An Emerging Pneumatology: Jürgen Moltmann and the Emerging Church in Conversation*

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Abstract
The emerging church has recently gained attention in regards to its liturgical innovation and postmodern methodology. Viewed through the lens of Jürgen Moltmann’s theology, however, the emerging church is not merely another church growth movement but is in fact reflecting key pneumatological principles, emphasizing and exhibiting a more holistic perspective on the broad work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in this world.

Keywords
pneumatology, Jürgen Moltmann, emerging church, Holy Spirit

I. Introduction
By placing Jürgen Moltmann and various leaders of the emerging church movement in conversation, a new holistic perspective on pneumatology in the church begins to take shape that allows experience and reason to both contribute to a holistic theology. This perspective understands the kingdom of God as a pneumatological reality emphasizing relationship rather than power, politics, or territory. In this relational kingdom, the Spirit works to increasingly bring the world into the perichoretic fellowship of the triune

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* This paper was previously presented at the Joint Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society & the Society for Pentecostal Studies with the Wesleyan Philosophical Society and the Society for the Study of Psychology and Wesleyan Theology, Duke University, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC, March 14, 2008.

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God. That which expresses this kingdom among us is the more complete and lasting evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.

I will begin this conversation by introducing the conversation partners, spending a little more time with the emerging church which might be, for many, an unknown contributor to church and theology. Following this, I will explore nine traits of the emerging church that Moltmann’s writings will help to identify as pneumatological. Finally, I will show how the fruits of this conversation can help provide a framework and guide not only for the emerging church, but also for all those who are interested in a full theological and practical exploration of pneumatology.

II. The Conversation Partners

The name ‘emerging church’ derives from a website developed in 1999 by Karen Ward, then working at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America headquarters. She was frustrated with the attempts to minister to younger generations. Others, many of whom had been addressing the same issues for a while, began to coalesce around this name. In continued conversation with one another, certain trends and definitions began to take shape that helped unite the loose amalgamation of participants. It became clear the Western church no longer constituted Christendom and response to the broader

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1 Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, Emerging Churches (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 30. However, there seem to be different sources that led to the movement as a whole adopting the name. Dan Kimball writes, ‘When I wrote the book The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations, I used the term because I first saw the organization, Leadership Network (www.leadnet.org), using it. They used to describe themselves as “advance scouts for the emerging church.” I liked this use of the word “emerging”, because it felt like an adventurous exploration of new horizons, which the Spirit of God was leading amongst churches in our emerging culture’; ‘The Emerging Church and Missional Theology’, in Robert Webber (ed.), Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), pp. 81-105 (83).

2 In 1996 Dieter Zander began New Song, considered the first ‘Generation X’ church that catered to the children of Baby Boomers. ‘Where the flock likes to rock’ was the motto. It shared many of the values of what later became the emerging church, however with many distinctions as well. It is seen as a precursor more than an early full fledged expression. I attended this congregation from 1991 to 2003. Cf. Robert Webber, Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches, pp. 9-18, for an excellent and brief study of the historical development of emerging churches.
culture required a missional stance. Thus, the key term of ‘missional’ began to increasingly shape emerging thought and practice.

In 2005, Eddie Gibbs and his student Ryan Bolger sought to gain a more comprehensive view of this diffuse movement. They spent five years collecting and analyzing data from emerging churches which they gathered together in their book *Emerging Churches*. This book helps to define the emerging church in its broad expression. Here they note that ‘identifying the emerging church with youth church is to miss the point’. Instead, it is much more accurate to see emerging churches as ‘missional communities arising from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus who are seeking to be faithful in their place and time’.

Living in postmodern communities does not mean fighting postmodernity, as many conservative congregations have sought to do. Rather, ‘taking postmodernity seriously requires that all church practices come into question’. They continue by noting that ‘to be missional is to go way beyond strategy. It is to look for church practices that can be embodied within a particular culture. In other words, theologies given birth within modernity will not transfer to postmodern cultures.’ Church practices express and embody theology. This is not simply a question of practical theology. Practices and experiences reflect theology just as much as theology leads to practices and experiences.

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3 It should be noted that the emerging church is not simply a liturgical strategy to reach younger generations, even if popularly defined as such. Gibbs and Bolger write, ‘Popularly, the term emerging church has been applied to high-profile, youth oriented congregations that have gained attention on account of their rapid numerical growth; their ability to attract (or retain) twentysomethings; their contemporary worship, which draws from popular music styles; and their ability to promote themselves to the Christian subculture through websites and by word of mouth’ (Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 41).

4 A distinction can be made between ‘missional’ and ‘emerging’ not entirely unlike the distinction between ‘charismatic’ and ‘Pentecostal’. Emerging churches tend to emphasize fresh starts and new communities, while ‘missional’ expresses an ideal that can find a place within new or within established settings. However, for the sake of convenience I have decided to use the term ‘emerging’ to signify the whole of the emerging/missional church movement (EMC). A distinction should also be made between ‘emerging church’ and ‘Emergent Church’ the latter being a more formally organized group of communities and leaders who reflect emerging principles. Not everything emerging is found in Emergent, however, and Emergent is not the full extent of emerging. Thus critics should note this distinction and not immediately see the whole movement as monolithic.

5 Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 28.


7 Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 34.

8 Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 34.
And at the core of this theology is a de-emphasis on ecclesiology and a renewed emphasis on a broader perspective of the kingdom of God. According to Doug Pagitt, emerging churches see ‘the church as not necessarily the center of God’s intentions. God is working in the world, and the Church has the option to join God or not.’ This perspective pushes the expressions to now discover more adequate theology.

Mark Scandrette, an emerging leader from San Francisco, notes,

The emerging church is a quest for a more integrated and whole life of faith. There is a bit of theological questioning going on, focusing more on kingdom theology, the inner life, friendship/community, justice, earth keeping, inclusivity, and inspirational leadership … Overall it is a quest for a holistic spirituality.

It does not take a great familiarity with his works to realize this is in many ways the quest of Jürgen Moltmann as well, albeit from an entirely different direction:

My image of theology is not ‘A safe stronghold is our God’. It is the exodus of God’s people, on the road to the promised land of liberty where God dwells. For me, theology is not an inner-church or postmodern dogmatics, designed only for one’s own community of faith. Nor is it for me the cultural study of the civil religion of bourgeois society. Theology springs out of a passion for God’s kingdom and its righteousness and justice, and this passion grows up in the community of Christ. In that passion, theology becomes imagination for the kingdom of God in the world, and for the world in God’s Kingdom.

Instead of approaching this from the direction of church planting and missions, Moltmann has pursued this imagination from the side of systematic theology. Yet his intent has not been an isolated study of arcane knowledge. At every point, from the beginning, he sought to bring systematic theology to intersect with questions of lived life. Indeed, this is at the core of his theological journey. ‘My experiences of death at the end of the war, the depression into which the guilt of my people plunged me, and the inner perils of utter resignation behind barbed wire: these were the places where my theology was born.’ Instead of pursuing these answers in the context of church ministry, however, Moltmann pursued advanced degrees and increasingly advanced

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12 Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, p. 4. He adds that these ‘were my first locus theologicus, and at the deepest depths of my soul they have remained so.’
thought, as the questions of why he was alive—and others were not—urged him deeper and farther. But even as he has contributed some of the most engaging thought to systematic theology, he has consistently sought conversation with those who answered the questions of life and God through practical ministry.  

The mission of the Spirit is the mission of Christ, which is the redemption and liberation of this whole world. Thus a holistic pneumatology has to, as Moltmann has shown, embrace all of life, in every sphere, and in every direction. This insists upon experiences that bring a community out of the particular church service and into the whole of the created reality. Yet, because of the nature of the Spirit to deflect attention towards Jesus and mission, it is not enough to simply listen for places where the Spirit is most discussed. Instead, we have to look for signs. And we need conversation, conversation that brings together consideration with actions, so that one can highlight the other and bring holistic understanding to a very diffuse topic.

III. The Practices of the Emerging Church as Pneumatological Emphases

Gibbs and Bolger highlighted nine practices which ‘are common to these innovative churches’ and which help illustrate common, shared ideals. However, when we view these practices from the perspective of Moltmann’s thought, it becomes clear these practices are more than liturgical innovations.

13 ‘These two theologies, the academic and the popular, must relate to each other, show consideration for each other, and learn from each other. If academic theology does not find its way to ordinary people, it loses its foundation. Without the church, Christian theology cannot exist as a university discipline. It will become diffused and lose itself in the science of religions. On the other hand, popular theology loses its reasonable character if it pays no attention to academic theology, or if it despises that theology’s competence’ (Moltmann, Experiences in Theology, p. 11).


15 ‘Nine practices are common to these innovative churches, though not all nine are common to each emerging church. Each emerging church, however, does possess three core practices. The other six practices are derivative of these three core practices’ (Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, pp. 43-44). In my book It’s a Dance: Moving with the Holy Spirit (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2007) I added ‘holiness’ as a tenth trait that can also very much be described as a pneumatological practice in and beyond these emerging churches.

16 ‘This might be better illustrated by an alternative framework created by Ryan Bolger in a later article. Here he describes the emerging churches according to five core ‘kingdomlike’
Instead, these practices are illustrating a deeper and more profound experience of the kingdom of God and can be considered, with Moltmann’s help, not only shared practices but also the foundation of an emerging pneumatology.

The first core practice that Gibbs and Bolger identified was a renewed emphasis on Jesus. This includes and goes beyond an emphasis on the cross or forgiveness for sins. The emerging churches seek to identify with Jesus, placing his life, teachings, and values at the center of their own, seeing his whole incarnation as a model for church and life. ‘However difficult and complex, there is no better model for missionary activity than the way of Jesus, and it is in the life of Jesus, the gospel, and the kingdom that emerging churches receive their blueprint for mission.’ The focus is not placed on the liturgy or the hierarchy or other outward signs of church organization. The emphasis is continually Jesus. Everything else becomes relative to this center, with flexibility of approach and form pursued in order to best enhance the model of Jesus within each particular context. More specifically, it is the model of Jesus as found in a few particular scholars. ‘The emerging church relies heavily on the New Testament scholarship of N.T. Wright and to a lesser extent the work of Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder and missiologists David Bosch and Lesslie Newbiggin, among others, for its understanding of Jesus, the gospel, the kingdom, and the missio Dei.’

On the surface, this seems a Christological emphasis, not pneumatological. Yet the focus is not on the nature of Christ or any of the classical Christological questions. The emphasis is on the mission of Jesus, a mission that Moltmann emphasizes as being wholly pneumatological. ‘The criterion for life in the movements: 1) a communal movement; 2) a movement of reconciliation; 3) a movement of hospitality; 4) a movement of freedom; 5) a movement of spirituality. ‘Following Jesus into Culture: Emerging Church as a Social Movement’, An Emergent Manifesto of Hope, (eds.) Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), pp. 131-139 (135-136). Cf. Tim Conder, ‘The Existing Church/Emerging Church Matrix’, An Emergent Manifesto of Hope, pp. 98-107 (100).

17 ‘If we only view worship through the atonement, we don’t focus on Jesus’ teaching on this life and on being a kingdom-minded disciple. I also think we need balance with a holistic Jesus in our teachings; that is, we certainly need to be speaking of Jesus as a friend and full of love, but at the same time we need to focus on him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings who one day will judge the earth. Too often churches seem to go to polarizing extremes’ (Kimball, ‘Emerging Church and Missional Theology’, pp. 100-101).

18 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 62.

19 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 49. These influences point towards a historical understanding of Jesus and a practical application of ethics more than philosophical musing or metaphysical obsession. These influences also belie the assumption that emerging churches have wholeheartedly taken up the deconstructivist aspects of postmodernity.
Discipleship is not simply seeing Jesus as a good teacher of ethics. The Spirit both emphasizes and empowers a life reflecting the life of Jesus in thought and action. ‘The indwelling of the Spirit brings the divine energies of life in Jesus to rapturous and overflowing fullness … The Spirit makes Jesus “the kingdom of God in person”, for in the power of the Spirit he drives out demons and heals the sick; in the power of the Spirit he receives sinners, and brings the kingdom of God to the poor.’ This is the mission that Jesus claimed in Lk. 4.18–19, and the mission which the Spirit of the Lord binds upon all those who follow Jesus. ‘The Spirit whom the disciples experience, and with them the community of believers, bears the impress of Christ. Through the Spirit they enter into Christ’s saving and life-giving fellowship. In the expiring of the life-giving Spirit they recognize Jesus as the Lord of God’s rule.’

The second practice of the emerging churches as identified by Gibbs and Bolger is ‘transforming secular space’. In essence, this means an end to the perceived division between secular and sacred, emphasizing instead God’s broad work in this world that is not limited by ecclesiastic boundaries or by notions of dualism. ‘Sacralization, the process of making all of life sacred, represents the interaction of kingdom and culture. Emerging churches tear down the church practices that foster a secular mind-set, namely, that there are secular spaces, times, or activities.’ By enforcing the idea there are special places and times set aside for God, an attitude develops there are places and

22 ‘The kingdom of God, we might say, is what happens between Jesus and the sick, between his power and the faith of men and women. The two things have to come together. When they do, we talk about an experience of the Holy Spirit. The presence of God’s kingdom is discovered in the experiences of the Spirit like this. The future of this experience of the Spirit is that kingdom. So today too we experience the coming kingdom in the present Spirit of God who brings us to life and makes us living people’ (Jürgen Moltmann, Jesus Christ for Today’s World, trans. Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994], p. 15). The first work of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament is not the gift of tongues at Pentecost, it was the conception of Jesus in Mary. So too can we say this is still a primary work of the Holy Spirit, bringing Jesus into this world through those who participate with the Spirit.
23 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 68. Cf. Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), p. 100, who writes, ‘When practicing the missional discipline of incarnation, we need to always have our eye to the Lordship of Jesus and the exclusive claims consistent with his nature. How far is too far? I suggest that it is when we refuse to bring aspects of our cultures and lives under the Lordship of Jesus—that simple.’ The whole of Hirsch’s chapter 3 is focused on the emphasis of Jesus in missional communities.
24 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 66.
times where God is not. Thus, there becomes a split between religious events and regular life, with God increasingly limited to specialized roles. God, however, does not limit himself to such roles and emerging churches seek to explore the fullness of God’s work. ‘Sacralization in emerging churches is about one thing: the destruction of the sacred/secular split of modernity.’

The breaking down of the sacred and secular can result, however, not in increased understanding of the sacred, but rather a diminishing of the sacred as churches become increasingly imbued with the values of the surrounding culture. Rather than being salt, the Church loses its saltiness. This is true if the goal is merely to be relevant. However, ‘these churches do not use cultural expressions because they are trendy but because they are rooted in people’s lives, and this is the only way to be honest before God’. Honest before God because it is assumed God himself is not limited to the institutions or settings that the Church has often set aside for him.

These aspects have been set aside because of a misplaced understanding of his holistic work of liberation as it ‘merged into late antiquity’s Gnostic religion of redemption’. Pursuit of the Spirit has been placed as a contrast to pursuit of the world, and thus the most supernatural, unworldly aspects of worship have been emphasized as the taste of what will be. Yet, as Moltmann writes, ‘we shall be redeemed with the world, not from it’. He continues by noting ‘Christian experience of the Spirit does not cut us off from the world. The more we hope for the world, the deeper our solidarity with its sighting and suffering.’

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26 And is true not only in ministry but also in theology, as so much of modern theology illustrates.
28 Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp. 67-68, writes, ‘When we gather in our normal-looking living room like space, it is so we can talk about the unusual things of God and the call to live a life in the Kingdom of God. We infuse abnormal practices into this normal place. We sing, pray, confess, eat the body and drink the blood of our Savior, sit quietly, hear the story of God, hear each other’s stories, and give money, because these are practices we want to replicate in the rest of our lives. If we can only talk about these things in highly regulated places, then we will have a difficult time translating what is talked about here to any other setting. We are seeking to create a place where our normal lives intersect with the intentional structuring of life in the Christian practices. In this we hope to learn how to bring the two together in other settings. Instead of having a special place unlike any other where we try to make the things of God seem normal, we have tried to create a normal place that gives us permission to discuss the unique things of God.’
In other words, the more we participate with the Spirit the more we are present in this world, as active participants, embodying and exhibiting the life-giving, freeing aspects of the Spirit in all circumstances. When Jesus ‘abolished the division between the cultic and the secular, the pure and the impure, sabbath and the ordinary days, it was not in favour of everyday secularity, but in favour of the messianic festiveness of all life’. Indeed, as we see throughout the book of Acts, God is active in all sorts of places, and all sorts of lives, with the earliest followers oftentimes having to move around to keep up. The gift of tongues at Pentecost was not an insulated worship experience, but rather resulted in going out into the streets where visitors from around the world heard the Gospel in their own tongue. The Spirit went out, and the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, went along into the world, towards the world.

The third practice of the emerging churches is ‘living as community’. The pursuit of Jesus in and for this world is not, and cannot be, a solitary pursuit. There is no sense of lone heroes facing down the forces of evil nor idealized individualism that supports isolated realization. Instead, discipleship insists upon community. And just as discipleship is holistic so too real community encompasses all of life.

By identifying with Jesus, believers undergo a profound change of allegiance. They die to self and recognize that their primary identity is as adopted daughters and sons in the family of God and that the local expression of that family is the church, understood as a community of Christ followers seeking to live out their new identity in all circumstances of their daily lives.

This form of community de-emphasizes the organized weekly gathering and the insistence upon a specialized building. Although these may be part of an emerging church, they are not inherent to the goals. Emerging churches ‘develop a growing conviction that the real issue is not where a church meets, the style of the service, or even the structure but that the kingdom of God is embodied in the life of the community’. It is in the pursuit of the kingdom


\[34\] ‘The church above all, which listens to the word of Christ and confesses Christ, exists wholly in its receptivity for the Spirit’s coming, for the influence of its energies and the radiance of its light. That makes Christianity alive to the operation of the Holy Spirit *extra muros ecclesiae*—outside the church as well—and prepared to accept the life-furthering communities which people outside the church expect and experience’ (Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, p. 231).

\[35\] Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 91.

\[36\] Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 96.
of God that people are gathered together in the common mission and so form community out of concern for this common mission.\textsuperscript{37} 'The kingdom gives rise to the community and not vice versa'.\textsuperscript{38} Because of the centrality of mission, all church practices become flexible. In the pursuit of the kingdom, a broad place of community is necessary that allows barriers to be broken down and more holistic practices to be adopted.

Paul ends his second letter to the Corinthians with ‘the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all’.\textsuperscript{39} And with this phrase from Paul, Moltmann begins his chapter on the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{40} ‘In his “fellowship” the Spirit evidently gives himself. He himself enters into the fellowship with believers, and draws them into his fellowship.’\textsuperscript{41} The practice of community is not an organizational principle; it is a pneumatological experience. ‘In fellowship with himself and through his creative energies, God the Spirit creates the network of social relationships in which life comes into being, blossoms and becomes fruitful.’\textsuperscript{42} Continuing this emphasis, Moltmann writes, ‘Life comes into being out of community, and wherever communities spring up which make life possible and further it, the divine Spirit is efficacious’.\textsuperscript{43} Community is communion, the true Eucharist, in which the Body of Christ is celebrated, empowered, and joined. ‘Wherever community of life comes into being, there is also the community with God’s life-giving Spirit.’\textsuperscript{44} And thus also community with the Father and Son, who are in perichoretic community with the Spirit, and reflect this community to those participating with the Spirit.\textsuperscript{45} ‘The creation of community is evidently the goal of God’s life-giving Spirit in the world of nature and human beings.’\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{37} ‘The main task of kingdomlike churches is to equip those within the community to serve under the reign of God. To embody this kingdom, community formation must be central and involves a practical training in the gospel: how to serve, how to forgive, how to love, and how to open up your home. More important than any programs, community formation provides an avenue for a person to enact an entirely different way of life’ (Bolger, ‘Following Jesus’, p. 135).\textsuperscript{38} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{39} 2 Cor. 13.13
\textsuperscript{40} Chapter XI
\textsuperscript{41} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{42} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{43} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{44} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{45} ‘The perichoretic unity of the divine Persons who ek-sist with one another, for one another and in one another finds its correspondence in the true human communities which we can experience—experience in love, in friendship, in the community of Christ’s people which is filled by the Spirit, and in the just society. The correspondences are called to life through the fascinating attraction of the triune God who rests in himself and revolves in himself’ (Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 309).

\textsuperscript{46} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 219
Emerging churches ‘recognize that they have moved from the physical proximity of Jesus to his presence in the midst of their community by the Holy Spirit’.47 This is not a closed community the Spirit creates, but an open community which draws more and more together in a holistic participation. ‘The risen Christ now works by his Spirit, who operates through the community as well as beyond it, in the furtherance of his purposes in the wider world.’48 Moltmann expresses this as the two movements ‘for people who experience themselves in the presence of God’s Spirit’.49 The first is ‘the gathering of Christians in the church’.50 The second is ‘the sending out of the church to Christianity in the world’.51 This is the fellowship of the Spirit that leads to an expression of Christ’s mission in, to, and with this world.

The fourth practice of emerging churches is ‘welcoming the stranger’. This is a key element of the particular form of postmodernity that emerging churches embrace. It is recognized that ‘in modernity, the outcasts paid the highest price’.52 Modernity sought control and homogeneity. Those who did not—or would not—fit into the established patterns were left on the outside. Those who were already on the outside, due to culture or ability or race, were pressed to adapt. ‘Modernity’, Gibbs and Bolger write, ‘teaches its inhabitants to exclude and to conform’.53 Jesus, however, went to those who were socially and ritually excluded, drawing them into his mission and providing a place for their participation. He was the friend of ‘sinners and tax-collectors’. And so, ‘emerging churches, if they are to be faithful to the way of Jesus, must welcome the outsider’.54 This includes hospitality and conversation and forms of interaction in which the typical ‘us versus them’ mentality is broken down by shared fellowship, a fellowship that begins by breaking down the boundaries and washing away the defenses that have been erected.55

47 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 90.
48 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 90. Cf. Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 230: ‘We talk about the church in the fellowship of God’s Spirit, and by doing so we are presupposing that his fellowship between people which is the work of the Spirit reaches beyond the church; it fills the church, but takes us beyond its frontiers’.
49 Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 95.
50 Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 95.
51 Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 95.
52 Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 118.
53 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 133.
54 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 121.
55 Dwight Friesen, ‘A Hopeful Way Forward,’ An Emergent Manifesto of Hope, pp. 202-212 (209), writes, ‘Without the reconciling presence of the Holy Spirit actively drawing together those who would naturally divide, there is no possibility for humanity to experience the kind of oneness that Jesus enjoys with the Father. Thus the emerging hope of Christianity is not found
For as modernity has sought exclusion and conformity, the Spirit of Life brings unity and diversity. "The Kingdom is breaking in where we least expect it, among the poor and oppressed, the sick and the lonely, those who in the eyes of this world are of little or no account."\textsuperscript{56} Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the poor’. But much of the Church has often dismissed the poor and the poor in spirit as secondary participants unable to really contribute to the work of the Church. However, ‘the power of the Kingdom is to be found precisely where we participate as a church in the pattern of the cross of Christ, in which God gives up his honor and glory and comes into the midst of the suffering world to identify those who are in need’.\textsuperscript{57} This identification is not the distant provision of basic sustenance. It is, even more so, inclusion into the full community so that while outer needs are met, so too are the inner needs, providing real, thorough hope and a radical sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{58} This means ‘not hoping for the usual signs of success and worldly acclaim for our efforts, but out of love and the power of the Spirit to be willing to minister in what the world calls “hopeless situations”’.\textsuperscript{59} “This welcoming of strangers, those on the outside for whatever reason, is a work and an experience of the Spirit in which ‘a new community of rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated comes into being. The Spirit of God is no respecter of social distinctions; it puts an end to them.’\textsuperscript{60} To hold onto these distinctions, in overt or covert ways, is thus a rejection of the Spirit, and undermines holistic spirituality.

The next practice exhibited by the emerging churches as noted by Gibbs and Bolger is ‘serving with generosity’. Not only are the included and the excluded to be welcomed, they are to be served within a broad expression of hospitality. ‘Hospitality, as taught by Jesus, means reaching out to one’s neighbors first to meet their immediate needs and then to address their deeper, in a modernist claim to intellectual certainty any more than it is found in a moralistic way of being in the world; it is found in our walking with the Holy Spirit of God as reconciling agents’.

\textsuperscript{57} Moltmann, \textit{Hope for the Church}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{58} According to Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{A Broad Place}, trans. Margaret Kohl Minneapolis (Fortress Press, 2007), p. 232, ‘… “the poor” have no wish to be approached from the angle of what they are lacking; they want to be seen first and foremost from the angle of what they are. If we speak to them merely as “the poor”, then they are merely the victims of the rich and the powerful. But they are men or women, whites, blacks, or indios; they have families, language, understanding, and faith. It is only when they become aware of who they are that they can become the determining subjects of their own biographies’.
\textsuperscript{59} Moltmann, \textit{A Broad Place}, p. 232.
\textsuperscript{60} Moltmann, \textit{The Source of Life}, p. 23.
long-term needs.\textsuperscript{61} This is in contrast to those modern forms of churches which function according to the western ideal of consumerism in which everyone is seeking to take and gain and compete.\textsuperscript{62} The emerging churches understand that ‘God continues to pour out his love and mercy in the world, and the church is entrusted with the opportunity to join God in this work’.\textsuperscript{63} This serving is not primarily formalized programs, but rather ‘in the context of their lives’ those in the emerging church ‘take care of the marginalized’.\textsuperscript{64} This is an expression of the kingdom as an alternative kingdom, in which the selfishness of the world is overcome, where instead of ‘greed is good’ there are practical expressions of ‘God is good’.

This instinct towards giving rather than taking is the expression of the Spirit binding each participant to each other and with God. After Pentecost, Moltmann notes, ‘People put their community above the individual and their private possessions’.\textsuperscript{65} Possessions are a form of security, an investment in safety and well-being for the future. Yet, in the power of the Spirit, the earliest Christians ‘no longer needed these possessions to give their lives security. In the Spirit of the resurrection their fear of death disappeared, and with it their greed for life.’\textsuperscript{66} Instead of the isolated and unprotected fighting against this world, the Spirit provokes those in the Church to let go of this isolation by reaching out and offering to others. ‘In this community the competitive struggle which turns people into lonely individuals is ended, and the social chill of a heartless world vanishes.’\textsuperscript{67} It is the very model of John 3.16 which the Spirit incites: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only son’. So too, with God, the Church loves and gives.\textsuperscript{68} And indeed, this is more than just a giving

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\item\textsuperscript{61} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 140.
\item\textsuperscript{62} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, pp. 251-52, argues, ‘Modern industrial society does everything to individualize people through the pressure of competition, and to set one person against the other. In a competitive society there is never “enough for everyone”. The competitive struggle is fuelled by shortage of opportunities … The person who wants to climb the ladder must often enough sacrifice his relations with neighbors, friends and family, for what is required of climbers is not merely creativity and flexibility, but mobility and continual availability’.
\item\textsuperscript{63} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 136.
\item\textsuperscript{64} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 142. Cf. Rodolpho Carrasco, ‘Hopeful Activism’, \textit{An Emergent Manifesto of Hope}, 248-58 (256): ‘Programs will never replace people who love a person over the long term. Programs, no matter how well-planned or well-funded, can’t do what a committed person can do—a principle easily overlooked, even by those of us who preach it’.
\item\textsuperscript{65} Moltmann, \textit{Experiences in Theology}, p. 331.
\item\textsuperscript{66} Moltmann, \textit{Experiences in Theology}, p. 331.
\item\textsuperscript{67} Moltmann, \textit{Experiences in Theology}, p. 331.
\item\textsuperscript{68} ‘Love is perfected according to the degree which it carries human beings out of their own selves. Not self-love but selflessness, not desire but surrender lead to the love of God’ (Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 249).
\end{itemize}
to people. Giving unites the Church with and for the whole world in ‘a wholly new life in righteousness and holiness, personally and in community with other people, in community with other people and politically, politically and ecologically, with all the energies of the Spirit in us, and in all the possibilities which God opens up for us’. 69

Because giving is a pouring out one to another, it can become unbalanced, leading to emptiness and exhaustion, if there is not a mutuality of giving. Which means there cannot be a category of givers and a category of receivers. Instead, all give to and receive from one another, 'participating as producers' in the life of the community. This is the sixth practice of emerging churches. 'The congregations are contributors to rather than recipients of worship.' 70

One of the emerging church leaders, Kester Brewin, notes, 'we are looking for the time when people begin to take responsibility for presenting worship to God which has integrity for who they are, involves their own struggles and gifts, and shows some personal investment in communion with their creator'. 71 It is felt that churches have become a place of consuming, where a small number of professionals serve up the menu to meet the needs of the patrons. That the patrons have occasional opportunities for acknowledgment or agreement is a form of courtesy rather than real involvement. In contrast, 'emerging churches are determined to move from a consumer to a producer form of church.' 72 This is not, however, limited to the church service, but rather includes all aspects of an increasingly outward oriented posture. 73

It is in the Spirit that all have gifts to offer. There is no priority of rich over poor, Jew over Greek, or male over female, leading to a recognition of all, for all. With that is a balance of gifts given by the Spirit and given to the whole Church through the whole Church. 'In the concurrence of faith in Christ and hope for the parousia, this community grows in the sphere of the Holy Spirit into a charismatic community, where potentialities and capabilities are brought to life', 74 which makes it curious how once a person begins to experience this kind of new life in Christ, the churches they join offer only limited

70 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 158. Cf. Tertullian, Apology, xxix.
71 Quoted in Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 160.
72 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 159.
73 Dieter Zander, one of the earliest emerging leaders, notes, 'I think we are moving rather quickly away from teaching people how to serve in the church to serving like Jesus apart from the church. Through our teaching on gifts, we were training them to be loyal church members, not missionaries. We have now come to realize we need to train people as missionaries to serve outside the church service' (Quoted in Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 169).
74 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 69.
expression. This brings a halt just as potentiality comes to fruition, squelching in deed what is extolled in word. Yet, the Spirit liberates and this is more than a rhetorical or spiritual liberation. It is a real freedom to become and to communicate. ‘Freedom is present where Christ is experienced in the Spirit’, Moltmann writes. 75 He continues, ‘Anyone who experiences God and a “deification” (theosis) of this kind, is freed from all the godless ties and this world and is nobody’s slave. He lives in the free space of God’s creative possibilities, and partakes of them.’ 76 Thus the Spirit who gives gifts for participation expects the free space where these gifts can be given and received, by all for all. 77 This participation brings to life even more work of the Spirit. ‘The more deeply the presence of the Spirit is experienced in the heart and in fellowship with one another, the more certain and assured the hope for the Spirit’s universal coming will be … In this the new creation of all things is already experienced—experienced now, for all, representatively and in anticipation’. 78

Participation in the Spirit does not, and can not, mean simply putting people to work in convenient tasks appointed by a small number of organizers. The Spirit does not simply keep people busy in religious chores. Rather the Spirit empowers participation that is profoundly creative. This reality is at the basis of the seventh practice of the emerging church: ‘creating as created beings’. ‘Emerging churches are attempting to participate with a creative God and to make the physical expression and the spiritual experience one.’ 79

The goal of this is not expression for expression’s sake but rather expression for exploration into the developing identity of the individual and the community. ‘When each person is empowered to express and develop his or her gifts, increasing diversity can be expressed, resulting in both creativity

75 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 121.
76 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 121.
77 ‘The question about the different gifts of the Spirit in a congregation is generally treated under the heading “ministry and community”. But that is misleading, for in the community of Christ all the members have their “ministry”, for they are all “spiritually” endowed. It is not just the ordained or consecrated ministers who have to be called ‘spiritual’ (“spiritual pastors”). The Holy Spirit always descends upon the whole congregation, and cannot be claimed by anyone as his or her possession. This has been so ever since the first Pentecostal congregation we hear about in Acts 2, even if things have been different in the church’s history, and are still different today’ (Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 57).
78 Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 74. Restriction of this leads to a lessening, rather than heightening of identity in Christ by those outside the sanctioned power structures. ‘People no longer believe they are capable of the things of which God thinks them capable. They do not make themselves greater than they are. They make themselves smaller and more unnoticeable’ (Moltmann, The Source of Life, p. 91).
79 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 175.
and ownership.\textsuperscript{80} The expression of creativity, the emphasis on diversity, becomes itself ownership of the community, making unity instinctive rather than imposed. ‘By contrast, in a controlling environment that demands conformity and reduces people’s responses to predetermined channels and patterns, creativity is frustrated’,\textsuperscript{81} which leads to more and more controlling strategies in order to counter the deepening disunity caused by constraint. People begin to compete and argue, breaking down unity and breaking apart diversity.\textsuperscript{82} It is for freedom, however, that Christ has set us free, and in freedom comes the creative expression of identity.

This identity is not to be feared or hidden, as so many in the Church seem to indicate through enforced limitations. Rather, this identity as creative beings is an expression of the image of God and a key indication of the Spirit’s presence. Creativity is participation with the Spirit who is creative from beginning to end. This is action and experience, not thought and consideration. ‘The Spirit is not an ideal, over against what is physical and mortal, but is God himself, who calls into being the thing that is not, makes the godless righteous, and raises the dead. He is the “life-giving” Spirit, giving life to everything that is mortal (1 Cor. 15:45).’\textsuperscript{83} This life is not an anemic life to be given and then hidden. It is not life to be squelched or constrained. Rather, ‘the community’s spiritual powers must be correspondingly understood as creative powers endowed with life’.\textsuperscript{84} ‘This creative power fills the whole community and each person in it, insisting on participation of a creative kind.’\textsuperscript{85} ‘For the new call puts the person’s particular situation at the service of the new creation. The Spirit makes the whole biological, cultural and religious life history of a person charismatically alive.’\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{80} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{81} Gibbs and Bolger, \textit{Emerging Churches}, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{82} ‘There can be a tendency in Christian circles, especially ones that venture into new territory, to complain about how things are. But creativity is providing a new way of living, seeing, hearing, or being, and we were blessed with several people who love the process of seeing a possibility and turning it into something tangible. So we allowed ourselves to look at something with cynical eyes only if we were committed to working on it’ (Pagitt, \textit{Church Re-Imagined}, p. 181).
\textsuperscript{83} Moltmann, \textit{The Church in the Power of the Spirit}, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{84} Moltmann, \textit{The Church in the Power of the Spirit}, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{85} ‘Life grows by expressing itself. Its expression emerges from the depths of the unconscious which the consciousness does not illuminate; and it both shapes the consciousness and is shaped by it. In expressing itself, life is intensified, structured and developed. There is expression through words. There is expression through actions. There is expression through bodily attitudes, the play of features, and the gestures of hands. The creative power of life is to be found in its expression. Life in God’s Spirit is also ‘minted form, which takes shape as it lives’, as Goethe said’ (Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 163).
\textsuperscript{86} Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, p. 296.
Believing in God, following him, embracing his life cannot be separated from the creative response to this new call. Life means movement and response and interaction and expression. Faith that is not expressed becomes anemic and artificial. Through a free faith, however, ‘the hitherto unexplored creative powers of God are thrown open to men and women’. 87 According to Moltmann, this exploration can even define faith.

So faith means becoming creative with God, and in his Spirit. Faith leads to a creative life which is life-giving through love, in places where death rules and people resign themselves and surrender to it. Faith awakens trust in the still unrealized possibilities in human beings—in oneself and in other people. 88

In the presence of the Spirit, faith and creativity are synonymous. The Spirit never inspires only to hinder, meaning communities embracing the Spirit embrace the creativity of everyone. 89

In their re-emphasis of mission, emerging churches have adopted the eighth practice as noted by Gibbs and Bolger: ‘Emerging churches, in their attempts to resemble the kingdom, avoid all types of control in their leadership formation’. 90 This is not a suggestion that communities will somehow instinctively exist without any kind of leadership. 91 Rather, this is a reordering of what leaders are responsible for doing. Instead of providing top-down rigid order and commands, thus leading the church to be an expression of the particular leader rather than the whole gathered people, in emerging churches ‘the

87 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 115. ‘This desire to be people who live creatively and for whom creativity is a kind of spiritual formation goes far beyond hanging lovely drawings on the walls or filling our couches with lots of people in funky shoes. Instead our creativity comes from a desire to live life as people who are created in the image of a creative God, who are invited to be co-(re)creators with God’ (Pagitt, Church Re-Imagined, p. 183).
90 Gibbs and Bolger, Emerging Churches, p. 192.
91 Kester Brewin, Signs of Emergence (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), p. 115, writes, ‘Any system involving free human beings that requires some degree of organization must involve some form of leadership. We have already discussed that anarchy is no better for us than dictatorship, but there has to be a place between these two extremes where leadership can be effective without being abusive. The advantage of complexity theory is that it provides us with a model of leadership that has very little power, and this naturally fits very well with the Christian tradition of servant leadership (see Mark 10.43)—a term that appears to have been adopted from the Gospels by complexity theorists’. Brewin also provides a very useful chart comparing the leadership models of ‘rigid church’, ‘emergent/conjunctive church’, and ‘anarchic church’ showing how these impact church ministry (p. 117).
leader’s role in such groups is to create a space for activities to occur’.  
Leadership opens up possibilities and creates space by protecting the wide boundaries as defined by the kingdom. It does not assert authority by title or position, demanding singular response or action. Unity is not seen as formed beneath a single office, but rather unity is discovered within the diversity of all those who gather, with leaders providing functional guidance instead of rigid authority.

The Spirit calls each and all to participate as equals. ‘The one fellowship of the Holy Spirit is expressed in the fellowship of those who are commissioned, which is a fellowship of brothers and colleagues.’ In and with the Spirit, the Church is ‘the fellowship of the free’ and thus leadership itself does not confer identity upon those gathered, but rather those gathered find their identity and constant equality in the Spirit.

‘Merging ancient and contemporary spiritualities’ is the ninth practice which Gibbs and Bolger identify in emerging churches. Understanding of equality in Christ is not limited to organizational structure. This also extends to space and time. As these emerging churches have sought freedom from contemporary power structures, this has not meant an accompanying rejection of Church history or worship. Instead, breaking free has allowed a new freedom to look into other traditions, from earlier centuries, in order to find thoughts and liturgies to address the present world, seeking what is pre-modern to help reorient what is now post-modern. Gibbs and Bolger write, ‘there is an increasing desire to reconnect with ancient liturgies that inspired past generations and sustained the church across centuries’. However, this does not mean appropriating other traditions uncritically, but rather involves an understanding of both the contemporary context and how differing approaches can allow for the most helpful reorientation towards a kingdom of God perspective. Andrew Jones, an emerging church leader in Britain notes:

I would say that monastic Christianity over the past fifteen hundred years is giving us more resources than the more centralized, formal, Constantinian churches.

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93 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 309. Richard Bauckham writes, ‘God in his Trinitarian history is not a justification for clerical rule, but is the vulnerable and liberating love which makes possible open fellowship in freedom and responsibility … In this trinitarian context ecclesiology cannot be reduced to hierarchology, preoccupied with the authority of the ministry, but must begin with the fact that every believer is a responsible member of the messianic fellowship (CPS 289; cf. SL 236)’ (*The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995], p. 139).
There is also much in the Old Testament feasts, parties, and pilgrimages that resonates with the contemporary practices of emerging church. The ways of Celtic Christians have been especially meaningful to me recently, especially as we create a monastery in the Orkney Islands. But our monastery will not be a retro, return-to-a-dead Celtic ritualism. Rather, it will, like its predecessors, function as a cultural portal, pilgrimage center, new-media resource base, micro-business enterprise, and a place of spiritual strength for a dispersed community.96

The goal of emerging church spirituality is to take hold of what spirituality meant and means in each present, pursuing the spiritual focus rather than the religious forms, and thus opens the Church to learn from those who went before while investing contemporary experiences into these pursuits.

This merging of ancient and contemporary spiritualities is sometimes considered a worship buffet of sorts, seeking to pluck from different eras what is comfortable while dismissing other, more difficult aspects much as western new-age religion has done. However, being willing to listen and adapt to forms of worship and spirituality from all centuries can not be so easily dismissed out of hand when the issue is not one of power structures, but instead an issue of pursuing the movement of the Spirit, who seeks to work creatively in each generation and has not stopped working in any generation, pointing each generation to Jesus.97

In Moltmann’s writings, this is not seen as clearly in terms of liturgy, but more fully in terms of method as he begins again and again with his experiences and questions, then seeks voices from throughout history and traditions to engage as conversation partners.98 This embrace of different voices is

97 ‘In the Christian congregations too, the accepted life-style is often given its impress by an older generation, which does not give the new experiences of younger generations a chance… Wherever different generations live together, they can only build community which furthers life by going hand in hand with one another. This presupposes that one is conscious of one’s own age, and sees the limitations of the forms of faith and living that correspond to it. It requires one generation to withdraw, in order to give scope to the coming generations, in which they can live their own life’ (Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, p. 237). This is not only limited to living generations, but should extend throughout the community of saints from all times. In a way this can be understood as a kenosis of worship, in which each generation pours out its spirituality into another, while at the same time remaining open for being poured into. Each generation contributes but also receives, emptying itself for the teaching of the whole Spirit throughout time and space. Cf. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, p. 25.
98 ‘Theology is like a network of rivers, with reciprocal influences and mutual challenges. It is certainly not a desert in which every individual is alone with himself or herself, and with his or her God. For me, theological access to the truth of the triune God is through dialogue. It is communitarian and co-operative. *Theologia viatorum*—the theology of men and women on the
possible because the transmission of God’s revelation is not a single event or limited to a single generation. Instead, an understanding of the Spirit who ‘teaches us all things’ leads us to understand theology and worship as being in a broad place of both time and space, participating with each generation rather than beneath or above them.

IV. Conclusion

Of course, this is only the beginning of what appears to be a fruitful conversation. In presenting this initial conversation, I have emphasized the commonalities. Indeed, I have also presented what may be considered an idealized version of the emerging church, one that reflects their ideals and strengths, while setting aside for the moment the weaknesses, occasional errors, and realities of existence that make living up to ideals often very difficult. However, this is not to whitewash these, but rather to encourage the practices of the emerging churches to be a framework of continued discovery as they grow and develop. If this presented conversation is indeed an accurate assessment of the Spirit’s holistic work, then the emerging churches can see these ideals as more than mere whims or responses to discontent, and can then assert these practices as corrections when errors or breakdowns occur. Indeed, further conversation with Moltmann’s broader pneumatology, especially as it relates to a more eternal perspective on the kingdom, will bring even more balance.

It is also quite apparent that the practices which define the emerging churches are by no means exclusive to this quite recent movement. We see manifold examples of each of these various emphases throughout Church history, not least in the early Methodist movement which one could even argue illustrated all nine of these principles, and then some, to varying degrees. So while it might seem obvious to bring Jürgen Moltmann into a conversation for his contributions, it might not seem as clear what would be unique, and thus useful, about the emerging church for the broader community of Christ. The uniqueness is not in these various practices, the uniqueness is found in the newly opened contexts which the breaking down of Christendom has seemingly allowed. The emerging church is, following the title of Moltmann’s recent autobiography, a broad place.

way—is an enduring critical conversation with the generations before us and the contemporaries at our side, in expectation of those who will come after us’ (Moltmann, Experiences in Theology, p. xvii).
‘Life in the Spirit is a life in the “broad place where there is no cramping” (Job 36:16). So in the new life we experience the Spirit as a “broad place”—as the free space for our freedom, as the living space for our lives, as the horizon inviting us to discover life.’  

Yet, in the history of the Church there have been again and again restrictions placed upon this ‘broad place’, some for reasons that make sense in attempts to deter heresy, other times for reasons that can only be characterized as anti-Christ as they assert personal or corporate power for reasons of individual gain. Most often, and consistently through the last two thousand years, the restricted place of the Church has not been due to some kind of intentional nefarious rejection of God, but rather due to uncritical assumptions of the broader culture in each era, leading to wholly non-Spiritual boundaries. Churches in which racism or sexism dominate are restricted places. Churches in which the rich dominate poor, or the powerful dominate the powerless are restricted places. Restricted not for those who are the aggrieved, restricted for the aggressors and for the whole society, unable to take up the whole work of the Spirit because of these inherent, societal restrictions.

As Moltmann writes, “The broad place is the most hidden and silent presence of God’s Spirit in us and round about us. But how else could “life in the Spirit” be understood, if the Spirit were not the space “in” which this life can grow and unfurl.” The dismantling of institutional racism, the new emphasis on equality between men and women, the growing awareness of first world responsibility to the third world, and the increasing concern for the environment have all broken the bonds of restriction that have silently fought against the constant mission of the Spirit. So it is no surprise that now, in this era of new openness, we can see new movements that in their freedom reflect the freedom that is God’s kingdom, movements that echo in practice what Moltmann emphasizes as traits of the broad place of the Spirit. ‘We explore the depths of this space through the trust of the heart. We search out the length of this space through the extravagant hope. We discover the breadth of this place through the torrents of love which we receive and give.’ Only those contexts which freely open themselves to this continual discovery can expect to learn and to express a holistic pneumatology.

This is not a new reality of the Spirit or a new movement of the Spirit but is, in essence, the heart of what was spoken of by the prophets and then

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100 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, p. 178.
experienced in the early Church beginning on Pentecost. In this way, we could call the movement described by Gibbs and Bolger not only the emerging church, but indeed a form of neo-Pentecostalism in which a holistic pneumatology is embraced through a new, liberating freedom for living. ‘God’s Spirit encompasses us from all sides and wherever we are (Ps. 139). Christ’s Spirit is our immanent power to live—God’s Spirit is our transcendent power for living.’ In embracing this reality in full, individually and communally, in unity and in diversity, the Church emerges into the comprehensive vision of the kingdom of God.

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