

Dwelling in Christ

Marius J. Nel

Introduction

I will begin by making a few remarks about what I believe the gospel is (part 1), before discussing how we can communicate the gospel. In this second part I will argue that the gospel is communicated by communities that embody the kingdom of God. This understanding of how the gospel is communicated raises the question as to what the role of the AMCS should be in relation to these communities. In the third part of my paper I will make a specific suggestion in this regard, namely that it should serve as a design studio for prototyping the kingdom of God communities. Thereafter I will present my own prototype for reading the Bible (that we read it stereoscopically) on the table. I will first explain what I mean by this and why it is a necessary corrective for how we read the Bible at present, before testing it by using different stereoscopic images of John 15:1-17. I will then conclude by making a few final remarks.

I am thus attempting to address four audiences at the same time: those who are interested in understanding and communicating the Gospel (it is the good news of God's restoration of the whole of creation which must be prototyped by the church), the mission of the AMCS (it is a design studio in which we can utilize our collective imagination to improve our prototypes), those who are interested in ways of reading Scripture (let's do it stereoscopically) and those who are interested in John 15:1-17 (let us dwell in Christ).

Part I - What is the Gospel?

In the New Testament references to "the gospel" does not primarily refer to a new idea or philosophy, but rather a series of events in history (Wright, 2012:6-20). These events concern the birth, death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus. The last two events, the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus, are not just good news for Him because God had vindicated Him after being unjustly executed by his enemies. It is good news – gospel - for all of creation for the promise of this seminal event is that God will do for everyone and everything what He did for Jesus at Easter (Wright, 2008:93). The hyper-relational effect of sin will be undone. Our relationship with God, ourselves, the created world, and all others that has been tarnished by sin will be restored and renewed (McKnight, 2007:22-24). Proclaiming the gospel therefore entails more than saving souls. For Paul, salvation comes to those who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and who believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead. Salvation is thus for those who publically proclaim that Christ, and not Caesar is Lord, along with the socio-political implications thereof, and who inwardly believe that He was raised from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). The gospel thus elicits a public witness and a personal, internal response.

The implication of this, according to Michael Gorman, is that we must not just believe the gospel in the sense of intellectually affirming a list of assertions about the life and teaching of Jesus. We must also embody it, we must become the gospel. We do not just believe in the reconciliation brought about by Jesus. We must become reconciliation. The same can be said about justice, peace and hope. Not just as individuals, but as new communities we must embody the gospel (Gorman, 2015 loc:78-124). Stated differently, to proclaim the gospel we need to be the church.

We should furthermore not forget that the gospel is not an answer to any question. It is a specific answer to the questions posed by the plight of Israel (Wright, 2012:80). When would the covenantal God put the world to right through his chosen people? The world in which the Romans ruled the world? According to the New Testament, God has done this through Jesus, Israel's representative. God has acted through his chosen representative, the Messiah, from his chosen covenantal people to inaugurate the rebirth of the world. The covenantal community of God had furthermore been radically redefined in the New Testament in that the *missio Dei* now invite participants from all nations to live within the story of God. To live according to the gospel we thus need to live according to the story of God, not by repeating previous acts of it, but by living according to its plot in the act we find ourselves in.

In short, the gospel is the good news of what God has done through Jesus in history and how we have been invited to embody God's restored creation ruled by Christ. Through Jesus the Kingdom of God has been restored.

Part II – How do we communicate the Gospel?

I agree with Michael Gorman (2015:loc125-153) and Scot Mcknight (2007:27-28) that we communicate the gospel by forming communities of Christ-followers that live according to the values of the kingdom of God in a specific place and time in line with the story of God's renewal of the world.

Communities of Christ-followers communicate the gospel about the Kingdom of God by prototyping it. They must therefore be sincere attempts to embody the kingdom of God in a specific context through their interaction with each other, the world and God. Prototyping is a daunting task for the New Testament, because it does not provide us with timeless blueprints for the kingdom of God that we can simply duplicate in each and every locale. It instead provides us with examples of different prototypes of how to embody the kingdom of God in different locales. To create a prototype one needs an active imagination, for a prototype is not a copy of what exists, but an attempt at concretising what does not yet exist. To create a prototype of the kingdom of God furthermore necessitates the conversion of our religious imagination. We need to see what as yet remains unseen and this is where I believe the AMCS can be of help. We need a centre where our imaginations can be converted and consecrated. In short, we need a design studio. A design studio where we can come with our best practices of sharing the gospel and for creating formative communities,

or new insights into the gospel and share and shape them with others. As church we do not just need to be able to retreat from the world, or to restore our energy, or reflect on theology. For these we have retreat centres, health spas and faculties of theology (note: these are not to be confused with each other). We instead need a place where we can reform our imagination. Reformed, so that we can continuously improve the manner in which we prototype the kingdom of God as communities. As a design studio we need to be able to present, reflect and discuss, but also practice what we are attempting to prototype with others.

In short, we need to keep doing what we are doing today and tomorrow. The parallel sessions which follow this one are all I believe attempts to prototype different aspects of the kingdom of God within our unique context.

Part III - Prototyping stereotypical readings of Scripture

What I would like to do this morning, is instead of just talking about the theoretical grounding of a spiritual design studio is to bring a prototype to this space that we can discuss. The prototype that I have in mind is a way of reading Scripture which I will illustrate by applying it to John 15:1-17.

My reason for choosing this particular prototype for my presentation is that Scripture has always been central in our relationship with Christ and a crucial part of converting and reforming our imagination (cf. the slogans *ad fontes* and *sola scriptura* of the Reformation). The reason why we need a new way of reading Scripture is that since the Enlightenment we have fragmented the ways in which we read Scripture. In line with David Tracy's (1981:3-46) distinction between different publics or spheres in which theologians can operate, the academy, church and society, we have developed what I consider to be a *tri-focal* approach for reading the Bible. Since each of the three spheres identified by Tracy have their own problem-consciousness, logic of investigation, ethos and highest loyalties, a responsible reading of the same text in different spheres differs from each other. A reading of John 15, like in Andrew Murray's *The True Vine: Meditations for a Month on John*, could for instance be seen as a responsible reading of the text in an ecclesial setting. It would, however, not be considered a responsible one within an academic context, for it does not utilize a rigorous exegetical method.

The result of our differences over what would constitute a responsible reading of a text in a specific context, is that we have crafted different lenses according to the hermeneutical refraction of each of the three spheres. The result is that many of us wear tri-focal lenses which we utilize by asking if it is a close (church), near (society) or distant (academic) reading of Scripture and then adjusting our gaze accordingly to utilize the appropriate part of our lens. In training students for the ministry we spend six years carefully grinding and polishing their hermeneutical lenses with the Faculty of Theology providing an academic prescription and the Seminary an ecclesiological one with student's broader involvement on

campus determining the prescription they use in society. The question I am often confronted with, is if this approach is the best one.

While one can argue that Tracey's distinction between the three spheres justifies the use of different hermeneutical lenses it create huge problems for all of us who operate in more than one sphere. If the church, for example, only reads Scripture according to its own hermeneutical prescription, its reading becomes *a boundary marking exercise instead of a boundary crossing one*, that makes the crucial conversation between the church, society and academia, that Keifert (2009:13-26) and others pleads for, an impossible one.

Academic readings of Scripture, for example, can only be shared with other readers if they have the same prescription lens. This is however, often not the case. The result is that readings of texts which are clear for academics often appear blurry for congregants when shared with them. The opposite is also true. Readings of a text within the ecclesial sphere often appear unwarranted to academics or even offensive for those who interact with the Bible within society using a human rights lens. The preference for a particular prescription lens is thus problematic.

It is not just the different ethical and theological images that the different lenses focus on that is problematic. It is their different hermeneutical prescriptions itself and how they are understood that results in variant readings that is problematic. Let me illustrate this by reflecting on the practice of Dwelling in the Word, the very influential reading method popularised by the Partnership for Missional Churches in South Africa (Nel, 2013:2-4). The practice of Dwelling in Word, developed by Church Innovations from St. Paul in the USA, is usually conducted by a group reading the same text together over time. The group begins each time by reading the text aloud, then reading it individually in silence whereafter each member reflects on the possible meaning of the text for them. In the next step each individual shares his or her insight with someone in the group they do not know well (a 'reasonably friendly-looking stranger'). After sharing their respective insights they share each other's with the larger group which then after listening to each contribution discusses what commonalities they heard in how the text was interpreted. Interpreting the text is thus the responsibility of the whole group instead of a few exegetical experts. While the sharing of the initial individual readings with someone else in the group, as well as the group's reflection on all contributions, combined with the allowance made for asking a New Testament scholar any question that arise from the collective reading, functions as filters for esoteric interpretations of Scripture, *Dwelling in the Word* cannot be considered to be an academic reading of the text. The *practice itself* can be described in academic terms, but its *conclusions* about the meaning of a particular text will not be readily accepted in academic circles.

In terms of understanding a text, academics argue that all text have a pre-text (oral and literary sources out of which it was created).¹ Matthew in his Gospel, for example uses Mark and the hypothetical document Q, which he combines with other material, to create his Gospel. Other Gospels, like John, have also clearly been revised more than once. In order to study the pre-text of a text to understand the relationship between them academics have developed various approaches like redaction criticism, source criticism and form criticism. These approaches help academics to understand how the oral Jesus tradition was over time first shaped into unconnected written fragments before being combined into the narratives we have in our New Testament. Along with these literary approaches academics have also developed other methods like socio-historical and socio-scientific criticism that help them to understand the world in which a text was created (i.e. the world behind the text).

In order to analyse the world in the text, in other words the world the text creates in our consciousness when we read it (we can all envision the sea of Galilee in the time of Jesus even though we have never seen it in real life), Biblical scholars have developed approaches like narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism and various structuralist approaches. Since it is furthermore clear that we as readers contribute to what a text means the contribution of different readers have been studied by ideology criticism and reception criticism as well as various reader-response methods. All of these focus on the world in front of the text, the world in which it was read.

We should also take into consideration that we are not the first readers of the text. We are instead the post-readers of the original intended readers. Furthermore we are not reading the exact same text as they did. We are instead reading a translation thereof which can be described as a post-text. All post-text are new, contemporary creations based on the final Greek and Hebrew texts.

So from an academic perspective the practice of Dwelling in the Word is a group based, repetitive reader-response reading of a post-text by post-readers. Whereas most academic readings of a text would attempt to maintain the historical and cultural distance between the text and contemporary readers (Van Eck, 2008:1176), *Dwelling in the Word* deliberately eliminates this distance. So from an academic perspective Dwelling in the Word is a reader-response criticism practised by average, everyday readers (in contrast to informed, "expert" readers who have received specialised training in reading ancient texts) of a post-text (Fowler, 1992:52). Dwelling in the Word can also be consider a conservative reader-response approach in that it focuses on the various ways the text itself invites the reader into the production of meaning (Vanhoozer, 1995:307) instead of aggressively attempting to modify its meaning in terms of contemporary values. It is, however, not an academic reading since its exegetical conclusions cannot be verified by repeating the process or by checking the sources that underlie the interpretation.

¹ The description of how academics understand the nature of the hermeneutical process that underlies the creation and reception of texts uses the meta-critical tool developed by Hong (2013).

Despite not being an academic reading of a text, Dwelling in the Word has proven to be a tremendously powerful way of reading Scripture that has enabled many to Dwell in Christ. Should we not just accept that having a tri-focal prescription has enabled us to read Scripture in different ways even if we cannot reconcile their readings with each other? Personally I would be saddened if we persevered in this manner. My hope is that we can use our different lenses to capture different images of the text and that we then can use them to obtain a deeper understanding of the text that would be possible if we had only used one lens. I am thus proposing that we read the Bible stereoscopically. A stereoscope is a device by which two photographs of the same object taken at slightly different angles are viewed together, creating an impression of depth and solidity. The different angles of the lenses with which the two pictures are taken are thus used to create an impression with more detail and depth. Unlike a bi-focal or tri-focal reading of Scripture which uses a single lens at a time to produce a clear image, a stereoscopically reading looks at the images obtained by using different lenses at the same time.

Part IV – Reading John 15:1-17 stereoscopically

My proposal, which I would like to prototype in the AMCS design studio this morning, is that we consider grafting a stereoscopic reading of a text onto the practice of Dwelling in the Word² to open up new ways of dwelling with Christ. The various stereoscopic readings will be developed by utilizing insights from the sphere of academic readings of a text to provide different readings of a text (in each case John 15 will be one image and the academic one the other). I will illustrate the different stereoscopic readings in terms of John 15:1-17, the foundational text for this conference, if not for the AMCS. The different examples will reflect the growing levels of complexity of the academic lens which I will be using. This I hope will serve as a reminder of why theological training is important

Dwelling in different post-texts (translations)

The first stereoscopic reading is a relatively simple one that in reality has already been utilised in multilingual groups practicing Dwelling in the Word. In South Africa it is usually Afrikaans and English translations that are utilized while in Europe the IRC often combines German and English translations. In academic courses the different languages would be Hebrew or Greek and a translation thereof. The effect of combining different translations of the same language, or of two different languages on the same page is to immediately alert us as readers that we are dwelling in at least one post-text. For readers who can read both languages the text they dwell in effectively becomes the synopsis of the two text. This opens up new images and ideas that engage with their religious imagination in a different way that reading a single text (or post-text).

NAV - “Ek is die ware wingerdstok en my Vader is die boer. ² Elke loot aan My wat nie vrugte dra nie, sny Hy af; maar elkeen wat vrugte dra, snoei Hy reg, sodat dit nog meer

² It can also be combined with other practices like Lectio Divina.

vrugte kan dra. ³ Julle is alreeds reg gesnoei deur die woorde wat Ek vir julle gesê het. ⁴ Julle moet in My bly en Ek in julle. 'n Loot kan nie uit sy eie vrugte dra as hy nie aan die wingerdstok bly nie; en so julle ook nie as julle nie in My bly nie.

⁵ “Ek is die wingerdstok, julle die lote. Wie in My bly en Ek in hom, dra baie vrugte, want sonder My kan julle niks doen nie. ⁶ As iemand nie in My bly nie, word hy weggegooi soos 'n loot en hy verdroog. Die mense maak sulke lote bymekaar en gooi dit in die vuur, en dit verbrand. ⁷ As julle in My bly en my woorde in julle, vra dan net wat julle wil hê, en julle sal dit kry. ⁸ **My Vader word juis daardeur verheerlik** dat julle baie vrugte dra en my dissipels is.”

NET - 1 “I am the **true vine** and my Father is the gardener. 2 He **takes away** every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit. 3 You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me - and I in him - bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. 8 **My Father is honored by this**, that you bear much fruit **and show** that you are my disciples.

Dwelling in the two text emphasises that those who dwell in Christ will bring forth much fruit (John 15:5 - ὁ μένων ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ οὗτος φέρει καρπὸν πολύν). The subtle differences in the two translations of the Greek text of John 15, however, call for reflection. For example, God’s role in casting out those who do not do the will of God (“take away” vs. “sny Hy af”). Does God just respond to those who had cast themselves off from the true vine or does He actively remove them? Is the mental image of a “wingerdstok” and a vine the same? Is “verheerlik” and “honoured” the same action?

It is clear from these few remarks that a stereoscopic dwelling in different post-text of the same text can deepen our engagement with the text.

Dwelling in the intra-text of John 15 (The Gospel of John)

In practice Dwelling in the Word usual reads a single pericope of a text in isolation from other text. The text is even at times physically extracted from its literary context by being printed by itself on a handout. The text thereby becomes a fragment isolated from its intra-text, in the case of John 15, the Gospel of John. From an academic perspective which emphasises that text are never to be interpreted in isolation this is not a responsible reading of a text. Another possible stereoscopic reading of a pericope can thus be to read it along with its intra-text. Since it is impossible to read an entire text the length of the Gospel of John every time we read a section of it, a specific inter-text needs to be created for this approach. One way of creating this intra-text is to note the intra-textual links that exist

within the specific pericope and the longer text in which it is embedded. Frederic Bruner, in his commentary of the Gospel of John (2012), for example notes how the Greek verb μένω (“remain”) is entangled with the motif of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel. An intra-text handout can thus be prepared which link the passages where this entanglement is evident by noting where the verb μένω is used with the notion of dwelling.³ In this handout the link can be made explicit by consistently translating μένω with “dwelling.”

John 1 - ³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you dwelling (staying / ποῦ μένεις)?”³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was dwelling (staying / μένει), and they dwelled (spent) that day with him (ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν). It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

John 4 - ³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to dwell (stay / ἠρώτων αὐτὸν μεῖναι) with them, and he dwelled (stayed / ἔμεινεν) two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers. ⁴² They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

What becomes clear from Dwelling stereoscopically in John 1 and 4 the intra-text of John 15?

First it is clear that in dwelling in Christ the action of Jesus precedes ours (Bruner, 2012:881). It is Jesus who asks “What do you want?” (John 1:38) and of whom it is said “He told me everything I ever did.” (John 4:39). It is because Jesus according to John chose to dwell with and in us that we can dwell in him. The urge to dwell with Jesus in John, and our time, is a response to Christological proclamation. In John 1 it is by a prophet who cleanses Israel and in John 4 a woman with a past who proclaims Jesus to the Samaritans. In John 15:4 the

³ According to BDAG the verb μένω can have the following possible meanings 1. ‘be in a situation for a length of time’, remain, stay, intr. —a. of being in a location, whether geographical site, dwelling, or person, or thing Mt 10:11; Mk 14:34; Lk 8:27; J 7:9; 8:31; 12:46. —b. of continuing in a state or condition—α. w. focus on sameness J 12:24; Ac 27:41; 1 Cor 7:20.—β. w. focus on existence J 12:34; 1 Cor 15:6; Phil 1:25; Hb 7:24; 1 J 2:17; Rv 17:10. —2. ‘stay in a place for the presence/arrival of’ someone, await, wait for, tr. Ac 20:5, 23.

invitation comes from Jesus in the last of seven of the “I am sayings” when Jesus asks that we stay, remain, live, abide, dwell in him (μείνᾱτε ἐν ἐμοί). For John this is possible because Jesus has chosen to dwell with us.

Secondly, we dwell with Jesus through prayer, with prayer understood as having a conversation with Jesus. Paraphrasing Bruner (2012:882), we dwell with Jesus by turning to him in conversation in response to preaching that points to him. Dwelling with Jesus and producing fruit has a direct bearing of what we can ask of Jesus.

Thirdly, we dwell with Jesus by keeping his command to love one another (John 15). This is the focus of John 15:9-17. To be able to love others we need to experience that we are beloved by God and that God’s love for us is as strong as God’s love for Jesus (Bruner, 2012:889). I will return to this important focus on love later on.

There are also other shorter intra-texts for John 15 that enrich our understanding of what it means to dwell in Jesus. For example John 6:56 and 8:31-32

John 6:56 - Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells (remains) in me (ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει), and I in them.

From this intra-text it is clear that we do not dwell alone with Jesus. We instead dwell with Jesus through the meal that we feast on along with the faith community.

John 8:31-32 - To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you dwell in (hold to my) Word (teaching) (ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ), you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

In practice we dwell with Jesus by continuing in his Word. To dwell with Christ is to obey Christ. The opposite is true of the opponents of Jesus.

John 5:38 – The Word does not dwell in them because even though they search the Scriptures they do not recognize that it testifies about Jesus.

These few examples have shown how our understanding of John 15:1-17 is greatly enhanced by dwelling in the intra-text of John by stereoscopically looking at text linked by common themes in the same books with each other.

Dwelling in the inter-text of John 15

The Gospel of John functions within a group of text with which it has a close affinity. Reading passages linked by common words, phrases and comments can thus enable us to deepen our understanding of the text we dwell in. The primary inter-text of John is the Johannine corpus, the NT canon and the Old Testament. It is therefore possible to create different handouts

that contain John 15 and various of its inter-texts so that we can read them stereoscopically. If we do this our dwelling in the Word gets progressively deepened.

- The Johannine corpus as inter-text

John 15:1 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 **Remain in me, as I also remain in you.** No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain in me and I in you,** you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you **remain in me** and **my words remain in you,** ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

1 John 2:24 - As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning **remains in you.** If it does, **you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.**

1 John 4:16 - And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. **Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.**

Dwelling in the Johannine inter-texture alerts us to the emphasis these text place on mutual indwelling. This emphasis on indwelling love, in contrast to the binary love that we are used to (my love for you or my love for the other) frees our imagination to think about non-binary love. Love that according to Miroslaf Volf (2008:46-47), make space for the other in our hearts and not just in the spaces we share.⁴ Can I live in you and you in me? Do I experience that God lives in me and I in Him?

- The New Testament canon as inter-text

John 15 is also part of a larger literary corpus, the New Testament canon which forms its post-text inter-texture in that it was created from a collection of text by the church after the text of John was completed. The OT intertexture of the NT is in turn a pre-text of the NT. As is the case with the intra-text of John 15 (its embeddedness in the Gospel of John) the New Testament inter-text can be used in a stereoscopic reading in order to highlight aspect it shares with this larger literary collection. It is thus possible to create an inter-text for John 15 that link common theological themes so that we can deepen our understanding of these themes. This is not to claim that these meanings can be read back into John. It is instead to

⁴ "The mutual indwelling of God and the believer who abides by God's command is a theme echoed in 1 John 2:24; 4:12, 16; 5:3." Attridge.

argue that we can begin to understand what the New Testament teaches collectively about a particular concept.

According to John 15:9, dwelling in Christ can be transposed into the phrase dwelling in love. Or to change the metaphor, love can be used as a theological Rosetta stone that unlocks what it means to dwell in Jesus for the New Testament contains numerous reflections on love. We can thus create a handout which contains both John 15:1-17 and other texts in the New Testament that reflect on what the early Christian writers understood with ἀγάπη (love) for we have numerous texts containing their reflections on love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 - Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Philippians 1:9-11 - And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 3:12-14 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

1 Timothy 1:5 - The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

From these New Testament inter-text of John 15:1-17 we can glean that for the early Christians love was something that could be analysed and atomised to reveal the elements it is comprised of. Note again this is not to argue that the author of John assumes all these meanings when he refers to love, this is an exercise in the canonical reading of John which is thus a post-reader reading in that it was later readers than the initial readers of John who created the canon. This post-reader reading is however tremendously helpful for it reminds us that we can strengthen and increase our love by keeping our heart pure, conscience clear and our faith sincere (1 Timothy 1:5); or having compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and a forgiving nature (Colossians 3:12-14); or if we grow in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9-11) or if we are patient, kind, not envious, boastful or proud, nor self-seeking, easily angered, or record keepers of wrongs, who delight in evil (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). If this is what it means to Dwell in the Love of Jesus, for we see these

elements described in his life in the Gospels, we Dwell in Christ by adhering to them. I can thus work on my ability to dwell in Christ by being more patient or kind. Since we can change these elements Jesus can command us to love one another just as he had loved us (John 15:12) with the promise that doing this will complete our joy (John 15:11). Reading the text of John 15 stereoscopically along with other New Testament images of love demystifies what Dwelling in Christ means.

- The Old Testament as inter-text

Unlike the post-reader inter-text, the New Testament canon, the Old Testament is the intentional pre-text inter-text of John 15 in that John intentionally draws on the Old Testament as a source for his text.

Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals that the image of a vine is often applied to Israel (cf. Hosea 10:1–2; Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1–5, 17:1–21; 19:10–15; Psalm 80:8–18). It is thus again possible to create a handout which contains the Old Testament inter-text of John 15. In this case an inter-text that's centuries deep.

Isaiah 5:1-7 - I will sing to my love - a song to my lover about his vineyard. My love had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He built a hedge around it, removed its stones, and planted a vine. He built a tower in the middle of it, and constructed a winepress. He waited for it to produce edible grapes, but it produced sour ones instead. 3 So now, residents of Jerusalem, people of Judah, you decide between me and my vineyard! 4 What more can I do for my vineyard beyond what I have already done? When I waited for it to produce edible grapes, why did it produce sour ones instead? 5 Now I will inform you what I am about to do to my vineyard: I will remove its hedge and turn it into pasture, I will break its wall and allow animals to graze there. 6 I will make it a wasteland; no one will prune its vines or hoe its ground, and thorns and briars will grow there. I will order the clouds not to drop any rain on it. 7 Indeed Israel is the vineyard of the Lord who commands armies, the people of Judah are the cultivated place in which he took delight. He waited for justice, but look what he got - disobedience! He waited for fairness, but look what he got - cries for help!

Hosea 10:1-2 - Israel was a fertile vine that yielded fruit. As his fruit multiplied, he multiplied altars to Baal. As his land prospered, they adorned the fertility pillars. 2 Their heart is slipping; soon they will be punished for their guilt. The Lord will break their altars; he will completely destroy their fertility pillars.

Dwelling in the Old Testament inter-text of John 15 alerts us to God's care for Israel as his vine and his disappointment with Israel over her lack of fruit. Every Old Testament text that describes Israel as a vine refers to their failure to produce the fruit God expected. The inter-texture of John 15 furthermore warns us of the very real nature of God's threat to withdraw his care if his vine does not produce fruit.

Part V - Conclusion

In this presentation I started off by making a few remarks about what I believe the gospel is (part 1), before discussing how we can communicate the gospel through communities that embody the kingdom of God. This understanding of how the gospel is communicated suggest that AMCS should serve as a design studio for prototyping the kingdom of God communities. I then placed my own prototype for reading the Bible stereoscopically on the table. In testing this prototype we read John 15 stereoscopically along with various different intra- and inter- textual images in order to deepen our understanding of what it means to Dwell in Christ. I thus propose that we first Dwell in a text like John 15, and then in subsequent dwellings read it stereoscopically along with its intra- and inter-text that can be identified by words, concepts and phrases that link them to each other [Due to time constraints I have not given examples of dwelling in the socio-historical world behind the text or in front of it].

Dwelling in Christ, my title, thus presupposes (a) the appropriate response to an encounter with Christ (in person or through proclamation); (b) having conversations with Christ (praying); (c) sharing in the communion with others and Christ; (d) holding on to the Word of Christ (teaching); (e) loving each other and (f) being fruitful. We must furthermore (g) take the possibility of judgment seriously and (h) intentionally cultivate the constituting elements of love.

May the AMCS thus be a space for conversion, conversation, communion, cultivation and commitment to the Word and community!

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