

The Corporate Operation of the Mingled Spirit

God created humankind with a tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body—to corporately express and represent Him on earth. To accomplish this, the divine Spirit regenerates the human spirit to produce a mingled spirit; then this mingled spirit spreads into the faculties of the soul and eventually saturates the body. This experience transforms the individual believer in his tripartite being, joining him organically with others to form one new corporate man. The article focuses on the grammatical structure in which a plural referent is associated with a singular faculty or part, e.g., *our heart*. This structure occurs throughout the New Testament, reflecting the particular experience of the believer, which joins him not only to God as the divine Spirit but also to fellow believers as members of the Body of Christ through the operation of the mingled spirit in every part of their tripartite being.

Corporate Humanity

God created humans as tripartite beings with a spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23; Gen. 2:7) in order to obtain a corporate being to express Him, represent Him, and even match Him as His counterpart (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18; Isa. 54:5). According to Genesis 1:26-27, God considered the individual man as a corporate being, when He said, “Let them have dominion,” and “male and female He created them.”

After the fall, humanity took advantage of the fact that the whole earth had one language and the same speech to collectively rebel against God and conspire together as one people to build the city and tower of Babel (11:1, 5-6). God responded by confounding their language and scattering the people (vv. 7-9).

God then called out Abraham from this divided and scattered humanity and formed his descendants into the nation of Israel as His corporate people on earth. Israel is frequently referred to using collective or group nouns such as *'am* (people), *bet yisrael* (house of Israel), *qahal* (congregation), and *'edah* (assembly), and these nouns most frequently take singular verbs and singular pronominal referents, thus reinforcing the corporate and collective aspect of the people of Israel. Among many examples of the corporate functioning of the people is the use of the

phrase *as one man*, which occurs ten times (Num. 14:15; Judg. 6:16; 20:1, 8, 11; 1 Sam. 11:7; 2 Sam. 19:14; Ezra 3:1, 9; Neh. 8:1). However, the history of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament testifies to their ultimate failure to be God’s expression and representation and to the need for a new covenant, or New Testament, people reconstituted with a new heart and new spirit by the impartation of His Spirit (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 11:19; cf. 18:31).

God accomplished His new covenant in Christ by becoming a man, passing through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit, so that He could regenerate individuals and form them into a group of people, His called-out assembly (*ekklesia*), the church, which is His one Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13; Col. 3:15; 1:24) and the one new man (Eph. 2:15; cf. 4:24; Col. 3:10) as the intrinsic fulfillment of this corporate man. The consummation of this corporate man will be the New Jerusalem as the bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9; 22:17).

The Mingled Spirit

Individual human beings become constituents of this corporate man through the regeneration of their human spirit by the divine Spirit (John 3:6). Through regeneration the human spirit becomes mingled with Christ as the life-giving Spirit to become one spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17).¹

The mingled spirit is referred to on numerous occasions in the New Testament. Sometimes it is not altogether clear whether a reference to the spirit is to the human spirit or to the divine Spirit. Many times what is being referred to is, in fact, the mingled spirit. For example, “the same spirit of faith” in 2 Corinthians 4:13 is

“not distinctly the Holy Spirit,—but still not merely a human disposition: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man” (Alford). “Spirit of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both” (Vincent). The spirit of faith is the Holy Spirit mingled with our human spirit. (Recovery Version, note 2)

This regenerated mingled spirit becomes the base for God

to transform and renew the faculties of the soul, of which the leading part is the mind. "This is the regenerated spirit of the believers, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Such a mingled spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. It is in such a spirit that we are renewed for our transformation" (Recovery Version, Eph. 4:23, note 2). Eventually even our physical body benefits from this process by being transfigured to become a spiritual body (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:44).

The mingled spirit is not merely something that is the possession of the individual believer but also is the means for the individual believer to be joined to other believers as members of the Body of Christ. This is illustrated and typified by the tabernacle in the Old Testament. In the tabernacle the boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold were united by bars of acacia wood, also overlaid with gold, placed through rings attached to the boards. The boards of the tabernacle typify individual believers as the constituents of God's building, and the uniting bars can be considered equivalent to the mingled spirit.²

The uniting bars are not the Holy Spirit alone, but the Holy Spirit with the human spirit...the Holy Spirit mingled with our spirit. Therefore,...the Spirit represented by these bars also includes the human spirit. This means that if our spirit does not cooperate with the uniting Spirit, the oneness cannot be realized in a practical way...

The Spirit will never join us to others without this willingness. The uniting Spirit cannot unite me to you unless your spirit is willing to cooperate with the Spirit. When the uniting Spirit comes to me, it comes with the spirit of another brother, and when it goes from me to still another, it goes with my spirit. The uniting Spirit cannot unite us Himself. He must have the cooperation of our spirit. This means that we must be willing to be crossed by Him. (Lee, *Truth Messages* 106-107)

The more the individual believers cooperate with the uniting mingled spirit by allowing the spirit to spread into the faculties of their soul, the more the Body of Christ is built up as God's habitation on earth.

A Singular Human Faculty with a Plural Referent

When parts of the human body or faculties are referred to in the Bible, frequently a singular noun is used, even when the pronominal referent is plural. A singular noun modified by a plural pronominal element can have a collective

sense, a distributive sense, or a combination of the two senses.

A singular noun has a collective sense when there is collective ownership of the noun by the individuals associated with the pronominal element, e.g., *our God*, *our country*, *our king*; or if the noun corresponds to a collective experience, e.g., *our captivity*, *our trial*.

A singular noun has a distributive sense when the noun is distributed to all of the individuals subsumed under the possessive pronominal adjective; e.g., in the sentence *we believers need to open our heart to the Lord*, the phrase *our heart* would be understood to indicate that each individual possesses a heart. Grammarians call this structure a distributive singular.³ In some languages, like Hebrew, this structure is preferred, especially when referring to parts of the body. In other languages, like English, the distributive plural is the norm.⁴

If the antecedent of the plural pronoun is a collective or group noun (e.g., *the people*, *the house of Israel*, *the assembly*, *the church*, or *the Body of Christ*), the writer or speaker may be emphasizing a corporate view along with the distributive sense. With collective nouns a contrast can be seen between the use of a plural verb and pronoun and the use of a singular verb and pronoun. For example, "the government *are* cutting *their* losses" refers to "the group thought of as a set of individuals," whereas "the government *is* cutting *its* losses" refers to "the group as an indivisible abstraction" (Quirk 771). We could say then that the so-called distributive singular use of a noun in a phrase such as *their mind* in the sentence *the government is/are slow in making up their mind* combines both thoughts. The singular faculty or body part (i.e., mind) of a collective or group noun relates to the group as an indivisible abstraction, whereas the plural pronoun (i.e., *their*) refers to a set of individuals and has a distributive sense.

The corporate notion is reinforced by examples in which a collective group is assigned a single human faculty; for example, "the heart of the people melted and became like water" (Josh. 7:5; so also 1 Kings 12:27; 18:37; 1 Chron. 29:9; 2 Chron. 20:33; Psa. 62:8; Isa. 6:10; 29:13; 51:7; Jer. 13:10; 24:7; Ezek. 13:17; 33:31; Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27).⁵

The corporate notion is further reinforced when the collective entity can be considered as joined together or in

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harmony in this particular faculty, e.g., having one heart (1 Chron. 12:38; 2 Chron. 30:12; Psa. 83:5; Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19), having one spirit (Phil. 1:27, cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), having the same spirit (2 Cor. 4:13; 12:18), having one soul (Phil. 1:27), being like-souled (2:20), and being joined in soul (*sumpsuchoi*) (v. 2).⁶

In this article we will look at cases in the Bible where a singular human faculty with a plural referent is used, and consider the implications of these structures in relation to the experience of the church as the Body of Christ.

The Distributive Singular in the Old Testament

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament there is a preference for using the singular rather than the plural when referring to a part/organ which the body has only one of, e.g., spirit, heart, soul, mouth, and tongue. For example, the word *spirit* (*ruach*) occurs eight times as a singular noun with the plural possessive adjective (e.g., *your spirit*—Mal. 2:15-16) and does not occur as a plural with the plural possessive adjective (e.g., *your spirits*); *ruach* occurs only three times as a plural without the possessive adjective. The two words for *heart* (*leb* and *lebab*) occur sixty-eight times and sixty-seven times, respectively, in the singular with the plural possessive adjective; and as a plural, only seven times and one time, respectively. *Soul* (*nephesh*) occurs seventy times in the singular with a plural possessive adjective and twenty-eight times as a plural with a plural possessive adjective (fifty-one times as a plural in total). *Head* (*ro'sh*) occurs thirty-one times as a singular with a plural possessive adjective and twenty-four times as a plural with a plural possessive adjective; *mouth* (*peh*) occurs forty-three times as a singular with a plural possessive adjective and does not occur as a plural; *tongue* (*lashon*) occurs twenty-one times as a singular with a plural possessive adjective and only five times as a plural; and *throat* (*garon*) occurs twice as a singular with a plural possessive adjective and never as a plural.

Conversely, parts of the body which we have two of—eyes, ears, nostrils (nose), lips, cheeks (face), hands, feet—occur more frequently as plurals with plural possessive adjectives, although they still occur quite frequently as singular forms with plural possessive adjectives.

The fact that human faculties and parts of the body are frequently presented as singular nouns, yet also occur in the plural, cautions us against thinking that this is just a Hebrew idiom.⁷ The question is whether the use of this structure is arbitrary or whether the writer or speaker ascribes a collective sense to the singular noun with the plural pronominal. The fact that the collective notion is so prevalent in the Old Testament would lead us to consider that this notion also impacted the New Testament writers' use of the singular noun with the plural pronominal.

The Distributive Singular in the New Testament

In the New Testament Greek, use of the plural for human faculties and parts of the body occurs more frequently than in the Old Testament. Some instances of plural pronominal elements with singular nouns are quotations from the Old Testament. Some plural pronominal elements with singular nouns reflect the notion of humanity or of a species viewed corporately or collectively. Most of the examples below associate individual believers (as indicated by the plural pronominal) with the church as the Body of Christ (as indicated by the singular human faculty). They combine both collective and distributive senses, indicating that the Body of Christ is composed of individual believers who are joined together in their human faculties by the spreading of Christ as the life-giving Spirit from their spirit into other parts of their tripartite being. The Body of Christ has the faculties of Christ, such as the mind of Christ and the inward parts of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 1:8). Hence, the writers of the New Testament speak of our spirit, our soul, our heart, and even our body.

A Corporate Mingled Spirit

There are five verses in the New Testament which have a plural pronoun with the singular word *spirit* (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; 1 Thes. 5:23; Philem. 25). In addition, there are numerous verses in which the referent (usually the subject) is plural but *spirit* is singular. Most, if not all, of the examples below refer to the corporate mingled spirit produced by the regeneration of the human spirit by the divine Spirit, as indicated by the context. As a result, he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).

In John 4:23-24 the Lord indicates that the place of worship for the true worshippers is neither in Jerusalem nor in a physical location, such as Mt. Gerizim, but rather in spirit, which is the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). In considering our spirit in comparison with God's Old Testament dwelling place of the temple in Jerusalem, Witness Lee states,

What is in our spirit?...The Lord Jesus and the Spirit of God are in our spirit...The new man is also in our spirit. God's habitation, His dwelling place, is in our spirit (2:22). In type, the ancient city of Jerusalem was God's dwelling place, but today God's dwelling place is in our spirit. Our regenerated spirit is today's Jerusalem. You may think that there is no comparison between the city of Jerusalem and our spirit. Jerusalem was a large city, and our spirit is very small. But if you know the Bible, you will realize that our spirit today is much larger than Jerusalem. Our spirit is universally spacious. The problem is that we are too individualistic and think only of our individual

spirit. But when the Bible speaks of “your spirit,” it includes the spirits of all the saints...

Our spirit is universally spacious. We know that God dwells in the third heaven, but He also dwells in our spirit. This makes our spirit today’s Jerusalem. Hallelujah for that wonderful entity in the universe called our spirit! The Spirit witnesses with our spirit (Rom. 8:16). The words “our spirit” include Paul’s spirit, Martin Luther’s spirit, John Wesley’s spirit, Brother Nee’s spirit, your spirit, and my spirit. How spacious our spirit is! The Bible reveals that God is the God of our spirit (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). Where is God today? In our spirit. Where is God’s dwelling place today? In our spirit. Where is the one new man? Also in our spirit. (Lee, *Life-study of Ephesians* 213)

God has given the believers a spirit of power, love, and sobermindedness (2 Tim. 1:7), and Paul prays that God would give the saints in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17).⁸ The believers have received a spirit of sonship in which they cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15), and as a result, the Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are children of God (v. 16). They serve in newness of this spirit (7:6), they walk according to this spirit (8:4, cf. Gal. 5:16, 18, 25), and Paul indicates to the saints in Rome that they are in the spirit if the Spirit of Christ dwells in them (Rom. 8:9).

Paul charges the saints in Ephesus to be renewed in the spirit of their mind and to put on the new man (Eph. 4:23-24), to be filled in spirit, speaking to one another (5:18-19), and to pray in spirit, taking up the whole armor of God (6:18, 13). Paul charges the saints in Rome to be burning in spirit, in the context of loving one another warmly in brotherly love and taking the lead in showing honor one to another (Rom. 12:11, 10), and he charges the saints in Philippi to stand firm in one spirit in the context of striving together along with the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). Paul charges those who are spiritual to restore those overtaken in some offense in a spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1). He concludes three Epistles with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ being with the recipients’ spirit (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25). The Lord encourages the disciples to watch, the spirit being willing (Matt. 26:41). The dead believers in Christ, who suffered persecution because of their Christian testimony, lived in the spirit according to God (1 Pet. 4:6). The Lord grants revelation to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit (Eph. 3:5). Paul prays that the Lord would sanctify the

church of the Thessalonians wholly and that their whole spirit and soul and body would be preserved complete unto the Lord’s coming (1 Thes. 5:23). In addition, Paul prays that the Lord would strengthen the saints in Ephesus with power through His Spirit into the inner man, which is the believers’ regenerated spirit (Eph. 3:16).

Other indicators of the corporate nature of the mingled spirit are the fact that the spirit is also referred to as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Phil. 1:27)⁹ and the same spirit (2 Cor. 4:13). Paul and Titus walked in the same spirit in their visits to the Corinthians (12:18).¹⁰

In two verses Paul talks about being present in his spirit with the other believers. He is present in spirit although he is absent in the flesh, rejoicing and seeing the good order among the saints (Col. 2:5), and his spirit is assembled together with the believers in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:4).¹¹ In addition, the experience of refreshing is common, or shared, by both Paul’s spirit and the Corinthians’ spirit (1 Cor. 16:18).

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A Corporate Conscience

The singular *conscience* with the plural pronominal occurs nine times. The Gentiles have the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with it and their reasonings, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them

(Rom. 2:15). To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; rather, both their mind and their conscience are defiled (Titus 1:15). The believers who are not clear about eating food as an idol sacrifice defile their conscience (1 Cor. 8:7). Those who eat idol sacrifices with the knowledge that an idol is nothing can stumble weaker brothers, wounding their weak conscience (v. 12; cf. 10:27-28). The apostles’ conscience testifies that they have conducted themselves in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God (2 Cor. 1:12). The apostles are persuaded that they have a good conscience (Heb. 13:18). The blood of Christ purifies the believers’ conscience from dead works to serve the living God (9:14). Christians need to have meekness and fear, having a good conscience, so that in the matter in which they are spoken against, those who revile their good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame (1 Pet. 3:16), and their baptism is the appeal of a good conscience unto God (v. 21).

Only once is the plural *consciences* used with a plural pronoun. The apostles hope that they are made manifest in the consciences of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:11). This

immediately follows the verse that speaks of all being manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, which stresses the individual rather than the corporate aspect of the believers.

A Corporate Heart

The singular *heart* with the plural pronominal occurs thirty-four times. It occurs in New Testament quotations of the Old Testament in which the people's heart becomes fat and does not understand (Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27), their heart stays far away from the Lord (Matt. 15:8; Mark 7:6) and is hard (3:5). Paul considers that the Jews have a veil on their heart (2 Cor. 3:15). Part of Mary's poetic praise is that the Lord has scattered those who are proud in the understanding of their heart (Luke 1:51), and those who hear about the events around the birth of John the Baptist put these things in their heart (v. 66). In the parable of the sower, when the seed falls beside the way, the devil takes away the word from their heart (8:12; cf. Matt. 13:19, which has the singular pronoun). The disciples experience the hardening of the heart (Mark 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40), reason in their heart regarding who is the greatest (Luke 9:47; cf. Matt. 9:4, which uses *hearts* in the plural). Their heart is where their treasure is (Luke 12:34; cf. Matt. 6:21, which has a singular subject). They experience a burning heart, doubts arise in their heart, and they are troubled, afraid, filled with sorrow, and rejoice in their heart (Luke 24:32, 38; John 14:1, 27; 16:6, 22).

Mankind in general experiences becoming darkened in their heart, lacking understanding (Rom. 1:21) because of the hardness of their heart (Eph. 4:18). The apostles' mouth is opened and their heart is enlarged toward the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6:11), and they are not bereaved in heart at not seeing the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 2:17). Paul prays that the eyes of the Ephesians' heart would be enlightened (Eph. 1:18), tells them to be filled in spirit, singing and psalming with their heart to the Lord (5:19), and charges slaves to be obedient to their masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in singleness of their heart, as to Christ (6:5). The Philippian believers have Paul in their heart (Phil. 1:7). The believers need to beware of having an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12), to guard against having bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in their heart (James 3:14), to love one another from a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22), and to persuade their heart before God rather than have it blame them (1 John 3:19-21).

All of these examples can be considered as references to the collective, shared experience of the antecedents of the pronominal element. The antecedents are almost all collective or corporate: the Jewish people at the time of Christ, the disciples, mankind, the believers in the church, and the apostles.

Another indicator of the corporate aspect of the heart is the expression *one heart*. Acts 4:32 says that "the heart and soul of the multitude of those who had believed was one; and not even one said that any of his possessions was his own, but all things were common to them." The expression *one heart* also occurs on a number of occasions in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 12:38; 2 Chron. 30:12; Psa. 83:5; Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19).

Hearts (plural) occurs about forty-five times with the plural pronominal.¹² All of these plural examples can be considered as emphasizing the experiences of individuals without necessarily tying them together corporately. The fact that the same verbs, such as *reasoning* (Mark 2:6, 8; Luke 5:22), *filling* (Acts 14:17), *singing* (Col. 3:16), and *hardening* (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7), occur with the singular and the plural forms indicates that the use of the singular with the plural pronominal is not constrained by the idiom of the Greek language but is a deliberate choice of the author.

A Corporate Mind

The singular word *mind* (*nous*) occurs seven times with the plural pronominal in the New Testament. The Lord opens the disciples' mind to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). God has given up mankind to a disapproved mind (Rom. 1:28), the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind (Eph. 4:17), and the defiled and unbelieving are defiled in their mind and their conscience (Titus 1:15). Paul charges the saints in Rome not to be fashioned according to this age but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2), and he charges the Ephesians to be renewed in the spirit of their mind (Eph. 4:23). Paul is concerned that the Thessalonians not be shaken in mind or alarmed to the effect that the day of the Lord has come (2 Thes. 2:2). In addition, Paul beseeches the Corinthians: "Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Another word, translated "mind" or "understanding" (*dianoia*), occurs in the singular with the plural pronominal eight times in the New Testament. Those who are proud in the understanding (*dianoia*) of their heart are scattered (Luke 1:51). The believers formerly were enemies in their mind, united in hostility against God (Col. 1:21). God's new covenant is for the Lord to impart His laws into the believers' mind and to inscribe them on their hearts; He will be God to them, and they will be a people to Him (Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Peter speaks of the believers girding up the loins of their mind and being sober, setting their hope perfectly on the grace being brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:13). Peter writes his second letter to stir up the believers' sincere mind to

remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior preached by their apostles (3:1-2). The Son of God has come and has given the believers an understanding (*dianoia*) that they might know Him who is true (1 John 5:20).

Conversely, the plural form with plural pronouns occurs only once. The believers conducted themselves once in the lusts of their flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts (*dianoia*), and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (Eph. 2:3).

A few times the verb *phroneō* occurs with the notion of thinking the same thing and is often translated as having “the same mind toward one another” (Rom. 12:16; 15:5). Also, the ten kings have one mind (*gnomē*) to give their authority to the beast (Rev. 17:13) and perform one mind to carry out God’s mind concerning the religious Babylon (v. 17).

A Corporate Soul

The singular word *soul* (*psuchē*) occurs with the plural pronominal five times in the New Testament. The Lord charges the disciples not to be anxious for their life (*psuchē*), what to eat or what to drink; nor for their body, what to put on (Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22). The Jews ask the Lord how long He would hold their soul in suspense, and if He was the Christ, to tell them plainly (John 10:24). Paul prays that the God of peace Himself would sanctify the believers wholly and that their spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 5:23). The overcomers overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they love not their soul-life (*psuchē*) even unto death (Rev. 12:11). Perhaps we could say that the overcomers collectively agree to renounce their soul-life.

As was pointed out above, the multitude has one soul as well as one heart (Acts 4:32), and Paul charges the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27).

The plural is more common, occurring seventeen times (Matt. 11:29; Luke 21:19; Acts 14:22; 15:24, 26; 27:10; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Thes. 2:8; Heb. 12:3; 13:17; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:9, 22; 2:25; 4:19; 1 John 3:16; Rev. 20:4). The plural emphasizes the individual experiences of the believers more than their corporate or collective

experience. For example, the Lord tells the disciples to take His yoke upon themselves and learn from Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart, and they will find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:29). Other verses speak of the believers fainting in their souls (Heb. 12:3), the disciples possessing their souls (Luke 21:19), and Paul and Barnabas establishing the souls of the disciples (Acts 14:22). There are certain ones who went out from among the apostles who trouble the believers with their words, unsettling their souls (15:24). Some risk their lives (v. 26; cf. 27:10), Paul would most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of the souls of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:15), and the apostles are well pleased to impart their souls to the believers (1 Thes. 2:8). The elders oversee the souls of the believers in the church (Heb. 13:17), and the Lord is the Overseer of the believers’ souls (1 Pet. 2:25). The implanted word is able to save the believers’ souls (James 1:21), the end of the believers’ faith is the salvation of their souls (1 Pet. 1:9), and the believers have purified their souls by their obedience to the truth (v. 22). Those who suffer according

to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator (4:19). John charges the believers that they ought to lay down their lives (*psuchai*) on behalf of the brothers (1 John 3:16).

A Corporate Body

The Lord charges the disciples not to be anxious for their body, what they should put on (Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22). Paul charges the saints in Rome not to let sin reign in their mortal body (Rom. 6:12). He also indicates that if Christ is in the believers, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness (8:10), and that they themselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even they themselves groan in themselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of their body (v. 23). He tells the church in Corinth and all those who call on the Lord in every place that their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within them (1 Cor. 6:19) and that they should glorify God in their body (v. 20).¹³ Paul and the other ministers of the new covenant are always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in their body (2 Cor. 4:10). Paul tells the saints in Philippi that the Lord will transfigure the body of humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). Paul prays for the church of the Thessalonians that the God of peace Himself would sanctify them wholly and that their spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 5:23).

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James questions the twelve tribes in the dispersion that if any one of them says to a brother or sister who is without clothing and lacks daily food, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” yet does not give them the necessities of the body, what is the profit? (James 2:16).¹⁴

The plural is used four times. Mankind in general dishonors their bodies among themselves (Rom. 1:24). Paul says that if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in the believers, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to their mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells them (8:11). Paul exhorts the brothers in Rome, through the compassions of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is their reasonable service (12:1). Paul asks the church in Corinth if they know that their bodies are members of Christ, expecting an affirmative answer (1 Cor. 6:15). These last two examples also have a corporate sense: *bodies* become *a* living sacrifice, and *bodies* are members of the corporate Christ. Since the believers are tripartite beings living in the physical world, even their bodies have a corporate aspect, giving Christ’s mystical Body a physical, visible manifestation on the earth today.¹⁵

Conclusion

God created tripartite man as a corporate man. His fall was a corporate event (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22), and his regeneration and transformation are also corporate matters involving the operation of the divine life. The believers’ entire tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body—are affected corporately. While a singular faculty or part of the body with a plural pronominal can be used to indicate a collective and yet distributive sense in the New Testament for a variety of subjects, such as the Gentiles, the Jews, or mankind in general, it is used in a particular and more intrinsic sense when referring to the Body of Christ as a corporate entity.

The human faculties of the members of the Body are transformed from being individualistic to becoming corporate because they are transformed by the impartation of Christ and even become Christ. The Body of Christ has Christ as its Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23), and the individual believers are members of the Body of Christ and even members of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; 6:15). The members of the Body also have Christ as the life-giving Spirit in their spirit (15:45; 2 Tim. 4:22), and they have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Paul beseeches the Corinthians, through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to speak the same thing and to be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion (1:10), and he prays that the saints in Rome would be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:5). He himself longs after all the saints in Philippi in the inward parts (lit., bowels; signifying inward affection, then, tender

mercy and sympathy) of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:8), and forgives the Corinthians in the person (lit., face) of Christ (2 Cor. 2:10).

As the operation of the mingled spirit spreads from the spirit to the soul and eventually to the mortal body, the individual members are joined and blended together in the corporate faculties of their being. The oneness of the believers, as members of the Body of Christ, is not simply an agreement or a compromise but a genuine transformation that is particularly expressed in the soul in this age. The corporate glorification of the body will be manifested fully in the coming age. The grammatical feature of a singular noun, expressing the unique faculties of the Body of Christ (i.e., *one heart, one soul, one mind*, and even *one mouth*), combined with a plural pronominal element, indicating that the individual distinctiveness of the members is retained, attests to this transformation.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹This notion of the mingled spirit is covered in much more detail in an article entitled “The Mingled Spirit” by John Pester in *Affirmation & Critique*, II.4 (Oct. 1997): 39-46. Articles in the current issue also deal in more detail with the mingled spirit and the concept of mingling.

²The bars typify the Spirit as the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The believers need to be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace with all lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering and by bearing one another in love (v. 2). This indicates that oneness is not only of the Spirit but also has elements of humanity as indicated by human virtues and the need for human cooperation to keep it.

³Sometimes there is ambiguity in using this structure. For example, in the sentence *it took a long time for the girls to eat their sandwich*, a collective reading of *their sandwich* would understand that there was only one sandwich that the girls ate, whereas a distributive reading would understand that the girls ate one sandwich each.

⁴There are a number of reasons a writer or speaker may use a singular noun with a plural referent. It may be used for economy of expression (preferring a singular rather than a plural), or due to the idiom in the language (e.g., *we want to keep an open mind*, or *they could not put their finger on it*). When singular and plural forms both occur with the same verb in a language, this would tend to discount idiomatic constraints. A singular with a plural referent may be used to disambiguate. For example, the sentence *all the students must hand in their papers today* could be understood in two ways—each student has a paper and each student must hand it in, or each student has more than one paper to hand in. Therefore, the distributive singular may be used to indicate individual instances: for example, *all the students*

must hand in their paper today indicates that each individual member of the group has only one paper to hand in. However, with parts of the human body or faculties, it is usually obvious regarding the number of the part(s) that each person possesses. Therefore, indicating quantity does not appear to be the primary motivation for the use of the distributive singular in the Bible.

⁵Another example occurs in Acts 11:22, in which a paired human faculty is referred to: “the account concerning them was heard in the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem.”

⁶*One accord* (*homothumadon*) also occurs eleven times (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29; Rom. 15:6). In the Old Testament *one accord* occurs four times (lit., one mouth, Josh. 9:2; 1 Kings 22:13; 2 Chron. 18:12; lit., one shoulder, Zeph. 3:9). In addition, the Lord states that “if two of you are in harmony (*sumphoneō*) on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens” (Matt. 18:19).

⁷Some have tried to point out that late biblical Hebrew prefers plural verbs with collective nouns rather singular verbs (Polzin 40-43), but this is not so obviously the case with human faculties or parts of the body.

⁸There are also numerous verses that speak of God giving us the divine Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 3:34; Acts 5:32; 8:18; 15:8; Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thes. 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13).

⁹Elsewhere, the phrase *one Spirit* refers to the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9, 13; Eph. 2:18; 4:4).

¹⁰Elsewhere, the phrase *the same Spirit* refers to the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4, 8, 9, 11).

¹¹This refers to the human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit. O'Brien and Dunn concur in the following comments:

How did Paul envisage his spirit as being present with the Colossians or the Corinthians? Regarding the latter context (1 Cor. 5:3-5) the expression “in spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι) suggests something more than that they were present in his thoughts and prayers, however true this may have been. Paul states that he is present with them, not that they are with him. Certainly at 1 Corinthians 5:4 it is a real presence, not simply that he agrees with their verdict, for he writes, “When you and my spirit are assembled.” He clearly conceived of his spirit’s presence in a place far removed from where his body stood. (O'Brien 98)

Paul thought of himself “of being somehow really present with the Colossians, in the spiritual realm by means of the Spirit” (Dunn 134).

¹²Matt. 9:4; 18:35; Mark 2:6, 8; Luke 3:15; 5:22; 16:15; 21:14, 34; Acts 7:39, 51; 14:17; 15:9; Rom. 1:24; 2:15; 5:5; 16:18; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:2; 4:6; 7:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:17; 6:22; Phil. 4:7; Col. 2:2; 3:15, 16; 4:8; 1 Thes. 2:4; 3:13; 2 Thes. 2:17; 3:5; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7; 8:10; 10:16; James 4:8; 5:5, 8; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:23; 17:17. The heart consists of the conscience (part of the spirit) and the three parts of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. For a more in-depth treatment concerning the parts of man see *Affirmation & Critique*, II.4 (Oct. 1997): 50 (note 4) and *Affirmation & Critique*, I.2 (Apr. 1996): 44, 46.

¹³Hays notes, “The Christian who engages in fornication...defiles the *church which is Christ’s body* because such a person misuses his or her body which is actually an extension of *Christ’s body*” (106).

¹⁴A true distributive singular can be seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.” Each one is responsible for the things done in his own body. In

addition, the distributive singular is used with a class noun, *horses*: “Now if we put bridles into the mouths of horses that they would obey us, we direct their whole body as well” (James 3:3).

¹⁵Other parts of the body are also expressed as singular nouns with a plural pronominal element, e.g., *their hand* (Acts 11:30; Heb. 8:9; Rev. 20:4).

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