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All Suffer the Affliction of the One: Metaphysical Holism and the Presence of the Spirit

By Brad J. Kallenberg

When Copernicus and Galileo proposed that the earth circled the sun and not the other way around, Christian believers faced the difficult prospect of surrendering a long-held belief that had seemingly undeniable support from the biblical text. After all, Joshua reported that the *sun*, not the earth, stood still; what could this mean if not that the sun orbited the earth? Today, centuries later, believers unanimously hold a heliocentric view of the solar system and are somewhat embarrassed by the ignorance of our pre-Enlightenment brothers and sisters. Ironically, however, such embarrassment masks the possibility that we ourselves may one day be found guilty of having held notions yet to be realized as "backwards."

We face just such a possibility with our conception of the Holy Spirit's presence. It is my suspicion that, contrary to some of our most trenchant modern sensibilities, we are mistaken when we construe the presence of the Spirit in largely individualistic terms. Yet in this case, it is not the biblical text that is misleading. In contrast, a close inspection of the biblical record and of its earliest interpreters reveals that the earliest Christians naturally understood the presence of God's Spirit primarily in *corporate* rather than individualistic terms.

The holism that marks first- and second-century conceptions of community life tends to strike our modern ears as a form of primitive hocus-pocus. However, very recent discussions of "emergence" and "supervenience" in philosophical circles may provide us moderns with the conceptual resources necessary for better owning the biblical record. In this paper, I will argue that biblical notions of the Spirit's "indwelling" and "filling" ought to be primarily understood as descriptive of the Spirit's relation to the believing community and perhaps only secondarily in rela-

Since the Enlightenment, systematic theologies have almost invariably described the Holy Spirit in terms of an interface between God and human individuals *qua* individuals. Since the biblical text leans the other way, there are good reasons for seeking out better conceptual resources for understanding the presence of the Holy Spirit than can be offered by reductive theories of metaphysics that became so influential in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This paper surveys recent work in supervenience and emergentism in order to suggest ways for recapturing a more holistic, which is to say more biblical, pneumatology. **Brad J. Kallenberg** is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton.

tion to believing individuals. I begin by examining the biblical texts and the witness of the second-century apologists. I then proceed to summarize philosophical discussions regarding emergence and supervenience. I end with a suggestion that we can recover the biblical sense more fully by appropriating the language of emergence and supervenience: (1) the Body of Christ *emerges* from the system of individuals living under a particular form of life; and that (2) descriptions of the Holy Spirit's presence *supervenes* upon descriptions of this particular form of communal living.

Holism in the Biblical Text

Paul writes to the motley group of believers in Corinth that "there are many members, yet one body." Moreover, God has so arranged this body that "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it . . . "[1] It is difficult to convey the strength with which Paul writes this last sentence. He does not say that members of a believing community *ought* to suffer with one of their afflicted members, or that the affliction of the one is *grounds* for empathy and sacrificial care. Rather, he uses an indicative verb to express a fact: *all suffer the affliction of the one*. Paul's language is clear on this point: the body of Christ is so constituted that no individual member can escape affecting or being affected by the condition of the rest.[2]

Now, I am puzzled by this, not by Paul's view of the body, but by the curious fact that contemporary believers who take biblical texts very seriously display a consistent tendency to conceive the action of God's Spirit in individualistic terms. To cite but one example, Millard Erickson construes the corporate action of the Holy Spirit as exhausted by the piecemeal distribution of spiritual gifts to individuals. Erickson consistently emphasizes the primacy of the Holy Spirit's action toward *individuals*: "The work of the Holy Spirit is of special interest to Christians, for it is particularly through this work that God is *personally* involved and active in the life of *the* believer."[3] In Erickson's eyes, the Holy Spirit initiates the *individual* into the Christian life by playing the dominant role both in conversion, which he calls "the *individual's* turning to God," and regeneration, which he defines as "the miraculous transformation of the *individual* and implantation of spiritual energy."[4]

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[1] 1 Cor. 12:20, 26, NRSV.

[2] Stanley Hauerwas observes that "our normal reading of I Corinthians 12:12-25 as a 'metaphor' is a mistake. It is not as if the church is, like the body, interconnected, needing all its parts even the inferior one. The church is the body from which we learn to understand out particular bodies." See his "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self'," in *Sanctify Them in the Truth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 82. For recent helpful exegesis on the nonmetaphorical use of "body" in the Corinthian correspondence, see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).

[3] Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 265, emphasis added.

[4] Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 268, emphasis added.

I take Erickson's views as symptomatic of a broader pattern of individualism in contemporary theological conversations. I suspect that we are so thoroughly steeped in individualism that we have great difficulty even imagining what pneumatology could be about if not about the empowerment of the individual. Yet consider an alternative reading of the biblical record.

When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to the details of the coming kingdom, he responded with the words, "The Kingdom of God is . . . *within you.*" Or did he say, rather, *"in your midst"*?[5] We rightly object on theological grounds that the kingdom ever be considered "within you," since Jesus' original audience included, among others, his nemeses the Pharisees. Rather, Jesus seems to be intimating that he himself was the embodiment of the kingdom who stood *in the midst* of the those who interrogated him. Unfortunately, this reading strategy appears to be an exception to our more general exegetical practice. What I find most puzzling is the instinctive way we assume that phrases such as ἐντὸς ὑμῶν or ἐν ὑμῖν *ought* to be translated as "within each of you" rather than "in the midst of you all." For example, the NASB translates Romans 8:9 as, " . . . you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Here again the Greek pronouns are plural—as they nearly always are—and therefore, the text is probably better rendered in the plural: "you all are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells *in the midst of you all.*"

I am not denying that the Spirit indwells and fills individuals. Peter, after all, was full of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. What I *am* questioning is whether in the long run the notion of "individual filling" makes any sense at all when treated in isolation from the communal form of life that is conceptually linked with the corporate filling of the Spirit.

Consider Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Believers typically turn to 5:18 as the *locus classicus* for individualized Spirit-filling. However, note that the notion of Spirit-filling there is qualified by five participles, the first and last of which—namely *speaking* and *subjecting*—are especially bound up with intracommunal living. Apparently, believers cannot be filled with the Spirit apart from speaking and acting in a certain manner toward others.[6] Moreover, the object of Paul's address is plural: "Be *you all* filled with the Spirit." Since this is a corporate command, are we not obligated on textual grounds at least to entertain the possibility that the content of the action envisioned is likewise corporate in nature? After all, Paul rarely concerns himself with "new persons" but with a singular "new person." Recent New Testament scholarship confirms that the Pauline "new person" in Ephesians is not a new nature internal to each regenerate individual, but a new corporate personality spelled out most clearly in chapter 2: Christ himself is the communal peace having made

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[5]Luke 17:21.
[6]One might respond that the Spirit's filling of an individual is logically prior to changes in behavior and speech. Yet is this the emphasis of the text? It seems to me that the text assumes that filling and acting are internally related, two sides of the same coin, neither of which can be rendered logically (nor chronologically) prior to the other.

out of both groups—Jews and Gentiles—one new *corporate* person (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον). The reality of this new entity has radical implications for the individual. An individual does not possess identity solely on the basis of his or her *difference* from others but on the basis of his or her *connection* with them. Thus, believers are each members of one another (4:25) by virtue of the new reality, the church, which Paul identifies as Jesus' "body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (1:23).[7] As a whole, this body constitutes the temple of God's Spirit who indwells—*not the bricks*— but the building as a whole (1:21, 22).

Similar lines of reasoning might be teased out of other Pauline passages. For example, Luke Timothy Johnson argues helpfully that Paul's concept of practical wisdom (prudence—φρονεῖν and its cognates) demands that we see pneumatology as internally related to Christian moral behavior within the believing community.[8] Likewise, Richard Hays, commenting on Romans 12, writes,

the primary sphere of moral concern is not the character of the individual, but the corporate obedience of the church. Paul's formulation in Romans 12:1-2 encapsulates the vision: "Present your bodies (*somata*, plural) as a living sacrifice (*thysian*, singular) holy and well pleasing to God. And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . " The community, in its corporate life, is called to embody an alternative order that stands as a sign of God's redemptive purposes in the world.[9]

This emphasis on the corporate presence of the Spirit makes sense out of the earliest apologists' employment of descriptions of the believing community in order to trump all objections raised against Christianity. Consider a concrete example excerpted from the pages of a second century apology written by Aristides to Caesar Hadrian,

But the Christians . . . show kindness to those near them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly . . . they do good to their enemies . . . if one of them have bondsmen and bondswomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is

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[7]NASV. Perhaps the phrase τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου might be illuminated by the paraphrase: "the one filling each by virtue of filling all."

[8]Luke Timothy Johnson, "Transformation of the Mind and Moral Behavior in Paul" (paper presented at the AAR, San Francisco, CA, 1997).

[9]Richard B. Hays, "Ecclesiology and Ethics in I Corinthians," *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994): 33. A third example of supporting biblical scholarship can be found in Dale Martin's recent *The Corinthian Body*. Martin claims to have uncovered a more complicated understanding held by early Christians regarding the relation between individual believers and the believing community than is typically expressed within contemporary theology. Rather than construe the community as constituted by its members, first-century believers likely considered their individuality as constituted by the Body of Christ. See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). For a theological-ethical appropriation of this concept by Stanley Hauerwas, see "What Could It Mean for the Church to Be Christ's Body? A Question without a Clear Answer," in *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994/1995), 19-32.

not found among them; and they love one another . . . And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their own homes and rejoice over him as a very brother . . . And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity . . . And if there is any among them that is poor and needy, and they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food . . . Such, O King . . . is their manner of life . . . And verily, *this is a new people, and there is something divine in the midst of them.*[10]

Apparently, Aristides felt that he could not speak intelligibly of the Spirit's presence without preceding this undefined notion with several pages of text describing the manner in which Christians lived with each other.

Ludwig Wittgenstein may shed some light here: "the *words* you utter or what you think as you utter them are not what matters, so much as the difference they make at various points in your life . . . *Practice* gives the words their sense."[11] If I read Wittgenstein correctly, the pair of statements "Behold, how they love one another!" and "God is among them" are not descriptions of two states of affairs that stand in causal relation to each other; they are two sides of the same coin. The cash value of talk about divine presence is precisely that of talk about a Christlike manner of living. We are only fooling ourselves (not to mention attempting to fool outsiders) when we maintain in the absence of concrete practical differences between our community and others' that, nevertheless, talk about the Spirit's presence must mean "something." No. If our theology is to resonate with the New Testament and second century apologists, we must ground our pneumatological statements in concrete descriptions of community life.

To sum thus far, the earliest Christ-followers moved effortlessly between descriptions of community life and descriptions of the Spirit's presence precisely because they understood these descriptions to be internally related. Just as faith was embodied in action, so too the Spirit's presence was embodied in the hurly-burly of the christomorphic community. Perhaps our fluency in this earlier, richer, biblical language of the Spirit's corporate presence has atrophied, while our modern penchant to construe fundamental spiritual realities in primarily individualistic terms has grown overly strong. Speculation as to why or when this fluency was lost is outside the scope of this paper. However, I suggest that recent discussions in philosophy of mind and philosophy of science may provide us with conceptual resources for enriching our language once more. It is to a summary of these discussions that I turn next.

[10]Aristides, "The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers (First Series). Original Supplement to the American Edition*, Volume 10, ed. Allan Menzies (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 276-278. Emphasis added.

[11]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch, English translation with the amended 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 85e.

Metaphysical Holism

Metaphysical holism names the school of thought that resists the modern urge to explain complex wholes simply in terms of their parts. Molecules, holists aver, are *more than* the sum of their constitutive atoms; human beings are *more than* the collection of their respective cells; communities are *more than* the aggregation of their members. Since the nineteenth century, this resistance has taken two forms. In the case of "emergentism," something real is thought to *emerge* when a system reaches a certain level of complexity giving the emergent reality (the whole) real downward influence over its members. In the case of "nonreductive physicalism," descriptions of the systematic whole are said to *supervene* in an irreducible way on descriptions of the parts. Both notions, emergence and supervenience, may profitably illuminate aspects of pneumatology that seem overlooked today.

Emergence

Emergentism is a version of metaphysical holism born of nineteenth century romanticism. Like the Romantics, emergentists were unhappy with the scientific (which is to say, deterministic) descriptions of the world that seemingly precluded the possibility of real novelty. Unlike the Romantics, emergentists did not think that real novelty indicated an intrusion into the material world by an *immaterial* property, force, or entity. (Belief in such an invasion is called "vitalism.") Consequently, emergentists tried to retain the spontaneity and creativity of romanticism but edged away from the romantic notion of vitalism.

In his poem "The Metamorphosis of Plants," the Romantic thinker Johann W. von Goethe portrays "Life" as an animating force that throbs in the life cycle of flowering plants.[12] His perception of a perduring vitality enabled Goethe to classify all the parts of the plant, as well as phases of its life, as different modes of this single life force.[13] At the turn of the twentieth century, Oswald Spengler applied Goethe's romantic vision to an analysis of culture. In Spengler's mind, science inevitably describes the *world-as-nature* in terms of cause-effect pairs that operate on the microcosmic scale. But when science tries to think macrocosmically, it unwittingly assumes that the explanatory power of its theorems depends on the integrity of the entire cause-effect chain linking the present with the past. Thus, for example, Darwinism must *postulate* the existence of transitional types between species even when evidence for these is lacking. For the same reason, turn-of-the-century scientists tended toward reductionism; even properties as significant as "life" and "free will" were thought to be completely explainable by reference to purely physical parts in a purely aggregative causal arrangements under the constraints of general

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[12]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "The Metamorphosis of Plants," in *The Poems of Goethe* (New York: Lovell, Coryell, & Co., 1882), 289.
[13]M. W. Rowe, "Goethe and Wittgenstein," *Philosophy* 66 (1991): 283-303.

laws of nature.[14] Spengler objected that such a stance necessarily overlooked the pulsating presence of the life force that alone provides the real unity of what he called the *world-as-history* on the macrocosmic scale.[15] Other romantics joined Spengler in envisioning life as a force that manifested its periodicity through the "forms" embodied in living things—even human culture as a whole. In other words, not only are individual human beings alive, the species itself has a kind of life cycle, and human life as a whole is the progressive actualization of the "form" of humanity. Thus, cultures "evolve" in the same way that animal species evolve, namely, by the *spontaneous emergence of new and unrelated modes of life*. Spengler contended that this is the only way to make sense out of the historical fact that empires rise and fall without transitional types serving as causal links from one empire to another.[16]

In this way, the romantic explanation did what scientific reductionism could not do: give prominence to the apparent interconnectedness of all things living. It was this explanatory power of romanticism that emergentists sought to preserve— yet without all the hocus-pocus associated with vitalism. For example, C. Lloyd Morgan argued that the steps forward taken by the process of evolution were *novel* and in an important sense *discontinuous* with any real or imagined causal chain, simply because the emergence of new species is a brute fact; no further explanation was needed. In terms of cosmogeny, Morgan held that psychophysical events *give rise* to life, which *give rise* to mind and from which *emerges* spirit, even deity.[17]

At stake for all emergentist accounts is the distinction made in the nineteenth century by J. S. Mill and G. H. Lewes between *resultant* (sometimes called *hereditary* or *mechanistic*) forms of causation and *emergent* (or *nonmechanistic*) forms of causation. The former refer to the broadly Humean view of nomological regularity, while the latter signify those that do not succumb to nomological description.[18]

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[14]C. Lloyd Morgan crafted his version of emergent evolution to displace four unacceptable and rival explanations: vitalism, mechanism, preformationism or substance dualism, and metaphysical reductionism. I have simplified his list for sake of clarity. See T. A. Gouge, "Emergent Evolution," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing & The Free Press, 1965), 2: 472-477.

[15]Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, [1926-8] 1946).

[16]Spengler, *Decline of the West*, II: 32-33.

[17]Similarly, Samuel Alexander lists five emergent levels: space-time, matter, life, mind, deity. Later accounts were more circumspect with respect to deity. For example, Hilary Putnam and Paul Oppenheim first conceived of a "mereological" ontology that began with elementary particles which gave rise to atoms which gave rise to molecules, then cells, multicellular organisms, biological individuals, and finally, social groups. See Gouge, "Emergent Evolution," 2: 475.

[18]See Achim Stephan, "Emergence—A Systematic View on its Historical Facets," in *Emergence or Reduction? Essays on the Prospects of Nonreductive Physicalism*, eds. Ansgar Beckerman, Has Flohr, and Jaegwon Kim (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 25-48. See also Mario Bunge, *Causality; The Place of Causal Principle in Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 17-19, 198-219. Bunge himself complains that romanticism is susceptible to an "organismic view of the block universe, in which there is place neither for chance nor freedom." On his view, causal determinism "leaves enough holes in the universe to let chance work as an ontological category" (116). See also Ernest Sosa, "Varieties of Causation,"

Emergentism enjoyed a brief heyday in the 1920s but fell on tough times with the advent of quantum physics.[19]

However, since the late 1970s, there has been a renaissance of emergentism occasioned by the inability of reductive physicalists to account adequately for the apparent causal power, which, for example, the human mind is commonly supposed to exert over the physical world. As Paul Humphreys notes:

> For if mental properties are causally impotent vis-a-vis physical properties, the traditional worry about epiphenomenalism confronts us: What is the point of having them in our ontology if they are idle? Abstract objects escape this worry, for we do not expect them to do causal work, but mental properties are retained in part because we believe them to affect the course of the world.[20]

Emergentism is once again becoming respectable, although today it is commonly thought of in connection with the reality of the human mind (vis-a-vis the brain) rather than the reality of World spirit or Life force or God.

The easiest way to begin getting a handle on contemporary emergentism is to recall the familiar hierarchy of scientific disciplines. The discipline known as particle physics is distinct from chemistry precisely because it studies a different class of phenomena, namely, those having to do with sub-atomic particles. Chemistry cannot be reduced to physics precisely because it studies properties unique to the molecular, rather than atomic, level of complexity. Of course, some properties, such as mass, *are* simply additive. However, other properties can be thought of as distinctive, unique to a given level of complexity; such are the particular domain of that scientific discipline. Thus, stereoisomerism (the study of 3-D structural differences between molecules with identical constituent parts) at the level of chemistry has no analog at the level of physics, because for molecules, but not for sub-atomic particles, three-dimensional structure is functionally significant (for example, "right-handed" vs. "left-handed" enzymes). This fact tempts us to say that a new *entity* is being studied at this level of complexity despite the fact that such an entity is made up entirely of atoms, which is to say, elements that comprise the next lower ontic

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in *Causation*, eds. Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 234-242.

[19]See Brian McLaughlin, "The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism," in *Emergence or Reduction?*, 49-93; see also R. E. Tully, "Emergence Revisited," in *Pragmatism and Purpose: Essays Presented to Thomas A Goudge*, eds. L. W. Sumner, John G. Slater, and Fred Wilson (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 261-277. Unfortunately for the emergentists, C. D. Broad had built his case for emergentism on what classical physics regarded as the "fact" of the nonpredictability of chemical properties. However, the advent of quantum mechanics, with its surprising successes to predict just such properties, fueled relentless attacks on emergentism by very robust physical reductionists. Eventually, emergentism died the death of a thousand qualifications when Hempel and Oppenheim conceded that in the face of indisputable scientific progress, perhaps emergentism was no more than a stop-gap theory—a temporary way to talk about matters that would eventually succumb to purely physicalist explanation.

order. This mereological picture is repeatable. Moving up: molecules constitute cells, and properties unique to the cellular level *emerge* giving justification to biologists' treatment of cells as "real" in their own right. On this view, the so-called "soft sciences," such as sociology, are seen to lie farther up the same mereological hierarchy as the hard sciences. In the case of sociology, human individuals constitute a social group, and the social group instantiates properties unique to that group, a fact that justifies treating the *group* as a causal entity in its own right.[21]

Many (if not all) emergentists will characterize the relationship between adjacent levels in the hierarchy with the several features.[22] The most important of these is *downward causation*: macro-properties have top-down causal influence on the parts that constitute the system. Thus, mental events have real causal influence on brain states.[23] Similarly, as Durkheim was the first to discover, social facts (namely, group

[20]Paul Humphreys, "How Properties Emerge," *Philosophy of Science* 64 (March 1997): 2.
[21]In addition to Achim Stephan's essay cited above, see Brian McLaughlin, "The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism," in *Emergence or Reduction?*, 49-93. See also Arthur R. Peacocke, "Reductionism: A Review of the Epistemological Issues and Their Relevance to Biology and the Problem of Consciousness," *Zygon* 11, no. 4 (Dec 1976): 307-334.
While early versions took an ontological cast, contemporary expressions of emergentism may be taken simply as linguistic in form: the concept of emergence is useful for talking about properties of systems. This avoids on the one hand, the supposed difficulties inherent in unfalsifiable ontological commitments and, on the other hand, the difficulty of believing that each sentence of psychology, for example, can be translated into sentences about physical events (a position called semantic physicalism). Ansgar Beckerman summarizes this latter problem thus: "Every time we try to explicate the meaning of the mental expression in terms of behavioral dispositions we find ourselves in the situation that we cannot formulate the conditions of the disposition except by using other mental expressions." Ansgar Beckerman, "Introduction—Reductive and Nonreductive Physicalism," in *Emergence or Reduction?*, 6.
[22]See Stephan, 27-45; McLaughlin, 48-52. There are five features generally mentioned in addition to downward causation. First, nonadditivity: the whole is greater than the arithmetic sum of its parts because new properties (perhaps even new entities?) emerge that make each level of complexity "discontinuous" with the level of its constituent parts. Mario Bunge defines emergence this way: "Let P be a property of a complex thing x other than the composition of x. Then (i) P is *resultant* or *hereditary* if P is a property of some components of x; (ii) otherwise, that is, if no component of x possesses P, P is *emergent, collective, systemic* or *gestalt*" (cited in Stephan, 31). Second, novelty: emergent properties are a function of the complex and are not instantiated at the level of the parts. For example, there is no analog to wetness for an isolated H_2O molecule. Third, nonpredictability: neither the laws which describe the emergent property nor the laws which describe the regularity of the transition between levels are deterministic (in the Laplacean sense). This leaves us necessarily unable to discover or predict these laws prior to empirical observation of the complex. Fourth, nondeducibility: because one set of base conditions can give rise to a variety of complexes, and, because two or more distinct base conditions can realize the "same" emergent property, the emergent property cannot be thought of as deducible. Fifth, radical epistemological contingency: because emergent properties are nondeducible and nonpredictable, we must face the necessarily incomplete state of human knowing. In a recent essay Paul Humphreys notes that once we construe the world in terms of levels we open ourselves to the wrongheaded question, "Which level is more basic than the others?" Of course this question is simply another version of the reductionism that emergentists want to disabuse us of. Consequently, Humphreys argues that we ought to abandon the levels model altogether. See Paul Humphreys, "Emergence,

properties such as belonging to a Protestant Church) predisposes individuals in this group toward certain behaviors (in this instance, toward suicide).[24]

A Conceptual Assist from Emergentism

Despite our strong tendency to consider the status of the individual as more fundamental to the workings and identity of the community than the other way around, the language of emergence may give us a way to understand the dynamic relation in which believers stand to the whole: the Body of Christ emerges from the system of individuals that embodies a particular form of life.

Saying that the Body of Christ *emerges* from a group of believers whose matrix of relations is configured in the *imitatio Christi* has the advantage of emphasizing the fact that the faithful community is itself crucial to both the salvation and sanctification of the individual. Augustine's dictum, "Outside the church there is no salvation" (*ad extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), does not make some sort of good work (for example, church membership) a prerequisite for salvation. It simply states a fact— the individual who neglects participation in the new relational configuration that constitutes the Body of Christ stands outside that which is being saved.

Similarly, an emergentist outlook opens the possibility of top-down influences by the community upon the individual members in ways that transcend spiritual disciplines undertaken on the individual level (such as prayer, Bible reading, fasting, etc.).[25] Negatively stated, the spiritual poverty of the believing community places, in an important sense, an unavoidable upper limit to the spiritual health of the individual and beyond which ceiling no member can rise despite a host of isolated efforts on his or her part.[26] Positively stated, the emergent social reality, the Body of Christ, may exercise top-down persuasiveness on those outsiders that come within range of its language and life, by *showing* at the corporate level what simply

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Not Supervenience," *Philosophy of Science* 64 (Proceedings) (March 1997): S337-S345. See also his essay, "Understanding the Not-So-Special Sciences," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34 (Supplement. Spindel Conference 1995) (March 1995): 99-114.

[23]For a neuroscientific defense of downward causation see the works of R.W. Sperry such as "Discussion: Macro- Versus Micro-determinism," *Philosophy of Science* 53 (1986): 265-270. For a neurobiological example see Josie Glausiusz, "The Chemistry of Obsession," *Discover*, June 1996, 36. For a philosophical defense see Paul Humphreys, "How Properties Emerge" and "Emergence, Not Supervenience." For biochemical explanation and defense see Arthur R. Peacocke, *The Physical Chemistry of Biological Organization* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1983).

[24]Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 189-190.

[25]Of course, the opposite scenario is also possible: a deficiency in the form of intra-communal life exercises a negative top-down influence on its parts. (Surely we call this a dead church.)

[26]1 Cor. 12:26 says that the suffering of the one, *in fact* (note the indicative verb, συμπάσχει), entails the suffering of the whole. The text does not limit the sort of suffering that is distributed throughout the Body merely to physical or emotional loss. Rather, the point is that believers are mystically—or mereologically—connected within the Body and thus the spiritual health of each is bound up with the spiritual health of the other and of the whole.

cannot be *said* on the level of the individual. We have already witnessed Aristides' apologetic strategy of appealing to the remarkable shape of life in the believing community. A similar example can be found in another second century apologist. In Athenagoras's mind, truthful description of the Christian community always trumps any and all objections raised against the gospel:

> But among us you will find uneducated persons and artisans, and old women who, if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth: they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give of those who ask of them, and love their neighbors as themselves.[27]

Such a strategy is fully commensurate with the Scripture's insistence that the *church* is the "pillar and bulwark of the truth," rather than the other way around.[28]

The concept of emergence affords the first part of an enriched pneumatology. If community life is an emergent property that cannot be reduced to the sum of properties manifested by the parts (in this case, the members of the body), and if community life has real downward causal power over its constitutive members, then we are obligated to look at community life under an aspect different than that of merely an aggregative description of individual actions; there is a patternedness and reality to the whole that must itself display Christlikeness if we are to intelligibly say that the Spirit is present among us.

Supervenience

In addition to claiming that the Body of Christ is an irreducible social reality that must figure prominently in Christian pneumatology, a second conceptual assist for pneumatology can be found in the notion of "supervenience." The nature of theological language is such that descriptions of the divine presence cannot simply hang in space; theological descriptions mean something only when framed by particular linguistic practices within a determinate form of life. I claim, in particular, that descriptions of the Spirit's presence *supervene* upon descriptions of the believing community's form of life. In order to unpack the significance of this claim, I must recount a little history.

If emergentism began with romanticism and edged away from vitalism toward a moderate center, supervenience began at the other extreme, with physicalism, and moved toward the center by edging away from reductionism. The term was first used by Richard Hare to describe G. E. Moore's contention that a pattern of human behavior in the *physical* world can be given a *moral* description; moral properties can be thought to "depend" on physical properties, yet without being

[27]L. Russ Bush, ed., *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 44.
[28]1 Tim. 3:15 NEB.

reduced to these.[29] For example, we might naturally say: "Mother Teresa gave her life serving the poor in Calcutta. This is morally good." Did Mother Teresa's moral property of goodness *cause* her to behave in ways that she did? Or did her behaving in such-and-such ways *cause* her to gain a property called moral goodness? Here, causal questions are wrongheaded. Rather, we have two ways of describing Mother Teresa:

    a.   Mother Teresa gave her life serving the poor in Calcutta. (Physical)

    b.   Mother Teresa is morally good. (Moral)

Now the question becomes "what is the relationship between these two descriptions? Clearly, we cannot say that the second is entirely independent of the first. Rather, the second in some sense "depends on" the first for its meaning and veracity. (If Mother Teresa had lived her life in wanton greed and self-service, it would not dawn on us even to describe her as morally good.) Moreover, we cannot speak of this dependence as if it were an entirely accidental feature of *this present* social world. We say instead that the "dependence" between the two above claims is strong enough to warrant the assertion that caring for the poor in a manner that resembles Mother Teresa is *always* morally commendable—on this or any other conceivable planet.

The notion of supervenience was originally employed to do this job: moral descriptions *supervene* on descriptions of physical behavior. However, today the term "supervenience" appears most frequently in discussions surrounding the mind-body problem. It was in this context that Donald Davidson resurrected Hare's term in his own 1970 lecture "Mental Events."[30] Davidson explains that mental event language *supervenes* upon descriptions of physical events. This means simply "that there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but different in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respect without altering in some physical respect."[31]

The central concern *appears* to be the nature of the relation between mental properties and physical properties. Is the connection law-like? If so, is this nomological regularity due to a *mechanistic* connection from physical events (brain states) to mental ones? If the connection is causal in the ordinary sense, then mental events reduce to physical events; determinism follows. However, Davidson avoids reductionism by denying that the connection between the physical and the mental is law-like, hence predictable and deterministic. By "supervenience," he is raising the

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[29]For a brief history of the concept see Jaegwon Kim, "Concepts of Supervenience," in *Supervenience and Mind*, 53-78.

[30]Davidson's 1970 landmark essay, "Mental Events" is reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1980), 207-225. Davidson's position is most vigorously explicated (and consequently opposed) by Jaegwon Kim. See his *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[31]Cited in Ansgar Beckerman, "Introduction—Reductive and Nonreductive Physicalism," 11.

possibility of a *nonmechanical* "because of" in the following sentence: "individuals have their mental properties *because of* their physical properties."[32]

But notice what else Davidson is doing by employing the concept of "supervenience": he is framing the discussion in *linguistic* rather than ontological terms. As in the case of Mother Teresa, at stake is not the direction of causation—whether her goodness causes her behavior or vice versa—but rather the nature of the relationship between two complementary *descriptions*. Similarly here: at stake is not whether mental events *cause* brain states or vice versa, but whether the notions of "mind" and "brain" are in some sense complementary and interdependent descriptions of human experience. In other words, we must speak of both mental events (for example, intentionality) and brain states (for example, synapse firing) to give a complete description of the events that comprise our lives.

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[32]It is important at this juncture to understand what Davidson is not saying. Davidson has drawn fire from Jaegwon Kim for utilizing supervenience to defend the reality of both mentality and physicality without envisioning a nomological connection between the two. See Beckerman, "Supervenience, Emergence, and Reduction"; Jaegwon Kim, "The Nonreductivist's Troubles with Mental Causation," in *Supervenience and Mind*, 336-357, "Multiple Realization and the Metaphysics of Reduction," in *Supervenience and Mind*, 309-335, and "'Downward Causation' in Emergentism and Nonreductive Physicalism," in *Emergence or Reduction?*, 119-137. Kim parodies nonreductive physicalists as supposing that "To be real is to have causal power" (Kim, "Downward Causation," 135). In Kim's view, Davidson, *et al*, "accord full ontological status to emergent properties: not only are they real and genuine properties of things in the world, *in the same sense in which basic physicochemical properties are real*, but in some ways they are richer and fuller features of the things they characterize" (Kim, "Downward Causation," 134; emphasis added). Kim fears that nonreductive physicalists are claiming that mental states do work not done by physical states. This zero-sum game evidences Kim's confusion: to say that mental causation works *to the exclusion* of physical causation is the very category fallacy that supervenience seeks to overcome. I suspect that for Kim the phrase 'mental event' refers to something out there in the real world in a manner no different than the phrase 'physical event' refers. Given this outlook, Kim *must* object to Davidson or else surrender his own physicalist ontology.However, Davidson does not conceive the world as one thing and language as another. (For a discussion of Davidson's views of language see my "The Gospel Truth of Relativism," in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 53, no. 2, (2000):177-211). Following Wittgenstein, Davidson views language as constituting, or being internally related to, the human world. Thus, Davidson is free to speak of "reality" in a variety of language games and also to ask the question of the relationship between the language game of mental events and the language game of brain states. The real issue for nonreductive physicalists is not a consideration of the relation between properties or entities as Kim wrongly imagines. Rather, it is a question of the relation between *descriptions*. Does this mean that for Davidson the only difference between mental events and brain states is a "linguistic" one? Wrong question—for that way of putting the objection only has bite for someone who holds that language *corresponds* to reality or that language is somehow *ontologically inferior* to "reality" in the same way that a photo of me is ontologically inferior to me.

Now we are in position to see how the concept of "supervenience" might enrich current pneumatology, especially by helping us overcome our contemporary penchant to speak of the Spirit's presence in purely individualistic terms. In particular, I suggest that descriptions of the Holy Spirit's presence are of the same sort as moral claims: they supervene on descriptions of the communal form of life.

In one sense, my appropriation of the language of supervenience (and emergence) may simply be another way of making what Wittgenstein called a "grammatical point." For example, the word "chair" gets a grip in our lives via our multiple activities involving chairs.[33] A "grammatical" mistake in this case would be expressed by the question, "Is this chair intelligent?" A grammatical remark, then, is simply a statement that points out that the ways in which we ordinarily use the word "chair" disallow our speaking of a chair's intelligence. So too, ordinary language prevents us from inquiring about the *honesty* of the letter "e" or the *wetness* of social justice. In the case of pneumatology, the grammatical remark I am trying to make is that talk of the Spirit's presence may be vacuous unless associated with a particular shape of community life. What do claims about the Spirit's presence amount to if not the way believers live with each other?

Please do not mistake what I have tried to say. Discussions of emergentism and supervenience might be easily and naturally associated with process theology. However, process thinkers (as well as other versions of panentheism) make ontological claims about the nature of the divine substance that supposedly enables God to interact with the physical world. In contrast, I am not making an ontological claim about the divine substance. I am not saying *God* supervenes upon the community. I am saying that *descriptions* of God's presence supervene upon *descriptions* of the believing community's form of life. In other words, *claims* such as "God is here" have determinative meaning if and only if a communal form of life is explicated in the same context.

Why the communal form of life and not that of the individual? Because the meaningfulness of language depends on the linguistic practices of a *community*. If Wittgenstein can be trusted, a sentence's meaning is not some occult thing that rides piggyback on a string of vocables. Rather, what we call a sentence's meaning is the use to which it is put within the context of a community's form of life. Thus, to understand a sentence requires us to look for how the speaking of a given sentence meshes with the rest of life. For example, people are bound to misunderstand claims about God's forgiveness if these are spoken against a backdrop of a community that fails to practice forgiveness.[34] The practice of forgiveness in community

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[33]Wittgenstein wrote, "It is part of the grammar of the word 'chair' that *this* is what we call 'to sit on a chair'." *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 24.
[34]Mk. 11:25, Mt. 6:16.

becomes the form of life upon which intelligibility of statements about divine forgiveness hinges.

Irenaeus hinted at what I call the supervenience of the description of the divine presence upon descriptions of the form of communal life when he rejected Gnostic claims of direct knowledge of God (that is, knowledge unmediated by any social life). Rather, God and nature (*physis*) are categorically different. We are unable to know God *in se*, but we come to know God via the image of God stamped in various media—namely, Jesus and the believing community. What Irenaeus identified as the "image" of God, then, was the pattern of relationality: the primary pattern was the relationship of Jesus with the Father that became embodied in the Gospel story; secondarily, the pattern of the intra-trinitarian relationality was reproduced in the Christian community as mutual humility, service, and kenosis. Thus, while God cannot be known *in se*, for God is wholly other, the configuration of this relationality can be described, or better, *shown*, by the narrative of Jesus and by the story of historical Christian communities.[35] Is not the character of God thought to be revealed by the way his worshippers sold themselves into slavery to feed the poor?[36] In Irenaeus's mind, the *telos* of human existence is salvation, which on his account is nothing less than the realizing of God's likeness in the realm of human community.[37]

Some may object that my suggestions have mortgaged the farm; my use of supervenience (in particular) appears to outlaw certain ontological commitments we hold regarding God. Who can imagine a less satisfying trade than a God who "does stuff' and to whom we are "personally related" for a set of mere grammatical points? Fortunately, this dilemma is artificial.

Grammatical remarks gesture toward the real. On the one hand, attention to the grammar of the conceptual language that believers speak prevents the "refutation" of their claims as if they were empirical propositions.[38] On the other hand, grammatical points have the power they do because they reflect a "realism without empiricism."[39] The speaking of the Christian language within the context of the believing community creates and fulfills the conditions for its own reality: a whole

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[35]My exegesis of this point is indebted to Rowan Williams who cites Irenaeus with commentary, "For when the word of God was made flesh, He established both these things: He showed us the true image [of God in humanity] by Himself becoming what was in fact His own image; and He established and restored the likeness [of humanity to God] by making humanity resemble the invisible Father by means of [His action as] the visible Word." Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, 2d rev. ed. (Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 1990), 29.

[36]1 Clement 55:2.

[37]Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, 30. Of course, the narrative of Jesus belonged to, and was the crucial part of, the longer OT narrative of Judaism which gnosticism explicitly rejected.

[38]This is precisely the sort of advantage logical positivists had over turn-of-the-century fundamentalists. See Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 36-61.

[39]See Brad J. Kallenberg, "Changing the Subject in Postmodernity: Narrative Ethics and Philosophical Therapy in the Works of Stanley Hauerwas and Ludwig Wittgenstein" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 377-387.

new world (καινὴ κτίσις—2 Cor. 5:17) is created for the community that speaks and lives thus. Such a linguistic community is itself an emergent reality that gathers up others into a mode of speaking that is itself partly constitutive of the *praxis* which gives sense to its language. In Johannes Fisher's words, "There is a kind of knowledge which is practical in the sense that it does not just state reality but rather first of all places the perceiving agent into this very reality."[40] Within the form of life that believers inhabit by grace, they *are* entitled to robust ontological commitments— namely, beliefs in the reality of God's Spirit, of the community, and of oneself. Bridge builders calculate wave functions and rely on the "reality" of *imaginary* (!) numbers to tell them which bridges won't spontaniously collapse. Surely religious believers are as justified in their commitment to the reality of God's Spirit.[41]

An important consequence of a linguistically sensitive pneumatology is the fact that no clear boundaries need to be drawn between the realm and role of God and that of human believers. Reinhard Hütter urges that we understand this complicated form of life under the double aspect of *paraclesis* (exhortation). In other words, the Apostle's words "You are the body of Christ!" (1 Cor. 12:12) is *both* a promise *and* a claim. Unfortunately, we typically dichotomize God's activity and human activity such that we take the "indicative" as a reference to "God's already accomplished activity," while taking the "imperative" to name our human activity. In contrast, Hütter explains that "*paraclesis* thematizes God in the presence and activity of the *paracletos*, the third person of the Trinity, in such a way that our activity is *transformed* and, at its very best, only joins the Spirit's activity."[42] In this sort of pneumatology, the distinction between God's activity in the midst of our community and the communal life itself begins to be blurred in a way that rivals the mystery of the trinity.

Conclusion

I think that the notions of emergence and supervenience may prove useful to discussions of the Spirit's presence in community on several counts. Most obviously, these two concepts enable us to avoid the language of "causality" and thereby

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[40]Cited in Reinhard Hütter, "Ecclesial Ethics, the Church's Vocation and Paraclesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 2 (fall 1993): 446.

[41]W. V. O. Quine defended augmenting ontology—with gods, irrational numbers, physical objects, and other "myths"—in order to "simplify our treatment of experience." See "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *The Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951): 41-42. Daniel Bonevac has shown that ontological commitments remain intact for speakers of language governed by supervenient relationships. Only some form of "ontological supervenience" could eliminate other ontological commitments, and then only do so by implementing some presupposed background theory. See Daniel Bonevac, "Reduction in the Mind of God," in *Supervenience: New Essays,* ed. Elias E. Savellos and Ümit D. Yalçin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 133-134.

[42]Hütter, "Ecclesial Ethics, the Church's Vocation and Paraclesis," 443.

escape the sorts of confusions so typically prominent in discussions of divine action.[43]

Second, this language gives us a way to formulate our beliefs more in keeping with the historical position of the church. As Clark Pinnock notes, for 1,500 years the church worshiped God sacramentally by conceiving of a physical side to the spiritual and a spiritual side to the physical in a way that avoided matter-spirit dualism.[44] They conceived the spiritual and the physical as flowing together, providing them with a robust understanding of God's presence in the sacrament. So too, Calvin and Luther insisted that God's presence in the Eucharist was more than mere symbolism. Since Descartes, their views have been considered by some to be philosophically embarrassing. Yet the notions of supervenience and emergence may give us a respectable way to reclaim our heritage by showing a way to avoid dichotomizing the physical and the spiritual, on the one hand, and to understand, on the other hand, that the material and formal conditions for speaking about the Spirit's presence are *broader* than mere ritual—they encompass the entire form of communal life.

To say the same thing differently, the notions of emergence and supervenience are but reminders of the close connection between how believers speak (theology) and how the church lives (practice). In particular, emergence teaches us that the whole is real and deserving of attention if we are to "attain . . . to a [corporate] mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."[45] Supervenience underscores this lesson by reminding us that concrete theological claims are vacuous unless spoken within arm's length of the community that incarnates, however imperfectly, the story of Jesus.

Finally, the notions of emergence and supervenience give us a way to say what we have wanted to say all along: the Spirit of God is present "where two or three are gathered" in a manner that the Spirit is not present with an individual believer.[46]

[43]Thus, I am *not* saying that God's presence supervenes upon a certain communal form of life—that is tantamount to pantheism. In my estimation this is exactly the error that Dennis Biefeldt makes in his article, "God, Physicalism, and Supervenience," *The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 1-12. Likewise, Martin Buber insisted that relationality is logically prior to existence but because of his unitarian view of God, he saw divine relationality as external to God and was therefore forced to conclude that "emergence" expressed a reciprocal dependence between Creator and creation. See *I and Thou*, a New Translation with a Prologue "I and You" and Notes by Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 130-132.

Rather, I am saying that the *descriptions* of God's presence supervene on the description of a Christomorphic form of community life; that's the best that we can do. Although I've focused attention on Davidson in this essay, perhaps R. M. Hare's original usage is closer to what I mean to employ.

[44]Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 113-147.

[45]Eph. 4:13 (NASB).

[46]It is important to note that Mt. 18:20 begins (postpositively) with gar, thus identifying God's presence with the communal actions of binding and loosing discussed in vv. 18-19.

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