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Unity among Division: Dissociative Identity Disorder and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

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ABSTRACT

Dissociative Identity Disorder is a mental disorder in which seemingly independent identities arise within the same body. It is a disorder that raises profound questions about our understandings of certain theological concepts and doctrines, especially if one can consider the different identities to be different persons. In this paper, I shall provide support for this claim by exploring the implications that Dissociative Identity Disorder can have for our understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. After outlining two models of the indwelling that have been proposed in the contemporary analytic literature, I am going to explain the problem that Dissociative Identity Disorder seems to raise for these models. I will then consider various potential solutions and shall highlight which I find to be the most convincing.

KEYWORDS

mental illness; mental health; psychiatry; religion; systematic theology

Introduction

Recent engagement with disabilities and mental health conditions, such as autism and depression, has proven to be a fruitful area of theological enquiry. Such an endeavor can lead us to rethink the way we understand key theological concepts and doctrines with a view to accommodating persons with these conditions.¹ A disorder that has received significantly less attention from theologians is Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), and I shall illustrate its significance in theological discussions in this paper.²

DID is a psychiatric condition in which multiple identities (alters) that appear to be independent arise within the same body. It is a disorder that prompts interesting philosophical questions,³ with one of the most significant being that of whether one can consider these alters to be different persons. One's answer to this question has wide-ranging implications, and depends both on one's understanding of what is required for personhood and what distinguishes one person from another.

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In this paper, I shall discuss some theological consequences that arise from one's answer to this question.⁴ I shall consider the implications that certain cases of DID can have for some understandings of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit if alters can be considered different persons. The doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (the indwelling) states that when someone comes to faith, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within them. In the understandings considered here one of the key areas where the believer (someone who has come to faith)⁵ is impacted by the indwelling is their mind due to the sharing of psychological elements of the divine with them. Because the mind is divided in cases of DID, it has interesting implications for this doctrine.

When discussing these implications, I will focus on a specific understanding of the indwelling. It is often claimed that the indwelling occurs after, and is perhaps prompted by, a person's coming to faith, and this is the claim that I am going to challenge using DID. One might alternatively claim that the indwelling is the cause of faith in a person.⁶ I acknowledge this, but the former claim is popular enough to show the significance DID can have for our understanding of the indwelling.⁷

I shall begin by outlining different articulations of the indwelling that are popular in the contemporary analytic literature, and shall then provide an overview of DID. I will argue that DID causes an issue for the understandings of the indwelling outlined. In some cases of DID, an alter can have phenomenological access to the thoughts and experiences of another alter, and this seems to entail that the faith of one alter can enable another alter to receive the indwelling without, or prior to, faith. I will then consider some potential solutions, and shall conclude that a solution drawing on a communal understanding of faith and another based on communal election, or predestination, are both plausible options.⁸

Understandings of the indwelling

Discussions of the indwelling are prompted by numerous Biblical passages that point toward it. For instance, Romans 8:9 states that: 'You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.'⁹ Jesus also promises the Holy Spirit in John 14:15–17: 'If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.' Verses such as these point to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and have in turn prompted scholars to try and make sense of this doctrine.

There is also an internal dimension to the indwelling pointed to in certain passages. For instance, it is pointed to in Ephesians 3:16–19:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Scholars in the indwelling literature, whilst attempting to account for the internality of the work of the Spirit pointed to here,¹⁰ have produced explanations of how exactly it is that the Spirit can be said to dwell in the mind of a believer and have specified the impact it has.¹¹

In such models, it must also be affirmed that the Spirit comes to dwell within the relevant person without negating their personhood, allowing them to flourish by God's grace.¹² There have been several attempts to formulate models of the indwelling in the recent analytic literature, and I shall consider two of the most prominent options here, the partial life sharing account and the interpersonal account. My purpose here is not to defend these models of indwelling, but to draw out the implications DID has for them.

The partial life sharing account

I shall begin by outlining the partial life sharing account, which has been proposed by William Alston. In this model, there is a partial merging of the psychological lives of God and the believer. The barriers usually separating different people are broken down, allowing for a more intimate relationship between God and the believer than can be found in ordinary relationships between people. This allows the believer to partially share in certain elements of the divine psychological life.

Alston provides some useful examples to help illustrate his understanding of partial life sharing. In one example, he asks us to imagine a neural wiring hookup that enables the psychological boundaries between two people, P1 and P2, to be broken down, such that some of P1's reactions, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes are as immediately available to P2 as P2's own and influence P2's further thinking and behavior in the way that P2's own thoughts, attitudes, reactions, and emotions do. This is a partial merging of lives, as one life has become intimately involved in another.

The elements partially shared with the believer in the indwelling can be split into two categories: psychological and conative. The psychological elements shared are said to be immediately available to the believer and influence their psychological states in a way that is analogous to their

own thoughts. However, this sharing is only partial, meaning that the human person is not eradicated in this process. There is also a conative element to the sharing, as certain divine conative tendencies like love and compassion can be introduced or infused, initially in a weak, isolated form, into the believer's conative system. These are essential for sanctification, as they push against sinful self-centeredness and self-aggrandizement. Whilst these tendencies may initially seem alien, the believer, through freely and rightly responding to God, can more strongly integrate them into their own psychological life.

The psychological and conative elements work in unison in the sanctification of the believer. In the case of love, for example, the believer is given cognitive access to God's loving tendencies, such that they have direct access to these and can model their own attitudes accordingly. The introduction of these same tendencies, albeit weakly, into the believer's conative system, opposes the sinful tendencies they already possess. In introducing these tendencies weakly, this model allows for the believer to work toward the development of their character in sanctification through the strengthening of these tendencies (Alston, 1989, pp. 245–252).¹³

The interpersonal account

In interpersonal models, the psychological life of the person is changed through their receptivity to the relational presence of the Spirit. Here, God could influence the believer by making Godself a role model, making the sinful ways of the believer seem unfavorable and Christian practices favorable, call the individual to repentance and holiness, and make new resources available to believers (Alston, 1989, pp. 235–237). Alston himself outlines such a model, but rejects it in favor of his partial life sharing account because the external nature of the relationships in the interpersonal model do not account for the internality of the indwelling (Alston, 1989, pp. 241–242).

Alston's judgment has recently been questioned by Steven Porter and Brandon Rickabaugh. The presence of others can impact people internally. Such relationships can impact your experience of yourself and others, influencing your feelings, attitudes, and desires. Receptivity to the Spirit in this model can have an internal influence, and this can in turn generate dispositions in the person to be patient, generous, and so on. The relationship can be internalized, influencing the person even when they do not consciously attend to the Spirit. The Spirit's influence is constant and infinite. In this model, God can also impress on the mind of the believer awareness of God's thoughts, values, and so on. This relationship would bring about an immediate change in one's psychology. The believer makes an effort to actively receive more and more of God's love and goodness,

and is in turn transformed by God's loving presence (Porter & Rickabaugh, 2018, pp. 123–126).

A specific articulation of how this occurs is presented in Eleonore Stump's understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In her model, the Spirit comes to reside in the minds of those who have come to faith, as they enter into a loving relationship with God. Key to her understanding is the notion of second-personal presence, or unification in love. When one comes to faith and freely accepts God's love and enters into a mutual relationship with God, the Holy Spirit is said to come and dwell in one's mind. God himself is now within each person of faith. The individual's mind and awareness of their own mind is said to remain their own, but they become aware of the presence of God in their mind.¹⁴ Stump's model can be deemed an interpersonal model due to her emphasis on the importance of relationships.

Stump uses mind-reading in support of her account. She suggests that a certain form of presence between human persons is provided by mind-reading, which gives them knowledge of the other person and of their mental states. One of the essential concepts she draws on is the 'mirror neuron system', something that is now considered controversial in contemporary neuroscience. This supposed faculty makes it possible for one person to acquire knowledge of the mental states of another when that knowledge shares something of the phenomenology of perception. Proponents of the mirror neuron theory argue that a particular set of neurons is active both when one performs a particular action oneself or witnesses that same action or emotion in another person. In mind reading between human persons, there is a sense in which something of the thought, intention, or emotion of the person having their mind read is in the mind of the reader, resulting in the latter being personally present with the former (Stump, 2013, pp. 37–41). Stump has clarified, however, that her use of the mirror neuron system is heuristic and the conclusions can be drawn from phenomenology alone (Stump, 2018, p. 453, n43).

In mind-reading, the form or configuration of the relevant thought is in both the brain of the reader and the brain of the person whose mind is being read. It allows the reader to have cognition of the thought being read and identify it as that of another person. Stump claims that this allows the other person's mind to be within that of the reader. In cases where the persons are united in love, mind-reading occurs when there is willingness on the part of each to be open to the other. The mind of the subject is open to the reader because this is willed by the subject. Each also desires the good of the other (Stump, 2013, pp. 47–50).

In the indwelling case, the relation is stronger. The Holy Spirit is said to come and dwell in someone's mind only when someone has come to faith and accepted God's grace. In this relationship, the love is freely given

and freely accepted (Stump, 2013, pp. 50–51). When someone comes to faith, the Spirit can be said to dwell in their mind, enabling shared mind-reading between them (Stump, 2019, pp. 357–361). It is not just the thoughts and intentions of God that are within the mind of a believer, but God himself (Stump, 2013, pp. 50–51). God will be as present in the believer as is possible (Stump, 2019, p. 361). Therefore, whilst Stump uses mind-reading between humans in support of her account, she is clear that the relationship between God and believers established in the indwelling is greater than any that can be attained between humans. To persons of faith, God is presented with maximal second-personal presence (Stump, 2013, pp. 45–51).

As illustrated here, the key difference between the interpersonal and partial life sharing accounts is the use of relationships in the formulation of the former. In both, the Spirit has an internal influence on the mind of the believer, but in the interpersonal account, this occurs through the relationship that the believer has with God, a relationship we can understand through our knowledge of the nature of human-human relationships. This completes our outline of the two models.

Dissociative Identity Disorder and indwelling

Now that we have an outline of the different models of the indwelling to be considered in this paper, we can discuss the problems DID raises for our understandings of the indwelling. I shall begin this section with a more detailed discussion of DID, with a particular focus on personhood and interidentity amnesia, and shall then consider how certain cases can cause problems for these models.

Dissociative Identity Disorder, personhood, and memory

The DSM-5 outlines two elements that are key for diagnosing DID: Firstly, we have the ‘disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality states’, and secondly ‘recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and for traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting.’¹⁵ In DID, there is a discontinuity in memory which causes problems with self-integration and thus brings about the existence of two or more alters, the at least partially independent identities that one finds in cases of DID (Güell et al., 2017, p. 109). The alters take control of consciousness and the body alternatively, which is why one gets the differences in personality characteristic of DID sufferers (Morton, 2017, p. 315).

As mentioned earlier, a key philosophical topic in discussions of DID is that of whether alters can be considered different persons. There are

two approaches that one might take here. We have the Multiple Persons thesis, the idea that the alters in DID sufferers are different persons. Alternatively, there is the Single Person thesis, the idea that DID sufferers are individual human persons whose psychiatric symptoms resemble global self-delusion, and the different alters are merely altered states of these persons and are thus not distinct persons.¹⁶

Elsewhere, it has been argued that depending on one's theological anthropology, one cannot take it for granted that the alters in at least some cases of DID are the same person. These arguments shall not be reproduced in their fullness here, but I shall briefly outline some of the features of alters that motivate the Multiple Persons thesis, and which understandings of personhood in theological anthropology seem to be impacted.¹⁷

To begin with, it is worth pointing to the fact that alters can differ with regards to key characteristics such as age and gender. Furthermore, they may differ in things like facial expressions, posture, and speech patterns (Braude, 1995, pp. 42–43). They can also significantly differ in their abilities and traits. One alter can be good at something like mathematics, or foreign languages, whilst others in that same body are not. Depending on traumas experienced, some alters may even have an impairment of some kind impacting one of their senses that others in the same body do not have (Braude, 1995, p. 48). There can even be physiological variations with things like sight conditions, drug tolerance and allergic responses (Braude, 1995, p. 49). Thus, to those interacting with the different alters, they may come across as very different because they can vary in the way they present themselves, in their abilities, and even in their physiology.¹⁸

There are also more internal features that may be used in support of the thesis. There are indications that alters can differ in what they will. Alters can vie for control of the body and interfere with things like the diets of other alters to negative effect (Maiese, 2017, p. 776). They can thus differ in their desires.

Furthermore, there is the amnesia pointed to in the clinical description of DID mentioned earlier. The differences in amnesia between alters is important both for this discussion of personhood and the discussion of indwelling in the next subsection. The level of fragmentation or integration between alters in DID sufferers differs. In some patients, there is little communication and awareness between alters, and in others there is a great deal more.¹⁹ With some alters, there is two-way amnesia, in which alters are unaware of other alters and their experiences. Alters are mutually unaware of each other here. With others, there is one-way amnesia, in which one alter is aware of another alter and its experiences, but the latter is unaware of the former (the relationship is asymmetrical). With other

alters, there is mutual awareness, where they are mutually aware of each other's existence and experiences. These variations can all appear in the same DID patient.²⁰

In cases of mutual awareness and one-way amnesia, alters can have phenomenological access to the thoughts of other alters without regarding them as their own.²¹ This occurs in an asymmetrical manner in cases of one-way amnesia. It is also worth noting that these epistemic relationships between alters are not fixed. There are cases in which alters initially reported interidentity amnesia, but the amnesic boundaries between them were dispelled, allowing them to share knowledge and awareness (Maiese, 2016, p. 227).

One could construe all of these features as evidence for the Multiple Persons thesis, but whether one can successfully argue for the thesis will depend on the understanding of personhood adopted. To briefly restate arguments made elsewhere, there are at least two prominent understandings of personhood in theological anthropology in which these features of DID patients make it plausible to argue that, in at least some cases, alters could be construed as different persons.

The first is the definition that deems persons distinct centers of knowledge, love, will and action, proposed by the likes of Richard Swinburne and William Hasker.²² The memory differences that can arise between alters, and the fact that they can have access to the thoughts of other alters without regarding these as their own, suggests that they are different centers of knowledge. The differences in their abilities and traits can be used to argue that they are different centers of action. Moreover, the fact that they can vie for control of the body and interfere in each other's lives suggests that they can be different centers of will. The differences in will and ownership regarding memories may extend to relationships, suggesting that alters may be different centers of love. This is supported by the fact that in some cases of DID, alters have expressed attitudes of love toward other alters.²³

The other definition deems persons those capable of uttering the word 'I' and being addressed as 'thou' (Van Inwagen, 1995, p. 264).²⁴ Here, encounter with the other, the thou, is crucial for personhood, but it is also essential that in these relationships, the thou is not reduced to an object in the gaze of the eye, or vice versa.²⁵ There are cases of DID in which alters occupying the same body refer to themselves as 'I', and to other alters within the same body as 'they', or 'she', suggesting they view them as different persons. The cases previously mentioned in which alters intervene in one another's lives and have access to the thoughts and memories of other alters without regarding them as their own further reinforces this point. This suggests that alters can be different persons on this understanding as well.²⁶

This is an extremely brief restatement of arguments given elsewhere, and I would refer readers to my previous work on this topic for more detail on this.²⁷ For the purposes of this paper, the Multiple Persons thesis shall be assumed and its implications for the indwelling considered.²⁸ The cases of one-way amnesia and mutual awareness shall be the focus of the remaining discussion.

The indwelling in cases of Dissociative Identity Disorder

Now that these features of DID have been outlined, we can consider the problem DID raises for models of the indwelling. For this, one first requires an understanding of how people come to faith. Faith is a gift of God's grace.²⁹ This is inconsistent with Semi-Pelagianism, the claim that people desire grace or will the good themselves. However, when trying to reconcile this with free will, it is typically claimed that people can refrain from resisting God's grace. The will is operative here in some way.³⁰ Given that it was previously claimed that alters in the same body can differ in what they will, it seems conceivable that they can differ as to whether they are resistant or nonresistant to God's grace, and thus whether they have faith.

Furthermore, there are cases that suggest that alters can have different attitudes toward and relationships with people. This is displayed in the case of John Woods, a DID sufferer responsible for murdering his girlfriend and her flatmate. The alter in executive control when the murders occurred, Ron, when speaking of himself in comparison to his fellow alters, said 'he sees himself as different from John and Donnie, both of whom like people. He does not like to be around people since "they turn evil."³¹ This suggests that alters can differ in their attitudes toward others, and one may speculate that such differences can apply when thinking about God.³²

Building on this point, we can produce an example more relevant to the topic of the indwelling. Imagine that we have two alters, A1 and A2. Of the two, A1 is more open to faith, whereas A2 is staunchly resistant to God's grace. At a particular time, A1 becomes nonresistant to the grace of God and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in their mind. We can also imagine that there is either mutual awareness or one-way amnesia between A1 and A2 such that A2 is aware of the thoughts and experiences of A1.

In both the partial life sharing and interpersonal models, there would be psychological elements of the divine that would enter into and impact the mind of A1 as a result of the indwelling. In cases of one-way amnesia and mutual awareness, A2 would have access to these thoughts, and thus the psychological elements of the divine received by A1 will be shared with A2 as well. Since the receipt of these psychological elements of the

divine is such a key part of the indwelling in both models, there is a sense in which God comes to dwell in the mind of A2 also. A2, at this moment, lacks faith. In this example, one could either accept that A2 can have indwelling without faith, or one can say that A2 is converted as a result of the indwelling, which entails that indwelling can come before faith. Both claims are inconsistent with the understanding of indwelling that is the focus of this paper. This generates a conundrum.

There may be push back from proponents of both accounts of the indwelling to this conclusion. I shall consider the partial life sharing account first. In response, one might point to the earlier claim that in the relevant DID cases, alters may access the thoughts of other alters without regarding these as their own. It may be suggested that since A2 does not view the thoughts of A1 as their own, they do not share in the divine life in the way that A1 does. One will recall that in his outline of what it would be like to partially share in the life of another, Alston claims that one would have immediate access to the shared mental contents and that they would influence one's own thinking and behavior in the way that one's own mental contents do. The phenomenological access A2 would have to A1's mental contents may grant them immediate access, but, since they do not view A1's thoughts as their own, one might argue that this does not guarantee that the psychological elements shared with A1 in the indwelling shall influence A2's behavior and thinking in the way required for partial life sharing.

This seems like a plausible claim. However, one can think of some potential cases of DID in which the thinking and behavior of A2 could be influenced through their access to the thoughts of A1 impacted by the indwelling. An example will serve our purposes here. Imagine that A2 is extremely trusting of A1 in certain respects. Although they do not share A1's attitudes toward God, perhaps they view A1 as a reliable moral guide, such that when A1 has a particular attitude toward something like charity, this influences A2's behavior and thinking in the way that A2's own attitudes do.³³ Such attitudes are ones that would be impacted, or perhaps even shared with believers, by God in the indwelling, suggesting that some of the elements of the divine life shared with A1 would influence the behavior and thinking of A2 as well in this case. It thus seems possible for A2 to partially share in the divine life through their access to the thoughts of A1.

It might be pointed out that there are some elements of the indwelling that are not shared with A2. The conative tendencies mentioned by Alston are infused into the believer by God, and there is good reason to think that these would only be infused into A1. Since this is key for sanctification and character development, the indwelling would impact A1 and A2 differently.

This may indeed follow from Alston's model. However, it seems plausible to think that A2 is still indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As argued previously, A2 would still partially share in the divine life through their access to the thoughts of A1. It would be the character transformation experienced by A1 in sanctification that might differ in the case of A2. Although, if we return to the case in which A2 trusts and adopts certain moral attitudes of A1, one may argue that A2's character would be impacted even without the infusion of these tendencies, but perhaps not to the same extent as A1's. Regardless, one would be justified in thinking that partially sharing in the divine life entails that what A2 has is still indwelling.

What about interpersonal models? It might be thought that the relationship requirement in interpersonal models provides a way out of the problem. A2 does not have a mutual, personal relationship (to use Stump's terminology) with God, meaning that this condition for the indwelling is not fulfilled. However, because A2 has access to the thoughts of A1 they still acquire the psychological elements of the divine shared with A1 through the loving relationship A1 has with God. The only difference is that A1 acquires them directly from God and A2 indirectly through their access to the thoughts of A1. It still seems plausible to claim that A2 also has the indwelling in this case.

In both the partial life sharing and interpersonal models of the indwelling, DID seems to generate a serious theological problem. Because it is possible for the alter without faith, A2, to be aware of the thoughts and experiences of the alter with faith, A1, it seems that A2 can be aware of the psychological elements of the divine shared with A1 in the indwelling, meaning that it is possible for A2 to have indwelling before faith, if not indwelling without it.

Potential solutions

I shall spend the remainder of this paper discussing potential solutions to this problem. Some of these solutions shall involve the rejection of some of the assumptions made in the previous section, and others shall attempt to find a way around this issue whilst accommodating these assumptions.

Rejecting the multiple persons thesis

The obvious place to start would be with the rejection of the Multiple Persons thesis. There is precedent for this move in the literature on DID. The Single Person thesis is certainly the more intuitive of the two theses, and the Multiple Persons thesis results in numerous undesirable ethical complications both within and outside of Christian theology. It raises

questions about whether one alter can be punished for the crimes of another, whether therapies resulting in integration should be considered a form of murder, or whether consent from one alter is sufficient in certain interactions.³⁴ There are certainly good reasons to avoid the Multiple Persons thesis for theologians and secular scholars alike.³⁵

However, as mentioned previously, one's theological anthropology does not always permit this. Moreover, due to certain features of the indwelling, scholars in this debate have to be particularly cautious when arguing for the Single Person thesis. In a plausible understanding of the indwelling both God and the believer must retain their status as persons despite their sharing of mental contents. The DID cases that cause the indwelling issue, those in which there is mutual awareness or one-way amnesia, resemble the indwelling in that there is a sharing of thoughts and experiences in both examples. In the indwelling, it is essential that the personhood of both parties is still maintained despite the sharing of mental contents. Therefore, if theologians were to appeal to the sharing of mental contents in these cases of DID as evidence that the alters are the same person, they risk contradicting their reasoning in cases of the indwelling, in which the personhood of God and the believer is maintained despite the sharing of mental contents.³⁶

Thus, those trying to avoid this issue with the indwelling must be careful with the features of DID that they appeal to when arguing for the Single Person thesis, as they have to make sure they do not contradict their own reasoning when appealing to the sharing of mental contents between alters. I will consider some alternative solutions.

Integration and indwelling

One might appeal to certain elements of Stump's theology for a solution. Stump insists that the kind of closeness achieved in the indwelling requires internal integration on the part of the believing person. Stump claims this because it allows for wholeheartedness. One must fully desire to be close to someone. One cannot desire not to have this desire, or one would not be properly close to someone. Moreover, if one has hidden a considerable part of one's mind from oneself, one cannot properly reveal oneself to another person. If one is divided within oneself with regards to one's desires, one cannot be properly close to the other person because there will always be a part of one hidden from the other person (Stump, 2018, pp. 124–127).

Stump also claims that it is not possible for someone to be wholehearted in evil. They will always be double-minded. She claims that the objective moral standard is so accessible to human reason that one could never be totally ignorant of it. Even if one was doing something extremely bad and

sees it as permissible, there will always be a part of one's mind that knows it is wrong (Stump, 2018, p. 126). Therefore, moral wrongdoing itself fragments a psyche (Stump, 2018, p. 150). Integration around the good is something that God helps the person of faith work toward through their relationship in the indwelling (Stump, 2018, pp. 342–344).³⁷

One might see this as a way of avoiding the issues caused by DID in an interpersonal model. One might claim that DID patients, because they are fragmented into different alters with differing wills and beliefs, are incapable of achieving the closeness to God and integration around the good that is worked toward in the indwelling. As a result of this, one might either claim that DID patients are unable to receive the indwelling in the first place or that the indwelling facilitates the integration of all of the alters into one person. Both routes seemingly provide solutions to the problem.

However, regardless of which route is opted for here, there are issues. Stump seems to be discussing cases in which a person is internally divided, and thus such an argument would require the Single Person thesis to be successful. If the alters are different persons, whilst the psyche itself is divided it seems conceivable that they, as individual persons and parts of this psyche, are capable of the wholeheartedness attained through the indwelling if indwelt individually by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the reasoning behind the idea that DID should prevent the indwelling or cause the indwelling to facilitate the integration of the alters is unsound given the Multiple Persons thesis.

There are also problems that plague each of the individual options themselves. Let us start with one that can be raised against the idea that DID patients would not be able to receive the indwelling. It has been claimed that the fragmentation in many DID cases is brought about by trauma, often occurring in childhood. Dissociation can be used to cope with abuse, perhaps at the hands of a caregiver, as it allows one to distance oneself from the experience of the abuse and see it as something that is happening to somebody else.³⁸ It seems problematic to deny indwelling to DID patients because of their fragmentation, as it can be a result of severe traumatic experiences.

Regarding the integration option, it is not even clear that it solves the problem. Integration would be caused by the indwelling, and would thus presumably occur after the Spirit has come to dwell in the mind of the alter with faith. One might conceive of integration as a gradual process facilitated by the presence of the Holy Spirit, but this means that there will be a period of time in which other alters, some of which might lack faith, exist, reviving the problem.

If one instead claims that integration happens instantaneously at the moment of indwelling, one still faces issues. There is some debate as to

whether integration generates a completely new person or the preceding alters survive in the person generated in some sense, and I shall consider each option in turn.

The former option seems unsuitable here, as it entails that the alter that prompted the indwelling would no longer exist as a result of it. There are also clear ethical issues, as it would entail the forced annihilation of the other alters, or persons. In response, one may point to certain understandings of the afterlife in which God is said to annihilate the damned, but there is a key disanalogy.³⁹ These alters are not yet damned. One member of their group has come to faith before them, and there is no reason to think that they cannot come to faith themselves at a later point. God would not be annihilating damned persons devoid of any opportunity for reconciliation, but persons still capable of coming to faith. There are thus issues with this proposal.

The latter option, in which the alters somehow survive in the person produced, seems more appropriate, but also raises difficult questions. If we assume the alters that existed prior to integration survive in the person generated in some sense, how would this person assess the desires and beliefs of the alters that existed before? In cases where one of these alters had faith and another did not, how is it determined whether the person generated has or lacks faith?⁴⁰ This is a difficult question to answer, but an important one, as if it is possible for this person to lack faith following the integration process caused by the indwelling, we have another situation in which someone has indwelling without faith.⁴¹ The complexities of integration thus raise serious questions about the plausibility of this solution.

The use of Stump's claims about integration as a response to the problems raised by DID is problematic. Such a solution assumes the Single Person thesis, which we have not done here. Moreover, if one claims that the integration of alters is required for indwelling, it seems unfair on DID patients. If one alternatively claims that integration is a cause of indwelling, one faces difficulties assessing the plausibility of this route due to the challenges that come with understanding how integration works. We should thus search for another solution.

Communal faith

An alternative response is to reconceptualise the way we think God interacts with DID sufferers. Thus far, when considering the indwelling we have thought of God as interacting with alters much like he would with other individual persons. However, just as God seeks loving relationships with individuals, he can also seek loving relationships with communities. If the Multiple Persons thesis is true, we should perhaps instead claim that God interacts with DID patients in the way that he would with

communities.⁴² I shall now explain how, in cases of DID, we can conceptualize how God would come to have a relationship with, and dwell within, the community of alters within the patient.

For this, we must recall our earlier description of how alters come to faith. In cases where persons have some influence in their coming to faith, as is implied by the relational nature of the models of the indwelling considered, persons have an input by refraining from resisting God's grace. In cases of DID where there is mutual awareness, alters can communicate to make decisions. There are examples of this occurring. There are cases where alters not currently in control of the body are said to have a council meeting to supervise the emergence of the various alters and make it so that the needs of each individual alter are met (Braude, 1995, p. 44).

In such cases, a community of alters can decide whether to resist or refrain from resisting God's grace in a structured, coordinated way. It thus seems that we can attribute commitments to the group as a whole. Groups do seem able to form beliefs about facts and values independently of their members. For instance, a business could have a particular goal of maximizing profit whilst the board members are committed to preserving the environment. The board members may vote to act in an environmentally friendly way when possible, but they could then abandon such policies if they conflict with the business's primary goal of maximizing profit. A corporate agent can choose to adopt new commitments or abandon old ones independently of its members' own commitments. They can thus possess their own rational equivalents of beliefs and desires: their own commitments about fact and value (Björnsson & Hess, 2017, pp. 279–280).

This is important. Earlier, it was pointed out that alters may differ in their wills and desires, as well as their beliefs, which granted plausibility to the argument that they may differ as to whether they have faith. If groups themselves are capable of possessing these, or their equivalents, through these commitments, perhaps faith can be bestowed on the group of alters as a whole.⁴³

In cases where alters have mutual awareness and are able to communicate in a sophisticated way, it is possible for one to attribute such commitments to the community of alters as a whole without undermining the personhood of each individual alter. It would be possible for the alters to communicate through some form of decision-making procedure in a way that would make it viable for one to attribute the commitments decided upon to the group.⁴⁴ This is not to say that this is guaranteed in such cases. The alters would still have to implement a sophisticated enough decision-making procedure to formulate commitments at the level of the community.

In cases where this occurs, we can say that the Spirit comes to dwell in the mind of the DID patient when the alters, as a community, decide

as a community to refrain from resisting God's grace through their decision-making procedure. This does not require all of the alters to refrain from resisting. There may be cases where the community as a whole settles on nonresistance despite the reservations of some alters, but the Spirit comes to dwell anyway due to the nonresistance of the community. This thus accommodates cases where some alters in the community are not in agreement with the community's stance.

Equally, there can be cases where the community settles on resistance and non-belief, despite the nonresistance of some of the alters. However, this is not as problematic as it first appears. Communities can perform actions that not all of their members participated in or were aware of. It has been pointed out that the actions of some, but not necessarily all, of the members of a community are sufficient to exile God. This means that there may be victims of God's absence that are ultimately not responsible for it.⁴⁵

Earlier, cases were pointed to in which alters interfere with things like the diets of other alters. In cases where the community decides on faith but there are resistant alters, could these alters rebel against this decision, and somehow sabotage the indwelling relationship? In response to this problem, I would highlight the fact that since the Spirit comes to dwell in the entire community of these alters, including those that might be more resistant, these alters too would be subject to the transforming work of the Spirit. They may initially show more resistance than the other alters to the effects of the indwelling, but they would also be gradually transformed. Thus, they cannot compromise the work of the Spirit because they too are subject to it, despite their resistance.⁴⁶

Interidentity amnesia, however, raises another difficulty for our understanding of communal faith in DID cases. It entails that there will be DID cases in which some alters are unaware that they are participating in a community, meaning that they are unable to form the relationships required for the implementation of a decision-making procedure. This is still a problem if the amnesia is only one-way, or if it impacts only some of the alters within the patient. There may also be cases where alters are capable of implementing such a procedure, but do not due to a lack of cooperation. Because a decision-making procedure including all alters has not been, or cannot be, put in place in such cases, to establish a communal relationship with God here we require all of the alters individually to refrain from resisting grace to enable all alters to have faith and be indwelt by the Spirit as a community.⁴⁷

This communal solution allows us to avoid the problem DID raises for our understanding of the indwelling. The problem was caused by the fact that when the Spirit comes to dwell within an individual alter, others can be indwelt without or prior to faith. In this solution, the Spirit comes to

dwell in the community of alters itself. The nonresistance, and thus the faith, of the community, rather than that of the individuals, is what is important.

The communal nature of this solution can also help us articulate what happens when the Spirit comes to dwell in DID patients. There have been discussions of how the Holy Spirit works in groups in contemporary discussions of the liturgy and Church worship. It is claimed that the Holy Spirit plays something of a unifying role. The worship performed by different Church congregations, and even by individuals privately, appears to be disparate. The Holy Spirit works to unite the members of the Church into an organism capable of responding to God in worship, linking the disparate actions of individuals and congregations. Moreover, individuals can have little to no awareness that they are participating in this kind of structured action.⁴⁸

One can conceptualize the Holy Spirit working in DID patients in a similar way. The Spirit can be said to make it so that the actions of alters are organized and structured in such a way that they constitute a unified response to God. This accounts for cases of interidentity amnesia as well. Much like those performing private acts of worship, alters unaware of the existence of other alters can participate in unified actions without being aware of this. Not only does construing DID patients as communities in the Spirit's interaction with them avoid the problems outlined earlier, but it also provides insight into the impact that the Spirit can have on the community of alters.

This solution appears to be the most plausible out of those considered thus far. The idea that God would interact with DID patients as he would with communities seems appropriate given the fact that God is dealing with a psyche that contains multiple people. Moreover, it can coherently avoid the problem for the indwelling raised by DID.

This proposal still has counterintuitive consequences. Imagine we have one alter that is nonresistant to God's grace and is unaware of all other alters, some of which are resistant. They would be completely confused as to why they have had no response from God, potentially resulting in extreme suffering. As a result of the claims made in the construction of this model, this scenario is a possibility, as it has been suggested that nonresistant alters may suffer as a result of the overall stance of the community of alters. One might feel uneasy about this consequence.⁴⁹ However, our treatment of DID patients as communities can explain such instances. As previously indicated, when the relationship is fundamentally with the community, there will be innocent individuals that suffer as a result of the stance of their community.⁵⁰

One might still have reservations. If one desires to adhere to the idea that individual people cannot experience the indwelling without or before faith, one will not be satisfied with this proposal. It allows for scenarios

in which the nonresistance, and thus faith, of communities can bring about the indwelling despite the lack of conformity from some members of the community. Therefore, there is still the possibility of indwelling without or before faith in individual alters. I will propose an alternative solution for those dissatisfied with this.

Communal election

Although this discussion is focused on the indwelling, the process of coming to faith is key in motivating the problem. The fact that one alter in a DID patient can seemingly come to faith whilst another in the same patient does not is what generates the issue with the indwelling. Therefore, if all of the alters come to faith at the same time, there would not be a problem here.

It has previously been argued that alters can differ in their wills and attitudes toward God, making this a difficult case to make. If the will of individual persons is involved in the process of salvation by refraining from resisting God's grace, there is no way of guaranteeing that they will come to faith at the same time.

One might avoid this problem by endorsing predestination. In such views, for people to be saved, God must have predestined them to be saved. God's grace is necessary and sufficient for salvation. Faith is a blessing given by God.⁵¹ If one advocates such a view, the idea that God makes it so that all the alters in a DID patient come to faith at the same time is not problematic, because God has complete control over who is saved and when they are saved. This is another way of avoiding the problem caused by DID, as all the alters would come to faith at the same time, preventing there from being indwelling without or prior to faith in some cases.

The model proposed here shares features with the fiat model, another model of the indwelling that has been proposed and rejected by Alston. In the fiat model, God produces new dispositions and tendencies within believers to transform them into the kind of person he desires. This is a one-sided process. God decrees transformation, and it occurs with minimal contribution from the believer. Alston rejects it for being too impersonal (Alston, 1989, pp. 231–235). The model proposed here in some ways resembles the fiat model, as it is also one-sided. Here, someone's journey to faith is entirely in the hands of God.

Conclusion

One's view on whether alters can be different persons in DID patients, and thus on surrounding topics such as theological anthropology, has consequences for important theological topics. For the models of the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit considered here, the Multiple Persons thesis raises a serious difficulty, as it seems that we can have cases in which the indwelling is prompted by the faith of one alter, and another alter without faith can receive it as well as a result of this. However, one can escape this by suggesting that whether the Spirit comes to dwell in the mind of a DID patient depends on the nonresistance of the community of alters as a whole, or by endorsing predestination and concluding that all the alters in a patient are converted at the same time.

I began this paper by outlining the partial life sharing and interpersonal accounts of the indwelling. I then discussed the problem that DID raises for these accounts. Following this, I considered several potential solutions, before concluding that one should either endorse the idea that the indwelling is based on the faith of the community of alters or that God elects the entire community at the same time. I shall leave it up to the reader to decide which option they prefer.⁵²

Notes

1. For excellent examples of this with regards to autism, see Leidenhag (2021b), Leidenhag (2021c) and Macaskill (2019), and for others discussing depression, see Scrutton (2018), Scrutton (2020) and Coblenz (2023).
2. To be clear, DID is not completely absent from theological discussion. This paper largely follows from my previous work on DID and its implications for the doctrines of heaven and hell in Cawdron (2023). It has also been discussed by others. See, for instance, the consideration of DID treatment from a Christian perspective and the role of the Church in helping sufferers in Rosik (2003), and the discussion of self-multiplicity and theological anthropology in Turner (2007).
3. There have been numerous studies on the philosophical implications of DID. Two of the most influential treatments of the topic are Braude (1995) and Radden (1996).
4. Although I have based my argument on the Multiple Persons thesis in this paper, one might think that this is unnecessary, and that the idea that alters are different identities or centres of consciousness is perhaps sufficient. This may be the case, but I have framed the argument this way due to the importance of personhood as an ethical category. A discussion of whether identity is sufficient shall also be complex and is beyond the constraints of this paper.
5. In using the term 'believer' to refer to someone with faith, I am following other key scholars in the indwelling debate such as Alston (1989) and Kroll (2019). I note, however, that whether faith entails belief in God is up for debate. For discussion, see Howard-Snyder (2016).
6. One might interpret Calvin as making this claim in his *Institutes* when saying that 'faith itself is produced only by the Spirit'. See Calvin (1845), Book 3, Chapter 1.4. It is also suggested in Adams (2016), pp. 94–95.
7. The claim that the indwelling occurs after, and as a result of, someone's coming to faith is made by key scholars in this area, including Stump (2013), p. 46. It is also discussed in Alston (1989), p. 230.
8. For a consideration of the relevance of autism to discussions of the indwelling, see Leidenhag (2021a).

9. This, and all subsequent Biblical quotes, are taken from the New International Version.
10. Indeed, Alston uses passages such as this to emphasise the need for an account of indwelling that is sufficiently internal. See Alston (1989), p. 242. More relevant passages are pointed to there.
11. A different approach is taken by Ray Yeo, who has argued instead that it is Christ's human unitive drive that is infused in the indwelling, with the Spirit only having a mediating role. See Yeo (2014). For a critique of Yeo's account, see Kroll (2019).
12. See Leidenhag and Mullins (2018). See Kroll (2021) for a detailed model that explains how this can be the case. There are numerous questions raised by the indwelling, including that of how we can be related to all three divine persons distinctly in sanctification. See Vidu (2020). For a discussion of the demarcation between indwelling and theōsis, see Leidenhag (2020).
13. For a critique of Alston's model, see Adams (2016).
14. This account is developed in Stump (2013), chapters 4 and 5 of Stump (2018), and Stump (2019).
15. Quoted in Morton (2017), p. 315.
16. These theses are outlined in Kennett and Matthews (2002). Kennett and Matthews themselves opt for the Single Person thesis.
17. See Cawdron (2023).
18. The models of indwelling being discussed here focus on the indwelling in the mind of the believer. The physiological differences between alters suggest that there may be interesting implications for more embodied understandings, but since my focus is on the mental implications, such a discussion is beyond the constraints of this paper.
19. Some have attempted to measure the extent of integration in DID patients. See Barlow and Chu (2014). For examples of more fragmented alters in terms of memory, see some of the cases noted in Morton (2017). For a survey of research on memory dysfunction in DID, see Dorahy (2001).
20. For a study on the transfer of information between identities in patients with alters displaying one-way amnesia, see Peters et al. (1998). For a study of alters that are aware of each other, see Dick-Barnes et al. (1987). In the latter study, it was found that the alters studied differed in their processing of word information.
21. This is pointed out in Rovane (1998), pp. 171–172. Cases in which alters have introspective access to the mental states of other alters are also discussed in Bayne (2002), pp. 96–97 and Braude (1995), pp. 69–70. Mark Brown has argued that we can interpret such instances as a deficit in autobiographical self-consciousness and argues against the Multiple Persons thesis. See Brown (2001).
22. See Swinburne (2018), pp. 425–426, and Hasker (2013), pp. 19–25.
23. For instance, in the John Woods case, one of the alters, Ron, in an interview claimed to love John, one of the other alters, like a brother because John needs him. See Armstrong (2001), p. 212.
24. Van Inwagen (1995), p. 264.
25. This outline is drawn from Leidenhag (2021c), who is critical of the inability of this understanding to accommodate autistic persons.
26. See, for instance, the case of Eve outlined in O'Kelly and Mackless (1956), p. 27.
27. See Cawdron (2023).
28. Support for the Multiple Persons thesis is also provided in Bayne (2002).
29. Support for this point is provided in Ephesians 2:8–9: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.'

30. I do not have time to discuss this view in detail, and recognise that affirming such a view whilst avoiding Semi-Pelagianism is no easy task. See Stump (2001) and Timpe (2014), pp. 57–65, for some proposals.
31. For an extensive outline of this case, see Armstrong (2001).
32. This argument for the potential for alters to differ as to whether they have faith is also made in Cawdron (2023).
33. The examples provided in Clark and Chalmers (1998) in their argument for the extended mind inspired this example.
34. See Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000), pp. 305–306, for these and other examples.
35. Those who have argued for the Single Person thesis include Maiese (2016), Maiese (2017), Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000), and Brown (2001).
36. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to clarify this point.
37. To be clear, Stump holds that all that is required for indwelling is that a person ceases to resist God's love, which is in line with our understanding. See Stump (2018), p. 343.
38. For a study on the memories of traumatic events in DID patients, see Van der Hart et al. (2005). For a case of DID in which childhood trauma seems to play a prominent role, see the case of Sarah outlined in Rothschild (2009). Whether trauma is necessary is contested, however. For example, Maiese (2016) has argued that DID is a result of internal emotional conflict.
39. For an overview of this view and the wider debate on the afterlife, see Walls (2010).
40. For an interesting discussion of the possibility of the reordering of knowledge and altering of wills in persons post-mortem, see Davis (2021).
41. This discussion of integration draws from Bayne (2002), pp. 97–99.
42. See Rovane (1998), pp. 169–179, for a useful discussion of cooperation between alters in DID.
43. There seem to be examples of the bestowal of faith on communities in the Bible, such as the granting of faith to a household and the subsequent baptism of this household in Acts 16:29–32: 'The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.' One will note that only the belief of the jailor was demanded for faith to be bestowed to the household, indicating that faith can be bestowed on communities in virtue of the belief of some, but not all, members. There are further instances of household baptism one can draw on. In 1 Corinthians 1:16, it is said: 'I also baptized the household of Stephanas.' One might also refer to the fact that the Nicene Creed begins with the phrase 'We believe in one God,' in support of this. See Cockayne (2021), for discussion.
44. This discussion is heavily influenced by the social ontology literature in analytic philosophy. I shall leave open what kind of decision-making procedure is used, as when alters interact in the way suggested, I think such a model is compatible with numerous options. Perhaps the judgements of the group are aggregated, or the alters all raise relevant points but the deliberation is done at the level of the group. See List and Pettit (2011), Rovane (1998), Rovane (2014), Collins (2019), and Cockayne (2021), for some different options. As indicated here, instances in which alters interact like this would resemble cases of group agency.
45. This point is used to respond to the problem of divine hiddenness in Blanchard (2016).

46. I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.
47. Such cases would mirror cases of group non-agential moral responsibility. For models of this, see Björnsson (2020) and Schwenkenbecher (2013).
48. For more on this, see Cockayne (2018), Cockayne (2019), and chapters 1, 2, and 6 of Cockayne (2022). Cockayne uses this to develop a model of the Church as a group agent, but such matters are beyond the scope of this paper. Also, see Wolt-erstorff (2016) for a discussion of how one can come to know God through participating in liturgical enactments.
49. Such instances may not be as uncommon as this seems at a first glance. Non-resistant non-believers such as these are a crucial component of the hiddenness argument. See Schellenberg (2016), for an outline.
50. Again, here I am drawing on the explanation of divine hiddenness in Blanchard (2016).
51. See Baker (2003) and Fergusson (1993) for discussions of this doctrine. One's acceptance of such a doctrine will depend on one's stance in the free will debate. See Van Inwagen (2008) for a useful analysis.
52. I am indebted to Kim Kroll, Joanna Leidenhag, Oliver Crisp, Andrew Torrance, Chris Whyte, Aaron Davis, Jason Stigall, Parker Haratine, and two anonymous reviewers for this journal for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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