

TOWARDS THE NEW AGE OF THE SPIRIT

The Old Testament Vision of Society as a Spirit-Energized Movement.

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1. Introduction

The Hebrew term *ruah*, which occurs 389 times in the Old Testament (O.T), basically means wind, moving air and breath¹. As breath is the vital element in a living being, it stands for life, dynamism and basic activity of a person. Hence, when we speak of the spirit of God, *ruah* denotes the most important characteristic of the deity. Although the OT speaks of the spirits of humans, animals and supernatural beings, our focus in the study will be on the spirit of God. God has a plan for this cosmos. In that vision this *ruah* plays a vital role. This world, especially human society, in God's design, is intended to become a spirit-energized movement, the orientation of which finds its destination in union with the deity. This article tries to shed light on various phases of the dynamic acts of the divine spirit from creation to new creation².

2. The Spirit Dynamism in God's Vision of Creation

The creation account as narrated in Gen. 1: 1 - 2: 4a was written with the background of the Babylonian epic *enuma elish*³. The Priestly author wanted to provide to the exile people of Israel in Babylon a creation story, matching that of the Babylonians in

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¹ R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "Aruah Geist" in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, Vol. II, Col 726-753. The Greek for spirit is *pneuma* see Sjöberg in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VI, pp. 282-289.

² K.D. Schunck, *Wesen and Wirken des Geistes nach dem Alten Testament*, SLAG 18 (1979) pp. 7-30.

³ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, Minneapolis, 1984, pp. 74-177.

structure, style and grammatical constructions. At the same time he made it a superior one with deeper and sublime theological motifs. As the *enuma elish* presented the creation of the world as a result of victory over chaotic forces, so the Priestly author used the motifs of darkness, formlessness, emptiness and deep - the symbols of chaos. While Marduk, the God of order had to struggle hard to subdue the evil forces, the Genesis' account makes clear that the Lord was in command of everything from the very beginning. His spirit reigned supreme over all the symbolic forces of evil (Gen. 1:2). Nothing threatened or challenged His authority.

Thus, the Priestly writer presented the first creation story as God bringing order and harmony in the cosmos. In darkness He brought light. By separating the water under the expanse from the water above it⁴, He made the sky. By gathering the water under the sky to one place, the land was created. By producing vegetation He made the earth inhabitable and a lovely place. The creation of the sun, moon and the stars gave the earth a beautiful and joyful countenance. The seasons, days and years brought harmony and continuity in the world. Birds and animals and other creatures added further homogeneity and diversity to the whole creation. The appearance of a human being, who served as a maestro to the cosmic orchestra completed the creative act of the divine artist.

To sum up, creation was intended by God to be the earthly heaven where total harmony and rhythm reign. In other words, the earth and its living beings are to irradiate the beauty and goodness of the Godhead⁵. This was God's vision of creation. The sentence "the spirit of God was hovering over the waters" played this creative role. God through His spirit dominated over all the symbolic forces of chaos. It was through His *ruah* that God realized His vision of making earth a replica of heaven. The dynamic and creative activity of the spirit brought out such transformation. God wanted humans to live as divine beings, enjoying the celestial symphony, *nada, tala, and laya*.

⁴ Such was the concept of the ancient man about the sky.

⁵ The expression "God saw that it was good", is repeated again and again in the creation account, eg. vv.9,12,18,21,25.

3. Spirit, the Existence-Subsistence Principle

The creation of human beings is narrated as a story in the account of the Yahwistic author (Gen. 2: 4b - 25): "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath (*ruah*) of life, so that he became a living creature" (Gen. 2:7). Thus the spirit of God abides in human beings. According to Is 42: 5, Yahweh who created heaven and earth gives his spirit to its inhabitants. Job 33:4 says: "The spirit of God has made me." The author of the same book asserts: "If God should take back his spirit to himself all mortals would perish together and humans would return to the dust" (Job 34: 14-15). The grass and the flower will be dried away when the spirit of the Yahweh blows upon them (Is. 40:7). The Psalmist attests to the same truth: "when you send your spirit they are created and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104: 30). Again he exclaims: "Whither shall I go from your spirit?" (Ps. 139: 7). Contemplating the whole creation the poet has these words of admiration: "Your spirit is *good*" (Ps. 143:10). As God saw the whole creation as *good*, now his living images come to the same conclusion. It is the divine *ruah* which is the source of goodness. Neh. 9: 20 also designates the spirit as good which instructs the people how to walk in the path of God. Thus the spirit is the source and cause of existence and subsistence of creatures. Should God withdraw his spirit nobody would subsist on earth. No mortal can question the ways of the divine spirit or give counsel to it (Is. 40:13). What we can do is to pray with the Psalmist: "Take not your holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11).

This dream of God was later shattered. Humans began to disturb and destroy the harmony and the divinely designed order. As sin multiplied on earth the Lord decided to delimit the abiding presence of his spirit in human beings. The Hebrew word *yadon* of Gn. 6: 3 literally means strive with or contend with. The implication may be that the divine *ruah* is engaged in striving or contending with human beings. Human life is a continuous contention with the spirit which never ceases to challenge the undivine values embraced by mortals. As the wickedness and moral chaos multiplied on earth, God out of consideration for the weakness of the human beings, decided to cut short their long life span. Otherwise He would be leaving them to suffer the existential agony which results from the

striving presence of the spirit in them. To sum up, the chaotic actions of humans served to defeat God's vision of human society.

4. Cult and Spirit

Still God held to his vision. He called a nation who was destined to live as a spirit energized movement. For this purpose He liberated Israel out of political, social, economic and moral chaotic situations. He made them his own through the covenant bond. It amounted to a new creation. The Israelites were called to reflect the divine harmony and oneness in their life so that they could become the living images of the deity. The spirit played a unique role in that process. First we turn our attention to the role of the spirit in cult which brings out communion and communication between God and human beings.

The divine *ruah* first appears in the history of Israel in Ex.28: 3. In ch. 25-31 Yahweh, the God of Israel, gives instruction to Moses the leader how to make the community a cultic congregation. In Ex. 28:3 we read: "You shall speak to all who are skilled men whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom that they make the priestly garments...." Here the sacred vestments are made according to the inspirations of the spirit of the God. The *ruah* of Yahweh also guides Bazalel to make all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting (Ex. 31: 3)⁶ According to Ex. 35:21 it was the spirit who moved the people to bring contributions for the cultic expenses. To sum up, even in liturgical matters the spirit of God played vital role, since Israel was designed by Yahweh as a spirit-energized - movement.

5. Leadership as a Spirit-Energized Phenomenon

During Israel's march through the wilderness to the Promised Land, the spirit dynamism was evident. As Moses found his responsibilities too heavy, Yahweh appointed seventy elders to help him in administrative work. He took part of the spirit which was conferred on Moses and bestowed it on them (Num 11: 17). Then they were seized by a prophetic ecstasy (Num. 11:25). The spirit

⁶ The Tent of Meeting was the place where Israel worshipped Yahweh, before the Temple was constructed.

also alighted on two of the seventy elders, Eldad and Medad who were not present with others (Num. 11:26). They also were seized by prophetic ecstasy. At this Joshua, the helper of Moses asked the leader to stop them. Then Moses said: "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would bestow his spirit on them all!" (Num. 11:29). This episode calls forth certain conclusions. In God's vision the Israelite community was intended as a spirit-energized - movement. Its leaders are to be filled with the divine *ruah* that provides them the prophetic charism. Indeed, the whole nation is to be transformed as a pneumatic and prophetic community.

The spirit continued to play a vital role in the evolution of Israelite society. The spirit alights on even the non-Israelite diviner Balaam who was hired to curse Israelites (Num. 24:2), who was then inspired to utter blessing oracles in favour of them. Moses' successor Joshua was a man filled with the spirit (Num. 27:18; Dt. 34: 9).

The *ruah* of Yahweh reigned supreme at the time of Judges. The leaders of that time were elected by the spirit. They owed their authority, dynamism, success in battles and administration to the spirit. The formula "the spirit came up on" is repeated again and again: Jg. 3:10 (Othniel); 6: 34 (Gideon); 11: 29 (Jephthah); 13: 25; 14:6, 19; 15: 14 (Samson).

After the period of Judges there emerged the institution of monarchy in the history of Israel. Although this shift took place because of the people's desire to imitate the other nations, the *ruah* of Yahweh played a vital role in the selection of the early kings. I Sam. 9-10 narrate, how Saul was made the first king of Israel. As Saul approached the prophet Samuel to consult him on a certain family affairs, the prophet, according to the divine instruction, anointed him king and said to him: "As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them and they will be prophesying. The spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into a different person" (I Sam. 10: 5-6). And it happened so. The spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied (v. 10). Three things

contributed to the office of kingship : Anointing, bestowal of the divine *ruah*, and the gift of prophesy. The last two things are supernatural phenomena, which escape human ingenuity. It implies that Israelite kingship owes its origin to the divine spirit, as prophecy was pneumatic in character. The spirit played further roles in the life of Saul. At the news of the imminent threat of disgraceful slavery of Jabesh, "the spirit of God came upon him and he burned with anger" (I Sam. 11:6). Under the influence of the spirit he fought against the enemy and defeated them. During the last period of Saul's life God withdrew his spirit from him, and evil spirit entered into him. As he found in David a threat to his kingship, he tried to kill him many a time. I Sam. 19: 9-24 narrates a few of his attempts. When Saul knew the whereabouts of David, he sent men to capture him. As they approached the place, the spirit of God alighted on them and they prophesied with a group of prophets assembled there. Here the spirit obstructed them from capturing David (vv. 20-21). Finally, Saul himself went, but the spirit came even upon him and he also began to prophesy (vv. 23-24). Once more, it was the divine *ruah* that came to the rescue of the future king David. The rise to kingship of the second king, David, is attributed to the act of the divine *ruah*. As he was anointed by Samuel, the spirit of Yahweh came upon him from that day onwards (I Sam. 16: 33). The abiding of the *ruah* made his life a success, as the departure of it caused the downfall of Saul. The oracle uttered by David on his last days was inspired by the spirit of Yahweh "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (II Sam. 23: 2).

The name of Amasai, the leader of the thirty mighty men of David deserves special mention. As the spirit came upon him, he uttered the victory song (I Chr. 1: 18) which made the thirty young men fight and win the kingdom for David.

To sum up, God's vision of leadership in Israel was pneumatic. Humans cannot claim for it or assume it upon themselves. A non-spirit-energized leadership was bound to fail.

6. Prophets, the Pneumatic Conscientizers of Society

But the religious and political leaders of Israel failed to live up to their call. Instead of building up God's society on earth, based on economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and a religion of God's freedom⁷ they returned to the secular ideals of other nations. There reigned in Israel economic injustices, systematic oppression and exploitation of the poor and weak ones. Religion was converted into a means to achieve egoistic and shameful aims. Neither the kings nor priests bothered to pay attention to the dictates of the divine *ruah*. The kings behaved not as the envoys of God but as absolute tyrants. Without consulting Yahweh they freely entered into alliances, which were against the divine *ruah* (Is 30: 1). The country became a land of corruption, lust and blatant idolatry. The people rebelled against Yahweh and vexed his spirit (Is. 63: 10). At this juncture Yahweh sent prophets to warn the people of dire consequences. Moved by the divine spirit these spoke-persons of God uttered judgement oracles. If Israel does not turn back to Yahweh, they will be wiped off the earth - thundered the prophets. The Lord testified against the unfaithful nation by his spirit in the prophets (Neh. 9: 30). Again and again Yahweh appealed to the people to repent of their offences and to get themselves a new heart and new spirit (Ez. 18: 31). But the people preferred to mock at the prophets: "Is the spirit of Yahweh straitened? Are these his deeds?" (Mic. 2:7). Below we limit ourselves to enumerate the texts where the *ruah* of Yahweh is explicitly mentioned.

Like a whirlwind Elijah came to the life of the irreligious and inhuman king Ahab. By divine inspiration he announced the punishment of draught in the country. (I Kings. 17: 1). Ahab tried to catch Elijah but could not, as the spirit of the Lord always carried the prophet away from his hands. (I Kgs. 18: 12). Every action of Elijah was performed at the dictate of the spirit. At the heavy rain he could even run from Carmel to Jezreel (I Kgs 18: 46), the whole distance of 17 miles, ahead of the chariot of Ahab! The intimate

⁷ Paul Kalluveettil, "Social Criticism as the Prophetic Role", *Jeevadhara* 29 (1989) 133-160.

relationship between Elijah and the divine *ruah* was well known to all. That was why when Elijah was carried up to heaven, the disciples of Elisha wanted to search for him, thinking : "Perhaps the spirit of the Lord has lifted up him and cast him on some mountain or into some valley" (II Kgs. 2: 16).

The phrase, "the spirit of Yahweh/God came upon " frequently occurs in the accounts of the prophets: (2 Chr.15:1 (Azariah); 20: 14 (Jahaziel); 24: 20 (Zechariah). The prophetic proclamation would start with this coming of the spirit. Another phrase, "the divine spirit entered into" appears in Ezekiel: 2:2; 3: 24. In the same book we find another expression: "Spirit of Yahweh fell upon me" (Ez. 11: 15). It is often said that the *ruah* of Yahweh is upon the prophets: Is. 59: 21; 61:1; Dan. 4:8,9,18; 5:11,14. As the result of this phenomenon, God's words are put in the mouth of the prophets for ever (Is. 59: 21), and they announce the good news to the poor, the broken hearted, the captives, those who mourn and are of a faint spirit (Is. 61: 1-3). It is said that the spirit lifts the prophet up: Ez. 3: 1, 14; 8: 3; 11:1,24; 43:5. Thereby he is led to some other place. The prophet can claim that he is filled with power by the spirit of the Lord to declare to the people their offences and crimes (Mic. 3:8). The spirit is said to send him: Is. 48: 16; Zec. 7:12.

The conscientisation acts of the prophets were meant to bring the people back to Yahweh. Punishment was intended to be disciplinary, a means, not an end. Thus the ultimate purpose of the prophetic proclamation was salvation, to re-establish the primeval rhythm and harmony in the cosmos. The commission given to Jeremiah clearly puts it: "This day I give you authority over nations and kingdoms to root out and pull down⁸, to build and plant" (Jer.1:10). As the punishment fell on the people they were saddened. Is. 63:11-14 gives verbal articulation to their lament. Remembering Yahweh's past salvific acts during the time of the exodus they exclaim, "where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherd of his flock? Where is who put within him (them) his holy spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,

⁸ Although the text contains two more verbs, 'destroy and demolish', they do not belong to the original text.

who divided the waters before him ... who led them through the depths sure-footed as horses in open country, like cattle moving down into a valley, thereby the spirit of Yahweh brought them to rest?" At the calamity the people do not seem to repent of their crimes. Rather they flung question after question at Yahweh, as if He had not done his duty towards them. What he had performed at the liberation from Egypt, he is bound continue even at this time. They could not understand why he has failed them. The divine spirit is mentioned twice. Once the Lord had put his spirit within Moses, their leader, who, because of that, could encounter difficulties successfully. Why the same spirit is not bestowed on their present leaders? Once the spirit of Yahweh gave them rest by bringing them to the promised land. What has happened to that *ruah*? Why should they be denied now the rest which results from their peaceful life in their own country?

Yahweh heard their crying and felt compassion towards these wretched creatures. Through the prophets he proclaimed words of salvation. His vision of a new society, which is a spirit-energized movement was disclosed.

7. Spirit-Dynamism in Eschatological Vision .

In their oracles of salvation the prophets proclaim a new age of the spirit. Then the *ruah* of Yahweh will be poured upon people from on high (Is. 32:15; 44:3; Ez. 39:29; Joel 2:28,29; Zec 12: 10); his spirit will gather them together (Is. 34: 16); it will remain among them (Hag. 2: 5). During the eschatological times justice will reign; nobody will be denied their rights. Yahweh will be a spirit of justice and strength to the judges so that they will judge cases with equity (Is. 28:6). The spirit will enable the people to understand supernatural vision (Zec. 4:6). Let us study in detail the nature of this future spirit-energized-movement.

8. Vision of Revival as Pneumatic Phenomenon

"Our bones are dried up, our hope has perished, our life-thread has been cut" (Ez. 37:11) - thus lamented Israelites who had lost their country, temple and national identity, and were languishing in the exile of Babylon. This misfortune fell upon them on account of their persistent infidelity to Yahweh. Instead of living the divine

ideals for a new society with its structural elements of economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and a religion of God's freedom, they returned to the inhuman structure of Egyptian society with its elements of economics of affluence, politics of oppression and exploitation and static and triumphalistic religion. Thus they defeated God's purpose for choosing them as his own people. The punishments enumerated in the covenant document fell upon them. Most of them met tragic and cruel deaths at the hands of the Babylonians when that foreign army attacked Jerusalem and destroyed it. At their miserable fate the remaining people lamented and became completely desperate. Still they did not repent and cry for mercy from Yahweh. But the God of the Bible did not forsake them. He felt compassion for them and unilaterally proclaimed salvation for them. Ez. 37:1-14 narrates the imminent 'resurrection' of the nation.

The text consists of two parts, a vision narrative (vv.1-10), and its explanation (vv. 11-14). The prophet Ezekiel was carried out by the spirit of the Lord to a plain that was full of bones. The key term which holds together the text is *ruah*⁹. It occurs ten times (vv.1,5,6,8,9, (4 times) 10, 14), which may be translated 'spirit', 'breath', or 'wind' according to the context. It was the spirit that led the prophet out into the plain strewn with the bones of the slain. He was instructed by Yahweh to proclaim that God will bring them together and instil life giving- *ruah* (breath) in them. The result of the proclamation was that the scattered bones assembled into skeletons, and the skeletons were transformed into cadavers with sinews, flesh and skin. Still there was no *ruah* (breath) in them. Then Ezekiel was asked to summon the life-giving *ruah* (breath) from the four *ruah* (winds) to give life to them. As he did so the *ruah* came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Here we find a re-enactment of the creation of human beings in the account of Gen. 2. God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath (*ruah*) of life and the man

⁹ J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Interpretation), John Knox Press, Louisville, 1990, pp.170-174.

became a living being. In this sense one may understand the account of Ez. 37: 1-14 as a new creation. Or, one may call it resurrection. What the vision proclaimed was the resurgence or revival of Israel as a nation. It is the *ruah* of Yahweh that will accomplish it. Indeed, the vision of revival is a pneumatic phenomenon, which brings out a real miracle in the life of a dead nation. The first words of Yahweh to Ezekiel illustrate this fact very clearly: "Mortal, can these bones live?" (v.3). Humanly speaking resurgence of Israel as a nation was an impossible thing. They were 'dead' and scattered like the dry bones in the plain of the vision. But God can work impossible things; he can perform miracles. This fact is asserted in the reply of the prophet: "O Lord God, you know." It is the divine *ruah* which will accomplish this revival or new creation. Yahweh asserts this fact in the explanation of the vision: "I will put my *ruah* within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil" (v.14).

The purpose of this wonderful resurgence is stated twice in vv.13 and 14: "Then you shall know that I am the Lord". The creation of the spirit did not presuppose any merit from the part of Israel. It was fully a gratuitous act. At the reception of this extraordinary grace, the people will acknowledge Yahweh as all of all and all in all of their life. The salvific experience will fill their hearts with gratitude, awe and love for Yahweh, which will transform their new life as that of unceasing faithfulness and devout service of God and his living images in this world.

9. New Covenant as Spirit-Energized Event

The greatest contribution of the OT to humanity is the concept of new covenant - the unilateral, unconditional and everlasting gift of the creator to his creatures. Jer. 31: 31-34 illustrates this theme. Ez. 11: 17-20 and 36: 24-28 develop it by adding new elements. We are mainly concerned here with the texts from Ezekiel, since the role of the spirit is mentioned only there. First the nature of the new Covenant needs elucidation.

As we have seen, Yahweh liberated Israel from Egypt for the purpose of entering into a covenant fellowship with them. His dream was to make them his own loving reflections and living extension by enjoying the *advaita bhava* and *rupa* (undivided

disposition and 'beingness') of the Godhead. Thereby they were supposed to lead a harmonious and divinely focused life, which would be manifested in their altruistic orientations. The covenant law was intended to achieve this purpose, as articulated in Ex. 19: 5-6. Yahweh wanted to make them his treasured possession, holy nation, as well as kings and priests. As kings they had to provide leadership to other nations and bring them to 'rich pastures' (Ps. 23:2), thereby they could enjoy the divine 'rest' (Gen.2:3) and make life a celebration. As the covenant law was written on stone tablets (Ex.24:12; 34:1), the people gradually forgot the divine instructions and went astray from the path of *dharma*. Since the Sinai covenant was conditional, which presupposed the faithfulness of Israel for its validity, their infidelity brought to an end to it. And the covenant curses, which they had undertaken upon them at the eventual unfaithfulness, fell upon them. They were severely punished; they lost their national existence and became political slaves in Babylon.

It was at this juncture that Jeremiah proclaimed Yahweh's promise of new covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34)¹⁰. It amounted to a new creation, a new humanity who could exhibit in their life the fulfilment of the divine dream. At this new age, human will shall be united with the divine will, since the law will be written in the hearts of human beings. Love will be the law. Thus there will be no conflict between willing and doing. Chaotic elements of human existence are done away with once for all. Creator and creatures will form a family; human relationships will be that of the fellowship between brothers and sisters, all of them enjoying equal rights, privileges, as well as obligations. Then justice and peace will kiss each other (Ps. 85:10). The earth will become an aureole of heaven. All these facts are encapsulated in the formula, "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31: 33; Ez. 11;20). All will have experiential and salvific knowledge of the saving Lord, whom they will acknowledge and accept as the all of all and the all in all (*antaryamin*) of their life. Sin which is the symbol of chaos and evil, will be blotted out from their life. To sum up, Yahweh promises them four covenant blessings: intereORIZATION of the law,

¹⁰ H.W. Wolff, *Confrontations with Prophets*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1983, pp.49-62.

realization of covenant fellowship, experiential and integral knowledge of God, remission of sins.

Ezekiel provides inner dimensions to the reality of the new covenant. Twice he proclaims the coming dawn of the new age: Ez. 11: 17-20 and 36: 24-28. The days of gloom will be over; gleam of hope will arise on the horizon of Israel. Let the texts speak for themselves.

Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you back the land of Israel again. They will return to it and will remove all the detestable idols and vile images. I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. They will be my people and I shall be their God (Ez. 11: 17-20).

I shall take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring back into your own land. I shall sprinkle pure water over you and you will be purified; I shall purify you from everything that defiles you, and from the taint of all your idols. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I shall remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes; you will observe my laws faithfully. Then you will live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people and I shall be your God (Ez. 36: 24-28).

Both texts are interrelated. They contain similar ideas, still there exist differences. The first text (Ez. 11: 17-20) begins with Yahweh's promise of bringing Israel from Babylon to Jerusalem¹¹. This coming back will help them to remove from their midst every trace of idols which they formally used to worship. The idol is a symbol of everything undivine. Thus money, body, etc. can become idols. Such a kind of idolatry will make one a divided person (cf.

¹¹ L.E. Cooper, *Ezekiel* (The New American Commentary), Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, 1994, pp. 142-144.

Mt. 6:24) who puts the 'idol' in the place of God. Now Yahweh helps Israel to serve Him with singular devotion. This is made possible by the divine gift of 'one' heart and a new spirit. God will put His *ruah* within them. When the spirit enters, it will possess their whole person. The dynamic *ruah* will never allow any trace of division or disorder within them. Its act is described as surgically removing the heart of stone, which cannot pulsate in accordance with the inspirations of God. Then people will be given a heart of flesh - a living organ, which will be always responsive to God. This new heart will enable them to remain always faithful to the covenant law of love. Thereby Yahweh's dream for Israel will be realised in them. They will be transformed into authentic images of God, and the Lord will become the all of all and the all in all of their life. All this will result from the action of Yahweh's *ruah*.

The second text (Ez. 36: 24-28) speaks of different stages of inner transformation¹². It also begins with Yahweh's promise to bring them back to Jerusalem. Then comes stage I: Yahweh will purify them from what still clings to them from their past life. Sprinkling with pure water stands for the ritual act of cultic purification (cf. Num. 19: 9-22). As in Ez. 11:17-20, the taint of the idols is specially mentioned, like 11: 17-20. At stage II a new heart and a new spirit are promised. After the purification of body comes the purification of heart. Their old *ruah*, which embodied the past life of evil and chaos, will be taken from them, and it will be replaced by the divine *ruah*. What is meant by a new heart is then explicated. The idea of the heart of stone and of flesh is repeated. The nature of the new spirit is then revealed: it is the very spirit of Yahweh, which forms the third stage in inner transformation. This is the greatest gift of God for humankind. As if God is taking away his own *ruah* and putting it within us! Humanly speaking this amounted to supreme sacrifice from the part of God. Now the divine *ruah* becomes ever active. It makes the human will united with the divine will, and renders the observance of the covenant law spontaneous and perfect. The result will be the grace of living with God in the promised land once for all. Life will become an

¹² W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Hermeneia), Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1983, pp. 248-249.

undivided dedication, a complete celebration and eternal 'rest' with Yahweh as His covenant children.

To sum up, the agent of the new covenant is the *ruah* of Yahweh. It is a spirit-energized event which illustrates the divine love and self-sacrifice for humanity.

10. Towards a Charismatic Community

The eschatological community envisaged in the OT is a charismatic community where the divine *ruah* reigns supreme. While Is. 32:15 and Hag. 3:5 refer to it, Joel. 2: 28-32 picturesquely describes it¹³. The new age is designated as the day of the Lord, which dawns after the days of destruction. The era of salvation begins with Yahweh's pouring out His *ruah* on all people. The Hebrew verb *shpk* denotes the act of freely and incessantly pouring out of some liquid. The idea of generosity is implied in that act. In the OT the term is used for pouring out of water (Ex. 4: 9), blood (Gen.9:6), or other liquids. The phrase 'pouring out of the heart' (Ps. 62:6; Lam. 2:19) or of the soul' (I Sam. 1: 15; Ps. 424: 4) connotes an unreserved unburdening of confidences, an open sharing of one's thinking and willing, of one's feeling and insight. Now Yahweh is pouring out His *ruah* unabashedly on human beings without any reservation or inhibition. It serves to establish a new order, a new creation, a new vigorous life, a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1). The degree of the magnanimity of God's act becomes clear when we consider the undeserving and faithless nature of the recipients.

The result of the coming of the *ruah* is stated in three synonymous, parallel statements. The spirit will endow the people with the gifts of prophecy, dreams and visions. All will receive these gifts, irrespective of their age, sex, and status differences. In Joel *ruah* does a different function from that of Ezekiel, where the gift of the spirit makes the people obedient and faithful children of God. In Joel the earnest desire of Moses who wanted all to become prophets (Num. 11: 29) is realised. Here dawns a charismatic age. Yahweh's people are prophetic people who live, move and have their

¹³ H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, (Hermeneia), Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1977, pp.65-70.

being (Acts 17: 28) in His world, visions, dreams and utterances. They make a new humanity who possesses God's ideas, ideals, aspirations and words, which bring salvation, harmony, and celebrative joy in the life of others. They are related and inter-related people, related to God and inter-related to others. Or their relationship to God brings out their inter-relationship. They live enjoying the divine *samadhi*, which is implied in God's rest in Gen. 2: 3¹⁴. This experience will transform their whole life, liberating them from the limitations of space and time and matter. The people of Israel are made direct beneficiaries of the gifts of the spirit for this specific purpose of becoming symbols of the future humanity.

The first sentence of Joel's proclamation of the coming age of the spirit literally reads thus: "Afterward I will pour out my spirit on all *flesh*" (2: 28). The word 'flesh' conveys a rich theological meaning. It gives stress to the weak and frail nature of human beings. The divine *ruah* will alight upon the *agati* who, because of their weak and defenceless situation, do not have any hope for salvation in themselves. Their only hope (*gati*) is in the almighty Lord. This state of mind, one may say, is a prerequisite for becoming recipient of the graces of God (Is. 40: 6; 31: 3; Ps. 56: 4). In Joel 2: 28 it is the totality of Israel that is comprehended by the life of hope in God ('all flesh'). In this new economy of salvation there will be no place for privileged individuals. Till now the prophetic call was limited to very few persons. Now the community as such is elevated to this status in which the members will live in communion and communication with God and fellow human beings. This pneumatic age was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost after the departure of Jesus to heaven (Acts.2).

This charismatic community symbolizes a social revolution. Till that time male and female slaves were never treated as equals by any political or religious authorities. Now they are elevated to a privileged position in the age of the spirit. Only they get specific mention in the text. No other social classes find a place in this proclamation of Joel. Slaves or servants become free citizens of the

¹⁴ Paul Kalluveetil, "The Transcending and Transgressing Man", *Bible Bhashyam* 2 (1986) pp. 94-96.

society of *ruah*. The charismatic community is the family of God, and its members enjoy equal rights and privileges. Spirit-energized life style is the characteristic trait of this community.

As Israel's liberation took place in the midst of portents and terrible signs of Yahweh, so the day of the Lord will be preceded by apocalyptic events. The whole of nature will be in turmoil. Both sun and moon will be affected. Before the coming presence of Yahweh, the entire creation shudders. Their response betrays a sense of awe for the holy and almighty Lord. Nobody can resist the advent of the deity. No evil can stand in His way. He will exterminate the chaotic powers. Only those who submit to Yahweh and call upon His name will be saved. This is the only condition prescribed for surviving catastrophes, and becoming worthy of salvation.

The age of the spirit transforms the whole earth into a paradise (Is. 32:15-20). Then the desert will become a fertile field. The people will sow seed by every stream, and let oxen and donkeys range free. They will live together in righteousness, peace and prosperity. And *ruah* of Yahweh will abide in the community forever (Hag. 2: 5).

11. The Messiah as the Pneumatic Person

In God's vision the leaders of Israel were destined to be spirit-energized persons. But this dream was never realized fully in any of their leaders or kings. Now Yahweh comes with the idea of an ideal leader for the eschatological era. He is the Messiah, the anointed one. As was already said, the early kings of Israel had been anointed which brought upon them the presence of the divine spirit. Hence they could be called Messiahs (I Sam. 24: 7,10; 26: 9,11,16,23; 16:6; II Sam 2:1). The eschatological texts as well as royal psalms designate the future Davidic kings as anointed ones: Is. 7: 14; 9: 2-7; 11: 1-9; Mic. 5: 2-4; Ps. 45: 7; 89: 20,51; 132: 10, 17; 18: 50; 2: 2; 20: 6; 28: 8; 84: 9. As Is. 11: 1-9 speaks of the *ruah* of Yahweh in the life of the eschatological leader, we discuss it in detail.

The portrait drawn by Isaiah stands out as the most charming and elegant one of the future righteous king¹⁵. The prophet begins by comparing the Davidic dynasty to a tree, which has been reduced to be mere stump. This refers to the political downfall of the kingdom. Now comes the promise of Yahweh. A branch will grow out of its roots. This points to the coming Messianic king. Once more a person will be chosen from the insignificant family of Jesse (cf. I Sam. 16: 1-13; II Sam. 7: 18). Just as the spirit of Yahweh once rested upon David (cf. I Sam. 16: 13; II Sam 23: 2f.), the second David will also be equipped for his office by the divine *ruah*. There follows the description of the nature of the spirit. It is the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Through the gift of wisdom the spirit will enable the ruler to see and evaluate everything, everyone, every event, and the ups and downs of life, from the perspective of God, and help others to do so. The spirit of understanding provides the king the grace to discern between right and wrong, separate good from the evil, and to teach others the same. Thereby he would be able to reject undivine and inhuman values, and to state clearly and fearlessly what is wrong, wrong. The spirit of counsel fortifies him to inspire and orientate others to understand the designs of God and to act accordingly. It would make the king an authoritative instructor who counsels others to follow faithfully the salvific ways and means of the era of the divine *ruah*. The spirit of might would bestow on him the divine strength of righteousness (*dharma*). By this inner power he could bring out in this world God's righteousness, justice and goodness. The gift of knowledge would make the Messiah to delve into the interior depths of persons, things and events. This experiential intuition helps him lead the people in the path of salvation. Finally the spirit would fill him with salvific fear of the Lord, by which he would accept and proclaim Yahweh as the Lord of heaven and earth, who arranges everything for the good of His creatures. By this gift the *ruah* makes him a person full of security and confidence. The fear of the Lord turns him into a fearless and worryless person who

¹⁵ Hans wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, pp.459-485.

entrusts everything into the hands of the loving Father. To conclude, the spirit serves as the vital force and resource of the life of Messiah by which he could make others also pneumatic persons.

Deutro-Isaiah presents the Messianic King under the figure of Ebed Yahweh (servant of the Lord)¹⁶: Is. 42: 1-4 and 5-9; 49: 1-6 and 7-13; 50: 4-9 and 10-11; 52: 13-53: 12. Upon him also Yahweh bestows his spirit which enables him to bring forth justice and righteousness to the nations, as truth, on the earth. This pneumatic person also, moves lives and has his being in the spirit.

The effects of the working of the divine *ruah* are described in Is. 11: 3-5. Like God, the Messiah will establish creational harmony by judging between good and evil impartially, i.e., by separating and destroying the forces of chaos from the earth. His righteousness will bring forth salvation to the defenceless people like the poor, the needy and the meek. This act will have a negative impact in the lives of the oppressors and exploiters who stand against Yahweh's plan of salvation. These wicked people will meet a tragic end. The spirit-endowed Messiah will perform this task of establishing God's society on earth with all enthusiasm and faithfulness, the result of which will be the emergence of a new cosmos.

The next verses (6-9) depict the nature of the eschatological age in apocalyptic colours. The whole creation, which was profoundly disturbed by human sin, will be restored to its primeval purity. The enmity that had been prevailing between humans and animals will be once for all done away with. They will form one family, rooted in peace and fraternity. The days of paradise will dawn again. Thus God's dream for bringing a celestial symphony on earth will be realized. This inner transformation and intimate union will take place on account of the knowledge of the Lord by which every creature will acknowledge Yahweh as the all of all and the all in all of one's life. The Messiah could achieve this radical newness on account of the *ruah* which lives and works in him. The pneumatic person creates a pneumatic cosmos.

¹⁶ C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1969, pp. 92-97; 206-217, 225-232, 234-235, 253-269.

Is. 28: 5-6 also speaks of the divine judgement by which the earth will be transformed into a new creation. God is designated here as spirit of justice. Is 61: 1-3 may be entitled as the song of the Messiah on whom the *ruah* of Yahweh dwells. The spirit will be the dynamic force in his life, which will enable him to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release for prisoners and the year of the Lord's favour to humanity. In spirit the Messiah will bind up the broken-hearted, comfort all who mourn and turn grief into gladness, despair into praise. Jesus in Lk. 4: 16-21 declared that this prophecy of Is. 61: 1-3 has found its fulfilment in his person.

12. Conclusion

The Old Testament provides a vision of society as a spirit-energized movement where the vitality and dynamism of the divine *ruah* reign supreme. It draws the picture of a God who is in love with humans and the cosmos. He wants creation to be a living and loving extension of Himself, irradiating His *advaita bhava rupa* the undivided disposition and form of Godhead. His dream of one *nada, thala, laya* found its realization in Jesus Christ, the new Adam and new creation. All are called to be transfigured into this Son of God.

