

CREATION AND REDEMPTION: A STUDY OF KINGDOM INTERPLAY

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The subject of the created order has received considerable popular attention through the political awareness campaigns of environmental or ecology organizations in recent years. Some additional and related interest in creation has been invigorated because of the rise and growth of new-age religion. In the Church, however, there has generally been little discussed in this area, other than the creation/evolution controversy. Instead the popular and scholarly interest of the Church has centered on the new creation in Christ and the kingdom of God to come. God's providential kingdom, his creation of all things (*creatio ex nihilo*) and their maintenance by him (*creatio continua*) are relegated to minor interest. This has not always been the case.

I. THE EARLY APPROACH TO CREATION AND REDEMPTION

1. *Creation and redemption in the early Christian Church.* The broad themes of creation and redemption have occupied the attention of Christian theology from its very inception. The NT writers weaved these subjects from the fabric of Hebrew literature and the teaching of our Lord. The early Church fathers spoke on both themes also, carefully charting a course between the dualism regarding creation rampant in Hellenistic philosophy and gnosticism¹ and avoiding the inadequate redemptive views of the pagan cults and mysteries tied in with monistic nature religion.² These early Christian theologians were careful to distinguish between God

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¹ See H. O. J. Brown, *Heresies* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984) 49-50. The conflict between Christianity and gnosticism centered around the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of Christ. Whereas gnostics saw God opposed to creation, orthodoxy viewed God's creation as good. Whereas the gnostic Christ was a cosmic being, in orthodox perspective Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man. If the Church had accepted Christ within a gnostic framework it would have lost the historical roots of Jesus, the God who became truly human, physically died on the cross and physically rose from the grave.

² Hippolytus sought to refute the idea that the world is a divine emanation. "Emanation would mean that the world gradually seeps or leaks out (*e*, out, *manare*, flow) of the edges of the being of God, according to the analogy of fragrance emanating from flowers. Theories of emanation have been consistently rejected by Jewish and Christian teachers because they fail to make a sharp distinction between God and the world. God is not the world (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Her. X, ANF V*, pp. 140-53" (T. C. Oden, *The Living God: Systematic Theology, Volume 1* [San Francisco: Harper, 1987] 233-234).

and the world in creation on the one hand and God in redemption as the one who initiates salvation within his creation for fallen humanity and creation in general on the other. The Church saw the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who joined together these elements into his person and work. Certainly God is presented in Scripture as far above the world in creation and near the world in redemption. But likewise he has demonstrated himself to work within the creation over which he is Lord. Thus the early Christian Church presents a blending of the order of creation and the order of redemption, which demonstrates the unity of the purposes of God.

2. *Modern theology and creation and redemption.* Contrary to this Biblical approach is the tendency in modern theology to see the creation as inferior and material and the new creation, the redemptive creation, as superior and immaterial, to see creation as being squarely set over against the new order that has come in Christ, finally to be realized in the complete establishment of the new creation. In so doing, modern theology has reverted back to errors refuted by the doctors of the Church and once again placed the people of God at the mercy of false orthodoxy that comes from heterodoxy.

In order to discuss this matter we will first look at the new creation as contrasted with the old. Next we will examine ways that theologians have viewed the orders of creation and redemption. In the last section we will conclude by looking at a specific case study seeking to determine how the relation of new to old relates to Gal 3:28, a passage regularly used to contrast the new creation in Christ with the original creation.³

II. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO CREATION AND REDEMPTION

1. *The relation of the order of creation to the order of redemption.* In 1932 Emil Brunner introduced two terms that are widely used to indicate the creative orders—namely, the order of creation and the order of redemption. The order of creation speaks of the particular position which by the will of the creator any created object occupies in relation to others, and the order of redemption designates the relationship of the redeemed to God and his fellow man in the new creation established by God in Christ.⁴

Theology has distinguished between the rule of God in the world and the rule of God in people's hearts. The creation of the universe and its continuance by God has been known as the providential kingdom, and the work of God in the redemption of man has been known as the mediatorial kingdom. The way in which this rule is carried out is dependent on the

³ See P. K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 142; S. L. Johnson, "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem [Wheaton: Crossway, 1991] 154–155).

⁴ E. Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947) 208–233.

nature of the existence in which God places man. For example, the control that God exercises over his creatures (especially humans) in the natural and moral order we call creation relates to social relationships, issues of dominion in the earth, and interaction with other created beings and things. In the new creation, energized by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, there are different dimensions of experience unknown in the purely physical realm. The question arises, though, whether the original creation and the new creation, the providential kingdom and the mediatorial, and even the future kingdom are in conflict with each other. In order for the new creation to operate, is it necessary for the old creation to be set aside or its laws violated? I would contend that the creation completed in Genesis 1 and 2 is good and proper for the nature of humanity as it dwells in the present world. Moreover, in the future world this creation is not abrogated or destroyed but instead refurbished and made appropriate for the existence of the people of God in the new age. In both cases creation's essence is material, not simply spirit, since its inhabitants (other than angels) are material, not spirit. This is not to deny the fact that humans presently have, and will have, a spirit aspect of their being. It is simply acknowledging the Biblical reality that to be human is to be spirit and body, and we will be human forever. There is not merely a supersession from the old age to the new. There is a heightening and perfecting of the old. The new needs the old to become all that it should be. God's rule will be in agreement with the world he has created and will create, one in which his creatures will occupy time and space and will have succession of events. God will work out his purposes through the created order and do so forever.

In exploring the nature of the new creation, apocalyptic, sociological and ecological strands combine, and they center on how man fits into the overall scheme of things. Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse has called for a "new type of man, a different type of human being . . . capable of finding a qualitatively different way of life."⁵ Is there a future for mankind in the ecological world we are creating? How can man relate to other animal life? Can a society that distinguishes between men and women, or again does not distinguish, function in a fully democratic political new world order? This concern for a different humanity is resident in current debates in broader society and in the evangelical Church in particular on male and female roles. What does it mean to be a man, and what does it mean to be a woman? A further question arises for the Biblical Christian. What does God originally intend for a man and a woman to be—in the Church, in the home, in society? In order to understand this basic question, I believe that understanding the nature of God's work in creation and in the new creation is fundamental.

⁵ H. Marcuse, *Marxism and Radical Revolution* (ed. J. C. Raines and T. Dean [Philadelphia: Temple University, 1970] 7), quoted from J. F. Johnson, "Neither Male nor Female": The Relation between the Orders of Creation and Redemption" (unpublished paper) 1. I owe a debt to Johnson for his work in this area, both in his privately published paper and as a dissertation advisor.

2. *The original creation of God.* The universe is an expression of the power of God. He stands above it and rules over it. It exists not by necessity but comes from the total freedom of God.⁶ Through this creation God demonstrates his freedom to act and to rule. "His purpose will be fulfilled, even if it requires the miraculous drying up of streams ([Isa. 44] v. 27) or the raising up of Cyrus the Persian (v. 28). Isaiah proclaimed Yahweh as the only God, who, by his fiat creation, has shown his absolute claim over everything (45:5-6) and who will demonstrate to every generation that he is 'the LORD, and there is no other' (v. 6)."⁷ But this power is not mere force. It is a directed power. It brings forth order. VanGemeran has correctly said, "The absolute power of the Creator is manifested in his continued working out in an orderly, contingent, and gracious way his plan for the world and particularly for his children (vv. 11-25)."⁸ The rule or kingdom of God is characterized by this order. With the initial creation itself one observes perfect design that demonstrates purposefulness. This continues even after the fall (Gen 8:22) in matters that are not as corrupted by the impact of sin. That is, the "created world is not unpredictable or filled with brute facts that randomly interact with each other. Scientific inquiry is not only possible but expected by the Creator, who rules over his creation in an orderly manner."⁹

Equally important to God's rule over his world is his faithfulness and goodness to his world. God's faithfulness guarantees that his absolute power is not dictatorial but beneficent. The faithfulness of God is evidenced in the stability of the universe, as VanGemeran rightly avers:

Since the universe not only is created out of nothing but is maintained in its creaturely being through God's constant interaction with it, who will not let it slip away from him into nothing but grounds its existence on his eternal faithfulness, the universe is given a stability beyond anything of which it is capable in its own contingent state.¹⁰

Moreover, Genesis 1 presents the creation of man as the pinnacle of God's creative activity. Humanity stands at the center of all of God's creation. The rest of the creation, both material and immaterial, including angels and other created beings, is a backdrop for the drama of human history. We should understand creation as an act that takes place in his-

⁶ L. Berkhof says regarding the development of creation as a free act during the early Church Trinitarian controversy: "At the same time some of the Church Fathers expressed the idea that God was always Creator, though the created universe began in time. During the trinitarian controversy some of them emphasized the fact that, in distinction from the generation of the Son, which was a *necessary* act of the Father, the creation of the world was a *free* act of the triune God. Augustine dealt with the work of creation more in detail than others did. He argues that creation was eternally in the will of God, and therefore brought no change in Him. There was no time before creation, since the world was brought into being *with* time rather than *in* time. The question what God did in the many ages before creation is based on a misconception of eternity." *Systematic Theology* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 126 (italics his).

⁷ W. VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 61.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.* 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 61.

tory, not outside of it. Creation is a part of the history of man. When we say then that the Biblical view, particularly the OT, is man-focused this is not to say that man is supreme over all other things in the universe in and of himself.¹¹ Rather, man in reference to God is supreme. God has placed human beings at the focus of his attention, to redeem them for himself and to dwell with them forever.

Furthermore, man is viewed in the Biblical text as being created in the image of God. As stated before, humans are both body and spirit. As spirit there does not appear to be a distinction between male and female. But physically the man and woman are different. When I say "physically," I speak not merely of the sexual features of the two but of man and woman as they function within a physical existence. Men and women do not think or act the same. They view the world differently because they are different.¹² Men and women are not simply persons, they are male persons or female persons.¹³

When God created Adam, he created him after his own image. When speaking of this image it is characteristic to think only of the spiritual image of God in man. More than this, however, may be in view. Mankind may be in the image of God in some sense physically. Certainly we are not saying that God is physical.¹⁴ John Frame has responded to such out-and-out rejection of God's being the basis of man's physical nature: "As to the objection that God has no body: True enough, but there are ways in which a body can picture a spirit. Psalm 94:9 asks, 'Does he who implanted the ear

¹¹ "Luke 3:38 provides a further insight into Adam and his significance. Luke 3:38 falls at the end of a genealogy of Jesus that begins, 'Jesus was the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat . . . ' and the genealogy continues back through David and Abraham to 'Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.' God appears in the genealogy along with all the other fathers. There is a great deal of theological significance in this verse, but now it is enough to note that the author of the verse saw something in Genesis that is sometimes missed because of cultural differences. In Genesis 2, God is treating Adam as his son. He creates him and gives him a place in life, especially by providing an occupation for him and getting him a wife. Genesis 2 concretely portrays what Genesis 1 states—that God created man in his image and likeness to have dominion over the earth. God places the man (Adam or Human) over his creation, just as a Jewish father would place his only son over his house. The man (Adam, Human) is descended from God, his creator, and represents him, acting on his behalf and according to his instructions." S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1980) 17.

¹² For discussion on the difference between men and women see the following essays: J. Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible"; G. Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior"; and G. A. Rekers, "Psychological Foundations for Rearing Masculine Boys and Feminine Girls," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood*; see also Clark, *Man and Woman* 369–465.

¹³ This is one reason that when I know the sex of a person I prefer, for example, "chairman" or "chairwoman" to the asexual "chairperson."

¹⁴ Regardless of whether God has a true form, that form is not material and is not sexual. Some, however, have viewed even maleness and femaleness as being the image of God; cf. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958) 3.194–195; Jewett, *Man as Male* 122. But this sexual difference is unlikely to be the image. Early gnostics spoke of God as Father and Mother, as a bisexual being. God was not a Trinity but "a dyad whose nature includes both masculine and feminine elements" (D. G. Bloesch, *The Battle for the Trinity* [Ann Arbor: Servant, 1985] 9). This gnostic attempt to create a bisexual God has been taken up again

not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see?" God does not have literal ears or eyes, but our ears and eyes image His ability to hear and see."¹⁵ Erich Sauer provides further thought on this matter:

The image of God has two aspects, an outer and an inner. The outer is not the essential one, but for all that it must not be overlooked. It concerns man's bodily nature.

Obviously this has not the meaning it had in Babylonian mythology, according to which the *essence* of man's being in the image of God would lie in man's body being similar to the form adopted by the Deity in His earthly theophanies. This is far too materialistic and superficial. Nevertheless an element of truth is to be found even here.

Man's body itself expresses certain characteristics of his inner, spiritual being and shows his superiority over the rest of the earthly creation. In particular his upright posture and his look directed upwards express the upward-look of his spirit, its superiority over all earthly things and its being turned to God. The soul in man's body is "not only like the sailor in the boat he steers, but it also shapes man's physical side."¹⁶

Though I would not argue that God has any materiality, it may also be true that he has form in some sense. God can be spirit and still have a form after which even the material aspect of man is created and that is similar to the form in which he appeared in theophanies. This is so because even the angels have a center of being but are spirit. The view that God can have an immaterial form, after which man is in some sense made, may be thought to be in contradiction to his omnipresence. But God is intensively everywhere, not extensively everywhere. If this is true there is no reason that God could not have an immaterial form in some sense (after which our physical form is patterned) and yet be an omniscient being.

3. *The new creation in Christ.* Paul's doctrine of the new creation appears to be centered in man. This anthropocentricity, though, is only because it really is Christocentric, centering in Christ the new man. The creation and the goal for which it is destined finds its ultimate expression in Christ and his new creation. Even as the original creation was anthropocentric, so is the new creation. The center of this new redemptive order is the redeemer himself. Jesus as the second Adam brings full meaning to God's purposes for mankind that were made futile by the fall of the first Adam.

The new order of creation is brought about by power even more dramatic than what produced the original creation. The greater "magic," to

in modern theology and in feminist theology. Tillich, Moltmann and Hartshorne (Bloesch, *Battle* 6–8) have sought to argue for a masculine and feminine dimension to God's being, a theme prevalent in feminist ideology today (M. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel* [Wheaton: Crossway, 1992]). This is misdirected. Certainly the Biblical practice to address God as Father does not relate to a sexual aspect to his being, as is in humans. But it does express a dominant feature that expresses his person without excluding less masculine traits (cf. Bloesch, *Battle* 1–3; W. Oddie, *What Will Happen to God?* [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984]).

¹⁵ J. Frame, "Men and Women in the Image of God," *Recovering Biblical Manhood* 227.

¹⁶ E. Sauer, *The King of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 139 (italics his).

use the words of Aslan in Narnia, was of a sort that not even the fiends of hell could imagine. God took upon himself the nature of a creature to enter into communion with his creation. Moreover, he leads the way toward the new future that he made possible through his cross.

The new future, however, is not one without connection to the past. This is true of nature, and it is true of humanity too. The original creation was *ex nihilo*. Is this true of the new creation? The desire to divorce the material world from importance was a concern of some first-century Jews. In so doing, however, they "deprived the Bible of one of its most characteristic features, namely, the fact that it is rooted in real space-and-time history."¹⁷ In the same way some may think that the new heavens and the new earth, a part of the new creation of God, need to be an immaterial reality to be pure or special. To this idea George Ladd has retorted:

The final restoration includes the very material world. Creation itself awaits the disclosure of the sons of God when they shall experience the redemption of their bodies, for creation shall be freed from the bondage to decay and shall experience freedom from the burden of evil to which it has been subjected (Rom. 8:19–23). While Paul does not develop this truth of the redemption of nature, there is profound biblical theology underlying it. The redemption of the natural world from evil and decay is the corollary of the redemption of the body. The prophets constantly described the establishment of God's Kingdom in terms of a redeemed world (Isa. 11:6–9; 65:17–25); and the New Testament shares the same theology. Creation is never viewed as something evil that must be escaped. Man as body is a creature of God. Man is not sinful because he is a creature but because he has rebelled against God. In the final consummation, the whole man and the world of which he is a part will be delivered from the curse of evil.¹⁸

Similarly, Oden comments: "The new heaven and the new earth are not alien to the old heaven and the old earth but a fulfillment of it, a continuation and fulfillment of God's original purpose in creation."¹⁹ But what of Biblical passages that seem to speak of the destruction or passing away of the old heavens and the old earth (e.g. Isa 65:17; Matt 24:35; 2 Pet 3:9–14; Rev 21:1)? We should understand these as statements of the passing of an old order or the purification of the physical world, not the obliteration of matter.²⁰

The new future order refers not only to nature but to humans as well. Those who are the chosen of God will have a future physical existence similar to the present fleshy, though glorified, existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is reason to believe, as Murray Harris points out, that since sexuality is an essential part of humanity it also continues forever:

¹⁷ Brown, *Heresies* 45.

¹⁸ G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 567; see discussion of D. Moo for a confirming understanding of the material creation along with the redemption of the sons of God in Romans 8 (*Romans 1–8* [Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago: Moody, 1991] 551–554); see also N. L. Geisler, *In Defense of the Resurrection* (Lynchburg: Quest, 1991) 23.

¹⁹ Oden, *Living God* 243.

²⁰ See S. A. Ellisen, *Biography of a Great Planet* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1975) 233, 237.

At this point we may add two further characteristics of the resurrection body mentioned in the New Testament: it will be *angel-like* and *without physical instincts*. In his controversy with the Sadducees regarding the resurrection, Jesus affirmed that those who are raised "neither marry, nor are given in marriage but are as angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25; Matt 22:30). This contrast suggests that the resurrection body will be without sexual passions or procreative powers, not that the resurrected righteous will be sexless (since sexual identity is an essential part of personality, and personality is retained in resurrection).²¹

Merely to create, *ex nihilo*, would not rectify the fall. It is necessary that God bring back into balance the universe that has fallen.

When one is speaking of forgiveness of sins and participation in the very life of God one may think there is a totally new creation, immaterial *ex nihilo*, with no connection at all to the former self. But one must remember that mankind once shared in the life of God. Now the redeemed do so again, but in a much more profound way.

The new creation, of which the physical world will become a part (Rom 8:18–25), is grounded in grace. Galatians 6:15 says that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything: What counts is a new creation." The idea "new creation" was not new to Christian theology. The rabbis used the phrase when a proselyte or Gentile converted to Judaism since the person's old associations had passed away. More is involved in the new creatureliness of being a Christian, as Johnson elucidates:

A new creation means not simply the reception of certain spiritual gifts, but participation in a new existence, in the new world that has come in Christ. The word "creation" does not refer primarily to the act of creation, but to the new state which has come in Christ. But this presupposes an act of creation. Paul associates, for instance, the light of faith with the action of God in the creation of the world in II Cor. 4:6 ("For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"). The same power of God that was active in the creation had now been at work in and through Christ. Thus, the new creation is not entirely discontinuous with the old. It is a restoration of the old to its proper destiny by the unchanging creative Word of God. Creation is thus seen in a christological context, both because Christ is the incarnate Logos in New Testament theology, and because He is the ground of the new humanity.²²

The old physical relationships and conditions are not determinative for the Christian since he or she has passed from the old life into the very life of God. This link has been established by the cross (Gal 6:14) and baptismal faith (3:27).

The phrase "new creation" is also found in 2 Cor 5:17. The apostle Paul says that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." But all are not part of

²¹ M. J. Harris, *Raised Immortal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 123 (italics his).

²² J. F. Johnson, "Neither Male nor Female" 5–6.

the new creation. One enters it "in Christ." Again, the statement in 2 Cor 5:17 is clear: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

It should be pointed out at this juncture that obviously what has passed away in the new creation is not the material world, nor is history or time-space reality annihilated for us. Instead what is passed away is the "world of relationship that is characterized by knowledge according to the flesh." One looks at the world differently, at one's relationships with others, at oneself, and especially at Christ. The Christian is called to come to terms with the tension of the "now" and the "not yet." The "now" refers to the participation of the believer in the life of the Spirit. The "not yet" speaks against the believer who believes that he or she is already consummated, free of the original order of creation.

One who has entered into the new creation must live a new kind of life. Certainly the Christian is still plagued by sin and its consequences, but now he must act in faith. As C. K. Barrett says, "Christian existence means that by faith one lives in the midst of the old creation in terms of the new creation that God has brought about through Jesus."²³ When Christ comes, the orientation that we have had until then begins to shift. This process is not finally culminated until the future expression of the kingdom in the eternal state, the process.

Christ's work on the cross has begun a new humanity, and alongside of this new humanity—and maybe in consequence of it—a renewed order of creation, nature itself. The people of God at present have a foretaste or partial realization of that new creation. As humans acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into the ramifications of that new life in him, the new creation begins to be realized. Moreover, as we Christians spread the good news of Christ to others and share the compassion and love of God to others, the kingdom to come becomes the kingdom on this earth. Heaven gradually comes to earth, though certainly one day this will be so in fullness and glory.

The recognition of the creation of Christ and new creation in Christ has raised difficulties on how these two orders relate, especially in the transitional period of this present world that shares components of both realities.

III. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ORDERS OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION

1. *A dualistic view of creation and redemption.* There are primarily three ways we might view the relation between the order of creation and the order of redemption. One manner of handling the two orders is to see creation and redemption as being set over against each other. One way this has been expressed is dualism, found in gnostic thought of the patristic era and in expressions of asceticism. In its most extreme form, dualism

²³ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1973) 175.

identified the act of creation with the fall into sin. Consequently, it was thought, the object of redemption was to free man from this evil world of matter. Redemption, however, was viewed not only as excluding creation but also as set over against creation. Another variation of the perspective is explained by H. Richard Niebuhr, who depicts this view of Christ as "accommodation."²⁴ Niebuhr explains that this view accommodates Christ to a given culture in opposition to nature, resulting in creation and redemption being radically separated. In this attempt to set creation over against redemption Jesus is considered to be the leader of the spiritual and cultural struggle of humanity to subdue and transcend nature.²⁵ How men are to relate to nature is lost, as is often the case in liberal perspectives of Jesus. He is seen as the "moral hero who marks a great advance in the history of culture."²⁶ Liberal theology has as its motivation the need to understand the dilemma of its own era.²⁷

2. *The subservience of creation to redemption.* Another manner in which creation and redemption are related is when creation is subsumed under redemption. What usually follows is a specific interest under the subject of redemption so that creation is excluded from consideration in the area of concern. This view suffers from taking the problems of human beings as a starting point in theological inquiry rather than the purposes of God. It tends toward individualizing faith so that creation is not seen as a corollary of redemption with its different emphases and purposes. This form of interpretation is a result of the secularization of theology and the overemphasis of one theological perspective to the exclusion of others. Such individualism is expressed in two ways: undue attention to individual self-consciousness (instigated by Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*), and a preoccupation with a pietistic experience of faith. Both of these center on the individual to such an extent that man's relation to creation is obscured.²⁸

3. *The unity of old and new in Christ.* The third procedure is to recognize that the orders of creation and redemption are held together and function together within the purpose of God. "It is a view," as J. F. Johnson asserts, "that neither opposes creation to redemption nor subsumes creation under redemption, but holds them in tandem under the lordship of Christ."²⁹

This particular model was adopted by several of the Church fathers who fought against gnosticism, notably Irenaeus, Augustine and Anselm. It appears to be the balance found in the writings of Paul. In 1 Cor 8:6 Paul says that Christ is the one through whom God creates and redeems.

²⁴ H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951) 85–115.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 101.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 98.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 91–101.

²⁸ J. F. Johnson, "Neither Male nor Female" 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Romans 8:18–39, specifically vv. 18–21, asserts a similar view. There the lordship of Christ over creation serves to attest to his lordship in redeeming man. Note the words of the apostle:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (NKJV)

Note that the old creation will not be abolished—Paul says it will be delivered.

The book of Colossians includes the pivotal passage on the unity of creation and redemption under Christ. VanGemerren speaks to this truth when he comments:

The plan of God the Father involves Jesus the Son as the cosmic Redeemer (Col. 1), by whom all things will be restored to himself. The christological focus provides a sharp contrast to concepts of order, power, faithfulness, and goodness because God did not spare his Son for the sake of the redemption of humanity and creation. . . . The biblical teaching of God's rule established in creation correlates with God's involvement in redemption. Creation anticipates a *telos*, or end. The God who freely, graciously, and powerfully rules creation has a goal: the new creation in his Son Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:15).³⁰

The apostle presents Christ as the one who is Lord over creation, the one in whom the new creation comes into being, and the one for whom the new creation is made. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. But he is also the pattern of a new humanity—not a discontinuous humanity, but one that is a restoration to the purpose for which God created it. The incarnation of Christ as a true human, a physical and spiritual reality, assures God's interest in the material and the spiritual creation. The resurrection of Christ in the flesh establishes our resurrection in the flesh. He is the pattern for the new humanity, the new Adam. John identifies the deceiver as the one who does not acknowledge Jesus as having come and remaining in the flesh. The reason for this is that there is no place in true Christian thought, which walks between gnostic dualism and eastern monism, for a rejection of the order of creation (soon to be fully restored) and the order of redemption. The one does not abrogate the other. Heaven is not an ethereal existence but one that conforms to our creatureliness of time and space and God's high view of the material world of which he is the architect and the restorer.

This third model recognizes that it is the same God and the same Lord who stand over both creation and redemption, the providential kingdom and the redemptive kingdom.

³⁰ VanGemerren, *Progress* 62.

IV. RELATION OF THE ORDERS OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION TO THE INTERPRETATION OF GAL 3:28 ON THE PHRASE "NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE"

1. *Interpretations of Gal 3:28 regarding the orders of creation and redemption.* How one views the original creation and the redemptive work of Christ in his people at the present time influences the way one views the current controversy in Christian circles about the roles of men and women in the church, home, and society at large. The argument from nature or creation has been used over the years to restrict the rulership functions of women over men especially in church and home, and they are the specific concerns of this section. But what about the implications of the new work in Christ, the order of redemption, for these arguments? Is there not a new orientation that must be addressed? Has not Christ undone the creation order? Are we not already participants in the kingdom to come where equality of the sexes is *fait accompli*? Three basic positions have been proffered to answer the above questions.

The first perspective was offered by Krister Stendahl. Since Paul seems to use the order of creation in his first letter to the Corinthians, Stendahl looks at Gal 3:28 as a breakthrough that transcends this present created order. The new creation replaces the old. Stendahl writes:

It is not difficult for us to recognize that we are not yet in the kingdom. But we need badly the reminder of that which is new. We are not in danger of overstating that. We need help to see the forces toward renewal and re-creation. A mere repetition of Paul's reminder of the order of creation is not our most crying need. When Paul fought those who defended the old—as in Galatia—his bold vision of the new expressed itself most strongly, as in Galatians 3:28.³¹

Stendahl's point is that there is a tension between the new Christian element of "neither male nor female" and the subordination of women in the order of creation, between *coram Deo* ("before God") and "among men in Church and society." In Christ the dichotomy between male and female is overcome. Galatians 3:28 refers back to Gen 1:27 where man is the image of God, before the division into male and female.

A second perspective is advocated by David Tracy. He argues that Gal 3:28 asserts that we Christians are required to adhere to a radical equality. "The humanity which Christianity promises to those who will hear its call cannot be placed into any usual stereotype of 'masculine' or 'feminine.'"³² The new creation totally abolishes the old. All distinctions between male and female have been negated by Christ.

The third position is one taught by George Knight and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.³³ The divine arrangement is a headship structure observed in 1 Cor 11:3, in which man is head of the woman,

³¹ K. Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 37.

³² D. Tracy, "Christian Faith and Radical Equality," *Today* (1977) 370-377.

³³ See *The Danvers Statement* published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Though recognizing the headship structure presented in Scripture on male-female relations, the Council tends to use the term complementarian rather than hierarchical because of

Christ is the head of the man, and God is the head of Christ, each person being subordinate to the respective head.³⁴ The headship or leadership structure is expressed for male-female relations as a part of the order of creation and is not abrogated by the new creation. Knight says:

Paul sees both equality (image-bearers) and difference (masculinity-femininity) to be equally the result of God's creative activity and order, and therefore, both are germane to the question under consideration. He who can reflect Genesis 1:27 in terms of spiritual equality in Galatians 3:28 (and Col. 3:10–11) can also reflect Genesis 2:18–25 in speaking of wives' being in subjection to their husbands as their heads.³⁵

Both Knight and the Council are arguing that spiritual equality in Christ may not be done away with by difference of gender because men and women are renewed as images of God. The theological basis for this is the fact that all human beings are made in God's image, and that image is recreated in the image of Christ (Gal 3:28; Col 3:10–11). Therefore there is true and full equality as bearers of God's image. But equality does not require sameness. Nor does our spiritual equality as joint-heirs of life remove our maleness and femaleness and the distinct relationships that that created difference brings to the relation of man and woman³⁶ and that God himself called "very good" (Gen 1:31).

2. The teaching of Gal 3:28 and its relation to the orders of creation and redemption. The latter model does the most justice to the teaching that one observes in Gal 3:28 and agrees with both the order of creation and the order of redemption being under the lordship of Christ. Christ redeems the structure that governs man and woman, a structure that has sought to correct the sin and alienation of the fall (see Eph 5:22 ff.) but not one that destroys the male-female roles established in original creation, roles recognized by Paul and Peter and reflected from a careful exegesis of Genesis 1 and 2.³⁷

possible misunderstanding. Male and female are equal beings before God, equally in his image, but are assigned by God different functions so as to complement one another and fulfill the purpose of God in creation.

³⁴ See H. W. House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) 110–112. Catherine Kroeger wrongly understands subordinationism in the early Church as the belief that the Son was subordinate to the Father. She confuses the false teaching of the ontological inferiority of the Son to the Father with the functional subordinationism of the Son to the Father, which has been orthodox teaching from the early period of the Church. This misunderstanding causes many egalitarians and feminists to believe that if a woman is in subordination to a man this means that they are not equal persons. Such a view is clearly inaccurate since church members are to be under the rule of elders, and children under their parents, and employees under employers, and citizens under political leaders—none of which in any way implies the inferiority of any of the groups to those under whom they work or serve. R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, "Subordinationism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 1058.

³⁵ G. W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago: Moody, 1977) 8.

³⁶ J. F. Johnson, "Neither Male nor Female" 15.

³⁷ R. C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," *Recovering Biblical Manhood* 95–112.

There is no question that the acceptance of the total spiritual and ontological equality of men and women, evidenced in Genesis 1, Gal 3:28, and the life of Christ and Paul, should have ramifications in the social realm of the home, church and society. Having said that, however, we would not be Biblical if we sought to reject the original, creation intentions of God for male and female marriage relations that include loving headship from the man and voluntary submission from the wife. And if leadership in the home and leadership in the church are closely connected, as Paul seems to imply, then it would also be contrary to Scripture to put women in certain positions of leadership in the church based on the mention of spiritual oneness in Christ by faith. Certainly the rulership of pastors or elders in the church over the general membership does not negate spiritual oneness. And neither would obedience to apostolic teaching of male headship in the church and in the home.

Stephen Lowe³⁸ seeks to undercut the interpretation of Gal 3:28 that I have offered here, and elsewhere,³⁹ by arguing that the male-female pair of Gal 3:28 is equally open to social and ecclesiastical expansion, similar to what Paul did in reference to the Jew/Gentile question in the churches under his care. After a lengthy demonstration that Paul believed the Gentile should have equal footing with the Jew in the life of the Church, Lowe concludes that a similar application should be made to the male-female issue—namely, that women should occupy all positions that men have in the Church. His argument, however, is a non sequitur. In my article to which he alludes I comment that if one desires to extend functional dimension to any of the pairs of Gal 3:28 he or she would need to find passages that teach equality of function. I have no doubt that Gentiles have equal access to all functions in the Church that Jews have. The division between these parties is based in a covenant between God and Abraham, one specially fulfilled in Christ, the seed of Abraham. This is the contextual teaching of Galatians 3. Also there is little question that similar argument and application could be made for the slave/free division of Gal 3:28. But this social inequity and moral wrong is an aberration from God's intentions expressed in the *imago Dei*. Its correction is very appropriate. The male/female dichotomy, however, is founded in the order of creation, an order that has not been abrogated in Christ. Paul had ample opportunity to develop the kind of argument he did with Jew and Gentile but chose not to do so, much to the undercutting of Lowe's need for a paradigm. In fact the apostle took the opposite approach to teach male headship and female submission (within church and home) based in part on the order of creation. The male-female relationship will continue under this order as long as the functions of the sexes are consistent with God's purpose in the

³⁸ S. D. Lowe, "Rethinking the Female Status/Function Question: The Jew/Gentile Relationship as Paradigm," *JETS* 34/1 (March 1991) 59–75.

³⁹ H. W. House, "Neither . . . Male nor Female . . . in Christ Jesus," *BSac* 145 (January-March, 1988) 47–56.

original creation and the nature of the marital and church relationships of men and women.

V. CONCLUSION

The perspective that the kingdom of God is now present in some manner with the new creation in Christ and that this fact abrogates the original creation of God does injustice to the teaching of Scripture and reflects a tendency toward a dualistic view of reality. The old order of creation is being renewed and one day even altered to fit the new reality of our eschatological bodies and relationships. This day is not yet, and the order of creation is still in force. To the degree that the original creation was affected by the fall into sin, the redemptive order seeks to repair the damage. But until we enter into the kingdom of God in its fullness we are bound by the moral and natural laws of the original creation, including the holy and good relationships established by God for men and women.