was Yahweh's; they knew that the power that seized them came from Yahweh and not from any other. Yahweh's hand and Yahweh's *ruaḥ* are substantially identical; they are both expressions for the same divine power which is effective in ecstatic experiences." Idem, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil, 1962), 58. See also D. I. Block, *Ezekiel* 1- 24, 35- 36. Although J. J. M. Roberts does not accept Lindblom's postulate that the "hand of Yahweh" is an immediate experience of divine encounter, he, nonetheless, concedes that Lindblom and others "are right in connecting the expression to concrete manifestations of a physical or psycho-physical nature." J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of Yahweh*, 100- 101. See also K. P. Darr who notes that although "in Isaiah 8:11 and Jer.15:17, the phrase expresses the prophets' experience of being under 'divine compulsion' … the meaning of the text remains ambiguous." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1111. The Ezekielian notion of the "hand of Yahweh" is evidently portrayed as a personal experience or encounter with the רוח (e.g. Ezek 1:3- 2:2; 3:14; 8:1- 3; 37:1).

"The word of Yahweh came to Ezekiel … and the hand of Yahweh was upon him there … and as he spoke to me, a רוח entered into me" (Ezek1:3- 2:2),[5]

"ורוח נשאתני ... ויד־יהוה עלי חזקה"

"A רוח lifted me up … the hand of Yahweh was strong upon me" (Ezek3:14),

ותפל עלי שם יד אדני יהוה---ותשא אתי רוח

"The hand of the Lord Yahweh fell on me there … the רוח lifted me up" (Ezek 8:1- 3), and

היתה עלי יד־יהוה ויוצאני ברוח יהוה

"The hand of Yahweh was upon me; he brought me out by the רוח of Yahweh" (Ezek 37:1).

Ezekiel's interaction with the realm of the divine is akin to the pneumatological worldview of the biblical-faith communities of the Global South,[6] particularly in Africa, which accentuates the immediacy of divine presence in existential circumstances without necessarily the agency of ecclesial hierarchy or church sacraments.[7] However, there has hardly been any concerted attempt in biblical scholarship to relate Ezekiel's רוח motif to the contemporary pneumatological

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[5] Unless otherwise indicated the English renderings of the Hebrew texts are translations by the present writer.

[6] The term "Global South" is increasingly viewed, in the contemporary world of political correctness, as a more appropriate reference to the global areas of Asia, Africa and South America, rather than the seemingly classist appellation "third world." See, for example, Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 9. On the question of Global South pneumatology, see, for example, K. C. Abraham and B. Mbuy-Beya who observe that the communities of the Global South readily embrace and celebrate divine presence in their desire for communion with the divine world. Idem , eds., *Spirituality of the Third World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 41. See also Owen C. Thomas, *God's Activity in the World: The Contemporary Problem* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 1- 13; and Lee E. Snook, *What in the World is God Doing?: Re- Imaging Spirit and Power* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1999), 13- 22.

[7] A pneumatological worldview may be defined as a theological construct that attempts to conceptualize divine relationship with creation. In biblical faith, pneumatology can be viewed as relational theism which utilizes the biblical numinous notions of "Spirit of God," or "Holy Spirit," to integrate the divine realm with the phenomenal world of creation. See also Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 85; George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition: A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Paulist, 1976), 16, and Mark W. Worthing, *God, Creation and Contemporary Physics* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1996), 120- 24.

worldview of the biblical-faith communities of the Global South, most notably African pneumatology.[8] The present study is an attempt to address the lacuna.

It is the working hypothesis of the present study that the Ezekielian l*eitwort*, רוח, represents a polysemous symbolism which, nonetheless, accentuates an overarching *leitmotiv*; the symbolism signifies a paradigmatic shift, in ancient Israelite understanding of divine presence and Yahweh's relationship with Israel, from theophanic phenomena mediated through religious rituals at cultic centers to ethereal conceptualizations and unmediated experiences of divine presence and Yahweh's relationship with Israel.[9] Thus the Ezekielian רוח motif conveys a pneumatological construct which accentuates the transcendence of Yahweh while at the same time attempting to integrate, relationally, the perceptually transcendent realm of Yahweh with the existential exilic and postexilic worlds of the ancient Israelites. As George T. Montague observes:

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[8] The expression "African pneumatology" is a reference to a culturally contextualized theological construct of the African peoples' attempt to portray divine presence in, and relationship with, creation. However, it is reckoned that African peoples are diverse groups who subscribe to diverse religions, notably African traditional religions, Islam, and Christianity. The reference to "African pneumatology" is, in the present study, limited to the pneumatology of the African communities of biblical faith which is tendentiously a syncretistic blend of Western Christianity and African traditional beliefs. As Alyward Shorter, a keen observer of African Christianity, remarks, "At baptism, the African Christian repudiates remarkably little of his former non- Christian outlook … conversion to Christianity is for him sheer gain, an 'extra' for which he has opted. It is an 'overlay' of his original religious culture … consequently the African Christian operates with two thought systems at once, and both of them are closed to each other." Idem, "Problems and Possibilities of the Church's Dialogue with African Traditional Religion," in *Dialogue with the African Traditional Religions* (ed. A. Shorter; Kampala, Uganda: Gaba Publications, 1975), 7. See also Allan Anderson, "Stretching the Definition?: Pneumatology and 'Syncretism' in African Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10 (2001), 100.

[9] It is, however, reckoned that all experiences of infinite divinity in the finite world of creation are mediated experiences since, as C. S. Lewis argues, in the infinite-finite inequality, there cannot be any isomorphic coupling or a one-to-one correspondence between divine disclosure and human perception of the same. Therefore the notion of "unmediated" in this context implies a translational, or a transpositional, mediation through the human conscience. See C. S. Lewis, *Transposition and Other Addresses* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), 9- 20.

> With Ezekiel, an entirely new 'wind' fits his vocation to rally the hopes of the exiles and prepare this remnant to become the new and purified people of the restoration. The spirit now appears everywhere, both as the author of the prophet's own experience and as the objective agent of renewal.[10]

Moreover, the present study postulates that the African pneumatological worldview which plausibly emerges out of the people's perceptual experiences of divine presence and activity in their world and which readily embraces an "encounter with God in real life and action … a living communion with God who is experienced as being personally present in the relationships of humanity,"[11] is an apt hermeneutical lens for understanding Ezekiel's רוח motif.[12]

1.2 Significance of the Study

The cultural settings of the Global South, particularly in Africa, resonate with the idyllic country settings of the ancient Israelite biblical world as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The

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[10] George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit*, 45. Equally James Robson postulates that "the prophet Ezekiel is recovering an emphasis on רוח in prophecy from the pre-classical prophets, or even pioneering an emphasis that has been conspicuously absent from the classical writing prophets." Idem, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 24.

[11] Aylward Shorter, "African Christian Spirituality," in *Spirituality in Religions: Profiles and Perspectives* (ed. C.W. du Toit; Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1996), 62- 64. See also Amos Yong, "On Divine Presence and Divine Agency: Toward a Foundational Pneumatology," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3 (2000), 174. Of particular note is John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu's observation that "*homo africanus homo religiosus radicaliter –* 'the African is a radically religious person, religious at the core of his or her being;' African communal activities and their social institutions are inextricably bound up with religion and the spirit world." Idem, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts, and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996), 9.

[12] See also John Parratt who notes that there are many aspects of African culture which may illumine certain aspects of Christian theology, particularly "the concept of divine 'life- force' which is found among many African peoples." Idem, *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (London: SPCK, 1997), 7.

biblical stories of the Hebrew Bible form the bedrock of the African biblical faith narrative;[13] hence the proprietary of relating Hebrew Bible scholarship to the contemporary contexts of the African biblical-faith communities. Furthermore, biblical interpretation is, indeed, implicit in all communities of biblical faith.[14] As Francis Watson argues, "Christian theology cannot evade the task of biblical interpretation; it is in the biblical texts that the irreplaceable primary testimony to the God acknowledged in Christian faith is to be found … biblical interpretation is therefore theology's primary task."[15] In addition, biblical interpretation is contextual; Elizabeth Freund aptly argues that "no work of art and no interpreter is free of history, society or any other system of signification."[16] Likewise, Robert Neville notes that the praxis of the communities of readership is an essential component in the task of biblical interpretation:

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[13] See, for example, John S. Mbiti who notes that not only is literal interpretation of the Bible common in much of African Christianity but that "there is a tendency among some groups to stick almost exclusively to the Old Testament and its precepts." Idem, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 235.

[14] The notion of "African biblical faith communities" or "African Christianity" is not intended to convey the impression of a unique brand of African biblical faith or African Christianity. Rather, as K. A. Busia remarks, "The concept of 'African' Christianity does not mean that there is a version of Christianity that is African, anymore than that there is a European Christianity … there are universal and eternal elements of Christianity that cannot be nationalized or regionalized; yet Christianity enjoins a way of life to be lived in society, and this must find expression in human relations and institutions. It is this expression of Christianity in an African milieu that we are seeking." Idem, "The Commitment of the Laity in the Growth of the Church and the Integral Development of Africa," *Laity Today* (1972), 241. See also J. S. Pobee and G. Ositelu, *African Initiatives in Christianity*, 11.

[15] Francis Watson, "The Scope of Hermeneutics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (ed. C. E. Gunton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 65

[16] Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader- Response Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), 71. See also Stanley Grenz and John Frank who argue that the Bible is never read in a context- less vacuum. Idem, *Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 25. See also David T. Adamo who observes that "the history of biblical hermeneutics will reveal that there has never been an interpretation that has been without references to or dependent on a particular cultural code, thought patterns, or social location of the interpreter." Idem, "What is African Biblical Studies?" in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (BSS 4; ed. S. O. Abogunrin; Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies, 2005), 17.

> Experience is an important source for theology, and for criticizing Scripture, tradition and reason, because it provides the ground for relevance in theological assertions. Although theology is unwise to confine itself to the needs of a particular domain of experience, it has no ground for determining in what respects theological assertions need interpretation except by appeal to experience."[17]

The notion of "domains of experience" portends communities of readership and, hence, a reader-response approach to biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation is thus contextually oriented; it is, indeed, arguable that an interpretive approach that is abstracted from the situational experiences and concerns of communities of biblical faith is limited in its practical relevance.

A preliminary question that is plausibly brought to the fore in the present study is the feasibility, and indeed the reasonableness, of relating modern scientific biblical criticism to cultural contexts that readily embrace trans-rational pneumatological dimensions of reality. The methodological presupposition that is implicit in modern biblical criticism is succinctly stated by Rudolf Bultmann as follows:

> Modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated by supernatural powers … The same is true of modern study of history, which does not take into account any intervention of God or of the devil or of demons in the course of history … Modern men take it for granted that the course of nature and of history, like their own inner life and their practical life, is nowhere interrupted by the intervention of supernatural powers.[18]

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[17] Robert C. Neville, *ATheology Primer* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 16.

[18] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1958), 15- 16. However, as James C. Livingston and Francis S. Fiorenza note, Rudolf Bultmann's conception of the modern scientific view does not necessarily imply a deistical conception of a God unrelated, providentially, to events in the world. Rather, "it means that one must give up a mythological conception of God's action in the world." Idem, *Modern Christian Thought Vol. 2: The Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006), 155. The modern scientific paradigm of objectivity is, nonetheless, increasingly being challenged by a post-objectivist philosophy of science. Wentzel van Huyssteen, for instance, points out that the contemporary theological and scientific discourses are equally characterized by "a rejection of reductionism and a new awareness of the hermeneutical dimension of science." J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Truth and Commitment in Theology and Science: An Appraisal of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Perspective," in *Beginning with the End: God, Science, and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (ed. C. R. Albright and J. Haugen;

It is, however, arguable that the apparent dichotomy between the modern biblical critical scientific approach which is avowedly non- or post- mythopoeic, and a hermeneutical context that embraces a mythopoeic or pre-scientific pneumatological worldview can be reconciled by viewing the apparently irreconcilable worldviews in terms of symbolism.

Symbolism is generally concerned with signs as conveyers of meaning. Pierre Grelot notes that symbols are constructs that correspond to people's perceptions and experiences. Thus a myth can be viewed as a symbolic construct or a signifier akin to a scientific conceptual construct in that it "evokes, through imagery, certain domains that are inaccessible to observation."[19] Pneumatological symbolism, in particular, can be viewed as a relational theism category that emerges out of human perceptual experiences of divine presence and activity in the phenomenal world.[20] It is an attempt to symbolize, or conceptualize, how the realm of the divine embraces and pervades the world of creation.[21] The African pneumatological worldview and the modern scientific approach to biblical interpretation of relational theism can, therefore, be viewed as

Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 41. Stanley Grenz likewise argues that the contemporary view of science is that the scientific paradigm describes reality as exposed to the scientist's method of questioning. As such, the scientist's observation is "colored and affected by his or her own perspective, including social location, culture, ideological commitments, prior experiences, and even gender ... the post-empirical understanding has led to the realization that the scientific enterprise is not simply the accumulation of facts that are 'out there' waiting to be discovered by neutral, dispassionate observers; rather, scientists must (and quite naturally do) bring a type of faith to their endeavors." Idem, "Why Do Theologians Need to be Scientists?," *The Journal of Science and Religion* 35 (2000), 347- 48.

[19] Pierre Grelot, *The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics, and Exegesis* (trans. C. R. Smith; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 67.

[20] For a discussion of religious experience as an epistemological- hermeneutical paradigm, see W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985), and Owen C. Thomas, *God's Activity in the World: The Contemporary Problem* (Chico, Ore.: Scholars Press, 1983).

[21] See also Eugene Rogers, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 57.

mythpoeic and non- mythopoeic symbolisms, respectively, of the same perceptual experiences.

Robert Neville observes that in mythopeic thinking the symbol itself refers, iconically, to reality

as experienced or engaged while in non-mythopoeic approaches biblical stories, myths, and

sagas, are viewed as symbol systems shaped by narratives in order to serve as literary and

ideological portrayals of reality as perceived or experienced in particular socio-historical

contexts.[22] The hermeneutical task of the present study is therefore an explication of how a non-

mythopoeic exegesis of a biblical symbolism, namely Ezekiel's רוח, can inform and illumine a

mythopoeic hermeneutical context, and how the latter can serve to illustrate the biblical

symbolism.

A particular significance of the need to read Ezekiel's רוח symbolism in the

pneumatological-hermeneutical contexts of the Global South is the observation that "Christianity

is growing faster than it has ever before, but mainly outside the West and in movements that

accentuate spiritual experience."[23] It is also observed, particulary in Africa, that "the Christian

bible is crucial, since this is the book or collection of books that contributes toward a disclosure

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[22] Robert C. Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996), 39- 41. See also Elizabeth S. Fiorenza who argues that "The pretension of biblical studies to 'scientific' modes of inquiry that deny their hermeneutical and theoretical character and mask their historical-social location prohibits a critical reflection on their rhetorical theological practices in their socio-political contexts." Idem, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988), 11- 12.

[23] Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith*, 8. J. S. Pobee and G. Ositelu also note that " that Christianity is growing more quickly than the world population is due to the churches in the Third World and in particular to the African initiatives in Christianity and their relatives, the autochthonous Pentecostal churches in many parts of the world." Idem, *African Initiatives in Christianity*, ix. See also Alister E. McGrath who points out the apparent tension between modern biblical scholarship and contemporary Christian quest for pneumatological experiences, hence the need for biblical scholarship to utilize the insights of biblical-faith communities' pneumatological experiences in biblical interpretation and thus provide sound biblical-hermeneutical basis for pneumatological praxis. Idem, *The Future of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 135- 52.

about the nature of God" and that the hallmark of African Christianity is its pneumatological

orientation.[24] Jacob Olupona also observes that:

> African spiritual experience is one in which the 'divine' or the 'sacred' realm
> interpenetrates into the daily experience of the human person so much that religion,
> culture and society are imperatively interrelated. The significance of this interaction is
> that there is no clear cut distinction between religious and secular spheres or perspective
> of the ordinary experience.[25]

It is in such an intergrated milieu of the sacred and the mundane realms of human existence that

the Ezekielian רוח symbolism, contextually interpreted, can serve as a biblical paradigm for the

African quest for divine presence, thereby bringing into focus critical aspects of biblical

pneumatology in the midst of a morass of African pneumatologies.[26]

The pneumatology that emerges in the present study is shaped by a dialogic synthesis of

the רוח symbolism in the Hebrew Bible in general, the Ezekielian רוח motif in particular, and the

African biblical-faith pneumatology which, as noted above, is a synthesis of biblical

pneumatology and African spirituality. The latter resonates with the Pentecostal sub-culture of

Christian pneumatology since, as the eminent Pentecostal studies scholar, Walter Hollenweger,

in his review of the historical roots of Pentecostalism, notes, "a number of historical roots played

a significant role in the formation of Pentecostalism; the most important one is the Afro-

American culture and religion … from these black roots Pentecost received its music and its oral

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[24] David Adamo, "What is African Biblical Studies?," 18.

[25] Jacob K. Olupona, "Introduction," in *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions* (ed. J. K. Olupona; New York: Crossroad, 2000), xvii.

[26] J. N. Kudadjie notes that African Spirituality is variegated, given the different ethnic groups that comprise the African communities of biblical faith. Idem, "African Spirituality," in *Spirituality in Religions: Profiles and Perspectives* (ed. C. W. du Toit; Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1996), 61- 65.

culture."[27] Therefore some of the pneumatological concepts for the present study will be sourced from classical and contemporary Pentecostal scholars because Pentecostalism, in many respects, epitomizes African spirituality.

1.3 Study Outline

Chapter One introduces the case for the present study by outlining the problem necessitating the study and its significance as well as the working hypothesis. The methodological approach and the theory underlying the study are explicated as well as a statement of the limitations of the study. Both the significant presuppositions implicit in the study and the flow of argument are outlined.

In Chapter Two, an exploratory review of contemporary Ezekielian scholarship is outlined in terms of the book's socio-historical settings, its literary, thematic and rhetorical designs, including exegetical explications of the רוח *leitwort* as a structuring device in Ezekiel, its intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible and in the ancient Near East milieu, as well as the inferential hermeneutical implications there from for the Ezekiel's רוח motif. The purpose is to show the extent to which the Ezekielian רוח motif coheres with the overall literary, thematic and rhetorical shape of the book of Ezekiel, the extent to which the Ezekielian רוח motif rhymes with the

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[27] Walter J. Hollenweger, "An Introduction to Pentecostalism," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 25 (2004), 127-28, and Idem, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 18- 24. See also Leonard Lovett, "Black Roots of the Pentecostal Movement," in *Aspects of Pentecostal- Charismatic Origins* (ed. V. Synan; Plainfield, N. J.: Logos, 1975), 123- 42. The inference in Hollenweger and Lovett's "black roots" is that the "Afro- American" culture is a derivative of the native African cultural domain.

various nuances of the רוח symbolism in the Hebrew Bible, and any hermeneutical inferences from the ancient Near Eastern context.

In Chapter Three, an explication of the various nuances of רוח that are inferable from a critical reading of the רוח motif in the context of the Ezekielian corpus, as well as from an intertextual reading of the רוח motif in the Prophetic Literature and the Hebrew Bible as a whole, is undertaken. The working hypothesis of the Chapter is that the Ezekielian *leitwort,* רוח, is a polysemous symbol which, nonetheless, accentuates a particular worldview and, arguably, portends a paradigmatic shift in exilic and postexilic Israelite worldview regarding divine-human interrelation. Any possible exilic and postexilic influences of Babylonian, Persian or Hellenistic worldviews on the Ezekielian רוח motif are explored further in the Chapter.

Chapter Four is devoted to an explication of the African biblical-faith pneumatology and its possible roots in African spirituality. Typologies of African pneumatology which adumbrate hermeneutical clues for interpreting the Ezekielian רוח motif are explicated. Cases of Hebrew Bible interpretations in African theological contexts are presented as exemplars of contextual hermeneutics and as precursors that set the stage for the next Chapter, which is then devoted to parsing the Ezekielain רוח motif in the African pneumatological-hermeneutical context.

The purpose of Chapter Five is to interpret Ezekiel's רוח motif utilizing a particular community of readership as a hermeneutical context. Typologies of Ezekiel's רוח motif in African pneumatology are explicated in greater detail. Thus, in Chapter Five, an attempt is made to utilize a cultural hermeneutical context as an interpretive lens of a biblical text in a biblical-critical reader-response approach. The meaning and significance of Ezekiel's רוח motif will be shown to be a product of the relation between the text and the reader in a community-of-

readership, and thus the Chapter will attempt to show how Ezekiel's רוח motif can critically inform African biblical pneumatology, and how, as a corollary, the cultural context of African pneumatology can illumine and illustrate the meaning of Ezekiel's רוח motif. Classical scholarship on African pneumatology is utilized to examine the extent to which the contextual reading of Ezekiel's רוח motif corresponds with the African *locus classicus* theory of divine presence in existential living. The Chapter concludes by drawing lessons on how the African communities of biblical faith can study biblical texts utilizing the reader- response biblical critical method in their cultural hermeneutical context and, as a corollary, the insights that biblical scholarship can glean from African pneumatology.

Chapter Six, finally, summarizes the findings of the study, reflects on the methodology and its underlying theory, and recapitulates how African communities of biblical faith can explicate biblical texts utilizing tools of modern biblical criticism in communities-of-readership hermeneutical contexts. The Chapter concludes by pointing out any gaps in knowledge, or unresolved issues, which require future research.

1.4 The Question of Method

In hermeneutical theory, method is not simply a matter of technical procedures; it is, rather, a paradigm of critical analysis and reflection.[28] The generic use of the term 'method' embraces both concepts and procedures. However, a distinction is sometimes made between

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[28] See, for example, Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Method in Women's Studies in Religion: A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Methodology in Religious Studies: The Interface with Women's Studies* (ed. Arvind Sharma; Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 212.

'method' and 'methodology,' the former denoting "the way one collects data, the means or process of selecting information for analysis,"[29] while the latter refers to "the assumptions and preconceptions that influence one's analysis and interpretation of data, that is, the theoretical and analytical framework, even personal feelings, that one brings to the task of organizing and analyzing facts."[30] Hans-Gunter Heimbrook defines 'method' as "a process of concrete steps to do research, to collect data and draw conclusions from data; methods are standardized ways to do research, independent of the research objects themselves, and they involve skills and procedures that can be learned."[31] Heimbrook then goes on to define methodology as:

> Inquiry that addresses the question of why to do research in one way, and not another way. It relates to the *meta- niveau,* theoretical reflection about choices for methods within the framework of a scientific discipline. Methodology is the discipline that explains research interests, the relation of method with research objects, the meaning of basic concepts, and the implicit norms and expectations of a research design."[32]

Thus methodology is portrayed as a more nuanced concept than method since it embraces both theory and procedures. Nonetheless, the distinction between 'method' and 'methodology' is no longer a logical necessity since both concepts overlap; methodology, by definition, includes method and the latter draws, implicitly, on the conceptual theory that undergirds methodology.[33]

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[29] Jon R. Stone, *The Craft of Religious Studies* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 6.

[30] J. R. Stone, *The Craft of Religious Studies*, 6.

[31] Hans- Gunter Heimbrook, "From Data to Theory: Elements of Methodology in Empirical Phenomenological Research in Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 9 (2005), 275.

[32] Hans-Gunter Heimbrook, "From Data to Theory," 275.

[33] See also Robert D. Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1- 5; and John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (rev. enl., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 246.

The overarching methodology of the present study is hermeneutical; it seeks to interpret

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism in the hermeneutical context of African biblical-theological

pneumatology. The term 'hermeneutics,' derived from the Greek word, *hermeneuein,* which

means "to interpret, exegete, or explain," is described by Elizabeth S. Fiorenza as follows:

> *Hermeneuein* owes its name to Hermes, the messenger of the gods, who has the task of mediating the announcements, declarations, and messages of the gods to mere mortals. His proclamation, however, is not mere communication and mediation but always also an explication of divine commands in such a way that he translates them into human language so that they can be comprehended and obeyed.[34]

Hermeneutics thus entails a translation of meaning from one world to another. Francis Watson

also notes, concerning the study of ancient texts, that "the role of hermeneutics is to investigate

how an ancient text, determined by quite specific historical factors, can transcend the limitations

of its historical origin and be meaningful today."[35] This resonates with the hermeneutical dictum

of the mediaeval Gregory the Great, concerning biblical texts, that "the text grows with the

reader,"[36] a dictum generally understood to mean that a biblical text has the capacity to speak to

readers in different historical epochs and in different socio-cultural settings.[37]

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[34] Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Method in Women Studies," 207.

[35] Francis Watson, *The Scope of Hermneutics*, 66.

[36] Gregory the Great, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (ed. J. Cowrie; trans. T. Gray; Etna, Calif.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990), I: 7. 8, 145. See also Pol Vandevelde, *The Task of the Interpreter: Text, Meaning and Negotiation* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005), 110- 146.

[37] See also Pol Vandevelde, *The Task of the Interpreter,* 117- 46.

Hermeneutics is thus not a technique that is simply applied to a text-in-itself; rather, it is an epistemological paradigm. Elizabeth Freund notes that "our relationship to reality is not a positive knowledge but a hermeneutic construct, that all perception is already an act of interpretation, that the notion of a 'text-in-itself' is empty … that subject and object are indivisibly bound."[38] In the interpretation of ancient texts, hermeneutics seeks to constitute a relationship between the text and the reader in order to bring the socio-historical worldview of the text into a dialogic interaction with the contextual worldview of the reader.[39]

The specific hermeneutical theory that undergirds the methodology of the present study is reader-response criticism. Reader-response criticism is thus a hermeneutical theory which portrays the reader as a significant contributor to the interpretive production of textual meaning. David Clines and Cheryl Exum observe that:

> The critical strategies that may be grouped under the heading reader-response criticism share a common focus on the reader as the creator of, or at the very least, an important contributor to, the meaning of texts. Rather than seeing 'meaning' as a property inherent in text, whether put there by an author (as in traditional criticism) or somehow existing intrinsically in the shape, structure and wording of texts (as in new criticism and rhetorical criticism), reader-response criticism regards meaning as coming into being at the meeting point of text and reader – or, in a more extreme form, as being created by readers in the act of reading.[40]

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[38] Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader*, 5.

[39] See also Peter C. Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000), 54, and Wolfgang Iser who remarks that "we have to remind ourselves of what interpretation has always been: an act of translation of semiotic artifacts and their cultures." Idem, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 5.

[40] David J. A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum, "The New Literary Criticism," in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 18- 19.

Thus, in the study of Ezekiel, the meaning of רוח neither inheres in some ancient Ezekielian authorial intention nor in the text *per se;* rather, the meaning of רוח will be shown to be created in the interaction between the text and the reader. Reading is thus an epistemological meaning-making relationship between the text and the reader. The worldview, the socio-cultural location, and the praxis of the reader, are therefore integral to the hermeneutical explication of a text.

Reader-response criticism, as a hermeneutical paradigm, however, raises fundamental epistemological questions, such as: what is reading, who is the reader, and what is creation of meaning? Reader-response criticism has been portrayed as one of the post-structural literary approaches.[41] According to Edgar McKnight, post-structuralism "challenges an intellectual certitude that is the antithesis of freedom, faith, and imagination, but does not support a lapse into irrationality."[42] The basic thesis of reader-response criticism is that the reader is an integral

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[41] Robert P. Carroll describes post-structuralism, in literary studies, as a concept characterized by its rejection of "structured analyses which forced texts to yield up all their secrets to a mathematically inscribed scrutiny ... on the contrary, texts tended to become mirror images of the readers who assumed into their textual readings their own values as explicit modes and strategies for their reading processes." Idem, "Post-Structurist Approaches: New Historicism and Postmodernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50. See also Robert D. Parker, who views post-structuralism as the literary wing of postmodernism. Idem, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 78- 79. Postmodernism is "characterized by diversity in both method and content and by an anti- essentialist emphasis that rejects the idea that there is a final account, an assured and agreed- on interpretation, of something- here the biblical text or any part of it." George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh, "An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009), 384. Other critics, however, view postmodernism and its post-structuralism component as a state of uneasiness with the positivism of modernity, rather than an established paradigm. See, for example, Jean- Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 81.

[42] Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 13. The assertion that reader-response criticism "does not support a lapse into irrationality" could, as well, be viewed as an aspiration of the approach, rather than an actuality; some radical reader-response approaches, such as what Wolfgang Iser postulates in his *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), have raised questions of plausible indeterminacy of meaning and relativism. K. P. Darr, for example, observes that "By bringing in the reader as a co-creator of meaning, Iser has left himself open to … charges of indeterminacy and relativism … will not each individual

part of any meaning-making textual interpretation.[43] Thus reading is a dialogic creative

interaction between the text and the reader. John A Darr notes that reading is:

> A dialectic in which the text guides, prefigures, and attempts to persuade a reader to choose a particular path or adopt a certain worldview. At the same time, the reader is only using these textual promptings as starting points for filling in the gaps left by the text … and anticipating what is to come as the reading progresses. Texts have a certain determinateness, but the meanings derived from these texts are qualified by the receptivity and creativity of the individual reader in an interpretive community.[44]

The notion of textual "gaps" is explained by Wolfgang Iser, drawing on phenomenological

philosophy, as l*eerstellen* or indeterminacies in the text which must be filled by the reader. Thus

the reader actively participates in the production of textual meaning by supplying the portion

which is not written but implied by the indeterminacies. Iser formulates his textual "gaps" theory

as follows:

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reading of a text be different? Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1096. The question of plausible indeterminacy of meaning and relativism in reader-response criticism is explored further in the present study.

[43] The notion of meaning is viewed, by some critics, as an indeterminacy. Phyllis Trible, in her review of theories of meaning, raises questions which portend an apparent indeterminacy of the notion of meaning. Thus "Is meaning restricted to authorial intention? May not literature speak differently from what its author intended? Are authors not infrequently caught short when they discover meaning in their compositions they did not intend? Are these meanings valid?" Idem, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1996), 96. However, this view of indeterminacy of meaning is premised on the concept of meaning as a given or as an object in the text or in the reader. According to Wolfgang Iser, meaning is neither available in the textual object nor in the reader; it is something that emerges in the interaction between the text and the reader. Thus "meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced." Idem, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, 10.

[44] John A Darr, " 'Glorified in the Presence of Kings': A Literary-Critical Study of Herod the Tetrarch in Luke-Acts*"* (Ph.D diss., Vanderbilt University, 1987), 38- 39. See also K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1096. Jane P. Tompkins also argues that "meaning has no effective existence outside of its realization in the mind of a reader." Idem, "An Introduction to Reader- Response Criticism," in *Reader- Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (ed. Jane P. Tompkins; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), ix. It is thus arguable that all reading is, in a sense, reader-response criticism, or, in the words of Robert D. Parker, "all criticism is reader-response criticism." Idem, *How to Interpret Literature*, 278.

> The literary work has two poles, which we might call artistic and esthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the esthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader. From this polarity it follows that the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and further more the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader- though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader.[45]

The indeterminacies in the text do not necessarily imply indeterminacy of meaning, but the indeterminacy of the text prior to reading. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, the text is silent until the reader engages it in a conversation, and that the interpretation is not merely reproducing an author's meaning: "assimilation (*Aneignung*) is no mere reproduction (*Nachvollzug*) or repetition (*Nachreden*) of the traditionary text; it is a new creation (*Neue Schopfung*) of understanding."[46] Although Pol Vandevelde, in a critique of Gadamer's method, argues that an interpreter can use the Gadamerian principle and manipulate the text for "personal, activist, revisionist, or political goals,"[47] the Gadamerian principle postulates that the structures and

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[45] Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *Reader- Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (ed. J. P. Tompkins; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 50. Iser defines a textual gap as (i). "a deliberately withheld piece of information in a narrative- (ii). a missing link in a series of events, (iii). an absent cause or motive, (iv). a failure to offer satisfactory explanations for an occurrence in a story, (v). a contradiction in the text that challenges the audience's understanding of the narrative, or (vi). an unexplained departure from norms." Idem, *The Range of Interpretatiion*, 24. Thus textual gaps create indeterminacies which ensure that the text remains dynamic by being open to new contexts of readership and new ways of understanding. See also David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 74.

[46] Hans- Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2d. ed.; New York: Continuum, 1998), 473.

[47] Pol Vandevelde, *The Task of the Interpreter*, 23. The notions of 'activism' and 'manipulative' interpretational goals are also discussed by Wolfgang Iser, who notes that the "oppositional discourses … are developed by social groups for the purpose of asserting their objectives, of gaining recognition for their agenda, and of striving for power." Idem, *The Range of Interpretation*, 4. Iser, however, argues that the oppositional discourses, in order to gain validity, use the same interpretive structures as the logocentric discourses which they seek to

norms of the tradition to which the interpreter belongs obviate such capricious manipulations of the text.[48] The disposition of the reader is thus constrained by the structural designs of the text and the literary norms of the interpretive community to which the reader belongs. Therefore, unlike Stanley Fish and other critics who appear to privilege the reader over the text, Iser's *Rezeptionsasthetik* portrays a mutuality of relationship between the text, the reader and the conditions or settings that give rise to the text- reader interaction.[49] Thus while the reader is free to fill the gaps in the text, he or she is not only constrained by the literary structural patterns of the text but also by the socio-cultural interpretive norms of the communities of readership.[50] Hence Hans- Georg Gadamer's argument that the task of interpretation is not an arbitrary process on the part of the reader; rather, the reader is constrained by the interpretive tradition to which he or she belongs.[51] The interpretive authority of the reader-in-community is best exemplified in the canonization of the biblical texts as Scripture. It is the readership community, rather than the writers' guild, who decided on the canonical status, and hence the authoritative meaning, of the

subvert. Thus the oppositional discourses are actually dependent on, and hence subsets of, the logocentric interpretive structures and they often critically sharpen and/or augment the persuasiveness of the latter. Idem, *The Range of Interpretation*, 4.

[48] Hans- Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 377.

[49] Stanley Fish argues that "the objectivity of the text is an illusion" and that the meaning- making process is determined by the reader. Idem, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," in *Reader- Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post- Structuralism,* 82. See also Elizabeth Freund who notes that "Fish proposes to relocate meaning in the reader by replacing the illusory objectivity of the text with the experience of a reading subject." Idem, *The Return of the Reader*, 92- 93. Following Stanley Fish, David Jasper portrays an ideal biblical reader as one who is freed from all religious and textual constraints in his or her meaning- making process of readership. Idem, "How Can We Read the Bible?" in *English Literature, Theology and the Curriculum* (ed. L. Gearson; London: Cassell, 1999), 15.

[50] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, 9- 21.

[51] Hans- Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 377.

ancient texts of the bible. As Moshe Halbertal notes, the canonization decision was, *ipso facto*, an interpretive act and that it was the readership guild who translated the ancient texts into the life of the faith community.[52]

The question of who the reader is has been discoursed variously. As noted above, David Jasper portrays an ideal biblical reader as one who is freed from all cultural, religious and textual constraints in his or her meaning-making process of readership.[53] This portrayal of the reader as an individual removed from his or her cultural context is at variance with the general view in reader-response scholarship which locates the reader in a cultural context.[54] The general reader-response scholarly view is, however, nuanced; it also portrays the reader as a critic who is "not a given (such as an innate property of the text), but rather, is implicitly or explicitly contrived by the critic; such a construal is inevitably based, at least in part, on the critic's own reading experience."[55] This portrayal of the reader is also embraced, in a nuanced fashion, by Stanley Fish who describes his reader as "a construct, an ideal or idealized reader … neither an

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[52] Halbertal goes on to remark that from the moment the text was sealed through canonization, "authority was removed from the writers of the text and transferred to its interpreters; denied to the prophets and awarded to the sages." Idem, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 19. Nonetheless, the linguistic and cultural structures embedded in the text by the writers' guild continue to exercise a constraining authority on the readership community regarding the possible range of interpretive meanings. Wolfgang Iser underscores this aspect by stating that "authority rests exclusivelyneither in the canon nor in the reading; instead, it oscillates between the two, and this oscillation is an indication of the ineradicable space between the canon and its interpretation." Idem, *The Range of Interpretation*, 19.

[53] D. Jasper, "How Can We Read the Bible?" in *English Literature, Theology and the Curriculum* (ed. L. Gearson; London: Cassell, 1999), 15.

[54] See, for example, K. P. Darr who notes that the receptivity of the text by, and the creativity of, the individual reader is in the context of an interpretive community. Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel,* 1096.

[55] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel,* 1097.

abstraction, nor an actual living reader, but a hybrid."[56] Whether the reader is viewed as an actual

individual in a community of readership, or as a construct of the critic "whose selections specify

and limit what is to be perceived and how best it is to be understood by others,"[57] the focus on

the reader is viewed as an attempt to underscore the significance of the act of reading as an

epistemological paradigm or a process that is integral to the creation of textual meaning.[58]

The reader-response approaches that tend to privilege the community of readership over

the individual reader imply that "meanings are the property, neither of the fixed and stable texts

nor of free and independent readers but, of interpretive communities that are responsible both for

the shape of the reader's activities and for the texts those activities produce."[59] Edgar McKinght,

for instance, argues that the reader is "a member of a community which determines the attention

given by the reader and the kind of responses made by the reader; this emphasis on the

community allows proper readings to be identified; proper readings are those in agreement with

the beliefs and practices of the community of readers."[60] The notion of an interpretive

community, as developed by Stanley Fish in his *Interpreting the Variorum*, implies that the

literary structures that constrain the reader are not embedded in the text, but in the interpretive

community to which the reader belongs:

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[56] Stanley Fish, *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics*, 86- 87.

[57] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1096.

[58] See also Edgar V. McKnight, *Post- Modern Use of the Bible*, 16.

[59] Stanley Fish*, Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of the Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 322. See also Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader*, 107.

[60] Edgar V. McKnight, *Post- Modern Use of the Bible*, 16.

> Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way round.[61]

Thus both the text and the reader are subsumed under the same interpretive milieu; "this, then, is my thesis: the form of the reader's experience, formal units, and the structure of intention are one, that they come into view simultaneously."[62] In effect, Stanley Fish eradicates what Wolfgang Iser regards as "the ineradicable space between the canon and its interpretation."[63] Rather than the text exercising constraints on the reader, it is, according to Stanley Fish, the interpretive community which obviates interpretive anarchy: "this, then, is the explanation both for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same community)."[64] Other critics, however, argue that giving all the interpretive power to the community of readership imposes community-hegemonic constraints on the individual reader and is inimical to individual freedom of thought and creativity.[65]

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[61] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," in *Reader- Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (ed. J. P. Tompkins; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 182.

[62] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," 177.

[63] Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation*, 19.

[64] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," 182.

[65] The plausibility of a hegemonic authoritarian interpretive community has been noted by Elizabeth S. Fiorenza who remarks that "Interpretive communities such as the SBL are not just scholarly investigative communities, but also authoritative communities. They possess the power to ostracize or to embrace, to foster or to restrict membership, to recognize and to define what 'true scholarship' entails." Idem. "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988), 8.

They further argue that the ascription of interpretive authority to an anonymous community of readership, in effect, portends interpretive anarchy.[66]

An obvious implication of Stanley Fish's interpretive community model is that interpretation, and hence meaning, is grounded, neither in the text nor in the individual reader, and not even in the text-reader interactive act of reading, but in the interpretive community under which the text and the individual reader are subsumed. Hence interpretive differences can only occur because of different interpretive communities or because of nuanced structures within an interpretive community, and that the individuality of the reader is, itself, a product of his or her relationship to the interpretive community. A similar view is expressed by Jonathan Culler who portrays a competent reader as one who is embedded in an interpretive community which imbues the reader with "an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for."[67]

Stanley Fish's interpretive community model, as noted above, assumes that the text is produced and read in the same socio-historical and cultural settings and thus the textual communities, that is, the communities of authorship and the communities of readership, share the same cultural and literary conventions. However, in the case of ancient texts such as the biblical texts, there exists obvious spatio-temporal and socio-cultural gaps between the ancient

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[66] See A. Thistleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 550, Mark A. Pike, "The Bible and the Reader's Response," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 7 (2003), 40- 42, and K. J. Vanhoozer, *'Is There a Meaning in this Text?': The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 165- 68.

[67] Jonathan Culler, "Literary Competence," in *Reader- Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, 102, and Idem, "Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (ed. S. R. Sleiman and I. Crossman; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 49.

communities of textual production and the contemporary communities of readership. Even within the contemporary communities of readership, there exists spatial and cultural differences which portend different literary conventions. Therefore historical-critical and socio-cultural approaches remain relevant in order to recover, as far as possible, both the historical and socio-cultural patterns and literary conventions of a text's *Sitz im Leben* which exert a constraining influence on the contemporary reader. This aspect is underscored by Hans Robert Jauss who argues that ancient texts necessitate a critical study of the historical settings and reception history of the texts in order to understand the abiding interpretive structures and patterns that inform successive generations of interpretive communities.[68]

Nonetheless, literary criticism of ancient texts is not simply an incremental translation of the ancient text's historical settings and reception history into contemporary understandings. Rather, it is, in the first instance, a critical attempt at understanding the text itself, and this might necessitate disabusing the text of "the disfigurements imposed on it by all the appropriations to which it had been subjected."[69] Thus the critical study of an ancient text need notbe constrained, neither by its reception history nor by the established interpretive conventions of readership; both the reception history and the established interpretive conventions must be subjected to critique.

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[68] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward An Aesthetic Reception* (trans. T. Bahti; Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 34. See also Robert D. Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 284.

[69] Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation*, 39.

For example, new archeological discoveries which facilitate new access to the world in which

the text came into being, and/or fresh linguistic evidence and novel approaches in literary

criticism, have to be brought into the task of interpretation at hand.[70]

The reader- response strategy adopted for the present study is a critical dialogic interaction

between the Ezekielian text in its socio-historical context, its reception history, and the

contemporary communities of readership, notably contemporary biblical scholarship as well as

the contemporary African communities of biblical faith, the latter viewed as a hermeneutical

context. Neither the text nor any interpretive community is privileged; rather, it is the critical

interaction of the text with the interpretive communities, in the light of the structural constraints

of the text and the hermeneutical conventions of the interpretive communities, that meaning is

produced. Thus, in the present study, neither the text nor the scholarly interpretive community is

assumed to exercise any hegemonic interpretive authority over the African hermeneutical

readership context. Rather, the text, the scholarly readership community, and the African

hermeneutical context are all assumed to be in a critical-triadic interpretive interaction.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The present study is limited by a number of factors. First, it is a biblical critical reading of

the particular motif implicit in the רוח symbolism in the book of Ezekiel. As such it is neither a

critical study of the entire book of Ezekiel nor is it a study of the whole range of the רוח nunaces

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[70] See also John Barton, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1; and Pol Vandevelde, *The Task of the Interpreter,* 219.

in the entire Hebrew Bible. However, the whole book of Ezekiel is explored in order to contextualize the רוח motif in the overall literary, thematic and rhetorical designs of the Ezekielian corpus. Likewise, the nuanced use of the term רוח in the entire Hebrew Bible is highlighted in order to explore the intertextual dynamics of the רוח symbolims within the Hebrew Bible and to contextualize Ezekiel's use of his *leitwort*, רוח, in the ancient Israelite exilic and postexilic worldview as portrayed in the texts of the Hebrew bible.

Second, the consideration of African pneumatology in the present study is limited to the biblical-faith communities of sub-Saharan Africa for reason of feasibility of the study scope and homogeneity. Thus North Africa, which represents cultural situations different from the rest of Africa,[71] as well as Afro-Western pneumatologies are excluded from the study. Although it is reckoned that African biblical-faith pneumatology is polyphonic and polysemous, both in theological conceptualization and praxis, an attempt is made to interact with as many nuances of African pneumatology as are reflected in literature with a view to deciphering its main ethos. Third, whereas African biblical-faith pneumatology is informed by both the 'New Testament' and the 'Old Testament' of the Christian Canon, it is the Hebrew Bible, and specifically the רוח symbolism in the book of Ezekiel, which is the critical textual motif for which African pneumatology is utilized as a hermeneutical lens.

Fourth, the study examines only written documents. This is a limiting factor since, as Tite Tiénou notes, "in the case of Africa, this is rather unfortunate because much of our theological

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[71] The biblical faith communities of North Africa are characterized by Eurocentric and Middle Eastern cultural norms which, in the words of Tite Tiénou, "represent different situations requiring separate studies." Idem, "The Church in African Theology: Description and Analysis of Hermeneutical Presuppositions," *in Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 151.

creativity is in oral form- in songs, sermons, and in rituals."[72] A fuller understanding of African pneumatology, as a hermeneutical context for understanding Ezekiel's רוח motif, would therefore require field research, which is beyond the time scope of the present study, in order to incorporate the immense oral dimensions of biblical-faith pneumatology implicit in African theological creativity.

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[72] Tite Tiénou, "The Church in African Theology," 151.

CHAPTER TWO

EZEKIEL IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Ezekiel: The Text

The received text of Ezekiel comprises a Hebrew version, the Masoretic text (MT), and a shorter Greek version, the Septuagint text (LXX). The traditional textual theory which posits that the Greek version represents an earlier vorlage of a Hebrew version that was later expanded to form the Masoretic text has recently been brought into question.[73] The traditional textual theory is premised on the unproven assumption that the ancient transmission of the Hebrew Bible texts was chronologically progressive, such that "at any one point in time only a single homogeneous text-type could have been in existence, as if the existing text would drop out of circulation as soon as the new text was produced."[74] Hector Padmore's study of the fragmentary manuscripts of the Ezekiel text found at Qumran and Masada leads him to the conclusion that:

> At some point two different versions of the Hebrew were in existence at the same time. The 'longer' (i.e. Masoretic) and the 'shorter' (i.e. Greek) texts were in circulation concurrently and in Hebrew for at least 200 years. Both versions may have at one time

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[73] Various forms of the traditional textual theory have been proffered by various scholars, such as John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel,* The Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), 30, Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (trans. C. Quin; London: SCM, 1970), 12, Johan Lust, "Major Divergences Between LXX and MT in Ezekiel," in *The Relationship Between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered* (ed. A. Schenker; SBLSC 52; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 83- 92, and Emmanuel Tov who, in particular, argues that "The short text of the LXX reflects a more original text from a contextual point of view, and the long text of the MT a secondary one." Idem, "Recensional Differences Between the MT and the LXX of Ezekiel," *ETL* 62 (1986), 92, and, Idem, *The Greek and the Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (VTSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 367-410. See also Jake Stromberg who, in concurrence with Emmanuel Tov's stance, remarks that "E. Tov has convincingly argued that the longer text of MT. Ezekiel is due to editorial expansion. Idem, "Observations of Inner Scriptural Expansion in MT. Ezekiel," *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008), 70.

[74] Hector M. Padmore, "The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel: The Implications of the Manuscript Finds From Masada and Qumran," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2007), 241.

stemmed from a Hebrew *Urtext,* but the data do not allow us to say which is now nearer to the *Urtext*.[75]

Padmore's view is consistent with an earlier observation by Moshe Greenberg that the theory of a single homogeneous *Urtext* for a 'shorter' Greek version and an 'expanded' Hebrew version is not supported by any text-critical evidence.[76] However, Ezekielian scholarship does not appear to have reached any consensus on the relationship between the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Ezekielian text. Daniel Block, for example, observes that "whereas in the past some have almost automatically assumed the superiority of LXX over MT, recently scholars have tended to be more eclectic, in some instances showing a decided preference for the MT."[77] The present study is based, primarily, on the Hebrew Masoretic text of Ezekiel, but recourse may be made to the other versions, where necessary, for textual or literary clarifications.

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[75] Hector M. Padmore, *The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel,* 241- 242. It is, however, noted that Emmanuel Tov, in his text-critical study of the same fragmentary textual finds at Qumran and Masada, reaches a different conclusion; he argues that "Certainly for Ezekiel the Septuagint remains an outstanding witness to the text, with many of its manuscripts being centuries older than the Hebrew Masoretic manuscripts." Emmanuel Tov, "The Use of Textual Witnesses for the Establishment of the Text: The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel," in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and Their Interrelation* (ed. J. Lust; Leuven, Belgium; Leuven University Pres, 1986), 12.

[76] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1- 37,* Anchor Bible 22 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 18- 24.

[77] D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1- 24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 42.

2.2 Ezekiel: The Socio-Historical Setting

The book of Ezekiel is, by its own account, set in one of the most traumatic periods in ancient Israelite biblical history.[78] According to the Ezekielian biblical account, Ezekiel received his prophetic call while among the Israelite exiles in Babylon.[79] Thus:

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[78] The term "ancient Israel" is viewed, by some scholars, as a creation of biblical scholarship that is "motivated by theology and religious sentiment, not critical scholarship." Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 48. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Biblical Seminar 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 50-54, Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 27-30, and Karl van der Toon, "Currents in the Study of Israelite Religion," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 6 (1998), 9-13. Iain Provan, however, points out that "all historiography is ideological in nature" and that historiography is always anchored in socio-historical contexts. Idem, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995), 589-99. There is, thus, considerable opinion in biblical scholarship that biblical narratives are anchored in some socio-historical contexts, though not necessarily as narrated in the biblical accounts. Implicitly, therefore, the notion of "ancient Israel" cannot be a product of sheer fiction. See also E. Yamauchi, "The Current of Old Testament Historiography," in *Faith, Tradition and History: Old Testament Historiography in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (ed. A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeir, and D. W. Baker; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 1-36.

[79] The notion of biblical historiography is a problematic category in contemporary biblical scholarship. Thomas L. Thompson, for example, remarks that "a modernist perception of history and history writing as a distinct genre from narrative fiction has been the singularly most tenacious distortion in the past generation's scholarly reading of the Bible … asking whether the Bible is in some way historical no longer informs." Idem, "Historiography in the Pentateuch: Twenty-Five Years after Historiography," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 13 (1999), 258-260. Biblical narratives that are cast in historical perspectives are tendentiously viewed, in some quarters of scholarship, as historicized fiction or literary artistry. See, for example, Philip R. Davies who posits that "the reason why many things are told in the biblical literature and the way they are told, has virtually everything to do with literary artistry and virtually nothing to do with anything that might have happened." Idem, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel' (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield: JSOT Press,1992),* 29. On the other hand, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp cautions that "the current ahistoricist orientation of biblical literary criticism is severely wrong headed. Literary study of whatever kind, and especially of the Hebrew Bible, cannot escape history." Dobbs-Allsopp, nonetheless, acknowledges that history and historical criticism must submit to historiographical and theoretical scrutiny. Idem, "Re-Thinking Historical Criticism," *Interpretation* 7 (1999), 235, 271. K. Lawson Younger Jr. likewise remarks that "We should reject the view that the biblical account has no value in the historical reconstruction of the period. We should also reject the view that the biblical account is all that is sufficient for the process of historical reconstruction." Idem, "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 205. Similar cautions are also sounded by Zecharia Kallai, "Biblical Historiography and Literary History: A Programmatic Survey," *Vetus Testamentum* XLIX (1999), 339-342, and Iain W. Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writings on the History of Israel*," Journal of Biblical Literature 114 (1995),* 585-586.

ואני בתוך־הגולה על־נהר־כבר נפתחו השמים ואראה מראות אלהים

"As I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezek 1:1),

ויאמר אלי בן־אדם לך־בא אל־ בית ישראל ודברת בדברי אליהם

"He then said to me, son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak my words to them" (Ezek 3:4).

Ezekiel was, thus, plausibly one of the Israelites who were deported to Babylon after the initial capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 597 BCE.[80] It was also in the exilic setting of Ezekiel's prophetic oracles and symbolic actions that a report about the final conquest of Judah and Jerusalem was received.[81] Ezekiel's prophetic career, according to the biblical accounts, is therefore set in a traumatic period of ancient Israelite history and appears to bear marks of trauma. Brad Kelle describes trauma as "an experience of one or more catastrophic events that

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[80] The biblical account of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 597 BCE is also depicted in 2 Kings 24:10-16; 2 Chronicles 36:6-7; Ezra 2:1; and Jeremiah 29:1-2. See also K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1075- 1080, Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 13, Risa L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah* (JSOTSup 358; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2002), 1, Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 120- 121, B. Oded, "Judah and the Exile," in *Israelite and Judean History* (ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 435- 486, and D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 1-4. For extra- biblical accounts of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, see K. S. Freedy and D. B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian, and Egyptian Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* XC (1970), 462- 485, and M. Tsevat, "The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Vassal Oaths and the Prophet Ezekiel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* LXXVIII (1959), 199-204. The biblical account of the return from the Babylonian exile by the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1- 4) is corroborated by an extra-biblical account contained in the Cyrus Cylinder (a text written in Akkadian and found in Babylon in 1879, now housed in the British Museum, London) which reads, in part, thus: "People of Babylon, who, against the will of the gods …(had suffered) a yoke unsuitable for them … I offered relief from their exhaustion, and ended their servitude … the cult places on the other side of the Tigris, whose sanctuaries had been deserted a long time ago, I returned (their) gods to their (rightful) place, and let them be housed there forever." *The Persian Empire from Cyrus* II *to Artaxerxes* I (ed., trans. Maria Brosius; Lactor 16; London: London Association of Classical Teachers, 2000), 11.

[81] Maria Brosius, in her review of extra-biblical accounts of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, observes that, "Nebuchadnezzar … was king of Babylon from 604 to 562 … In December 598 he led a campaign against Judah, and on 16 March 597 he took Jerusalem. The Jewish king Jehoiachin and many of his subjects were deported as prisoners to Babylon. This was followed by more deportations in 587/6 and 582/1." Idem, ed., *The Persian Empire From Cyrus* II *to Artaxerxes* I, 94.

can produce several kinds of disruptive responses, as well as both conscious and unconscious ways of reliving the experience."[82] Nancy Bowen also, following Jon Allen, defines trauma as "extreme stress or an injury or wound violently produced," and then postulates a trauma theory, in the Ezekielian prophetic career, as follows:

> Given the Babylonian conquest, corporately and individually Judeans were powerless to influence the course of events. To call the exile a 'disruption' is an understatement. The Davidic dynasty was nullified and the king ignobly taken away. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple, the place of YHWH's assumed presence, were razed. Citizens were forcibly exiled from the land that was the foundation of their identity. Their world no longer made sense, raising profound questions of faith: (i). Was YHWH not powerful?, and (ii). Was YHWH not faithful? The experience of exile meets this definition of a traumatic situation.[83]

Ezekiel's seemingly bizarre symbolic actions, idiosyncratic oracles and the apparently enigmatic רוח imageries have thus been interpreted, in some quarters of Ezekielian scholarship, in terms of trauma theory.

Brad Kelle notes that "trauma theory, in general, suggests that in order to deal with trauma, persons or communities must find ways to 'emplot' such experiences within the story of their life and thereby make the experience able to be comprehended, endured, and perhaps surpassed."[84] Kelle goes on to observe that "Ezekiel scholars have begun to highlight the

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[82] Brad E. Kelle, "Dealing with Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009), 483. See also Jay Getter, "Trauma," in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (ed. A. K. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 261- 265.

[83] Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), xvi, and Jon G. C. Allen, *Coping with Trauma: A Guide to Self- Understanding* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1995), 4.

[84] B. E. Kelle, "Dealing with Trauma of Defeat," 483.

significance of trauma studies for interpreting Ezekiel's rhetoric and context."[85] Nancy Bowen

equally remarks that "there is something deeply disturbing about Ezekiel, both the book and the

prophet … contemporary insights from the psychology of trauma will provide the lens for

looking at Ezekiel."[86] Trauma theory is therefore inferred, in the present study, as a plausible

interpretive lens of Ezekiel's seemingly enigmatic רוח imageries. It is, however, pointed out that

the employment of trauma theory in Ezekielian scholarship for the present study differs

markedly from the "mental illness" or "post- traumatic stress disorder" psychoanalytic

approaches of such scholars as Edwin Broome and David Halperin.[87] As K. P. Darr aptly

remarks, "despite Ezekiel's apparent eccentricities, most contemporary scholars reject a

psychoanalytic approach to understanding Ezekiel's personality."[88]

The social-historical setting of the book of Ezekiel, as portrayed in the biblical accounts

and the authorship of the book by a sixth century BCE prophetic persona named Ezekiel have,

nonetheless, been questioned by a number of Ezekielian scholars. Although there is a notable

general shift, in biblical scholarship, "from historical personalities to prophetic books," questions

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[85] B. E. Kelle, "Dealing with Trauma of Defeat*", 482.

[86] Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel,* xv. See also David G. Garber, "Traumatizing Ezekiel, the Exilic Prophet," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures, Vol. 2: From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision* (ed. J. H. Ellens and W. G. Rollins; Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 215- 235, D. L. Smith-Christopher, "Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587- 539 BCE)," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (ed. J. M. Scott; JSJSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7- 36.

[87] Edwin C. Broome, "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65 (1946), 277- 292, and David Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

[88] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1086. D. I. Block equally notes that "this psychoanalytic approach has been rejected by commentators and psychiatrists alike ... while psychoanalysis of the person may explain certain features of the text, the entire enterprise is far too speculative about Ezekiel's past and too conjectural about his emotional state" Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 10- 11.

about the authenticity of Ezekiel's authorship and his historical settings appear to predate the

contemporary scholarship's disaffection with prophetic personae in prophetic literature.[89]

Shalom Spiegel, writing in the early part of the twentieth century, noted that "from the earliest

times we hear of doubts and difficulties in the book of Ezekiel which have beset alike the pious

and the inquiring student."[90]

Whereas a number of Ezekielian scholars, impressed by the apparently schematic literary

and rhetorical structures of the book and the recurrence of first person accounts, have argued for

a single historical eye-witness author, other scholars have argued otherwise.[91] Charles Torrey,

for instance, argues that the book of Ezekiel was a pseudepigraph from the third century BCE but

set in the Judean monarchial period of Manasseh.[92] Similarly, G. A. Cooke argues that "it is no

longer possible to treat the book as the product of a single mind and a single age."[93] Recent

Ezekielian scholarship, however, appears to ascribe the bulk of the book to a prophetic persona,

Ezekiel, in his exilic setting. K. P. Darr, for example, argues that:

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[89] Martti Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19 (2005), 153.

[90] Shalom Spiegel, "Ezekiel or Pseudo- Ezekiel?," *Harvard Theological Review* XXIV (1931), 245.

[91] See Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 21- 31, for a detailed account of the debate on the authorship of Ezekiel.

[92] Charles C. Torrey, *Pseudo- Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1930), 69- 70, and Idem, "Notes on Ezekiel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1939), 69- 86. See also Moshe Greenberg, "What are the Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?" in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and their Interrelation* (ed. J. Lust; Leuven, Belgium; Leuven University Press, 1986), 123- 135.

[93] G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), v. See also Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 22.

> Although some scholars think that the Ezekiel scroll reached essentially its final form years, perhaps even centuries, after the prophet's lifetime, I am not persuaded to that view. It is possible, perhaps likely, that during the postexilic period, members of Ezekiel's 'school' further supplemented his work. But the book as a whole does not address, or even seem knowledgeable about, conditions pertaining during the postexilic period.[94]

Moshe Greenberg, likewise, remarks that "I can see no demonstrable ground for supposing that the book underwent the extensive process many modern critics allege to account for its present shape."[95]

On the argument that Ezekiel's obscurant imageries are symptomatic of a psychopathic writer, a pseudepigraphic work, or a purely literary artistry,[96] Robert Wilson, who at one time remarked that "the prophet's detailed symbolic acts … are likely to be the product of literary activity, for they are too complex to have been comprehensible and some of them are physically impossible,"[97] nonetheless, concedes that:

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[94] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1087- 1088. See also, Idem, "Ezekiel Among the Critics," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994), 9- 24.

[95] Moshe Greenberg, "What Are Valid Criteria for Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?," 135, and, Idem, *Ezekiel* 1- 20, Anchor Bible 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 18- 27. See also Walther Zimmerli, "The Special Form and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel's Prophecy," *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965), 515- 516, and Idem, *Ezekiel I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters* 1- 24 (trans. R. E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 68- 73.

[96] Paul E. Fitzpatrick, for example, views the whole book of Ezekiel as an ancient cosmogonic myth set in a historical context of social duress. Idem, *The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38- 39 in Its Mythic Context* (CBQMS 37; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America Press, 2004), 113- 192. See also Stephen S. Tuell, "Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab?: The Method to Ezekiel's 'Madness'," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 3 (2009), 289- 292, and Corine L. Paton, "Priest, Prophet, and the Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* (ed. S. L. Cook and C. L. Paton; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 73- 89.

[97] Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 283.

Interpreters must explore the possibility that the aberrant characteristics of the book are not primarily the result of the prophet's 'abnormal' personality or of the heavy-handed work of a later editor, but are themselves part of the message which the prophet and his disciples sought to deliver to concrete Israelite communities facing specific theological and social problems.[98]

Other scholars, however, adopt a wholly synchronic approach to the study of Ezekiel. Thus such scholars "prefer to analyze the text in its present form rather than posit a hypothetical history of its formation."[99] Nonetheless, as Zecharia Kallai argues, even purely literary works have socio-historical settings which delineate the contours of their meaning:

Whereas the details of a historiographical description may be a literary elaboration, based on a general historical notion or motif, and not necessarily on concrete historical concept, a general historical concept, and particularly one that creates a historiographical pattern, is most likely to be based on experienced history.[100]

The present study adopts a mainly synchronic literary approach with a focus on both the text of Ezekiel in its present form, and the reader in his or her socio-cultural context, and thus gives the text a synchronous voice in communities of readership. It is, however, reckoned that the text of Ezekiel is diachronically anchored in particular socio-historical contexts which, inevitably, have a bearing on its meaning. Therefore the synchronic approach is undergirded with diachronic perspectives in order to contextualize the Ezekielian רוח motif in its socio-historical settings.

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[98] R. R. Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 119. See also Stephen Tuell, "Contemporary Studies of Ezekiel: A New Tide Rising," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality,* 241- 254.

[99] Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 30.

[100] Zecharia Kallai, "Biblical Historiography and Literary History: A Programmatic Survey," *Vetus Testamentum* XLIX (1999), 345.

2.3 Ezekiel: Literary and Thematic Designs

The book of Ezekiel has, for long, been recognized as a literary structural artifact *per excellence.* In the nineteenth century, Rudolf Smend commented that the entire book was "the logical development of a series of ideas in accordance with a well thought out and in part quite schematic plan; we cannot remove any part without disturbing the whole structure."[101] Earlier on, Heinrich Ewald had remarked that Ezekiel "was more an author than a prophet, and his great book arose almost entirely out of literary effort."[102] However, the early scholarly consensus had its detractors, such as Gustav Holscher and G. A. Cook, who attributed the major part of the book to the work of redactors or an Ezekielian school.[103] Recent Ezekielian scholarship is, however, more interested in the literary unity of the book, whether by Ezekiel himself or by redactors. Moshe Greenberg, who argues that the book of Ezekiel is the *locus classicus* of literary unity among the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, nonetheless, acknowledges some observable redactional markers, but then asserts that "a consistent trend of thought expressed in a distinctive style has emerged, giving the impression of an individual mind of powerful and

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[101] Rudolf Smend, *Der Prophet Ezekiel fur de Zweite Auflage erklart* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1880), xxi.

[102] Heinrich Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes erklart* Vol. 2: *Jeremija und Hezeqiel* (Gottingen, 1868), 207. See also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 3, and Paul Joyce*, Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 21-31.

[103] Gustav Holscher, *Hezekiel, der Dichter und das Buch* (BZAW 39; Giessen, 1924), 26- 27, and G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), v. See also H. H. Rowley, "The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study," *BJRL* 36 (1953), 146- 190, for a diachronic review of various hypotheses regarding the unity of the book of Ezekiel.

passionate proclivities."[104] Nonetheless, as K. P. Darr maintains, contemporary scholarship

views redactors as "gifted literary artists and theologians in their own right."[105]

The literary architecture of the book of Ezekiel has been portrayed variously. Traditionally

the book's structure has been read as a tripartite eschatological schema.[106] The eschatological

schema is also apparent in the other major prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible.[107] Ezekiel's

tripartite eschatological schema is usually read as follows: a call narrative and oracles of

judgment against Israel (chs.1-24), oracles of judgment against foreign nations (chs.25-32), and

oracles and portrayals of salvation and hope for Israel (chs.33-48).[108] Marvin A. Sweeney,

however, argues that "although many take this tripartite sequence as the general pattern for the

organization of prophetic books, the pattern appears to be the product of systematic theology

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[104] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1- 20, Anchor Bible 22 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 26. See also Kirsten Nielsen who observes that "Moshe Greenberg has become the spokesman for the view that the book of Ezekiel should be classed as literature and therefore read as a unity." Idem, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call as Prologue: From Complexity and Changeability to Order and Stability," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2008), 109. Equally Paul Joyce reviews recent Ezekiel "literary unity" scholarship and remarks that "we may take M. Greenberg's 'holistic interpretation' as a good example of this trend." Idem, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel,* 30.

[105] K.P. *Darr, The Book of Ezekiel*, 1094.

[106] Karl- Friedrich Pohlmann, for example, notes an eschatological schema in the book of Ezekiel that entails temporal movement and that delineates the major themes of the book. Idem, *Das Buch des Prophet Hesekiel Kapitel* 1- 19 (ATD 22; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 19- 20.

[107] See David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 18- 19. Ronald M. Hals also notes "manifest parallel between the book of Ezekiel and the books of the two other major prophets; both books of the eighth century Isaiah and that of Jeremiah are similarly divided into an earlier message, a later message, and a collection of prophecies against foreign nations." Idem, *Ezekiel* (FOTL XIX; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 4.

[108] See K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1088- 1089, D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 23, Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 59- 60, Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (JSOTSup 78; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 11. Variant eschatological schematic readings of Ezekiel either combine the oracles against Israel (chs.1-24) with those against other nations (chs.25-32) into a single section, "the oracles of judgment," and/or subdivide the portrayals of hope (chs. 33-48) into: oracles of salvation (chs. 33-39), and the new temple (chs.40-48). See also Kirsten Nielsen, "*Ezekiel's Visionary Call as Prologue*," 109- 110, and S. S. Tuell, "*Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab?*," 293- 294.

rather than a close reading of biblical books."[109] Notwithstanding Sweeney's reservations, the

eschatological schema of judgment and hope is evident in the major prophetic books. David

Petersen underscores this observation by pointing out that:

> Ethical norms inform much of the critique offered by Israel's prophets … despite the
> propensity of prophetic literature to identify the many ways in which humans have fallen
> short of both universal and Israel's ethical norms … that literature also often strikes a
> hopeful note.[110]

The eschatological schema in the Ezekielian literary design is particularly striking in the text's

"death and resurrection" motif (ch.37) and the seemingly trans-historical "Gog and Magog"

imageries (chs.38-39).

The tripartite eschatological schema in Ezekiel is, apparently, anchored in historical

contexts by means of chronological markers. The historical markers are observed as follows: the

call of Ezekiel and oracles of judgment against Israel (Ezek1:1- 3; 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1), oracles

against foreign nations (Ezek 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17), and oracles of hope for Israel

(Ezek 33:21; 40:1). K. P. Darr equally notes that "many of Ezekiel's oracles are dated … in

chronological order; this feature of the book contributes to the reader's sense of its

coherence."[111] Ronald Hals also notes that:

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[109] Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 130.

[110] David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature*, 39- 41.

[111] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1089. See also Walther Zimmerli who remarks that "the book of Ezekiel does not leave its readers in the dark about the time at which words were uttered." Idem, *Ezekiel* 1, 9.

> The frequent dates and strongly chronological arrangement of the book reflect a definite concern for what might be termed 'contextual accommodation'- in very many cases a prophetic word is seen as not just reflecting a definite historical background, but as addressed to it, even called forth by it. [112]

Ezekiel's chronological structuring device may thus be viewed as a rhetorical strategy of not only relating his oracles to specific historical contexts but also as a response to the historical-contextual situations. Robert Wilson similarly notes that "even though some of the dates play a structural role in the book, all of them seem to point to the historical and cultural background against which the prophet's words must be understood."[113] K. P. Darr further notes that the chronological markers impress the reader with an "experience of the unfolding prophetic message of Ezekiel as historical events unfold."[114]

Thomas Renz, in his rhetorical reading of Ezekiel, raises the question of "whether the book of Ezekiel was a fitting response in so far as it addressed the issues at hand,"[115] to which he responds: "I believe the book of Ezekiel did indeed provide an interpretation of the Ezekiel material which addressed the issues at hand in the exilic community."[116] The present study, however, argues that Ezekiel's message, particularly his רוח motif, responds not only to 'the issues at hand in the exilic community' but also to the wider historical situation of the whole of ancient Israel, notably the loss of the ancient Israelite monarchy, the loss of the Jerusalem temple

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[112] Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 6. See also Umberto Cassuto, "The Arrangement of the Book of Ezekiel," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies*: Vol. 1, Bible (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1974), 227- 240; and D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 26- 27.

[113] R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy in Crisis*, 120.

[114] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1089.

[115] Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 231.

[116] T. Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 231.

which was viewed as the seat of כבוד־יהוה divine presence in ancient Israel, and the loss of the land which was otherwise viewed as Yahweh's inalianable bequest to Israel, and their implications for Israel's future relationship with Yahweh.

Another structuring devise that is observed in the book of Ezekiel is the מראת אלהים "visions of God," or "divine vision."[117] Although four vision reports appear in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1- 3:15; 8:1- 11:25; 37:1- 14; 40:1- 48:35), a number of biblical critics argue, convincingly, that it is only three visions that appear to constitute structural pillars of Ezekiel's literary architecture. The three structural visions, namely, Ezekiel's inaugural vision (Ezek 1:1- 3:15), vision of departure of the glory of Yahweh from Jerusalem (Ezek 8:1- 11:25), and vision of the return of Yahweh's glory and of a new order (Ezek 40:1- 48:35), are linked together by definitive chronological markers that specify year, month and day (Ezek 1:1; 8:1; 40:1).They are also termed מראת אלהם (Ezek1:1; 8:3; 40:2), and their unique theme is כבוד־ יהוה or כבוד־ אלהי ישראל"the glory of Yahweh" or "the glory of the God of Israel" (Ezek1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23; 43:2, 4, 5; 44:4).[118]

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[117] D. I. Block, following Moshe Greenberg, argues that the proper translation of מראת אלהים should be "divine vision" because "in Ezekiel, אלהים usually functions as an appellative, 'divinity,' rather than a proper noun." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 85, and Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel* I- 20, 41. Margaret S. Odell also argues that "Ezekiel has a decided preference for the masculine term מַרְאֶה "appearance," as opposed to the feminine term מַרְאָה, "vision' … the feminine מַרְאָה is associated with prophets and dream revelations … the masculine מַרְאֶה is associated with face-to-face encounters that do not have the dreamlike ambiguity of prophetic revelation." Idem, "Ezekiel Saw What He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty First Century* (ed. M. A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 168- 169. John F. Kutsko likewise argues that Ezekiel is "talking about the physical appearance of God … the prophet ardently struggles to find appropriate language that indicates both human likeness and divine incompatibility." Idem, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 67- 68.

[118] See also H. Van Dyke Parunak, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's MAŘOˆT `ELOˉHIˆM," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980), 61- 62, and Stephen S. Tuell, "Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab?," 293- 294.

David Petersen also observes that the three visions provide a tripartite, historically contextualized theological schema whereby "the first vision establishes the notion of God's mobility in and through the language about wheels, the second vision depicts the people in idolatrous behavior which warrants God's departure from the temple, and finally the third vision reports the deity's return from exile; the visions provide a structure of theological movement in the book."[119] Of particular significance for the present study is the observation that the רוח motif, as represented by the metaphor, יד-יהוה "the hand of Yahweh,"[120] is embedded in the tripartite vision schema (Ezek 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 40:1).[121] Van Dyke Parunak also notes the close association between רוח and מראת אלהם by stating that "these three, and only these three, are termed *marʾôt ʾĕlōhîm* 'visions of God' (1:1; 8:3; 40:2); only in these contexts is the *rûah* ("spirit") the subject of *nśʾ* ("lift up") with the prophet as object (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5)."[122] Thus the רוח motif is a significant structuring device in Ezekiel's literary architecture, and, implicitly, an integral part of Ezekiel's prophetic message.

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[119] David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature*, 140. Margaret S. Odell also notes that "the great visions of Chapters 1, 8- 11, and 40- 48, lend coherence to the book." Idem, "Ezekiel Saw What He Saw," 176.

[120] See also Keith W. Carley, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets: A Study of Ezekiel's Place in Prophetic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1975), 13- 37.

[121] See also S. S. Tuell, "Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab?", 294.

[122] H. Van Dyke Parunak, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's *marʾôt ʾĕlōhîm," Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980), 61.

2.4 Ezekiel in Canonical Context

The text of Ezekiel has been received as an ancient Israelite prophetic book in the category

of prophetic literature, [123] which is set in the Hebrew canonical context. [124] The concept of

canon, both in its literary reference to an established collection of texts, and in its ideological-

religious reference to Scripture or authoritative set of Holy Writ for a community, is an

ideological mechanism which "establishes an intertextual network that provides a reading

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[123] Ehud Ben Zvi defines an ancient Israelite book is as "a self-contained written text that was produced within ancient Israel, and characterized by a clear beginning and conclusion, by a substantial level of textual coherence and of textually inscribed distinctiveness vis-à-vis other books, and that, accordingly, leads its intended and primary readers (and re-readers) to approach it in a manner that takes into account this distinctiveness." Idem, "The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism,* 279- 280. Ehud Ben Zvi then defines a prophetic book as "A book that claims an association with a prophetic personage of the past and that is presented to its readership as YHWH's word." Idem, *Micah* (FOTL 21B; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 187. See also Michael H. Floyd, "Basic Trends in the Form-Critical Study of the Prophetic Books," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism*, 306. Prophetic literature, in the ancient Israelite context, is defined as "literature that attests to or grows out of (i.e. is generated by) the activity of Israel's prophets." D. L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature*, 4.

124 A canonical context is a reference to the plausible hermeneutical influence that emerges from reading a text as a component of a metatext, the canon. See also James Sanders, "Text and Canon: Concepts and Method," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979), 36. The Hebrew canon, in this context, is viewed as "a definitive circumscribed body of literature … a fixed body of quite diverse literature that was both socially and religiously 'authoritative' as Scripture." John Van Seters, "The Origins of the Hebrew Bible: Some New Answers to Old Questions," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7 (2007), 87- 88. See also R. E. Clements, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon," in *Canon and Authority* (ed. G. W. Coats and B. O. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 42- 55, and David W. Baker, "Israelite Prophets and Prophecy," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker Books,1999), 268. It is, however, reckoned that the concept of "canon of scripture" is a Christian construct and, as George Aichele remarks, "it is doubtful that Jews understood the concept of canon in the same way that Christian do." Idem, *The Control of Biblical Meaning: Canon as Semiotic Mechanism* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 28. See also James Barr who points out that "The word 'canon' is a Christian term; moreover … it is a rather late Christian term, not found until about the fourth century AD." Idem, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, and Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 50. Notwithstanding, the pre-Christian Israelite-Jewish act of preserving particular ancient texts as a collection, as alluded, for example, in second century BCE Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 49:10), *ipso facto,* constituted a canon of sorts, or an ideological metatext. James Barr actually acknowledges this observation by rhetorically asking, "Was there not, back into early Old Testament times, a sort of core of central and agreed tradition, a body of writings already recognized and revered?" Idem, *Holy Scripture*, 83.

context through which any of its component texts can be understood correctly."[125] Thus a canon

establishes a hermeneutical context in which component texts are read intertextually. George

Aichele argues rightly that "the biblical canon is a powerful intertextual, ideological

mechanism."[126]

Intertextuality is a nuanced concept. Although the basic notion of intertextuality is that

"meaning arises when two or more texts are brought together in the understanding of a

reader,"[127] intertextuality is not limited to explicit canonical contexts; every reader brings to his

or her reading process a repertoire of 'extra texts' in terms of literary and social conventions and

one's own life experiences as analogies for understanding a text.[128] The 'extra texts' of one's life

experiences which have a bearing on textual understanding is what Tite Tiénou refers to as

"mnemic hermeneutics" or the hermeneutic of remembrance; thus "mnemic hermeneutics is

allowing one's own natural analogy to become the crucial key in understanding Scripture."[129]

John Darr argues that "the first time reader must bring to a text a set of expectations which

provide a context for processing it; such a meeting point between reader and text is provided by

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[125] George Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning*, 2.

[126] G. Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning*, 11. James Barr, however, in his critique of some contemporary canonical criticism approaches, argues that "canons are not particularly hermeneutical in their character; one of the deepest assumptions of modern canonical criticism is that canons give hermeneutical guidance and are intended to do so. This, however, is not their function." Idem, *Holy Scripture,* 67. Nonetheless, although component texts in a canon may be autonomously produced and read separately, the ideological process of constituting a canon creates a hermeneutical context, albeit, ideological, for the component texts.

[127] G. Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning,* 18.

[128] John A. Darr, "Glorified in the Presence of Kings: A Literary- Critical Study of Herod the Tetrarch in Luke- Acts" (Ph.D. diss.; Vanderbilt University, 1989), 63.

[129] Tite Tiénou, "The Church in African Theology: Description and Analysis of Hermeneutical Presuppositions," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 160.

the exta- text, the repertoire of shared conventions and canonical works that exist in any literate society."[130] Thus intertextuality signifies the various ways in which anyone literary text is inseparably intertwined with other literary texts, literary and social conventions, as well as the "mnemic hermenutics" extra- texts.[131] Both the reader and the creator of a text are involved in intertextuality. As Patricia Tull argues:

> Creators of new texts, according to Bakhtin, cannot help but enter into intertextual relationships. They may repeat the words of some, repudiate the conceptions of others, twist an old theme into a new form, but no matter what they do, they are shaped by what has already been said, and in their rejoinders they attempt to reshape what will be understood in the future.[132]

The book of Ezekiel is a *locus classicus* of authorial intertextuality. The writer(s) of Ezekiel indeed "repeat the words of some, repudiate the conceptions of others, twist an old theme into a new form … they attempt to reshape what will be understood in the future."[133] Thus the reader of Ezekiel enters into an already intertextaualized book. For example, the pentateuchial transgenerational retribution motif (Exod 20:5; 34:7; Num 14: 18; Deut 5:9-10), which Ezekiel portrays thus: אבות יאכלו בסר ושני הבנים תקהינה

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[130] J. A. Darr, "Glorified in the Presence of the Kings," 67. See also K. P. Darr who portrays the exilic or postexilic reader of Ezekiel as one who, "though this is his first reading of the Ezekiel scroll, he is familiar with other of Israel's existing religious texts; he also knows the literary 'classics' of his larger culture." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1098.

[131] See also Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000), 60, and T. Morgan, "Is there an Intertext in this Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality," *American Journal of Semiotics* 34 (1985), 8.

[132] P. Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," 69. See also J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (ed. L. S. Roudiez; trans. T. Gora, A. Jardine, and L. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 86- 87, and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (ed. M. Holquist; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1981), 276- 280.

[133] P. Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," 69.

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek 18:2),

is, nonetheless, repudiated by Ezekiel, in an intertextual resonance with Jeremiah, thus:

מה־לכם אתם משלים את־המשל הזה על־אדמת ישראל---

חי־אני נאם אדני יהוה אם־יהיה לכם עוד משל המשל הזה בישראל

"What do you mean, repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel … As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel"(Ezek18:2, 3; cf. Jer 31: 29-30).[134]

On the other hand, Ezekiel readily embraces רוח as the יד־יהוה "hand of Yahweh" upon him (Ezek 1:3; 2:2; 3:14; 8:1, 3; 37:1),[135] in intertextual resonance with other biblical traditions (e.g. Exod 13:3; 1Kgs 8:42; Ps 32:4) and apparently in repudiation of other traditions which posited that:

אויל הנביא משגע איש הרוח

"The prophet is a fool; the man of רוח is mad" (Hos 9:7; cf. 2 Kgs 9:11; Jer 29:26).[136]

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[134] See also K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1257- 1258. Nancy R. Bowen notes that "Just as the proverb had support in the tradition, so does Ezekiel's counter proposition; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death (Deut 24:16)." Idem, *Ezekiel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 101. The question of whether Ezekiel had access to the other texts of the Hebrew Bible is inconsequential since both the writer(s) of Ezekiel and the other biblical texts' writers were products of the same literary and cultural milieu, and hence shared common extra- texts. See also Rodney R. Hutton, "Are the Parents Still Eating Sour Grapes?: Jeremiah's Use of the *Māŝāl* in Contrast to Ezekiel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71 (2009), 275.

[135] Walther Zimmerli views the Exodus tradition of Israel's deliverance "by a strong hand," of Yahweh (Exod 3:14, 16, 19; 6:1), as the source of Ezekiel's invocation of the "hand of Yahweh." Idem, *Ezekiel* 1, 117- 118. Keith W. Carley, likewise, states that "Ezekiel also betrays knowledge of the 'mighty hand and outstretched arm' characteristic of the Deuteronomic references to the Exodus. Idem, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets*, 14. D. I. Block also remarks that Ezekiel's use of "the 'hand of Yahweh' idiom is reminiscent of the Deuteronomistic traditions of Elijah and Elisha." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1, 35- 36. The intertextual markers do not, however, reveal the direction of the literary influence. See also K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel,* 1111.

[136] Johannes Lindblom remarks that "In Hos Ix:7, 'the prophet' and 'the man of spirit' stand as synonymous; the statement that prophets were fools and mad men was of course a current popular saying." Idem, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 75. See also R. R. Wilson who notes that "In the difficult and textually corrupt oracle in Hosea 9:7- 9, Hosea apparently quotes the people as saying that "the prophet is foolish, and the man possessed by the spirit is insane (Hos 9:7)." Idem, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 229- 230.

Moreover, Ezekiel appears to put a spin to an intertextual eschatological schema in the prophetic

literature in which Yaheh promise to infuse the human heart with רוח. Thus, whereas Jeremiah

states the eschatological schema in terms of infusion of the תורה, "the law," into the human

hearts:

הימים ההם נאם־יהוה נתתי את־תורתי בקרבם ולע־לבם אכתבנה

"In those days, says Yahweh, I will put my תורה within them; I will write it upon their hearts"
(Jer 31:33),

Ezekiel renders the eschatological schema in terms of an infusion of רוח:

ואת־ רוחי אתן בקרבכם "My רוח I will put within you" (Ezek 36:27).[137]

A number of scholars have also observed thematic intertextuality between the Pentateuch

and Ezekiel. For example, Risa Kohn identifies a number of textual instances where Ezekiel

appears to draw on the priestly source vocabulary in the Penteteuch.[138] Kohn does, however,

point out that "determining the literary dependence of one text upon another remains difficult;

notwithstanding … our analysis suggests that Ezekiel is familiar with the priestly source but,

clearly, his writing is more than just a product of its influence or tradition."[139] Daniel Block also

argues that "the parallels between Ezekiel 40- 48 and the Mosaic Torah can hardly be

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[137] D. I. Block also notes that "What Jeremiah attributes to the infusion of the divine Torah, Ezekiel ascribes to the infusion of *rwh*." Idem, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 39. Moreover, it is noted that, whereas רוח is a *leitwort* in Ezekiel (occurring no less than fifty two times), this is not the case with Jeremiah, where the word occurs eighteen times only. See also D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 28.

[138] Risa L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah* (JSOTSup 358; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 21- 85. See also A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship Between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1982), 146- 164.

[139] Risa L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul,* 84.

coincidental in view of the remarkable correspondences between the broad structures of

Ezekiel's restoration oracles in chs. 40- 48 and the Exodus narrative as a whole."[140]

Menahem Haran, on the other hand, while acknowledging some intertextuality between

Ezekiel and the priestly source in the Pentateuch, nonetheless, notes that "the relationship

between the two is unique since within the connection they contradict each other."[141] In effect,

Ezekiel appears to use familiar linguistic tropes and literary conventions to deconstruct familiar

traditions. Ezekiel maintains a semblance of continuity while, in reality, effecting a discontinuity.

Rebecca Idestrom, in her examination of plausible thematic intertextuality between the book of

Exodus and Ezekiel, concludes that "several parallels between Moses and Ezekiel are noted,

raising the question of whether Ezekiel was understood as a second Moses figure; both were

Levites who became prophets and leaders of God's people in a time of crisis."[142] However,

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[140] D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters* 25- 48 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 498. It is, however, noted that Ezekiel's temple restoration schema differs markedly from both the Mosaic tabernacle and the Solomonic temple. See, for example, Moshe Greenberg who argues that "Ezekiel's program is a revision- an updating and a rectification- of selected topics of existent Priestly legislation and practice very similar to, if not identical with, that of the Pentateuch." Idem, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 208.

[141] Menahem Haran, "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008), 211. R. R. Wilson also notes the controversial character of Ezekiel's temple restoration schema and recalls that "some ancient rabbis wanted to withdraw Ezekiel from public circulation because … the laws dealing with the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of worship (40- 48) … contradicted the prescriptions of the Torah." Idem, "Prophecy in Crisis," 118. A conspiracy theory, articulated by Shalom Spiegel, postulating that Ezekiel chapters 40- 48 was "part of a Samaritan plot to persuade the new Colony of returned Jews in Jerusalem to tear down the temple they had built … and to lead them to erect, instead … a new sanctuary in which the Samaritans should be given equal privileges with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin," has, however, not found much support in Ezekielian scholarship. See Shalom Spiegel, "Ezekiel or Pseudo- Ezekiel?" *Harvard Theological Review* XXIV (1931), 247.

[142] Rebecca G. S. Idestrom, "Echoes of the Book of Exodus in Ezekiel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2009), 489. See also Henry McKeating, "Ezekiel the 'Prophet like Moses?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 61 (1994), 97- 119, Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel* 40- 48 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 39, and Johan Lust, "Exodus 6:2- 8 and Ezekiel," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction- Reception- Interpretation* (ed. M. Vernenne; Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1996), 209- 224.

Ezekiel exhibits a discontinuity with Moses in that whereas Moses was a man of the תורה, 'the law,' Ezekiel was a man of the רוח, 'the spirit.'

The inferences emerging from the above analysis are that the Pentateuch was extant in some form at the time of Ezekiel's composition and that the Ezekielian writer(s) had access to the Pentateuchial texts. The evidence for such inferences is, however, tenuous; intertextuality, by itself, neither infers direct textual dependence nor the direction of the dependence. As already argued above, writers could be drawing from common stocks of linguistic tropes, literary conventions and traditions. Menahem Haran aptly argues that "In his place in Babylonia Ezekiel was removed from P, but the heritage of the priestly school with its language, spirit, and concepts, was deeply ingrained in him."[143]

Other Ezekielian scholars have inferred intertextuality between the book of Ezekiel, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history. Paul Joyce, for instance, states that:

> We find that much of the wording of Ezek 11:14- 21 is very close to Deuteronomy; the reference to the 'scattering' of Israel in 11:16 recalls Deut. 4:27, whilst the 'gathering' promised in the following verse is reminiscent of Deut. 30:3-5. The description of obedience in Ezek 11:20 closely resembles the language of Deut 26:16-19. In Ezekiel 36 too, we find further marked affinities with Deuteronomy; for example, the description of the renewal of nature in Ezekiel 36:29-30 employs a number of words particularly characteristic of Deuteronomy.[144]

Risa Kohn, likewise, remarks that:

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[143] Menahem Haran , "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School", 218.

[144] Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel,* 119.

Despite his affinities with P, Ezekiel was also influenced by D. Much of D, however, would have been anathema to the priestly writer: non- exclusive Levite priesthood, the importance of the king and of the prophet, the tradition of Aaron as sinner. Yet Ezekiel, who draws heavily upon P, is not shy about deriving terminology and ideas from D. … As is the case with P, however, Ezekiel adopts aspects of D's history while ignoring or even contradicting others.[145]

Within the prophetic literature, Ezekiel is viewed as having closest intertextual affinities with Jeremiah.[146] The two prophetic personae are presented in their respective texts as either priests or from priestly families, as follows:

ירמיהו בן־חלקיהו מן־הכהנים אשר בענתות

"Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah of the priests who were in Anathoth" (Jer 1:1).[147]

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[145] Risa L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 94- 95. See also Nancy R. Bowen who argues that Ezekiel Chapter 20 "reflects Ezekiel's penchant for combining, rearranging, and distorting Israel's traditions. In the historical recital, Ezekiel employs vocabulary from various traditions to express his view of Israel's history." Idem, *Ezekiel*, 113. Mark F. Rooker, who also notes that Ezekiel made considerable use of earlier Israelite traditions, nonetheless cautions that Ezekiel's plausible borrowing of the language of earlier traditions implies that "not all the language of the book of Ezekiel should be viewed as characteristic of the exilic period since the book preserves earlier source language." Idem, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 90; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 64. It should, however, be noted that, although Ezekiel's language may be borrowed from earlier traditions, his message does not necessarily echo or affirm the earlier traditions; Ezekiel is adept at using familiar language to convey unfamiliar message.

[146] However, as already noted, contemporary scholarship views the notion of relationship between historical prophetic personae and the books that are associated with their names as problematic. The prophetic 'authors' are viewed as literary figures rather than actual historical writing prophets. See also William L. Holladay who remarks that "the prevailing assumption is that the relation between historical persons and the books that purport to offer their words and deeds is so problematic that it is more useful to stay with the text simply as text." Idem, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (2001), 31. Martti Nissinen also notes the general shift, in biblical scholarship, "from historical personalities to prophetic books." Idem, "How Prophecy Became Literature," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19 (2005), 153.

147 Anathoth is portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as having had priestly connections right from the early days of Israel's settlement in Canaan land, at which time Joshua gave the city of Anathoth, among other cities, to the בני אהרן הכהנים "the descendants of Aaron, the priests" (Josh 21:8-19). Anathoth is also portrayed as the city to which king Solomon banished Abiathar, the disgraced Davidic priest, thus: ולאביתר הכהן אמר המלך ענתת לך "And to Abiathar the priest the king said, go to Anathoth" (1 Kgs 2:26). See also Patrick D. Miller, *The Book of Jeremiah. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, The New Interpreter's Bible VI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 575.

היה היה דבר־ יהוה אל־יחזקאל בן־בוזי הכהן בארץ כשדים

"The word of Yahweh came to Ezekiel son of Buzi the priest in the land of the Chaldeans" (Ezek 1:3).[148]

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of Israel's restoration from exile (Jer 29- 33; Ezek 36- 37) and the everlasting covenant of an inward transformation (Jer 31- 32; Ezek 16, 36- 37). William Holladay identifies "obvious phraseological parallels between passages in the two books,"[149] notably, the 'eating of words' (Jer 15: 16) vis-à-vis the 'eating of a scroll' (Ezek 2:8- 3:3).[150] On the question of the repudiation of the proverbial saying of "sour grapes" (Jer 31: 29; Ezek 18:2), and the infusion of תורה (Jer 31:33) vis-à-vis רוח (Ezek 36: 27), Holladay underscores Ezekiel's mastery of continuity- discontinuity rhetoric by surmising that:

> The direction of influence is surely from Jeremiah to Ezekiel … that Ezekiel transformed Jeremiah's metaphor of Yahweh's words placed in the prophet's mouth into phraseology of sensory stimulus only underlines the contrast of mentality between the prophet in Jerusalem and the erstwhile priest exiled in Babylon, now transformed into a prophet himself,"[151]

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[148] K. P. Darr notes that "the oppositional phrase could refer to Buzi, his father. Yet the strong possibility that the son shared his father's vocation, coupled with the book's priestly caste, supports the view that Ezekiel was himself a priest." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1110, n.66.

[149] William L. Holladay, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?," 32. See also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 136.

[150] William Holladay notes, in particular, that "there is no parallel elsewhere in the Old Testament for this phraseology with the verb 'eat' linked with the objects 'words' (Jer 15: 16) or 'scroll' (Ezek 3:1- 3)." Idem, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?," 32.

[151] William L. Holladay, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?," 34, and, Idem, *Jeremiah* 2: *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters* 26- 52 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1989), 154- 163. Holladay's surmising is premised on the assumption that the prophetic personae of Jeremiah and Ezekiel were actual historical figures and that Jeremiah had a pre-exilic prophetic career that preceded an Ezekielian exilic prophetic call. However, Holladay is fully aware of the problematics of the assumption that the prophetic personae were actual historical figures. He, nonetheless, terms his surmising as a "plausible speculation at least." Idem, "Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally*?,"* 31.

Ezekiel's continuity-discontinuity rhetoric could also be visualized in terms of Michael

Fishbane's process notion whereby authoritative texts are "studied, reinterpreted, and adapted to

ongoing life."[152] Patricia Tull, elaborating on Fishbane's process notion, observes that:

> Over time, authoritative texts are called upon to address problems or explore possibilities
> unforeseen by their creators. New interpretations arise, drawing out of Scripture
> meanings that earlier generations may not have intended or perceived. The authority for a
> new interpretation is closely tied to its ability to demonstrate rhetorically that it stands in
> continuity with the past.[153]

It is thus plausible that Ezekiel's apparently enigmatic רוח symbolism represents a

reinterpretation, and adaptation to ongoing life, of the ancient Israelite רוח symbolism,

particularly given the new realities of the exile, the loss of much of the land of Israel, loss of the

Davidic monarchy, and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

Ezekiel shares various affinities with all the other prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible.

Martti Nissinen attributes the common features in the prophetic texts to a common writers' guild

in the Second Temple period. Nissinen postulates a distinction between ancient Israelite

prophecy and biblical prophecy. The former is "the actual communication situations and oral

performances of the prophets of Israel and Judah,"[154] while the latter is the prophetic literature in

the Hebrew Bible. Nissinen argues that the destruction of Jerusalem was "the main catalyst for

the writing of the prophetic books … the anonymous scribes of the Second Temple period are

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[152] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 1.

[153] Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," 76.

[154] Martti Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature," 166- 167.

held in much higher regard than before; they are the fathers of the prophetic books".[155] However, Martti Nissinen's thesis of a 'common prophetic writers' guild' does not adequately account for the notable literary and thematic differences among the prophetic books, particularly Ezekiel's apparent deconstructionist and revisionist approaches to a number of traditions espoused in other texts of the biblical prophetic literature.

The above analysis shows that Ezekiel is intertextually related to other texts in the Hebrew Bible, particularly the prophetic books. Implicitly, therefore, the Hebrew Bible must be viewed as an intertextual-hermeneutical context for the interpretation of Ezekiel. The notion of the Hebrew Bible as a hermeneutical context is, however, not necessarily synonymous with the classical canonical criticism, associated with Brevard S. Childs, which postulates a theological center in the Hebrew canon and which not only suffuses each component text with theological meaning but also controls the range of meaning in each biblical text.[156] Rather, the biblical hermeneutical intertextuality postulated in the present study is a literary intertextual situation which, in the Bakhtinian sense of intextuality, portrays a polysemy of literary voices in dialogic relation with one another without privileging any one voice as the normative, and without a reductionist quest for an ideological center in the literary canon.[157]

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[155] Martti Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature," 156.

[156] Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 115- 121, and, Idem*, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1993), 53- 106.

[157] See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist; trans. V. W. McGee; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1986), 71- 125. See also Juliana M. Claassens, "Biblical Theology as Dialogue: Continuing the Conversation of Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Theology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003), 127- 144 and Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible and Dialogic Truth," *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996), 292- 294.

Furthermore, Exekiel's dialogic inertextuality in the Hebrew Bible cannot be visualized in terms of the dated reductionist *sola scriptura* hermeneutical principle of "scripture interpreting scripture," whereby the usage of linguistic vocabulary, literary tropes or narrative traditions in what is, supposedly, an earlier text of the Bible is simply understood as controlling the meaning of their usage in other, supposedly, later texts of the Bible.[158] Rather, any intertextual interpretation of Ezekiel should take into account Ezekiel's deconstructionist and revisionist rhetoric, hence the thesis of the present study that Ezekiel's רוח motif is not simply an intertextual echo in the Hebrew Bible; rather, it portends a paradigmatic shift in ancient Israelite visualization of divine-human interrelation and, hence, Yahwerh's relation with Israel.

2.5 Ezekiel in Ancient Near Eastern Context

Ancient Israelite prophecy has long been recognized as part of a wider socio-religious divine-human intermediatory phenomenon of the ancient Near East. This recognition is underscored by Martti Nissinen who remarks that the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible "cannot be divorced from prophecy as an ancient Near Eastern socio-religious phenomenon."[159] Other ancient Near Eastern societies have been shown to have had prophetic phenomena loosely comparable to the ancient Israelite prophecy. Archeological and epigraphic finds of ancient

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[158] For a discussion of the *Sola Scriptura* hermeneutical principle, see Kevin Vanhoozer, "Hermeneutics, Text, and Biblical Theology," in *A Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. vanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 32- 35.

[159] Martti Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature," 162. See also Hans M. Bastard, "*Comparare necesse est*: Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy in a Comparative Perspective," in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamia, Biblical and Arabian Perspectives* (ed. M. Nissinen; SBLSymS 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 3-11.

Babylonian texts from *Mari*, the ancient Neo-Assyrian texts, and the ancient Aramaic Balaam

epigraphic find at *Deir 'Alla* in Jordan, for example, attest to the existence of a pervasive

prophetic phenomena of sorts in the ancient Near East.[160]

   Although some scholars have postulated that Canaanite or Babylonian prophetic traditions

were the sources for ancient Israelite prophecy, contemporary scholarship has been reticent in

embracing such postulates.[161] Robert Wilson, in his anthropological study of ancient and modern

prophetic phenomena, remarks that, in the light of anthropological evidence, contemporary

scholarship is apt in its reticence with respect to the idea of prophetic borrowings by ancient

Israel; "the existence of intermediation can be explained on the basis of internal social and

religious conditions; borrowing need not be involved, although outside influence may be present

and in particular may help to shape the form that intermediation takes in a given society."[162] The

"outside influence" plausibility theory, as postulated by Robert Wilson, can be visualized in

terms of intertextuality in the dialogic sense of interaction of variegated traditions which

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[160] See S. D. Walters, "Prophecy in Mari and Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970), 78- 81, M. Weinfeld, "Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977), 178- 195, R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 89- 134, J. S. Holladay, "Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel," *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970), 29- 51, J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooiji, *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 179- 182, and J. Hackett, *The Balaam Texts from Deir 'Alla* (Chico, Calif.: Scholar Press, 1980), 85- 89. See also M. W. Chavalas and E. C. Hostetter, "Epigraphic Light on the Old Testament," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 38- 58.

[161] For a comparative study of ancient Israelite and ancient Near Eastern prophecies and the arguments for possible prophetic borrowings, see Herbert Huffmon, "A Company of Prophets: Mari, Assyria, Israel," *in Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamia, Biblical and Arabian Perspectives* (ed. M. Nissinen; SBLSymS 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 47- 70.

[162] R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 90. Lester L. Grabbe, however, cautions that conclusions drawn from anthropological studies are not evidential data, but models which need corroborative data from other sources. Idem, "Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy from an Anthropological Perspective," in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (ed. M. Nissinen; SBLWAW 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2003),13- 32.

mutually inform one another without any one tradition becoming the normative or the dominant voice in the dialogue. Dialogic intertextuality of prophetic traditions is also informed by Carol Newsom's observation that "dialogism is not only descriptive of certain kinds of literature; it is a prescriptive model for understanding persons and communities and for the conduct of discourse."[163] Juliana Claassens also informs that, in the Bakhtinian sense of intertextuality, a foreign text or culture "has the function of challenging us to ask new questions that we have not thought of raising."[164] This is in reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's postulate that a text or culture reveals new dimensions of meaning once it encounters other texts or cultures.[165]

Ezekiel's apparent spatio-temporal proximity to the ancient Babylonian, the ancient Persian, and ancient Hellenistic cultures in his exilic and postexilic settings raises the plausibility of being in dialogic intertextuality with the foreign cultures to such an extent that he raises new questions about traditional understandings of his Israelite cultural heritage and this could, inferentially, explain Ezekiel's deconstructionist and revisionist rhetoric as an attempt to infuse ancient Israelite traditions with intertextually reappraised and nuanced dimensions of meaning. A number of scholars have proffered such a plausibility theory. Marc Zvi Brettler, for example, postulates a general evolutionary socio-religious development of ancient Israelite religion:

> The religion of the biblical period went through many changes caused by internal and
> external factors such as the establishment of monarchy, the rise of classical prophecy, the

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[163] Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996), 293.

[164] Juliana M. Claassens, "Biblical Theology as Dialogue: Continuing the Conversation on Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Theology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003), 132.

[165] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 7.

centralization of worship, and the influence of Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arameans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks.[166]

A Persian influence on the development of postexilic Israelite religion is conceivable since the Israelites lived under the *pax persica* for over two centuries (530- 330 BCE).[167] The arguments for a Persian influence on postexilic Israelite religion are usually presented at two levels: a primary or particular influence based on discrete pieces of evidence, such as loanwords, and a secondary or general influence based on the reasoning that the long-lasting and overarching Persian Empire inevitably impacted the socio-cultural and religious systems of its subject territories.[168] James Barr's investigation of a possible Persian influence on Israelite religion through loan words leads him to conclude that "the evidence for loan words, for what it is worth, seems to show no strong evidence of Jewish awareness of the Iranian religious structures."[169]

At the level of secondary or general influence, a number of scholars have argued that the proto-apocalyptic character of some of Ezekiel's prophetic narratives is strongly suggestive of

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[166] Marc Zvi Brettler, "Judaism in the Hebrew Bible?: The Transition From Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999), 444. Brettler is, however, quick to point out that there is no conclusive evidence from "objective scholarly analysis" to show that any one factor was "sufficiently decisive" to effect a paradigmatic shift in Israelite religion. Idem, "*Judaism in the Hebrew Bible?",* 444, 446.

[167] See Pierre Briant, "History of the Persian Empire (550- 330 BC)," in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* (ed. J. Curtis and N. Tallis; London: The British Museum Press, 2005), 12- 17, and James Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence: The Case for Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 111 (1985), 201. See also Mary Boyce who postulates some Persian-Zoroastrian influence on the Hebrew Bible. Idem, *Zoroastrianism: A Shadowy But Powerful Presence in the Judeo-Christian World* (London: Williams Trust Press, 1987), 8, and, Idem, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 99.

[168] See James Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence," 204.

[169] James Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence," 212.

borrowings from Zoroastrian apocalyptic eschatology.[170] Paul Hanson, however, points out that

"the basic schema of apocalyptic eschatology evolved in Israel and the whole development is

perfectly comprehensible within the history of Israel's own community and cult; hasty recourse

to late Persian influence is therefore unnecessary and unjustifiable."[171] Likewise, James Barr, in

his critical review of the case for Israelite general borrowings from Persian religious motifs,

remarks that "if this were to be accepted, however, it would not necessarily mean that Jewish

religion 'took over' large elements from Iranian; rather, it would suggest that Iranian religion

acted as a catalyst and caused the Jewish religion to define itself by contrast as much as by

imitation."[172] This is reminiscent of the Bakhtian dialogic intertextuality in which a foreign text

or culture challenges people to re-evaluate and re-articulate their own culture more critically.[173]

The 'hellenistic influence' thesis, with regard to the exilic and postexilic Israelite religion,

has been premised on the late dating theory, or the revisionist historicism, which argues that the

texts of the Hebrew Bible were written or redacted during the Hellenistic period.[174] The 'late

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[170] For a discussion of the theories of Israelite borrowings of apocalyptic motifs from Persian Zoroastrianism, see Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic:The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (rev. ed., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 25- 60.

[171] Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic*, 60.

[172] James Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence," 208.

[173] See Juliana M. Claassens, "Biblical Theology as Dialogue," 132.

[174] See, for example, Niels P. Lemche who postulates that "Palestine in the Persian period hardly seems to have embraced the kind of society in which to look for the authors of literature like the one found in the historical parts of the Old Testament … the biblical writers display a knowledge of the Greek tradition." Idem, "The Old Testament- A Hellenistic Book," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 7 (1993), 164- 165. See also Gerhard Larsson, "Possible Hellenistic Influences in the Historical Parts of the Old Testament," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18 (2004), 297.

'dating' theory has, however, not gained general consensus in biblical scholarship.[175] Ancient

Israelite and ancient Greek seers, for example, have been shown to exhibit markedly contrastive

features. Armin Lange, in a critical and comparative review of ancient Near Eastern prophecy

vis-à-vis Greek seers of antiquity, notes that:

> The ancient Near Eastern understanding of the prophet emphasizes heavily his reliance on divine revelation. This is especially true for Israelite and Jewish prophets. The messenger formula describes them as mere communicators of the divine message. On the other hand, the Greek *mantis* acts mostly as a diviner in his own right. His special insights and knowledge go back to his abilities. He is able to either perform acts of deductive divination or is able to see and perceive more than the average human being by way of second sight.[176]

Thus, whereas Ezekiel, in his exilic and postexilic settings, may have been more exposed to

inter-cultural influences than his predecessors, his text does not exhibit any notable foreign

influences or borrowings that entailed abandonment of the ancient Israelite traditions. Rather,

Ezekiel's continuity-discontinuity rhetoric is best understood as an intertextual encounter with

foreign cultures. Intertextuality is, therefore, a plausible hermeneutical paradigm in the study of

Ezekiel's רוח motif. As Patricia Tull argues, "studies of the literary use of biblical material,

which do explicitly employ intertextual theory, often offer freshness to biblical understanding

both in terms of methodology and in terms of content."[177]

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[175] See William G. Dever, "Revisionist Israel Revisited: A Rejoinder to Niels Peter Lemche," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 4 (1996), 35- 50, for a critical review of the Israelite revisionist historicism arguments.

[176] Armin Lange, "Greek Seers and Israelite- Jewish Prophets," *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007), 481.

[177] Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," 82.

2.6 Summary

The book of Ezekiel is, by its own account, set in one of the most traumatic periods in ancient Israelite biblical history. Trauma theory is therefore inferred as a conceivable interpretive paradigm of Ezekiel's seemingly enigmatic רוח imageries. However, as argued above, the application of trauma theory in contemporary Ezekiealian scholarship eschews psychoanalytic approaches which simply focus on Ezekiel's supposedly traumatized personality. Rather, trauma theory as an interpretive paradigm focuses on any discernible literary or thematic strategies in the Ezekielian text that appear to be strategic responses to traumatic experiences.

The present study adopts a synchronic interpretive approach which focuses on the literary design of the book and which views Ezekiel's רוח motif as a structuring device in the text's literary unity and therefore an integral part of Ezekiel's prophetic message. It is, nonetheless, reckoned that the text is diachronically anchored in particular socio-historical contexts and intertextually anchored in the Hebrew Bible canonical context, as well as in the ancient Near Eastern milieu. Ezekiel's רוח motif is therefore interpreted synchronically within the text of Ezekiel, diachronically in Ezekiel's socio-historical settings, and intertextually in its Hebrew Bible canonical and ancient Near Eastern contexts. In what follows the study exegetes, in an exploratory fashion, the usage of the word רוח in the Hebrew Bible in general, and in the Ezekielian text in particular, in order to map out the contours of the רוח semantic range and symbolism in the Hebrew Bible, and to show how the semantic range and symbolism are re-envisioned in Ezekiel.

CHAPTER THREE

USAGE OF THE WORD רוח IN EZEKIEL

3.1 Polysemous רוח Symbolism in the Hebrew Bible

Ezekiel's *leitwort*, רוח, appears 389 times in the entire Hebrew Bible, including 11 times in

the Aramaic segments of the book of Daniel, as follows: [178]

    I. The Pentateuch – 38 times
    II. Deuteronomistic History – 47 times
    III.The Prophetic Books – 170 times
    IV.The Wisdom Literature – 115 times
    V. Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah – 19 times. [179]

The above analysis shows that the term רוח permeates the entire Hebrew Bible. It is, however,

apparent that רוח is more widely used in the prophetic texts than in any other literary component

of the Hebrew Bible. Thus the prophetic texts are the central locus of the usage of the word רוח,

plausibly signifying a close association of the concept of רוח with the divine-human

intermediatory phenomenon of prophecy. Other related terms, namely: אוב, often translated as "a

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[178] See also Daniel I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 28. Also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "**רוח**, *Rûah*, Spirit," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament Vol.* 3 (ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann; trans. M. E. Biddle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 1202- 1203, Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters* 25- 48 (trans. J. D. Martin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 566, R. Laird Harris, ed. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 836- 837, and James Robison, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 15.

[179] For heuristic purposes of this analysis, the literary components of the Hebrew Bible are grouped as follows: the Pentateuch includes Genesis to Deuteronomy, while Deuteronomistic History includes Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings. The Prophetic Books include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Book of Twelve, the Book of Lamentations (by virtue of its correspondence with Jeremiah's lamentations/confessions and its traditional association with the Prophet Jeremiah), and the Apocalypse of Daniel (usually classified as a prophetic book in Christian canons, and its resonance with the apocalyptic sections of Isaiah and Ezekiel). Under the rubric of Wisdom Literature, the following books are included: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. The books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are grouped together on account of their common post-exilic restoration motifs (e.g. 2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1- 3; Neh 1:1-3). The word **רוח** is not found in the Hebrew Bible texts of Ruth and Esther. See also Christoph Levin, *The Old Testament* (trans. M. Kohl; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 16- 21, and David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1- 5.

spirit, spirit of the dead, someone with a spirit of divination or medium"(e.g. Lev 20:27; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:7- 8; Isa 29:4), and נשמה , often rendered as "breath of life, or wind," (e.g. Gen 2:7; 2 Sam 22:16; Isa 30:33) are used in the Hebrew Bible 17 and 24 times, respectively. However, of the three related words, only the term רוח is used in the book of Ezekiel.[180]

Within the Prophetic books, including Lamentations and the book of Daniel, the use of the word רוח is distributed as follows:

I. Isaiah – 51 times
II. Jeremiah – 18 times
III. Ezekiel – 52 times
IV. Book of Twelve – 33 times
V. Book of Daniel – 15 times
VI. Lamentations – 1 time.

Thus, within the Prophetic books, the text of Ezekiel is the epicenter, as it were, of the usage of the word רוח. The significance of this observation is the *raison d'etre* of the present study. [181]

The term רוח is used in the Hebrew Bible, mainly, as an ontological-relational symbol with a wide semantic range.[182] The basic referent of רוח in the Hebrew Bible is meterorological phenomena "wind" or "storm," but it also refers to the anthropological principle of life, such as "breath of life." However, the references appear to portray the meteorological phenomena and

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[180] See also D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 28, and Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, " רוח, *Rûah*, Spirit," 1206- 1209.

[181] Although Ezekiel's use of the word רוח is almost matched by Isaiah, it is, nonetheless, observed that most of the appearances of רוח in the Isaiah corpus are in the apparently postexilic Deutero- and Trito- Isaiah. The significance of this observation will be explored further in the present study. See also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "רוח, *Rûah*, Spirit," 1203- 1209.

[182] The sense of symbolism inferred in this context is the Philip Wheelwright's "tensive symbolism." In this sense, רוח is viewed as a literary symbol which encapsulates a range of meanings that can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed by any single referent. Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1962), 92- 110. See also Douglas B. Miller who notes that Philip Wheelwright's tensive symbol "holds together a set of meanings that can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed by any single meaning." Idem, "Qohelet's Symbolic Use of הבל," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998), 444.

the anthropological principle of life, not merely as essences but, rather, as "the power

encountered in the breath and the wind, whose whence and whither remains mysterious."[183]

 In the Genesis creation narrative, רוח is introduced as an apparently natural-meteorological

phenomenon but, at the same time, as a divine creative agency:

ורוח אלהים מרחפת אל־פני המים "and the רוח of God was moving/hovering over the face of the

waters"(Gen1:2b). The above passage is variously rendered, in English translations of the

Hebrew Bible, as follows: "a wind from God swept over the face of the waters"(NRSV), "the

spirit of God was hovering over the waters"(NIV), "the spirit of God was hovering over the face

of the waters"(ESV), or "a wind from God sweeping over the water"(JPS). Thus some

translations portray רוח as a mere meteorological phenomenon while others connote a divine

agency motif.[184]

Some biblical critics argue that the primordial wind of Phoenician cosmogony is implicit

in Genesis 1:2, and that the term אלהים is used here as an illative, thus rendering the expression

רוח אלהים as "a tempestuous wind" and then rendering the word מרחפת as "ranging."[185] The use of

the term אלהים as an illative is witnessed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, the

biblical passage: ותרגז הארץ ותהי לחרדת אלהים (1 Sam 14:15b), is usually translated as follows:

"The earth quaked; and it became a very great panic" (NRSV, ESV), while the verse:

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[183] Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "רוח", 1203. See also William R. Shoemaker, "The Use of רוח in the Old Testament and of Πνεῦμα in the New Testament: A Lexicographical Study," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 23 (1904), 14.

[184] The acronyms NRSV, NIV, ESV, and JPS stand for *New Revised Standard Version*, *New International Version*, *English Standard Version*, and *Jewish Publication Society*, English versions of the Hebrew Bible, respectively.

[185] See Sabatino Moscati, "The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (1947), 306.

וְנִינְוֵה הָיְתָה עִיר־גְּדוֹלָה לֵאלֹהִים (Jonah 3: 3b), is likewise translated as follows: "Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city" (NRSV), or "Nineveh was an enormously large city" (JPS). Sabatino Moscati, however, remarks that the use of אלהים as an illative "does not exclude divinity … but it uses this name in a metaphorical sense, as a symbol of greatness."[186]

The textual context of Genesis 1: 2 has explicit references to divinity (e.g. Gen 1:1, 3). Implicitly therefore, the term רוח in the Genesis creation narrative is imbued with divine agency motifs without being evacuated of its meteorological-phenomenal references. P. A. Nordell also notes that a numinous-phenomenal symbolism is implicit in the use of the term רוח in the Genesis creation narrative; "the unseen wind has ever been to the human mind a symbol of that invisible spirit … to understand *ru(a)h* as 'wind' and so to translate it, is too materialistic; we need not, on the other hand, project upon the word a refined Aristotelian abstraction which evacuates it of all sensuous affiliations."[187] Sabatino Moscati equally remarks that the reference to a personal deity in the creation narrative "shows clearly the autonomy of Hebrew thought; it revivifies and transfuses in a monotheistic and transcendent sense the elements of a pagan and natural

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[186] Sabatino Moscati, "The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony," 306. P. A. Nordell, writing in the nineteenth century, argued that the word **מרחפת** does not describe "a mechanical blowing of the wind over the primeval ocean, for this would be wholly inadequate to the production of the subsequent effects. On the contrary, it points to the spirit of God as a constructive, life-imparting energy transforming the formless waste, the תהום , into a habitable world." Idem, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit of God," *The Old Testament Student* 4 (1885), 434.

[187] P. A. Nordell, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit," 440.

cosmogony which were parts of the traditional heritage of the Semites and in general of the ancient Near East."[188]

The numinous-phenomenal symbolism of the term רוח is also evident elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; the רוח הקדים "the East wind" (e.g. Exod 10:13; 14:21; Jer 18:17; Jonah 4:8), refers to the phenomenal "destructive East wind from the Arabian desert,"[189] but also symbolizes a divine agency: ורוח הקדים נשא את־הארבה "and the East רוח 'wind' brought up the locusts" (Exod10:13b), ויהפך יהוה רוח־ים חזק מאד וישא את־הארבא "and Yahweh turned the exceedingly strong West (or Sea) רוח 'wind' and lifted the locusts" (Exod 10:19). More specifically Hosea portrays the וח הקדים as the "רוח 'wind' of Yahweh" or "רוח 'wind' from Yahweh;" יבוא קדים רוח יהוה ממדבר "The East רוח of Yahweh from the Desert" (Hos13:15). Ultimately, all the רוחות 'winds' which blow in all directions of the earth, literally ארבע רחות "four winds" or "four directions," denoting the four points of the compass, are portrayed as proceeding from Yahweh and as divine agencies:

אלה ארבע רחות השמים יוצאות מהתיצב על־אדון כל־הארץ

"These are the four רחות 'winds' of heaven going forth after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth"(Zech 6: 5b). [190]

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[188] Sabatino Moscati, "The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony," 309. See also William R. Shoemaker who observes that "For the early Hebrews … this powerful and invisible force is under the direct control of God. It goes forth from him to do his bidding." Idem, *"The Use of* רוח *in the Old Testament,"* 14.

[189] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25- 48* (trans. J. D. Martin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 566. See also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermannn who remark that "The reference is particularly to the *sirocco* that appears in Palestine in the Spring … which is so hot (Jonah 4:8; Jer 4:11) that with one gust it withers the vegetation of the Spring rains." Idem, "**רוח**", 1203.

[190] Also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, " **רוח**," 1203, and Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 566.

It is conceivable that, from the primordial- phenomenal experiences of רוח as wind in terms of its invisibility, intangibility, power, and motion, the term רוח became a viable symbol for a wide range of phenomena, experiences, and perceptions and thus invested the term רוח with multiple metaphorical referents, such as the meteorological phenomenon, רוח הקדים, "the East wind," the anthropological principle of life: נשמת חיים ,רוח חיים, or נשמת־רוח חיים "the breath of life"(Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:22), or רוח־אל עשתני ונשמת שדי תחיני "the רוח of the Almighty has made me, and the 'breath' of the Almighty has given me life" (Job 33:4).[191] Thus רוח is portrayed as a polysemous construct that can symbolize natural weather phenomena, the anthropological principle of human life, or a theological symbolization of God's 'breath' which constitutes the anthropological principle of life, thereby implying a sense of continuity or interrelation between divinity and humanity.

The רוח symbol is also used in the Hebrew Bible as a vehicle of theophany and divine mobility. However, in the pre-exilic texts of the Hebrew Bible, the divine mobility is apparently confined to the ancient Israelite cultic shrines, notably the mobile wilderness tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple. In the Sinai theophany narrative, the imageries of weather phenomena "thunders and lightning and a thick cloud" (Exod 19:16) presaging the theophany are elsewhere portrayed as vehicles of divine mobility: וירכב על־כרוב ויעף וירא על־כנפי־רוח "he rode on a cherub

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[191] W. R. Shoemaker surmises that "with the conception of the wind as an invisible power of God, it seems probable that the early Hebrews easily carried over the term רוח to designate the unseen but powerful influences which appeared to operate within the physical and psychical life of man. God, by his unseen but powerful רוח (spirit) acted upon man in much the same way as, through his רוח (wind), he acted upon natural objects." Idem, "The Use of רוח in the Old Testament," 14.

and flew; he was seen upon the wings of the רוח "(2 Sam 22:11; cf. Ps 18:11).[192] The רוח

symbolism also represents experiences of divine presence. Whereas divine presence in Israel's

deliverance from Egypt and guidance through the wilderness is portrayed in terms of an

angel, הנה אנכי שלח מלאך לפניך "I am sending an angel before you" (Exod 23:20, cf. Exod 33:14;

Num 20:16), the angelic presence is elsewhere portrayed as Yahweh's רוח:

איה המעלם מים ... השם בקרבו את־רוח קדשו

"Where is he who brought them out of the sea … he who put the רוח of his holiness within
them?" (Isa 63:11),

בצאתכם ממצרים ורוחי עמדת בתוככם

"When you came out of Egypt, my רוח abiding within you" (Hag 2:5),

ורוחך הטובא נתת להשכילם ומנך לא־מנעת מפיתם

"You gave your good רוח to instruct them, and did not withhold your manna from their mouths"
(Neh 9:20).

Thus the מלאך "angel, messenger" who led the Israelites from Egypt (Exod 23:20-23) is also

portrayed as the רוח who was put within them (Isa 63: 11). It is, however, plausible that the

portrayal of מלאך as רוח was a later development in Israelite רוח theology which was retroactively

redacted into earlier texts of the Hebrew Bible.[193] This plausibility theory will be explored

further in the present study.

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[192] Also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1: *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters* 1- 24. (trans. R. Clements. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 119.

[193] The portrayal of divine presence as **מלאך** or **רוח** does not, however, appear to be a hypostatization of divine presence. Rather, it appears to be a literary symbolization of the perceptual experiences of divine presence. See also John R. Levison "Holy Spirit," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 863- 864, and W. R. Shoemaker who notes that **רוח** is, generally, not portrayed as a separate and distinct hypostasis or object of divinity. Idem, "The Use of *רוח*," 28.

The use of the term רוח to denote divine presence is poignantly portrayed in the biblical

Psalms where, in apparently poetic stanza, divine presence and רוח are used in synonymous

parallelism:

על־תשליכני מלפניך ורוח קדשך אל־תקח ממני

"Do not cast me away from your presence; do not take the רוח of your holiness from me" (Ps
51:13),

אנה אלך מרוחך ואנה מפניך אברח

"Where shall I go from your רוח; where shall I flee to from your presence?"(Ps 139:7).

William Shoemaker remarks that "the spirit was one of the concepts through which the

omnipresence and immanence of God were maintained in spite of the growing belief in his

transcendence."[194]

The use of the term רוח to symbolize prophetic inspiration, or divine inspiration on a

person with the impartation of a revelatory message from the realm of divinity, is a significant

motif in the Hebrew Bible. Moses, who, according to the Deuteronomist, was the archetypal

prophet of Israel (Deut 18:15; 34:10; cf. Num 12:6- 8) had an infusion of the רוח with which he

could impart a prophetic effect on members of his guild:

וירד יהוה ... ויאצל מן־הרוח אשר עליו ויתן על־שבעים איש הזקנים ויהי כנוח עליהם הרוח ויתנבאו

"Then Yahweh came down … and took some of the רוח which was upon him (Moses) and put it
upon seventy elders. And when the רוח rested upon them, they prophesied" (Num 11:25).

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[194] W. R. Shoemaker, "The Use of *רוח* ," 28. See also John R. Levison, "Holy Spirit," 863- 864.

The Mosaic רוח is also portrayed as רוח יהוה "Yahweh's 'spirit'" (Num11: 29), as well as רוח הכמה 'spirit' of wisdom" (Deut 34: 9).[195] The Samuelian prophetic guild is particularly notable for their ecstatic form of prophetic activity inspired by רוח אלהים "spirit of God" or רוח יהוה "spirit of Yahweh"(1 Sam 10:6,10; 19:20). The prophet Elijah also experienced יד־יהוה "hand of Yahweh," a metonym for רוח, upon him (1 Kgs 18:46), by virtue of which he was able to do extra-ordinary feats, such as bringing a child back to life (1 Kgs 17:22), and by which he was recognized as a prophet:

עתה זה ידעתי כי איש אלהים אתה ודבר־יהוה בפיך אמת

 "Now I know that you are a man of God, and the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth"(1 Kgs 17:24).[196]

Elisha also received Elijah's רוח (2 Kgs 2:15) and exhibited ecstatic prophetic behavior by virtue of the רוח which he also experienced as יד־יהוה "hand of Yahweh" (2 Kgs 3:15).[197] The יד־יהוה is elsewhere described as יד חזקה "strong hand" (Exod 6:1), and also as מלאך "angel, messenger" (Exod 23:20), which led Israel out of Egypt (Deut 26:8); hence Trito- Isaiah's use of the terms

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[195] The portrayal of רוח as wisdom, skill, or extraordinary enablement is a common feature in the Hebrew Bible. Notable examples include Bezalel and others who had skill to craft the vessels for the wilderness tabernacle because the רוח אלהים "'spirit' of God," was upon them (Exod 35:31, 35). Examples of extraordinary empowerment include Othniel, Gideon and Samson who carried out extra-ordinary feats because רוח יהוה "'spirit' of Yahweh" was upon them (Judg 3:10; 6:33; 14:6; 15:14).

[196] Kirsten Nielsen defines metonymy as "a form of imagery where, for example, instead of naming the originator, one names the effect." Idem, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call as Prologue: From Complexity to Changeability to Order and Stability," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2008), 107, n. 17. According to this definition, יד־יהוה is an apt metonym for רוח in the sense that the presence of רוח was experienced as a strong hand gripping a person. Thus the רוח lifted me up … the יד־יהוה was strong upon me" (Ezek 3:14).

[197] Keith W. Carley notes that the use of the word והיה (conj.- Qal pf. 3ms) in 2 Kings 3:15 is best understood to denote a regular happening; " II Kings 3:15 tells not merely of one instance in which a prophet was aided by music, but indicates that this was a regular occurrence … whether the effect of the music was to sooth or stimulate him, II Kings 3:15 indicates that 'the hand of Yahweh' came upon Elisha on specific occasions … and in that special condition of mind he was made aware of Yahweh's will concerning selected matters." Idem, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets: A Study of Ezekiel's Place in Prophetic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1975), 17, 19.

מלאָך "angel, messenger" and רוח 'spirit' interchangeably (Isa 63:9-11) though, arguably, the interchangeable use is plausibly diachronic in temporal terms.[198]

Although the symbols of רוח and יד־יהוה are associated with prophecy in the eighth century classical prophetic books, the most common symbol of prophetic unction during that era is דבר יהוה "the word of Yahweh"(e.g. Isa 1:10; 2:3; 16:13; Jer 1:2, 4, 9, 11, 13; 2:1; 7:1; 11:1; 13:3, 8; Hos 1:1; 4:1; Amos 3:1; 7:16; 8:11; Micah 1:1; 4:2; Zeph 1:1; 2:5). [199] The apparent preference for the expression דבר יהוה over רוח in the classical prophets has been interpreted variously. Joseph Blenkisopp argues that the earlier ecstatic spirit prophecy in Israel was discarded in favor of the more rational word prophecy of the writing prophets.[200] Sigmund Mowinckel also argues that "the *rûah* idea recedes very much into the background in the literary prophets as a whole … a detailed study proves that in most of the reforming prophets the idea is not only absent but

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[198] Bogdan G. Bucur argues that the portrayal of רוח as מלאָך by Trito-Isaiah was plausibly a theological "angelomorphic pneumatology" development which became the characteristic pneumatology of the postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature and early Christian writings. Idem, "Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of the Book of Revelation's *Wirkungsgeschichte*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008), 174.

[199] First Isaiah, for example, states: **כי כה אמר יהוה אלי כחזקת היד ויסרני** "For thus Yahweh spoke to me, and with a strong hand he warned me" (Isa 8:11). Equally Jeremiah narrates his prophetic call in terns of יד־יהוה, thus: **וישלח יהוה את־ידו ויגע על־פי ויאמר יהוה אלי** "Then Yahweh put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and Yahweh said to me." (Jer 1: 9). The prophet Micah states that: **אנכי מלאתי כח את־רוח יהוה** "I am full of power by the רוח of Yahweh" (Mic 3: 8), while Hosea appears to decry Israel's derisive view of the prophetic רוח ; thus: **אויל הנביא משגע איש הרוח** "The prophet is foolish; the man of the רוח is mad" (Hos 9:7). Sigmund Mowinckel's assertions that Hosea "emphatically disclaims all practices of the spirit man" and that Micah's words espousing the רוח are a gloss, have not found much support in contemporary scholarship. Idem, "The Spirit and the Word in Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets,"*Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (1934), 201. See also Keith Carley*, Ezekiel Among the Prophets*, 27, and John R. Levison, "Holy Spirit," 862. It is, however, arguable that the frequent recurrences of the word רוח in the prophetic literature were postexilic redactional layers.

[200] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (rev. ed., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 48- 55.

actually rejected; they regard possession by the spirit as something undesirable."[201] Yehezkel

Kaufmann, however, argues that the דבר, not the רוח, was always the primary source of prophecy:

> The Bible never regards the spirit of Yahweh as the primary source of prophecy … we must distinguish the action of the spirit of Yahweh from prophecy proper. The spirit is the source of activity and creativity; it animates the ecstatic, the judge, the mighty man; it rests on the poet. It rouses the prophet to act, to speak, and endows him with the ability to harangue and poetize. The spirit of prophecy also prepares him to receive the divine word.[202]

Yehezkel Kaufmann's argument, in effect, implies that the רוח was the divine agency that

inspired the prophet and infused him or her with the divine דבר, such that both terms were always

concomitant notions in prophecy, rather than mutually exclusive referents.

Robert Wilson argues that different prophetic traditions in Israel used different words to

denote prophetic inspiration. According to him, the Ephramite prophetic tradition "regarded

spirit possession as the most common means of mediation" while משל 'oracle' or 'word' was

characteristic of the Judahite prophetic tradition; "when the word *maśśā'* is used to designate a

type of oracle, the term always appears in the writings of Judahite prophets or with reference to

their activities."[203] Wilson, however, appears to vacillate on the distinction; elsewhere, he states

that "while the Ephramite prophetic tradition described the process of intermediation in terms of

the word which God spoke to the prophet … like the Ephramites, the Judean prophets seem to

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[201] Sigmund Mowinckel, "The Spirit and the Word," 200. George T. Montague also observes that "among the prophets of the classical period … a significant development took place – an almost total abandonment of reference to 'the spirit of the Lord' as the source of their prophecies in favor of 'the word of the Lord.'" Idem, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition: A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the Old and New Testaments (*New York: Paulist, *1976),* 30.

[202] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. Moshe Greenberg; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 97, 99.

[203] Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 144, 257.

have received their visions when they were possessed by Yahweh's spirit."[204] Notwithstanding

the variegated views concerning the use of the term רוח vis-à-vis דבר by the eighth century

reforming prophets, there is a discernible paucity in the use of רוח in the eighth century prophetic

books and an apparent accentuated use of the term רוח, both in the later Israelite texts and in the

apparently redactional layers of the earlier texts. As Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann

observe:

> A concentration in the early historical books (Judges, Samuel), an almost complete
> absence in the prophecy of the 8th cent. (occurrences in Isa. except for two passages
> …belong to later layers), and a marked increase in later salvation prophecy (beginning
> with Ezekiel), in the Psalms and in Wisdom is observable. *Rûah* reached the high point of
> its usage only in exilic/post-exilic times.[205]

The above exegetical-exploratory analysis of the use of the term רוח in the Hebrew Bible

affirms Lloyd Neve's observation that "probably nothing in the Old Testament so eludes

comprehension as the spirit of God."[206] As observed above, the nuanced referents of רוח in the

Hebrew Bible include, but are not limited to, meteorological phenomena which are, nonetheless,

under divine control and direction, the anthropological principle of life which is, nonetheless, a

divine breath of life, as well as theological symbolizations of divine mobility, experiences of

divine presence, and divine prophetic inspiration. The multifarious nuances appear to preserve

dialectical tensions between the various רוח symbolisms, rather than resolve them, and ostensibly

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[204] R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, 260- 261.

[205] Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "רוח," 1203. See also Wonsuk Ma who argues that while the prophetic inspiration of the spirit of God is evident throughout the Hebrew Bible, "it is only after the fall of Jerusalem that the idea received a revived emphasis in Ezekiel." Idem, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (JSOPSup 271; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 135.

[206] Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972), 1. See also James Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel,* 15.

enrich the symbolic value of רוח. As David Lull remarks, "an understanding of any subject will be richer the more it is able to retain the contrasts between different perspectives, rather than eliminating them."[207]

There is, however, a discernible expansion of the semantic range of רוח from its concrete meteorological phenomena references, to the anthropological principle-of-life portrayals, and to the conceptual-theological symbolic attributes in the later stages of the Israelite religion. This observation resonates with P. A. Nordell's postulate that:

> As thought and speculation advance, the mind passes gradually from the concrete, material substance to the ideal concept; every abstraction is built on a sensuous substratum … while it is true that the word *ru(a)h* has its physical or sensuous side, it has also its purely dynamic or spiritual side.[208]

In its conceptual-theological development in the Hebrew Bible, רוח appears to have been an especially appropriate aniconic symbolic conception of divine presence of a deity who was otherwise perceived as transcendent;, hence William Shoemaker's remark that the spirit conceptually symbolized the omnipresence and immanence of God in the era of an accentuated belief in divine transcendence.[209]

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[207] David Lull, "The Spirit and the Creative Transformation of Human Existence*," Journal of American Academy of Religion* 47 (1979), 40.

[208] P. A. Nordell, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit of God," 440.

[209] W. R. Shoemaker, "The Use of **רוח** in the Old Testament," 28. See also E. L. Cherbonnier who opines that Israel perceived God's transcendence in the sense of his sovereignty over creation, and his immanence in the sense that "he takes an active role in his creation, and particularly in human history, guiding the destiny of nations." Idem, "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism,"*Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962), 201.

3.2   The רוח in Ezekiel's Symbolic Thinking

Ezekiel's *leitwort*, רוח, is, in a sense, a continuation of the polysemic רוח symbolism that was already existent in the ancient Israelite worldview. Nonetheless, as will be argued presently, Ezekiel's רוח symbolism displays a literary dexterity which, while maintaining continuity with the ancient Israelite רוח symbolism, subtly signifies a paradigm shift in his symbolic thinking.[210] Thus, in Ezekiel, the רוח tensive symbolism becomes a conceptual-theological cipher for both divine presence and Yahweh's new, or everlasting, covenantal relation with Israel (Ezek 16:60; 37:26; cf. Jer 31:31).[211] The term רוח which, as noted above, is embedded in Ezekiel's literary architecture, is used in Ezekiel, in its various construct forms, as follows:

I. Oracles against Judah and Jerusalem (chs. 1 -24) – 32 times.

II. Oracles against foreign nations and rulers (chs. 25- 32) – 1 time.

III. Oracles concerning Israel's future restoration (chs. 33- 48) – 19 times.[212]

There is an apparent paucity in Ezekiel's use of the term רוח in the oracles against foreign nations and rulers; the word is used once only in an oracle against Tyre in which רוח הקדים "the East

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[210] Dale F. Launderville argues that Ezekiel's **רוח** imageries represent a symbolic thinking, analogous to the Mesopotamian and pre-Socratic Greek symbolic thought, by which he sought to orientate the exiles to "think beyond appearances to perceive … the spirit of Yahweh's sovereign rule." Idem, *Spirit and Reason: Ezekiel's Symbolic Thinking* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2.

[211] Norman Perrin notes that a tensive symbol, as opposed to a one dimensional steno-symbol, denotes several concurrent referents without exhausting any of them, and thus creates an atmosphere of indeterminacy and mystery. Idem, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics: Reflections on Method in the Interpretation of the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974), 3- 14.

[212] See also D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 30. Pamela E. Kinlaw notes that the only time the term **רוח** is used against foreign nations and rulers is when "the symbol turns to one of judgment against other nations." Idem, "From Death to Life: The Expanding **רוח** in Ezekiel," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30 (2003), 169.

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wind" שברך בלב ימים "wrecked you in the midst of the seas"(Ezek 27:26). It is also observed that

the metonym, יד־יהוה, is never used in Ezekiel's oracles against foreign nations and rulers

although it appears in the oracles against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1) and in

the oracles concerning Israel's future restoration (Ezek 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). Moreover, the

expression מראת אלהים "visions of God," which also constitutes Ezekiel's literary architecture

(Ezek 1:1- 3:15; 8:1- 11:25; 40:1- 48:35) and in which the term רוח is embedded (Ezek 3:12, 14;

8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) is absent in the oracles against foreign nations and rulers.[213]

The absence of the word רוח in Ezekiel's oracles against foreign nations and rulers has

been interpreted variously. Daniel Block, for example, surmises that "one might speculate that

the Hebrew conception of the spirit was incomprehensible to foreigners, or that it differed so

radically from that of her neighbors that it would have seemed incongruous for the prophet to

speak of *rwh* in such contexts."[214] Likewise, P. A. Nordell argues that, in the Hebrew Bible, רוח

developed into a cipher that symbolized participation in Yahweh's covenant relation with Israel

and a unique conception which differentiated Hebrew thought from the iconic-pantheistic

conceptions of God in the ancient Near East, or the mythological-deistic gods of Greek

mythology; "in this conception of the spirit … we touch the point where the Hebrew thought

sharply differentiated itself from every form of deism on the one hand, or of pantheism on the

other."[215] Nordell's argument implies that Ezekiel's use of רוח symbolized a unique Hebrew

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[213] See also H. Van Dyke Parunak, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's *Marʾôt ʾElōhîm*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980), 61- 74.

[214] D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 29.

[215] P. A. Nordell, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit of God," 438, 441.

thought that would have been alien to the foreign nations and rulers, other than the use of the expression רוח קדים "the East wind" as an instrument of divine wrath, a conception which was familiar to the ancient Near Eastern societies.[216] However, as K. P. Darr notes, "not one of the nations Ezekiel 'addresses' was privy to his words, of course; the import and function of his oracles against the nations lies not in what they said to Israel's foes, but in their significance for his exilic audience and for readers of the scroll."[217]

The notion of Yahweh's רוח covenant with Israel is, indeed, implicit in Ezekiel's רוח symbolism (Ezek 16:60- 63; 36:27- 27; 37:1- 26). It is conceivable, therefore, that the virtual absence of רוח in the oracles against foreign nations and rulers was Ezekiel's rhetorical strategy of affirming to his exilic audience their unique monotheistic רוח covenant relationship with Yahweh, even in their exilic settings. Thus the exclusion of רוח from the oracles against foreign nations implicitly reinforced Israel's uniqueness by connoting that the foreign nations were excluded from the unique רוח covenant relationship with Yahweh. Richard Sklba's argument that the רוח was "a vehicle for affirming monotheism; by divine spirit, Yahweh could be mysteriously present in many lands, transcending limitations of space and time," reinforces the thesis that the exclusion of רוח in Ezekiel's oracles against the enemies of Israel rhetorically reaffirmed Israel's

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[216] See also Sabatino Moscati, "The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmology," 305- 310, and Walter Gerhardt, *The Weather- God in Ancient Near Eastern Literature with Special Reference to the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College Press, 1963), 9- 51.

[217] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1349.

unique רוח covenant relation with Yahweh, even in exilic settings, from which the enemies of

Israel were excluded.[218]

Ezekiel employs the term רוח multifariously, albeit with an expanding accretion of nuances

that reaches its climactic symbolic value in the רוח revification or "resurrection" of Israel in

Chapter 37. In Chapter 1 Ezekiel introduces רוח as a natural weather phenomenon, רוח סערה "a

stormy wind" (1:4), which can break down walls (13:8-11), and cause vines to wither (17:10).

However, the stormy wind is also under divine control:

לכן כה אמר אדני יהוה ובקעתי רוח סערות בחמתי

"Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, I will cause a stormy wind to break out in my wrath"
(13:13).

The 'stormy wind' thus functions as an instrument of Yahweh's wrath or judgment

(cf. 19:12; 27:26). In addition, the stormy wind presages a theophany in which דבר־יהוה is heard

and יד־יהוה is experienced (1:3). The רוח theophany includes a chariot imagery with humanoids,

or living creatures, for "they had the appearance of mankind" (1:5b), who were mobilized by רוח:

ילכו אל אשר יהיה־שמה הרוח ללכת

"Wherever the רוח would go, they went" (1:12, 20).

The imagery is reminiscent of the Solomonic Jerusalem temple inner sanctum in which were

cherubim and where the כבוד־יהוה "the glory of Yahweh" was present (1 Kgs 8:1- 11; cf. Ezek 1:

23- 28).

[218] Richard J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High is Poured Out on Us (Isa. 32: 15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984), 13.

On the other hand, as K. P. Darr remarks, Ezekiel has a "tendency both to utilize existing conventions and to introduce innovations."[219] Unlike the static golden emblems of the cherubim in the Solomonic temple, Ezekiel's humanoids are not only mobilized by the רוח but are, indeed, infused with the רוח and animated by it.[220] Thus כי רוח החיה באופנים "for the רוח of the living creatures was in the wheels" or "the רוח of life was in the wheels" (1:20, 21; 10:17).[221]

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism thus expands from a natural meteorological phenomenon to an instrument of divine wrath and a symbol of theophany, and to an anthropological principle of life. Pamela Kinlaw's study shows that Ezekiel's רוח is, indeed, an expanding symbol. Following Edgar Conrad's notion of a "repetitive-with-variation" text,[222] Kinlaw argues that repetition of a word or phrase creates cohesion in a text and that "repetition with variation suggests movement and progression."[223] Ezekiel employs the word רוח not only repetitively but with an accretion of nuances. The רוח lifts Ezekiel (3:12,14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) in a manner which, on the face of it, could be interpreted as being swept away by a stormy wind. However, it soon dawns on the reader of Ezekiel that the רוח was not simply a meteorological phenomenon; it actually entered into Ezekiel, ותבא בי רוח "and the רוח entered into me," when Yahweh spoke to him, and then

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[219] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1120.

[220] Pamela Kinlaw remarks that the " רוח is present in the living creatures, and it has the power to come into and provide movement to formerly inanimate objects from within, rather than only from without, as does wind." Idem, *"From Death to Life,"* 165.

[221] D. I. Block argues that רוח החיה is best translated as "the רוח of life." Idem, *"The Prophet of the Spirit,"* 36-37. F. Brown, S. Driver and C. Briggs also note that the " רוח of life" nuance is implicit in the use of רוח החיה in Psalms 143:3, and in Job 33:18, 20, 22, 28; 36:14. Idem. *The Brown- Driver- Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1906; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 312.

[222] Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), 30.

[223] P. E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life," 163.

lifted him (2:2; 3:12,14, 24). The entrance of the רוח into Ezekiel is experienced as יד־יהוה upon

him (3: 24; 8: 3). Farther on, it dawns on the reader that the רוח which entered into Ezekiel and

lifted him was also the רוח אלהׄים (11: 24). The רוח יהוה fell upon Ezekiel and prophetically

inspired him to hear Yahweh's voice (11:5), the רוח אלהימ transported Ezekiel in a vision back

and forth between Jerusalem and Babylon (11:1-24), and the יד־יהוה also fell upon Ezekiel, lifted

him, and brought him out into a valley of dry bones (37:1).

Ezekiel's experiences of the רוח thus expand from a symbol of theophany, to an agency of

animation, to a prophetic inspiration, and to a divine instrument of human conveyance. E. K.

Brown's notion of rhythmic symbolism differentiates a recurrent symbol from an expanding

symbol; "while recurrent symbol reveals its full meaning early in the narrative and serves more

as a reminder than a development, an expanding symbol grows as it accretes meaning from a

succession of contexts."[224] E. K. Brown goes on to note that an expanding symbol is particularly

useful for a prophetic writer who:

> impels and persuades his readers towards two beliefs: first, that beyond the verge of what
> he can express, there is an area which can be glimpsed, never surveyed; second, that this
> area has an order of its own which we should greatly care to know … an impression of
> belief in things hoped for, an index if not an evidence, of things not seen.[225]

Ezekiel's prophetic portrait fits E. K. Brown's description of a 'prophetic writer;' he appears to

imbue the רוח symbolism with nuances "beyond the verge of what he can express," as evinced by

his frequent use of the word דמות "likeness, similitude, resemblance" (1:5,10,13,16, 22, 26, 28; 8:

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[224] E. K. Brown, *Rhythm in the Novel* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1950), 57- 58. See also P. E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life," 163.

[225] E. K. Brown, *Rhythm in the Novel*, 57- 59. Also P. E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life," 163- 164.

2; 10:1, 10, 21, 22; 23:15).[226] Ezekiel's seemingly bizarre רוח imagery "has an order of its own which we should greatly care to know" since it is embedded in his literary architecture and is therefore an integral part of his prophetic message. Moreover, Ezekiel's expanding רוח symbol portends "things hoped for," that is, the "resurrection," or transformational revivification and restoration of Israel through the agency of the רוח (chs. 36-37).

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism expands to include nuances of human disposition, such as the inner faculty or seat of emotion and also the faculty of cognition or will; when a רוח lifts Ezekiel and takes him away, he goes 'in bitterness, in the heat of my רוח, for the יד־יהוה was strong upon me" (3:14). Ezekiel also refers to other people's inner dispositions as רוח: "every לב will be feeble … every רוח will faint" (21:12), "I know the things that come to your רוח "(11:5), "woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own רוח" (13:3), "what you have in your רוח shall never happen"(20:32).[227] Ezekiel then challenges his audience to change their inner disposition; "get yourselves a לב חדש "new 'heart'" and a רוח חדשה "new 'spirit'" (18:31). It is, however, Yahweh who effectuates the people's change of inner disposition through his רוח infusion: "I will give

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[226] Ezekiel's frequent use of the word דמות to describe his רוח imageries resonates with the basic tenet of symbolism in that it does not exhaust the reality it represents since the reality is inaccessible to observation; it can only describe the perceived reality analogically; "it gives a glimpse beyond the limits of natural understanding." Pierre Grelot, *The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics, and Exegesis* (trans. C. R. Smith; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 18.

[227] Ezekiel apparently uses the words לב "heart, mind" and רוח interchangeably. However, as Robert Alter argues, synonymy in biblical poetic parallelism is seldom exact. Idem, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985), 13- 26. See also D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 39. The apparent synonymy of meanings could plausibly be a rhetorical device portraying the pervasiveness of the רוח symbolism and its inexhaustible 'surplus of meaning.' Both Hans Wolff and Rolf Kneirim argue that the portrayal of a theological רוח and the human לב in a synonymous fashion portrays a divine influence on the human inner disposition. Hans W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM, 1974), 54, and Rolf P. Kneirim, *TheTask of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 282. James Robson, following Rolf Kneirim, also observes that "the 'heart' is the anthropological complementation to the cosmological or theological 'spirit' and as such is structured to be susceptible to the influences of 'spirit' and its notions." Idem, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*, 245.

them לב חדש 'a new heart, or wholesome mind' and a רוח חדשה 'new spirit' I will put within them" (11:19; cf. 36:26). The רוח חדשה is, nonetheless, portrayed as Yahweh's רוח: "I will put רוחי 'my רוח' within you" (36:27). The apparent conflation of meanings and imprecision of the Ezekiel's רוח symbolism fits Widick Schroeder's description of religious symbols; "symbols referring to religious experiences are always abstractions from an experience more fundamental than the symbols."[228] Schroeder also notes that the imprecision of religious symbols is compounded by changes in the symbolic nuances as new contexts "modify the experiences to which the symbols refer;"[229] hence Ezekiel's expanding רוח symbol's accretion of more nuances as he encounters new visionary and perceptual-experiential contexts.

Ezekiel's רוח symbol is also emblematic of geographical directions, or points of compass. Israel would be scattered לכל־רוח "to all רוח" or "in all directions" (5:10,12; 12:14; 17:21). Ezekiel is commanded by Yahweh to prophesy to the רוח to "come מארבע רוחות "from the four 'winds' or directions (37:9). The semantic nuances of מארבע רוחות are also expressed variously in the Hebrew Bible as follows: על־כנפות הארץ "to the corners or ends of the earth" (Job 37: 3), מארבע כנפות הארץ "from the four corners of the earth" (Isa 11:12), מכנף הארץ "from the ends/corners of the earth" (Isa 24: 16), מארבע קצות השמים "from the four ends/quarters of the heavens"(Jer 49: 36), לארבע רוחות השמים "toward the four 'winds' or quarters of heaven"(Dan 8: 8). Daniel Block observes that "the expression finds a close parallel in Akkadian *šari erbetti* and

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228 W. Widick Schroeder," Measuring the Muse: Reflections on the Use of Survey Methods in the Study of Religious Phenomena," *Review of Religious Research* 18 (1977), 151.

229 W. Widick Schroeder, "Measuring the Muse," 151.

reflects the hypothetical division of the earth into quadrants."[230] The expression ארבע רוחות in the

Ezekielian context has the nuance of "all directions," or divine רוח omnipresence, since the "all

directions" רוח is under Yahweh's control and direction (Ezek. 37:9-10).

The dimensions of Ezekiel's visionary temple are also described in terms of רוח as

follows: רוח הקדים "the East side" (42:16), רוח הצפון "the North side" (42:17), רוח הדרום "the

South side" (42:18), רוח הים "the West/Seaward side" (42:19), and לארבע רוחות "the four sides"

(42:20). Although the apparent nuance of רוח in the visionary temple schema is that of the

physical dimesnions of the temple, it is, nonetheless, noted that the יד־יהוה was upon Ezekiel as

he was brought in a vision to the visionary temple (40:1-5), and that the רוח was Ezekiel's tour

guide in the visionary temple in which he also experienced כבוד־יהוה (43:4-5). The juxtaposition

of רוח with יד־יהוה and כבוד יהוה in Ezekiel's visionary temple betokens a theology of divine

omnipresence sustained by a רוח relationship between Yahweh and those who worship at the

temple. The relational motif is also noted by K. P. Darr who remarks that Ezekiel's "theology of

holiness is a relational theology."[231] It is therefore arguable that the רוח sides of Ezekiel's

visionary temple denote, not simply physical dimensions, but symbolic רוח relational dimensions

of Yahweh with Israel in the temple worship.

The central locus of Ezekiel's רוח paradigmatic symbolism is that of Israel's inward

transformation through רוח infusion (36:26-27) and a transformational "resurrection" and

restoration through the רוח (37:1-21). This observation is also underscored by Daniel Block who

aptly notes that "no text in the entire Old Testament portrays the vivifying power of the divine

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[230] D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 32.

[231] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1564.

spirit as dramatically as Ezekiel 37:1- 14."[232] The רוח that enters the "dry bones" Israel (37:5-10)

is none other than החיה רור "spirit of life," (1:20), for "I will put my רוח within you, and you shall

live" (37:14). Ezekiel invokes the imagery of the creation narrative (Gen 2:7) to portray the

restoration of Israel from the exile as a רוח re-creation. K. P. Darr observes that "the creation

account is educed here not just by the presence of that same verb, but especially by the fact that

in both passages, the human body is formed before the breath (or spirit or wind) enlivens it."[233]

Michael Fox also notes that the paradigmatic theme of Ezekiel 37 is the re-creation and survival

of Israel,[234] while Walther Zimmerli explicates the Ezekielian re-creation motif as follows:

> For the people who experienced the judgment of the year 587 on their sins, one can, in
> my opinion, speak of the future with the category of awakening from the dead. Thus, as
> in the original creation (Gen 2:7), when man was first formed into a body and then
> created as a living being with God's own breath, so the spirit whom the prophet called in
> by his word awakens to life again those bodies which had assembled from dead bones
> under the prophet's word.[235]

Ezekiel's notion of 'resurrection' by the רוח is, indeed, more than a re-enactment of the Genesis

creation narrative; it portends a new creation under a new paradigm of the ancient Israelite רוח

covenant relation with Yahweh.

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[232] D.I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 37.

[233] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1500.

[234] Michael V. Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *HUCA* (1980), 1- 15.

[235] Walther Zimmerli, "The Message of the Prophet Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 23 (1969), 153.

3.3   Ezekiel's רוח Symbolism: A Paradigm Shift

Ezekiel's unique רוח symbolism has been interpreted variously in biblical scholarship.

Some critics have argued that Ezekiel's seemingly excessive use of the term רוח is simply an

attempt to recover an ancient Israelite רוח symbolism which had been neglected during the pre-

exilic classical prophetic era and an attempt at self- authentication of the prophet. [236] Walther

Zimmerli, for example, argues that "there emerges a manner of speech and of experience which

was completely avoided in written prophecy before Ezekiel … this manner of speaking is to be

found in pre-written prophecy."[237] The various arguments of the רוח recovery thesis are

synthesized by James Robson as follows:

> According to this paradigm, the prophet Ezekiel is recovering an emphasis on רוח in
> prophecy from the pre-classical prophets, or even pioneering an emphasis that has been
> conspicuously absent from the classical, writing prophets. Such an emphasis on רוח in
> Ezekiel is usually understood, on this reading, in terms of self authentication of the
> ministry of the prophet."[238]

It would, however, be ironic for Ezekiel, who is of a priestly background (1:3) and whose literary

style and cultic imageries of cherubim resonate with the priestly school terminology and

ideology, to seek to recover a supposedly ancient Israelite רוח symbolism which did not feature

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[236] Sigmund Mowinckel, "The Spirit and Word in Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (1934), 200- 202.

[237] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters* 25- 48 (trans. J. D. Martin and P. D. Hanson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 568.

[238] James Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 24. See also Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 271; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 121- 135.

in the priestly traditions in the Hebrew Bible.[239] For example, the term רוח is virtually absent in

the classical priestly book of Leviticus, and even where the word רוח appears elsewhere in the

priestly traditions, a number of critics have demonstrated that the occurrences are postexilic

redactional layers which reflect the pervasiveness of a postexilic רוח worldview.[240] It is also

noted that Ezekiel's excessively nuanced רוח symbolism differs significantly from the רוח

symbolism noted in the apparently pre-exilic Israelite texts.

The argument for a recovery of an ancient Israelite symbolism is, plausibly, inadequate to

explain the extensive and excessively nuanced use of the term רוח in Ezekiel. It is apparent that

Ezekiel is not defining Israel by its past; rather as Thomas Renz argues, "the book of Ezekiel can

indeed be described as a rhetorical unit … the argument of the book of Ezekiel is that the exilic

community is to define itself not by the past but by the future promised by Yahweh."[241] James

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[239] See Menahem Haran, "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008), 218. Risa Levitt Kohn also argues that Ezekiel was heavily dependent on his priestly heritage. However, she also notes that "the prophet appropriates P's terminology but feels comfortable situating it in new, different and even contradictory contexts." Idem, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah (*JSOTSup 358; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic,*2002),* 84. See also Brad E. Kelle who notes that Ezekiel's "words reflect priestly ideology and terminology similar to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, with emphasis on holiness of God, the separation of clean and unclean, and the consequences of defilement or pollution." Idem, "Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of the Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel,*" Journal of Biblical Literature 128 (2009),* 470.

[240] See, for example, Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann who observe that "only in the postexilic period … is prophecy also understood in retrospect as the work of the spirit." Idem, "רוח ," 1217, and John R. Levison, who notes a postexilic retrospective association of רוח with prophecy in Nehemiah and in Zechariah. Idem, "Holy Spirit," 863- 864. Richard J. Sklba argues that "the religious traditions of the Exodus were retold, but in such a manner as to make the spirit a primary force in their unfolding." Idem, "Until the Spirit from on High is Poured Out on Us (Isa. 32: 15): Reflections on the Spirit in the Exile," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984), 13. See also John F. Kutsko who notes that the priestly traditions employ the expression **כבוד יהוה** "the glory of Yahweh," rather than **רוח־יהוה** as the primary mode of God's self manifestation at cultic settings. Idem, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 79- 82.

[241] Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 249.

Robson also critiques the recovery thesis and posits that Ezekiel is ostensibly not looking back; rather, his רוח envisions a new future for Israel.[242]

The pre-exilic Israelite tradition of visualizing divine presence in terms of כבוד יהוה at cultic locales was no longer sustainable in the exilic settings and in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the city and the land of Israel, as well as the demise of the Davidic monarchy which vouchsafed the temple worship. As already noted above, the people of Judah staked their faith on four pillars, namely, that they were Yahweh's chosen people, that their land was an inalienable bequest from Yahweh, that the Davidic covenant secured a perpetual dynasty in Jerusalem, and that the Jerusalem temple was Yahweh's dwelling place, or the place of כבוד יהוה.[243] However, as K. P. Darr notes, "Ezekiel scrutinized these four tenets of Yahwist theology of his day and subjected them to a radical critique."[244] Ellen Davis concurs with the notion of Ezekiel's critique of the Israelite's theological tenets and then argues that Ezekiel's prophecy is:

> more than a warning; it is designed to serve an explanatory function, to explain a state of affairs which is, in terms of the regnant theological system, quite unthinkable … he is concerned with reorganizing Israel's view of its past from the standpoint of the present crisis. He seeks to give Israel a new sense of history as a basis for future faith.[245]

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[242] J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel,* 24- 25.

[243] See also D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* 1- 24, 7- 8.

[244] K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1084. See also Dale Launderville who remarks that the exile upset the Judahite royal theology. Idem, "Ezekiel's Throne- Chariot Vision: Spiritualizing the Model of Divine Royal Rule," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 (2004), 362.

[245] Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (JSOTSup 78; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 109- 110.

Although John Kutsko portrays Ezekiel's כבוד־יהוה imageries as a reaching back to the

כבוד־יהוה tradition in the wilderness, there is a marked discontinuity between the wilderness

tradition and Ezekiel's imageries.[246] In the Pentateuchal priestly traditions, כבוד יהוה is always

associated with משכן "a place" (e.g. Exod 29:43; 40:35; Lev 9:23), or אהל מועד "tent of meeting"

(e.g. Num 14:10; 16:19; 17:7; 20: 6), denoting localization of the כבוד־יהוה divine presence.[247]

However, in Ezekiel כבוד יהוה is usually associated with מראות אלהים visions of a celestial vehicle

charioted by רוח (Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:2). Thomas Wagner rightly points out that "while in Ezekiel

the כבוד is described as a free moving chariot driven by the divine spirit, in the priestly source it

appears as a cloud coming down to mount Sinai, the tent of meeting, or the tabernacle."[248]

The apparently strange imageries of Ezekiel's visions, his seemingly bizarre actions, and

his enigmatic rhetoric, have also, as noted above, been viewed from the perspective of trauma

theory. Brad Kelle's trauma theory, as applied to Ezekiel, implies that the prophet's rhetoric

reflects more than his priestly theology and that it is symptomatic of traumatic experiences and

hermeneutics of defeat, whereby "the victim is unable to make sense out of the experience within

the normal categories of his or her life story, so the trauma exists as a force that remains outside

the recognizable narrative of life and is unable to be coherently understood."[249] The collapse of

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[246] J. F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel (*Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns*, 2000),* 151- 152.

[247] See also Thomas Wagner, "The Glory of the Nations: The Idea of כבוד in the Early Isaian Traditions," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 23 (2009), 196.

[248] Thomas Wagner, "The Glory of the Nations," 196.

[249] Brad E. Kelle, "Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat," 483. See also Daniel L. Smith- Christopher, "Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587- 539 BCE)," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (ed. J. M. Scott; JSJSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7-36.

the old order and the departure of כבוד־ייהיה from Israel were, conceivably, more traumatizing

than the geographical dislocation and the sufferings of the exiles at the hands of the Babylonian

captors. Brad Kelle also notes that "Ezekiel, especially in his temple vision in chs. 8- 11,

understands the judgment experienced by Judah precisely as the result of Yahweh's withdrawal

of his presence from the community."[250] Thus as Ezekiel grappled with the traumatic experiences

of the exile, he was faced with a crisis of the old order of his priestly theology of Yahweh-

Israelite interrelation which was no longer tenable by virtue of, not only being removed from the

Jerusalem cultic locale of כבוד יהוה but, more critically, the departure of divine presence from

Israel.[251] Ezekiel's רוח motif can therefore be viewed as not only as an attempt to come to terms

with the traumatic events of destruction and exile,and hence a traumatic response, but also as a

programmatic attempt to craft a new theological response in thelight of the changed

circumstamces.

The old priestly theological system, which visualized divine presence in terms of

phenomenal כבוד־ייהוה, was essentially anthropomorphic in terms of being visually containable by

the human eye and localized at cultic centers. Thomas Wagner, in his description of the various

nuances of כבוד, observes that it is generally used as a reference to phenomenally visible and thus

visually containable qualities.[252] In the Isaiah corpus, כבוד is used to describe the visible image of

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[250] Brad E. Kelle, "Dealing with Trauma of Defeat," 482.

[251] R. R. Wilson also notes that "As Ezekiel, his disciples and later members of his 'school' attempted to make sense of the traumatic events of the exile, they were forced to re-examine their traditional priestly theology." Idem, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 130.

[252] T. Wagner, "The Glory of the Nations," 195. K. P. Darr also notes that "biblical traditions frequently associate the visible manifestation of Yahweh's 'glory' with a cloud … and fire," phenomena which are visually perceptible. Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel,* 1117.

a person or nation, such as כבודו "their honored ones" (Isa 5:13), or כבודכם "your honor, or wealth" (Isa 10:13). However, the כבוד־יהוה that Ezekiel saw (1:28; 3:12) was no longer a localized, visually containable phenomenon. Dale Launderville observes that "Ezekiel blurs the outline of the enthroned Yahweh by speaking of this figure as a דמות 'likeness,' like the appearance of a human (1:26b) … as if the picture were out of focus."[253] Launderville goes on to remark that Ezekiel's 'blurring' description of the כבוד־יהוה "emphasizes the limitations of the linguistic description and artistic representation of the visionary reality of Yahweh and his throne chariot."[254] Margaret Odell also notes that Ezekiel's 'blurring' terms "indicate Ezekiel's restraint in introducing analogies to describe the indescribable."[255] In similar vein, Kirsten Nielsen notes that, in Ezekiel, "the divine world is portrayed through a series of elements from the known world, but the known is transformed and combined in startling ways."[256] Daniel Block's conclusion that "the *rwh* can hardly be identified as none other than God himself" is, arguably, a reductionist portrayal of a rather nuanced concept; [257] the כבוד־יהוה that Ezekiel saw is suffused with such nuanced רוח symbolisms that it not only induces mobility and imbues the כבוד־יהוה with a sense of ethereality (1:12; 20:21) but that it also defies analogical descriptions, either from the ancient Israelite traditions or from the exilic experiences.

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[253] D. Launderville, "Ezekiel's Throne- Chariot Vision," 364.

[254] D. Launderville, "Ezekiel's Throne- Chariot Vision," 364, n. 12.

[255] Margaret Odell, "Ezekiel Saw What He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty- First Century* (ed. E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 170.

[256] Kirsten Nielsen, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call," 101.

[257] D. I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit," 49.

Ezekiel's visionary call therefore represents a transformative right of passage, as it were, from the old priestly order to a new order of divine-human interrelation.[258] The new order represents a paradigm shift which begins to emerge as the כבוד־יהוה is transformed from a visually containable phenomenon to an ethereal conceptual imagery, albeit, to some extent, amenable to human perception and experience. Dale Launderville notes that the mysterious cherubim imagery "called forth attentiveness to the transcendent power of Yahweh who burst the bounds of every human concept and construct."[259] Ezekiel's רוח symbolism does not, however, portend exclusively ethereal-conceptual imageries; the מראות אלהים imageries include a דמות אדם "a human likeness" (1:5), פני אדם "the face of a man," (1:10), וידו אדם "and human hands" (1:8). The portrayal of the כבוד־יהוה in the מראות אלהים in both other-worldly conceptual imageries and also in humanoid similitudes plausibly symbolizes a divinity that is both transcendent and immanent; thus "as composite creatures with human and animal characteristics, (the humanoids) symbolized beings that moved between the divine realm and the human realm."[260]

The immanence of the divinity is, however, no longer confined to cultic centers; it is mobile and therefore present everywhere, even in the exilic settings. As D. Launderville observes:

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[258] See also Dale Launderville, "Ezekiel's Throne- Chariot Vision: Spiritualizing Model of Divine Royal Rule," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 (2004), 368, and Margaret S. Odell, "You are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998), 235- 237.

[259] D. Laundervile, Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003), 182. See also K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1117, and Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CONBOT 18; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 108- 115.

[260] D. Launderville, "Ezekiel's Throne- Chariot Vision," 365.

> Just as the cherubim moved out of Jerusalem to Babylon and carried the presence of Yahweh there, so too the exiles were obliged to adapt and encounter Yahweh in Babylon. Ezekiel promised that such an encounter would be possible because Yahweh would transform their hearts and give them an infusion of his spirit.[261]

Thus the sphere of divine presence was no longer a spatial boundary but a divine-human רוח relational dynamic of an inward disposition. Kirsten Nielsen remarks that "such a depiction of Yahweh must lead to disorientation, given the insistence of the Zion theologians on the temple in Jerusalem as the place where Yahweh is present. If we read the book of Ezekiel in its entirety, this disorientation will prove to be part of the book's strategy."[262] The 'disorientation' is, inferentially, Ezekiel's rhetorical strategy of both coming to terms with the traumatic events of the exile and reorienting the Israelites to a new paradigm of their relationship with Yahweh.

The רוח interiorization of the divine-human interrelation also entailed an interiorized רוח purification. In the priestly traditions, purification was usually carried out by means of external ritual performances, either by a priest or under priestly auspices. Both the people and cultic objects were purified by means of sprinkling, זרק, of blood or water. For example, Moses יזרק "sprinkled" blood on the children of Israel, thereby purifying them as Yahweh's covenant people (Exod 24:8). Likewise, a person defiled by a corpse was purified through זרק "sprinkling" of water (Num 19:13, 20). Ezekiel uses the same vocabulary, זרק, and the same concept of purification with water (Ezek 36:25). However, Ezekiel utilizes the external water purification concept analogically; he transposes the concept into an interiority of רוח purification, thus:

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[261] D. Launderville, "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?," 183.

[262] Kirsten Nielsen, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call," 108.

וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם ומכל־גלוליכם אטהר אתכם

"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols" (Ezek 36:25).

ונתתי לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי את־לב האבן מבשרכם ונתתי לכם לב בשר ואת־רוחי אתן

בקרבכם ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו ומשפטי תשמרו ועשיתם

"I will give you a new heart; a new רוח I will put within you. I will take out the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my רוח within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances" (Ezek 36:26-27).

Ezekiel, in effect, utilizes an ancient priestly model of external purification analogically to enact a new order of inward רוח purification and interiorized רוח relationship with Yahweh. The Babylonian exile, arguably, precipitated a theological crisis which resulted in a hermeneutical move toward a religion of interiority and in which Ezekiel encouraged the exiles to shift from a phenomenal perception of divine presence and Yahweh's relation with Israel to an interiorized conceptual רוח envisioning.[263]

The new רוח paradigm of Yahweh-Israelites interrelation is also implicit in Ezekiel's temple schema whose physical measurements, as noted above, are, nonetheless, described in רוח imageries (Ezek 42:16-20). Ezekiel's temple is a רוח construct to which he is drawn by יד־יהוה (Ezek 40:1- 2) and in which he is given a guided tour by a רוח (Ezek 43:5). Nancy Bowen observes that "Ezekiel is never commanded to build this complex; instead he is commanded 'to declare' and 'make known' what he sees (40: 4; 43: 11)."[264] Richard Sklba also notes, with respect to Ezekiel's temple schema, that "with the absence of cultic means for meeting the divine

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[263] See also D. F. Launderville, *Spirit and Reason: The Embodied Character of Ezekiel's Symbolic Thinking* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2.

[264] Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel*, 241.

mystery, emphasis was placed on the concept of the 'spirit' as a vital and powerful expression of divine presence."[265] The absence of cultic objects in Ezekiel's temple schema, and the plausible import of the omissions, is also noted by Moshe Greenberg who observes that:

> Many furnishings of the Solomonic temple and the desert tabernacle are missing: the ark and its cherubs and the lamp; the only interior furniture mentioned is an ambiguous 'alter of wood.' … Are these omissions haphazard, or is the house emptied purposely of all objects contributing to a mythological conception of God?[266]

The 'mythological conception of God' is, arguably, the new conceptual רוח paradigm of Yahweh's interrelation with Israel.

On the other hand, the apparently mythological temple schema is held in dialectical tension with instructions to carry out, in the רוח temple, the traditional Israelite priestly cultic rituals. The Israelites are commanded by Yahweh thus: להעלות עליו עולה ולזרק עליו דם "to offer burnt offerings upon it and to sprinkle blood thereon" (Ezek 43:18b). The new temple schema is, thus, another continuity-discontinuity rhetorical device in Ezekiel's paradigm shift which augments his new רוח paradigm. It is, however, observed that, unlike apocalyptic imageries, Ezekiel's continuity-discontinuity rhetorical strategy served to portray his new conceptual, or other-worldly, רוח paradigm without losing sight of existential realities. W. Lemke notes that Ezekiel neither discards his priestly theology altogether nor does he disregard the phenomenal reality of his exilic existence. Rather, there is a conflation of nuances where רוח־יהוה is "the

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[265] Richard J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit From on High is Poured Out on Us," 15.

[266] Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 193. Walther Zimmerli also alludes to the new **רוח** paradigm with the remark that when Ezekiel encountered **כבוד־יהוה** in exile; he "experienced something which … of necessity decisively determined his subsequent preaching." Idem, *Ezekiel* 1, 124.

ultimate source of life in the full range of both its physical as well as its spiritual connotations;

that these dimensions should never be separated too far as religious people are sometimes

tempted to do, is perhaps another lesson of which Ezekiel's vision would remind us."[267]

Thus Ezekiel still espouses such ritual purity traditions as "not approaching a woman in her

impurity" (Ezek 17:6), not defiling oneself by drawing near to a dead person (Ezek 44:25),

keeping the Sabbath (Ezek 20:12,20), or observing the cultic rituals of animal sacrifices (Ezek

46:4,12).

Ezekiel's espousal of the new רוח paradigm in dialectical tension with the ancient Israelite

traditions also serves to enrich the symbolic value of the new רוח paradigm by integrating its

inward and other-worldly motifs with the ritual traditions of the ancient Israelite religion.[268]

Kirsten Nielsen remarks that "the divine world can only be described through complex, verbal

images which partly characterize its otherness and partly maintain the link to this, our earthly

world."[269] The new רוח paradigm which emerges from a reevaluation of the experiences of the

exile is therefore one of continuity and discontinuity; the interiority of divine-human interrelation

is held in dialectical tension with the old theological schema of mediating divine presence

through cultic rituals. Rainer Albertz, in his review of the experience of the exile, also remarks

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[267] W. Lemke, "Life in the Present and Hope for the Future," *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 179. See also P. E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life," 170- 171.

[268] See also Philip Sheldrake who observes that authentic 'spirituality' entails integration of inward experiences with all other aspects of human life and experience. Idem, *Spirituality and History* (rev. ed., MaryKnoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 58- 59. See also D. J. Tull, "The Spirit and the Creative Transformation," 40.

[269] Kirsten Nielsen, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call," 114.

that "the period of the exile led to a far-reaching realignment within official Yahweh religion and a reevaluation of personal piety, to which previously little attention had been paid."[270]

The new רוח paradigm of an interiorized relationship of Yahweh with Israel also portrays the exile, not only in terms of alienation from the land of Israel, but also in terms of an interiority of a רוח alienation from Yahweh. Bradly Gregory argument that the Babylonian exile was more than a historical event, and that it represented a hermeneutical move, "a theological exile that extends beyond the temporal and geographical bounds of the Babylonian captivity," is therefore germane to Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm.[271] The theological exile is visualized in terms of an inner or רוח disposition of the Israelites which was alienated from Yahweh and which would only be reconciled through a transformative infusion of רוח־יהוה:

ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם ... ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו

"A new רוח I will put within you … and will cause you to walk in my statutes"(Ezek36:26-27). The exilic returnee, Ezra, alludes to the continuing 'spiritual' exile, even in his postexilic setting, as follows:

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[270] Rainer Albertz, *A History of the Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Vol. 1: From the Exile to the Maccabees* (trans. J. Bowden; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 370. See also Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton who note that Ezekiel presents spatial and 'spiritual' hierarchies, but that the 'spiritual' predominates. Idem, "Introduction: Hierarchical Thinking and Theology in Ezekiel's Book," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* (ed. S. L. Cook and C. L. Patton; SBLSymS 31; Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 1- 23.

[271] Bradley C. Gregory, "The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1- 3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007), 475. See also Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of Sixth Century BC* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 232- 256, James van der Kam, "Exile in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Exile: Old Testament Jewish and Christian Conceptions,* 91- 94, and Peter Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (JSJSup 65; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 303- 304.

מימי אבותינו אנחנו באשמה גדלה עד היום הזה ובעונתינו נתנו אנחנו מלכינו כהנינו ביד מלכי הארצות בחרב בשבי

ובבזה ובבשת פנים כהיום הזה

"From the days of our fathers to this day, we have been in great/exceeding/deep guilt, and because of our iniquities our kings and our priests have been given over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering and to utter shame, as it is today" (Ezra 9:7).

כי־עבדים אנחנו ובעבדתנו לא עזבנו אלהינו

 "For we are slaves, yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us" (Ezra 9:9).[272]

Although a number of critics argue that the cause of the hermeneutical move was "the disillusionment during the postexilic period that the sweeping visions of restoration … had not come to pass according to expectations,"[273] it is apparent that Ezekiel's interiorization of Israel's relationship with Yahweh provided the hermeneutical basis for viewing the exile, not simply in terms of alienation from the land of promise, but in terms of an inner רוח disposition that was alienated from רוח־יהוה, hence the need for רוח חדשה "a new inner רוח disposition"(Ezek 36:26). The apparently postexilic Trito-Isaiah also appears to intimate the continuance of the 'spiritual' exile by alluding to a continuing postexilic expectation of a רוח restoration; "until the רוח from on high is poured out on us" (Isa 32:15-17).[274]

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[272] See also Bradley C. Gregory who remarks that "the ongoing captivity was a sinful disposition that had persisted since the days of 'our ancestors' … the remnant stand on the threshold of restoration contingent on their faithfulness in obeying God's law." Idem, "The Postexilic Exile,"491. However, the obedience to God's law can only be possible, according to Ezekiel (36:26-27), through an infusion of **רוח־יהוה** into the 'hearts' of the Israelites.

[273] B. C. Gregory, "The Postexilic Exile," 490. See Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion* Vol. 2, 454-458, and Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 239.

[274] D. F. Launderville also notes that the new 'heart' and new 'spirit' were attained through "participation in Yahweh's 'spirit.'" Idem, *Spirit and Reason*, 348.

3.4 Ezekiel's רוח Paradigm in Postexilic Israel and Beyond

The book of Ezekiel is a theological masterpiece whose central concern is the question of Israel's restoration not only to their homeland but, more significantly, to a right relationship with Yahweh in the aftermath of the collapse of the pre-exilic theological schema.[275] In this section, an exploratory survey of the usage of the word רוח in postexilic Israelite-Jewish and early Christian writings is carried out in order to show the reception history of Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm in the postexilic Israel and beyond. However, the survey is illustrative rather than exhaustive since the aim is to find out if there was any marked onset of Ezekiel's רוח paradigm in the postexilic Israel and beyond.

The postexilic Israelite prophets who returned from the Babylonian exile appear to accentuate a רוח motif in a manner that is reminiscent of Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm. For example, the postexilic prophet Zechariah tells Zerubbabel, the governor of the postexilic Jehud (Hag 2:21), that the new temple would be built:

לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם־ברוחי אמר יהוה צבאות

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my רוח, says Yahweh of hosts" (Zech 4:6),

 thus echoing Ezekiel's visionary רוח temple (Ezek 42:16-20). Zechariah's visionary imageries of mobile מרכבות "chariots" with living creatures (Zech 6:1-8) representing ארבע רחות השמים "the four רוח of the heavens" (Zech 6:5) are reminiscent of Ezekiel's מראות אלהים of charioting רוח

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[275] See also J. F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 154.

humanoids (Ezek 1:1-26). Zechariah also re-appropriates the Exodus tradition of the

promulgation of the Mosaic Law at Sinai in terms of רוח, thus:

את־התורה ואת־הדברים אשר שלח יהוה צבאות ברוחו

"The *Torah* and the words which Yahweh of hosts sent by his רוח (Zech 7:12).

Zechariah, in effect, appears to recast the Exodus tradition in the light of Ezekiel's רוח paradigm.

The same re- appropriation of the Exodus traditions in terms of רוח is also apparent in a

postexilic prayer of Nehemiah:

ורוחך הטובה נתת להשכילם ומנך לא־ מנעת מפיהם

"You gave your good רוח to instruct them, and did not withhold your manna from their mouth"
(Neh 9: 20).

 Equally the postexilic prophet, Haggai, recasts the Exodus covenant in terms of an abiding רוח in

a manner reminiscent of Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm:

את־הדבר אשר כרתי אתכם בצאתכם ממצרים ורוחי עמדת בתוככם

"According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my רוח
abides with you" (Hag 2:5).[276]

Ezekiel's paradigm of suffusive formation of רוח within the human 'heart' is also echoed by

Zechariah:

דבר־יהוה ... ויצר רוח־אדם בקרבו

"The word of Yahweh … who forms the רוח within the human being" (Zech. 12: 1).

The post-exilic texts, the *Chronicles*, also re-appropriate other, apparently older, Israelite

traditions and imbue them with the רוח symbolism in a manner that is reminiscent of Ezekiel's

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[276] See also R. J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High," 13- 14.

רוח paradigm.[277] As Richard Sklba notes, "the books of Chronicles demonstrate an increased inclination to ascribe events to the influence of the spirit."[278] For example, the legends of the soldier Amasai in the Ziklag military campaign (1 Chr 12:18), of Azaiah in his support of king Asa's removal of idols (2 Chr 15:1), and of Jahazel in his words of encouragement to king Joshaphat in battle (2 Chr 20:14), are all narrated in רוח imageries although רוח is not mentioned at all in the parallel accounts in 1 Samuel 29- 30 and in 1 Kings 15- 22. Equally, the legend of king Jehoash repairing the temple, in which there is no mention of רוח in the parallel account in 2 Kings 12:1- 21, is recast in Chronicles with a רוח motif (2 Chr 24:1-27). Moreover, the Chronicler understands all prophetic discourses to be רוח inspired (2 Chr 15:1; 20:24; 24:20). Richard Sklba remarks that, in Chronicles, "new legends were added to the Deuteronomic accounts in the books of Kings in which the spirit received prominence."[279]

Of the fifty one times that the term רוח occurs in the book of Isaiah, forty nine occurrences are in what a number of Isaiah scholars consider to be either postexilic works of a Deutero- and a Trito- Isaiah, or postexilic redactional layers.[280] John Levison notes that Isaiah "sets the spirit into a context replete with allusions to the Exodus, wilderness wanderings, and conquest."[281]

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[277] See J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*, 161.

[278] R. J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High," 15- 16.

[279] R. J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High," 16. See also J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel,* 161- 162.

[280] See Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, " רוח," 1203, and also William L. Holladay, "Was Trito- Isaiah Deutero- Isaiah After All?" in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. C. Broyles and C. Evans; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1: 193- 217.

[281] John R. Levison, "Holy Spirit," 863.

Thus in the Deutero- and Trito- Isaiah corpus, the word רוח is accentuated in a manner that is not consistent with the usage of the word in the other classical prophetic books. For example:

והמה מרו ועצבו את־רוח קדשו --- איה השם בקרבו את־רוח קדשו

"But they rebelled and grieved the רוח of his holiness … where is he who put the רוח of his holiness in their midst?"(Isa 63:10,11).

Isaiah's רוח imageries depict a proleptic eschatology in which the רוח is both a present and an anticipated experience. For instance: רוח אדני יהוה עלי "the רוח of the Lord Yahweh is upon me" (Isa 61:1), and עד־יערה עלינו רוח ממרום "until the רוח from on high is poured out on us" (Isa 32: 15). The proleptic perspective echoes Ezekiel's proleptic רוח paradigm in which the רוח comes upon the whole house of Israel (Ezek 37:1-11) but which was also a futuristic anticipation:

אשר שפכתי את־רוחי על־בית ישראל֞

"when I will pour out my רוח upon the house of Israel" (Ezek 39:29).

The eschatological רוח motif is amplified further in "the postexilic promise of the gift of the רוח as an indispensable factor in the establishment of a new universal covenant order of grace."[282] The prophet Joel, for example, promises that:

והיה אחרי־כן אשפוך את־רוחי על־כל־בשר

"It shall come to pass, afterward, that I will pour out my רוח upon all flesh" (Joel 3:1).[283]

Likewise the prophet Zechariah promises that:

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[282] R. J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High," 15.

[283] Although the book of Joel is plausibly a pre-exilic text, there is a growing consensus among scholars that the Book of Twelve was formed in radactional stages that stretched well into the postexilic era. See, for example, Russell Fuller, "The Texts of the Twelve Minor Prophets," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 7 (1999), 81- 82. and Paul L. Reddit, "Recent Research on the Book of the Twelve as One Book," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 9 (2001), 50.

ושפכתי על־בית דויד ועל יושב ירושלם רוח חן

"I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the רוח of grace" (Zech 12:10).

In the Wisdom and Liturgical Literature of the Hebrew Bible, there is a notable accentuated use of the term רוח; it occurs thirty nine times in the Psalms, thirty one times in the book of Job, twenty four times in Ecclesiastes, and twenty one times in Proverbs. Much of the Wisdom and Liturgical Literature is considered to be postexilic. Psalm 137, for example, reflects on the Babylonian exile in a retrospective fashion: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion" (Ps 137:1; cf. Ps 126:1-3). A number of other Psalms are also couched in terms or expressions that are characteristic of postexilic Hebrew language. James Kugel notes that:

> When scholars looked closely at the Psalter, they began to realize that its language was not all of one piece. Some Psalms, like Psalm 1, or 119 or 145, used terms or expressions that were simply not found in the earlier parts of the Bible but that existed in abundance in its latest datable books.[284]

The Wisdom Literature is particulary deemed to be postexilic because of apparent postexilic or foreign influences in its ethic. Herbert Schneidan, for instance, remarks that "the books of Wisdom in the Bible are somewhat compromised; they are not informed by a rigorous Yahwist vision but, rather, by an essentially foreign ethic of prudent calculation."[285] James Kugel equally

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[284] James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 462.

[285] Herbert N. Schneidan, *Sacred Discontent* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), 206-207.

notes that "it was in the period after the return from Babylonian exile that the Wisdom ideology truly began to emerge as a dominant stream in biblical texts."[286]

Richard Sklba observes that there is "evidence for the gradual exilic shift in liturgical language toward referring to the spirit as a sign of divine presence."[287] Psalm 139, as already noted above, portrays רוח as a symbol of divine omnipresence:

אנה אלך מרוחך ואנה מפניך אברח

"Where shall I go from your רוח, or where shall I flee from your presence?"(Ps 139:7).

Likewise, Psalm 51 portrays רוח as a symbolic representation of both divine presence and divine- human interrelation by virtue of the רוח indwelling the psalmist:

לב טהור ברא־לי אלהים ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי : אל־תשליכני מלפניך ורוח קדשך אל־תקח ממני

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a steadfast רוח. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take away your holy רוח from me."(Ps 51:12-13).

In the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, רוח is variously portrayed, as an inward experience of divinity (Job 32: 8), divine wisdom (Prov1:23), divine omnipresence that cannot be contained spatially (Prov 30:4), or the anthropological principle of life from God (Job 33:4) that returns to God at death (Eccl 3:21;12:7). The multifarious representations of רוח, nonetheless, accentuate the motif of divine presence and an inward experience of divinity, such as ורוח אלוה באפי "the רוח of God in my nostrils" (Job 27: 3). The Wisdom Literature portrayals of רוח as a symbol of divine presence and also as a symbol of purification are particularly reminiscent of the Ezekielian רוח paradigm of divine presence and an inward experience of

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[286] J. L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 636.

[287] R. J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit From on High," 15.

divinity.[288] The accentuated use of the term רוח in the Wisdom and Liturgical books, viewed in

light of a growing consensus in biblical scholarship that the Wisdom and Liturgical books of the

Hebrew Bible are either postexilic works or that they reached their redactional final form in the

postexilic period, reinforces the thesis that Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm had an overwhelmingly

favorable reception in postexilic Israel.[289] Thus the observed high point of usage of the term רוח

in the Wisdom and Liturgical Literature of the Hebrew Bible is, inferentially, a reflection of a

favorable postexilic reception history of Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm.

The Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and beyond, particularly the

Apocalyptic literature which is dated between 250 BCE and 150 CE, displays close affinities

with the Ezekielian רוח paradigm.[290] John Collins' definition of an apocalypse as:

> A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which revelation is
> mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality
> which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial
> insofar as it involves another, supernatural world,[291]

resonates with Ezekiel's מראוח אלהים of otherworldly humanoids and a transcendent being "upon

a throne above the firmament" (Ezek1:26), of being lifted up by a "between earth and heaven"

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[288] See also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, who note that "In the late period, *rûah* becomes a comprehensive theological concept." Idem, " רוח ," 1219

[289] See also Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann who observe that the increased usage of the word רוח in the Wisdom Literature shows that "*rûah* reached the high point of its usage only in exilic/postexilic times." Idem, "רוח," 1203. Michael V. Fox also notes the late dating of some of the Wisdom texts; he observes that "numerous Wisdom writings are extant from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, ranging from the third millennium BCE to Hellenistic times." Idem, *Ecclesiastes.* The JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), xi.

[290] See Stephen L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 27.

[291] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2d. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4- 5. See also S. L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature*, 26- 27.

(Ezek 8:3), or of being set "upon a very high mountain" by יד־יהוה (Ezek 40:1- 2). Stephen Cook

portrays Ezekiel's רוח experiences in apocalyptic imageries:

> God breaches Ezekiel's earthly experiences, seizing control of the prophet's speech and actions. At God's mercy, the spirit transports Ezekiel up and down the Fertile Crescent and backward and forward in time … more significantly, Ezekiel's visionary gaze penetrates beyond that of other mortals to glimpse the dangerous glory of God's very presence.[292]

Paul Hanson likewise states that "the connections between the book of Ezekiel and later

apocalyptic writings are unmistakable; the bizarre imagery, the form of the vision, and the device

of divine interpretation … live on in later apocalyptic compositions."[293] These observations

reinforce the plausibility theory that Ezekiel's רוח motif became the paradigm of experiences of

divine presence and divine-human interrelation in the postexilic Jewish thought. However, as

already argued above, Ezekiel's continuity-discontinuity rhetoric differs from a purely

apocalyptic worldview in that it holds the other-worldly realms in dialectical tension with this-

worldly existential realities.

In the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version in the late

Second Temple period, the choice of a Greek word for the Hebrew רוח was Πνεύμα, which was

used "in three- fourths of all instances" of the Hebrew רוח.[294] Rainer Albertz and Claus

Westermann postulate that the word πνεύμα in Hellenism was "loaded with a multitude of

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[292] S. L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature*, 94.

[293] Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic,* 234.

[294] Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "**רוח**" , 1219. See also J. D. G. Dunn, "Spirit, Holy Spirit," in *The International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* Vol. 3 (ed. Colin Brown; rev. ed., Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1992), 690.

philosophical and worldview concepts whose adaptation the LXX prepared and enabled."[295]

Marie Isaacs, in her study of the concept of רוח in Hellenistic Judaism of the third-to-first century

BCE also postulates that Hellenistic Judaism adapted into their theology the stoic philosophical

concept of πνεύμα, which principally denoted, in abstract symbolism, divinity, humanity, and the

relationship between divinity and the world, a concept that had close affinities with the

Ezekielian symbolic רוח paradigm of divine-human interrelation.[296] The choice of the word

πνεύμα in the LXX translation can, conceivably, be viewed as a theological-hermeneutical move

that sought, in the act of translation, to entrench the Ezekielian conceptual רוח paradigm of

divine-human interrelation in the new Hellenistic world of biblical readership.

Early Christian writers make frequent use of the Ezekielian רוח motifs. The *Apocalypse of*

John is not only framed by four occurrences of ἐν πνεύματι "in the spirit," but also borrows

heavily from Ezekiel's רוח imageries. John, the apocalyptist, was ἐν πνεύματι "in the spirit"

when he had his inaugural visions of the divine realm (Rev 1:10-17), in the same manner that the

יד־יהוה was upon Ezekiel when he had his inaugural מראות אלהים visions of God (Ezek 1:1-26).

John was transported ἐν πνεύματι into the heavenly realm (Rev 4:1-8) just as Ezekiel was

possessed by the רוח, lifted and taken away (Ezek 2:2; 3:12-14). The imagery of John's four

visionary humanoids with the face-likeness of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle (Rev 4:6-8) is

an apparent borrowing from Ezekiel's visionary humanoids (Ezek1:5-15). Similarly, John's

visionary transportation, ἐν πνεύματι to "a great and high mountain" in which he saw the city of

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[295] Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "רוח," 1219.

[296] Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop, 1976), 51- 58.

Jerusalem and "the temple of God" (Rev 21:1-10) is reminiscent of Ezekiel's visionary

transportation by יד־יהוה to "a very high mountain" in which he saw "the structure of a city" and

a temple (Ezek 40:1-5). John climaxes his other-worldly experiences with a vision of divine

presence in the visionary temple in which God "dwells with men"(Rev 21: 3, 22) in the same

way that Ezekiel climaxes his visionary temple experiences by pointing out that יהוה שמה

"Yahweh is there"(Ezek 48: 35), or that Yahweh "is present with his people" in

Ezekiel'svisionary temple.[297] Nancy Bowen notes that "John's revelation of 'the new Jerusalem'

clearly borrows language and imagery from Ezekiel's temple vision; both are visions of the place

where God 'dwells' … Ezekiel and John envision the ideal relationship between humanity and

God."[298]

The writer of the 'New Testament' *Acts of the Apostles* utilizes Joel's eschatological motif

of the outpouring of רוח "on all flesh"(Joel 3:1) to portray the inauguration of the incipient

Christian Church as an act of the πνεύμα (Acts 2:1-4), and the Christianity community as

πνευματικοῖς or "a people of the πνεύμα"(1 Cor 2:13, 15; 3:1), in a manner that is reminiscent of

Ezekiel and Joel's envisioning of the Israelites as a people of the רוח (Ezek 36:26- 27; 37:14;

39:29; Joel 3:1). [299] Bogdan Bucur notes that the New Testament church used the expression ἐν

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[297] So Ralph W. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 188- 189.

[298] N. R. Bowen, *Ezekiel*, 266- 267.

[299] See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 28- 32.

πνεύματι to describe a functional experience of divine presence in Christ and that those who had an intimate encounter of "God in Christ by the spirit" were πνευματικοῖς or "spiritual people."[300]

A more vivid portrayal of Ezekiel's רוח paradigm in which both divinity and divine presence are transformed from theophanic imageries and spatial localization to an ethereal רוח conceptualization is found in the Johannine discourse between Jesus and a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). When the Samaritan woman raises the question of whether God should be worshipped at the Jerusalem temple or on the Samaritan mountain, Jesus' answer is that "you will worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem. God is πνεῦμα, and those who worship him must worship ἐν πνεύματι and in truth" (John 4:21, 24). Thus, in the early Christian community, divinity and divine presence were no longer visualized in terms of the ancient Israelite theophanic imageries and spatial-phenomenal experiences of divinity; rather, the early Christian community's conceptualization of divinity and divine presence was in terms of רוח/πνεῦμα imageries reminiscent of Ezekiel's רוח motif.

3.5 Summary

The term רוח is employed in the Hebrew Bible as a polysemous symbol that denotes multifarious referents, ranging from natural meteorological phenomena, the anthropological principle of life and human inner dispositions of emotions and cognition, to a theological construct denoting divine presence and divine-human interrelation. In the book of Ezekiel, there

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[300] Bogdan G. Bucur, "Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of the Book of Revelation's *Wirkungsgeschichte*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008), 187.

is an apparent accentuation of the use of the term רוח which, while denoting the multifarious referents, nonetheless portends a paradigm shift from portraying divine presence as thepohanic phenomena mediated through cultic rituals in spatial locales, to a conceptual-theological construct. The Ezekielian רוח paradigm portrays divine presence as an ethereal interiority, or a transcendental experience that is neither necessarily mediated through cultic rituals nor confined to cultic centers. Moreover the Ezekielian רוח divine presence as a transcendental experience is transformative and thus 'creates' a new רוח inner disposition, or לב דשה "new heart," which is portrayed as the point of confluence between the רוח אדם and וח־יהוה, and, hence, constituting a new paradigm of divine-human interrelation.

The Ezekielian רוח paradigm of divine presence as an interior, or transcendental experience and an interiority of divine-human interrelation, whose usage is accentuated in the postexilic Hebrew Bible texts, is, arguably, retroactively redacted into the ancient Israelite preexilic biblical texts and traditions. This argument is premised on the observation, made above, that some of the preexilic radical theocentric use of רוח is inconsistent with the less conceptualized phenomenal-meteorological and anthropological uses of רוח in other preexilic biblical texts. Other non- canonical Israelite-Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, as well as early Christian writings, appear to employ the Ezekielian רוח paradigm as the frame of reference for divine presence and divine-human interrelation. In what follows, the contemporary African biblical-faith pneumatology is explicated as a hermeneutical lens for understanding the Ezekielian רוח paradigm in a contemporary community of biblical readership.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PNEUMATOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

4.1 Introduction

In what follows, the study seeks to integrate critical biblical interpretation with theological

concerns of the African Christian hermeneutical context. Thus the interpretation of Ezekiel's רוח

motif is hermeneutically contextualized in the theological construct of African biblical-faith

pneumatology in a reader-response hermeneutical strategy. The specific reader-response

hermeneutical approach employed in this regard is biblical inculturation. Justin S. Ukpong, an

African biblical scholar, defines biblical inculturation as:

> A dynamic on-going process by which people consciously and critically appropriate the
> bible and its message from within the perspectives and with the resources of their
> cultures. It is a hermeneutical process of appropriation which, in the case of Africa, is
> concerned to make a specifically African contribution to biblical interpretation and
> actualize the creative power of the bible in African society.[301]

Ukpong goes on to observe that biblical inculturation "eschews the classical dichotomy between

exegesis and hermeneutics whereby exegesis means the recovery of the meaning of a text, and

hermeneutics as the application of that meaning to a context. Rather, it collapses exegesis and

hermeneutics into one process whereby readers situated in and informed by their community

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[301] Justin S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of Biblical Studies in Africa," in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (BSS 4; ed. S. O. Abogunrin; Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigeria Association of Biblical Studies, 2005), 35.

context enter into a text, read it dynamically against its own context, and derive meaning for the present."[302]

The distinctive feature of biblical inculturation is that the biblical hermeneut brings both the interpretive interests and the theological-contextual life concerns of the reader to the task of biblical interpretation. Gerald West, following Stephen Fowl, describes interpretive interests and life concerns as follows:

> Interpretive interests are those dimensions of text that are of interest to the interpreter, while life interests are those concerns and commitments that drive or motivate the interpreter to come to the text … Life interests come from our experience of the world and from our commitment to the world. With such interests African Christians come to the Bible to hear what it has to say concerning these things. Interpretive interests are different … for example … the historical and sociological dimensions of text … the literary dimensions of text … the thematic or symbolic dimensions of text.[303]

According to Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, life concerns do, indeed, underlie all forms of biblical interpretation.[304] For purposes of the present study, life concerns are defined as the existential

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[302] J. S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of Biblical Studies," 45. It is, however, reckoned that critical biblical hermeneutics, by definition, entails both critical textual exegesis as well as situating the text in a hermeneutical context, whether undertaken sequentially or concurrently. In reality, exegesis is informed by the pre-understanding of the exegete and is thus part and parcel of hermeneutics. Severino Croatto argues that exegesis is, in a way, eisegesis; it is "entering into the biblical text with a cargo of meaning that recreates the first meaning precisely because it is placed in harmony with it, whether by virtue of the continuum of a faith praxis (on the level of historical effect) or by virtue of the continuum of successive interpretations or readings (on the level of hermeneutic tradition)." Idem, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning* (trans. R. R. Barr; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987), 75. See also Richard S. Briggs, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to Do with Biblical Interpretation?" *Heythrop Journal* XLVII (2006), 55- 56.

[303] Gerald West, "Shifting Perspectives on the Comparative Paradigm in (South) African Biblical Scholarship," *Religion and Theology* 12 (2005), 49, and Stephen E. Fowl, "The Ethics of Interpretation, or, What's Left over After the Elimination of Meaning," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield* (ed. S. E. Fowl and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 379- 398.

[304] Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Biblical Interpretation and Critical Commitment," *Studia Theologica* 43 (1989), 4-18.

life issues in the African hermeneutical context which the African Christian pneumatological

worldview grapples with. They include such concerns as the problems associated with the

historical injustices of slavery and colonization, the continuing existential problems of poverty

and diseases which are endemic in the African society, as well as phobias of perceived witchcraft

and malevolent 'spirits.'

4.2 African Christian Pneumatology

African Christian pneumatology is viewed as the theological expressions, whether oral or

documented, which portray the African Christian perceptual experiences of transcendence from a

biblical perspective. It is an expression of relational theism by which the African Christians

attempt to integrate the divine realm with their phenomenal world, or a concretized way of

symbolically fostering their inner perceptual experiences of transcendent reality, and about their

consciousness of relatedness with themselves and with the world.[305] This view challenges the

traditional understanding of pneumatology as a simplistic theological reflection on the third

hypostasis of a triune divinity. Bernard Cooke argues that the traditional understanding of

pneumatology is both inadequate and misleading; it is a reductionistic hypostatization of a rather

nuanced pneumatological symbolization of transcendent experiences and the attendant

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[305] See also George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition: A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Paulist, 1976), 16, Mark W. Worthing, *God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1996), 120- 124, and also Harald Walach and Helmut Reich, "Reconnecting Science and Spirituality: Toward Overcoming a Taboo," *Journal of Religion and Science* 40 (2005), 431.

"consciousness of absolute dependence,"[306] or relatedness to the divine transcendence.[307] The

appellation 'African Christian pneumatology' is therefore a reference to culturally contextualized

theological expressions of the African Christian peoples concerning their experiences of

transcendence. The cultural contextualization of biblical-faith pneumatology is premised on the

reckoning that, although religious experiences appear to be universal phenomena, the way the

experiences are expressed or symbolized is highly dependent on cultural contexts, or what Birgit

Meyer calls "glocalizing disjunctures" in the otherwise global religious experiences.[308] Gregory

Peterson also notes that religious experiences are culturally conditioned; "cultural conditioning

can play a significant role in the formation and interpretation of experiences generally and

religious experiences specifically."[309]

A number of scholars have observed that African biblical-faith, and hence African

Christian pneumatology, is informed by both the tenets of the Christian biblical canon and

African spirituality. Jacob Olupona, for instance, observes that Africans responded to

Christianity by domesticating the new faith such that African Christianity "has been thoroughly

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[306] Friedrich Schleiermacher argued that "the common element in all diverse expressions of piety … is this: the consciousness of absolute dependence, or which is the same thing, of being in relation with God." Idem, *The Christian Faith* (ed. and trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948), 12.

[307] Bernard Cooke, *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience- Based Pneumatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7- 10.

[308] Birgit Meyer goes on to remark that "globalization is rife with disjunctures." Idem, "Pentecostalism and Globalization," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theory and Methods* (ed. A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, A. Drooger, and C. van der Laan; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2010), 113. See also Arjun Appandurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27- 47.

[309] Gregory R. Peterson, "Mysterium Tremendum," *Journal of Religion and Science* 37 (2002), 241. See also Thomas P. Maxwell, "Considering Spirituality: Integral Spirituality, Deep Science and Ecological Awareness," *Journal of Religion and Science* 38 (2003), 266, and also Harald Walach and Helmut Reich, "Reconnecting Science and Spirituality: Toward Overcoming a Taboo," *Journal of Religion and Science* 40 (2005), 428.

changed and adapted to African taste and sensibility."[310] Kwame Bediako also remarks that

African spirituality "is increasingly mentioned as the power behind the growth of Christianity in

Africa, especially the African Instituted Churches."[311] However, before explicating the nuanced

symbolism of African Christian pneumatology, it is *a propos* to parse the terms 'Christian

biblical canon,' 'African,' and 'African spirituality.'

A canon, in the context of biblical faith, can be defined as a textual frame by which a

Christian community defines certain texts as essential to its own religious identity in terms of

beliefs and values.[312] However, the notion of a Christian biblical canon is problematic because

what is billed as the Christian canon is not a monolithic construct; it embraces the Hebrew Bible

which has two major canons, the Hebrew and Greek versions, that differ markedly in a number

of texts, and also the 'New Testament' Gospels and other Apostolic Writings. Some Christian

traditions also embrace the so- called Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical Writings as canonical

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[310] Jacob K. Olupona, "Introduction," in *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions* (ed. J. K. Olupona; New York: Crossroad, 2000), xv.

[311] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non- Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 192. See also Alyward Shorter, "Problems and Possibilities of the Church's Dialogue with African Traditional Religion," in *Dialogue with the African Traditional Religions* (ed. A. Shorter; Kampala, Uganda: Gaba Publications, 1975), 7, and Allan Anderson, "Stretching the Definition?: Pneumatology and Syncretism in African Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10 (2001), 100.

[312] See, for example, John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (rev. and enl., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 90. See also George Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning: Canon as Semiotic Mechanism* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 22. The relationship between a canon and a believing community is, nonetheless, fraught with dialectical tensions since, as James Barr retorts, "far from the canon establishing or expressing the self- identity of the church, it is the church that establishes the network of familiar relations within which its scriptures are known and understood." Idem, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 43. Thus the believing community frames the canon while, dialectically, the canon maps out the textual hermeneutical contours for the community.

intertexts, or texts outside the canon which closely interact with and inform the canon.[313]

However, for the purposes of the present study, canonical influence refers, particularly, to the

Hebrew Bible רוח symbolisms and its equivalent New Testament πνευμα motifs' impact on

African Christian pneumatology. Furthermore, it is observed that the deuterocanonical רוח -

πνευμα motifs portray nuances similar to those of the Hebrew Bible רוח and the New Testament

πνευμα motifs.[314] In the final analysis, the canon is a story, or a meta-story, and "every story is

inherently incomplete, dotted with 'spots of indeterminacy' that must be concretized by the

reader, often unconsciously, always intertextually, in order for the story to have any meaning at

all."[315] Canonical influence is therefore exerted, not only by the shape of a canon, but also by its

intertexts, or the readers' repertoire of literary conventions and social experiences which they

bring to the text as references and analogies for understanding the text.[316]

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[313] See Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio- Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996), 40.

[314] So Stephen L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 27, Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (rev. ed., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 234, and Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of the Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop, 1976), 51- 58.

[315] George Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning*, 23.

[316] See also John A. Darr, "Glorified in the Presence of Kings: A Literary- Critical Study of Herod the Tetrarch in Luke- Acts," (Ph.D diss., Vanderbilt University, 1989), 63, and Tite Tiénou, "The Church in African Theology: Description and Analysis of Hermeneutical Presuppositions," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 160.

4.3 African Peoples

The term "African" generally refers to about 600 million inhabitants of the continent of

Africa who comprise different racial and ethnic groups, including the caucasoid- light skinned

peoples of North Africa and South Africa, the negroid- dark skinned indigenous inhabitants of

Sub- Saharan Africa, as well as the Hamites of North and North- East Africa.[317] Nonetheless, in

common parlance, the term "Africa" tendentiously denotes the dark- skinned indigenous

inhabitants of Sub- Saharan Africa.[318] Even then, the indigenous dark- skinned Africans

comprise many ethnic groups with different cultures and religions. J. N. Kudadjie, in his update

of David Barrett's comparative study of religion among indigenous Africans, shows the

distribution of religious affiliations in Africa as of 1985, with projections to the year 2000, as

follows:[319]

Distribution of Religious Affiliation in Africa: 1985- 2000		
Religion	**1985**	**2000**
African Traditional Religions	12.30%	8.90%
Christianity	45.40%	48.40%
Islam	41.50%	41.60%
Other Religious Affiliations	0.80%	1.10%
	100%	100%

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[317] See J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," in *Spirituality in Religions: Profiles and Perspectives* (ed. C. W. du Toit; Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1996), 62.

[318] See also J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," 62.

[319] J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," 63, and D. B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, A.D. 1900- 2000 (Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1982), 65- 71.

J. N. Kudadjie observes that "although African traditional religion is statistically the smallest group, the influence of traditional African culture and religion is very strong and quite evident in the daily lives of the people – whether they are traditionists, Christians, Muslims, or people of other faiths."[320]

Although the diverse African ethnic cultures and religions may appear to compromise any attempt to generalize African religious beliefs and praxis, it is, nonetheless, possible to identify broad patterns of culture, linguistics, religious beliefs, symbols and rituals that constitute the worldview of the African peoples, while still acknowledging nuanced accents in each ethnic cultural context.[321] Thus the appellation 'African spirituality' presupposes that broad patterns of spirituality common to the diverse groups of African peoples are identifiable.

4.4 Spirituality

The term "spirituality" is often imbued with connotations of "withdrawal to interiority, of flight from the world, of contempt for matter and history, and an abstract other-worldliness."[322] This is, however, an idiosyncratic and reductionist view of spirituality. As C. E. T. Kourie argues, spirituality should be envisioned in a much wider perspective; spirituality "refers to the

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[320] J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," 63.

[321] See also Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 27.

[322] K. C. Abraham, "Introduction," in *Spirituality of the Third World: A Cry for Life* (ed. K. C. Abraham and B. Mbuy- Beya; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 5.

raison d´etre of our existence, the meaning and values to which we ascribe."[323] Peter Paris

defines the spirituality of a people as "the animating and integrative power that constitutes the

principal frame of meaning for individual and collective experiences … the spirituality of a

people is synonymous with the soul of a people: the integrating center of their power and

meaning."[324]

Spirituality issues from a perceptual encounter with, or experience of, a divine-

transcendent world and is manifested in a people's worldview.[325] Spirituality cannot, therefore,

be examined in a cultural vacuum; its essential context is the social norms of a people. J. N.

Kudadjie observes that spirituality as "an encounter with the divine, or sharing of the divine

nature, necessarily – though not exclusively – is first and foremost an interior experience which

is manifested or expressed in one's relationships with the environment, that is, human society

and the world of nature as a whole."[326] C. W. du Toit likewise notes that spirituality is both an

awareness of a numinous presence that transcends the senses and "the linking of the awareness

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[323] C. E. T. Kourie, "Spirituality and Mystical Transformation," in C. W. du Toit, ed., *Spirituality in Religions*,3.

[324] Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 22, 129.

[325] See also Frank Chikane who notes that "the very word 'spirit' is an acknowledgement that human life is propelled by a principle beyond human power and knowledge … spirituality spells our connectedness to God … to the rest of nature, to one another." Idem, "Spirituality of the Third World: Conversion and Commitment," in *Spirituality of the Third World: A Cry for Life* (ed. K. C. Abraham and B. Mbuy- Beya; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 175- 176. A people's worldview may be defined as "an overarching conceptual perspective from which one interprets reality, thus making human experience meaningful or understandable. A worldview consists of a cluster of basic assumptions (whether consciously recognized or not) through which one arranges thoughts, responds to experiences and interprets reality in a meaningful manner." Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, Tenn.: CPT Press, 2009), 38. See also L. R. Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 322.

[326] J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," 65.

of this presence to one's style of living … spirituality is never authentic if it is divorced from life

– one's own life and that of others."[327]

Spirituality is thus the outcome of a perceptual experience of a transcendent horizon of

reality, which then gives rise to a perception of infinite potentiality beyond human finitude, or

the experience of divine transcendence as immanent presence.[328] It is the perceptual awareness of

divine immanence which, dialectically, suggests a transcendent horizon. Hence Lemke's

observation that divine transcendence must always be viewed in the context of divine

immanence.[329] Likewise, Lawrence Fagg argues that:

> I do not see transcendence and immanence as constituting a clear black and white duality, but as roughly defining poles of a seamless continuum descriptive of our sense of universal presence. For me, immanence involves a feeling of inner or inherent immediacy, a vibrant indwelling that is pervasive here on earth and in the universe. Transcendence involves a perception of an unreachable 'beyond', a transcosmic presence engendering a sense of an encompassing omnipresent other.[330]

Fagg, however, points out that the notions of divine immanence and transcendence are trans-

spatial and trans-temporal; they can only be envisioned in trans-temporal and trans-spatial

imageries since their perception transcends the realm of the senses. Fagg further notes that

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[327] C. W. du Toit, "The Poverty of Western Religious Experience and the Contact with African Spirituality," in *Spirituality in Religions: Profiles and Perspectives* (ed. C. W. du Toit; Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1996), 99.

[328] See also Werner E. Lemke, "The Near and Distant God: A Study of Jer. 23: 23- 23 in its Biblical Theological Context," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981), 551, and Elizabeth Amoah, "A Living Spirituality Today," in *Spirituality of the Third World: A Cry for Life* (ed. K. C. Abraham and B. Mbuy- Beya; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 51.

[329] W. E. Lemke, "The Near and Distant God," 555.

[330] Lawrence W. Fagg, "Are there Limitations of Divine Transcendence in the Physical World?" *Journal of Religion and Science* 38 (2003), 560.

isolating transcendence from immanence, in effect, objectifies divinity, "seeing God as an object."[331] The notion of "spirit" can, therefore, be viewed as a metaphor for the perceptual experience of divine immanence and transcendence.[332]

The notion of "spirituality," as described above, challenges the closed or static-rationalistic view of the religious person; it portends a self- transcendence of the rational self. As Jayne Svenungsson remarks, "no matter how hard we try to control spirituality by setting up dogmas, rules, and institutions, there will always be something escaping our calculations."[333] This is reminiscent of Ezekiel's רוח spirituality which envisions divine transcendence and immanence in ethereal imageries and seemingly trans-rational similitudes.

4.5 African Spirituality: A Nuanced Symbolism

The African perceptual experience of spirituality is integrative; "African spiritual experience is one in which the divine or the sacred realm interpenetrates into the daily experience of the human person so much that religion, culture, and society are imperatively related … there is no clear- cut distinction between religious and secular spheres or perspectives

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[331] L. W. Fagg, "Are There Limitations of Divine Transcendence?," 560- 561, 568.

[332] See also Louis Dupre, "Transcendence and Immanence as Theological Categories," *Proceedings: The Catholic Theological Society of America* 31 (1976), 1- 10.

[333] Jayne Svenungsson, "Transcending Tradition: Towards a Critical Theology of the Spirit," *Studia Theologica* 62 (2008), 71. See also David B. Burrell, "The Spirit and the Christian Life," in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks* (2d. ed., ed. P. C. Hodgson and R. H. King; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 312.

of the ordinary experience."[334] African spirituality is thus neither reductively "inward- directed

and individually oriented without relation,"[335] nor does it espouse a worldview devoid of what

Rudolf Otto calls *mysterium tremendum*, or a supra- rational emotion of reverential awe.[336]

Rather, it is a sacramental ontology in the sense that nature is presumed to participate,

experientially, in the transcendent realm of divinity. Thus, in African spirituality, nature is

always 'en-spirited,' or, akin to Pentecostal spirituality, "nature is always already suspended in

and inhabited by the 'spirit' such that it is always already primed for the 'spirit's'

manifestations."[337]

African spirituality appears to challenge the classical theory of secularization which argues

for "the successive disappearance of religion following the civilization and progress of human

society."[338] J. Svenungsson, in a review of several studies on the spirituality of the Global South,

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[334] J. K. Olupona, "Introduction," in J. K. Olupona, *African Spirituality*, xvii.

[335] So C. W. du Toit, "The Poverty of Western Religious Experience," 89.

[336] Rudolf Otto's notion of m*ysterium tremendum*, analogous to African spirituality, acknowledges the failure of any rationalized schema to fully contain the supra- rational character of the experience of divinity. He notes that "the truly mysterious object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently wholly other, whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb." Idem, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry in to the Non- Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (2d. ed., trans. J. W. Harvey; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 28.

[337] James K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?: Pentecostal Ontology and the Spirit of Naturalism," *Journal of Religion and Science* 43 (2008), 890. As already argued elsewhere in the present study, African spirituality is at the root of contemporary Pentecostal spirituality. Harvey Cox, for example, points out that "no responsible historian of religion now disputes that Pentecostalism was conceived when essentially African and African- American religious practices began to mingle with the poor white Southern Christianity that sprang from a Wesleyan lineage." Idem, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty- First Century* (Reading, Mass.: Addison- Wesley, 1995), 75. See also Ian MacRobert, "The Black Roots of Pentecostalism," in *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism* (ed. J. Jongeneel; Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 73- 84, and Jean- Jacques Suurmound, *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology* (London: SCM, 1994), 5- 7.

[338] Jayne Svenungsson, "Transcending Tradition," 78, n.4. The classical theory of secularization is critically discussed in Jose´ Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

concludes that "there are strong reasons to assert, contrary to the theory of secularization, that religious engagement does not necessarily decline as levels of welfare and education increase."[339] Thus the African spirituality discussed in the present study is not necessarily that of Africa's traditional past or a nostalgic reminiscence of a romantic past; rather, it is a portrayal of contemporary indigenous African spirituality. However, Svenungsson does aptly point out that secularization is not necessarily atheistic rejection of religion but, rather, autonomy from the tyranny of religious hegemony.[340] In the African setting, the latter form of secularization is seen in the rejection of the Eurocentric form of Christianity which is increasingly perceived as hegemonic, and the proliferation of African instituted Christianity in the form of African initiated churches. This accords with Jacob Olupona's observation that Christianity in Africa has been undergoing a domesticating process; "it is being thoroughly changed and adapted to African taste and sensibility."[341]

A number of scholars have observed some common characteristics of the variegated spiritualities of the various ethnic groups of indigenous Africans. First, the single most common characteristic is "the ubiquity of religious consciousness among African peoples"[342] and, hence, a unitive worldview. John Mbiti remarks that "wherever the African is, there is his religion … although many African languages do not have a word for 'religion' as such it, nevertheless,

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[339] J. Svenungsson, "Transcending Tradition," 65.

[340] J. Svenungsson, "Transcending Tradition," 66.

[341] J. K. Olupona, "Introduction," in J. K. Olupona, *African Spirituality*, xv.

[342] P. J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 27.

accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death."[343] The

ubiquity of religious consciousness implies that the spirituality of the African peoples is not

simply a consciously schematized form of faith or worship; rather, "it is a way of life and social

control."[344] C. W. du Toit notes that the African religious consciousness "impinges on every

issue of life – a thoroughly incarnational spirituality that penetrates the whole of life."[345] As

such, the Enlightenment worldview which posits a closed universe governed by natural processes

and which bifurcates life into sacred and secular spheres is alien to African spirituality. The

ubiquity of religious consciousness symbolizes a unitive worldview whereby "African

spirituality permeates all aspects and levels of life, from the most mundane and ordinary to the

most spiritual and mystical."[346]

The African unitive worldview implies that reality is not visualized in terms of matter and

'spirit', or non- matter; "the world is seen as a unity with visible and invisible dimensions; the

human being is not seen as composed of body and soul, but as one person with visible and

invisible dimensions."[347] Laurenti Magesa notes that, in African spirituality, "The universe is a

composite of divine, spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements, hierarchically perceived, but

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[343] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 2- 3.

[344] P. J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 27.

[345] C. W. du Toit, "The Poverty of Western Religious Experience," 99.

[346] J. N. Kudadjie, "African Spirituality," 78.

[347] J. S. Ukpong, Rereading the Bible With African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 8- 9. See also K. C. Anyanwu, "The African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge," in *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (ed. E. A. Ruch and K. C. Anyanwu; Rome: Catholic Books, 1981), 93, and Adekunle O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa: Towards Holistic Empowerment," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8 (2010), 166.

directly related, and always interacting with each other. Some of these elements are visible, others are invisible … the two spheres of the universe – the visible world and the invisible – are both closely interrelated; each influences the other."[348]

The unitive worldview, is, however, not monistic in the sense of portraying all reality as one unitary organic whole. Rather, it is a participatory ontology in which the transcendent 'spirit' world inheres in immanence such that the world of nature sacramentally participates in the 'spirit' world. It is what J. K. Smith calls "enchanted" or "en-spirited naturalism."[349] The sacramental participatory ontology also implies that the African spirituality worldview is neither natural- supernatural dualism nor is it naïve or interventionist supernaturalism, such as is portrayed by Daniel Dennet and others, in which a transcendent divinity supposedly intervenes and interrupts the laws of nature.[350] Rather, the 'spirit' is always present, though not panetheistically embodied in nature; instead, the 'spirit' is transcendently present to nature.[351]

Second,, African spirituality is relational; it espouses a divine origin of the universe and a dynamic interrelation between divinity, humanity and the universe; "the entire universe is seen as participating in the one life of God, and there is supposed to exist a network of relationships

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[348] Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997), 39, 71. See also J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 32.

[349] J. K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?," 881.

[350] For a detailed discussion of the notion of 'interventionist supernaturalism,' see Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking, 2006), 21. See also J. K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?," 882.

[351] See also J. K. A. Smith, "Is There Room for Surprise in the Natural World?: Naturalism, the Supernatural, and Pentecostal Spirituality," in *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (ed. J. K. A. Smith and A. Yong; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 34- 47, and Amos Yong, "*Ruach*, the Primordial Waters, and the Breath of Life: Emergence Theory and the Creation Narratives in Pneumatological Perspective," in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (ed. Michael Welker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 183- 204.

between God, humanity and the cosmos."[352] People belong to God, to one another, to the

ancestral world of the living dead, and to spirits. Ogbu Kalu observes that the influence of

ancestral spirits in African primal religions is very pervasive; belief in ancestral spirits

underscores "the vibrant reality of the spiritual world or 'an active universe', the continuity of

life and human relationships beyond death."[353] The identity of a person is thus his or her place in

the community of the visible and invisible beings. Augustine Shuttle has fittingly adapted the

Cartesian dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am," to the African spirituality of

belonging, thus: *cognatus ergo sum*, "I am related, therefore I am."[354]

The notion of relatedness is a dominant motif in African spirituality and, hence, African

Christian pneumatology. Amon Kasambala notes that "at the very center of African spirituality

lies the core issue of relationship."[355] Kasambala portrays the African relational spirituality as a

five- dimensional experience. The first is the experience of relationship with divine

transcendence; "relationship with dimensions of power and meaning that people perceive as

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[352] J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 9. Also Placide Temples, *African Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), 25, and K. C. Anyanwu, "The African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge," 91.

[353] Ogbu Kalu, "Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa," in J. K. Olupona, *African Spirituality*, 54- 55. J. S. Ukpong also notes that in African spirituality, "the dead are now human persons who exist in the invisible realm of the world. There are also spirits, both good and bad inhabiting the same world with human beings but unseen by humans." Idem, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 9. See also J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 97, and J. S. Pobee who remarks that "*homo africanus* has a communitarian epistemology and ontology … it is the community of the living, the living dead, and those who are yet to be born." Idem, "Biblical Study in Africa: A Passover of Language," *Semeia* 73 (1996), 166.

[354] Augustine Shuttle, *Philosophy for Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1993), 47. J. S. Ukpong equally remarks that "African authors see the Cartesian dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, (I think therefore I exist) replaced in the African thought system by *cognato ergo sum* (I am related by blood/ belong to a family, therefore I exist). Idem, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 9. See also J. S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 49.

[355] Amon E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality and Cosmology on God- Images in Africa: A Challenge to Practical Theology and Pastoral Ministry," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 9 (2005), 304.

transcending their everyday lives."[356] The experience of divine relatedness is not only with God

but also with angel 'spirits' and demonic 'spirit' powers. The notion of 'spirit' is thus a common

metaphor for the relational experiences with the perceptual transcendent realities. The second

dimension of relatedness is with the self, or an intra-personal relatedness. The perception that a

human being possesses a 'spirit' is, essentially, a symbolic reference to the intra-personal

relatedness. It issues from the African spiritual experience of self- transcendence, and, in

Christian pneumatology, it is also informed by the biblical notions of a human רוח- πνευμα. The

third relational dimension is an inter-personal relatedness to one another, not simply at the

kinship or social level, but at a deeper 'spiritual' sense of connectedness to one another.[357] The

fourth dimension is a communal relatedness among all people, the living, the living dead, and the

unborn. The communal relatedness is usually enacted in ritual commemorations "expressing the

community of spiritual bonds that tie people together."[358] As Kasambala goes on to observe,

when African Christians enact the rituals of baptism or the Eucharist, the symbolism of

'spiritual' bonding in the rituals enactment is as vivid to the African as the biblical significance

of the rituals, and the church community is viewed as the visible expression of the

communitarian 'spiritual' relatedness.[359] The fifth dimension of relatedness is relationship with

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[356] A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 304.

[357] See A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 304.

[358] A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 304.

[359] A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 304.

space and things; African spirituality is relationally "deeply rooted in all that surrounds human life- the earth, the universe, spirit and matter."[360]

The third common characteristic of African spirituality is the emphasis on the pragmatic, rather than the abstract, dimensions of reality. Peter Paris observes that:

> Africans are not easily disposed to speculative thought because the latter tends to have little or no empirical basis. Rather, much of African thought, including that of theology and ethics, arises out of the problems of daily experience, and it is pursued for the purpose of discovering practical solutions for everyday problems.[361]

African spirituality is thus not an abstract or esoteric, highly conceptualized belief system, but a communitarian worldview that is fleshed out in pragmatic living in society. The notion of 'spirit' in African spirituality is, therefore, neither an abstract philosophical idea nor a conceptualized ideological- theological construct. One African Christian is quoted as having remarked that "My faith is not informed by theoretical explanations, even if they present logical and well formulated arguments. I feel that faith comes alive in the active participation of the community in the simplicity of each other."[362] Nonetheless, the pragmatic view of reality has a 'spiritual' ethos since, in the African 'spirit' worldview, nature is always en- spirited, and the African communitarian life is visualized in 'spirit' relational terms.

The fourth and final characteristic of African spirituality is that the African view of God is covenantal; "God is viewed as reciprocally related to the tribal community, sustaining and

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[360] A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 304.

[361] P. J. Paris, "The Spirituality of African Peoples," 132.

[362] Reported in K. C. Abraham, "Introduction," in K. C. Abraham, *Spirituality of the Third World*, 5.

preserving the latter in return for steadfast obedience and faithful devotion."[363] The covenantal

view issues from the African conviction that God is the beneficent creator who is providentially

and immanently involved in sustaining the universe and, therefore, creation owes divinity a

reciprocal duty of loyal devotion.[364] As already noted above, the participatory ontology of

divinity is, however, not visualized in panetheistic imageries. Instead, it is akin to J. K. Smith's

notion of "immanence without reduction and transcendence without dualism."[365] Thus the

African perceptual experience of divine providential immanence in existential life is a

cosmology which envisions "an alive universe" open to visitations of angels, demons, and the

living dead.[366]

The above common characteristics are the fundamental principles of African spirituality

which may be viewed as the African foundational pneumatology, or an account of the native

experiences of divine presence. The African foundational pneumatology underpins the African

Christian pneumatology, the latter viewed as the systematic pneumatology of African

Christianity, or a formal representation of the symbols of the notions of "spirit" within the

biblical accounts and historical Christian traditions, as perceived through the lens of the African

spirituality.[367]

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[363] P. J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 44.

[364] J. S. Mbiti remarks that "the African God is personally involved in his creation." Idem, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 29.

[365] J. K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?," 887.

[366] Ogbu U. Kalu , Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa," in J. K. Olupona, *African Spirituality*, 55.

[367] See also Donald Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 241.

The ubiquitous symbolic signifier of African pneumatological ontology is 'spirit.' The idea of 'spirit' in African Christian pneumatology, as informed by the African spirituality motifs and biblical רוח-πνευμα motifs, is aakin to Ezekiel's רוח motif, a nuanced symbolism which embraces the ubiquity of religious consciousness, the experiences of divine presence, an 'en-spirited' nature, covenantal relationality with divinity, as well as the multifarious relationalities in the African life experiences. Since in the African pneumatological ontology nature sacramentally participates in the transcendent 'spirit' world, the idea of 'miracles,' or visible manifestations of transcendence in immanence, is neither a simplistic reflection of Rudolf Bultmann's "mythical world of the New Testament,"[368] nor is it a case of "instances of God breaking into the world, as if God were outside it prior to such events."[369] Rather, 'miracles,' or supra- rational phenomena, are viewed as instances of more intense experiences of participatory 'spirit' ontology.

The African spirituality symbolism of a sacramental participatory ontology, which informs the African Christian pneumatology, is akin to the biblical participatory ontology which is expressed, for instance, in the New Testament *Acts of the Apostles*:

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[368] Rudolf Bultmann argues that the "mythical world of the New Testament," of angels and demons and other supernatural manifestations, "is simply the world picture of a time now past that was not yet formed by scientific thinking." Idem, *The New Testament and Mythology, and Other Basic Writings* (ed. and trans. S. M. Ogden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 3. Bultmann's argument is, however, now viewed as a reductionist understanding of a mythopoeic worldview and a totalizing view of science. See also Michael Ruse, *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 234- 236.

[369] J. K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?," 890.

"For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'we are his offspring.'"(Acts 17: 28).[370] The relational 'spirit' symbolism is also informed by other biblical- relational motifs. A biblical text that appears to exemplify the African depiction of a multi-dimensional relational spirituality is in the New Testament book, *Hebrews:*

> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebr. 12: 22- 24, NIV).[371]

The participatory ontology of the African spirituality, which informs the African Christian pneumatology, is also reminiscent of Henri de Lubac's *nouvelle theologie* which, in its critique of the Neo- Scholastic emphasis on the extrinsic character of divinity, or the portrayal of divinity and nature as discrete entities, argues that the distancing of divinity from nature leads to a theology that separates divine grace from life. For Lubac, nature and grace are intrinsically

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[370] The writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*, in effect, incorporates into Scripture the relational spirituality of the Hellenistic culture since his quotations are from the semi-mythical Cretan poet, Epimenides, in his *Cretica*, and from the Cilician poet, Aratus, in his *Phaenomena*. See also Theodore P. Ferries, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. IX (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 236. Thus the New Testament writer's inculturation of Scripture in Hellenistic spirituality prefigures, in a sense, contemporary biblical hermeneutical inculturation.

[371] The 'spirits of righteous men made perfect' (v.23) is usually interpreted, in the African pneumatological worldview, as "the clan gone ahead to the house of God," or the 'living dead' who are 'spiritually' related to the living. See A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 307. John Pobee also observes that "the spirits of righteous men made perfect" are the ancestors "already departed … they have taken a different role in their special place (usually heaven) to care for and guide those who are still living. This special role has made them intermediaries between human beings and God. Hence, in certain parts of Africa, Jesus is known as the great caring ancestor." Idem, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 314.

related and, implicitly, culture is germane to theology.[372] Analogically therefore, African

Christian pneumatology does not portray nature and divinity as discrete entities; rather, it

portrays the divine realm as both transcendent and immanently related to nature, hence the

African perceptual experiences of divine presence in existential living. The notion of 'spirit,' in

African Christian pneumatology, as informed by African spirituality, is thus a nuanced

pneumatological symbolization of the way the African people perceive and experience the

visible and the invisible worlds around them; "it incorporates all dimensions of human and

cosmic life."[373]

The fundamental principles of African spirituality, which inform the African Christian

pneumatology, constitute what Justin Ukpong calls "bridgeheads", or hermeneutical linkages,

between African Christian pneumatology and the Ezekielian רוח motif. The hermeneutical

bridgeheads are the inculturation parameters which ensure that "the bible is interpreted against

the background of African culture, religion and life experience to arrive at a new understanding

of it that would be African and Christian."[374]

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[372] Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Paulist, 1967), 27. See also James C. Livingstone and Francis C. Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century* (2d ed., Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006), 202- 205.

[373] Masamba Mpolo, "Spirituality and Counseling for Healing and Liberation," in *The Church and Healing: Echoes from Africa* (ed. E. Lartey, D. Nwachuku, and K. Kasonga; New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 16. See also A. E. Kasambala, "The Impact of African Spirituality," 303.

[374] J. S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of Biblical Studies," 44.

4.6 The Case for African Biblical Interpretation

An argument that is often proffered against a biblical interpretation that is both African-inculturated and Christian is that it is syncretistic Christo- paganism; "an admixture of Christianity and elements of traditional African religions."[375] The term 'syncretism,' first used in ancient Greece to describe the coming together of warring inhabitants of Crete in the face of a common enemy, and later employed metaphorically to refer to "an agreement between people with seemingly disparate opinions,"[376] has often been portrayed negatively in Christian theology as an unorthodox reconciliation of otherwise contradictory beliefs, or incorporation of foreign ideas, beliefs and practices into the Christian faith. Droogers and Greenfield note that seventeenth- century Christian theologians were the first to give 'syncretism' a negative connotation "by using it for what for them was the undesirable reconciliation of Christian theological differences; syncretism then became a threat to 'true' religion."[377]

The negative view of syncretism is plausibly informed by a univocal view of reality, or oppositional thinking, which focuses on only one dimension of reality in opposition to other dimensions of the same reality, or an etic- objective analysis of a reality that ignores the emic-subjective interpretation of that reality, hence David Adamo's pertinent argument that "there has never been an interpretation that has been without references to or dependent on a particular

[375] Adekunle O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa: Towards Holistic Empowerment," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8(2010), 171.

[376] Andre´ Droogers and Sidney M. Greenfield, "Recovering and Reconstructing Syncretism," in *Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas* (ed. S. M. Greenfield and A. Droogers; Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 27- 28.

[377] A. Droogers and S. M. Greenfield, "Recovering and Reconstructing Syncretism," 28.

cultural code, thought patterns or social location of the interpreter."[378] David Jasper, also, notes

that "our understanding of a text is not simply dependent on universal principles that are shared

by all, but depends on such things as age, gender, cultural assumptions, and so on."[379] An

interpretation of a text based on a hermeneutical inculturation approach is what Walter

Hollenweger calls "theologically responsible syncretism," or the reception of a text into a

hermeneutical context in order to facilitate a contextual understanding of it without necessarily

creating a foreign or contrastive text.[380] Such a "responsible syncretism" is, perhaps, exemplified

in the Acts of the Apostles writer's syncretization of Scripture with Hellenistic spirituality.[381]

The theologically responsible syncretism embraced in the present study is the adoption of

generally accepted principles of critical biblical interpretation and critical theological reflection

methods while, at the same time, hermeneutically contextualizing the critical biblical principles

and theological methods in the African pneumatological context.

A second objection to an African biblical interpretation is the argument that the African

worldview, as portrayed in the African spirituality, is mythopoeic and therefore inimical to

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[378] David T. Adamo, "What is African Biblical Studies?," in S. O. Abogunrin, *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation*, 17.

[379] David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 14.

[380] Walter J. Hollenweger pleads for "a theologically responsible syncretism," in biblical interpretation and theological reflection. He notes that "Christianity, both today and in the New Testament, is a syncretism *par excellence*." Idem, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Development Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 308. It is, nonetheless, noted that the notion of syncretism is a work- in- progress; it raises questions that have yet to be resolved. As Droogers and Greenfield ask, to what extent should disparate ideas be integrated, and how much integration is necessary to create something new? Is syncretism a conscious effort to integrate disparate ideas or is it an unconscious contextual assimilation of new ideas? Is the syncretistic process a mutual influence of disparate ideas or is it an asymmetrical process, with one idea dominating another? Idem, "Recovering and Reconstructing Syncretism," 31.

[381] See also T. P. Ferris, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 236.

modern critical biblical interpretation. Thus, according to this argument, African biblical interpretation is bound to be pre-critical and therefore out of touch with modern biblical scholarship. As already noted above, this argument is informed by a dated view of modern biblical scholarship which portrays biblical interpretation as an objective science. Mark Zvi Brettler, for instance, notes that "biblical scholarship has often considered itself to be a science which aims to be objective. This is now typically disputed. In this post- structuralist, post-modernist scholarly world, few would consider biblical scholarship to be an objective science."[382] This does not, however, imply that biblical scholarship is an eclectic discipline without unifying principles; rather, it means that biblical hermeneutics, as "the theory of the functions of understanding in their relationship to the interpretation of texts" in socio- historical and cultural contexts, is framed by paradigms that are sensitive to different socio- historical and cultural- contextual understandings. [383]

The mythpoeic notion of 'spirit' is viewed as a metaphor for a people's perceptual experiences of transcendence, just as science uses metaphors for non- sensate dimensions of reality,[384] hence Vondey's observation of "the increasing interest in the concept of 'spirit' which has led both scientists and theologians to the boundaries of their respective disciplines."[385] Thus

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[382] Mark Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 144. See also Robert F. Shedinger, "Kuhnian Paradigms and Biblical Scholarship: Is Biblical Studies a Science?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000), 471.

[383] J. Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning* (trans. R. R. Barr; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987), 2.

[384] Michael Ruse asserts that "the machine metaphor rules modern science." Idem, *Science and Spirituality*, 118.

[385] Wolfgang Vondey, "The Holy Spirit and the Physical Universe: The Impact of Scientific Paradigm Shifts on Contemporary Pneumatology," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), 3. See also J. K. A. Smith and Amos Yong who

both the scientific and the mythopoeic worldviews embrace metaphor as a limiting concept in the

sense that it marks the boundaries of conceptual thought, and is also a recognition that no

schema, scientific or mythopoeic, can fully contain the totality of reality. The metaphor is

therefore a symbolic construct that partially evokes, through imagery, domains of reality that are

inaccessible to observation. Moreover, just as a mythopoeic worldview rejects "the notion of an

autonomous, self- sufficient world that runs on its own steam,"[386] and therefore remains open to

transcendent experiences, likewise natural science rejects the notion of a closed knowledge

world and remains open to new methodologies and new ways of understanding reality. The only

a significant difference between a scientific symbol and a mythopoeic symbol is that the

scientific symbol tends to be highly schematized while the mythopoeic symbol is a relatively less

schematized iconic reference to reality as it is experienced. In mythic symbolism, the transition

from supra- rational or numinous experiences to rational symbolism of those experiences is

rudimentary. The relationship between mythopoeic and scientific symbols is best explicated by

Robert Neville as follows:

> For post- mythopoeic people, and for literary critics reading stories who ask what they
> might mean, their own symbolic systems are coded so that the myths and stories as a
> whole are referred to an extensionally defined referent within the system. That is, within
> our sophisticated semiotics we express the idea of reality, or the divine, or human life
> relative to the divine, as the object of the myth or story, and can formulate the ideas of

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observe that "It is increasingly being realized that 'spirit' is a sufficiently fluid notion that not only raises challenges for but also potentially holds forth promise to advance research across the spectrum of both human and the natural sciences." Idem, "Introduction: Science and the Spirit: Questions and Possibilities in the Pentecostal Engagement with Science," in *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (ed. J.K. A. Smith and A. Yong; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4.

[386] J. K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise?," 887.

disclosure … mythic thinking, however, is using the mythic system itself, or a relevant part, to interpret reality. In mythic thinking, the myth itself refers or is referred iconically to reality as engaged.[387]

A third argument against African biblical interpretation is that it is simply afrocentrism which lacks the scholarly rigor of biblical scholarship. Afrocentrism is an ideology that tendentiously reacts against a perceived Western cultural hegemony; "an expression of cultural renaissance … nationalistic zeal or outright repudiation of Western culture and influence."[388] In biblical hermeneutics, afrocentrism is viewed as:

> An attempt to re-read Scripture, but from a premeditatedly Africa- centered perspective and, in doing so, to break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that White Western biblical scholars have long enjoyed in relation to the Bible … Afrocentric hermeneutics, as conceived and practiced, is meant to be both a hermeneutic of suspicion ideologically and a hermeneutic of liberation psychologically- cum- politically.[389]

It is, however, observed that afrocentric hermeneutics, as a hermeneutic of suspicion and liberation, is *ideologiekritik*, and quite similar to other ideological hermeneutical strategies that are generally accepted in mainstream biblical scholarship. James Barr reckons that "ideological criticism has come to take its place alongside the older source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and so on."[390] Ideological hermeneutics is generally informed by the political nature of

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[387] Robert C. Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 40-41.

[388] A. O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa," 165.

[389] Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, "Biblical Hermeneutics: An Afrocentric Perspective," *Journal of Religious Thought* 2 (1995), 8. See also K. Nurnberger, "The Royal- Imperial Paradigm in the Bible and the Modern Demand for Democracy: An Exercise in Soteriological Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 81 (1992), 16- 34.

[390] James Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28.

biblical texts and interpreters. Tina Pippin observes that "the Bible has been used as a weapon of imperialism, sexism, and racism, and liberation hermeneutics is claiming the Bible back on its own terms; terms that are plural, national and post- national and often revolutionary."[391] *Ideologiekritik* thus views the Bible as a double- voiced text "because it has been a book of both oppression and liberation."[392] Pippin goes on to argue that:

> Ideological criticism shakes up the assumption of the dominant place of mainstream biblical scholarship by asking: Who is in control? Who supports this network of power relations? Who is not represented or is overrepresented? In what ways are the Bible and its translations and interpretations linked with colonial and neocolonial powers? Is the Bible always a liberating text for all? What is the ethical responsibility of the biblical critic? What is the place of dissenting or resisting voices?[393]

Afrocentric hermeneutics, as a hermeneutic of liberation, is analogous to the feminist emancipatory hermeneiutics. Elizabeth Fiorenza argues that an emancipatory methodological approach:

> is critical because it understands 'text' as rhetorical communication that needs to be evaluated rather than accepted or obeyed; is liberationist or emancipatory because it works with a systemic analysis of the intersecting structures of domination; its goal is not just understanding, but change and transformation; it seeks to change not only the ways the Bible is read and understood, but also to transform wo/men's self- understanding and cultural patterns of dehumanization.[394]

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[391] Tina Pippin, "Ideology, Ideological Criticism, and the Bible," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 4 (1996), 60.

[392] Tina Pippin, "Ideology, Ideological Criticism and the Bible," 60.

[393] T. Pippin, "Ideology, Ideological Criticism and the Bible," 67.

[394] Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Invitation to 'Dance' in the Open House of Wisdom: Feminist Study of the Bible," in *Engaging the Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women* (ed. C. Hee An and K. P. Darr; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006), 83.

Other critics, nonetheless, caution that *ideologiekritik* runs the risk of becoming ideological eisegesis; ideological readings can be "evasive and deceptive, revealing meaning as some slippery object that shoots from group to group in a series of power struggles or class conflicts."[395] Wolfgang Iser also cautions that "the various brands of ideology critique elevate their presuppositions to the status of reality, just as do the ideologies they combat … although they see themselves as frameworks for the reality to be grasped, they actually seek to shape that reality according to their presuppositions."[396] There is, nonetheless, an overwhelming conviction in biblical scholarship that "all biblical interpretation, however scientific and 'objective' it purports to be, is perspectival in nature … there is no such thing as a value- free biblical hermeneutics that exists in some abstract, absolute, or autonomous realm far removed from the biases and blind spots to which we are all susceptible as fallible, 'fallen' human beings."[397] The validity of ideological hermeneutics lies in the fact that they use the same hermeneutical methodologies as the mainstream biblical critical approaches. As Wolgang Iser notes, ideological critical readings try to gain validity for their objectives by developing "a frame of reference that, in the final analysis, is not far from being logocentric itself, because a certain rationality is required if an agenda is to be accepted."[398]

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[395] T. Pippin, "Ideology, Ideological Criticism and the Bible," 68.

[396] Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 2.

[397] G. L. O. R. Yorke, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 13. See also David Tracy who remarks that "there is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, no innocent text." Idem, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 79.

[398] Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation*, 4.

African biblical hermeneutics cannot, therefore, be rejected by mainstream biblical scholarship on account of its afrocentric propensity. However, the approach of the present study is not particularly afrocentric; rather, it is an inculturation hermeneutical approach that, rather than reject or subvert the mainstream hermeneutical approaches, seeks to bring mainstream critical- biblical scholarship into critical dialogic encounter with the African hermeneutical-cultural context. The case for an African biblical hermeneutics therefore rests on the premise that "the books of the Bible were written to have an effect on the reader,"[399] and that the texts become meaningful only through dialogue between the text and the reader in his or her socio-cultural setting.[400]

4.7 African Biblical Interpretation in Perspective

The African Christian view of the Bible, according to Philip Jenkins, is one which confers:

> greater respect for the authority of Scripture, especially in matters of morality, a willingness to accept the Bible as an inspired text, and a tendency to literalism; a special interest in supernatural elements of Scripture, such as miracles, visions, and healing; a

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[399] Terrence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1985), 11.

[400] An argument that is sometimes adduced, by such critics as John Riches, that contextual readings of the Scripture can alienate biblical faith communities from one another, or that local readings can result in the denial of common biblical faith, fails to recognize that biblical faith is always contextually perceived and appropriated. See John Riches, "Interpreting the Bible in African Contexts," in *Glasgow Consultation Reading With: An Exploration of the Interface Between Critical and Ordinary Readings of the Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 187. Contra John Riches and his guild, Elizabeth Fiorenza maintains that "context is as important as text … one's social location or rhetorical context is decisive for how one sees the world, constructs reality or interprets biblical texts." Idem, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1999), 19.

belief in the continuing power of prophecy, and a veneration for the Old Testament which is treated as equally authoritative as the New.[401]

African cultural affinities with the Hebrew Bible world, particularly the patriarchal narratives, render the Hebrew Bible particularly attractive to African Christianity. As one observer of African Christianity reportedly remarked, "You do not have to interpret Old Testament Christianity to Africans; they live in an Old Testament world."[402] The affinities between the Hebrew Bible world and the African cultural setting are succinctly portrayed in a commentary by some African Church leaders who observe that:

> When Africans learnt to read the Word of God as it was written in the Bible, they began … to recognize that there was no contradiction between their traditional religious beliefs and the written Word of God in the Bible … Although there was no written Bible in Africa in those days, the Word of God was known to our ancestors- at least partially. It was written in their hearts. King Moshoeshoe of Lesotho (1786- 1870) once told the Missionaries: 'Your laws (the Ten Commandments) are exactly like ours, except that yours are written on paper while ours are written in our hearts.[403]

However, the "tendency to literalism," which is noted by Philip Jenkins above, engenders a reductionist pre-critical reading of the biblical texts which, as Adekunle Dada observes, "might prevent the reader from holistically appropriating the full potential of the biblical text; such

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[401] Philip Jenkins, "Reading the Bible in the Global South," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30 (2006), 67.

[402] Reported in Philip Jenkins, "Reading the Bible in the Global South," 69. See also J. S. Mbiti who reports of African Christians remarking that "we opened the Scriptures in our own languages and saw the Jewish people in the Bible as a mirror in which we viewed ourselves." Idem, "The Role of the Jewish Bible in African Independent Churches," *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 221.

[403] N. H. Ngada and K. E. Mofokeng, *African Christian Witness: Independent Indigenous Churches* (Pietermaritzberg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2001), 27. See also J. S. Mbiti, "The Role of the Jewish Bible," 222.

reading strategies may also encourage the incorrect use of the text."[404] An example of a literalist-reductionist interpretation of a biblical text in Africa is David Oyedepo's exegetical explication of 2 Corinthians 8: 9 as a warrant for divine instant or 'miraculous" emancipation from poverty in Africa; [405] he educes that:

> Some of the principal consequences of sin were poverty … man became naked immediately he fell. Now that he has entered righteousness, should he still remain naked? No, he must be clothed with glory of God. That is why the Bible says "He became poor that we, through his poverty might be made rich.'[406]

As Adekunle Dada rightly observes, the reductionist character of the literalist contextual hermeneutics, in the above example, ignores not only the context of the text but also cultural factors in the hermeneutical context, such as unstable governmental systems, subsistence and mismanaged economies, rampant illiteracy, and so on, which contribute to poverty in Africa.[407] A non- reductionist inculturation hermeneutical approach should, instead, critically exegete a text in its textual and socio- historical context, allow the text to critique the hermeneutical-cultural context and, reciprocally, allow the cultural context to critically illumine and give meaning to the text of the Bible.[408]

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[404] Adekunkle O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa," 168.

[405] Second Corinthians 8:9 reads as follows: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."NIV).

[406] David Oyedepo, *Covenant Wealth* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion House, 1992), 26- 27. See also A. O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics," 168.

[407] A. O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics ," 169.

[408] See also Musimbi Kanyoro who argues that the text of the Bible should read the cultural context as much as the cultural context critiques and gives meaning to the text of the Bible. Idem, "Reading the Bible From an

A survey of eighty- seven doctoral dissertations on the Hebrew Bible by African scholars between 1967 and 2000 (seventeen of which were completed in African institutions) reveals that there was neither any serious biblical inculturation nor any significant use of the African cultural context as a resource for interpretation. In addition, the survey finds that the African cultural worldview of transcendent realities was never taken into consideration.[409] Nonetheless, biblical inculturation in Africa is implicit in the translation of the Bible into several African vernacular languages; the use of a 'mother- tongue' with local linguistic tropes and cultural symbols that reflect the contextual setting is, in effect, a vernacular hermeneutical inculturation.[410] Lamin Sanneh notes that the translation of Scripture into a local language is, actually, a hermeneutical move that utilizes cultural resources, such as local linguistic expressions, symbols, rituals, and analogies to express the biblical message, and is thus "a fundamental concession to the vernacular" which, *ipso facto*, accentuates the hermeneutical significance of the receptor cultural context.[411]

African Perspective," *Ecumenical Review* 20 (1999), 19. See also J. S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of the Bible," 43.

[409] See Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations*, 1967- 2000 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 97- 114.

[410] R. S. Sugirtharajah views 'vernacular hermeneutics' in biblical translations as "an awakening among people to their indigenous literary, cultural and religious heritage," and a use of the 'literary- cultural- religious heritage' as the matrix for receiving the message of a foreign text. Idem, "Thinking About Vernacular Hermeneutics Sitting in a Metropolitan Setting," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 94.

[411] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (New York: Orbis, 1989), 83. See also J. S. Mbiti who notes that, through translation, the Bible has been integrated with African culture at all levels. Idem, The Biblical Basis in Present Trends in African Theology," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 4 (1980), 119.

In addition, biblical inculturation is observed at the oral and symbolic levels where, with words taken from the biblical texts that have been translated into vernacular languages, the Africans create songs with African rhythm, sermons, drama, rituals and dance, and thus utilize their own cultural resources to appropriate the message of the Bible. John Mbiti views this process as an incultural oral and symbolic theological engagement with the Bible:

> Oral theology is produced in the fields, by the masses, through song, sermon, teaching, prayer, conversation and so on. It is theology in the open air, often unrecorded … and generally lost to Libraries and Seminaries. Symbolic theology is expressed through art, sculpture, drama, symbols, rituals, dance, colors, numbers, and so on.[412]

Mbiti, however, notes that "a great deal remains to be done by African scholars" in inculturating the oral- symbolic biblical theology into literary forms.[413]

A significant feature of biblical inculturation is that it operates at the interface of critical and ordinary readings of the biblical texts in order to capture the critical aspects of the oral and symbolic theology which are often developed at the ordinary readership of the Bible. This feature is what Gerard West calls a "reading- with" hermeneutical strategy.[414] This feature is informed by the view that biblical inculturation, in communities of biblical faith, regards the Bible not as a mere archeological literary artifact, but as a functional text; "not just as a

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[412] J. S. Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis in Present Trends," 119.

[413] J. S. Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis in Present Trends," 121.

[414] Gerald O. West, "Indigenous Reading Resources from a Southern African Perspective," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 41- 49. Also, Idem, "Acclaiming the (Extra)Ordinary African 'Reader' of the Bible," in *Reading Otherwise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading With their Local Communities* (ed. G. O. West; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 46, J. S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of Biblical Studies," 45, and Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Black and African Theologies in the New World Order: A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 96 (1996), 15.

fascinating anthology of Northwest Semitic texts … but as literature that carries weight and perhaps even authority for contemporary religious communities."[415] A functional text, according to John Barton, is "a vehicle for presenting insights into the moral life of human subjects in such a way that the reader would be challenged and stimulated to thought and action."[416] Barton is, however, quick to point out that functional interpretation is not reductionist moralistic reading which simply reduces a text to its ideational essence; rather, functional biblical interpretation renders the biblical text relevant to a community through a reciprocal and mutually enriching critique between the text of the Bible and the religio- cultural ethos of the community.[417] Functional interpretation thus incorporates the interpretive interests of critical biblical readership with the life concerns of ordinary biblical readership.[418]

4.8 Biblical Inculturation: The Process

A common procedural paradigm that has been applied in African biblical inculturation, particularly in New Testament studies, is the comparative paradigm. This paradigm arose,

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[415] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Functional Interpretation and Biblical Theology: Reflections on Judaism as a Civilization in Relation to Scriptural Hermeneutics," *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (2006), 147.

[416] John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 10. See also Benjamin D. Sommer, "Functional Interpretation," 147.

[417] J. Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*, 10.

[418] See also Tinyiko Maluleke who notes that, in functional interpretation, biblical scholars take a less prescriptive approach to the task of biblical interpretation and, instead, observe and critically appraise the manner in which ordinary readers appropriate the biblical text. Idem, "Black and African Theologies," 14- 16.

initially, as a reactive and apologetic strategy for legitimizing African religion and culture.

According to Eric Anun:

> The comparative method arose as a response to a colonial conception of African traditional religion and culture on the part of missionaries who believed that African cultures were satanic and pagan and needed to be totally abandoned if Christianity was to thrive in Africa. Thus what African biblical scholars tried to do was to identify similarities between the biblical world and African religio- cultural practices and to use their scholarly and scientific tools to show the relationship between African traditional religion and Christianity.[419]

In similar vein, J. S. Ukpong remarks that:

> When African biblical readers, for example, discovered in the Bible a Jesus who healed the sick … drove out demons from people and confronted the power of Satan … that the Jesus of the Gospels was opposed to oppression, having come specifically to set the downtrodden free … the discovery made a big difference for them and contributed in a big way to the springing up of African Independent Churches, the touchstone of whose spirituality is healing and driving out demons from people.[420]

Other reactive- apologetic- legitimizing comparative approaches are noted in the dated works of Joseph Williams who sought to show a correlation between the Hebrew language and some African languages, leading him to postulate an African descent from the Hebrew race or early contacts between Africans and the Hebrews.[421] Comparative studies on specific biblical

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[419] Eric Anun, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa: Some Concerns," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (ed. G. o. West and M. Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 48. See also G. O. West, "Shifting Perspectives on the Comparative Paradigm in African Biblical Scholarship," *Religion and Theology* 12 (2005), 52, and Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*, 89.

[420] J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995), 3.

[421] Joseph J. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1930), 35. See also J. S. Ukpong who observes that "William's methodology has been shown by modern scholars to be superficial and weak." Idem, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108 (2000), 6- 7.

motifs have also been carried out, such as comparative studies of the priestly sacrificial cultus in the Hebrew Bible and sacrifices in African traditional religions,[422] comparative studies between the Hebrew Bible and African conceptions of God, as well as comparative studies between biblical and African concepts of taboos, sacred space, among others.[423] Some of the comparative study approaches have, primarily, been concerned with legitimizing the African traditional religions vis-à-vis biblical faith,[424] and have thus been dubbed "Africa- in- the Bible" studies since they have sought to demonstrate "the presence of Africa and African peoples in the Bible and the significance of such presence."[425]

The legitimizing comparative studies which are marked by a tendency to demonstrate cultural affinities between the ancient biblical world and the contemporary African cultural milieu, presuppose a feasible literalist transplantation of biblical motifs into the African situation. The simplistic and uncritical comparative analyses have, however, been rejected in critical biblical scholarship on the grounds that the biblical world and contemporary Africa are far apart

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[422] See, for instance, J. S. Ukpong, *Sacrifice, African and Biblical: A Comparative Study of Ibibio and Levitical Sacrifices* (Rome: Urbana University Press, 1987).

[423] See P. A. Oguntoye, "The Creation of Man in Genesis and in African Myths of Creation: A Comparative Analysis," in S. O. Abogunrin, *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa,* 137- 159, and C. O. Ogunkunle, "Elijah and the Kings of Israel in the Context of Africa Today: A Comparative Analysis," in S. O. Abogunrin, *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, 163- 179.

[424] The studies were legitimizing in the sense that they tendentiously sought to establish African historical linkages with the biblical world and to refute a perceived Western denigration of the significance of African traditional religions in relation to biblical faith.

[425] J. S. Ukpong further notes that some of the comparative studies portrayed African traditional religions as "Africa's Old Testament" and as *praeparatio evangelica*. Idem, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa," 7. Also D. T. Adamo, "The Table of Nations Reconsidered in African Perspective: Genesis 10," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 2 (1993), 125- 143, and, Idem, "Ethiopia in the Bible," *African Christian Studies* 8 (1992), 51- 64. See also T. L. J. Mafico, "Evidence for African Influence on the Religious Customs of the Patriarchs," in *Abstracts: American Academy of Religion/ Society of Biblical Literature* (ed. J. B. Wiggins and D. J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 100, and J. S. Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa," 9.

in spatio- temporal terms.[426] The comparative paradigm has, since, moved away from the uncritical reactive- apologetic- legitimizing phase of the 1930- 70s to a critical proactive biblical scholarship which is discontinuous with the earlier reactive- apologetic- legitimizing impulses. The comparative procedural paradigm is now viewed as a comparative methodology that critically facilitates a "parallel interpretation of certain Old Testament and New Testament texts or motifs and supposed African parallels, letting the two illuminate one another."[427] J. S. Ukpong proposes a critical comparative procedural paradigm, in inculturation hermeneutics, which entails three procedural steps.[428]

The first procedural step involves a critical comparative analysis of the historical context of a biblical text with the contemporary hermeneutical context, identifying both dynamic equivalents and tensions between the two contexts. A comparative analysis that identifies dynamic equivalents only and ignores tensions between the historical context of the biblical text and the contemporary interpretive context is bound to be narrow- focused and reductionist in essence. Any tensions between the two contexts should be fully accounted for in order to present a holistic comparative analysis.[429] The critical comparative process requires the employment of historical- critical research tools in identifying the socio- historical context of the biblical text.

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[426] See, for example, Erich Isaac, "Relations Between the Hebrew Bible and Africa," *Jewish Social Studies* 26 (1964), 95, and J. S. Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108 (2000), 69.

[427] Knur Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*, 89.

[428] Ukpong actually outlines five procedural steps, but some of them are simply elaborations of one another. However, as he concedes, "it may not be necessary to follow all the above steps … two steps could be telescoped into one." Idem, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 13. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the comparative hermeneutical paradigm is condensed into three procedural steps.

[429] See also A. O. Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa," 162.

Ukpong recommends asking such questions as the following in order to link the historical context of the text with a dynamic equivalent interpretive context: "What socio- cultural, political, economic or religious situation does the text reflect, and what situation in my context approximates it? How and why would the text have been significant and meaningful in its historical context, and what concerns in my context does this reflect?"[430] The goal of the first step of the comparative procedural paradigm is to create a critical encounter between the socio- historical context of the biblical text and a dynamic equivalent context of contemporary Africa and, hence, obviate a simplistic transplantation of the ancient biblical world motifs into a contemporary context.

The second procedural step of the comparative hermeneutical paradigm is a critical analysis of the hermeneutical context of the interpreter. Socio- cultural and anthropological approaches are utilized in order to critically explicate the interpretive- contextual worldview, the relation of the worldview to the people's life history, and the religious dimensions of the worldview in the life situation of the interpretive context.[431] The critical analysis of the hermeneutical context reveals any socio- cultural and religious typologies that are prefigured, either correspondingly or contrastively, in the socio- historical context of the biblical text. The second step is essentially a continuation of the first analytical step but, in the second step, the analysis goes further and probes, not only the theological interests of the contextual biblical readership, but also the life concerns that the contextual theology of the ordinary reader seeks to

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[430] J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 10- 11.

[431] See J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 12, and Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*, 88.

address, and which might correspond with and illumine the textures, or the network of

significations, in the biblical text.[432] It also seeks to probe life concerns in the hermeneutical

context which ordinary biblical readership might overlook or fail to address and which might be

informed by a critical reading of the biblical text. G. West argues that the concern in the in-depth

engagement with the hermeneutical context is "to move away from the notion of biblical studies

as the pursuit of disinterested truth to something more human and transformative."[433]

The third and final procedural step of the comparative paradigm is "analysis of the text in

the light of the already analyzed contemporary context."[434] This requires application of different

textual and hermeneutical, or biblical- critical, tools and a critical review of any current

interpretations of the text, as well as reviewing the text in its larger textual and socio- historical

contexts for the purpose of clarifying the focus of the interpretation. Ukpong counsels that

questions should be "put to the text arising from insights gained from the analysis of the context

of interpretation in order to gain an insight into the nature of the functioning of the text in

relation to the context."[435] Thus, whereas the biblical text is analyzed utilizing the historical-

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[432] For a detailed discussion of textures as a network of significations in a text, see Vernon Robins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts: Socio- Rhetoric Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996), 120- 131.

[433] G. O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the Southern Africa Context* (2d. ed., Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 1995), 215. See also Richard Briggs who argues that the critical significance of contextual biblical hermeneutics is in bringing the import of the biblical text into critical dialogue with human life in a contemporary context. Idem, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to Do with Biblical Interpretation? *Heythrop Journal* XLVII (2006), 56.

[434] J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 12.

[435] J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," 12.

critical method as well as other literary hermeneutical tools, the hermeneutical context is analyzed through anthropological and socio- cultural approaches.[436]

Ibitofu Megbelayin observes that the whole purpose of the comparative procedural paradigm, in the African context, is two- fold: first, it "seeks to evaluate elements of African culture, religion, beliefs, concepts or practices in the light of the biblical witness, to arrive at a Christian understanding of them and bring out their value for Christian witness."[437] Second, it seeks to reflect on and critique particular issues in the society and in the church's life, or what lessons may be drawn from a biblical text or theme for a particular context. An example of a reflective critique is given by Caleb Ogunkunle who reflects on his comparative study of Elijah, the kings of Israel, and Africa, and then remarks that "there is need for African prophets to re-evaluate their 'prophecies' and 'revelations' in the light of Elijah … they must speak out today and at all times against our multifarious social ills, against all forms of oppression and man's inhumanity to man."[438]

It should, however, be pointed out that an equally significant corollary purpose is to critique and illumine the biblical text in the light of the hermeneutical context, thus deriving "a

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[436] See J. S. Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa," 9. A classic case of an evaluative comparative study, using the historical critical method and anthropological- sociological approaches, is G. O. Abe's "*Berith*: Its Impact on Israel and its Relevance to the Nigerian Society," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1 (1986): 66- 73.

[437] Ibitofu O. F. Megbelayin, "Decolonizing Biblical Studies in Africa: A Socio- Rhetorical Perspective," in S. O. Abogunrin, *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, 68.

[438] Caleb Ogunkunle, "Elijah and the Kings of Israel in the Context of Africa Today: A Comparative Analysis," in S. O. Abogunrin, *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, 175. See also Chris U. Manus "Elijah: A *Nabi* Before the Writing Prophets: Some Critical Reflections," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1 (1986), 32.

new understanding of the biblical text that would be informed by the African situation."[439] The last procedural step in the comparative paradigm is thus evaluative in the sense that it not only highlights the continuities and discontinuities between the biblical world and the contemporary hermeneutical context, but also evaluates the theological import of the continuities and discontinuities.

4.8 Summary

The present chapter has attempted to portray a paradigm for integrating biblical interpretation with theological concerns of the African pneumatological- hermeneutical context. The reader- response methodological approach of biblical inculturation, which is employed in the integration process, is designed to bring the Ezekielian רוח motif into critical encounter with the biblical reader's interpretive interests and life concerns.

In what follows, the above comparative procedural paradigm is adopted in the hermeneutical inculturation of the Ezekielian רוח motif in the context of African Christian pneumatology. The goal is to identify the dynamic equivalents between the Ezekielian רוח symbolism and the contemporary African Christian pneumatological 'spirit' symbolism, as well as the tensions between Ezekiel's רוח symbolism and the African pneumatology. The goal is to show the extent to which the Ezekielian רוח symbolism critically informs the African pneumatology and also, as a corollary, the extent to which the African pneumatological-

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[439] D. T. Adamo, "African Cultural Hermeneutics," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (ed. R. S. Sugitharajah; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 99. See also Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Biblical Interpretation and Critical Commitment," *Studia Theologica* 43 (1989), 15- 18.

hermenutical context critically illumines and illustrates the Ezekielian רוח symbolism, and thus offer a fresh understanding and appreciation of the Ezekielian רוח symbolism in the light of the African pneumatological- hermeneutical lens.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFRICAN PNEUMATOLOGY: A HERMENEUTICAL CONTEXT

The present chapter is an attempt to interpret Ezekiel's רוח motif in a reader- response

hermeneutical approach utilizing the African pneumatological- cultural context as a

hermeneutical lens for understanding the Ezekielian רוח symbolism. The methodological

procedure is one of biblical inculturation which creates a critical encounter between the socio-

historical context of the biblical text and the contemporary socio- cultural context of the

reader.[440] In inculturation hermeneutics, the bible is viewed as a text that is anchored in the

socio- historical settings of its authors, and yet plurivalent enough to speak meaningfully to

different contexts across space and time.[441] The significance of the critical encounter between

the text's socio-historical context and the reader's socio-cultural world is that it obviates the

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[440] As Robert R. Wilson aptly observes, it is generally accepted in biblical scholarship that the text is the creation of an author who shapes it to reflect his or her worldview; "the author's worldview is an amalgamation of personal insights and the views of the surrounding society … the literary expression of the worldview is the result of the author's creative use of the society's language and literary conventions … the reader brings to the text a personal view of the world and specific linguistic and literary conventions that are socially conditioned." Idem, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 4, 6. and, Idem, "Prophetic Authority and Social Reality," in *Canon and Authority* (ed. G. W. Coats and B. O. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 3- 20. Isaac Kalimi equally argues that the biblical authors "are conditioned by their own time, place and specific historical circumstances and religio- cultural norms and atmosphere … only from this wide perspective, and not in isolation, will we be able to grasp the uniqueness of biblical thoughts and be able to evaluate properly their special contribution." Idem, "The Task of the Hebrew Bible- Old Testament Theology: Between Judaism and Christianity," in *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspectives*, Vol 1: *Theological and Hermeneutical Studies* (ed. W. Kim, D. Ellens, M. Floyd, and M. A. Sweeney; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2000), 233.

[441] Justin Ukpong notes that "the biblical message transcends the particularity of its context and becomes part of our world today and can therefore speak to the present." Idem, "Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Issues and Challenges from African Readings," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town* (ed. J. Ukpong, M. W. Dube, and G. O. West; Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 17. See also Vincent L. Wimbush, "Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts," *Semeia* 62 (1993), 129- 140. Pablo R. Andināch and Alejandro F. Botta also underscore the plurivalence of texts and the contextual nature of reading; they observe that "texts are not exhausted in the simple reading; rather, they are placed in the context of life … which is the only place where it is possible to read texts." Idem, "The Bible and the Hermeneutic of Liberation: Worldwide Trends and Prospects," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (ed. A. F. Botta and P. R. Andināch; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 4.

fallacy of de-historicizing the biblical world by forcing it into a contemporary socio- cultural

mould and hence an uncritical retrodictive utilization of a contemporary cultural worldview to

interpret an ancient text.

5.1 Ezekiel's Socio- Historical Context
and Dynamic Equivalents in African Context

Ezekiel's socio- historical context, as already noted, was one of anomie and spatial

estrangement; he was socially destabilized by the exile as he was alienated from his ancestral

land, from his ancestral social structures of family and kinship relationships, from his Israelite

theocratic society, and from his traditional cultic settings. Thus Ezekiel was dislocated from the

pillars of his theological worldview which was anchored in the belief that Israel's land of

promise was an inalienable heritage from Yahweh, that Yahweh's eternal covenant with Israel

and with the Davidic dynasty vouchsafed a perpetual Davidic reign and a perpetual Yahweh

worship in Jerusalem, and that the temple in Jerusalem was the eternal indestructible abode of

כבוד־יהוה "the glory of Yahweh." A plausible consequence of Ezekiel's anomie and spatial

estrangement was a loss of confidence in the belief that the Israelites were Yahweh's covenant

people who enjoyed privileged divine providence. In short, Ezekiel's theological worldview was

totally destabilized.

It is in the backdrop of the anomie in terms of spatial, social and theological alienations

that Ezekiel's text is set. Paul Joyce, for example, notes that "the events of defeat and exile at the

hands of the Babylonians and the theological questions which they posed are the essential key to

understanding Ezekiel and his tradition."[442] Nonetheless, Ezekiel's text portrays his state of

anomie in tension with a reaffirmation and reformulation of his Israelite religious traditions.[443]

Daniel I. Block examines the motif of alienation in terms of divine abandonment that is

apparently portrayed as a novelty in Ezekiel, and then notes that although the theme of divine

abandonment is alluded in the covenant curses of the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Lev 26:1- 46; Deut

28:1- 69), "the full development of the motif of divine abandonment and return fell to Ezekiel,

rather than any other prophet, because he lived in Babylon where he was surrounded by images

of deities and where stories of divine abandonment flourished."[444] However, a 'reaffirmation and

reformulation' motif is also apparent in Ezekiel. John T. Strong, in his study of the presence of

Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel, notes the 'reaffirmation and reformulation' motif and then

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[442] Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 17. Risa Levitt Kohn likewise remarks that "the traumatic events of the exile provide the key to Ezekiel's prophetic message." Idem, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah* (JSOTSup 358; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 106.

[443] Whereas a number of scholars have argued that Ezekiel was so influenced by his exilic cultural milieu that he abandoned or modified his Israelite religious heritage, it has been argued elsewhere in the present study that Ezekiel's apparent continuity- discontinuity rhetoric is a case of intertextual dynamic whereby Ezekiel utilizes foreign traditions, tropes, and symbolisms to reformulate and reaffirm his Israelite religious traditions. See also Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000): 59- 90, and Daniel Bodi who presents a comprehensive review of scholarship on the subject of Babylonian and other foreign elements in the Book of Ezekiel. Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 35- 51. Various views on plausible foreign influences on Ezekiel have also been expressed by S. P. Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in the Book of Ezekiel" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1983), 1- 10, Marc Zvi Brettler, "Judaism in the Hebrew Bible?: The Transition from Israelite Religion to Judaism," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 429- 447, Pierre Briant, "History of the Persian Empire (550- 330 BC)," in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* (ed. J. Curtis and N. Tallis; London: British Museum Press, 2005), 12- 17, Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: A Shadowy But Powerful Presence in the Judeo- Christian World* (London: William Trust Press, 1987), 1- 8, and Niels P. Lemche, "The Old Testament: A Hellenistic Book," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 7 (1993): 163- 193.

[444] Daniel I. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. Margaret S. Odell and J. T. Strong; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 34- 35. John F. Kutsko also argues that Ezekiel held his Israelite traditions in tension with the Mesopotamian traditions, but that he exploited the latter to clarify and reaffirm the Israelite traditions. Idem, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 10- 24.

argues that Ezekiel "sought to maintain Zion theology" utilizing symbolism and imageries of his exilic settings to reaffirm his Israelite traditions.[445] In a sense, therefore, Ezekiel held his ancestral traditions in tension with the foreign traditions in his exilic settings but, in effect, utilized the foreign traditions to critically evaluate, reformulate and reaffirm his Israelite traditions.

Ezekiel's socio- historical context has dynamic equivalents in the contemporary African pneumatological context. The equivalents are dynamic in the sense that, although Ezekiel's socio- historical context, as portrayed in his text, is fixed in historical spatio- temporal terms, there is a considerable spatio- temporal gap between Ezekiel's world and the contemporary African context. Moreover the African pneumatological- cultural context is not fixed in time; it is dynamically evolving and therefore the only feasible comparative analysis between the two contexts is a dynamic equivalence approach.

Although, as already noted, scholars have observed a general African predilection for the Hebrew Bible in that "many Africans experience some sort of a correspondence between their own religio- cultural heritage and what they find in the Old Testament,"[446] Ezekiel's state of anomie and alienation is incisively analogous to the contemporary African socio- cultural setting. The advent of colonialism and the Western missionaries' 'Christianization' of African cultural

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[445] John T. Strong, "God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 69. See also Tryggve N. D. Mettinger who argues that Ezekiel anchored himself firmly in his Israelite priestly traditions by reaffirming them in the light of his exilic settings. Idem, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kābôd Theologies* (trans. F. C. Cryer; Lund: Gleerup, 1982), 109- 123.

[446] Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 42. See also Kwesi A. Dickson, "Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought," *Bulletin of African Theology* 1 (1979): 179- 193, and John S. Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis in Present Trends in African Theology," *Africa Theological Journal* 7 (1978): 72- 85.

heritage had the effect of creating a state of anomie and alienation of the African peoples from some of their ancestral lands in order to make room for "white settlers," from their ancestral family kinship structures, from their tribal governance systems which were replaced by colonial administrative and urbanization structures, as well as alienation from their ancestral cultic institutions and rituals. The twin processes of colonization and 'Christianization' of Africa at the turn of the twentieth century, and their anomic effect, is best articulated by a Western observer, John Parrat, who notes that:

> In the early phase of Western expansion the churches were allies of the colonial process. They spread under the protection of the colonial powers; they benefited from the expansion of the empire. In return they rendered special service to Western imperialism by legitimizing it and accustoming their new adherents to accept compensatory expectations of an eternal reward for terrestrial misfortunes.[447]

The impact of the anomie and alienation brought about by the twin processes of colonization and 'Christianization' of the African cultural heritage is further articulated by the African Nobel Peace Laureate and church leader, Desmond Tutu, thus:

> The worst crime that can be laid at the door of the white man … is not our economic, social and political exploitation, however reprehensible that might be; no, it is that his policy succeeded in filling most of us with a self- disgust and self- hatred. This has been the most violent form of colonialism- our spiritual and mental enslavement, when we have suffered from what can only be called a religious or spiritual schizophrenia.[448]

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[447] John Parrat, *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (rev. ed., London: SPCK, 1973), 3. See also J. A. Oladunjoye, "Decolonizing Biblical Studies," in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa,* 4.

[448] Desmond Tutu, quoted in John Parrat, *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, 37.

Therefore, just as the Ezekielian רוח motif issues from his dissonant state of anomie, the African

pneumatological inculturation hermeneutics emerges from the pains of an oppressive state of

alienation. Itumeleng J. Mosala, for example, notes that the consciousness of Afrocentric biblical

hermeneutics in South Africa arose out of tensions with the traditional theology of the 'Western

missionary' Church which appeared to espouse the South African oppressive apartheid

ideology.[449]

Ezekiel's רוח motif, which portrays a spirituality of interiority and ethereality not

necessarily mediated through cultic settings and rituals, was understandably meaningful to the

exiles who were alienated from their Jerusalem temple and from its priestly rituals. Thus Ezekiel

and his fellow exiles could now have an unmediated experience of כבוד־יהוה (e.g. Ezek 1:28;

3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4) in his exilic state of alienation.[450] Likewise the biblical-faith

pneumatology of interiority and ethereality divorced from the traditional African cultic rituals

and shrines, many of which had been obliterated through a conspirational collaboration of the

colonialists and the Western missionaries, was understandably meaningful to the African

peoples. Kwame Bediako observes that the Christian churches in Africa, particularly the African

Initiated Churches which espouse liturgical styles reminiscent of traditional African cultic

practices, represent a turning away from ancestral cultic resources which are no longer available

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[449] Itumeleg J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1- 23.

[450] Ralph W. Klein notes that Ezekiel's experience of כבוד־יהוה served to reaffirm the sustainability of the worship of Yahweh monotheism in an otherwise profane and polytheistic exilic setting. Idem, "Ezekiel at the Dawn of the Twenty- First Century," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives,* 5. See also John T. Strong, "God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 73. Dale Launderville also surmises that "As a priest without a sanctuary, Ezekiel had increasingly to carry out his ministry on a 'spiritual' visionary level. Idem, "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003), 165. See also John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 5.

or tenable in order to create an African biblical-faith pneumatology that is tenable in the African

dissonant state of 'Christianization.'[451]

The African pneumatology brings the worldview that underpinned the African traditional

spirituality into alignment with the new biblical faith and thus, analogous to Ezekiel, the African

peoples reaffirm their traditional worldview in their 'exilic' world of the biblical faith.[452] In other

words, as the Ezekielian exilic community's רוח worldview, which had previously been

envisioned in terms of כבוד־יהוה encounters at the ancient Israelite cultic shrines only, was re-

envisioned in line with the new realities of exilic settings away from the Israelite cultic centers,

the African pneumatological worldview of an 'en-spirited' nature is now re-envisioned in line

with the new realities of the Christian faith with its Christological- 'spiritual' centeredness of

divine presence. Thus, in both the Ezekielian and the African pneumatological worldviews, there

is, in effect, a re-envisioning of the respective worldviews in line with new realities. A

conceivable theological implication of such a re-envisioning is that biblical-faith pneumatology

is dynamic; it is informed by biblical tenets and fleshed out in the situational contexts of faith

praxis.

The Ezekielian Yahwistic worldview of a covenantal monotheism resonates with the

African spirituality which, as noted above, espouses a covenantal monotheistic worldview of a

God who is "reciprocally related to the tribal community, sustaining and preserving the latter in

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[451] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non- Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 63- 66.

[452] See also Kwame Bediako, "Cry Jesus: Christian Theology and Presence in Modern Africa," *Vox Evangelica* 23 (1993), 7- 25.

return for covenant faithfulness and devotion."[453] The African spirituality, which illumines the

Christian covenantal- monotheistic faith (e.g. Matt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:13), is reminiscent

of the Ezekielian רוח covental relationship with Yahweh and is an apt illustration of the latter.

The Ezekielian community does not appear to recognize the boundaries between the

individual and his or her society, akin to the African relational spirituality.[454] Both Ezekiel and

Jeremiah acknowledge the notions of collective and trans-generational personality in Israel (Ezek

18:2; Jer 31:29), but then disabuse its misuse in Israel as a recusal from individual moral

responsibility.[455] Implicitly, therefore, the Ezekielian rebuttal of the Israelites' recusal from

individual moral responsibility critically informs the African relational- communitarian

worldview that it should also embrace both individual and collective moral responsibility.

The Ezekielian exilic community espouses a worldview akin to the unitive worldview of

African spirituality which "knew no difference between the ordinary and the miraculous."[456]

Ezekiel's trans-rational רוח transportation narratives (e.g. 3:14; 11:1, 24) appear to be axiomatic

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[453] Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 44. See also John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 29.

[454] John. W. Rogerson, in his study of an apparently exilic lament Psalm (Ps 44), observes that the language of the Psalm oscillates between "I" and "We." He then surmises that the Israelites believed that "the personality of the individual could become completely merged with that of a group." Idem, "Anthropology and the Old Testament," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociology, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 18.

[455] Although a number of scholars, such as B. Halpern, argue that, in Ezekiel 18, the prophet develops the idea of moral individualism over corporate responsibility, other scholars argue that the moral individualism developmental theory is a forced one. G. H. Matties, for instance, maintains that Ezekiel is reinforcing the concept of social- self: an individual who takes both personal and corporate moral responsibility. See B. Halpern, "Jerusalem Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel* (ed. B. Halpern and D. Hobson; JSOTSup 124; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 11- 107, and G. H. Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (SBLDS 126; Atlanta: Scholars Pres, 1990), 150. Paul Joyce also espouses the concept of a social self. Idem, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel,* 187.

[456] John W. Rogerson, "Anthropology and the Old Testament," 18.

saga to the exilic community who readily flock to Ezekiel to hear the stories and to "inquire of

Yahweh" (e.g. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1). The unitive worldview of African spirituality is therefore a

fitting contemporary illustration of the Ezekielian apparently unitive רוח worldview.

Ezekiel's experience of כבוד־יהוה as the substantial and efficacious divine presence of

Yahweh has a dynamic equivalence in the African experience of the Bible.[457] In many African

communities of biblical faith, the Bible is not only regarded as a sacred classic but also as an

efficacious carrier of divine presence because of its stories of 'miracles,' visions, and healings.[458]

In the African context, therefore, the biblical-faith communities' perceptual experiences of the

Bible as efficacious, in itself, to impart divine grace can be viewed as a dynamic equivalent of

Ezekiel's experiences of כבוד־יהוה, "the glory of the Lord," as an efficacious divine presence. A

famous story in East Africa narrates how:

> A village woman used to walk around always carrying her Bible. 'Why always the
> Bible?, her neighbors asked teasingly; 'there are so many other books you can read.' The

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[457] Although John T. Strong argues that Ezekiel "understood Yahweh's *kābôd* as a hypostasis," Idem, "God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of God in the Book of Ezekiel," 72, it is, however, observed that in the Hebrew Bible, רוח is never portrayed as a hypostatization of divinity; rather, in the כבוד־יהוה narratives, רוח is portrayed as a symbolic representation of the experiences of divine presence. See also Jon R. Levison, "Holy Spirit," 863- 864, and W. R. Shoemaker, "The Use of רוח,"28. Dean S. McBride defines hypostasis as "a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation or the like of a deity which through a process of personification and differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own right." Idem, "The Deuteronomic Name Theology," (PhD. diss., Harvard University, 1969), 5.

[458] Krister Stendahl defines a classic text as "any work that is considered worth attention beyond its time … it is common recognition by a wide constituency of a society that makes a certain work into a classic; no inner quality suffices unless widely so recognized." Ibid, "The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Scripture," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984), 4- 5. On the African view of the Bible as a carrier of divine presence, see Mercy A. Oduyoye, "Biblical Interpretation and the Social Location of the Interpreter: African Women's Reading of the Bible," in *Reading from this Place*, Vol.2: *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 35, and Philip Jenkins, "Reading the Bible in the Global South," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30 (2006), 67.

woman knelt down, held her Bible above her head and said, 'yes, of course there are many books which I could read, but there is only one book which reads me.'[459]

The moral of the story is not only that Africans recognize aspects of their own culture in the ancient texts of the Bible, particularly in the texts of the Hebrew Bible,[460] but also the perception that, in the act of translating the Bible into vernacular languages and local idioms, efficacious divine presence, akin to the divine presence in Ezekiel's כבוד־יהוה, is experienced as incarnate in the sacred text.[461]

The above discourse demonstrates plausible critical encounters between Ezekiel's socio-historical exilic setting and dynamic equivalents in the contemporary pneumatological- cultural settings of the African communities of biblical faith. There are, nonetheless, some observable tensions between the two contexts. First, whereas the Ezekielian community of exiles entertained

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[459] Narrated in H. R. Weber, *The Book that Reads Me: A Handbook for Bible Study Enablers* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), ix, and in Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 51.

[460] See also Kwesi A. Dickson, "The Old Testament and African Theology," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4 (1973): 31- 41, and V. Bacinoni, "Bible *et identite africaine*," *Theologie Africaine* 6 (1989): 241- 255.

[461] Aylward Shorter remarks that the process of Bible translation which embodies the text of the Bible in concrete local idioms lends "credence to the theological insight that the word of God always carried the burden of the incarnation." Idem, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 121. Similar theological 'incarnational' implications of Bible translation are expressed by Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989), 170. The incarnational- sacramental view of the Bible, however, tendentiously leads to the use of the Bible as a talisman. Mercy A. Oduyoye reports of cases where the Bible has been placed in baby cots, house foundations, under pillows, or in coffins, in order to "keep away evil influences." Idem, "Biblical Interpretation and the Social Location of the Interpreter: African Women's Reading of the Bible," in *Reading from this Place, Vol. 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* , 34. Tinyiko Maluleke also observes that "In some parts of Africa, the dead are buried with the Bible on their chests, and the Bible is buried into the concrete foundations on which houses are built. In many African Independent Churches, it is the physical contact between the sick and the Bible that is believed to hasten healing." Idem," The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective," in *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multicultural Context* (ed. T. Okure; Pietermaritzberg, South Africa: Cluster, 2000), 91- 92. On the other hand, the sacramental view of the Bible can be likened to the sacramental theologies which view the Eucharist elements as efficacious conveyers of divine grace in themselves. See also Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Representation of Christian Existence* (trans. P. Madigan and B. Beaumont; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 8- 17.

the possibility of restoration to their ancestral land (Ezek 36: 22- 32), to their Davidic theocratic system of governance (Ezek 34:23- 24), and to their cultic ritualism at the envisioned new Jerusalem temple (Ezek 40:1- 48: 35), the African communities of biblical faith do not entertain such wholesale restorative hopes to much of their alienated ancestral lands, to their ancestral kinship governance structures, or to their ancestral cultus. The doyen of African literature, Chinua Achebe, characterizes the African liminal state between ancestral life and modernity as a state in which "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold."[462] Thus instead of entertaining hopes of return to their pre-colonial and pre-Christian ancestral life, the African communities of biblical faith reckon that their ancestral system of life is no longer tenable in the advent of modernity. A second observable tension between Ezekiel's socio- historical context and the contemporary African pneumatological- cultural context is that, whereas Ezekiel appears to utilize the foreign cultural symbolisms, tropes and narratives of his exilic settings to clarify and reaffirm his Yahwistic faith traditions,[463] the African communities of biblical faith appear to utilize the symbolisms, tropes and narratives of their traditional spirituality to appropriate and contextualize an otherwise foreign biblical faith.

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[462] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1959), 146. Chinua Achebe actually utilizes the poem, *Things Fall Apart*, by the Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats,* Vol.1*: The Poems* (London: McMillan, 1989) to portray the African socio- cultural setting in transition. See also Asamoah- Gyadu Kwabena who notes that although *Things Fall Apart* is a work of fiction, it provides significant insights into the African pre-colonial culture and its encounter with Western Missionaries and Colonialists. Idem, "Of 'Sour Grapes' and 'Children's Teeth': Inherited Guilt, Human Rights and Processes of Restoration in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *Journal of Ecumenical and Missionary Research* 33 (2004), 335.

[463] It has already been argued elsewhere in the present study, following Patricia Tull, that Ezekiel's apparent use of foreign narratives, tropes and idioms in his oracles and symbolic actions is plausibly explained by the intertextual theory which posits that foreign influences can offer freshness to one's own cultural understandings. Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000): 59- 90.

The above tensions are, nonetheless, somewhat lessened by the realization that Ezekiel's program of restoration, particularly as outlined in his visionary temple schema (Ezek 40:1-48:35), was not only a thoroughly revised restorative schema but that the whole experience of post- exilic Israel was a disappointingly failed restoration. [464] Rainer Albertz, in his extensive analysis of the failed experience of postexilic Israelite restoration, notes that "the new cult of the Second Temple … no longer formed the only kind of worship; alongside it there developed prototypes of synagogue worship at the center of which there was no longer sacrifice but the reading of Scripture."[465] Yehezkel Kaufmann also notes the failed program of restoration and then remarks that the Jewry of the Second Temple became "a people of the Book … from that time the life of the nation was indissolubly bound to the Book."[466] These developments are, in many respects, akin to the experiences of the African communities of biblical faith who have not only abandoned their former cultic traditions, which entailed animal and victual sacrifices at cultic shrines, but now read the Bible in place of the sacrificial cultus.

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[464] Moshe Greenberg notes that "Ezekiel did not rest with mere announcements of restoration but composited an ideal revision of the institutions of the new Israel." Idem, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretations* 38 (1984), 208. See also J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel* 40- 48 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 76- 107.

[465] Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, Vol. II: *From the Exile to the Maccabees* (trans. J. Bowden; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 464. See also Idem, "Religion of Israel During and After the Exile," in *The Biblical World*, Vol. 2 (ed. John Barton; London: Routledge, 2000), 101-124.

[466] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *History of the Religion of Israel*, Vol. IV: *From the Babylonian Captivity to the End of Prophecy* (trans. C. W. Efroymson; New York: Ktav Publishing, 1977), 485. See also Shaye J. D. Cohen who notes that "the religion, society, and culture of the pre-exilic kingdoms of Judah and Israel differ in many important ways from those of the period after the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE. The practices, ideas, and institutions that were elaborated during the Second Temple period formed and still form the basis of the religion known as Judaism." Idem, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (2d. ed., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 8.

Both the Ezekielian community of returnees and the African communities of biblical faith entered into a liminal state between old and new socio- cultural experiences. Aylward Shorter likens the liminal state to "the threshold period in a rite of passage when an initiate is passing from one state of life to another … a liminal quality which gives those who live in it a deeper perception and which helps them to glimpse the world of the spirit."[467] Aylward Shorter's 'rite of passage' theory, in effect, portrays the liminal state as the state of self- transcendence in which the רוח, 'spirit,' is experienced as the dimension of self- transcendence. The "rite of passage" theory therefore implies that both the Ezekielian returnees and the African communities of biblical faith share a common experience of רוח self- transcendence.

5.2 Ezekiel's רוח Motif and the African Reader: A Critical Encounter

In order to establish a critical encounter between Ezekiel's רוח motif and the African reader, it is necessary to, first of all, clarify who the African reader is and what his or her life concerns and interpretive interests are. It is the life concerns and interpretive interests of the reader which serve as hermeneutical bridgeheads between the African reader and the Ezekielian רוח motif. The process of clarifying the reader's life concerns and interpretive interests is a hermeneutical strategy that seeks to discover the reader's questions, concerns and interests which the biblical text has the potential to inform meaningfully.[468]

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[467] Aylward Shorter, "Introduction: African Christian Spirituality," in *African Christian Spirituality* (ed. A. Shorter; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1980), 10.

[468] See also Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 192, and J. H. Wright, "The Bible and the Hermeneutical Horizon: The Use of Scripture in Theology," *Theological Studies* 43 (1982): 652- 657.

5.2.1 The African Reader

Inculturation hermeneutics, as a contextual hermeneutical process, has a commitment to the ordinary bible reader in his or her socio- cultural context. The hermeneutical commitment to the ordinary reader echoes the concerns expressed by Elizabeth S. Fiorenza that "biblical studies must be decentered in such a way that the voices from the margins of the discipline who raise the issue of power, access and legitimization can participate on equal terms in fashioning a multi-voiced center."[469] The ordinary bible reader usually operates within the matrix of an ecclesiastical interpretive tradition and thus the church community constitutes the primary ordinary readership of the bible. Knut Holter observes that the ordinary readers in ecclesiastical traditions are primarily concerned with:

> the relationship between their daily life and faith and the biblical texts; their interpretation can be expressed verbally- through sermon or testimony, song and prayer, teaching or conversation … it can also be expressed non- verbally through the visible arts, drama, dance, and different kinds of rituals.[470]

It is, however, observed that in the African pneumatological- cultural context, the uncritical reverence for the bible as a sacred classic, coupled with the traditional unquestioning deference

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[469] Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Defending the Center, Trivializing the Margins," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* (ed. Heikki Räisänen; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 30. See also Justin S. Ukpong, "Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Issues and Challenges from African Readings," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town* (ed. J. S. Ukpong, M. W. Dube, G. O. West; Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 12.

[470] Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 52. See also John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46- 47, and John Riches, "Interpreting the Bible in African Contexts: Glasgow Consultation," *Semeia* 73 (1996): 181- 188.

for authority, can engender a hermeneutic of trust entailing literalist and symbolic, or even magical readings."[471] Such a plausible biblical readership scenario prompts Charles Wood to quip that "there is a strange magic about the work of interpreting a book with which one feels bound always to agree; the process is not favorable to the ascertainment of truth."[472] However, since inculturation hermeneutics operates at the interface of ordinary and critical readings of the bible, the scholarly involvement in inculturation hermeneutics serves to see to ensure that the biblical text is "protected, not because of its divine propensities but, because of the danger of it being read out of its historical and cultural contexts."[473] On the other hand, the ordinary readings of the bible can be viewed as aspects of the reception theologies of the biblical text which need to be studied with the same critical rigor as the text itself. John Sawyer observes that biblical scholars are beginning to admit that what the bible means to the ordinary reader, "how they actually use it- in everyday situations, in liturgy, in preaching, in the media, in literature, in art, in music, in film- can be studied with the same degree of scientific sensitivity and rigor as the original."[474]

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[471] Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 53. See also J. S. Ukpong, "Popular Readings of the Bible in Africa and Implications for Academic Readings," in *The Bible in Africa* (ed. G. O. West and M. W. Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 27, and H. B. P. Mijonga, "Hermeneutics in African Instituted Churches in Malawi," *Missionalia* 24 (1996): 358-371.

[472] Charles M. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 15.

[473] R. S. Surgirtharajah, "Critics, Tools, and the Global Arena," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki,* 50- 51.

[474] John F. A. Sawyer, "Ezekiel in the History of Christianity," in *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet* (ed. P. M. Joyce and A. Mein; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 2. Similar observations are also made by G. O. West, "On the Eve of an African Biblical Studies: Trajectories and Trends," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 99- 115, J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995): 3- 14, and N. Onwu, "The Current State of Biblical Studies in Africa," *Journal of Religious Thought* 41 (1985): 35- 46.

The above explication shows that inculturation hermeneutics collapses the traditional model, postulated by Krister Stendahl, that restricts the role of the biblical scholar to the critical descriptive task of exegeting the biblical texts in their socio- historical contexts and then leaves the hermeneutical- explicative task to ecclesiastical traditions and other ordinary readerships.[475] Thus the hermeneutic of distance which respects the spatio- temporal distance between the historical text and the contemporary reader is held in dialectical tension with the hermeneutic of proximity which brings the ancient biblical world into a dialogic relation with the world of the contemporary ordinary reader. The rationale for the strategy of combining the hermeneutic of distance with the hermeneutic of proximity is explained by Heikki Räisänen thus: "we must have the hermeneutical integrity to admit the difference between our context and theirs; but if we listen carefully we may discover in their stories and struggles our own anxieties, hopes, and questions."[476]

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[475] Krister Stendahl, argues that "in restricting the primary role of the biblical scholar to descriptive task, it was my intention to liberate the theological enterprise from what I perceived as the imperialism of biblical scholar in the field of theology." Idem, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984),1. Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, however, counters that "this prevalent hermeneutical division of labor between the exegete who describes what the text meant and the pastor/theologian who articulates what the text means has been seriously challenged in the past two decades and has been proven to be hermeneutically inadequate." Idem," Defending the Center," 41. The hermeneutical inadequacy of Stendahl's division of labor is its premise that biblical exegesis is a disinterested value- neutral enterprise while hermeneutical explication has a flair of doctrinairism. However, as E. S. Fiorenza observes, all interpretation "is intrinsically interested and value- laden." Idem, "Defending the Center," 46.

[476] Heikki Räisänen, "Biblical Critics in the Global Village," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki,* 28. Vincent L. Wimbush also notes that "religious literature ideally aims to trigger degrees of empathy in readers who share a particular universe of meaning, with the goal of entertaining, provoking, challenging, and persuading." Idem, "Reading Texts as Reading Ourselves: A Chapter in the History of African- American Biblical Interpretation," in *Reading From this Place*, Vol. 1: *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 95.

The role of the biblical scholar in inculturation hermeneutics is to be in critical dialogic interaction with the ordinary reader, who is usually a person of faith commitment, to reassess and reaffirm the faith commitment of the ordinary reader. As James Barr argues:

> The person of faith commitment should, in the face of the biblical material, to some extent hold his or her faith commitment in suspense, place it, as it were, in a state of questioning, in which one asks oneself: does the biblical material really fit in with my existing faith commitment, or may it be that my faith commitment has to be adjusted in view of my new insights into biblical material? … proper faith commitment can only be a commitment to discover what is really there in the Bible even if what is found disagrees with our faith commitment … otherwise commitment tends very easily to mean that we see in the Bible what we already consider to be right, or useful, or in agreement with a particular church tradition.[477]

The biblical scholar thus creates a context where critical and ordinary interpretations of the biblical texts can interact in mutual respect; the scholar enriches the ordinary readership with a critical reassessment of faith commitment while, at the same time, critical scholarship is illumined by the reception theology and instinctual insights of the ordinary reader.[478]

5.2.2 Hermeneutical Bridgeheads: Life Concerns and Interpretive Interests

Since inculturation hermeneutics interfaces critical scholarship with ordinary biblical readership, the life concerns of the ordinary reader are, *ipso facto*, also interpretive interests of

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[477] James Barr, "Evaluation, Commitment, and Objectivity in Biblical Theology," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki,* 147- 150. See also, Idem, "Modern Biblical Criticism," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 318- 324, and Knut Holter who views the role of the biblical scholar in inculturation hermeneutics as the creation of a context where critical and ordinary interpretations "can meet and interact in mutual respect." Idem, *Yahweh in Africa*, 60.

[478] See also Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 60.

the critical scholar. The African reader has a number of life concerns and interpretive interests that the Ezekielian רוח motif has the potential to illumine or ignite the imagination of the African reader to "act creatively."[479] Life concerns are the felt needs which arise from the reader's experiences of life and faith commitment and which draw the reader to the biblical text "to hear what it has to say concerning these things."[480] Interpretive interests, on the other hand, are aspirations, particularly of the critical scholar, which draw the reader to the biblical text to enhance his or her critical and theological understanding of the text.[481] Nonetheless, the interpretive interests can help develop biblical knowledge which has the potential to respond to the felt needs of the ordinary reader while, on the other hand, the felt needs and experiential insights of the ordinary reader have the capacity to ignite the scholar's critical imagination.

A persistent life concern in the African pneumatological- cultural context is the question of divine abandonment. The African society has been bedeviled by dehumanizing problems, including slavery, colonialism, oppressive socio- political and economic systems, disease epidemics and famines, ethnic wars and witchcraft practices, such that the question of whether Africa is a God- forsaken continent often crosses the minds of both the ordinary biblical reader

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[479] R. S. Surgirtharajah notes that the biblical texts may not necessarily provide answers to the questions of our existential circumstances, but "they may encourage our imagination to act creatively and to map out an open future." Idem, "Texts Are Always With You: Christians and Their Bibles," *Hindu- Christian Studies Bulletin* 9 (1996), 12.

[480] Gerald O West, "Shifting Perspectives on the Comparative Paradigm in (South) African Biblical Scholarship," *Religion and Theology* 12 (2005), 51.

[481] See also Stephen E. Fowl, "The Ethics of Interpretation, or What's Left Over After the Elimination of Meaning," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield* (ed. S. E. Fowl and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 379- 398. As already noted elsewhere in the present study, Elizabeth S. Fiorenza maintains that life concerns and interpretive interests underlie all forms of biblical interpretation. Idem, "Biblical Interpretation and Critical Commitment," *Studia Theologica* 43 (1989): 4- 18.

and the critical scholar. Knut Holter, in his exegetical study of Amos 3:7 in which Israel's worth

is apparently equated with that of the Ethiopian, nonetheless raises the question of divine

abandonment with the rhetorical question, "Is Israel worth more to God than Cush?"[482] Ezekiel's

רוח motif, in which the question of divine abandonment features, has the potential to inform the

African anxieties about the possibility of divine abandonment.

A second life concern in the African context is the desire for liberation from the oppressive

circumstances that African peoples find themselves bedeviled with, particularly the desire for

liberation from apperceived 'malevolent- witchcraft spirits' which are often portrayed as the

causatives of all manner of social, political, economic, and even health problems in the African

society,[483] and which make the African communities of biblical faith feel like pawns in a

dualistic contest between two equally powerful 'spirit' worlds - the world of the biblical 'holy

spirit' and the world of the 'malevolent spirits.' Laurenti Magesa observes that, in Africa,

witchcraft is viewed as a mysterious power that oppressively permeates all areas of life, "an

ever- present reality in people's political, social, and economic organizations."[484] Since the

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[482] Knut Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 115.

[483] As already noted elsewhere in the present study, the African unitive worldview does not differentiate between secular and sacred realms of reality. Social, political, economic and even health issues are thus thought to have both natural and 'spiritual' dimensions, hence the African quest for biblical answers to all dimensions of life. See K. C. Anyanwu, "The African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge," in *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (ed. E. A. Ruch and K. C. Anyanwu; Rome: Catholic Books, 1981), 93, and J. S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995): 3- 14.

[484] Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997), 181. See also Cosmas Haule, *'Witchcraft' and Christian Morality: The Encounter of Bantu Uchawi With Christian Morality: An Anthropological Study* (Schonek- Beckenried: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, 1969), 20- 26, and Onesmus K. Mutungi who documents the pervasive extent to which witchcraft has become an oppressive menace in all spheres of the African life. Idem, *The Legal Aspects of Witchcraft in East Africa With Particular Reference to Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1977), 10- 18.

'malevolent- witchcraft spirits' are perceived to operate in the same realm of transcendent ethereality as Ezekiel's רוח, it is conceivable that Ezekiel's רוח symbolism of perceptual experiences of the 'spirit' world has some common points of tangency with the African perception of the oppressive presence of 'malevolent- witchcraft spirits.'

A corollary life concern in the African context is the question of how to live in an environment of oppressive injustices and human indignity while still hoping for liberation, just as the Ezekielian exilic community lived in the Babylonian captivity while still hoping for liberation and restoration to their homeland. This life concern is highlighted by Mortimer Arias who asks: "What has the Bible to say to us while liberation does not arrive? It is a fact of history that the faithful communities, and those working for human liberation, have to live most of their lives and for a whole generation without the coming of the liberative event."[485] The issue to be explored here is whether the Ezekielian רוח motif played any significant role in the ancient Israelite quest for liberation and in the sustenance of hope while their liberation event tarried.

A third life concern, or rather an interpretive interest with implications for a proper understanding of a life concern, is the hermeneutic of liberation. In the African context, liberation appears to be visualized exclusively in terms of emancipation from extrinsic circumstances, that is, deliverance from oppression by the external forces of 'malevolent spirits,' from oppressive social- political- economic forces, or from external natural calamities like persistent droughts and disease epidemics. This understanding of liberation appears to be informed by a victim mindset in which the African reader views himself or herself as an innocent

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[485] Mortimer Arias, "Liberation and Hermeneutics: A Pastoral Journey," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (ed. A. F. Botta and P. R. Andiñach; SBLSS 59; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 233.

and hapless victim of external forces. [486] On the other hand, liberation as emancipation from a human interiority of evil disposition seems to be a major concern in Ezekiel's רוח motif; it views the exiles not only as victims of external oppression but also as guilty and in need of liberation from their wrong inward רוח disposition, מכל טמאותיכם "from all your uncleanness"(Ezek 36: 25).

A fourth life concern in the African context is the question of future hope. The aspiration for a blissful future, whether defined in terms of a utopian future in the historical horizon, or in terms of apocalyptic trans- historical transcendence of death and immortality, is a major life concern both in the African pneumatological context and in the Ezekielian רוח motif. Klaus Nurnberg observes that that the quest for a blissful future is common to all humanity and arises from "the common human awareness that what reality is does not correspond to what reality ought to be."[487] The hermeneutical issue to be explicated in the quest for future hope is whether the Ezekielian רוח motif envisages a restoration of the exiles to their former pre-exilic mode of existence or whether it portends a transformational liberation into a new society and new mode of existence. Similarly, does the African quest for liberation envisage a return to the pre-colonial pre- Christian ancestral mode of existence or is it a quest for transformation into a new mode of existence? Is it a quest for a blissful future in the historical horizon or is it an apocalyptic trans- historical hope? In what follows, a hermeneutical explication of Ezekiel's רוח motif is carried out utilizing the bridgeheads outlined above.

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[486] Per Frostin, in his study of African liberation theologies, observes that such theologies are characterized by an exclusive focus on emancipation from socio- political and economic issues. Idem, *Liberation Theology in Tanzania and South Africa: A First World Interpretation* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1988), 6- 9.

[487] Klaus Nurnberg, "Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth," in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives* (ed. J. W. de Gruchy and C. Villa- Vicencio; Cape Town: David Philip Press, 1994), 139- 140.

5.3 Ezekiel's רוח Motif: Inculturation
Hermeneutical Explication

The hermeneutical explication undertaken in this section is an attempt to arrive at an African pneumatological understanding of Ezekiel's רוח motif in the light of the life concerns and interpretive interests outlined above, and thus show how African communities of biblical faith can hermeneutically exegete biblical texts utilizing their cultural context as a hermeneutical lens.

5.3.1 Divine Abandonment

The experience of divine abandonment looms large in Ezekiel's רוח motif. Ezekiel experiences divine abandonment on two fronts. First, as noted above, Ezekiel's exilic state of estrangement from Yahweh's homeland, from Zion the city of the eternal- covenantal Davidic reign, and from the Jerusalem temple the eternal abode of כבוד־יהוה, inevitably engendered a sense of divine abandonment in Ezekiel and his exilic audience. The sense of estrangement is poignantly expressed remininscently in an apparently postexilic Psalm 137 thus:

על־ נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם־בכינו בזכרנו את־ציון

"By the streams of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion"(Ps 137:1).[488]

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[488] See also Amos Hakham, who notes that "Psalm 137 is composed as though spoken by the people living in exile in Babylon," and that the non mention of the name of God in the first section of the Psalm accentuates the sense of abandonment. Idem, *The Bible Psalms With the Jerusalem Commentary* Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 391- 392. However, the nuance expressed in Psalm 137:1 is that of reminiscence after the event.

 Second, Ezekiel had a visionary experience of Yahweh abandoning the Jerusalem temple and

the Zion city (Ezek 8:1- 10:22). Although the motif of divine abandonment was common in

Ezekiel's exilic settings, his vision of divine abandonment does not fit the common pattern of the

Mesopotamian divine abandonment motifs which portray a deity's abandonment of his subjects

as a consequence of defeat by a rival deity. Stephen Tuell, for instance, notes that "while there is

ample precedent in the literature of the ancient Near East for the abandonment and destruction of

a city by a god … generally, the motif of divine abandonment was a *de facto* recognition of

conquest and defeat." [489] Rather, Ezekiel's vision of Yahweh's abandonment of Jerusalem

portrays it as Yahweh's volitional act and the destruction of the city is actually Yahweh's doing

(Ezek. 10: 1- 22).

 Ezekiel's visionary experience of divine abandonment of the Jerusalem temple and the

Zion city is explained in terms of the apostasy of the Israelites and their moral decadence:

ויאמר אלי עון בית־ישראל ויהודה גדול במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ דמים והעיר מלאה מטה כי אמרו עזב יהוה את־הארץ

ואין יהוה ראה

"Then he said to me, the guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, the land is
full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice, for they say, 'Yahweh has forsaken the land;
Yahweh does not see (or care)'" (Ezek 9:9; cf. 8:12b).

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[489] Stephen S. Tuell, "Divine Presence and Absence in Ezekiel's Prophecy," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 102. The notion of volitional abandonment of a city by a deity is, however, evident in extra- biblical ancient Near East literature. The Neo- Babylonian *Poem of Erra*, for instance, depicts the god Marduk abandoning his subjects because of their moral decadence and neglect of his cultus. See also Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981), 183- 218, and D. I. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 18- 34. It is, nonetheless, maintained that volitional abandonment of a city by a deity was not the characteristic pattern observed in the ancient Near East literature.

Ezekiel's contemporary in Jerusalem, Jeremiah, concurs with Ezekiel that it is, indeed, the

Israelites who, by their apostasy and moral decadence, had caused Yahweh to abandon them:

הלוא־זאת תעשה־לך עזבך את־יהוה אלהיך בעת מוליכך בדרך

"Have you not brought this upon yourself, by forsaking Yahweh your God who led you in the way?"(Jer 2: 17).[490]

The Israelites' apperception of divine abandonment is therefore ironic in the sense that, whereas

they feel abandoned by Yahweh, it is, according to Ezekiel and Jeremiah, their apostasy and

moral decadence that alienated them from their God; the guilt of bloodshed and injustice had, as

it were, instilled in them a sense of alienation from Yahweh. Trito- Isaiah portrays the Israelites'

apperception of divine abandonment as a consequence of their guilt instilling in them a sense of

separation from God:

כי אם־ עונתיכם היו מבדלים ביניכם לבין אלהיכם וחטאותיכם הסתירו פנים מכם משמוע

"For your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he does not hear"(Isa 59:2).[491]

The Israelites' ironic expression of their sense of divine abandonmenant can also,

plausibly, be explained in terms of trauma theory in the sense of trauma as an "experience of one

or more catastrophic events that can produce several kinds of disruptive responses, as well as

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[490] Patrick D. Miller remarks that "Jerusalem's fate is not the result of a divine evil intent … there is one reason alone, and it has been indicated again and again in the book; the people have forsaken the covenant." Idem, *The Book of Jeremiah. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections.* The New Interpreter's Bible, VI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 741. See also John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 25.

[491] Christopher R. Seitz remarks that "what the prophet wishes to emphasize is not only God's immunity from criticism, but the opposite; the people's massive accumulation of sin taking the form of a barrier that separates them from God." Ibid, *The Book of Isaiah* 40- 66. *Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections.* The New Interpreter's Bible, VI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 500. See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 56- 66. The Anchor Bible 19B (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 185- 189.

both conscious and unconscious ways of reliving the experience."[492] Thus, the Israelites'

projection of their own guilt on to Yahweh, by accusing him of abandoning them, can be viewed

as their traumatic response in order to cope with their disillusionment as a consequence of the

devastation of their city and people.[493]

Ezekiel רוח motif explains Israel's sense of divine abandonment in two ways. First, the

problem of apostasy and moral decadence, which alienated Israel from divine presence, is a רוח

problem. What Israel needs is a רוח חדשה "a new 'spirit' " (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26) which is

also Yahweh's רוח (Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29). The need for a 'spiritual' transformation is also

implied in Jeremiah's who depiction of the condition of the human inward disposition in terms of

depravity: עקב הלב מכל ואנש הוא מי ידענו "The heart is deceitful above all things and is incurable;

who can understand it?"(Jer 17:9). Second, Ezekiel's רוח motif explains that divine abandonment

cannot be assumed simply because of alienation from particular geographical zones or from

particular cultic settings. Ezekiel's visionary experiences of כבוד־יהוה (Ezek 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4;

9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23; 43:2, 4, 5; 44:4) by virtue of being infused with רוח (Ezek 2:2; 3:

24),[494] and his experiences of being lifted by the רוח and transported back and forth between his

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[492] Brad E. Kelle, "Dealing With Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009), 483.

[493] Yehezkel Kaufmann views the sense of abandonment as a feeling of the absence of the divine 'grace' or 'spirit' of prophecy. He argues that "when God put an end to the kingdom, destroyed his city, burned his temple, sent his people into exile, and subjected them to the gentiles, he also took from them the grace of prophecy … it is the result of a deep- seated mood, the consequence of the feeling of the wrath of God … after the year 586 no prophets appeared in the whole period of the Babylonian exile." Idem, *History of the Religion of Israel*, Vol. IV: *From the Babylonian Captivity to the End of Prophecy* (trans. C. W. Efroymson; New York: Ktav, 1977), 461- 464.

[494] The expression כבוד־יהוה/אלהים in the Israelite priestly traditions denoted divine presence in cultic settings. Thus the כבוד was mostly associated with the אהל מועד "the tabernacle" (e.g. Exod 16:7, 10; 29: 43; 40:34- 35) and with the Jerusalem Temple (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:11; Ps 26:8). See also Steven S. Tuell, "Divine Presence and Absence in Ezekiel's Prophecy," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 98- 102, John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 80, Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1: *A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*

exilic locale and Jerusalem (Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24), as well as the רוח falling upon him

and speaking to him or leading him (Ezek 11:5; 37:1; 43:5) while far removed from his

homeland and from the Jerusalem cultic center, all portray the רוח as a symbolization of

Yahweh's divine presence and, hence, a transcendent divine omnipresence. Ezekiel's depiction

of Israel's problem as, primarily, a רוח inward disposition that was alienated from Yahweh

resonates with Bradley Gregory's thesis that the exile was more than a geographical

displacement; it was "a theological exile that extends beyond the temporal and geographical

bonds of the Babylonian captivity."[495]

Ezekiel's רוח motif therefore disabuses Israel's notion of spatial divine abandonment by

portraying a paradigmatic shift in Israel's conception of divine presence which was no longer to

be visualized simply as כבוד epiphenomena confined to cultic settings, but as a divine

transcendent omnipresence which "bursts the bonds of every human concept and construct."[496]

Tryggve Mettinger observes that:

> Beginning with the exile and thereafter, there is a general shift in the Israelite view of the
> Temple as the enthronement abode of a deity … textual testimonies reflect a shift in the
> Judahite definition of the Temple, a shift often applied retroactively to preexilic
> documents. The book of Jeremiah, a collection conceived as an immediate response to
> the whole cataclysm (cf. Jer 52:17- 23) opposes an ideology that depicts the deity as
> physically enthroned in the Temple (Jer 3:16- 17; 23:24). In the book of Jeremiah, the

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Chapters 1- 24 (trans. R. E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 124, and Johannes Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 91- 106.

[495] Bradley C. Gregory, "The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61: 1- 3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007), 475.

[496] Dale Launderville, "Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003): 165- 183 (182).

abode of Yahweh is relocated from the temple, no longer extant, to an increasingly reclusive heaven.[497]

The Israelite's apperception of divine abandonment is therefore a רוח problem for which the Ezekielian רוח motif has a fitting response in terms of an inward רוח transformation and a realization that Yaweh's רוח presence was no longer confined to particular geographical spaces.

The apperception of divine abandonment by the African communities of biblical faith is instilled by a number of factors. First, there have been a number of biblical hermeneutical attempts to portray the African peoples as a God- forsaken or cursed race. For instance, the pejorative Hamitic theory, which alleges a curse on the African race as Ham's descendants,[498] gave rise to the South African apartheid theology of racial discrimination.[499] However, as D. T. Adamo notes, although Africa and Africans are mentioned about 867 times in the Old and New Testaments, "there is no record of prejudice against Africa and Africans in the Bible."[500]

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[497] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (Lund: Gleerup, 1982), 66. Other scholars who posit the same view include Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: The Heart of Biblical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 255- 259, Paul Joyce, "Dislocation and Adaptation in the Exile Age and After," in *After the Exile: Essays in Honor of Rex Mason* (ed. John Barton and D. J. Reimer; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996), 45- 58, Richard J. Sklba, "Until the Spirit From on High is Poured Out on Us (Isa. 32: 15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in Exile," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 1- 17, and Silvin N. Bunta, "Yahweh's Cultic Statue After 597/586 BCE: A Linguistic and Theological Reinterpretation of Ezekiel 28: 12," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007), 230- 231.

[498] A Fifth Century CE Midrash on Noah's curse narrative (Gen 9: 18- 27) places Noah's curse on the black race by stating that "your seed will be ugly and dark- skinned." Midrash *Bereshith Rabbah* 1: 293. Likewise the Sixth Century CE *Babylonian Talmud* states that "the descendants of Ham are cursed by being black and are sinful with degenerate progeny." See Gene Rice, "The Curse That Never Was (Gen 9: 18:-27)," *Journal of Religious Thought* 29 (1972): 17- 25.

[499] See also J. S. Ukpong, "Inculturation as Decolonization of Biblical Studies in Africa," in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (ed. S. O. Abogunrin; Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigeria Association for Biblical Studies, 2005), 41- 47.

[500] D. T. Adamo, "What is African Biblical Studies?," in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa,* 26. Knut Holter notes that "the Old Testament reflects a dual concept of Africa, including both positive and negative lines of thought. Positively, Africa is associated with great wealth and strong military abilities; both can, at times, be

Second, the African perceptual experience of oppressive malevolent 'spirits' reinforces the African people's view that the forces of evil in Africa are, perhaps, stronger than the biblical 'holy spirit;'[501] hence an apperception of divine abandonment analogous to the ancient Mesopotamian view of divine abandonment as a consequence of defeat by a rival deity.[502] Third, the African people's experiences of slavery, colonization, alienation from their culture through disruptive colonization, the 'Christianization' or 'Westernization' of their cultural heritage, as well as dislocation from some of their ancestral lands by 'white settlers,' and the continuing inordinately oppressive socio- political and economic systems, reinforce the perception of God- forsakenness.

Ezekiel's רוח motif can, however, critically and meaningfully disabuse the African apperception of divine abandonment. First, Ezekiel's רוח motif of transcendent divine omnipresence means that there is neither a geographical space nor a temporal period that is out of the reach of divine presence. Ezekiel's רוח journeys back and forth between his homeland and the foreign Babylonian exilic locales inform that divine presence can be experienced in the Western 'homelands' of the biblical faith as much as in the 'foreign' lands of Africa. Second, the African people's perception of abandonment to malevolent 'spirits' and other oppressive forces of evil can be disabused by Ezekiel's rhetorical strategy of excluding the word

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used to the benefit of Israel. Negatively, however, Africa is, at other times, an enemy of Israel, oppressing and threatening her." Idem *Yahweh in Africa*, 105. There is thus no discernable portrayal of the African race as a god-forsaken cursed race in the Bible. D. T. Adamo rightly observes that "the present prejudice is a modern invention." Idem, "What is African Biblical Studies?," 31, n.33.

[501] See Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion*, 179- 189, and the various contributions in J. Middleton, ed., *Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing* (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1967).

[502] See D. I. Block, "Divine Abandonment in the Book of Ezekiel," 18- 34, and Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra,* 183- 218.

רוח from his oracles against foreign nations and rulers, some of whom are depicted in mythological imageries as though they were trans- human evil forces (e.g. Ezek 28:2). Ezekiel's exclusion of the word רוח can be viewed as a rhetorical strategy of affirming Yahweh's unique רוח sovereignty over the foreign nations and rulers who are not רוח (Ezek 25:7- 17; 28:10- 24; 29:1- 9; 30:1- 26; 31:1-11; 32:1- 32). The idea of the רוח as the unique symbolism of Yahweh's sovereignty vis-à-vis the mortal nature of the foreign oppressors of Israel is intimated by Ezekiel's castigation of the king of Tyre for his self- portrayal as a god whereas he was a mere mortal:

יען גבה לבך ותאמר אל אני---ואתה אדם ולאׄ־אל

"Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god … yet you are mortal and not a god" (Ezek 28:2).

The idea that the foreign nations and rulers were not רוח, but mere mortals, is also pointed out by Isaiah, thus:

ומצרים אדם ולאׄ־אל וסוסיהם בשר ולאׄ־רוח

"Now the Egyptians are mortals, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not רוח "(Isa 31: 3a).

Ezekiel does not, therefore, portray his exilic audience as pawns in a dualistic contest between a benevolent Yahweh and a horde of equally powerful oppressive foreign deities. Instead, Ezekiel debunks the seemingly deifying mythological aura of the oppressive enemies of Israel and portrays them as mere mortals. Daniel Block observes that "Ezekiel follows traditional Jewish thinking according to which the threat to human life is not to be found in some sort of

mot figure, nor in demons, but in God alone."[503] Ezekiel's רוח rhetorical strategy by which he debunks the mythological aura of Israel's oppressors should therefore serve as a corrective of the African perception and portrayal of 'malevolent spirits' as deities who could rival the biblical God. Laurenti Magesa also debunks the African perceptual experience of oppressive 'malevolent and witchcraft 'spirits' by remarking that "in so far as every human being experiences emotions of envy, hatred, anger, pride, lust, and so on, everyone is a potential witch; witchcraft is, in essence, a personal failure to keep these destructive emotions in rein."[504]

Third, the African people's perception of divine abandonment on account oppressive socio- political and economic systems can also be meaningfully informed by Ezekiel's רוח motif. The African self portrayal as innocent and hapless victims of extrinsic circumstances echoes the Israelites' self portrayal as innocent victims of trans-generational sins, a perception which they reinforce with the proverb:

אבות יאכלו בסר ושני הבנים תקהינה

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"(Ezek 18:2). By performing the proverb, the Israelites not only portray themselves as innocent victims of transgenerational sins but also, implicitly, exculpate themselves from responsibility for their destiny.[505] However, Ezekiel's rebuttal of the proverb performance re-orients the Israelites' focus

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[503] D. I. Block, "Beyond the Grave: Ezekiel's Vision of Death and Afterlife," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 2 (1992), 117- 118. See also L. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philosophical and Literary Study* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 167.

[504] Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion*, 187- 188. D. I. Block also notes that "the doctrine of malevolent spirits remains remarkably undeveloped in the Old Testament." Ibid, "Beyond the Grave: Ezekiel's Vision of Death and Afterlife," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 2 (1992), 118.

[505] See also Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 44- 47, and D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* Vol. 1: *Chapters* 1- 24 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 559.

from a victim mindset to one of taking responsibility for their destiny (Ezek 18:3- 32),[506] while

still trusting Yahweh to deliver the 'lean sheep' from oppression by the 'fat sheep' (Ezek 34:20-

22), the 'sheep' from oppression by the 'shepherds'(Ezek 34:10), the exiles from oppression by

their captors (Ezek 34:12), and to restore the exiles back to their homeland (Ezek 37:12- 22).

The pericope in which Ezekiel challenges the Israelites to take responsibility for their

destiny reveals that their victim mindset is, indeed, a רוח problem, that is, a problem of their

inward disposition or attitude:

ועשו לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה ולמה תמתו בית ישראל

"Get for yourselves a new heart, and a new רוח; why will you die O house of Israel?" (Ezek 18:
31b).

The African communities of biblical faith can therefore learn from Ezekiel's rebuttal of the

Israelites' victim mindset and get a new רוח in terms of changing from an innocent- hapless-

victim mindset to an attitude of taking responsibility for their destiny, while still trusting God for

deliverance from oppressive circumstances. Ezekiel's challenge to the Israelites not to allow

themselves to die simply because of their wrong רוח, or wrong attitude, is particularly instructive

for the African context.

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[506] The main thrust of Ezekiel's rebuttal appears to be the issue of taking responsibility both individually and collectively, rather than an issue of individual versus collective responsibility. See also Herbert G. May, "Individual Responsibility and Retribution," HUCA 32 (1961): 107- 120, and Rodney R. Hutton, "Are the Parents Still Eating Sour Grapes?: Jeremiah's Use of the *Māsāl* in Contrast to Ezekiel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71 (2009), 278. Nonetheless, as Jurrien Mol notes, Ezekiel holds individual liability in tension with collective responsibility. Idem, *Collective and Individual Responsibility: A Description of Corporate Personality in Ezekiel* 18, 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 201- 215. Equally, Walther Zimmerli notes that "Ezekiel knows something of the responsibility of the individual before God (chapters 18; 33: 10ff). But in this connection he never forgets that God has called not individuals, but his people." Idem, *Ezekiel* 2, 222.

5.3.2 The Hermeneutic of Liberation in the African Context

The quest for liberation is inspired by the African reader's awakening to a hermeneutic of liberation in the Bible. Pablo Andināch and Alejandro Botta observe that:

> The novelty of a hermeneutic of liberation lies in the fact that Christian communities are collectively reading the Bible in the midst of their struggle with eyes open to a liberating message. It became increasingly less a text for an illuminated group of isolated fighters and more a book that oriented Christian communities in their search for justice, peace, and dignity for the people of which they were an inextricable part. It seems quite an irony of history that this same book that so often was invoked to sustain exploitation of an entire people – of women by men, of black by white, of poor by rich – now has become the source of inspiration for all who rebel against oppression and seek to overcome all injustice.[507]

However, as already noted the hermeneutic of liberation in the African pneumatological- cultural context is mainly defined in terms of emancipation from extrinsic circumstances. Musa Dube, for instance, observes that African theologies of liberation have been characterized by:

> An open resistance to colonial government … a refusal to remain in missionary churches where leadership and interpretation was the sole prerogative of white people, a refusal to dismiss African cultures as pagan and a systematic use of both cultures interchangeably … a clear condemnation of the economic and political subjugation of black people and their kingdoms.[508]

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[507] Pablo R. Andināch and Alejandro F. Botta, "Introduction: The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation: Worldwide Trends and Prospects," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (ed. A. F. Botta and P. R. Andināch; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 7.

[508] Musa W. Dube, "Villagizing, Globalizing, and Biblical Studies," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, 52. Other works which explicate the hermeneutic of liberation exclusively in terms of socio-political and economic emancipation include A. A. Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio- Ethical Study of Black Theology and Power* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), B. Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology: Hermeneutics for Social Change* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986), T. A. Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible, and Liberation," *Journal of Black Theology* 2 (1988): 34- 42, Itumeleg J. Mosala and B. Tlhagale, eds., *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free* : *Essays in Black Theology* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986), and also the works of Desmond Tutu who

The African hermeneutical trajectory which visualizes liberation exclusively in terms of socio- political- economic emancipation is, however, problematic; it ignores the רוח problem of the human inward disposition.[509] To paraphrase the prophet Jeremiah, "the heart of the human problem is the problem of the heart" (Jer 17:9). There is therefore a need to premise the hermeneutic of liberation on critical biblical exegesis. Norman Gottwald aptly cautions that:

> Although the Hebrew Bible preserves exceedingly strong articulations of socio- political liberation … we must critically assess the social and political experience of ancient Israel in order neither to overstate nor minimize what the Bible may contribute to our contemporary quest for social justice and equality.[510]

In his oracles concerning the restoration of Israel (Ezek 33:1- 48:35), Ezekiel presents to his audience a liberation schema in which he utilizes such words as: נצל 'rescue, deliver' (Ezek 34: 10, 12), ישע 'save' (Ezek 34:22; 36:29; 37:23), יצא 'bring out' (Ezek 34:13) to denote liberation of: the 'lean sheep' from oppression by the 'fat sheep,' (Ezek 34:20- 22), the 'sheep' from oppression by the 'shepherds,' (Ezek 34:10- 12), and the exiles from the places where they had been scattered (Ezek 34:12- 13). Moreover, the liberation schema includes emancipation from an inward רוח 'uncleanness:'

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asserts that the pervasive theological trajectory in the Bible is one of socio-political liberation. Idem, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1983), 106.

[509] See also P. G. R. de Villiers, "The Gospel and the Poor: Let Us Read Luke 4," in *Liberation Theology and the Bible* (ed. De Villiers; Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1987), 45- 76, and Per Frostin, "The Hermeneutics of the Poor: The Epistemological 'Break' in Third World Theologies," *Studia Theologica* 39 (1985): 127- 150.

[510] Norman K. Gottwald, "The Role of the Bible in Politics in Contextual Theologies," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, 111.

וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם ומכל־גלוליכם־אטהר־אתכם:

"I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols" (Ezek 36: 25).[511]

Ezekiel's liberation schema therefore entails deliverance from extrinsic circumstances as well as an intrinsic רוח transformation:

ונתתי להם לב אחד ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי לב האבן מבשרם ונתתי להם לב בשר

"I will give them a wholesome heart; I will put a new רוח within them. I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a new heart" (Ezek 11:19; cf. 18:31; 36:26, 27; 37:5).

Ezekiel's holistic liberation schema therefore serves as a corrective of the African hermeneutical trajectory of liberation which appears to give scant attention to the need for 'spiritual' transformation. The continuing oppressive socio- political and economic systems in the African context long after the end of slavery and colonization cannot be wholly attributed to extrinsic or "globalizing forces" from outside Africa, as Musa Dube is inclined to assert.[512]

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[511] On the question of Israel being liberated from their uncleanness, K. P. Darr notes that "here, in effect, God rescues Israel from itself, that is, from the defilement that the people have brought upon themselves." Idem, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 1492. See also Steven Tuell who notes that the notion of cleansing in the Ezekielian context "reflects priestly ideas of washing with water as a means of removing ritual uncleanness." Idem, *Ezekiel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 209), 247.

[512] Musa W. Dube tends to attribute the continuing socio- political and economic woes in Africa wholly to global factors and prescribes a hermeneutic of liberation in terms of "resistance against those globalizing forces that increasingly make the world an economically, politically, culturally, and socially repressive place for many billions of people." Idem, "Villagizing,Globalizing, and Biblical Studies," 63. Whereas 'global forces' might be at play in some of the continuing woes experienced in the African context, a holistic liberation hermeneutic demands a critical examination of both extrinsic and intrinsic evils.

5.3.3 Hermeneutic of Liberation and the Everlasting Covenant

Ezekiel's liberation schema is premised on ברית עולם "an everlasting covenant" (Ezek 16: 60- 62; 37:26). The prophet Jeremiah portrays the ברית עולם (Jer 32: 40) as also a ברית חדשה "a new covenant" (Jer 31:31) and thus portends a new order of Yahweh's relation with Israel. Ezekiel's reiteration that the ברית עולם is, indeed, ברית שלום "a covenant of peace/salvation" (Ezek 34:25; 37:26) leads Walther Zimmerli to point out that the predicate עולם does not denote "any transcendentalizing" but, more appropriately, refers to a covenant of salvific restoration.[513] The restoration of Israel, premised on a salvific 'new covenant' (Ezek 34:25; 37:26; cf. Jer 31: 31), is therefore not a restoration to the old order of the ancient Israelite way of living and relationship with Yahweh. Ezekiel's visionary enactment of Israel's restoration as a רוח revivification (Ezek 37:1- 14) underscores the novelty of the envisaged salvific 'new covenant.'

Ezekiel's restoration schema, whose *leitmotiv* is a רוח transformation into a new order of Yahweh's relation with Israel, has significant implications for the African hermeneutic of liberation. First, it means that, from a biblical perspective, the African hermeneutic of liberation should not, in the first place, be envisioned in terms of restoration to the old order of traditional African spirituality. Rather, as the Christian 'new covenant' motif, apparently echoing the Ezekielian 'new covenant' motif, portends a new relationship with God, so the African liberation hermeneutic should, primarily, be envisioned in terms of a new pneumatological liberation or salvific order. Thus, as Ezekiel envisaged the new salvific order primarily in terms of an infusion

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[513] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 276.

of רוח with a transformational effect on the human inward disposition, in like manner the African

quest for liberation should, in the first place, be envisaged in accordance with the Christian

Scriptures in terms of an infusion of the Holy Spirit with a transformational effect on the human

inward disposition (e.g. Rom 8: 11; 2 Cor 3: 17- 18; 5: 17).[514]

Second, in view of the 'new covenant' motif, the African hermeneutic of liberation cannot

be explicated in terms of a mere investment of the old order of African spirituality with biblical

language and symbolisms. This is akin to the biblical ruinous fallacy of "putting new wine into

old wineskins" (Matt 9:17), and is tantamount to a mere re-branding of the traditional African

spirituality. The re-branding hermeneutic, which has also been portrayed as "inculturation from

below,"[515] is exemplified, for example, in Temba Mafico's argument that maintaining the label

"Christianity" serves the same purpose that the worship of Yahweh served to unify ancient

Israel; "the real purpose of the worship of Yahweh with the *ĕlŏhĕ hāˀăbôt* was the preservation

of the Israelites as a particular people. If the Israelites were left to worship the deities of their

progenitors, this would generate tribal independence and rivalries."[516] Rather, the Christian

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[514] John S. Mbiti points out that the African Christian has hardly any problem reading the Old Testament and the New Testament together since he or she readily identifies with the Old Testament narratives and symbolisms and hermeneutically views the New Testament salvific concepts as prefigured in the narratives and typologies of the Old Testament, especially given the numerous references of Old Testament narratives and motifs in the New Testament. Idem, "The Biblical Basis in Present Trends in African Theology," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 4 (1980), 119- 124, and, Idem, "The Role of the Jewish Bible in African Independent Churches," *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 222- 226. See also Justin U. Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108 (2000), 5- 11.

[515] The hermeneutic of "inculturation from below" is an ethos which, in the African context, advocates liberation from the 'foreign' Christian religion simply in terms of dressing the traditional African beliefs, rituals, and values in Christian language and symbolisms. See Musa W. Dube, "Villagizing, Globalizing, and Biblical Studies," 52- 53.

[516] Temba L. J. Mafico, "The Divine Name Yahweh ˀ*Elôhîm* From an African Perspective," in *Reading From this Place, Vol. 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective,* 31. The practice of 'Christianizing' African traditional beliefs and practices is discussed extensively by Andrew F. Walls and

biblical faith, which is premised on a salvific 'new covenant' and which declares that "God is πνευμα, and his worshippers must worship ἑν πνεύματι"(John 4: 24) portends a new רוח/πνευμα order of the Christian relation with their transcendent πνευμα divinity that is no longer to be worshipped with animal sacrifices at cultic shrines.[517]

5.3.4 Dialectical Tension in Hermeneutic of Liberation

Ezekiel's rebuttal of the Israelites' proverb performance and his challenge to them to take responsibility for their own destiny and the imperative to "repent and turn from all your transgressions … get for yourselves a new heart and a new רוח" (Ezek 18: 30- 31), is in dialectical tension with the promise that "I will give them a wholesome heart; I will put within them a new רוח." (Ezek 11:19; cf. 36: 26, 27; 37: 5, 6, 14; 39: 29). A number of scholars have wrestled with the dialectical tension variously. Paul Joyce, while remarking that "the book is marked by strong tensions, of which none is more dramatic than between the challenge to Israel to get a 'new heart' and a 'new spirit' in 18: 31, and the promise that a 'new heart' and a 'new

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Christopher Fyfe who note that many of the beliefs and practices in the African Initiated Churches are either a continuation of, or reversion to, African traditional religious beliefs and practices. Idem, *Christianity in Africa in the 1990s* (Edinburgh: African Studies Centre Press, 1996), 19- 48.

[517] Incidentally some of the African Initiated Churches practice a ritual of entering into a new covenant in their rituals of 'deliverance' from 'ancestral curses' and 'demonic possessions.' They thus appear to emulate Ezekiel's liberation schema in the sense that they speak of entering into a 'new covenant' with God by which they receive a 'new heart' free from 'ancestral curses' and' demonic possessions.' Kwabena notes that "the new covenant which former victims of demonic oppression and possession enter into with God is supposed to mark the beginning of a new way of life." J. Kwabena Asamoah- Gyadu, "Of 'Sour Grapes' and 'Children's Teeth': Inherited Guilt, Human Rights and Processes of Restoration in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *Journal of Ecumenical and Missiological Research* 33 (2004): 334- 353 (349). See also Birgit Meyer, "Make a Complete Break with the Past: Memory and Post- Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostal Discourse," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (1998): 316- 349.

spirit' will be given to Israel in 36: 26- 27," nonetheless, argues that the key to resolving the tension is in Ezekiel's radical theocentricity. Thus, according to Paul Joyce, the purpose of pointing out Israel's responsibility in the first half of the book (chs.1- 24) is simply to cause them to acknowledge their sin or culpability and their sense of helplessness, while the second half of the book (chs.25- 48) overwhelmingly stresses the primacy of Yahweh's divine initiative without which Israel is doomed.[518]

Paul Joyce's argument, however, appears to be a retrodiction of the New Testament Pauline doctrine of law and promise, in which the law is supposed to reveal sin and then lead one to the promise of grace in Christ (e.g. Gal 3:1- 25). It also appears to be a rendition of the sixteenth century John Calvin's commentary on the Book of Ezekiel in which he argued that God shows people their culpability so that they can acknowledge their helplessness and then "fly to the aid of the Holy Spirit so that the outward exhortation becomes a kind of instrument which God used to confer the grace of his Spirit."[519] A similar argument is proffered by Daniel Block who maintains that Ezekiel's imperative to Israel to get a change of heart is "a rhetorical device highlighting the responsibility of the nation for their present crisis and pointing the way to the future."[520] However, as will be argued next, the paradox is viewed as an irreducible dialectic between divine initiative and human responsibility that appears to be a rhetorical design in a number of biblical discourses. This view will be explicated further shortly.

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[518] Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 126- 128.

[519] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (trans. T. Myers; 1849; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 265- 266.

[520] D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* Vol. 1: *Chapters* 1- 24 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 588. Somewhat similar views are also expressed by Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 386, and Michael Fishbane, "Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 131- 150.

Jacqueline Lapsley, while acknowledging that the tensions between human responsibility

and divine action in the book of Ezekiel are irreconcilable, nonetheless proffers an

anthropological sequential thesis as a plausible resolution of the tensions. She argues that the call

to repentance was a characteristic anthropology, in the sense of autonomous human initiative and

action, in the Hebrew Bible which prevailed before Ezekiel's time, but that it began to wane in

Ezekiel's early ministry. After the fall of Jerusalem, Lapsley argues, the characteristic

anthropology was radically transformed into an anthropology initiated by divine grace.[521]

Elsewhere, Lapsley reiterates her sequential thesis as follows:

> Human action has proved to be at the root of Israel's history of failure and so profound is
> Ezekiel's pessimism regarding that history that in his re-visioning of the moral self he
> replaces human action with something more reliable, the consequences of which are less
> likely to lead to disaster: the divine gift of knowledge of God and of self. In this move
> away from action toward embracing knowledge as primary in the moral life, Ezekiel
> largely abandons the traditional view of moral selfhood that he had inherited.[522]

 Moshe Greenberg, on the other hand, argues that the Ezekielian dialectic in which he "vacillates

between calling on the exiles to repent and despairing of their capacity for it" is irreconcilable

since human freedom is curtailed by Yahweh's action of "enforced obedience."[523]

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[521] Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?: The Problem of Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel* (BZAW 31; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 103- 106. Michael V. Fox also argues for an anthropology initiated by divine action when he states that "When one has God's spirit in him he does God's will because he wants to do God's will." Idem, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," HUCA 51 (1980), 15.

[522] J. E. Lapsley, "Shame and Self- Knowledge: The Positive Role of Shame in Ezekiel's View of the Moral Self," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 173. See also James Robson who proffers a similar view of an anthropology of divine enablement. Idem, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 241- 262.

[523] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21- 37. AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 737. See also, Idem, "Salvation and Impenitent *ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*: Ezek. 36: 16- 32," in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient*

Although the various scholarly attempts to reconcile Ezekiel's dialectic between divine

initiative and human responsibility are persuasive, they do not appear to exhaust the full

significance of Ezekiel's dialectic. The dialect between divine initiative and human responsibility

is, indeed, a rhetorical design in the Hebrew Bible; it is, however, paradigmatically accentuated

in Ezekiel. The rhetorical strategy is also evident in the New Testament which, for example,

enjoins human salvific responsibility to "save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:

40) in tension with a portrayal of divine salvific initiative: "it is by grace you have been saved …

this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph 2: 8). The rhetorical purpose of the

dialectical tension is to show that divine initiative does not negate divinely inspired human

responsibility and action while, at the same time, human responsibility is not tantamount to

autonomous humanism which denies divine providential involvement in human existential

living.

The Ezekielian dialectic of human responsibility vis-à-vis divine action is a fitting

hermeneutical exemplar for the African pneumatological- cultural context. The African

pneumatological ethos of embracing divine action in terms of 'miracles,' or supra- rational

divine action, should be wary of theologies of 'miraculous' expectations which tendentiously

negate human responsibility and action in the quest for liberation. Thus, for example, the

prosperity theologies, which are popular in some quarters of the African communities of biblical

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Religion (ed. J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 263- 271, and J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*, 217- 218.

faith, such as portrayed in David Ayedepo's *Covenant Wealth*,[524] and which promise instant emancipation from poverty, in effect negate human responsibility and action. For example, the biblical promise of divine action that "God will meet all your needs" (Phil 4: 19) is dialectically held in tension with the biblical imperative that "If a man will not work, he shall not eat"(2 Thess 3: 10), and is therefore a fitting pointer that divine action does not negate divinely inspired human responsibility and action.

On the other hand, the liberation theologies and initiatives (tacitly supported by some African churches) which adopt socially and economically disruptive actions, including destruction of human life, in effect deny divine providence.[525] Ezekiel's liberation schema which portrays liberation as a divine initiative for the honor of God's name (e.g. Ezek 36:21- 23; 37: 13- 14; 39:7, 25), and which enjoins God- honoring human responsibility and action, can therefore serve as a corrective of the African liberation trajectories which, by virtue of adopting socially disruptive actions and destruction of human life, *ipso facto*, dishonor God's name. Allan Boesak, in his hermeneutical explication of the biblical story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1- 10) in the context of the African liberation struggles, notes that liberation initiatives should maintain a God- honoring brotherly responsibility, which he describes as follows:

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[524] David Oyedepo, *Covenant Wealth* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion House, 1992). See also Mensah Otabil, *Enjoying the Blessing of Abraham* (Accra, Ghana: Alter International, 1992), and Ogbu U. Kalu, *Power, Poverty, and Prayer* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).

[525] For a discussion of the socially and economically disruptive liberation theologies and initiatives in Africa, see Itumeleg J. Mosala, "Ethics of the Economic Principle: Church and Secular Investments," in *Hammering Swords into Ploughshares: Essays in Honor of Archbishop Mpilo Desmond Tutu* (ed. B. Tlhagale and I. J. Mosala; Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986), 119- 129, Idem, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology," in *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Essays in Black Theology* (ed. I. J. Mosala and B. Tlhagale; Johannesburg: Skotaville, 175- 199, and also the various contributions in C. Villa- Vicencio, ed., *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1987).

> This responsibility involves being human in community with one another in God's world. It means to seek together for true humanity; to attempt together to make something of God's objectives visibly operative in the world; to let something of God's own heart become visible in fraternal relationships; and in corporate relationship to history, to humanize the world and keep it humanized.[526]

The African hermeneutic of liberation should, ideally, embrace the biblical dialectic of divine initiative vis-à-vis human responsibility. Thus while espousing the biblical God of 'miracles' with whom "all things are possible" (e.g. Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37), the hermeneutic of liberation should, at the same time, reckon that God also works his 'miracles' through human instrumentality. The socio- economic dimensions of the biblical exhortations to "work out your salvation" (Phil 2:12) or to "save yourselves" (Acts 2:40) are perhaps best exemplified in societies that have, implicitly with divine enablement, 'saved' themselves from such ensnaring evils as ignorance, poverty, diseases, and inhumane social systems through arduous accomplishments in scientific and technological breakthroughs and establishment of humane systems of social order.

5.3.5 A Hermeneutic of Future Hope

The Ezekielian pericope (Ezek 37:1-14) is the climactic portrayal of the significance of Ezekiel's רוח motif. The ultimate significance of the רוח motif is its role in the 're-creation' of Israel as a new רוח community. The 're-creation,' is metaphorically portrayed, in Ezekiel's visionary drama, as a revivification, or, in Jewish Apocalyptic and Christian parlance, as a

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[526] Allan A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1984), 149- 150. See also Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (rev. ed., Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 65.

"resurrection."[527] Ezekiel apparently borrows from the imageries and vocabulary of the creation

narrative (Gen 1- 2) to present a dramatized protrayal of a רוח 're-creation' of Israel. The visage

of dry lifeless bones scattered in a valley plain (Ezek 37:1- 2) resembles the תהו ובהו "formless

and void" earth setting in the Genesis creation narrative (Gen 1:2). Yahweh had vowed to scatter

the Israelites' bones, וזריתי את־עצמותיכם "for I will scatter your bones" (Ezek 6: 5), and thus Israel

had receded into a 'formless and void' state devoid of "form, coherence, and beauty."[528] The

prophet Jeremiah, in his oracles against Judah on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem, also

utilizes the Genesis creation narrative trope, תהו ובהו, to portray Judah's apostasy as a return to

the pre-creation 'formless and void' state: ראיתי את־הארץ והנה תהו ובהו "I looked upon the earth,

and it was formless and void"(Jer 4:23).[529] Ezekiel's visionary drama is therefore a "movement

from chaos to order" and, hence, a re-creation of a new community of Israel.[530]

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[527] The notion of "resurrection" as human transcendence of death and immortality is a major theme in postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature and in early Christian writings. George W. E. Nickleburg observes that "biblical scholars have come to accept it as common place that a belief in a blessed future life was a fundamental postulate of the faith of the apocalyptist and an integral part of other, non- apocalyptic strains of the early post-biblical Jewish theology." Idem, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 9. Also, the *Apocalypse of John*, which appear to borrow heavily from Ezekiel's revivification imageries and his visionary temple, is framed by the theme of "resurrection" as a transcendence of death and immortality. The borrowing thesis is ably explicated by Ralph W. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 189, and by Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 266- 267. Ezekiel's statement that Israel is to be raised מקברותיכם "from your graves" (37: 12) reinforces the imagery of "resurrection."

[528] Louis Stulman remarks that, in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, similar to that of Jeremiah's vision of Judah's apostasy, "the order of creation collapses and reverts to its primeval state of chaos; the world comes unglued and is void of form, coherence and beauty." Idem, *Jeremiah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 70.

[529] Patrick D. Miller remarks that "the prophet reports a vision of desolation that is a virtual dismantling of creation, a return to chaos." Idem, *The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*. The New Interpreter's Bible VI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 614. See also William L. Holladay, "Jeremiah's Vision of Cosmic Destruction," *Near East School of Theology Quarterly* 12 (1964): 2- 23.

[530] Michael V. Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision," 10.

Ezekiel's revivification vision entails a two- stage process. In the first stage, bodies are

formed as the bones come together and are clothed with flesh and skin (Ezek 37:7- 8a), but

"there was no רוח in them" (Ezek 37:8b). In the second stage, Ezekiel prophesies to the רוח and

"the רוח came into them and they lived" (Ezek 37:10). The two- stage re-creation process echoes

the Genesis creation account where Yahweh first formed a human creature from the dust of the

earth. However, the human creature was lifeless until, subsequently, God "breathed into his

nostrils נשמת חיים "the breath of life," and the human creature became לנפש חיה "a living being"

(Gen. 2: 7).[531] Walther Zimmerli, in his commentary on Ezekiel's visionary 're-creation'

narrative, observes that:

> As in the original creation (Gen 2:7) when humanity was first formed into a body and
> then created as a living being with God's own breath, so the spirit whom the prophet
> called in by his word awakens to life again those bodies that had assembled from the dead
> bones under the prophet's word.[532]

Ezekiel's utilization of the Genesis creation account to depict Israel's restoration as a 're-

creation' by Yahweh's רוח, in effect, portrays restored Israel as a "new creation," or a

"resurrection" רוח community, an expression that is used in the New Testament to describe

Christians as a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:15) and as πνευματικος "spiritual

people" (1 Cor 2:13, 15; 3:1) who have a proleptic eschatological experience of resurrection by

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[531] The expression: **נשמת חיים** "breath of life," in the Genesis creation account is semantically equivalent to Ezekiel's expression: **רוח וחייתם** "breath, and you shall live"(Ezek 37:6). See also James Robson who observes that "by the time of the exile, the two words (**נשמה** and **רוח**) clearly had overlapping semantic domains (cf. Gen 7: 22; Isa 42: 5)." Idem, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*, 225- 226.

[532] Walther Zimmerli, *The Fiery Throne: The Prophets and Old Testament Theology* (ed. K. C. Hanson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2003), 92

virtue of being infused with the πνευμα.[533] In addition, the New Testament Pauline discourse on

eschatological resurrection (1Cor 15:12-54) follows the Genesis creation pattern and the

Ezekielian "new creation" schema in which the natural, or the 'spirit- less,' creation precedes the

resurrection 'spirit- infused' creation:

> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead … the spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven … and just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven … we will be changed- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet … the dead will be raised imperishable … when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1Cor15:42-54).[534]

Thus Ezekiel's revivification vision has, apparently, inspired resurrection motifs of an

eschatological רוח community both in postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature and in the New

Testament writings.

The notion of eschatology, as defined variously by a number of scholars, falls into either

of two categories: either a prophetic eschatology or an apocalyptic eschatology. [535] Prophetic

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[533] Jürgen Moltmann observes that the Christian theology of eschatology, or future hope of resurrection and immortality, assumes that the expected future has already begun with the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Idem, "Liberating and Anticipating the Future," in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell* (ed. M. A. Farley and S. Jones; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 189.

[534] See also J. Holleman, Resurrection and *Parousia*: A Traditio- Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 121- 160. Steven Tuell notes that although Ezekiel 37: 1- 14 "portrays a symbolic vision of exile and restoration as the national death and resurrection of Israel, however, the image proved too powerful to be restricted to that single historical interpretation." Idem, *Ezekiel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 253.Walther Zimmerli also notes that "Many Church Fathers found the final resurrection of the dead proclaimed here." Idem, *Ezekiel* 2, 264.

[535] Sigmund Mowinckel, for example, observes that every eschatological idea includes "a dualistic conception of the course of history and implies that the present state of things and present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superceded by another of an essentially different kind." Idem, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 125. R. E. Clements, likewise, describes eschatology as a set of "ideas and beliefs concerning the end of the

eschatology, which is an expectation of a new order within historical horizon, is described by

Maria Isasi- Diaz as "concerned with ending situations of oppression that are happening in the

here and now of history; it points to and calls for radically different times within history." [536]

Apocalyptic eschatology, on the other hand, is an expectation of a trans- historical new order

detached from present history.[537] The eschatological motifs inferred from Ezekiel's restoration

schema have been interpreted variously in biblical scholarship. Benjamin Uffenheimer, for

instance, argues that the Ezekielian eschatological motif intimated in the 'resurrection' of dry

bones is an apocalyptic, trans- historical expectation; "the resurrection of the dead bones (Ezek

37) - be it conceived literally or as a symbol of the rebirth of Israel- and the following defeat of

Gog from the land of Magog (38- 39), who symbolized the forces of evil, all these are beyond

any historical horizon and are entirely utopian."[538] Walther Zimmerli, while maintaining that

Ezekiel 37 has no thought of resurrection of individuals but simply refers to the restoration of

Israel, nonetheless rhetorically intimates the pausibility that Ezekiel 37: 1- 14 could also have an

apocalyptic resurrection motif:

> It must now once more be finally and unambiguously stated that Ezekiel 37:1- 14, with
> the two different images of the revival of unburied dead bones and of the opening of

present world order and the introduction of a new order." Idem, *Prophecy and Covenant* (London: SCM, 1965), 104. See also Yair Hoffmann, "Eschatology in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. H. Graf Reventlow; JSOTSup 243; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 75.

[536] Ada Maria Isasi- Diaz, "*Mujerista* Narratives: Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth," in *Liberating Eschatology*, 228.

[537] See, for example, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2d ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 6.

[538] Benjamin Uffenheimer, "From Prophetic to Apocalyptic Eschatology," in *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. H. Graf Reventlow; JSOTSup 243; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 209.

graves and the leading out of those buried there to new life, expresses the event of the restoration and the re-gathering of the politically defeated all- Israel. There is no thought of a resurrection of individuals from the dead nor of an event exclusively the concern of the exiles of the Northern kingdom … Nevertheless, exegetes who reckon with the figurative character of the two statements in the present context have raised the further question whether, in the use of these metaphors, it is nevertheless not to be recognized indirectly 'that the idea of the resurrection of the dead was not wholly unknown to the prophet and his contemporaries.'[539]

The apocalyptic eschatological motifs that have been inferred, in the reception history of Ezekiel by both Jewish and Christian readers, from Ezekiel's vision of revivification of dry bones (Ezek 37: 1- 14), from Ezekiel's seemingly mythological Gog- Magog conquests (Ezek 38- 39), and from Ezekiel's seemingly trans- historical visionary temple (Ezek 40- 48), are probably a classic case of the reader- response hermeneutical strategy in which, as John A. Darr points out:

> The text guides, prefigures, and attempts to persuade a reader … at the same time the reader is only using these textual promptings as starting points for filling in the gaps left by the text … the meanings derived from these texts are qualified by the receptivity and creativity of the individual reader in an interpretive community.[540]

Ezekiel's rather ambiguous eschatological schema can critically inform the African pneumatological context in a number of ways. First, it is possible to envision a blissful future in spite of present oppressive and dehumanizing experiences. Elsa Tamez's rhetorical question, "Is it possible to speak of dreams in a situation that is systematically anti- utopian?,"[541] is answered

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[539] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 264. In the last sentence above, Zimmerli is actually echoing the rhetorical question raised by Harald Riesenfeld concerning the plausibility of an apocalyptic resurrection motif in Ezekiel 37: 1- 14. See Harald Riesenfeld, *The Resurrection in Ezekiel* XXXVII *and in the Dura- Europos Paintings* (Upsala: Lundequists, 1948), 3.

[540] John A. Darr, "Glorified in the Presence of the Kings: A Literary- Critical Study of Herod the Tetrarch in Luke- Acts" (PhD. diss. Vanderbilt University, 1987), 38- 39.

[541] E. Tamez, "Dreaming From Exile: A Reading of Ezekiel 47: 1- 12," in *Liberating Eschatology*, 68.

with the lesson from Ezekiel's eschatological vision that it is possible to "discern from our 'exile' a new reality, in spite of the present realities that systematically deny it."[542] For the African communities of biblical faith, the audacity to envision a new reality whilst in 'exile' should be inspired by Ezekiel's portrayal of divine presence in terms of the רוח which proleptically enlivened the exiles to a new hope: ונתתי רוחי בכם וחייתם "I will put my רוח in within you, and you shall live"(Ezek 37:14b). Likewise the African communities of biblical faith, as πνευματικος, "spiritual people," should be enlivened to a new hope because of their engagement with the רוח /πνευμα divine presence.. Sharon Ringe, in her study of πνευμα as the παρακλητος in the Johannine Gospel, notes that "the *paraclete* is about eschatology, continuing God's ultimate engagement with us into the time beyond … this παρακλητος - advocate and spirit of truth- is the form of Emmanuel/God-with-us, the word now made flesh in communities."[543]

A second lesson that emerges from Ezekiel's eschatological schema is that the eschatological hope is not necessarily about a utopian world. Ezekiel's liberated community is faced with seemingly mythological 'Gog- Magog' battles in their restored state (Ezek 38: 8- 13). The eschatological hope should therefore be disabused of illusory complacency. Nonetheless, the liberated Israelites are assured of divine presence and enablement to be victorious in the new battles (Ezek 38:14- 39:29).[544] As Elsa Tamez notes, eschatological hope should be fleshed out

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[542] E. Tamez, "Dreaming From Exile: A Reading of Ezekiel 47: 1- 12," in *Liberating Eschatology*, 71.

[543] Sharon H. Ringe, "Companion in Hope: Spirit and Church in the Fourth Gospel," In *Liberating Eschatology*, 186.

[544] Steven Tuell notes that while Ezekiel 38- 39 is the source for the 'Gog and Magog' battles in the *Apocalypse of John* (ch.20), in both texts the battles come after Israel's restoration and after 'a thousand years of Christ's rule on earth,' respectively. Tuells' ensuing rhetorical question and his response to it is a corrective of misplaced utopian complacency; thus: "How can we make sense of this bizarre claim? In revelation, as in Ezekiel,

in concrete plans, projects and appropriate laws directed toward securing and preserving the envisioned new reality.[545] Donald Gowan likewise observes that an eschatological hope that is divorced from ethics is an illusory diversion from reality; rather, there should be an intimate relation between hope and action "in an effort to make our behavior correspond to what we believe the world will be one day."[546]

A third lesson that emerges, both from Ezekiel's eschatological schema and its derivative symbolic imageries in the *Apocalypse of John*, is the need for a hermeneutical strategy that accounts for symbolism and equivocality in biblical texts.[547] A common methodological fallacy that is observed in the African hermeneutical context is the application of hermeneutical literalism to symbolic and equivocal language. This fallacy, as John S. Mbiti observes, derives from the desire for plain and univocal, rather than equivocal, meaning of the biblical texts.[548] Ezekiel's רוח motif, which is a polysemous symbol, and his eschatological schema which is

Gog stands as a rebuke to complacency and misplaced confidence." Idem, *Ezekiel,* 271- 272. See also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 322- 324.

[545] E. Tamez, "Dreaming From Exile," 73- 74. Noel L. Erskine equally notes that believers should embrace a "combination of profound trust in the eschatological promises of God with concrete application to political and economic realities." Idem, "Christian Hope and the Black Experience," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 7 (1979): 88- 100.

[546] Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 123- 125.

[547] While the majority of the African communities of biblical faith embrace an apocalyptic eschatological imagination which envisions a transcendence of death and immortality in trans- historical heaven, it is, nonetheless, observed that the biblical texts which form the basis of the apocalyptic eschatology are not only scattered and disjointed but are also couched in symbolic equivocal language. The *Apocalypse of John* is a classic case of symbolic language. See also H. L. Pretorius, "The New Jerusalem: Eschatological Perspectives in African Indigenous Churches," *Missionalia* 15 (1987): 31- 41, and Klaus Nurnberg, "Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth," in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives* (ed. J. W. de Gruchy and C. Villa- Vicencio; Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), 125- 148.

[548] John S. Mbiti, "Eshatology," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (ed. Kwesi Dickson and P. Ellingworth; London: Lutterworth, 1969), 159- 184. See also Richard H. Hiers, "Eschatology and Methodology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1966): 170- 184 (183-4).

couched in symbolic language and mythological imageries, serve as rhetorical negations of hermeneutical literalism and univocal simplism. There is therefore a need to be less dogmatic about the future shape of our eschatological hope and to be open to other and/or newer ways of understanding biblical eschatology.[549]

5. 4 African Pneumatology: Implications for Ezekiel's רוח Scholarship

This section attempts to explicate the implications of African pneumatology for Ezekiel's רוח scholarship, or significant ways in which the African Pneumatological worldview critically informs illumines modern scholarship on Ezekiel's רוח pneumatology. However, this attempt is a corollary since the main purpose of the present study is biblical interpretation. Nonetheless, as argued in Chapter 1, biblical hermeneutics is contextual and the hermeneutical context has the capacity to critically inform, illumine and illustrate the biblical text. First, as already stated in Chapter 4, the African pneumatological worldview, which embraces an 'en-spirited' nature and the presence of 'spirits,' portends an open universe in which transcendence and immanence are not viewed as a clear cut duality but as definitions of limiting points of a "seamless continuum" of the universe.[550] This view critically informs the dated scientific premise of modern biblical

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[549] See also Norman Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics: Reflection on Method in the Interpretation of the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 3- 14 (14).

[550] See Lawrence W. Fagg, "Are there Limitations of Divine Transcendence in the Physical World?," 560, and also Louis Dupré, "Transcendence and Immanence as Theological Categories," 1- 10.

scholarship which, as Rudolf Bultmann notes, postulates that the course of nature cannot be "interpreted or, so to speak, perforated by supernatural powers."[551]

The African pneumatological worldview of an open universe is more consistent with the contemporary post- empirical scientific worldview which challenges the Newtonian concept of a closed universe,[552] and which now concedes that the universe is "a more mysterious place than the empirical scientists of the modern era realized."[553] The African pneumatological worldview of an open universe should therefore ignite creative imagination in biblical scholarship and thus raise scholarly curiosity about the notions of 'en-spirited' nature and 'spirits.' The mythological imageries implicit in Ezekiel's oracles against the king of Tyre (Ezek 28: 1- 19) and in Isaiah's oracles against the king of Babylon (Isa 14: 4- 27) are not only reminiscent of the *El* myths in the Ugaritic Texts but also resonate with the African pneumatological worldview and the familiar Christian narratives of angels and demons.[554] R. I. J. Hackett points out that the African pneumatological emphasis on 'spirits' can no longer be ignored by modern scholarship.[555]

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[551] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 15- 16.

[552] See Howard Stein, "Newtonian Physics," 256- 262, and Wolfgang Vondey, "The Holy Spirit and the Physical Universe," 5.

[553] Stanley Grenz, "Why Do Theologians Need to be Scientists?," 348.

[554] See Marvin H. Pope, *El in The Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 61- 8, Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah* 1- 39, 59, and Dale B. Martin "When Did Angels Become Demons," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010), 657. See also Christopher H. Grundmann who observes that the issue of spirit worlds has been a neglected subject in theology and this has "left a vacuum prone to be filled by whatever anyone pleased." Idem, 'Inviting the Spirit to Fight the Spirits:' Pneumatological Challenges for Missions in Healing and Exorcism," *International Review of Mission* 94 (2005), 52.

[555] R. I. J. Hackett, Revitalization in African Traditional Religion," in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* (ed. J. K. Olupona; New York: Paragon, 1991), 135- 148.

Likewise Leander Keck remarks that "it is time to stop telling the bible what it may mean and to let its mythological language restore imagination to our faith and thought."[556]

Second, although the African pneumatological view of the Bible as a 'supernatural' carrier, or efficacious symbolism, of divine presence might entail naïve and magical portrayals of the Bible as a talisman, the view, nonetheless, portends a profound sacramental ontology akin to the ecclesial sacramental traditions which view the Eucharist elements of bread and wine as not only outward signs of inward spiritual grace but also as efficacious conveyers of grace in themselves.[557] Robert Daly points out that the notion of efficacious substances of the Eucharist ritual may have no direct bearing on Scripture but that it has evolved over the centuries as a traditioning process of the Church and that it has enriched the church's Eucharist ritual.[558] It is also noted that, in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, the notion of efficacious Eucharist symbols has been accentuated in terms of a pneumatological divine presence; "since Vatican II, sacramental theology has taken a pneumatological course."[559] The African pneumatological view of the biblical text as a carrier of divine presence and efficacious in imparting divine grace can therefore be viewed as a traditioning process of what may be termed as an evolving pneumatological hermeneutic in the African context that can serve to ignite critical curiosity in

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[556] Leander E. Keck, "The Premodern Bible in the Postmodern World," *Interpretation* 50 (1996), 138.

[557] See Robert J. Daly, "Eucharist Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005), 3- 5, and Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A sacramental Representation of Christian Existence* (trans. P. Madigan and M. Beaumont; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 8- 17.

[558] R. J. Daly, "Eucharist Origins," 4.

[559] Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 76. See also Hans Urs von Barthsasar, *Explorations in Theology, Vol. 3: Creator Spirit* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 245- 267, for a detailed explication of the pneumatological implications of Vatican II on Roman Catholic sacramental theology.

scholarly understanding of biblical hermeneutics. The concept of a pneumatological hermeneutic is also alluded by Peter Horsfield and Asamoah Kwabena who note that, although references to the bible as 'the word of God' are commonly understood as references to its textual content, there are, nonetheless, other referential meanings and uses of the bible, such as the reference to the 'word of God,' as "not just the textual content but also to the material book itself" used as an instrument of spiritual power.[560]

Third, the African relational pneumatological worldview of intra-personal, inter-personal, communal, creatural, spatial, and transcendent dimensions of relatedeness critically illumines the Ezekielian רוח scholarship which views Ezekiel's portrayal of suffusive formation of רוח within the individual, and his supposed accentuation of individual moral responsibility (Ezek 18: 1- 18; cf. Jer 31: 29- 30), as signs of a paradigmatic individualization of spirituality.[561] An exclusively individualized spirituality is inadequate and problematic in that it is inconsistent with the core of the gospel message. Jacques Matthey, for example, while decrying the poverty of Western European spirituality, maintains that a holistic spirituality must:

> take seriously all lines of relationship involved in Christian worldview; spirituality has a vertical element of intimate relationship with God- formulated as the presence of the resurrected Christ or as inhabitable by the Holy Spirit- which is both empowering and leading to humility … spirituality has a horizontal element of relationship with brothers

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[560] Peter Horsfield and Asamoah- Gyadu Kwabena, "What is it About the Book?: Semantics and Material Dimensions in the Mediation of the Word of God," *Studeis in World Christianity* 17 (2011), 175.

[561] See Rodney R. Hutton, "Are the Parents Still Eating Sour Grapes?," 275, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live": The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 185- 186.

and sisters in Christ or in humanity … spirituality is also shaped by a circular dynamic, the relationship with cosmos, God's creation.[562]

The African relational pneumatology therefore both represents a critique of highly individualized spiritualities and aptly illustrates how spirituality can be lived relationally. A holistic relational spirituality also obviates what Owen Thomas refers to as the problematic tendency to bifurcate the individual between the 'spiritual' and the 'natural' self instead of viewing the individual as wholly spiritual and relationally self- transcendent.[563] Paul Tillich appears to echo the African holistic- relational pneumatology when he rebuts the tendency to bifurcate the individual; he asserts that "man's whole life, including his sensual self, is spiritual."[564] A relational spirituality is, indeed, implicit in Ezekiel's portrayal of, not only a suffusive formation of רוח within the individual, but also a corporate infusion of the רוח "upon the house of Israel"(Ezek 39: 29), as well as a depiction of the Israelites' corporate worship in a new temple portrayed in רוח imageries (Ezek 42:16- 20).

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[562] Jacques Matthey, "Serving God's Mission Together in Christ's Way: On the Way to Edinburgh 2010," *International Review of Mission* 99 (2010), 22- 23.

[563] Owen C. Thomas argues that to be spiritual is to have both "self- awareness" and "self- transcendence." Idem, "Some Problems in Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Anglican Theological Review* 82 (2000), 268.

[564] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, 2: Existence and the Christ* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), 51.

5.5 Summary

Ezekiel's *leitwort*, רוח, is a polysemous symbol which speaks to the contemporary African pneumatological context multifariously through hermeneutical bridgeheads between Ezekiel's historical context and the contemporary African pneumatological- cultural context. Ezekiel's exilic audience experienced a sense of divine abandonment and nurtured an attitude which portrayed themselves as innocent and hapless victims of extraneous circumstances for which they were not responsible and which were beyond their control. They, nonetheless, cherished a desire for liberation from their oppressive circumstances and restoration to their homeland.

The experiences, attitudes and aspirations of the Ezekielian community of exiles typologically prefigure the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of the contemporary African communities of biblical faith. The African communities portray a sense of divine abandonment by virtue of their experiences of oppressive circumstances in their settings. They also nurture an attitude, discernable from some of the African theologies of liberation, in which they portray themselves as innocent and hapless victims of extraneous circumstances for which they are not responsible and which are beyond their control. They, nonetheless, desire to be liberated from the oppressive circumstances and cherish hope for a blissful future.

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism is hermeneutically shown to be a fitting response to the Israelites' experiences, attitudes and aspirations. Above all, the רוח symbolism portends a paradigmatic shift in the Israelites' conception of divine presence and Yahweh's relation with Israel. Yahweh's presence is no longer to be visualized in terms of כבוד־יהוה epiphenomenna confined to particular cultic centers and particular societal leadership guild; rather Ezekiel's new רוח

paradigm of divine presence portrays Yahweh as a transcendent divine omnipresence. The ultimate significance of Ezekiel's רוח motif is the transformational liberation of the exiles by which they are 're- created' as a רוח community who now experience divine presence and assurance by virtue of being infused with Yahweh's רוח which also enlivens them to hope a new.

The inculturation hermeneutical explication of Ezekiel's רוח motif has not only shown how the African pneumatological context serves as an apt hermeneutical lens for understanding the Ezekielian רוח motif but has also shown that Ezekiel's רוח response to the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of Ezekiel's exilic community prefigures dynamically equivalent pneumatological responses to the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of the contemporary African communities of biblical faith. The hermeneutical explication has also shown how, as a corollary, the African pneumatological worldview critically informs and illumines Ezekielian רוח scholarship.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The present study set out to read Ezekiel's רוח motif utilizing African biblical-faith pneumatology as a hermeneutical lens. The study was motivated by heuristic observations which indicated that the Ezekielian רוח motif portrayed a pneumatological worldview akin to that of the African communities of biblical faith. The latter is a pneumatological worldview which axiomatically embraces experiences of divine presence in human existential living and thus integrates, relationally, the noumenal- transcendent realm of divinity with the phenomenal-existential world of creation. At the outset the study posited a working hypothesis that Ezekiel's *leitwort,* רוח, represented a polysemous symbolism which, nonetheless, accentuated an overarching *leitmotiv*; the רוח symbolism represented a paradigmatic shift in ancient Israelite understanding of divine presence in creation and Yahweh's relation with Israel. Ezekiel's new paradigm of רוח symbolism no longer visualized divine presence in terms of theophanic כבוד־יהוה phenomena mediated through cultic rituals and confined to particular cultic centers; rather, divine presence was now theologically conceptualized as a רוח ethereality that was neither necessarily mediated through cultic rituals nor confined to particular spatial locales. Thus Ezekiel's רוח symbolism portrayed divine presence as a transcendental experience of a transcendent divine omnipresence.

Exegetical analysis of the usage of the word רוח in the preexilic texts of the Hebrew Bible indicated that the רוח symbolism denoted meteorological weather phenomena which were,

nonetheless, viewed as portents of divine agency and action. The word רוח also symbolized the anthropological principle of life. However, the paradigmatic symbolism of רוח in preexilic Israel appears to have been a theological cipher for theophanies at the ancient Israelite cultic shrines, notably the wilderness tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple, as well as experiences of divine presence, particularly by the ancient Isaelite prophetic guild. Thus the רוח symbolism represented ritually mediated theophanies of כבוד־יהוה, within the confines of the ancient Israelite cultic centers and experiences of divinity usually limited to particular guilds of the ancient Israelite societal leadership. The study, however, observed that the various nuances of the word רוח represented a diachronically expanding symbolism which evolved, over time, from concrete meteorological and anthropological-principle-of-life references to theophanies at cultic centers, and to conceptual- theological symbolic attributes of experiences of divine presence, with particular reference to the prophetic guild of the preexilic ancient Israelite society who experienced divine presence as רוח־יהוה or יד־יהוה.

Ezekiel, however, epitomizes a critical paradigmatic shift in the ancient Israelite conceptualization of the רוח symbolism from ritually mediated theophanies and experiences to a symbolism of unmediated experiences of divine presence and divine- human interrelation. However, the manner in which Ezekiel portrays his paradigmatic shift in the ancient Israelite understanding of the רוח symbolism is a continuity- discontinuity strategy in which he depicts apparent continuities with the preexilic רוח symbolic nuances while, at the same time, he enacts discontinuities with the earlier רוח symbolisms of ritually mediated experiences of divine presence. Nonetheless, Ezekiel's discontinuity rhetoric was held in dialectical tension with a continuity of the preexilic Israelite רוח symbolism, such that Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm was

neither a wholly other- worldly nor a wholly this- worldly symbolism. Thus, although the theophanies and experiences of divine presence would no longer be necessarily mediated through cultic ritualism nor confined to cultic shrines or particular guilds any more, Ezekiel also envisions a continuation of the priestly cultus at the new Jerusalem temple schema. Notwithstanding, Ezekiel's new רוח paradigm implied that unmediated divine presence could be experienced anywhere, even in the Babylonian exilic settings, and by any individual or group of the Israelites.

The study, however, reckoned that all experiences of divine disclosure are mediated experiences since there cannot be any isomorphic coupling, or a one-to-one correspondence, between infinite divine disclosure and finite human perception of the same. The notion of unmediated experiences of divine presence, in the context of the present study, therefore implies that the Ezekielian רוח divine presence was not experienced indirectly through cultic mediation; rather, it was mediated directly through the human conscience. The climactic portrayal of the Ezekielian new paradigm of the רוח symbolism is the transformational revivification and restoration of the whole nation of Israel through the infusion of Yahweh's רוח (Ezek 37:1-14), and thus the constitution of a new Israelite רוח community.

The present study has shown that Ezekiel's רוח symbolism of unmediated and axiomatic experiences of divine presence resonates with the African biblical-faith pneumatology in many respects and, hence, the rationale for utilizing the African pneumatological worldview as a hermeneutical lens for understanding the Ezekielian רוח symbolism. The hermeneutical strategy employed in the explication of the Ezekielian רוח symbolism is the reader- response biblical criticism, approached from a biblical inculturation perspective. The argument of the study is that

the distinctive feature of biblical inculturation, in which readers bring both their interpretive interests and life concerns to the task of biblical interpretation, serves the reader- response strategy well in that, while the reader's interpretive interests draw the biblical text, through the process of inculturation, into critical encounter with reader's life concerns, the life concerns reciprocally illumine and contextualize the biblical text. In essence, the critical encounter between the text and the reader is an epistemological meaning – making process.

The study has also pointed out that, whereas a number of critics have expressed concerns that reader- response criticsm entailed the risk of textual-meaning indeterminacy, the argument of the present study is that textual meaning neither inheres in some ancient authorial intention *per se* nor in the text itself. Both the author and the text are deemed to be integral to the determination of textual meaning and their significance is factored into the reader- response interpretive approach by utilizing historical critical, as well as other literary and structural critical, tools of textual interpretation which ensure that the biblical text is not interpreted indeterminately without reference to its socio-historical settings and its literary- thematic designs. Moreover, the present study has argued that textual interpretation is contextual; the text is only meaningful to the reader in his or her contextual setting. Therefore the contextual interpretive interests and life concerns of the reader are, equally, intergral to the textual meaning-making process and they must therefore be brought into critical dialogic encounter with the text's socio-historical context and its literary- thematic designs. The present study has thus eschewed the radical reader- response approaches that ignore the socio- historical and cultural setting and literary- thematic designs of a text and that simply locate the meaning of the text either in the reader or in a community of readership.

The present study has shown that Ezekiel's רוח symbolism critically informs the African biblical-faith pneumatological worldview while, as a corollary, the African pneumatological worldview is an apt hermeneutical lens in that it critically illumines and illustrates Ezekiel's רוח symbolism. In particular, the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of the Ezekielian exilic community typologically prefigure dynamic equivalents in the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of the African communities of biblical faith. Therefore Ezekiel's רוח symbolism has been shown to be not only a fitting response to the ancient Israelite traumatic experiences of the exile but that it also portends dynamically equivalent pneumatological responses to the anomic experiences of the contemporary African communities of biblical faith. The hermeneutical import of the Ezekielian רוח symbolism, as understood in the African pneumatological context, is that divine presence is experientially feasible in existential life without the necessity of ecclesial or ritual mediation. As the writer of the New Testament book, *Acts*, affirms, "God … is not far from each one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being"(Acts 17: 27- 28).

The the present study scope was limited by a number of factors for purposes of feasibility. First, it was limited to examining a particular motif in the book of Ezekiel. It is, however, reckoned that a better understanding of Ezekiel's רוח motif would emerge from an exhaustive study of the whole of the Ezekielian corpus. It is therefore conceivable that the inexhaustive study of the book of Ezekiel has left gaps in our knowledge of Ezekiel's socio-historical and cultural world which could ostensibly enrich our understanding of the Ezekielian רוח motif. Second, the intertextual analysis of the Ezekielian רוח symbolism did not extend to an examination of any רוח symbolism equivalents in the ancient Babylonian and Medo- Persian divine- human intermediatory traditions which, inevitably, formed part of Ezekiel's exilic

environment. It is possible that a wider reading entailing an examination of any רוח symbolism

equivalents in the ancient Babylonian and Medo- Persian milieu would have enriched our

understanding of Ezekiels' רוח symbolism. It is therefore conceivable that gaps in our knowledge

of רוח symbolism equivalents in Ezekiel's exilic environment which, possibly, informed

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism, still persist.

Third, in the African pneumatological context, the study was limited to examining written

documents only. However, as pointed out in the study, much of the African theological

enterprise is orally expressed in sermons, in testimomies, in music, in drama, or in rituals.

Therefore gaps in our knowledge of the African pneumatological- theological worldview are

inevitable; hence future research entailing field studies is imperative. Fourth, the hermeneutical

context of the present study was limited to the biblical-faith communities in Africa. The dynamic

equivalents of the Ezekielian exile in the African pneumatological context are therefore

theological or רוח 'spiritual' exiles only since the African communities envisaged in the study

were not in any geographical exile. It is, however, reckoned that there are many African

communities of biblical faith who experience actual geographical exiles, either politically or

otherwise, in foreign lands, particularly in Western Europe and North America, and who

conceivably experience real, rather than simply theological, exilic disorientations. A study of

Ezekiel's רוח symbolism in the context of the real exilic settings of the African diaspora would,

perhaps, yield more relevant dynamic equivalents and, hence, contribute to a deeper

understanding and appreciation of Ezekiels' exilic רוח pneumatology.

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