

'Abide in Me, and I in You' as the Dawn of New Creation:

Deducing the meaning of mutual indwelling in John's
gospel and its missional implications

07 July 2023

Brian Middleton

CLIFF
COLLEGE

A dissertation submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of MA Mission
(Biblical Theology of Mission) in the Faculty of Humanities

15,000 words

Abstract

This study establishes the mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer in John as part of a major theme within biblical theology. Mutual indwelling as intimacy with God was present in Eden, but lost by the entry of evil and moral corruption of the fall. This evil had to be destroyed and humans transformed morally to regain the intimacy. Each step in this process is attended by mutual indwelling and they act as a sequence: the destruction of evil paves the way for moral transformation, which permits intimacy with God. So mutual indwelling is the route to new creation and, since Jesus expected his disciples to show fruit of participation, the new creation has started. Therefore, mutual indwelling is the dawn of new creation.

The missional implications are (1) believers' intimacy with God should lead to their sharing the Deity's concerns and the *missio Dei*; (2) personal moral transformation is of itself missional; (3) disciples should understand *missio Dei*; (4) once these are in place, disciples must testify; (5) missional prayer must start with the spiritual health of the church, rather than its evangelistic activities; (6) Christians must be united in their relationships and in the core apostolic doctrine.

Declaration

I declare that the dissertation is my own original work unless referenced clearly to the contrary, and that no portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgements

To my heavenly Father, who gave me the ability, time, resources, and passion to complete this study.

I would also like to thank my tutor, Dr. Ed Mackenzie, who challenged my thinking in numerous places and offered helpful comments on my earlier drafts. My dissertation is certainly better as a result, but any remaining issues remain my own responsibility.

Abbreviations: Bibles

ESV: The Holy Bible: English Standard Version

ISV: International Standard Version New Testament Version 1.1

NASB95: New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update

NET2: The NET Bible (Second Edition)

NIV: The Holy Bible: New International Version (Anglicised Edition, 2011)

NLT: Holy Bible: New Living Translation

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized)

Bible references are to the ESV unless otherwise stated.

Abbreviations: Other

AYB: Anchor Yale Bible

BECNT: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

BNTC: Black's New Testament Commentary

NAC: The New American Commentary

NCCS: New Covenant Commentary Series

NIB: New Interpreter's Bible

NICNT: The New International Commentary on the New Testament

NIGTC: The New International Greek Testament Commentary

NIVAC: The NIV Application Commentary

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

PNTC: The Pillar New Testament Commentary

SP: Sacra Pagina

TNTC: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

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INTRODUCTION

Even a casual reading of John will discover places where the author writes of Christ abiding-in or indwelling believers and vice-versa, but few go beyond wondering what it means and so miss the depth of relationship with God it offers. This study addresses two related questions. Firstly, what was the author portraying as Jesus’ meaning behind this concept? Secondly, what are the consequences for contemporary mission? These questions are vital for today’s British church, often seen to be in terminal decline.

Johannine mutual indwelling will be shown to represent a deep relationship with God involving moral transformation from the inside out. Insofar as church decline comes from neglecting this, regaining Jesus’ intent for mutual indwelling should reverse it. The study will also show that mutual indwelling is a critical precursor to effective mission.

In the opening paragraph of his short journal article ‘A Short Note toward a Theology of Abiding in John’s Gospel’ Latz notes that, of thirteen major commentaries on John, ten devote scant space to abiding as a theme, two give just two pages and only Dodd provides a whole chapter, albeit on the closely related theme of ‘in God’.¹ Latz helpfully

¹ Andrew Brower Latz, ‘A Short Note toward a Theology of Abiding in John’s Gospel’, *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4:2 (2010), 161-167 [161-162].

traces the use of μένω (abide, remain) throughout John, deducing that it is a major, yet under-recognised, theme.² Of particular interest to this study is his observation that abiding is directly related to witness: the disciples were qualified to witness because they had been with Jesus from the beginning (Jn.15:27), something that had started with their staying (ἔμειναν) with him.³ The title of Latz's essay invites others to develop his proposed theme of abiding further, and this present study accepts the challenge.

John contains various aspects of abiding, such as the abiding of Christ in the Father (Jn.14:10), the Father in Christ (Jn.14:10), and believers in Christ (Jn.15:6). This study will focus on the abiding of Christ in the believer and vice-versa in passages where the two are closely coupled. Therefore, it narrows the scope of Latz's introductory study to *mutual* abiding or, since two of the passages considered do not use the lemma μένω, *mutual indwelling*.

Approach

Numerous passages about abiding or dwelling in Christ can be found by searching for 'in me' through John, yet only four of these are mutual, where Christ indwells the believer and vice-versa within a few verses. This study will reveal that these passages contain significant biblical themes: John 6:52-59 shows Jesus as the promised new prophet and new exodus; John 15:4-10 portrays him as the new Israel; John 14:15-24 and 17:20-26 show him as the new temple. Each passage will have a chapter where the implications of these wider themes will be used to deduce the meaning of mutual indwelling there. The fourth chapter will firstly show that mutual indwelling is more widespread than John

² Latz, 'Short Note', [163-168].

³ *Ibid.*, [165].

alone, and then incorporate the biblical theology of the surrounding themes into the theme of mutual indwelling, arguing that they together indicate that new creation has begun. The fifth chapter will cover the missional significance of this theme.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the OT allusions that many contemporary scholars find in John were, in fact, present in the minds of the author and earliest hearers. The second assumption is that the meaning of mutual indwelling in each passage can be deduced from the OT backgrounds of these surrounding themes. This carries an implicit third assumption, since scholars disagree on the degree to which the NT uses of the OT align with the OT contexts.⁴ Beale found that, in most cases where the NT uses the OT, it *does* show an awareness of the OT context⁵ and Köstenberger takes such an approach to John.⁶ They will be followed here, augmented by other scholars as appropriate.

The gospel of John does not disclose its author and this study does not depend on that person's identity,⁷ so will follow the academic consensus by referring to them as *the author* or *John's author* whilst referring to the work itself as *John*. Despite the author of Revelation calling himself 'John', it is not assumed that this is the same person.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 1-13.

⁵ Beale, *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 13.

⁶ Andreas J Köstenberger, 'John' in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 415-512 [415-421, 443-448, 491-493].

⁷ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John. NICNT* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 5-24, discusses the arguments, finding it best to retain anonymity; Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 83-115, defends authorial control by John, son of Zebedee.

1. ACTIVELY BELIEVING CHRIST'S DEITY AND INCARNATION ENABLES ABIDING (JOHN 6:22-59)

Mutual indwelling first occurs in John 6:56, where it is a result of feeding on Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood. The context is the bread of life discourse of 6:22-59, which verse 26 links with feeding the five thousand (Jn.6:1-15). Together, these surround the incident where Jesus walked on the sea (Jn.6:16-21). Both these signs will be shown to allude to Moses' exodus miracles and suggest that the author was portraying Jesus as superior to both Moses and the exodus. It will be argued that Jesus as new prophet and new exodus hints at his deity, whilst feeding on his flesh denotes his incarnation. Many see feeding on Jesus here as Eucharistic, but alternative explanations of the apparently Eucharistic language will be given and it will be argued that feeding on Jesus means believing in him, but with an active aspect. This active faith in his deity and incarnation allows entry to mutual abiding, which will be shown to allude to becoming like God.

1.1. Allusions to Deity in John 6

In order to support the argument that active faith in Christ's deity is a precursor to mutual abiding, it must first be demonstrated that Christ's deity appears in John 6.

Feeding the Five Thousand

Moses had prophesied that another prophet like himself would arise (Dt.18:15-19) and Martyn amasses evidence from Maccabees, the Dead Sea scrolls, and Rabbinic works to show that some first century AD Jews had an expectation that this prophet would repeat

Moses' great works.⁸ Indeed Rabbi Isaac, of the third century, is recorded as saying that one of the signs of this prophet would be causing manna to descend,⁹ and Carson argues from the psuedepigraphical 2 Baruch that this expectation was known around the time that John was written.¹⁰ So, when Jesus multiplied the bread and fish to feed the crowd, their remark that the anticipated prophet had arrived (Jn.6:14) shows that they viewed the sign as a symbolic re-enactment of Moses' miracle with the manna.

But the bread of life discourse takes this further: after the exodus the Jews ate manna in the desert, yet died (Jn.6:49), whilst those who feed on Jesus will live forever (Jn.6:50). Jesus is portrayed as *better* than the expected prophet: not simply being the agent through whom transient bread came, but is himself the true and lasting bread; the antitype of Moses as Köstenberger puts it.¹¹

Walking on the Sea

The exodus crossing and manna from heaven are amongst the greatest miracles of the OT (Ps.78:13-25). John's account of feeding the crowd clearly links with the post-exodus gift of manna from heaven (Jn.6:26-56), but readers often miss that Jesus' walking on the sea also alludes to the exodus crossing of the Red Sea. This may be because the NIV mistranslates θάλασσα (Jn.6:16-19) as water, suggesting that Jesus walked on the water, rather than the more literal 'sea' used by formal-equivalent translations such as ESV. NET2 argues that 'lake' is a better rendering in English, since 'sea' denotes a larger body

⁸ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel (Third Edition)* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 104-111.

⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 107.

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John. PNTC* (Leicester: IVP, 1991), 286.

¹¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John. BECNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 196.

of water than a lake,¹² but the contextual allusions to the exodus crossing presented below make the more literal 'sea' preferable in order to retain the original connotations.

John hints at this Red Sea link since the disciples were afraid (Jn.16:19), just as the Jews had been at the Red Sea (Ex.14:10), but examining the parallel passages shows that Mark gives clearer evidence. In Mark, Jesus' walking on the sea occurred in the fourth watch (Mk.6:48), paralleling YHWH's deliverance at the exodus in the morning watch (Ex.14:24). Mark also writes that the disciples' failure to understand the feeding of the multitude led to their not understanding Jesus' walking on the sea (Mk.6:52). For Mark, the two incidents are so obviously connected that he did not need to explain how. From this unexplained connection, Hooker argues that, since feeding the crowd was a re-enactment of the gift of manna, Jesus' walking on the sea is best understood as re-enacting Moses' other great exodus miracle of crossing the Red Sea, concluding that he did not appear in order to rescue the disciples, but so they could witness his epiphany.¹³

Whilst Mark most clearly portrays walking on the sea as the exodus crossing, John has a significant detail that the synoptics lack (Mt.14:22-36, Mk.6:45-52). In John, the incident resulted in the disciples *immediately* reaching the land¹⁴ they were going to (Jn.6:21), whereas in the original crossing reaching the land occurred later (Ex.15:17). John not only portrays Jesus' walking on the sea as like the exodus, but as a *better* exodus.

This understanding that the exodus is being referenced helps uncover further clues in John. The phrase 'it is I, do not be afraid' (Jn.6:20) is often skipped over, but 'it is I'

¹² NET2 translation note on 6:16.

¹³ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*. BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 169.

¹⁴ This connection is obscured by the NIV, which incorrectly translates γῆς as shore.

translates the Greek phrase ἐγώ εἰμι, which could be either the simple self-identification that most translations assume¹⁵ or the divine *I AM* formula from Exodus 3:14.¹⁶ Morris thinks that self-identification was meant,¹⁷ whilst Köstenberger concedes that there may be more.¹⁸ But they both neglect that John's author gave the reason for selecting the signs included in the gospel as being that people may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn.20:30-31).¹⁹ In John, this title, 'Son of God', indicated 'the pre-existent and metaphysical relationship between the Father and the Son'²⁰ so, as the purpose of the sign was that people would believe this relationship between the Father and the Son, the *I AM* formula is more likely. This deduction is reinforced by the words 'do not be afraid' immediately afterwards, which often occurred alongside theophanies, such as Abram's vision (Ge.15:1).²¹ The proximity of these clues suggests that Jesus' walking on the sea is not a simple re-enactment of Moses' miracle, but a revelation of deity.

This is confirmed by the synoptics. Mark recounts that Jesus intended to 'pass by' the disciples (Mk.6:48), the best explanation for which comes from the OT. After the exodus, YHWH's goodness *passed before* Moses (Ex.33:19-34:7), so the implication in Mark is that Jesus was emulating YHWH by showing his divine glory to his disciples.²² Further confirmation comes from Matthew, where the incident caused Jesus' disciples to worship him (Mt.14:33), something reserved for deity (Ex.20:5).

¹⁵ NLT improves on the common 'it is I' with 'I am here', preserving the ambiguity.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John. NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 165-166.

¹⁷ Morris, *John. NICNT*, 335.

¹⁸ Köstenberger, *John. BECNT*, 205.

¹⁹ Stephen S. Kim, 'The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus' Passover Signs in John 6', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164:655 (2007), 307-322 [307-308].

²⁰ A. Winn, 'Son of God' in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Nottingham: IVP, 2013), 886-894 [893].

²¹ Kim, 'Christological', [320].

²² David E. Garland, *Mark. NIVAC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 266.

This argument does not require that John's author or audience knew the synoptics, but their understanding would have been greater if they did.²³ John, confirmed by the synoptics, does not simply portray Jesus as the promised prophet, but as a *better* prophet. Indeed, it strongly hints at deity.

1.2. The Meaning of Feeding on Jesus

Having made so many hints at deity, John now takes a surprising turn. Six times in consecutive verses the word *flesh* (σάρξ) is used as something of Jesus that must be eaten (Jn.6:51-56) so many hold that the passage is about the Eucharist.

Brown suggests that the author's omission of the Last Supper in John makes it possible that John 6:51 preserves the Johannine form of the words of institution,²⁴ but is unconvincing because the word *flesh* (σάρξ) is used here, rather than *body* (σώμα) as used in the institution formula (Mt.26:26, Mk.14:22, Lk.22:19, 1Co.11:24). Although Brown argues that there is no Hebrew or Aramaic word for *body*, so σάρξ may have been an earlier and better translation of what Jesus actually said,²⁵ he neglects the fact that, when John was written, σώμα was already widely in use for the words of institution, so σάρξ would be a deviation from the norm if the Eucharist was the author's primary referent.²⁶ More effectively though, he argues that drinking blood was forbidden by Torah (Ge.9:4, Le.3:17, Dt.12:23) and eating human flesh and drinking human blood appeared in a vision of apocalyptic carnage (Ezk.66:17), making it

²³ Paul A. Rainbow, *Johanne Theology: The Gospel, The Epistles, and the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 55-57 notes the debate on this, offering evidence that John was written for readers with knowledge of the synoptics.

²⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII. AYB* (London: Yale University Press, 1966), 285.

²⁵ Brown, *John I-XII. AYB*, 285.

²⁶ N. Perrin, 'Last Supper' in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Nottingham: IVP, 2013), 492-501 [500].

impossible to conceive of a positive meaning that Jesus' hearers could have taken from his words apart from a Eucharistic one.²⁷ This argument is not easily overturned but, if correct, it ignores the momentum that has been building throughout John of the revelation Jesus' deity. So it is hard to see the Eucharist as the *main* thrust of Jesus' words. Surprisingly, the Catholic commentator Moloney agrees that the *primary* concern of John 5:51-58 is not Eucharistic, rather the 'main thrust of the discourse is to point to Jesus as the revelation of God'.²⁸ He argues that the author, writing at the end of the first century, was addressing an audience who wondered *how* to encounter this revelation of God, concluding that the author inserted the Eucharistic language as a *secondary* theme to show that the Eucharist was a way in which they could tangibly know Jesus.²⁹ Gibson offers an alternative possibility: this first-century audience may have believed that the Eucharist by itself conferred eternal life,³⁰ and the passage was included to counter that by stressing Jesus' incarnation.³¹

Moloney's and Gibson's points are *possible*, albeit not proven, undermining Brown's point that the *only* positive interpretation of Jesus's words must be Eucharistic. This removes the obstacle to seeing consuming Jesus' flesh and blood as being only secondarily about the Eucharist. It will now be argued that its main purpose was to emphasise Christ's incarnation and the necessity for actively believing in him.

²⁷ Brown, *John I-XII. AYB*, 284-285.

²⁸ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John. SP* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 223.

²⁹ Moloney, *John. SP*, 223-224.

³⁰ Gibson cites C.K. Barrett, *Church Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament*, 74. Unfortunately, Barrett does not give *his* sources.

³¹ David Gibson, 'Eating is Believing? On Midrash and the Mixing of Metaphors in John 6', *Themelios* 27:2 (2002), 5-15 [15].

A non-sacramental view is that the author used the word σάρξ to remind John's hearers that the divine word was truly incarnate (Jn.1:14), so that he could voluntarily sacrifice his flesh on humanity's behalf.³² Carson notes the parallelism between John 6:40 and 6:54 where rising at the eschaton is a result of believing in the Son in one case, and of partaking of the flesh and blood in the other, suggesting that the latter is a metaphor for the former.³³ Carson's argument is susceptible to claims that *both* belief in the Son (Jn.6:40) and eating the flesh and blood (Jn.6:54) are necessary,³⁴ rather than the latter being metaphorical, but Gibson counters this by observing another parallelism between 6:47-48, where belief leads to eternal life, and 6:51, where eating the bread leads to eternal life. The significance is that, since the object of faith (Jesus) is identified with the bread in 6:48, there are neither two objects nor two actions and so eating the bread of Jesus must be a metaphor for believing in him.³⁵ This validates Carson's conclusion that eating Christ's flesh and blood is a way of describing faith in Christ, negating the Eucharistic sense of σάρξ and showing that Christ's physical flesh is meant.

Such faith will surely include believing the revelation of Christ's deity and incarnation that has been given in this chapter.³⁶ But it is not just passive acceptance of these which is required. Eating and drinking are actions that require something to be taken into one, so metaphorically eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood suggests that believing his deity and incarnation has to be internalised, it is an *active* faith that is required.

Therefore, when Jesus says 'Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in

³² Carson, *John. PNTC*, 295.

³³ *Ibid.*, 297.

³⁴ Gail R. O'Day, 'The Book of John' in Leander E. Keck (ed.), *NIB* (Nashville: TN: Abingdon, 1994-2004), Vol.9:491-865 [608].

³⁵ Gibson, 'Eating is Believing?', [10].

³⁶ The scope of that to be believed also includes Christ's sacrificial death, but will be covered in chapter 4.

me, and I in him' (Jn.6:56), it could be paraphrased as 'whoever actively believes in my deity and incarnation enters into a state of mutual indwelling with me'.

1.3. Confirmation from the Prologue

Gorman argues that the prologue offers a summary and interpretation guide for John,³⁷ which can be applied to support this interpretation. In the prologue, believing in Christ's name and receiving him gave the right to become God's children (Jn.1:12). From the OT, a person's name was related to their nature,³⁸ so believing in Jesus' name here probably means accepting the revelation of deity in 1:1-4 and incarnation in 1:14. In 1:12, it is not simply those who believe in Jesus who become God's children, but those who also *receive* him. Most commentaries surveyed consider believing there *identical* to receiving, but Kanagaraj notes a slight nuance, calling receiving the 'receptive aspect of believing'.³⁹ Although believing and receiving are different ways of describing the same event,⁴⁰ writing receiving before believing shows this believing in Christ's deity and incarnation is active, confirming the understanding that has been reached about 6:56.

Treating the prologue as an interpretation guide for the rest of the gospel also allows for the meaning of abiding to be elaborated. Those who actively believed Christ's deity and incarnation in the prologue were given the right to become God's children (Jn.1:11-13). Gorman argues that, in John, children have their father's likeness, with children of the devil doing the devil's desires (Jn.8:44) and children of Abraham doing what Abraham

³⁷ Michael J. Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 42-43.

³⁸ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11. NAC* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 117.

³⁹ Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John. NCCS* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

⁴⁰ Morris, *John. NICNT*, 87-88.

did (Jn.8:39).⁴¹ So the offer to become God's children is an implicit call to share in God's likeness,⁴² something Gorman relates to mutual indwelling in the Trinity.⁴³ In John 6:56, this same active belief in Christ's deity and incarnation allowed one to enter mutual abiding in Jesus, so the parallel with the prologue suggests that mutual indwelling in John 6:56 also means sharing God's likeness.

1.4. Conclusion

The evidence given in this chapter supports the claim that, when Jesus said 'whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him' (Jn.6:56) he meant believing in his deity and incarnation. Eating is a metaphor for believing here, but its imagery suggests active faith, so actively believing in Christ's deity and incarnation is what is necessary for mutual abiding. Despite the common Eucharistic interpretation of John 6, treating the prologue as an interpretation guide for the gospel confirmed that this reading is correct. It also gave the further insight that mutual indwelling means sharing God's likeness.

⁴¹ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

2. ABIDING AS FRIENDSHIP AND MORAL

TRANSFORMATION (JOHN 15:4-10)

Another statement of mutual indwelling occurs in John 15:4, just after Jesus had referred to himself as the true vineyard/vine, and in John 15:5, where he said ‘whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit’. This study will show that the vineyard/vine and fruit metaphors relate to a new Israel and moral fruitfulness respectively, giving the primary meaning of moral transformation to mutual abiding here, this coming about through friendship with God.

2.1. The Vineyard/Vine

The major translations are univocal in translating ἄμπελος as vine and κλῆμα as branch in John 15. Although these were the original meanings of the terms in classical Greek, Caragounis has convincingly argued that the meaning had changed hundreds of years before Christ, to vineyard and vine respectively.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, few commentaries currently adopt this finding⁴⁵ so, when referring to John 15, this study will use vineyard/vine for ἄμπελος, and vine/branch for κλῆμα. For OT passages, it will follow the ESV, which translates the Hebrew, avoiding this issue. An implication of Caragounis’ finding is that OT passages about either vine or vineyard are relevant to John 15.

⁴⁴ Chrys C. Caragounis, “Abide in Me’: The New Mode of Relationship between Jesus and His Followers as a Basis for Christian Ethics (John 15)’ in Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann (eds.), *Rethinking the Ethics of John: “Implicit Ethics” in the Johannine Writings* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 250-263 [251-255] summarises his earlier articles.

⁴⁵ David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 290-291 is an exception; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*. AYB (London: Yale University Press, 1970), 660 independently notes some crossover of meaning of ἄμπελος to vineyard.

The OT often portrayed Israel as a fruitless vineyard (Is.5:1-7) or vine (Ezk.15:1-8) that was in danger of being destroyed for lack of fruitfulness. When Jesus spoke of being the true vineyard/vine (Jn.15:1), he was almost certainly alluding to this OT imagery, and Carson argues that other possibilities from ancient literature can be discounted because of the extent of John's OT references and the dominance of the replacement motif.⁴⁶ His arguments are strengthened by Hutchison's observation that the Greek definite article is used here, despite being unnecessary which, together with the use of the word 'true', suggests a translation 'I am *the* vineyard/vine, the true one'.⁴⁷ This is best understood typologically, with the OT images of both vineyard and vine being types of the Messiah.⁴⁸ By claiming to be *the* vineyard/vine, Jesus was asking his disciples to look to him as the locus of God's promises; by claiming to be the *true* vineyard/vine, he was claiming to be the perfect fulfilment of Israel.⁴⁹ Jesus' connotations seem clear: his disciples' fruitfulness will depend on their relationship with him, rather than their Jewish ancestry, so he effectively becomes the *New Israel*.

2.2 Fruit

The word 'fruit' occurs eight times in John 15:1-16, showing its importance to the author, yet there is remarkable lack of agreement over what that fruit is. Morris says 'the fruit is not defined here' but argues from other parts of the NT that it must include Christian character as well as leading others to Christ.⁵⁰ Köstenberger thinks that fruit is

⁴⁶ Carson, *John. PNTC*, 513.

⁴⁷ John C. Hutchison, 'The Vine in John 15 and Old Testament Imagery in the 'I Am' Statements', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:669 (2011), 63-80 [66], emphasis original.

⁴⁸ Hutchison, 'The Vine', [67].

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, [70].

⁵⁰ Morris, *John. NICNT*, 595.

'most likely' leading others to Christ,⁵¹ though he later widens it to all signs of growth which he says 'would seem' to also include love and Christian character.⁵² Because such fruit is the result of effective prayer in Jesus' name (Jn.15:7-8) Carson thinks that it includes everything that could result from such a prayer, including the obedience, joy, love, and witness which all occur in John 15.⁵³ The very language these scholars use highlights their uncertainty as to the nature of the fruit. Perhaps the reason is that they are looking in the wrong place? Every scholar listed has noted that the vineyard/vine refers to Israel, which failed to produce fruit, yet they search for the meaning of fruit in John 15 or elsewhere in the NT. Keener comes close, writing of fruit that 'the image may develop the biblical picture of God requiring fruit from Israel',⁵⁴ yet he fails to develop his hypothesis. But the prevalence of OT background in John suggests he is right, so the meaning of fruit will be found by examining OT passages where Israel is depicted as a fruitless vineyard/vine and identifying what led to this description.

Fruitlessness

Works by Manning and Peterson help identify which parts of the OT John's author had in mind. Manning analysed verbal parallels between the vineyard/vine imagery in John 15 and OT prophets, finding great coherence with Ezekiel 15, 17, 19, Jeremiah 2:21-22, and Isaiah 5:2,6.⁵⁵ He noted that John 15 shares eight words with Ezekiel's three vine parables, more than any other OT passage, and that each of the three parables has more

⁵¹ Köstenberger, *John. BECNT*, 453.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 454.

⁵³ Carson, *John. PNTC*, 517.

⁵⁴ Keener, *John*, 998.

⁵⁵ Gary T. Manning Jr., *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 135-142.

in common with John 15 than the passages from Isaiah and Jeremiah.⁵⁶ Rare words in both Ezekiel and John strengthen this association.⁵⁷ Peterson argued that Manning's data shows Ezekiel 15 to have the strongest connection,⁵⁸ leading him to argue that the reason Jerusalem was a useless vine was unfaithfulness (Ezk.15:8), which he takes as unfaithfulness to the covenant.⁵⁹ The value of Peterson's observation of covenant-unfaithfulness is that he can then regard Jesus' command to abide in him in John 15 as one to remain in the covenant.⁶⁰ Since Ezekiel has the closest association with John 15's vineyard/vine-imagery, the issue of covenant-unfaithfulness in Ezekiel explains the core understanding of fruitlessness in John.

The other OT vine passages illustrate this unfaithfulness. Isaiah's first vineyard song (Is.5:1-7) castigates Israel for yielding wild grapes, because YHWH had 'looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry' (Is.5:7). The rest of the chapter expands on unrighteousness as the accumulation of possessions (Is.5:8), alcoholic excess (Is.5:11), confusing good and evil (Is.5:20), being wise in one's own eyes (Is.5:21), unjust legal processes (Is.5:23), and rejecting YHWH's law (Is.5:24B). Jeremiah likened Israel to a vine that would be pruned for their treachery (Je.5:10-11), writing that they followed other gods (Je.5:7A, Je.2:21-23), lusted after one-another's wives (Je.5:7B-8), and had a stubborn and rebellious heart (Je.5:23). These low ethical standards describe covenant unfaithfulness.

⁵⁶ Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet*, 140.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁸ Brian Neil Peterson, *John's Use of Ezekiel: Understanding the Unique Perspective of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 155.

⁵⁹ Peterson, *John's Use of Ezekiel*, 156.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Fruitfulness

Peterson noted three significant passages in Ezekiel that refer to the covenant (Ezk.34:25, Ezk.36:26, Ezk.37:26), suggesting that John's author wished the reader to make the association.⁶¹ In 34:25, YHWH makes a covenant of peace and gives blessing (Ezk.34:27). This is expanded two chapters later, where Israel is cleansed from uncleanness and idolatry (Ezk.36:25), given a new heart and spirit (Ezk.36:26), and given YHWH's Spirit (Ezk.36:27A) with the result that they would walk in YHWH's statutes (Ezk.36:27B), leading to fruitfulness for their land (Ezk.36:29-30) which eventually becomes like Eden (Ezk.36:33-35). In Ezekiel 37:26, the covenant of peace follows Israel obeying YHWH's laws and commands (Ezk.37:24) whereas Jeremiah's solution to the problems he decried was a new covenant, when YHWH's law will be placed within people, being written on their hearts (Je.31:31-33). This everlasting covenant will result in Israel having one heart that will not turn from YHWH so they may be planted in the land in faithfulness (Je.32:39-41). Though he does not use the word 'vine' here, the immediate context includes the planting of vineyards (Je.31:5), suggesting that is what being planted in the land alludes to.

Köstenberger finds another link between these covenantal passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel: the use of what he calls 'in' terminology.⁶² Here, he relates 'I will put my Spirit *within* you' (Ezk.37:14 emphasis added) and 'I will put my law *within* them' (Je.31:33 emphasis added) to John's indwelling passages.⁶³ By two different routes, the author's

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective. Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 143-144.

⁶³ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 144.

indwelling language in John 15 has been shown to be rooted in the new covenant prophesied by Ezekiel and Jeremiah, a covenant unlike the old one that Israel was unfaithful to (Je.31:32). This covenant will be within people, written on their hearts (Je.31:33) with YHWH's Spirit within to cause people to be careful to obey (Ezk.36:27).

This OT background to the vineyard/vine imagery of John 15 has covenant unfaithfulness and low moral standards underlying the meaning of fruitlessness, so *fruitfulness* in John 15 can be understood as faithfulness to the new covenant, with the resultant inward moral transformation. It is this which underlies mutual abiding there. Attention must now be paid to what else the author had in mind.

2.3 The Nature of Abiding in John 15:4-10

Two common evangelical views of abiding are epitomised by Laney and Dillow. Laney argued that abiding in Jesus means believing in him in John 6:56, due to the parallels with 6:40-54, and that believing in Jesus in 12:46 precludes abiding in darkness, which is a Johannine metaphor for unbelief (Jn.12:35-36).⁶⁴ In this he is correct, but seems to import this meaning into John 15:1-6 despite noting the 'strange absence of "believe" in this passage'.⁶⁵

Dillow argued that abiding cannot mean the same as believing because remaining in Christ comes from obeying his commandments (Jn.15:9-10). This would reduce believing in Christ to obeying those commands,⁶⁶ something unacceptable for

⁶⁴ J. Carl Laney, 'Abiding is Believing: The Analogy of the Vine in John 15:1-6', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146:581 (1989), 55-66 [64-65].

⁶⁵ Laney, 'Abiding is Believing', [65].

⁶⁶ Joseph C. Dillow, 'Abiding is Remaining in Fellowship: Another Look at John 15:1-6', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147:585 (1990), 44-53 [49].

evangelicals. Instead, he argued that abiding means fellowship with Christ, illustrated by loving other believers (1Jn.2:10, 1Jn.4:12), walking as Jesus walked (1Jn.2:6), doing the will of God (1Jn.2:17), and keeping Jesus' commandments (Jn.15:10).⁶⁷ In particular, he wrote, 'the believer remains in Christ (i.e., remains in fellowship with Him) by keeping His commandments'.⁶⁸ He did better than Laney because obedience to Jesus' commandments is nearby stated as a requirement for abiding (Jn.15:10), but the immediate context shows his commandment is to love one another (Jn.15:12-13,17). Though he said abiding means fellowship, for Dillow fellowship really meant obedience, something he appears to have imported from 1John.

Both authors seem to be motivated by the fate of the unfruitful vines/branches in John 15:2,6, since Laney argued that they never truly believed⁶⁹ and Dillow thought they are true believers who failed to remain in fellowship and so were disciplined.⁷⁰ Their concern over the eternal security of believers highlights their evangelical perspective: one thought that abiding meant believing; the other that it meant obedience. Because of their viewpoint, both miss the core nature of abiding in this passage, reading meanings into it from other passages on abiding.

Dubay, writing from a Roman Catholic perspective, was not distracted by the fate of the unfruitful vines/branches and focussed on the abiding of the fruitful ones. His approach was to trace through the OT the ideas that would eventually prepare Israel for God

⁶⁷ Dillow, 'Abiding is Remaining in Fellowship', [49].

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, [50].

⁶⁹ Laney, 'Abiding is Believing' [60-64].

⁷⁰ Dillow, 'Abiding is Remaining in Fellowship', [50-53].

abiding within them.⁷¹ Moving to the NT, he started with Paul's quotation of the Athenian poet, 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Ac.17:28), before noting that Jesus promises that both he and the Father will come and make their home with those who fulfil certain conditions (Jn.14:23), in order that he can pose the question: in what way is this coming and making home different from the presence that God has everywhere?⁷² His answer was breath-taking: the former has an intimacy and closeness that the latter does not.⁷³ This abiding is not an impersonal indwelling, as in the colocation of strangers, but the fellowship of two friends (Jn.15:15). Dubay is right, for the discussion of abiding in John 15:4-6 continues through to verse 10, with the clear injunction to remain in Jesus' love. Abiding in John 15:4-10 is neither cerebral nor volitional, but relational and emotional. It is a relationship of love. Protestants are used to the idea of Christ dying for them, but many miss the equally amazing fact that God desires to *live* with them in a relationship of mutual love.

2.4. The Results of Abiding in John 15:4-10

But, how can a relationship of mutual love bring about the covenant-faithfulness and moral transformation that YHWH desires? Firstly: how does prayer fit in?

Prayer

John 15:7, in most translations, has Jesus saying that the disciples may ask *whatever they wish* and it will be done for them, this being on the conditions of their abiding in Jesus and his words abiding in them, leading to much fruit in the next verse. Such a statement

⁷¹ Thomas Dubay, 'The Indwelling of Divine Love: The Revelation of God's Abiding Presence in the Human Heart', *Letter & Spirit 4* (2008), 167-188 [167-178].

⁷² Dubay, 'Indwelling of Divine Love', [180].

⁷³ *Ibid.*

is ripe for misunderstanding, so some commentators introduce caveats. Kruse interprets John 15:7 by giving precedence to John 14:13-14, where prayer is in the name of Jesus. He thinks that to ask something in Jesus' name means to ask for his sake, in order to bring glory to the Father.⁷⁴ But this treats the utterances as identical, rather than allowing 15:7 to speak for itself. Carson avoids this by explaining that having Jesus' words abide in one leads to conformity and obedience to Christ, so that all one asks in prayer is in accord with the will of God.⁷⁵ Borchert adds that a disciple's main life-commitment is to abide in Christ with the result that Christ permeates the disciple, whose asking becomes aligned to Christ's.⁷⁶

Moral Transformation

This alignment of the abiding believer's desires to those of Christ in prayer is the key to how covenant faithfulness and moral fruitfulness are achieved. Just as their prayer-desires conform to Christ's, the believer's *moral* inclinations align with his. In addition to mutual abiding in Christ being a relationship of mutual love, it also results in one doing the acts that Jesus would do and so producing the expected fruitful life.⁷⁷ Keener explains that the Spirit abiding within believers (Jn.14:16-17) teaches them, helping Jesus' words to remain in them (Jn.15:7) and to reflect the fruit of his character.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary (Second Edition)*. TNTC (London: IVP, 2017), 349-350.

⁷⁵ Carson, *John*. PNTC, 517-518.

⁷⁶ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*. NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 145.

⁷⁷ Caragounis, 'Abide in Me', [262] argues that the force of 'abide in me and I in you' is 'abide in, so that I, too, may abide in you'.

⁷⁸ Keener, *John*, 999.

2.5 Conclusion

Abiding in John 15 is best understood as friendship, where YHWH and humans dwell together in a loving relationship. Just as couples in a human relationship come to understand and anticipate one another, those abiding in Christ absorb his heart and mind. Such alignment of desires and attitudes results in the abider yielding ethical fruit.

The evidence for this claim is twofold. Firstly, Dubay's argument that John 15:4-10 pictures abiding as a relationship of mutual love is preferable to Laney's and Dillow's, whose Protestant concerns seems to have misled them. Secondly, the vineyard/vine allusion to the moral fruitlessness of Israel and the 'in' terminology both suggest references to the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Ezekiel 34-37, where YHWH's law becomes internalised so that people are renewed inside, thereby living a life that naturally aligns with YHWH's moral requirements. Despite other interpretations of fruit in John 15, the OT allusions to unfaithful Israel make this understanding of moral fruit the most compelling. In combination, the loving relationship with YHWH is what brings about the inward moral transformation, forming the meaning of mutual abiding here.

3. INDWELLING AS INTIMACY WITH GOD (JOHN 14:15-24, 17:20-26)

John 14 and 17 refer to indwelling using different words than chapters 6 and 15. In chapter 14, the phrase used is 'you in me, and I in you' (Jn.14:20), without μένω (dwell) in the same sentence. Nevertheless, the word does occur just three verses earlier in connection with the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer (Jn.14:17). Furthermore, three verses later, Jesus and the Father make their home or dwelling place (μονή) with the believer (Jn.14:23). This word occurs only twice in the NT, the other place being John 14:2, and is the noun form of the verb μένω which pervades this study.⁷⁹

This different phraseology, together with the understanding of Jesus being the new temple, gives a different emphasis on mutual indwelling. It will be shown to portray an even more intimate relationship with the Deity than that in John 15, one that draws believers into the relationships within the Trinity.

3.1 The New Temple in John

The theme of Jesus as the new temple is vital for understanding mutual indwelling in John 14 and 17, but this theme only becomes evident here once one recognises it as prevalent within John. Probably the most familiar portrayal of Jesus as the new temple in John is the cleansing of the temple incident, where the author is explicit that the temple being spoken of was Jesus' body (Jn.2:21). But there are also more subtle indications from John's very first chapter.

⁷⁹ C. K. Barrett, *Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text. Second Edition* (London: SPCK, 1978), 456-457.

In John 1:51, the angels of God ascend and descend on the Son of Man, alluding to Jacob's vision at Bethel in Genesis 28:12. Beale argues that Jesus' phrase 'Son of Man' here links with Adam's commission to fill the earth since Adam means man in Hebrew, and that Jesus completes Jacob's temple-building activities (Ge.28:18-22) by 'building a permanent temple that has begun to link heaven and earth'.⁸⁰ In the prologue, the Word became flesh and dwelt (σκηνώω) among us (Jn.1:14). Since the verb σκηνώω is related to the noun σκηνή, which was used in the Septuagint for the tabernacle, some translate 1:14 as 'tabernacled among us' to make the connection clearer.⁸¹ So Jesus is the one who tabernacles with his disciples, allowing them to see his glory. Moses could not enter the original tabernacle because of the glory of God (Ex.40:35), but now ordinary disciples can see the glory. Therefore, Jesus is introduced as a *better tabernacle* and, by placing this within the prologue, the author alerts his audience to the theme within the book.⁸²

3.2 The New Temple and Indwelling in John 14 and 17

The NT temple functioned primarily as a place of sacrifice and pilgrimage to God's dwelling place.⁸³ But Beale's argument that the original incarnation of the temple was Eden⁸⁴ implies that one of these functions was not part of the temple's original purpose. Since Eden predated the fall, sacrifice was unnecessary in this original temple, leaving its primary function being God's dwelling place, where the Deity could be met.

⁸⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 195-196; Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 164-166 interprets the evidence differently.

⁸¹ ISV so translates it in the main text; NASB95 in a footnote.

⁸² Bill Salier, 'The Temple in the Gospel according to John' in T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (eds.), *Heaven on Earth* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 121-134 [127-128].

⁸³ Lee I. Levine, 'Temple, Jerusalem' in John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (eds.), *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 1281-1291 [1289-1291].

⁸⁴ Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-76.

By presenting Jesus as the new temple, he becomes the new place to meet God.⁸⁵ But Jesus is not just a new temple; he is a *better* temple. After announcing the beginning of the new temple theme in John 1:14, the author continues 'No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known' (Jn.1:18). John 1:17 shows Jesus as being superior to both the law and Moses, so by implication he surpasses the old temple also.⁸⁶ As the theme continues in John.1:51, Jesus used the double-amen formula for the first time, confirming the importance of what he was about to say.⁸⁷ His following statement, about seeing heavens opened, indicated a revelation about divine matters.⁸⁸ The author has staged the narrative so that the hearer is expecting something major. Now, in John 14 and 17, the revelation reaches its climax.

John 14:2

A notable thing about John 14:20 is that Jesus says 'I am in my Father', a thought later echoed by the mutual indwelling of Jesus and the Father (Jn.17:21), and which is intertwined there with believers indwelling both the Father and Jesus (Jn.17:21) and with Christ indwelling believers (Jn.17:23). Apart from 10:38, the remaining place in John where mutual indwelling of the Father and Christ occurs is 14:10-11. Therefore, some understanding of these verses' context will be needed to inform the two mutual indwelling passages of John 14:15-24 and 17:20-26. Firstly, it will be argued that the temple theme occurs in John 14:2, part of the same pericope as 14:10-12.

⁸⁵ Salier, 'The Temple', [125-126].

⁸⁶ Köstenberger, A. J. (2009). *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 426-427.

⁸⁷ Köstenberger, *John. BECNT*, 85.

⁸⁸ Carson, *John. PNTC*, 163.

Most older commentaries understand ‘my Father’s house’ (Jn.14:2) in similar ways. Carson⁸⁹ and Morris⁹⁰ understand it as heaven; for Michaels it refers to neither the Jerusalem nor heavenly temple;⁹¹ and is ‘undoubtedly the domain of God’ for Borchert.⁹² Nevertheless, Kerr argues that ‘my Father’s house’ (Jn.14:2) refers, not to heaven, but echoes John 2:13-22, where it clearly refers to the temple.⁹³ Additional to this linguistic link there is a chronological one, since both passages are set just before the Passover and just after pilgrimages to the Jerusalem temple.⁹⁴ In order to establish that this temple is Jesus, Kerr notes that Jesus says he will take the disciples to be with *himself* (Jn.14:3), so the temple being spoken of was not a spatial entity, but the presence of Jesus.⁹⁵ Bryan agrees there is a temple reference here, but argues from OT and Pseudepigrapha that it refers to an eschatological temple,⁹⁶ rather than the temple of Jesus’ body as in John 2:19-21.⁹⁷ Whilst Bryan’s research and conclusion are plausible on their own, they ignore that the author has carefully set the stage throughout the gospel for thinking of Jesus as the new temple,⁹⁸ and it would be bizarre for the metaphor to be broken here,⁹⁹ so it is more likely that John 14:2 also portrays Jesus as the new temple.

Keener furthers this by finding a link between the new temple and permanency in John 2:16, 8:35, and 14:2: in the first and last of these Jesus refers to his Father’s house, whilst

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 489.

⁹⁰ Morris, *John. NICNT*, 567.

⁹¹ Michaels, *John. NICNT*, 767.

⁹² Borchert, *John 12-21. NAC*, 103.

⁹³ Kerr, *Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 276-277.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

⁹⁶ Steven M. Bryan, ‘The Eschatological Temple in John 14’, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15 (2005), 187-198 [187-193].

⁹⁷ Bryan, ‘Eschatological Temple’, [196-197].

⁹⁸ Joseph R. Greene, ‘Jesus as the Heavenly Temple in the Fourth Gospel’, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 28:3 (2018), 425-446 [436].

⁹⁹ Greene, ‘Jesus as the Heavenly Temple’, [440, footnote 55] implies that he takes this verse as treating Jesus as the new temple.

in 8:35 he speaks of a son who remains (μένω) in the house of his father forever, unlike slaves who do not.¹⁰⁰ Although the 'house' in 8:35 is not explicitly said to be Jesus' Father's house, he argues that this is Johannine double-entendre, so should help interpret 14:2.¹⁰¹ This latter verse has already been shown to understand the Father's house as Jesus, the new temple, set in the context of many rooms (μονή, dwelling places). So Keener makes the connection that being with Jesus in 14:2 is like the son in 8:35, who dwells in his father's house forever,¹⁰² implying a permanent relationship. In response to Thomas' question (Jn.14:5) about John 14:1-4, Jesus gave the mutual indwelling of himself with the Father as an explanation. Therefore, this *eternal* relationship with Jesus is a consequence of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son in 14:10-11, which links to the abiding of the Son in the Father (Jn.14:20). So the first implication for understanding mutual indwelling in John 14 is that it is eternal.

John 14:15-24

This implied permanency is made explicit in 14:16, where the Helper is given to be with the disciples forever. In the following verse, the Helper is clarified to be the Holy Spirit, who dwells with the disciples and will be in them.¹⁰³ Taking the future-tense reading as correct, Keener understands it as the Spirit's presence in Jesus, who himself was currently dwelling with the disciples, meant that the Spirit was implicitly with them indirectly but will in the future be in them directly.¹⁰⁴ Keener is correct, for the Baptist testified that a distinctive of Jesus was that the Spirit would remain (μένω) on him

¹⁰⁰ Keener, *John*, 752.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ There is a textual issue: NET2's translation note argues in favour of this future tense; Michaels, *John. NICNT*, 784n91 against.

¹⁰⁴ Keener, *John*, 972-973

(Jn.1:33), a uniqueness that would be violated if the Spirit were already dwelling (μένω) with the disciples (Jn.14:17) apart from through the Spirit's remaining on Jesus.

This idea of the Spirit being 'in' the disciples at a future point carries forward to 14:20 where, again in the future, Jesus and the disciples will be 'in' one another. It seems that this future mutual indwelling will be by the Holy Spirit. This also links with the new temple theme for Jesus will prepare a dwelling place (μονή) for the disciples in 14:2-3 and will, together with his Father, make a home (μονή) with them (Jn.14:23).¹⁰⁵

John 14:20 also holds that Jesus is 'in' his Father as well as mutually being 'in' the disciples, suggesting that the relationship between the disciples and Jesus is akin to the relationship between the Father and the Son. Michaels explains this as their knowing the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and being themselves drawn into it,¹⁰⁶ to which Latz adds that they participate in the shared identity of Jesus in the Father, without sharing its nature.¹⁰⁷

Since the Greek word used for 'you' in 14:20, as well as 17:20-26, is plural, one might suppose that the indwelling here occurs when they are gathered together. However, 14:23 is singular: 'If anyone loves me, ... we will come to him and make our home with him', so this plurality is 'you all individually', rather than 'you all corporately'. Indwelling here applies to each believer individually.

In combination, these insights suggest that the future mutual indwelling of Jesus and the disciples will come through the gift of the Holy Spirit and will bring about a relationship

¹⁰⁵ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 284-285.

¹⁰⁶ Michaels, *John. NICNT*, 787.

¹⁰⁷ Latz, 'Short Note', [168].

between each human and the Deity that is closer than anything ever before attained.

From the association with 14:2, the disciples are to remain in that relationship forever.

John 17:20-26

This understanding of an intimate relationship between humanity and the Deity is taken even further in John 17, which suggests that humans are drawn into the relationships already existing within the Trinity. Once again, this flows from the temple theme in John.

Duvall and Hays correctly linked the indwelling passage of John 17:21 with Jesus as the new temple but took the indwelling of God in Jesus there as 'implying that he is the new temple of God'.¹⁰⁸ Yet if this logic were correct, the parallel of the divine Christ indwelling the disciples in 6:56 should imply that they are also God's temple, which cannot be substantiated from the context of that verse.¹⁰⁹ So, God indwelling Jesus in John 17:21 does *not* imply that Jesus is the new temple. Instead, since Jesus already *is* the new temple from John 14, Jesus being the new temple illuminates what indwelling means. So the starting point has to be to evidence the temple theme in John 17.

Kerr lists numerous subtle allusions to the temple in John 17, but space allows for only a brief mention. In his prayer for his disciples, Jesus says that he has revealed 'your name' to them (Jn.17:6, 26). Kerr argues persuasively that this name is *ἐγώ εἰμι*,¹¹⁰ which he associates with the divine name YHWH not only by the common association through Exodus 3:14, but by references to the Septuagint of Isaiah 43:10.¹¹¹ He links this with the

¹⁰⁸ Duvall and Hays, *God's Relational Presence*, 284.

¹⁰⁹ Of course, it is present elsewhere.

¹¹⁰ Kerr, *Temple of Jesus' Body*, 323-328.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 328-331.

temple since the seven predicated occurrences of ἐγώ εἰμι have temple connections.¹¹² Of these, 'I am the light of the world' (Jn.8:12) is the most convincing as it took place at the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn.7:2), when the Court of the Women was illuminated by four giant candlesticks.¹¹³ By claiming to be the real light of the world Jesus supplants that visible in the temple courtyard. Finally, the divine name YHWH appeared on the high priest's turban (Ex.28:36-37)¹¹⁴ so, by being given the divine name (Jn.17:11-12), rather than simply wearing it on his forehead, Jesus also supplants the high priest.¹¹⁵

With the presence of the theme of Jesus as the new temple thus established in John 17, the same intimacy that followed from it in John 14:15-24 can be expected here. Jesus had introduced the concept of himself and the Father mutually indwelling one another, first in John 10:38 and repeated in 14:10-11. Bauckham elucidates that this shows the 'closest conceivable intimacy of relationship', demonstrating the inner oneness of the Father and Son without eliminating their differences.¹¹⁶ Now, in 17:21 it is repeated again, this time with the addition 'that they may also be in us' (Jn.17:21, emphasis added). Gorman argues from this that Jesus is inviting his disciples to join an existing relationship, extending that between the Father and the Son,¹¹⁷ so this close intimacy between Father and Son can now be shared by the disciples.

Just two verses later, the nested indwelling of the Father in the Son and Son in believers is prayed for so that the believers may become *perfectly* one (Jn.17:23, emphasis added).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 337-345.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 333-334 citing evidence that 'Holy to YHWH' from Exodus may have been shortened to 'YHWH' in later Judaism.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹¹⁶ Richard Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John' in Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), 148-166 [164].

¹¹⁷ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 123.

Some analysis of how this word was used in John is helpful. Ford notes that the Greek verb τελειόω underlying it is used in 4:34, 5:36, and 17:4 in relation to *accomplishing* the work that the Father had given him.¹¹⁸ Related words are the noun τέλος, used only at the start of the farewell discourse, where Jesus ‘loved them to the end’ (Jn.13:1), and a related verb τελέω in John 19:30, where Jesus said ‘it is finished’.¹¹⁹ To augment this evidence, 19:28 could be added, where both τελέω and τελειόω appear with Jesus knowing all was *finished* and asking for a drink to *fulfil* the scripture. In all these cases utter completion is indicated, so that is also the expectation in 17:23, where the human unity arising from nested divine indwelling is expected to be complete.¹²⁰

3.3 Conclusion

Portraying Jesus as the new temple in John extends into chapters 14 and 17, where mutual indwelling occurs. Since the Edenic temple was the place where YHWH may be met, this supports the claim that mutual indwelling is a closer relationship between humans and the Deity than anything previously experienced, akin to the relationships within the Trinity. Also, the link between 14:2 and 8:35 suggests that this relationship was not to be transitory, such as church attendance, but permanent. Mutual indwelling in John 14 and 17 is the ultimate relationship, in which believers are to remain forever.

Unique to these chapters is that mutual indwelling is *future* from the original disciples’ perspective and will come from the work of the Holy Spirit in each believer individually. Tracing this activity of the Spirit in those first disciples may be a valuable further study.

¹¹⁸ Ford, *John*, 350.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

4. MUTUAL INDWELLING AS THE DAWN OF NEW CREATION

It has been shown that mutual indwelling is a major theme in John. Now it will be extended to the rest of the Bible, establishing it, not just as a wider biblical theme, but a *major* biblical theme. Biblical theologians have noted the connection between the first and last three chapters of the Bible: issues that began in Eden are resolved in Revelation; what was lost in Eden is restored in the new creation. The recent popularity of biblical theology has led to numerous books devoted to various biblical themes, but I suggest that a theme should only be denoted as *major* if it covers something that started or was lost in Eden, reaches consummation or restoration in Revelation 20-22, and appears throughout the Bible in multiple genres.

Attention will first be given to establishing this. Following that, the contexts surrounding this theme in John will be added and it will be argued that the combination portrays mutual indwelling in John as the start of new creation.

4.1. Mutual Indwelling as a Major Biblical Theme

Lost in Eden

Beale observes that the Hebrew verbal form *mithallēk* used for God walking in the garden (Ge.3:8) is also used for God's presence in the tabernacle (Le.26:12), deducing that Eden was the archetypal place to experience the presence of God that the priests

later enjoyed in the tabernacle.¹²¹ This establishes an intimacy with God in Eden, but it is possible to go further. In Genesis 2:7, where God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, the word 'breathed' translates ἐμφυσάω in the Septuagint. This is quite a rare word, occurring just six times in the OT and once in the NT. Furthermore, in two of those cases, it occurs in combination with πνεῦμα (spirit): Ezekiel 37:9 and John 20:22.¹²² In John, Jesus breathed on his disciples so they could receive the Holy Spirit,¹²³ whilst, in Ezekiel, the prophet prophesied to the spirit that wind would blow into the corpses so they could live. In each case God is internalised within the human, so using the same word in Genesis 2:7 suggests that Eden does not only denote God's presence, but the Deity's indwelling. Furthermore, since Ezekiel and John wrote of *future* pneumatic infilling, the implication is that the Spirit was by then no longer within people, suggesting that this divine indwelling in Eden had been lost.

Restored in the New Creation

Revelation 21:3 affirms 'the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them', drawing from Ezekiel 37:27 and Leviticus 26:11-12.¹²⁴ The latter has God walking *among* the people, a sort of corporate indwelling. Beale finds evidence that Philo went further, interpreting Leviticus 26:11-12 as God dwelling in the soul (*On Dreams*, 1.148-1.149) and likening the soul to a city in which God walks (*On Dreams*, 2.248).¹²⁵ Since this contemporary of Jesus could interpret the verse as *individual* indwelling, John of Revelation may have thought likewise, particularly if that person also wrote John.

¹²¹ Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66.

¹²² Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 139 who adds Wisdom 15:11 from the Apocrypha.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, where he argues that the parallels suggest the meaning in John 20:22 is that Jesus breathed *into* his disciples.

¹²⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation. NIGTC* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 1046.

¹²⁵ Beale, *Revelation. NIGTC*, 1048.

Beale poses an interesting question about Revelation 21:1-3: why does John see a new heaven and earth in the first verse, and then only see a city in the second?¹²⁶ He argues that there is a 'seeing-hearing' pattern in Revelation where the same reality is first seen and then heard, so the vision of the New Jerusalem interprets the new heavens and earth, and both these visions are explained by what John heard in verse 3.¹²⁷ Verse 3 has the dwelling place of God being with people, this translating the same Greek noun, σκηνή, that was translated as 'tabernacle' in the Septuagint. His innovative conclusion is that Revelation 21:1-3 portrays the tabernacle of God's presence expanding to fill the whole of the new creation,¹²⁸ implying a filling or indwelling of humans. Given that God and the Lamb are the temple/tabernacle (Re.21:22), one could say that humanity also indwells God in this new creation, so making the indwelling *mutual*. Even if that is a stretch too far, the divine intimacy that mutual indwelling gives *is* present. For Revelation continues that God's servants will see God's face (Re.22:4A), alluding to the holy of holies which only the high priest could enter. Furthermore, this high priest wore the divine name on his headpiece, just as God's servants do (Re.22:4B).¹²⁹ In these two ways, believers resemble the high priest, who had access to God, so this access accrues to believers and is another way of describing the intimacy coming by mutual indwelling.

Remaining Old Testament

Mutual indwelling is not immediately obvious in the OT, but nevertheless occurs embryonically. For Dubay, YHWH was not a remote deity, but had intimate knowledge of

¹²⁶ Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 365.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 366-367.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 368-369.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 370.

people: in Proverbs, YHWH's eyes were everywhere (Pr.15:3); the psalmist marvels at YHWH's detailed knowledge of internal thoughts (Ps.139:1-6); and Jeremiah was known by YHWH from his mother's womb (Je.1:4-5).¹³⁰ Dubay argues that YHWH's presence is seen by results such as the burning bush (Ex.3:1-4), parting the Red Sea (Ex.14:10-31), and water from the rock (Ex.17:6-7) so, when the psalmist marvelled 'you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb' (Ps.139:13), the result of being formed also indicated YHWH's presence within the womb.¹³¹

From Exodus, Duvall and Hays note 'God does not encounter Israel at Mount Sinai just to give them the law. ... He gives them the law so that they can approach him in his holiness and his glory, and so that he can continue to live in their midst'.¹³² They argued that the sacrificial system in Leviticus was designed so that Israel could fellowship with the Deity as God dwelt among them in the sanctuary.¹³³ How the *NT* writers used these OT passages illuminates them further. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were temples of God, having 'the Holy Spirit within you' (1Co.6:19), reminding them later that they were temples of God, who dwelt and walked among them (2Co.6:16), he echoed Leviticus 26:11-12 and Ezekiel 37:27.¹³⁴ So Dubay argues that, since Paul used these OT verses to argue that the Corinthians are temples of the Holy Spirit, he had reinterpreted them not as God simply being *among* the people, but *within* them.¹³⁵ Therefore, divine indwelling has hints in Leviticus and Ezekiel.

¹³⁰ Dubay, 'Indwelling of Divine Love', [170-171].

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, [171].

¹³² Duvall and Hays, *God's Relational Presence*, 26.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³⁴ Peter Balla, '2 Corinthians' in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 753-783 [770].

¹³⁵ Dubay, 'Indwelling of Divine Love', [184-185].

Dubay discounts David's prayer for the Holy Spirit not to be taken away and for God to uphold a willing spirit within him (Ps.51:10-11) as an implicit recognition of the indwelling God since 'we cannot conclude for certain that the psalmist was thinking of it'.¹³⁶ But the OT is sometimes interpreted by the NT in ways that the original author could not have imagined, such as Beale's symbolic use,¹³⁷ so that objection is invalid. David was surely expecting results from his prayer, suggesting YHWH's presence within him, even if he did not realise it himself.

In Ezekiel, when YHWH says 'I have been a sanctuary to them' (Ezk.11:14-16), Chou argues that YHWH is functioning as a temple, which Israel indwells.¹³⁸ Just a few verses later, YHWH speaks of placing a new spirit within them (Ezk.11:19), later revealed to be YHWH's own Spirit (Ezk.36:27). The word 'you' is plural here, denoting an indwelling of the nation, rather than an individual such as happened to Ezekiel himself during his call (Ezk.2:2-3). Nevertheless, corporate indwelling is still indwelling. In Ezekiel, there is the clear individual indwelling of Spirit in the prophet himself, corporate indwelling of the Spirit in the nation, and the indwelling of the nation in the temple YHWH. This evidence of OT indwelling is not only the most explicit, it is also *mutual*.

Remaining New Testament

In the synoptics, Jesus' warning about those liberated from demonic spirits leaving themselves empty can be read as an implicit recognition of the need for the indwelling Holy Spirit, for France argues that proximity of the Holy Spirit's agency in driving out

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, [177-178].

¹³⁷ Beale, *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 71-72.

¹³⁸ Abner Chou, *I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 100.

demons (Mt.12:28) suggests that it is the Spirit who should fill the void.¹³⁹ In Luke, Jesus' instruction for his disciples to await clothing with power from on high (Lk.24:49) is reminiscent of the Holy Spirit's coming on Mary with the power of the Most High (Lk.1:35),¹⁴⁰ suggesting that the disciples are to be 'in' the clothing of the Holy Spirit. In his sequel, Luke wrote of the converse with the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ac.2:4). In Luke-Acts, the indwelling is mutual.

1John has a well-developed theology of mutual indwelling, being explicit thrice in 1John 4:13-16. Paul stresses being in Christ (Ro.8:1, 1Co.1:30), yet the Corinthians also have the Holy Spirit within them (1Co.6:19). In Hebrews, the metaphorical entering through Christ's flesh into the holy places (He.10:19-20) implies an entry into Christ, the tabernacle of the new creation as Beale put it.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the author's quotation from Jeremiah with YHWH's law being written on hearts and minds (He.10:16) means internalising the law, representing the character of YHWH. Less plausibly, from 1Peter 2:3, where Peter wrote to Christians who had tasted that the Lord is good, Dubay argued that tasting something involves taking it into oneself, so there was an implicit interiority of the Lord in the believer.¹⁴²

4.2 Mutual Indwelling as the Dawn of New Creation

Humanity was created in the image of God (Ge.1:27) but evil entered the world (Ge.3:1), leading to human sin (Ge.3:6-7) and exile from God's presence (Ge.3:22-24). The primordial narrative continues with an increasing divergence from the moral image of

¹³⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew. NICNT* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 493.

¹⁴⁰ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke. PNTC* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), 737-738.

¹⁴¹ Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 301.

¹⁴² Dubay, 'Indwelling of Divine Love', [184].

God: Cain was angry that his offerings did not please God and killed Abel (Ge.4:1-8); his descendent, Lamech, killed a man (Ge.4:23); eventually YHWH saw that 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time' (Ge.6:5 NIV). Thus began at least three major biblical themes that culminated in Revelation: evil was eliminated with the devil being thrown into the lake of fire (Re.20:10); human immorality was resolved because nothing unclean would enter the New Jerusalem (Re.21:27); and exile from God's presence was ended because servants of the Deity would see God's face (Re.22:4). These major themes bridge from the original creation to the new creation and surround the mutual indwelling passages in John.

Destruction of Evil

Active faith in Christ's deity and incarnation has already been seen as the key to mutual abiding in John 6, itself understood as regaining God's likeness. But there is more in John 6 that must be actively believed to enter mutual abiding.

In addition to portraying deity, Jesus' walking on the sea (Jn.6:16-21) links into a wider theological arc. In ancient Near East mythology, the sea represented chaos as something to be feared,¹⁴³ a concept that carried over into the OT (Ps.46:2-3). This chaos from the sea was sometimes personified as chaos monsters, such as Rahab.¹⁴⁴ YHWH alone was superior to the sea (Job.9:8) and, at the exodus, YHWH demonstrated this mastery by crossing the Red Sea and slaying the chaos monster Rahab (Is.51:9-10). In Isaiah, Egypt is called Rahab (Is.30:7) and the exodus crossing is linked with the destruction of Rahab

¹⁴³ F. Stolz, 'Sea' in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 737-742 [737-740].

¹⁴⁴ F. Spronk, 'Rahab' in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 684-686 [684-685].

(Is.51:9-10). By depicting Jesus crossing the sea, the author evokes the exodus crossing and therefore the destruction of evil.

Keener argues that the proximity of the Passover (Jn.6:4) makes it likely that speaking of eating flesh (Jn.6:56) would suggest the paschal lamb¹⁴⁵ but omitting the paschal meal in John suggests that the author intended the audience to look to Jesus' death.¹⁴⁶ The personal possessive pronoun in 'my flesh' (Jn.6:54) would point the hearers to Jesus, and mentioning the bread that the fathers ate in 6:58 remind them of the exodus, now with the understanding that Jesus is the true bread and necessary for salvation.¹⁴⁷

These combine to suggest that Jesus' sacrificial death was presented as the antitype to the exodus crossing: the real way to defeat evil. This falls within the scope of what was to be believed in order to participate in the mutual abiding in Christ, which was itself an allusion to regaining the image of God, and so to enter the new creation.

Moral Transformation

The new covenant and inward transformation of Jeremiah 31:31-33 finds echoes throughout the NT. When Jesus said 'make the tree good and its fruit good' (Mt.12:33) he meant the interiorisation of the law, for he continued 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks' (Mt.12:35). Peter wrote of precious promises, through which believers could partake of the divine nature and escape corruption (2Pe.1:4), surely alluding to the promise of Jeremiah. Yet John explains most clearly how this happens.

¹⁴⁵ Keener, *John*, 688-699.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 690.

¹⁴⁷ Köstenberger, *John. BECNT*, 216-217.

In John 15, the disciples can only bear fruit by abiding in Jesus (Jn.15:4), which fruit has been shown to be their moral transformation. Moral transformation was necessary because the fall had led to peoples' hearts becoming continually evil. By Revelation, moral transformation is complete as nothing unclean enters the New Jerusalem (Re.21:27). Yet John does not only portray mutual abiding as *necessary* for bearing fruit: it is also *sufficient* since those who abide in Jesus *will* bear much fruit (Jn.15:5). Furthermore, Jesus clearly expected such fruit to be evidenced, since bearing fruit would demonstrate their discipleship (Jn.15:8).¹⁴⁸ Mutual abiding in Christ should result in *present* evidence of a moral transformation that will find fulfilment in the new creation.

Intimacy with God

This study has already shown that Jesus' being given the divine name in John 17:11-2 suggests that he supplants the new high priest. But this also implies that he is the new creation, for the robes of the high priest matched the temple fabric with the same symbols of the universe.¹⁴⁹ When Matthew recorded the temple veil being torn and the rocks splitting on Jesus' death (Mt.27:50-51), most English translations obscure the fact that the same Greek lemma (σχίζω) is used in both places. Pitre notes this as evidence that Jesus' death had cosmic significance as well as cultic, powerfully reinforced by the cosmic imagery depicted on the temple veil.¹⁵⁰ So, Jesus' death ushers in the end of both the old cultus and the old cosmos; it is the dawn of new creation.¹⁵¹ By presenting Jesus as new temple in John 17, mutual indwelling there allows believers to experience the

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *John XIII-XXI. AYB*, 662-663.

¹⁴⁹ Brant Pitre, 'Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood', *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008), 47-83 [61-62].

¹⁵⁰ Pitre, 'Jesus, the New Temple', [62-63].

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, [62].

intimate relationships of the Trinity within that temple. When the imagery of his being new high priest is added, this indwelling also means they can participate in the new creation. In combination, the two images show that the perfect dwelling of humanity with the Deity (Re.21:22-23, Re.22:4-5) is achieved by mutual indwelling.

4.3. Conclusion

By being lost in Eden, regained in Revelation's new creation, and present in numerous genres throughout both testaments, mutual indwelling has been evidenced as a major biblical theme. Furthermore, John's author surrounds it with other major themes. John 6 puts indwelling in the midst of Jesus' deity and incarnation, showing that active belief in his sacrificial death was necessary to defeat evil. Abiding thus in Christ was both necessary and sufficient for the disciples' moral transformation in John 15 so they could regain the moral image of God lost in Eden. That chapter also touched on intimacy with God, again something lost in Eden yet regained in Revelation. Such intimacy was taken even further in John 14 and 17, with the suggestion of entering the relationships within the Trinity, and where high-priestly imagery suggested the new creation.

At each step, mutual indwelling was essential to appropriate the blessing and move towards new creation. Furthermore, since John 15 showed that Jesus expected his disciples to abide in him and exhibit moral fruitfulness in the present, the new creation must have already started in a sense. So mutual indwelling is the dawn of new creation.

5. MISSIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MUTUAL INDWELLING

Two studies are particularly relevant to the missional significance of mutual indwelling. Gorman's *Abide and Go* directly targets mission in the context of John's mutual abiding, whilst Beale's *Temple and the Church's Mission* covers it indirectly. Though Beale does not relate the temple to mutual indwelling, this study has already established the links between the new temple and mutual indwelling,¹⁵² so the missional implications that Beale drew from the mission of the temple should also result from the mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer. The conclusions already reached from the mutual indwelling passages will now be examined from a missional perspective, and the viewpoints of these scholars will prove a helpful starting place.

5.1. Intimacy with God

Gorman considers the mutual indwelling of the Trinity in John, arguing that it involves believers participating in the life and mission of God, becoming more Godlike and themselves giving their lives for God's mission.¹⁵³ His thesis begins with mutual abiding producing *theosis*, which means the believer participates in the relationships within the Godhead, becoming like God in areas such as holiness, yet remaining distinct from God as a creature of the creator.¹⁵⁴ He continues by considering how this theosis occurs, concluding that in addition to the sacraments, asceticism, prayer, and meditation,

¹⁵² Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 72 agrees that mutual abiding is grounded in Jesus and the disciples both being God's temple.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-19.

participating in *missio Dei* also produces transformation.¹⁵⁵ So, mutual indwelling is not only about entering into the relationships of the Trinity, but into the Trinity's *mission*.¹⁵⁶

Latz agrees that abiding is essential for mission, but reaches it by a different route. The first disciples in John, after being encouraged to 'come and see' (Jn.1:39), stayed (μένω) with Jesus,¹⁵⁷ so abiding and discipleship were connected from the start. He views abiding in John as meaning that the disciples' relationships with one another are to *imitate* the relationships within the Trinity.¹⁵⁸ This is subtly different from Gorman, who wrote that the disciples 'do not merely *imitate*, but actually *participate* in, the divine unity, mission, and glory'.¹⁵⁹ Latz's way of relating abiding to mission is that, since part of the function of Israel was to be a sign of God to the world, John's portrayal of Jesus as the new Israel (Jn.15) makes it necessary for the disciples to remain (μένω) in him so as to themselves portray God to the world.¹⁶⁰ Since John wrote of his disciples, 'that they also be in us' (Jn.17:21), Gorman's theotic participation seems correct but Latz's wording is less alarming for evangelicals, who may not have heard of theosis, more commonly found in Orthodox circles.

Since both successfully relate abiding to mission, it may seem pragmatic to take Latz's approach for an evangelical audience. However, this would be misguided, for a close comparison of the two approaches shows that Gorman has the disciples entering into and participating in the relationships in the Trinity, whilst Latz has them only *imitating* those relationships. He writes but two sentences about the Trinity's inclusion of others

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵⁷ Latz, 'Short Note', [165].

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, [166].

¹⁵⁹ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 110, emphasis added.

¹⁶⁰ Latz, 'Short Note', [166].

within its relationships and believers being the dwelling-place of God,¹⁶¹ and even then does not connect these with mission.

This difference is crucial; for Dubay's exploration of mutual abiding showed that the personal, loving relationship with the Deity was what made the difference between God being everywhere, in the way Paul meant when he spoke at Athens, and the Father and Son making their home (μονή) with the believer.¹⁶² This suggests that, in order to authentically confront unbelievers with the presence of God, Christians must enter into this loving relationship by mutual abiding. This is what Gorman calls entering into the relationships of the Trinity, and which Latz lacks. Therefore, the first missional consequence of mutual abiding is for Christians to enter into the loving intimacy of relationships in the Godhead, becoming bearers of God to those around them.

5.2. Personal Transformation

Gorman is wise to start with theosis, which aligns with the author's structuring of the farewell discourse to emphasise mutual indwelling and moral fruitfulness in John 15. By citing Augustine's linkage of John 15:8 with Matthew 5:16, where the disciples are encouraged to let their light shine that others may see their works and glorify God,¹⁶³ he also recognises that fruit is moral in nature and is itself missional. However, I differ from Gorman in seeing theosis as a predecessor of mission, rather than a result of it.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, [167].

¹⁶² Dubay, 'Indwelling of Divine Love', [179-180].

¹⁶³ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 102.

Gorman's definition of missional theosis has missional participation as a consequence of mutual indwelling.¹⁶⁴ But he later emphasises 'participation in the ongoing divine activity of salvation ... as *the means of transformation*',¹⁶⁵ writing 'mission is a *primary mode of theosis*'.¹⁶⁶ He offers John 15:8 as support for this, where Jesus' audience 'bear much fruit and become my disciples'. In this he follows the NRSV, which could suggest that the missional activity of bearing fruit leads to becoming a disciple. He makes that explicit by claiming that 'become my disciples' is the correct translation and that abiding and missional activity result in discipleship which produces theosis.¹⁶⁷ But Gorman does not report that there is a textual issue in 15:8 where the lemma γίνομαι (become) has two well-attested variants: either aorist subjunctive (γένησθε) or future indicative (γένησεσθε).¹⁶⁸ The aorist subjunctive leaves the conjunction ἵνα (that) governing both 'bear much fruit' and 'become my disciples',¹⁶⁹ making them parallel actions and removing the sequencing that Gorman claims. Although the future indicative could be translated 'will become my disciples', which would support Gorman's understanding, he puts γένησθε in brackets after 'become',¹⁷⁰ showing that he has not taken this option. Even if the future indicative is the original wording, Brown argues that the two actions are parallel, not consecutive: the act of bearing fruit demonstrates that they are disciples.¹⁷¹ The evidence does not support the sequencing Gorman claims.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 69.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, emphasis added.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 104, emphasis added.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

¹⁶⁸ Carson, *John. PNTC*, 519

¹⁶⁹ Brown, *John XIII-XXI. AYB*, 662.

¹⁷⁰ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 103.

¹⁷¹ Brown, *John XIII-XXI. AYB*, 662-663; similarly Carson, *John. PNTC*, 519.

Nevertheless, he has correctly identified the importance of mutual indwelling and the resultant moral fruit in John 15:4-9, which alluded to the inward transformation of Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Ezekiel 34-37. Gorman has showed that this moral transformation is missional of itself which, taken with Jesus' words 'apart from me you can do nothing' (Jn.15:5) suggests that the second missional consequence of mutual indwelling is for Christians to participate in it and begin this inward transformation.

5.3. Understanding *missio Dei*

Gorman notes that it is common for mission to be equated with evangelism, arguing that mission should be much more than this.¹⁷² His focus is not on enumerating what this is, but Wright argues that it includes the elimination of evil,¹⁷³ redemption of humanity,¹⁷⁴ social justice,¹⁷⁵ and ecological concern for the non-human creation.¹⁷⁶ Mutual indwelling in John 6 was set in the context of Jesus walking on the sea, echoing YHWH's destruction of evil in the OT, particularly at the exodus. John 6 also presented Jesus as the new exodus, so linking the redemption of humanity with mutual indwelling. In John 15, mutual indwelling was essential for bearing moral fruit, particularly in the context of social justice. Creation-care is not a direct consequence of mutual indwelling, but Wright argues that it *is* a consequence of social justice,¹⁷⁷ and so indirectly of mutual indwelling.

Gorman rightly argued that the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son resulted in the Father's works coming out through Jesus (Jn.14:10-11) and the same missional

¹⁷² Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 35, giving Köstenberger as an example.

¹⁷³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 41.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 96-113.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 88-95.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-62.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 270.

works are expected to result in the disciples because of the indwelling Christ.¹⁷⁸ But this should not be construed as automatic cause and effect. Jesus did not recount mutual indwelling in a vacuum, but spoke of it in the context of the OT allusions that have been discussed, and the disciples would have understood those allusions. Wright argues that the early Christians were successful in mission because they knew the biblical story they were part of,¹⁷⁹ whereas contemporary Christians often do not.¹⁸⁰

This suggests that the words that Jesus spoke in the context of mutual abiding must dwell in Christians (Jn.15:7) so they understand the extent of the mission they are called to and truly prove to be disciples (Jn.15:8). In the absence of that, their work may be merely evangelism rather than *missio Dei*. So, the third missional consequence of mutual abiding is for contemporary Christians to understand the *missio Dei* they are called to.

5.4. Testimony

Beale argues for the presence of the temple as a theme throughout scripture, stretching from Eden to Revelation 21-22:5. He treats Eden as a temple,¹⁸¹ and the creation mandate to Adam and Eve as being to spread their reflected glory of God throughout the earth, a mission they failed in due to sin.¹⁸² Beale shows how this mandate was then repeated to the patriarchs in their encounters with YHWH, a mission that they also failed in.¹⁸³ He argues that the phrases 'tabernacle of testimony' (Ex.38:21) and 'tent of testimony' (Nu.9:15) derive from the 'ark of testimony' (Ex.25:22), itself coming from

¹⁷⁸ Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 122.

¹⁷⁹ Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 35-47.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸¹ Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-80.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 81-87.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 117-121.

the Ten Commandments contained therein (Ex.31:18) which evidenced YHWH's moral law.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, in front of the ark were items that reminded Israel of YHWH's saving acts: Aaron's rod that had budded and a jar of manna.¹⁸⁵ The nett result is that the tabernacle was to be a place where Israel would accept YHWH's *testimony* to herself, and then spread that knowledge to the nations.¹⁸⁶

When Jesus came as the new Adam (Son of Man), the creation mandate to fill the earth with people glorifying YHWH could be fulfilled.¹⁸⁷ Since he is the new temple, the implicit mission arising from the items of testimony within can be realised by Christians inhabiting the truths of their salvation and testifying of them to those around. Both of these are important. Beale's treatment of the temple showed that YHWH's purpose was that it would expand to fill the universe.¹⁸⁸ The consequence for this study is that the intimacy with God arising from mutual indwelling cannot end with the believer's personal blessing. The temple has to grow, which it will do as believers are so taken by their relationship with the Almighty that they naturally enthuse to those around them, pray for, and serve them. As well as the Holy Spirit testifying to Jesus, Jesus said that the disciples will also testify (Jn.15:26-27) so, despite Gorman's (correct) argument that mission is more than evangelism, evangelism remains a part of mission. The fourth missional consequence is therefore that Christians must open their mouths and testify.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 402.

5.5. Missional Prayer

Beale observed that the temple was intended to be a house of prayer for all peoples (Is.56:7), so indwelling this new temple should result in prayer.¹⁸⁹ But mutual indwelling also has implications for *missional* prayer.

In John 17:20-24, Jesus prays for his disciples, firstly for unity (Jn.17:21-23) and mutual indwelling of believers in the Father and Son (Jn.17:21) and of the Father in the Son in believers (Jn.17:23), which he elaborates, giving the reason for his prayer. John 17:21 and 17:23 both contain three clauses starting with ἵνα, typically translated 'that'. There is some debate about whether the final ἵνα clauses of 17:21 and 17:23 are part of Jesus' prayer or an indirect consequence of it.¹⁹⁰ Brown opts for the latter, giving his translation 'that they also may be [one] in us[.] Thus the world may believe that you sent me'.¹⁹¹ Given that Jesus said he was praying for his disciples rather than the world (Jn.17:9),¹⁹² he is probably correct. This has implications for mission. Jesus certainly desired that the world would believe, yet he did not pray for that directly. Instead he prayed for his disciples to be united and to experience the intimacy with God implied by mutual indwelling. This suggests that the most urgent missional prayer may be prayer for unity and the spiritual health of the *church*, rather than directly for the lost. This surprising priority is the fifth missional consequence of mutual abiding.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 398.

¹⁹⁰ Brown, *John I-XII. AYB*, 770.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 769 emphasis added.

¹⁹² Francis J. Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 120.

5.6. Christian Unity

It has been seen that Jesus' portrayal as the new temple allows entry into the relationships within the Trinity. Of this unity with the Godhead, Borchert writes:

'This oneness with the Godhead is not to be viewed as a mystical flight of the hermit to be alone with God or to be mystically absorbed into the divine. Nor is this relationship to be understood as an individualized self-centered salvation that has developed in many churches as a result of the subjective individualistic philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.'¹⁹³

For, in chapter 17, a purpose for this indwelling the Trinity is given: that the world may believe (Jn.17:21) or know (Jn.7:23) that the Father sent the Son. Curiously, in both cases, this revelation to the world does not come directly from the fact of this indwelling, but via an intermediate step: the unity of the disciples. On this, Michaels observes 'the unity of the disciples and their mission to the world are inseparable'.¹⁹⁴ This unity is to include those who will believe through the word of the disciples (Jn.17:20), which suggests the faithful transmission of the words from the Father that the Son passed on to the disciples.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, unity cannot be at the expense of Jesus' teaching and must be the apostolic gospel, not the 'lowest common theological denominator'.¹⁹⁶ So, the sixth consequence of mutual abiding is for Christians to be united in their relationships and the core apostolic teaching.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Borchert, *John 12-21. NAC*, 207.

¹⁹⁴ Michaels, *John. NICNT*, 875.

¹⁹⁵ Carson, *John. PNTC*, 568.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Defining this would be a much larger study, but would include 1Corinthians 15:3-4.

CONCLUSION

Mutual indwelling is the dawn of new creation for the Deity because the Trinity's original intention to dwell with people bearing God's image can be fulfilled. In John 6, Jesus was new prophet, new Moses, and new exodus. Eating his flesh and blood meant active faith in his deity, incarnation, and sacrificial death as the way to defeat evil and enter into mutual indwelling, the doorway to regaining the image of God. In John 15, he was the true vineyard/vine and mutual indwelling meant friendship with God, with the disciples' hearts and minds aligning with God's, resulting in their moral transformation. In John 14 and 17, Jesus was the new temple with mutual indwelling suggesting the ultimate relationship with God, which humans are to remain in forever. The contexts and OT allusions of these passages are wildly different, yet the meanings they impart to mutual indwelling are remarkably complementary: regaining the moral image of God, realignment of heart and mind towards the Deity's character, and entering into a deep relationship with the Trinity. Although some may object to the individual readings, this consistency confirms the meaning given to mutual indwelling in each passage.

Mutual indwelling is the dawn of new creation for humanity since it opens the door to the relationship with God that was lost at the fall. As well as being consistent, the meanings of mutual indwelling inferred from the OT backgrounds of John 6, 15, 14, and 17 are also *cumulative*. Active faith was necessary in John 6 to enter mutual abiding and start bearing God's likeness. This continued in John 15, where mutual abiding was both necessary and sufficient for aligning with God's moral nature. Here it gave intimacy with the Deity, which continued in John 14 and 17, where the ultimate in intimacy was suggested: entering into the relationships within the Trinity itself. The evil that started

in Eden had to be destroyed before humans could enjoy God's love, regain the moral image of God, and enter intimacy with the Trinity. This logical progression adds further confirmation for this interpretation. But this will only benefit people if they understand it. In his high-priestly prayer, Jesus did not pray for his disciples' future activities; he prayed for their spiritual health including their mutual indwelling with the Trinity. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the church follows his lead.

Mutual indwelling is the dawn of new creation for the church's mission because it should arrest the church's decline, promoting *effective* evangelism. Perhaps the greatest missional implication of this study is that mission must not *start* with evangelism. The wording and structure of the farewell discourse showed John 15 to be the fulcrum, emphasising mutual indwelling both as personal relationship with the creator and moral transformation. These both preceded the disciples testifying in John 15:27, suggesting that mutual indwelling must precede evangelism. In John 6, mutual indwelling touched on *missio Dei* with a combination of the destruction of evil and the restoration of the image of God. Mutual indwelling is God's chosen way of bring about the new creation and, if a missional endeavour rushes into evangelism without first grounding its disciples in its consequences, particularly intimacy with God, personal transformation, and knowing *missio Dei*, it will fail. Any who think this is arguing from the specific to the general should show that Jesus *ever* prioritised evangelism over this preparation. This is supported by the finding that Jesus' missional prayer was for his disciples to know unity and experience this mutual indwelling, rather than for the lost directly. Eventually, of course, the church must testify: mission will include evangelism, which needs prayer, but must not start there. Designing church outreach programmes around these findings is a vital next step if the twenty-first century British church is to reverse its decline.

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