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Ezekiel

The Spirit (Dis)Abled Son of Man

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Introduction

This article seeks only to begin an exploration of the ways in which the רוּחַ or Spirit¹ (dis)ables Ezekiel as a prophetic witness. This is proposed to be directly tied to the preferential naming of Ezekiel as בֶּן־אָדָם (“son of man”) throughout the book of Ezekiel. Scholars have long contended that this name refers to the human-ness of Ezekiel, but this article proposes to fill a lacuna regarding the rhetorical function of this name as it ties in directly to Ezekiel’s experiences of the Spirit of Yahweh as prophetic witness to and for and as Israel.

First, the ways in which Ezekiel is rhetorically shaped via *Spirit* and *son of man* language will be examined in brief as a means of addressing rhetorical issues in the text (specifically the *illocutionary* function of such)—that is, what the text intends to do to the readers.² Second, this

¹ For a helpful summation and tracing the functions of the “S/spirit” noting ways in which various terms are used and how they might be used, see Daniel I. Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel,” *JETS* 32.1 (1989): 27–49.

² On the use of Speech-Act Theory in relation to the illocutionary speech-acts of Ezekiel 37, see, Jacqueline Grey, “Acts of the Spirit: Ezekiel 37 in the Light of Contemporary Speech-Act Theory,” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 1 (2009): 69–82.

will be followed by the ways in which these terms (*Spirit* and *son of man*) seem to have rhetorically functioned in regard to (dis)abling Ezekiel specifically for prophetic witness in Ezekiel 1–3. Part of the approach used in this section will take up disability studies as an attempted aid to hearing these Spirit (dis)abling texts. Finally, some preliminary considerations in conclusion will be offered toward a broader vision of Spirit-filled (dis)abled humans in Pentecostal contexts.

1. The Spirit and the Son of Man: Rhetorically Shaping Ezekiel

Considerable work has been published on the use and functions of rhetoric in Ezekiel with some offering what may be little more than literary readings without deference to the suasive intent and/or function of this book.³ This article seeks (albeit only in brief) to speak to the suasive intent of Ezekiel with regard to the language of רוח and בן־אדם, and their interrelations within the book by examining the first three chapters. This is by no means intended to speak to all of the ways in which these terms may be functioning within the book, but only to address an initial limited preview of illocutionary intent.

1.1 On Ezekiel's "Spirit"

Ezekiel has been called "the prophet of the Spirit". This is because the term רוח occurs 52 times in Ezekiel making it the most of any of the books of the OT (although Isaiah closely follows with 51

³ Note the footnotes throughout this paper are examples of those seeking to make supposed "rhetorical" comments where many are little more than literary comments and not properly pertaining to "rhetoric" as that which holds suasive intent. On the ways in which "rhetoric" has often functioned as little more than "literary" for many using the term that includes recommendations on how to better note rhetorical shapes within the OT, see, Michael V. Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1980): 1–15.

occurrences).⁴ This lexical count, though, fails to appreciate the diversity of terms used in some synonymous fashion with רוּחַ throughout the book. However, this study is not concerned about the volume of usage, but about *specific* usage of the term רוּחַ in the rhetorical shaping of the text.

It is noteworthy that work among Pentecostal scholars on the “Spirit” in Ezekiel flourishes via dissertations and publications.⁵ The ways in which Pentecostals seem to have taken to this book owes, in no small measure, to the place and function of the Spirit in the book and its intersections within the faith life of Pentecostal communities who also make wide and heavy usage of Spirit language.

For this study, the rhetoric of Spirit will be traced only in a few select passages as a means of offering a preliminary vision toward its rhetorical function within Ezekiel, specific to the language “son of man”. The rhetorical use of Spirit and “son of man” appear to function as properly terms for Israel to live into and out of in their life as creaturely and yielded to the life of the God of Israel. These two terms—“Spirit” and “son of man”—seem to function within the book as paradigmatic not only for the prophet Ezekiel, but as the intent for the community of Israel (and

⁴ These counts are discussed at length including providing a helpful charting of the functions in Ezekiel in Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit,” 27–49.

⁵ For a sampling that covers numerous facets of the role of the Spirit in Ezekiel with a growing number of Pentecostal representations, see, A. Rebecca Basdeo Hill, *Visions of God in Ezekiel: Pentecostal Explorations of the Glory and Holiness of Yahweh* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2019); Pieter de Vries, “The Relationship between the Glory of YHWH and the Spirit of YHWH in the Book of Ezekiel Part One,” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 5 (Fall 2013): 109–127; Grey, “Acts of the Spirit,” 69–82; Alicia R. Jackson, “The Spirit in Ezekiel: The Presence of Yahweh with His People,” *Pneuma* 43 (2021): 377–383; Leonard P. Maré, “Ezekiel, Prophet of the Spirit: רוּחַ in the Book of Ezekiel,” *OTE* 31.3 (2018): 553–570; Wojciech Pikor, “Stwórcze Działanie Bożego Rūah w Księdze Ezechiela,” *Verbum Vitae* 37.1 (2020): 69–87; and Lisa Ward, “A Pentecostal Hearing of Ezekiel: Ezekiel’s Visions by the יְהוָה and the רוּחַ” (Thesis; Bangor University, 2020). For a concise tracing of those doing Pentecostal reception history work on Ezekiel, see, John Christopher Thomas, “Chapter 4: The Spirit, the Text, and Early Pentecostal Reception: The Emergence of a Discipline,” in *Reading Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition: A Reception History* (ed. Daniel D. Isgrigg, Martin W. Mittelstadt, and Rick Wadholm, Jr.; CPT Press, 2020), 63–67.

thus rhetorically for the reading community). The contrastive language of that which is disembodied and properly divine with that which is fully embodied and creaturely are radicalized in their binding together with one another both in contrast and union within the character of Ezekiel. Even in the selection of passages, limitations of space prohibit depth of investigation of the uses within these passages, but the desire is that this initial sampling might open the way for a new vision of the Spirit-ed son of man in Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel finds himself overcome by the Spirit (of Yahweh) by the river Chebar. The vision he has just had of the “living-creatures” and mobile throne of Yahweh reveal the presence of Yahweh among the exiles (even as the vision will pick up in chapter 10 as Yahweh leaves his temple for the exilic community). These four “living-creatures” and the wheels are covered with eyes and face all directions so that nothing is behind or beside them, but all is before them. All of this is said to be Spirit-enabled (1:19–21). Even the wheels within wheels are Spirit-enabled. These creatures and the seeming inanimate chariot are alive with the Spirit of Yahweh. What the Spirit does, they do. Where the Spirit goes, they go. This rhetorically functions to prepare the reader for the experience of the Spirit by Ezekiel. The glorious visionary experience leaves Ezekiel overwhelmed and “facedown” (1:28), but not remaining there forever.

Chapter two finds Ezekiel infilled and raised up to his feet by the Spirit (2:2). The words spoken to him in the first verse to stand on his feet are insufficient apart from the enabling Spirit. The commissioning of Ezekiel to his prophetic task of bearing witness is initiated by the Spirit. While he has been overwhelmed by the divine encounter, the Spirit enables him to stand and to carry out the task before him. The Spirit enables him to affirm the commission committed to him by the word of Yahweh. His commission is to deliver the word of Yahweh to the House of Israel.

Chapter three then offers Ezekiel S/spirit-troubling words (3:14) as he is informed that this word from Yahweh will not be received by the House of Israel because they are rebellious: hard-headed and hard-hearted (2:3–8; 3:7–11). Likewise, the word of the Lord will be given to Israel. Yet it appears that the Spirit will be essential to Israel's receiving the very word committed to them just as Ezekiel was before them, to becoming the very people they have been made and instructed to be. The man, Ezekiel, "hardened by God" (as his name itself means) will be hardened to withstand the hardened House of Israel,⁶ but it will be the Spirit that will transform the hardened against Yahweh into the yielded to Yahweh. This literary gapping concerned with how the House of Israel will be restored remains hanging over the book until the final sections of the book in Ezekiel 36–39 (36:25–27; 37:12–14; 39:29). The reader of Ezekiel is left to wonder at Yahweh's renouncing of the people in their hardness and how Yahweh will resolve this. The rhetorical impact seems intended for the readers to bear the weight Ezekiel himself bears in the "heat" of his "spirit" even as he is Spirit-ed away into a seven-day silent witness under the "heavy hand of Yahweh" (3:14). This "hand" functions also as a synonym in Ezekiel for the Spirit of Yahweh upon Ezekiel.⁷

After seven days, the word of Yahweh appoints Ezekiel a watchman against Israel. Again, it is not until the "hand of Yahweh" came upon him (3:22–23) that he fulfills this commission of Yahweh. Yet the very commission to speak is met by further Spirit-silencing as witness bearing judgment (3:24–26). How can Ezekiel speak what he has been commanded to speak when he is "bound" up in silence by the Spirit? The sins of Israel would be counted against them and indeed Ezekiel would be a silent watchman (and likewise guilty?). Yet the book unfolds the prophetic

⁶ Per Walter Zimmerli, "The Message of the Prophet Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 23.2 (1969): 131–57 (139).

⁷ Ward, "A Pentecostal Hearing of Ezekiel."

witness of Ezekiel not in utter silence but with a fragile life yielded in witness to Yahweh by the Spirit of Yahweh; a Spirit-ed son of man.

James Robson contends that the experiences of רוּחַ by Ezekiel are meant rhetorically “to present Ezekiel as a model for the addressees of the book. His experience will illuminate for them not just *that*, but also *how* the dramatic vision of the future can become a reality in their experience.”⁸ It is argued in this article that this does not press the function far enough though orienting in a similar direction. The function of רוּחַ in its relation to בֶּן־אָדָם serves to expose the failure of the people to be yielded to the Spirit in such a wholistic fashion, but it also functions with regard to the embodied life yielded in all its frailties to the Spirit.

1.2 *On Ezekiel the “Son of Man”*

A return to chapter 1 provides reference to one of the four faces of the four living creatures that looked “human” (1:10) and to “the appearance of a human” upon the fiery throne of Yahweh (1:26). It is not until chapter two opens with Ezekiel’s commissioning that the moniker בֶּן־אָדָם “son of man” will be given to Ezekiel (2:1).

This opening address to Ezekiel by the voice of Yahweh does not use his proper name but calls him “son of man”. The use of this moniker occurs 93 times in Ezekiel as the name Yahweh calls him throughout the book.⁹ The use of “son of man” becomes overwhelming in the speeches of Yahweh to Ezekiel as Yahweh again and again addresses him specifically as “son of man.”

⁸ James Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel*. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 447 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 24–25, original emphasis, but see the extended treatment expounding this reading in part 3 covering pages 173–212.

⁹ Offiong Etuk Udoibok, “The Significance of the Son of Man Terminology in Ezekiel,” *The WATS Journal* 1 (2013): 85–93 (85).

Notably, Yahweh only once refers to Ezekiel as “Ezekiel” (as an aside that is not directed at Ezekiel) and that only when he is indicating Ezekiel as a “sign” (מופת) embodied in the ending of his silence at the news of the death of his wife (24:24)! Thus, every case of Yahweh speaking to Ezekiel, he is called “son of man”. What might be the rhetorical function of this term for the book and thus for the readers?

First, it should be noted that a functional translation of בן־אדם may better be represented by translations such as “mortal,”¹⁰ “human,”¹¹ or “human being.”¹² However, this then obscures the referent in the NT as Jesus’ preferred self-designation and the potential literary and theological connections between Ezekiel’s usage of the language and that of the Gospel writers (a project I intend to take up in the future).¹³ However, the use of בן־אדם as referring to Ezekiel’s human-ness is only part of what may be at play. Odell notes that the moniker “son of man” for Ezekiel functions “to remind Ezekiel of what he has in common with other members of his community.”¹⁴ As such, the character Ezekiel is being reminded of his solidarity with the humanity of the House of Israel. His encounters with Yahweh have not so othered him as to remove him from their community as

¹⁰ See the New Revised Standard Version and the Lexham English Bible footnote on 2:1 says “Or ‘mortal,’ or ‘son of humankind.’ See also Margaret Odell, “You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll,” *JBL* 117.2 (1998): 229–48 (240).

¹¹ See the Common English Bible, New Century Version, Contemporary English Version footnote at Ezekiel 2:1 says it means “mere human” in Ezekiel, while the New English Translation footnote at 2:1 says “It simply means ‘human one’” proposing this “distinguishes the prophet from the nonhuman beings that are present in the world of his vision”, though this seems to miss that the moniker is used throughout the book and not simply with the two chapters pertaining to the living creatures/cherubim.

¹² See the Complete Jewish Bible and the footnotes at 2:1 for the New American Bible Revised Edition and the New International Version (2011). J. Kuhlewein seems to miss the point in following Zimmerli’s “you individual” where this only functions in Ezekiel as a parallel expression to *enosh*, *ish*, and *adam*, “בן,” edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle, *TLOT* (Hendrickson, 1997), 1:244.

¹³ This is contrary to the interpretation of Robert Jenson, *Ezekiel* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Brazos Press, 2009), 28–29, and see particularly 28n32.

¹⁴ Margaret Odell who argues for Ezekiel’s liminality as priest become prophet. See Odell’s article, “You Are What You Eat,” 240.

one of them. Ezekiel remains human, remains exile, remains Israelite. Yet Ezekiel has been changed as one yielded to the life of another and being led along by the Spirit of Yahweh.

Further, the name בן־אדם for Ezekiel not only identifies him as human and a part of the company of Israel, but also “marks him out as a representative man” functioning in a mediatorial fashion.¹⁵ In this way, the name may actually function precisely to highlight his role as the Spirit witness who embodies the message. His human yielding to the Spirit is the witness to Israel of precisely what Israel may and must become. “Israel’s obedience will be the result rather than the cause of deliverance [and transformation], part and parcel of the restoration and certainly not a condition upon which it depends.”¹⁶ We may go further and say that “humankind is ultimately impotent without God” and as living into truest humanity, the Spirit bears witness.¹⁷ It has been argued that the “theological significance” of this title is with regard to human “alienation from God, which [according to this source] is the characteristic sense of the expression in the OT.”¹⁸ Yet, alienation would not necessarily capture the ways in which Yahweh addresses Ezekiel as “son of man” so emphatically, so repeatedly, that it seems less to alienate than to appoint or declare this Spirit-ed messenger as one of them, human, creaturely, needy before Yahweh. Israel (and all readers) must embrace what it means to be human as those who are Spirit-(dis)abled to enter into that eschatological future of Yahweh’s glory in the same way that the one Spirit-(dis)abled in the text of Ezekiel finds himself not being made less human by this, but more human and thus more fittingly called again and again, “son of man”.

¹⁵ R. Andrew Compton, “The Sign-Acts of Ezekiel 3:22-5:17: Formative Rituals of Priestly Identity,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 29 (2018): 47–80 (64).

¹⁶ Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield, 1981), 126.

¹⁷ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, 129.

¹⁸ Chrys C. Caragounis, “בן,” edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE* (Zondervan, 1995), 1:675.

1.3 *The Spirit-(Dis)abling of Ezekiel*

While the Spirit inspires, empowers, and mobilizes Ezekiel,¹⁹ these are not the only experiences of the Spirit for Ezekiel and as such they are not the only intended message calling for response from the readers. The Spirit also *disables* Ezekiel. The argument to be made here is that the Spirit (dis)abling of Ezekiel is meant to open the readers to enact, not in simple mimicry, the message embodied in and by Ezekiel. This is understood to point to how his function as “son of man” serves to call for Israel and readers to likewise be (dis)abled by the Spirit, those who are yielded to the life of the Spirit. This calls for a turn to a brief excursus on disability as we move to witness the (dis)abling Spirit of Ezekiel.

2. On Disability

The working definition of “disability” in this paper makes use of the work of Elizabeth Barnes in indicating “mere difference” rather than “bad difference,” that is, a “minority body” that should not be construed essentially as a defective body.²⁰ This is not to ignore that various forms of disabilities may be, and often are, fraught with very real challenges and pains (existential, emotional, spiritual, physical, social) that speak to a longing for the rightness and goodness of all things. It is to recognize that disabilities may in fact belong to the very essence of our humanity *as creatures* and not simply to our fallenness within creation. This article takes as presuppositional that being human is being those who are addressed by Yahweh as humans who may then be opened

¹⁹ Ward, “A Pentecostal Hearing of Ezekiel,” 216–23.

²⁰ Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 54–77, noting also the use of this functional definition in Luke Zerra, “The Body’s Availability: Ezekiel 37, Robert Jenson and Disabled Flesh,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75 (2022), 118n5.

to Yahweh as human.²¹ It is not the form of embodiment or the functionality, or mobility, or psychology, or sociality, etc., which constitutes humanity, but (taking a cue from Ezekiel) being those addressed by Yahweh as “human-being” that makes them human. This is enacted in fullness by living into the Spirit-filled human life, as Ezekiel himself lived and testified. To be fully human is to be Spirit (dis)abled. This is not to say disability makes one human. The gift of Yahweh in addressing *as* human makes one human in the fullest sense and this is enlivened and enacted by the infused Spirit of Yahweh. Echoing the words of Luke Zerra: “What is needed...is [a] theological anthropology in which the disabled are counted as full persons, one in which capacities or abilities are not requisite for personhood.”²² This Spirit (dis)abling gives all appearance of broken humanity, but this article proposes that this Spirit (dis)abling actually testifies to yielded and open fullest humanity to the work of the Spirit.

The typical theological framework for understanding disability is to default to it belonging only to a consequence of the “Fall” and not properly in the eschaton to our fullest redeemed humanity. It is treated as less than living into our humanity. As if the rest of people who are regarded as “normal” are properly representative of what it means to be human. Ruben Alvarado contends that

disabilities are not the clearest depiction of the Fall; but rather our propensity to divide from, do violence to, and marginalize entire groups of people based on our discomfort with their embodiment [is the clearest depiction of the Fall]. The disintegration of shalom...is most apparent not in the fact that some bodies have limitations but in the self-deception of

²¹ Here I am owing to the influences of the work of Karl Barth and Robert Jenson in general. For an example of another who picks up on this in Jenson, see Zerra, “The Body’s Availability,” 117–22.

²² Zerra, “The Body’s Availability,” 117.

many who believe their embodiment has a better quality of life because they pretend they have no limitation.²³

If Ezekiel's living into his life as "son of man" was to be Spirit-(dis)abled, this opens for the readers (Israel and us) to also be ever yielded in all our creatureliness to the life of the Spirit. Ezekiel's "transformation indicates that Ezekiel himself was the sign or portent of things to come.... In the transformation, Ezekiel not only gives up [the false notion of] his own [independent] identity; he lives out what is in store for his people. The man was the message; indeed, the man became the event."²⁴

3. On Ezekiel's (dis)abling

The ways in which Ezekiel has been diagnosed with all manner of disabilities: mental, emotional, physical, trauma, etc., are vast. Primary among the claimed disabilities are those contending for some manner of mental imbalance (at best) or full-blown psychoses at worst.²⁵ As a generous assessment of many of these publications they have offered analyses which suggest Ezekiel may have lacked certain abilities to function fully or in full health and fixate upon some proposed clinical malady as explanatory of Ezekiel's state. This seems to misinterpret the ways in which as "son of man" Ezekiel is more radically humanized in his being given over to the Spirit. Instead, it posits that the book is seeking a "Spirit" explanation for mental disorder. While this paper does

²³ Ruben Alvarado, "Shalom on Earth as It Is in Heaven," *Cultural Encounters: A Journal for the Theology of Culture* 16.2 (2021): 47–59 (50).

²⁴ Odell, "You Are What You Eat," 248.

²⁵ See, for example, Stephen S. Tuell, who cites numerous articles and books addressing this psychoanalytic approach to Ezekiel in "Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab?: The Method to Ezekiel's 'Madness,'" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36.3 (2009): 289–302; and Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel 1-24* (NICOT; William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 10–11. A significant contribution reading Ezekiel as a text responding to trauma is Ruth Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch als Trauma-Literatur* (VTSupp 154; Brill 2012).

not seek to directly address the many differing claims regarding Ezekiel's mental state, it will pick up briefly on the notions of his apparent (dis)abling in the narrative flow of chapters 1-3 as setting a potential trajectory for hearing the rest of Ezekiel. The two ways in which this article will address Ezekiel's Spirit-(dis)abling is limited to muteness and speaking in chapters 2-3. Numerous other experiences of Ezekiel might be noted with regard to potential disabilities, most notably his immobility/mobility in chapters 2-4, 33, etc. However, this will remain for another article, another day.

Regarding Ezekiel's speech, he is described as both silenced and unable to be silenced, as mute and uncontrollably speaking (3:26-37; cf. 24:25-27; 33:21-22) Ezekiel seems to very nearly lose all personal identity in the overwhelming of the Spirit. He is not the one to determine when or what he speaks as the son of man given over to the Spirit. One scholar even thought aloud whether "Ezekiel seems to become God himself."²⁶ As a Pentecostal minister, I have encountered enough persons in various Pentecostal contexts who likewise claim they could not control when, where and what they speak but are overcome with compulsion by the Spirit (whether this be discerned as the Spirit, remains for the Spirit discerning community). Saint Paul may have something to say with regard to self-control and communal Spirit-ed discernment of the S/spirit/s. Where is Ezekiel to be found in this Spirit-(dis)abling? He is found in the Spirit-(dis)abled son of man. It is in this way that we may regard the "most outstanding trait of the son of man that outlays his creatureliness ... [being] his dependence."²⁷ In this way the visibly disabled testify to the way of all those given over to the Spirit; their embodiment testifies to dependence upon the other. This is the way of Spirit-(dis)abling. The community living into its fullest humanity ("son of man") is

²⁶ Edwin C. Broome, Jr., "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," *JBL* 65.3 (1946): 277-92 (291).

²⁷ Udoibok, "The Significance of the Son of Man Terminology in Ezekiel," 91.

the community yielded to the Spirit (and the community, and even the world) in dependence. Thus, the son of man is one living into his Spirit-(dis)abling.

4. On Ezekiel's muteness and speaking

In Ezekiel three, as previously mentioned, Ezekiel is commissioned as a prophetic watchman for Israel. In this commissioning he is told he must speak whenever he is given a message to speak, otherwise he will be judged by Yahweh as guilty. This speaking is a necessity, but is it a (dis)abling by Yahweh?²⁸ How can speaking be (dis)abling? There are those in life who find themselves compulsively and uncontrollably speaking (there are even clinical diagnoses for such). Yet the words are not to be uncontrolled by Ezekiel or else holding him accountable seems to be invalidated at some level. However, Yahweh specifically says “I will loosen your tongue” (3:27). If Yahweh initiates, what role might Ezekiel play in his speaking? Openness. Faithfulness. It is as if Ezekiel has been lost in the glory of Yahweh and when one hears and sees Ezekiel, one sees and hears Yahweh. And yet, what one sees and hears is the “son of man” as the potentiated message en-Spirited *to, for, and as* Israel.

Note that Ezekiel is commanded to speak and yet it is the Spirit that “enters” (2:2; 3:24) and “lifts up” (3:12, 14) the “son of man” to obey every word of Yahweh. It is also the word of Yahweh that Ezekiel will be opposed and rejected by the House of Israel (3:7–10), but also that he will be silenced by Yahweh (3:26). Ezekiel will be mute by the (dis)abling Spirit.²⁹ But how is the

²⁸ It is according to Sarah J. Melcher, *Prophetic Disability: Divine Sovereignty and Human Bodies in the Hebrew Bible* (Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability; Baylor University Press, 2022), 64.

²⁹ There have been three typical views of Ezekiel's muteness: (1) it was punctiliar and partial, (2) only symbolic and not practiced, and (3) it was total silence but only for two years. Walter R. Roehrs, “The Dumb Prophet,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29.3 (1958): 176–86 (177).

son of man, as watchman, to be kept guilt-free if he remains silent? Will Ezekiel be held accountable for not warning Israel by remaining silent? Is his muteness also of the Spirit and thus a witness *to, for, and as* Israel? It seems Ezekiel is silenced from making intercessions on behalf of the people of Jerusalem (in similar fashion to Jeremiah) and properly warning them of the impending judgment. Instead, the verbally silent son of man bears muted, but active, witness against them until Jerusalem falls. At which point his words return and the shift of rhetoric moves from primarily judgment to primarily restoration.³⁰ Those with ears to hear may in fact hear the persuasive eloquence of Ezekiel's silent testimony as a watchman written large in the inscribed words of Ezekiel, but also upon the Spirit-(dis)abled son of man to live into the fullness of divine intent.³¹

5. A Few Concluding Remarks

The rhetoric of Ezekiel the Spirit-(dis)abled son of man may function to separate him from Israel, but more particularly to identify him *with* Israel as bearing a unique role *to, for, and as* Israel in their ideal submission to the Spirit of Yahweh with openness and fidelity that they must also experience.³² Thus, Ezekiel's Spirit (dis)abling as the son of man embodies "Israel's possibilities and limitations" simultaneously and intentionally.³³

³⁰ Tuell, "Should Ezekiel Go to Rehab," 296.

³¹ Walter R. Roehrs, "The Dumb Prophet," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29.3 (1958): 176–86 (178).

³² This follows the trajectory set by Margaret Odell who argues for Ezekiel's liminality as priest become prophet. See Odell's article, "You Are What You Eat," 235–36.

³³ Jeremy Schipper uses this language regarding the rhetorical function of Mephibosheth in the Deuteronomistic History, though it seems rather fitting as a function of the rhetoric of Ezekiel. See his *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story* (T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies 441; T&T Clark, 2006), 128.

The best of human-ing cannot properly live into this divine intent apart from divine en-Spiriting. The will *to human* (as a verb), as conceived apart from the (dis)abling Spirit, is a will to reject the divine prerogative and seek self-assertion. However, the one living as truly human, as the “son of man”, is the one most wholly given over to the life of the Spirit of Yahweh. It is this openness, vulnerability, humility, and recognition of need as genuine need, that opens up the humanity of human-ing by and through divine intent and enablement. This is the witness of Ezekiel the Spirit (dis)abled son of man. May we also be such Spirit (dis)abled humans in our commitment to live into God’s future for us.

Another potential trajectory of Ezekiel’s rhetoric as the Spirit (dis)abled son of man calls for the Pentecostal church to include welcoming all in their individual embodiment. It is imperative to receive from those (dis)abled. To hear. To see. To embrace. To love. To serve. To testify. Not only in claims of healing (which must also be given from time to time as those who testify that Jesus heals), but more particularly in the fullest welcome as we are accounted ourselves as Spirit (dis)abled communities living in the time of the already and the not yet of God’s fullest kingdom. If we will bear witness through obedience to the words of the Spirit (dis)abled son of man in Ezekiel, then we must also behold and enjoin the witness to the Spirit (dis)abled among us *as us*.

Third, the Pentecostal community that is right to testify, proclaim, and live into the Full Gospel message that “Jesus heals” may endanger itself if fixating on visible disabilities as primary for the healing of Jesus. The tendency may be to see those with visible disabilities and treat such as always in need to prayers for special healing. This ignores the non-visible disabilities of all people. It further ignores the ways in which the Spirit may be disabling as enabling to live more fully into the life of Jesus as the community of the redeemed and redeeming. Perhaps the congregation has become hard-hearted and/or hardheaded (as the House of Israel before it) who

“know” how, when, and what the Lord heals and therefore these expectations become the standards. What if the deaf and blind in need of healing among us are those precisely who have failed to see and hear the witness of the Spirit (dis)abled among us?

Fourth, the witness of Ezekiel as the Spirit (dis)abled son of man bears witness in the Pentecostal community through the Spirit (dis)abled Son of Man from Nazareth. He was nothing to desire. He was broken. He was humiliated. He was lifted up by the Spirit and the Spirit came upon him. He was crushed. He spoke only what he heard. He remained silent as a sheep before its shearers. The humanity of Jesus as the son of man was the truest humanity, the one given wholly to the life of the Spirit in the fullness of human-ing.

Finally, the resurrection holds the hope of those with disabilities and those seemingly wholly abled to altogether be transformed into the image of that Spirit (dis)abled Son of Man. The (dis)abling Spirit is the one transforming us into that Son of Man: yielded, faithful, alive to every possibility of the life of God.³⁴ It is this openness and receptivity to the (dis)abling Spirit of *that* Son of Man that takes us up into “the humanity of God,”³⁵ a humanity not separated from God as othered, but taken up into God’s own self-giving life.³⁶

³⁴ Jennifer Anne Cox argues against the ways in which Amos Yong proposes our disabilities may in fact be a part of the eschatological future when they are identifying of our us-ness as persons, *Autism, Humanity and Personhood: A Christ-Centered Theological Anthropology* (Cambridge Scholars, 2017), 147–83. For Yong’s well-articulated position, see Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (W.B. Eerdmans, 2011).

³⁵ The phrase “the humanity of God” is taken from the translation of Karl Barth’s “*Die Menschlichkeit Gottes*,” see “The Humanity of God,” pp. 37–65 in Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (trans. John Newton Thomas; Westminster John Knox Press, 1960).

³⁶ Alvarado, “Shalom on Earth as It Is in Heaven,” 47.