

The *Ruah Elohim* and the *Hagios Pneuma* in a Post-Mission World

Part 2: Old Testament Reconsiderations

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I am a systematic theologian by training, and during my first year at Fuller Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies, I found myself in a new disciplinary context. I have been having a wonderful time in the last few years actually taking my first courses and learning about intercultural studies and missiology in a more formal sense. Yet prior to this, I had already found myself starting in 2005 to write articles, and a bit later (more recently) publishing books, with a the word "mission" in the title. It was not really planned that way. For instance, I got an invitation to contribute to a book in the Regnum Centenary Series, a huge forty volume series on mission studies, in the area of diaspora and mission, and the lead editor contacted me and asked me to work with him on this. And given that I had written a few things on diaspora,¹ I thought this would be fun. So, I ended up having a book on diaspora and mission, without again not really knowing a whole lot about mission.²

I have lived a kind of missionary kid's life and have some firsthand experience about diaspora, migration, and mission. The Pentecostal academy has also really been working hard on the mission front, and so, as a scholar of Pentecostalism and as a Pentecostal who is a scholar, I have from the very beginning been reading a lot in missiology that my fellow Pentecostal colleagues have been churning out. So that primed me a bit to begin doing work in missiology. And I have been really grateful for developments in the dynamic field of systematics that have already explored and

¹ See Yong, *The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

² See Chandler H. Im and Amos Yong, eds., *Global Diasporas and Mission*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 23 (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, and Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

engaged in intercultural theology, comparative theology, theology of religions, theology of the interfaith encounter, etc., all of which are vital in the arena of missiology.

***Ruah* in the Old Testament: Theological Issues**

I have mentioned that this book that I am working on is one of my first scriptural explorations across the biblical canon and I was able to improvise a little bit yesterday (not yet having written the last three chapters of part II),³ simply because I am a little bit more familiar with the New Testament. From New Testament studies yesterday, today I feel like I am wading out across the ocean of the Old Testament. Moving into this domain is a bit like being transported from planet Earth to the planet Mars. So, take everything that you hear for the next hour with three grains of salt. We are going to look at the Old Testament today as an extension of what we did yesterday; in saying that, if in fact we read Scripture after Pentecost and in the light of missiology, to what degree is such an approach also viable for the Old Testament? How can we read in this bifocal way the Old Testament from a Spirit and mission perspective? So that's what we are going to do for the next few moments today.⁴

Let us zero in on this pneumatological focus, one side of the bifocal lens. In focusing on the pneumatological – or “ruahological,” is that a word yet? – I was looking at my manuscript last night to refresh my memory on what I had exactly planned to say on this part, and I noticed I was using the word pneumatological quite a bit in the Old Testament. So, I said to myself: it should be ruahological, related to the Hebrew word for wind or breath, *ruah*; and instead of *pneumatic*, I created another neologism: *ruahic*. When we turn to the Old Testament, we are focusing on ruahological texts, as few as the mentions may be (relative to the New Testament), although in some cases like Ezekiel we have a deluge of such references. And there's been a good number of studies actually on the divine wind or divine breath in the Old Testament: the classic text from Leon Wood from three or four decades ago, George Montague (a Catholic scholar who has done a lot of work on the Spirit in the Old Testament, and a few others like that.⁵ So, it is not that there has never been any ruahological or ruahic explorations of the First Testament or the Hebrew Bible.

For our purposes, however, I had to ask myself questions from a very uninformed perspective, uninformed because I took one semester of Hebrew in 1990 and have not used it much since. But remember: *ruah*, like *pneuma* is really wind, breath, breath-wind. How do we discern between when it is just breath or wind of nature as opposed to when such refers to God's wind or breath? Obviously if Yahweh (or Elohim) is added in the text

³ See part I of this two-part article; recall that the book manuscript I am overviewing in these lectures is my *Mission after Pentecost: The Bible, the Spirit, and the Missio Dei*, Mission in Global Community (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), forthcoming.

⁴ Historically, the Old Testament precedes the New; epistemologically, however, like with the first followers of Jesus, the experience of the risen Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit informs the apostolic reconsideration of Israel's sacred scriptures. See my *The Hermeneutical Spirit: Theological Interpretation and the Scriptural Imagination for the 21st Century* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), for further rationale, including ch.12 therein for a reading of a segment of the Hebrew Bible – Genesis 1-2 – from a post-Pentecost perspective.

⁵ E.g., Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976); George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (1976; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), part I; and Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

then it seems clearer that what is being discussed is divine, Yahweh's breath, or the breath of Yahweh. Of course, there is human, natural, or creaturely breaths or winds, but there is also divine forms of such. My focus in this exploration is on God's *ruah*. So, I have had to make some choices in different places when Yahweh is not mentioned; at times, these are obviously references to creaturely or created breaths or winds, but in instances, *ruah* appearing in creation texts could also be related to Yahweh or Elohim and hence denote divine realities.⁶

Another theological question is this: how do we recognise the difference between *ruah* in the Old Testament and *pneuma* in the New Testament in terms of continuities and discontinuities? Relatedly, how do we go about responding to this question from a systematician's point of view in contrast to that of a dogmatician's point of view (the former being perhaps less constrained by formal dogmatic, conciliar, or confessional data than the latter)? Put otherwise, how might we interact with this question if we were to bring a post-Nicaean sort of understanding of the Spirit and then reading that back into these texts, particularly in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible? All this to say that I have not yet fully sorted all of this out, but I think we need to be alert to the fact any reading of divine *ruah* in the Old Testament will be making these choices, consciously or not. Hence, we must be alert to the fact that we are reading text written long before Nicaea, and prior to the accumulated 2000 years of dogmatic, confessional, creedal, systematic unfolding of pneumatology (or ruahology, as the case may be).⁷

***Ruah* and Mission in Ancient Israel: Hermeneutical Guidelines and Challenges**

But coming back to Genesis 1:2 "...a wind from God swept over the face of the waters..." (NRSV). Clearly, this is *from* Elohim but is this a divine wind in some personal or trinitarian sense or is this merely a cosmic wind, even if sent or at least authorized by God? That is the kind of navigation we have to be careful about when we are working in the Old Testament. Such readings raise not just hermeneutical deliberations but also, for our purposes, explicitly missiological perspectives and considerations.

As has been mentioned already, there has been a good bit of work done in the last twenty or thirty years by missiologists who have developed missiological readings, applying a missiological hermeneutic and perspective, to the Old Testament. Christopher Wright is one of the leading lights on this front.⁸ So we have begun to appreciate the missiological character of the Old Testament. But it is within this context that we can also begin to appreciate that we cannot impose our New Testament understanding of mission – even our post-New Testament understanding of mission – directly back onto the Old Testament as if they were equivalent. For instance, one of the important questions we need to ask particularly in these missiological readings of the Old Testament is whether ancient Israel has a centrifugal understanding of mission going out

⁶ Helpful in this regard for me was Lloyd R. Neve, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (1972; reprint, Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2011).

⁷ An excellent text here is John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009).

⁸ E.g., Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), and *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

to the nations or a centripetal perspective of being – and focusing on being – the people of God and from that perspective being a light to the nations who might look toward Israel or come toward its temple built for Yahweh. There have been arguments on both sides.⁹ So, we have to at least recognise this challenge within the character of how we think about Israel and its missionary witness or its missionary call, and then also its missionary life.

So, missionary life may not always have been: “let’s go out to Papua New Guinea,” which the Old Testament saints had never even heard of anyway. But what did it mean for them being the worshipping people of God to bear witness and to be a light to the nations? There is a tension between understanding a more centrifugal perspective in which we go – in the New Testament, being apostolic is being sent – and the alternative: Israel was not always sent in exactly in the same way as Jesus’ disciples, though maybe being sent into exile is a sort of missional sending, phenomenologically similar but historically dissimilar, discontinuous between what it means to be sent as a people to survive in exile (in the Old Testament) in contrast with apostolic sending (in the New Testament).

From this perspective, then, this reading of the Old Testament missiologically is a dance. But we are developing a ruahological as well as a missiological hermeneutic of the Old Testament that needs to begin with a double alert: to imposing certain understandings of *pneuma* onto *ruah* and to imputing certain understanding of mission on to Old Testament text that are later derivations – we must hence be alert for anachronistic applications on both fronts. Therefore, reading canonically helps us to appreciate the unfolding missiological or missional arc of the Old Testament books going all the way through from Genesis to Malachi, and then being able to discern the movements, consolidations, reconsiderations, developments, and expansions as we follow that arc into and out of the new covenant.¹⁰

This said, I think we need to carefully consider the missiological implication of texts that are quite far removed from our contemporary world. From that perspective one of the things that I have been invited to reconsider is how we read that missiological relationship of Israel to the nations ruahologically? A kind of a model for such an approach comes from the mid-nineties, when I read Michael Welker’s book *God the Spirit* (translated from the German).¹¹ It is really an incredible helpful reading of Spirit all the way through, more precisely, or *ruah* all the way through the Old Testament and then of *pneuma* through the New Testament. But I think one of the things Welker did very well was understand *ruah* and *pneuma* not just in individualistic terms of but in terms of how in the New Testament it shaped the people of God’s relationship to the surrounding polis and in the Old Testament how it shaped the people of God’s relationship to the surrounding culture. So, there is a certain sense in which *ruah* and *pneuma* in Welker’s

⁹ The parameters of the debate was set long ago by H. H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (1944: reprint, London: Carey Southgate Press, 1955), and Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel’s Mission to the World*, trans. John Penney Smith (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962).

¹⁰ I am aware that *missiological* and *missional* are distinctive in the contemporary mission literature but for our purposes of retrieving the biblical witness to mission, I use them practically synonymously in this essay.

¹¹ Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

God the Spirit highlights not just the individual's perception of the Spirit but also the communal and public function of *ruah* and *pneuma* in both Testaments. I am asking here more missiological questions, but the paradigm for me is: what is the role of witness for the community, now considered Israel, and how do I read that witness ruahologically, like how Welker was reading Israel's community and corporate identity through what I call a ruahic lens.

So, these are what I call theological and hermeneutical guidelines that shape how we approach the opportunities before us, and also the challenges. Bringing too much baggage with us into the Old Testament can be a problem but the whole point is how can we be informed about *pneuma*-empowered mission for reading the Old Testament in a post-mission world? I think there are some very intriguing possibilities, and in the final twenty minutes of this lecture I hope to flesh some of these out. But note that there is not just one Israel; rather, there are 1500 years of Israel in these texts and, depending on how you date them, maybe 1500 different political circumstances through which this "light to the nations" motif unfolds. And from our more particular ruahological perspective there are 1500 years of different cultural circumstances through which divine winds, presences, and activities accomplished some of these missiological objectives. Such are the questions and concerns before us along this path.

***Ruah* and the Torah: Creational Mission**

So, moving very quickly, I am going to overview the major moves made within these four chapters,¹² in the hope that it will whet your appetite for something like: "ha! I am going to get this book so I can see all of the mistakes Amos Yong made reading the Old Testament!" I would be delighted to hear from you after you get the book and read it when it comes out.

The Old Testament begins with what we might call creational mission. I would like to think that the divine breath not only concludes the canon – remember we are reading canonically – with a pneumatological invitation: "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'" (Rev. 22:17a); but something similar happens at the very beginning when Genesis 1:2 is read in this ruahological sense. There is good reason therefore for us to see the canon as pneumatologically or ruahologically book ended, with the divine wind hovering over the waters that stir creation and then the divine breath also in the eschaton luring creation; divine wind initiating, sending out the ripples, and then divine breath bringing up to shore or ushering into the eschaton, to follow through with these metaphors.

In Genesis, divine *ruah* as far as I can tell appears three times, once in 1:2, and second time in 6:4; remember the Nephilim and the giants in the land and all that interesting stuff. The breath of God both initiates and grapples with, strives with the creation's not always appropriate responses to the freedom that Elohim gives. This already alerts us to what I suggest might be the ambiguity of mission. I think that's an important point, as we go through the Old Testament text, we are going to see that ambiguity. We'd like it a little bit cleaner in the sense that every time the wind of God shows up, eyes are open, bodies are raised, people speak in tongues, baptisms, hallelujah

¹² Part I of my book, *Mission after Pentecost* (forthcoming).

– somebody say amen or praise the Lord!¹³ Maybe every time the Spirit shows up a lot of things happen and not all of that is exactly what is good for raising missionary funds and dollars, in a classical sense of the missionary venture.

The third time the divine *ruah* appears in the first book of the Bible is with Pharaoh in Genesis 41:38, who actually recognises the divine breath in Joseph. Here is a very interesting occurrence – and this will not be the last time such happens throughout the pages of the First Testament – when those who are not part of the people of God are actually observant about the divine breath, people like Pharaoh, who ought not to have had any clue about the Holy Ghost. How do you understand such a perspective on the divine breath from a post-Nicean point of view? Not very easily. But that’s exactly the point about how these narratives in the Old Testament challenge our understanding of who owns the Holy Ghost. We who are Pentecostals or part of this modern-day movement might think we do, or presume that non-Pentecostals know little if anything about the Holy Ghost.

The wind or breath of Yahweh in Exodus 15 is also important because this liberational mission was designed to establish Israel even through the wilderness wandering, designed to establish Israel as Priests to the nations (see also Exod. 19:6).¹⁴ The call out of Egypt was also a call towards priestly representation among the nations; hence, that involves the wind of Yahweh delivering Israel into that priestly call. We also know about Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus 31 and 35, especially the reference to the divine breath enabling their “craftsmanship.” Further, we have, consistent with the Pharaoh text, Balaam as the pagan upon whom the breath of God descends (Num. 22-24). So, is it mission among and to the pagans or is it mission from the pagans, or is the divine breath reaching Israel through the pagans, in effect? How do we recalibrate and think about mission, if you will, Christian witness in this post-mission context when we are engaging with pagans? In our engagement with pagans are we bearers of the Spirit only or potentially are we also recipients of the wind of Yahweh in the context of this encounter? There are a lot of questions I have reading the Old Testament through this ruahological perspective. I think they are appropriate questions to think about it in what we call our post-mission world, but you’ll have to be the judge of that eventually.

The Spirits of Ancient Israel: Ambiguous Mission

We now move from chapter 1 of my book on Torah to chapter 2 that is on Deuteronomic history; in some circles that language is a bit dated, but we are looking at the text at least also historically. From this perspective, does Deuteronomy belong to the first five books of the Torah or does Deuteronomy belong to the historical books? God’s Spirit is mentioned once in Deuteronomy at the very end when the author talks about the breath of Yahweh coming upon Joshua for his ministry. But that breath of Yahweh is designed to say that Joshua is going to carry out Moses’ legacy, calling, and vocation, to fulfil Moses’s leadership of Israel. That surely raises all kinds of questions, the big one

¹³ Sometimes Amos Yong the lecturer turns into Amos Yong the preacher; for the latter, see my collection of sermons: *The Kerygmatic Spirit: Apostolic Preaching in the 21st Century*, edited by Josh Samuel, commentary and afterword by Tony Richie (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), with an audio of sermons available online at [Fuller Studio](https://soundcloud.com/fullerseminary/sets/amos-yong-sermons) [https://soundcloud.com/fullerseminary/sets/amos-yong-sermons].

¹⁴ See, e.g., George V. Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

being: does that text then invite us to read the conquest of Canaan ruahologically and what are the implications of that? How do we grapple with the conquest narratives from this ruahological springboard as we think about mission within the ancient Israelite frame? One way in which that happens – and I explore this in discussing Joshua by both looking forward and then looking backward to Numbers 11 where the breath of prophecy falls upon the 70 elders – is to follow out the implications of these intertextual connections and to raise such questions. In this case, we are prompted to read backward and forward within what I call Moses’s legacy handed onto Joshua in order to reconsider the mission of God scripturally and then revision our response to and participation in such for today.¹⁵

Judges is of course, also another very interesting text, because there is within its narrative lots of ruahic activity. There are three times even before you get to Samson and then there are four mentions of the Spirit on Samson. Some literature says the first three times that the Spirit comes is when Yahweh leads the people to move out in other geographical directions from Israel. Hence, one potential way of understanding the divine breath here is as anticipating trajectories toward many nations. Another perspective that I found helpful was from my colleague at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Lee Roy Martin, who has written a book on Judges from a Pentecostal perspective.¹⁶ He says actually that when the Spirit of God appears to those judges, those are the only three times when Yahweh actually said something; and then there is a correlation between the divine breath blowing and then what Martin calls Israel’s hearing. Does Israel hear well or not? Well that’s of course part of the question. Israel maybe does not hear very well in a lot of these instances (perhaps as we do not also).

And then you have Samson and the Spirit of God and “the violent take it by force” sort of anticipation of what is said explicitly in the New Testament (see Matt. 11:12b). Thus, when exploring the role of Samson, I call this ambiguous mission: when the Spirit of God shows up, and all kinds of havoc breaks loose. We would prefer to just simply latch on to the orderly statement in Corinthians,¹⁷ that every time the Spirit shows up that’s exactly what happens; but that is maybe why we do not read Judges ruahologically – because things are not often accomplished in decent order! I think part of the opportunity and challenge here for us is to recognise that there’s volatility in the Spirit’s work. It is not that we blame all disorder on the Spirit, but these ancient Israelite texts invite us to simply note the how creation’s materials and creatures combine with the combustibility of *dunamis* within the creaturely sphere. Dynamite obviously explodes, and sometimes when placed in the right place it explodes and does what you intend it to do and you gain the benefits of the explosion; but if it explodes in the wrong place other things happen that we have to deal with. There’s a certain sense in which, if in fact the wind of God blows where it wills, then sometimes we are going to have to grapple missiologically with how we understand what is happening as things unfold. These texts are invitations for us to be honest about these realities in our midst.

¹⁵ There is limited but growing missiological literature on these Old Testament texts; my book engages with such, although my ruahological perspective adds an overlooked dimension of these narratives.

¹⁶ See Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publications, 2009).

¹⁷ E.g., “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40, KJV).

Prophetic Saul and messianic David: if you remember the account here is about Israel wanting a king. How is Israel supposed to be a priest to the nations from their perspective without being a nation? And that is of course a very complicated set of questions. How do you really read history, not least the history of ancient Israel, how do you grapple with it, how does God bless this national emergence? Or does God's blessing only come with and through David? So, we have to grapple with the Spirit coming upon Saul who goes out naked, then the Spirit of God leaves Saul and falls upon David, and then we have this back and forth narrative in the books of Samuel. So, I explore this triangulated relationship of the Spirit between Yahweh, Saul, and David as a way of thinking about the emergence of mission and nation.¹⁸ Which brings us into this in a post-Christendom world: this is a good historical perspective on both opportunities and challenges when you have mission and nation intertwined in a more direct way, which has happened in the past. To the degree there are still Christian nations in some sense then we have got both the same set of opportunities and challenges today as present to ancient Israel.

Look at the story of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22, for instance. Here, nationalising and politicising are related but distinct, precisely how nations unfold. What happens when David is filled with the Spirit, and what happens when he both conquers and builds relationship with the nations around Israel, which is there in the Samuel text? But then the politicising of mission is also evident, as in 1 Kings 22, including when and where the various political agents are engaging the prophet Micaiah trying to claim the authority of the divine breath (as Zedekiah did in attempting to justify his agenda; 1 Kings 22:24). I know none of us ever do that but it happened in this text: political leaders calling upon or claiming the Spirit of God is on their side and using such appeals to get their way.¹⁹

Post-Exilic Spirit and Mission

Four times in the book of Chronicles, the Spirit comes Amasai (1 Chron. 12:8), Azariah (2 Chron. 15:1), Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20:14), and Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20). Those give interesting windows into how a post-exilic community is re-imagining restoration and return, understanding its historical identity. In other words, how does such a community re-tell its story for its self-understanding, as a returning, or as an aspiring restorative community? Missiologically, might we say that this community in the Chronicler period aspires to be restored in order that it might once again be a light to the nations or the priests of this nation perceived a renewed sense of the Torah's priestly call for Israel to serve as divine representative to and for the nations? On the other hand, these texts in the Chronicles also give us windows into the Samuel material with regard to these four individuals that we do not get there. What does it tell us about the Lord's Spirit at work in the context of restoration from exile and of rehabilitation of vocation to be priests to the nations? Those are the questions I am asking when reading Chronicles

¹⁸ A prior model for me was from a disability studies perspective triangulating between Mephibosheth, Saul, and David, in order to explore the fortunes of Israel's early monarchy: Jeremy Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 441 (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2009); Schipper's disability hermeneutic becomes ruahological-missiological in my book.

¹⁹ In hindsight, such theological politicization – or political theologizing – was strategic for the entire colonial enterprise, much less its missionary endeavors, a point I neglected mentioning in my talk.

ruahologically and missiologically.

Nehemiah gives us another perspective on what I could call reverse mission, in the sense that Nehemiah is actually a colonial agent at a certain level.²⁰ He represents the colonial government and their work in the colonies. But the Spirit appears in Nehemiah 9 twice, in part with his engaging with Ezra in reconstituting Israel's narrative from this reversed mission context. So, there are all kinds of complications and implications of imperialism, but yet in and through that contorted identity there is a recognition that the Spirit of God enables us to reconstitute the narrative in a new space, in a conflicted space and trans-national space.²¹

Job a few times mentions the divine wind or breath. Elihu is another of those voices, like Pharaoh and Balaam, who is the outsider speaking from, and out of, and because of, that site, and who calls upon the wind and breath of God. There is a broader theological anthropology to the wisdom literature inviting our consideration and embrace that may revitalize our engaging with and responding cross-cultural realities perennially, not least in the present post-mission moment.

When we turn to the next book, the divine wind or breath manifests in five separate psalms: 33, 51, 104 (which is the breath of Yahweh given to all creatures), 139 (which asks, "where can I go from your spirit?"), and 143 (which is post-exilic and explicitly about the renewal of Israel). But the way in which I read these Psalms missiologically, then, is that they form part of the fabric of Israel's singing, not necessarily to the nations, but among the nations, so that whoever may have been hearing them is also receiving the testimony of song in an international context. What then does this tell us about what we do in worship? Is our congregational praise just an ecclesial activity or is worship already a mode of mission? Even if the doors and windows of our sanctuaries were closed, is not our worship resounding among the nations? Such worship is also fully and deeply existential, which is the whole point of Psalms 51 and 139, even as such worship is also deeply political, precisely the thrust of Psalms 143 and 34; then, our worship is also even cosmic, which Psalm 104 clarifies. We never just sing ecclesially; rather, we sing individually, ecclesially, and politically among the nations, and we sing cosmically amongst all creation, and are a part of all creation's hymns by the breath of Yahweh, and that's part of bearing witness in a post-mission world.²²

And then even when we have stopped breathing and singing, there is a ruahic moment in Ecclesiastes. What's interesting is, having done a lot of work on East-Asian philosophical traditions, I have been struck by how often those folks working at a comparative theological level with these perspectives have been drawn in to it by

²⁰ *Reverse mission* in contemporary missiological literature pertains to how Asian, Africans, and Latin Americans are returning to Europe and North America, missionary sending countries during the colonial period, to re-evangelize and re-missionize the Western hemisphere; see also Claudia Wahrlich-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

²¹ E.g., John Eaton, *The Contemplative Face of Old Testament Wisdom in the Context of World Religions* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, and London: SCM Press, 1989).

²² See also Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier 2000).

engaging with Ecclesiastes. We find more engagement with Ecclesiastes amongst the Old Testament books in a Buddhist-Christian and Hindu-Christian and Daoist-Christian dialogue.²³ So, it is interesting that the message of the preacher from 3000 years ago, maybe, signals in some respects the end, the last breaths, of mission, but nevertheless these expirations indicate at least potentially, if not also actually, a crossing of cultural and even religious traditions.

The Spirit of Prophetic Mission

I have got three sections on Isaiah – from chapters 1-39, then 40-55, and finally 56-66 – in which I look at these texts of divine breath in the prophet in what I call *before* the exile; then *amidst* the nations, which is how most scholars understand 40-55; and finally *between* the nations 56-66, meaning now that they are back in Palestine, they are nevertheless in a colonial relationship with Persia. If before chapter 40 Israel was surrounded by Babylon and Assyria, and if in chapters 40-55 they are in exile in the middle of the Babylonian empire, then in the last section (56-66), Israel is back and forth between exile trying to figure out what restoration means, while the imperial and colonial power oversees and overshadows their return. So, we are now looking at the different moments where and when the divine breath is mentioned across these Isaianic texts and trying to understand how Israel relates to, exists within, and negotiates back and forth with the nations in these contexts.

Discussion of Ezekiel is divided into two. Ezekiel is by far the most ruahic Old Testament voice in terms of the number of references to the divine breath or wind.²⁴ I unpack the *ruah* in Israel as a transnational wind because Ezekiel is the prophet of exile. This exiled prophet keeps being shuffled back and forth between Babylon, Chaldea, and Israel, like how humans get beamed back and forth in Star Trek. In the first four or five chapters that's exactly what happens: the divine wind just picks him up and moves him here and then transports him over there. We thus have what I call a transnational ruahic mission. Then, of course, in chapters 33-37, including the vision of the valley of dry bones in the 37th chapter, we have a restorative mission in relation to exile, one that reconstitute Israel's priestly vocation in and through the fires of exile. The divine *ruah*, as far as I know, does not get mentioned at all in Jeremiah, so after this dearth of the breath of God, Ezekiel picks up the slack and effectively says, "alright, we'll get double the dosage now!"

In Joel and then in Haggai and Zechariah, it is a little bit complicated. Historically, Hosea through Malachi has been called the Minor Prophets or the Book of the Twelve. Is it the one book, or is it twelve books? What is the relationship within these? How do we read this canonically? And yet such witnesses are also testimonies to different moments and movements. The Spirit of Justice appears once in Micah. Joel we certainly know much more about because it is quoted in Acts 2.²⁵ The problem here is locating the text historically – since the provenance of Joel has eluded scholarly consensus –but if read it

²³ Including but not limited to Kari Storstein Haug, *Interpreting Proverbs 11:18-31, Psalm 73, and Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 in Light Of, and as a Response To, Thai Buddhist Interpretations: A Contribution to Dialogue*, Studies in Systematic Theology 10 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

²⁴ As documented by James Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 447 (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2006).

²⁵ Treated in Larry S. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

in the context of the Book of the Twelve, then it is possible to gauge the role and function the divine wind plays here in this elusive prophet situated between Micah's Spirit of justice and the transnational Spirit of mission in Haggai and Zechariah. The divine breath manifests four times, in chapters 4, 6, and then 8, of Zechariah's dreams: twice inside the dream sequence and twice outside of that dreaming. But we have here clearly a transnational ruahology again, wherein the divine wind blows in relationship to Israel within post-exilic multi-national contexts.

***Ruah* and Mission in the Old Testament: From a Pre-Mission to a Post-Mission World**

We need to wrap it up here. The effort in this part of the book is to reconsider Israel and the nations, Israel in relationship to the nations, from this ruahological (and pneumatological) perspective, and to comprehend better how mission is both centripetal and centrifugal and what being both means for Christian witness in a post-mission world. There is a dynamic movement between centripetality and centrifugality, and we need to be discerning about when that might be applicable in our context and when less so, what type of mission movement we can envision, and how we might participate in the mission of the divine Spirit in a post-mission context. In other words, to what degree is mission in our context better understood as centrifugal or centripetal? To what degree is it better understood to be a dynamic oscillation, perhaps rhythmically modulated depending on our discernment of political, social, and other factors?

Further, and relatedly, how can we now retrieve and re-tell the salvation history narrative of Scripture as a ruahic and, from a Christian point of view, Trinitarian story? What are the implication of Israel's creational theology and wisdom traditions for a contemporary witness in a scientific world of many faiths? By focusing on these ruahic texts in the Old Testament we get a kaleidoscope, a range or spectrum of different ruahic images, which when joined to the pneumatic data of the New Testament, prompts rethinking of mission after Pentecost, or what we might call Spirit-imparted, empowered, and enabled mission. Perhaps we could call such ruahically informed mission, a form of witness that the people of God endeavour that is attentive to how the wind and breath of Yahweh moves, creates confusion, and activates all kinds of other things across the pages of the Old Testament that we often do not consider missiologically but now maybe ought to.

How can this variety of Israel's historical but ruahically-propelled self-understanding provide models for Christian testimony and narrative witness in the twenty-first century? This is also important because – something I have really begun to appreciate over the last few years – we can and ought to read the Old Testament as a series of unfolding reinterpretations of itself. This is not only with regard to what the Chronicler does with the Deuteronomic material but also with regard to how Israel during and after the Exile grapples with its covenant identity, and with how to understand that covenant given what has happened.²⁶ In other words it is a series of what I would call in good Pentecostal parlance, a retelling of one's testimony which is

²⁶ Which I first encountered in Donn F. Morgan, *Between Text and Community: The "Writings" in Canonical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

what witness is about.²⁷ Here is the point: we do not have just necessarily one testimony; we have, from what I read in the Old Testament, evolving testimonies that are re-shaped every time that we retell them, because we are not speaking to the same crowd we were last time we told it. And Israel is grappling with Torah during Exile, and after the Exile, the whole Old Testament is received as scripture so that it is as canon a post-exilic narrative (even though it tells us a lot of what happened before the Exile). The point then would be that read missiologically, it is about how do we retell, how do we bear witness to our story, how do we bear witness to the salvation history of our lives? How do we adequately and potently give testimony in a post-mission world? How does Israel's exilic existence provide a model for contemporary Christian witness in a post-mission world?

²⁷ For more on the role of testimony on pentecostal spirituality, see Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2010), 15-18; I see Christian testimony more broadly as related to, if not undergirding, specifically pentecostal forms of testimony.