
PAUL'S HERMENEUTICAL ART IN EXPLAINING THE NEW CREATION

Randar Tasmuth

Creation and new creation are not frequent themes in the Bible but act as a kind of framework for the Scripture. Though creation does not have a visible place in the New Testament, all New Testament texts assume that the world is God's creation. New, however, is the phenomenon that the New Testament speaks of creation as a matter related to Christology. Roger Marcel Wanke writes that "for Paul, the new creation is defined as being in Christ, that is, anchored in Christ's death and resurrection."¹

New creation is one of the topics Paul interwove into the theological exposition of his gospel and mentioned it explicitly in Gal 6:15 and 2Cor 5:17. I approach the topic with some general questions: How did Paul express his views of new creation, what did he mean by it and how did he fit this concept in with his personal experience? What can we learn about Paul's hermeneutics on the topic? Did Paul imagine the new creation as an event emerging abruptly or rather evolving gradually as an ongoing process?

Paul, the Hellenistic Jew, made use of the cultural environment of his time when developing his ideas of the new creation. Paul was aware of hermeneutics as an art and literary technique of his time and he utilized hermeneutical devices creatively. In 1Cor 12:10 and in 14:26 he used the Greek word *ἑρμηνεία* in writing and did it probably more often when preaching and teaching. In Romans 1:1 he says that he was set apart for the gospel of God and the entire epistle appears to be an explanation of this gospel. I am confident that his hermeneutical skills and explanatory attitudes were present in every act of his mission. I place this topic into a wider hermeneutical horizon.

¹ Roger Marcel **Wanke**, "Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5: Impulses from Paul and Luther" – *Pauline Hermeneutics: Exploring the "Power of the Gospel"*. Eve-Marie Becker and Kenneth Mtata, eds. (LWF Studies 2016/3. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 76.

First, Paul based his argumentation on traditions. In addition to the famous use of earliest Christian *paradōsis* within the discussion of the reality of the resurrection², we have to think of the complexes of older traditions like the Septuagint, various Hellenistic-Jewish beliefs and common Hellenistic rhetorical tools as well. The typological interpretation in 1Cor 10:1–13 and allegory in Gal 4:21–31 testify to his techniques of scriptural interpretation.³

Second, the traditions, however, could not give rise to his thoughts alone for his personal experience was of great importance, even substantial if we look at the ways he developed his thoughts. Paul’s rejection of the Torah-oriented way of life was the result of his transforming encounter with Jesus Christ (Gal 1:15–16). The motif of death and life with Christ already emerges in Gal 2:19–20 and appears in other texts like Rom 6:8.

This also drives me to ask, did Paul look at the new creation through Christ as the lens? Is Christ the agent of the new creation and thus the source of Paul’s views on the topic? I will try to explain the structure of Paul’s explanation. It is easily visible that his concept consists of several elements combined originally in a set of images and patterns.

1. TRADITIONS THAT LAID BASIS AND SHAPED THE BACKGROUND

The correct approach to the problem of *καινή κτίσις* is via the well-trodden path of the history-of-traditions methodology. In addition to 1Cor 15:3–5, Paul’s use of early Christian *paradōsis* reflects his need to prove that he has had access to the kerygmatic and ritual origins of the belief in Christ (1Cor 11:23–25). In 1Cor 15:8–11 he substantiated his credibility as a witness of Jesus’s appearance to him and with reference to the words of the Lord (1Cor 7:10f. and 9:14) he paves the path to his credibility whenever Jesus traditions are of importance.

² In 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, a post-Easter kerygmatic tradition testifies to his explicit use of Christian tradition.

³ Eve-Marie **Becker**, “How and Why Paul Deals with Traditions” – *Pauline Hermeneutics: Exploring the “Power of the Gospel”*. Eve-Marie Becker and Kenneth Mtata, eds. (LWF Studies 2016/3. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlangsanstalt, 2017), 33f.

In a recent article, Oda Wischmeyer states that our question concerns not only Paul's interpretation of Scripture, but his understanding of God's communication with humankind. His own personal experience with Scripture is that of a devout Jew and to understand Paul we have to argue "within the basic Jewish paradigm of hermeneutics."⁴ In addition to that, Paul's selective use and creative interpretation of the Scripture testifies to the second element of his hermeneutics, the Spirit. As early as in 1Ths 1:5 he refers to the Holy Spirit "as the eschatological mediator and interpreter of God's salvific history with humankind."⁵ The presence of the Spirit is permanently visible in his succeeding writings and proclamation of the new creation is certainly an element of Paul's gospel.

The motif of new creation as encountered in the literature of Second Temple Judaism had its ultimate origin in the eschatological hopes of the later prophets.⁶ Isaiah 40–55 contains the highest concentration of creation language in the entire Bible with several references to divine renewal of reality (Isa 42:9; 43:18f; 48:3ff) and Isaiah 65 and 66 with the promise of a new heaven and new earth. Jeremiah 31:31–34 looks to the future with a new heart and a new law and Ezekiel does much the same (Ezek 11:19–20; cf. 18:31; 36:26–27) and emphasizes that Israel receives new spirit.

Later *Jubilees* (ca 168–140 BC) offers a commentary on the tumultuous events of the Maccabean period from a perspective closely related to that of the Hasidim, the pious Jewish defenders of the law who supported Mattathias in the war against the forcible Hellenization. In *Jubilees* 1:7–29 the pattern appears: sin → judgement → repentance → restoration.⁷ A model of an anthropological as well as cosmological change appear: Chapter 1 speaks of a moral renewal expected in the new age, while chapter 23 looks forward to physical renewal and increased longevity (see 23.8–10).⁸ The solution will be a newly created cosmos.

⁴ Oda **Wischmeyer**, "Principles of Paul's Hermeneutics" – *Pauline Hermeneutics: Exploring the "Power of the Gospel"*. Eve-Marie Becker and Kenneth Mtata, eds. (LWF Studies 2016/3. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlanganstalt, 2017), 40f.

⁵ Wischmeyer, "Principles of Paul's Hermeneutics", 42.

⁶ Moyer V. **Hubbard**, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought*. Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series 119 (Cambridge: University Press 2002), 11.

⁷ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought*, 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

In the time closer to the turn of the era, *Joseph and Aseneth*, usually dated between 100 BC and AD 100, portrays conversion as a new creation. The phrase itself is absent, but it seems to be an appropriate term to cover the fundamental transformation both spiritual and physical, which is ascribed to Aseneth in a variety of ways. The agent effecting Aseneth’s new creation is the Spirit, whose principal function in the narrative is to impart life.⁹ Convictions that God would renew the world and human beings in it were multifaceted and had been part of Jewish religious thinking for some centuries before Christ.

2. ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND DESTINY SHARED WITH CHRIST

I attempt to place Paul’s new-creation statements in the theological context in which these could be found – his death-life symbolism. The dominant symbolism of these texts is dying and rising with Christ. The basis of this symbolism can be uncovered from Paul’s own powerful experience that substantiated his powerful conviction. Paul builds his case on his own transformative encounter with Christ, which forced him to abandon his “former way of life in Judaism” (Gal 1:13).

The word encountered most often in Paul’s discussion of life-crisis rituals is transformation. This is not surprising, phrases like ontological transformation, metamorphosis, becoming another, becoming “a new man”, and “new creation”, are but a small sampling of expressions used by anthropologists and comparative religionists to capture the essence and aim of these death-life dramas.¹⁰

Paul expresses his personal commitment to Christ vividly by saying that he now feels himself as been crucified with Christ. It was in Galatians 2:19–20 that he gave expression to this feeling: “I have been crucified with Christ.”¹¹ Even more, “... it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 82–83.

¹¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of

who lives in me.” Paul gives word to his emphatic “I”: Paul is speaking rhetorically, emphatically, typically. He is making a point that would be true of anybody. Nevertheless, whatever Paul is describing, it was clearly of a personal, transforming significance marked by an experience of the risen Christ.

In the latest of his epistles Paul goes deeply into the recognition that it is only total fellowship in Christ, a shared destiny with him that matters and effects changes in human life. Romans 6:1–11 is located within the larger unit of 5:12–8:39. The movement from death to life arises organically from Paul’s discussion in 5:12–21, where the entirety of human history is schematized in precisely these terms.

In Romans 6:5 the subject of death is introduced clearly through the union with Christ in the likeness of his death. With the introduction of the term “our old self” the human body of sin undergoes deconstruction. However, if to be careful, it seems to be correct that “our old person” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) cannot simply be equated with “the body of sin” in the following clause.¹² With the plural personal pronoun “we”, Paul reminds the reader that he has the collective destiny of the members of the ἐκκλήσια in mind. The conceptual-structural parallels between 6:6 and 6:4 suggest that “walking in newness of life” is the verbal antithesis to the nominal “our old self.” It suggests that walking in the newness of life requires a changed, renewed self. This idea has its synonym in Rom 7:6 where the role of the Spirit becomes visible according to which “we” are now serving in the condition that is renewed by the Spirit (in newness of spirit / *en kainotēti pneumatos*).

Paul in Romans 6 is arguing that the resurrection life, in some sense at least, is a crucial part of the believer’s experience of dying with Christ. However, Paul does not go on here with the words “... so that we might be raised with him in newness of life”, but with the words “so that we also might walk in newness of life” (6:4). Dying first with Christ is an inevitable step presupposing an agreement of the Christian in order to be elevated later in a new position of walking in the newness of life. In Romans 6:5 the

America. NRSV Catholic Edition, Anglicised Text, copyright © 1999, 1995, 1989. This edition © 2008 the British and Foreign Bible Society.

¹² The phrase *ho palaios hēmōn anthrōpos* is also found in Colossians 3:9 and Ephesians 4:22, where it bears ethical connotations.

metaphor of likeness is central and binds human persons to Christ through baptism: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”¹³ The baptized persons will share in Christ event and go through existential changes. According to Peter Stuhlmacher, “Als Bekehrungs- und Erwachsenentaufe ... kam die Taufe urchristlich einem echten Existenzwandel gleich.”¹⁴ It means without technical wording that in baptism a sort of existentially decisive transformation has taken place.

3. THE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *EIKŌN*

One way to study phenomena is to try to follow respective Biblical texts in their written order. Romans is a later creation than Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians. However, it is better here to meet the very strongly loaded statement of the new creation in 2 Corinthians after acquaintance with the baptismal theology of Romans 6:1–14 has paved the way for our understanding. It is said sometimes that 2 Corinthians 5:16f has been ranked among the most famous verses in the whole New Testament. Yet familiarity is both friend and foe of good exegesis. I agree with Moyer Hubbard’s saying that “Good exegesis is often a delicate balance between the literary context of an idea and the larger conceptual world of which it is also a part. However, when several historical-conceptual backgrounds are on offer, the determinative vote should be cast by the specific literary-theological context”.¹⁵

There is a salvation-historical perspective that undergirds the section 2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4. In regard to 2Cor 5:5 it seems that the larger context suggests that Paul has in mind the re-creative work of God’s

¹³ NRSV Catholic Edition, Anglicised Text, 2008. With the expression τῷ ὁμοιώματι ... αὐτοῦ Paul clearly unites person to the likeness of the resurrected status or “form” of Christ.

¹⁴ Peter **Stuhlmacher**, *Der Brief an die Römer*. NTD 6 (Göttingen und Zürich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 85.

¹⁵ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 131.

Spirit which effects transformation into the εἰκών (image) of Christ (2Cor 3:18).¹⁶ Christ is the image of God εἰκών τοῦ θεοῦ, and his glory is reflected in the face of [Jesus] Christ (ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; 2Cor 4:4–6). This same idea is clothed in metaphor in 2Cor 3:3, where Paul describes Corinthians as persons who show that they are “an epistle of Christ ... written by the Spirit”. In the opening remarks of a fragrance *from life to life* (2Cor 2:16), Paul introduces a metaphoric theme of obtaining a new form, *i.e.* experiencing a sort of transformation. This refrain resonates throughout the argument of chapters 2–7. Without placing undue weight on Paul’s terminology, this motif is particularly evident in his frequent use of *zōē*, *pneuma*, *doxa*, and *eikōn* whenever transformation is under discussion. The motif of transformation reaches its climax in 2Cor 3:18 and 4:6 where God the Creator is at work.¹⁷

While the word εἰκών makes its debut in 2 Corinthians in 3:18, we know that Corinthians had some familiarity with this important theme of Paul’s gospel from his previous ministry among them. In 1Cor 15:49 a hope is expressed that just as we have borne the *image* of the man of dust, we will also bear the *image* of the man of heaven. If there were any questions, Paul answers them in 2Cor 4:4 where Christ is specifically identified as the image of God. Transformation into the image of Christ occurs elsewhere in Paul in Romans 8:29 and the history of influence appears in Col 1:15.¹⁸ The image, then, functions as part of Paul’s theology of creation/consummation and, due to its protological-Christological orientation, is regularly associated with restoration of glory. Paul described this dynamic process in 2Cor 3:18: “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the

¹⁶ “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” NRSV Catholic Edition, Anglicised Text, 2008.

¹⁷ Friedrich Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*. NTD 7 (Göttingen und Zürich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 279. Lang says aptly that “Die schöpferische Kraft Gottes ist sowohl in der alten wie in der neuen Schöpfung am Werk.”

¹⁸ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 157. In 1 Co 15:42–49 Paul employs this concept in relation to his Adam-Christ typology, clearly demonstrating the roots of this imagery in Paul’s reading of Genesis.

Spirit (ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος).” This verse concentrates central themes in a precise form. The motif of transformation is used also in the explanation of resurrection in 1Cor 15:43, in 15:49, in 15:51f,¹⁹ in Phil 3:21 (ὁ μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα ... σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), and at last in Romans 8:29–30. There the idea of the liberation of the whole creation from its bondage (Rom 8:19–23) sets the background for Paul’s hermeneutical mastery.

The relationship between 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:4, and 4:6 is especially close, and many see the three texts as parallel. The antithetical symmetry of the blinded minds of the unbelievers (4:4) and the hearts of the believers who have received the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6) is striking.

What is significant about 2Cor 4:6 is that Paul views conversion through the lens of Genesis and deems the initial creation to be a fitting analogy to God’s new Covenant work in the hearts of believers. After this intermediate statement, the questions centred to human beings will be in focus.

4. ANTHROPOLOGICAL, COSMOLOGICAL, AND COMMUNAL ASPECTS: HUMAN EXISTENCE *EN XRISTŌ*

Kainē ktisis is conditioned upon being *en Xristō*; Particularly noteworthy in the argument of 2 Corinthians 3–5 is Paul’s portrayal of *en Xristō* as the sphere of transformation. It is that the veil is removed from the heart. This idea is brought to a crescendo in 2Cor 5:21, where Paul declares that “in him” (*en autō*) believers become the *dikaioynē theou*.

The question concerning the new creation is: do we have here a statement of Paul’s soterio-cosmology, or his anthropology? Cosmological understanding means that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation ... a brand new world! Anthropological interpretation, however, goes

¹⁹ “Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.” The verb ἀλλαγησόμεθα means ‘to make other than it is’ and may be translated as ‘be transformed.’

that if anyone is in Christ, there is a newly-created being. It is closer to an anthropological understanding. Cosmos stands in 2Cor 5:19, but as to the context, the *cosmos* in 5:19 closely denotes the world of humanity! The world here probably denotes mankind!

What then are the “old things” which have passed in 2 Corinthians 5:17? We need look no further than the context: boasting in appearances (5:12), living for self (5:14–15), and judging others *kata sarka* (5:16). As the context makes clear, in 2 Corinthians 5:17 new creation (*kainē ktisis*) is an anthropological motif relating to the new situation of the individual “in Christ”.²⁰ In the Galatian context Paul reveals his close relations with the Galatians in Gal 4:19. Paul describes himself as in the pain of childbirth “until Christ is formed in you” (μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῆ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν). On the one hand, this “Christ in you” expression, seemingly contrary to the “in Christ” formula of 2Cor 5:17, can also be translated communally as “Christ among you”. On the other hand, the expression may have been coined with the active and transforming effect of Christ and the Spirit of Christ like it is expressed in 2Cor 3:18. In that case Gal 4:19 functions partially complementary to 2Cor 5:17.

The miracle of transformation is most clearly expressed when its goal, likeness to Christ, is repeatedly emphasized. There is ample justification for connecting *kainē ktisis* with Paul’s Adam-Christ typology and relating it to the idea of transformation into the *eikōn* of Christ (2Cor 3:18; 4:4–6). This confirms the earlier suggestion that the antithetical counterpart to the *palaios anthrōpos* of Romans 6:6 is the *kainē ktisis* of 2 Corinthians 5:17. It seems that 2 Corinthians 5:17 speaks not essentially about the presence of the new age, but the presence of a renewed image in humans and thus a new humanity. The primary purpose of Paul’s stark *καινή κτίσις* statement in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is to portray conversion as a complete and irrevocable break with one’s former life.²¹ That way the verse refers to the presence of the new creation in this world already now.

The aim of this symbolism is to create a distinctive community, and the relationship between the two is best illustrated by comparing 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 with 2 Corinthians 5:14–17. These two passages are conceptually parallel, though 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 has the community in

²⁰ Provided that the term ‘individual’ is not understood ‘individualistically.’

²¹ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 186.

view. I represent the position that new creation applies to the community as well as to the individual. In keeping with initiatory symbolism generally, its social relevance is grounded in its personal significance and this dual focus cannot be obscured if Paul is to be understood correctly.²² This interplay between personal and communal is also evident in Paul’s “temple of the Spirit” – motif in 1Cor 3:16 and 6:19. Compare also the “new person” – motif of Eph 2:15 and 4:24.

Paul uses individual anthropological expressions on the one hand and collective, even cosmic aspects on the other. An increased awareness of corporate themes in Paul’s letters has given rise to the view that *καινή κτίσις* in Galatians 6:15 express a “Gemeindewirklichkeit”, and that Paul’s new-creation motif speaks of a new community.²³ This assumption finds its expression also in the baptismal transformative communal effect in Gal 3:27f. Paul wrote: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”. The sense of corporateness is perceivable and Paul has here the body of Christ in view. James Dunn states “participation in Christ is irreducibly corporate”.²⁴ Second, this assumption finds support also if we consider Paul’s argumentation of Israel and its fate. In Romans 11:15 he deliberates that if the rejection of Israel is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead (*ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν*).

In Galatians 6:15 Paul summarizes his conviction that new creation abolishes some rules posed to Israel at the time of the old order. It is probable that Paul’s dismissal of “circumcision” and “uncircumcision” as irrelevant relates to his insistence on the priority of internal versus external considerations.²⁵ The primary support for an anthropological reading of *καινή κτίσις* in Galatians 6:15 is its coherence within the argument of Galatians itself. Paul introduces his closing comments with reference to

²² *Ibid.*, 187.

²³ Wolfgang Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ekklesiologie bei Paulus*. WUNT 85 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 251. Community ethos may be a viable expression in English.

²⁴ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 410.

²⁵ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 219.

“those who wish to make a good appearance outwardly” (v. 5:12), and this clearly picks up the “appearance versus reality” motif of chapter 2, with its emphasis on the priority of internal over external considerations.

Paul’s rejection of his Torah-oriented way of life was the result of his transforming encounter with Jesus Christ (Gal 1:15–16; 2:19–20), and it is difficult not to see these crucial themes (formerly/now, external vs. internal) crystallized in the words “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but *new creation!*” In regard to the Spirit, it should be noted that the preceding verses (6:12–14) virtually itemize the Spirit-contrasted ideas of the law, the flesh, and circumcision, to which *καινή κτίσις* is antithetically juxtaposed. The prominence of *σάρξ* in this reiteration is redolent of 2 Corinthians 5:16–17 and suggests that here, as there, *καινή κτίσις* occupies a position typically reserved for *πνεῦμα*.²⁶ If this conclusion is right, the role Paul gives to the Spirit needs more attention.

5. SPIRIT AND THE NEW CREATION

Contrasted with the outward state of (both) circumcision or uncircumcision, new creation should be related to the inner dynamic of the Christian life, which is precisely where Paul locates the work of the Spirit (Rom 2:28–29; 5:5; 8:9–11,23; 1Cor 6:19; 2Cor 1:22; 3:3; Gal 4:6). In Romans 2:28–29, which read like a commentary on Galatians 6:15, Paul again rejects the outer state circumcision, allowing validity only to the inner state of circumcision of the heart by the Spirit.

This imagery and line of thought has its theological ancestry in the prophecies of Jeremiah,²⁷ and suggests that Paul’s new-creation/circumcision of the heart language should be related to that inner renewal promised by later prophets. Paul brings pneumatic transformation into

²⁶ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 226.

²⁷ Jeremiah says that God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The Prophet adds: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33; NRSV Catholic Edition, Anglicised Text, 2008).

foreground in Galatians 3–5. Since the Galatians have received the Spirit (Gal 3:3, 14; 4:6), have been “made alive” by the Spirit (3:21–22 with 3:14 and 5:25), have been “begotten” by the Spirit (4:29), “live” by the Spirit (5:25), “walk” by the Spirit (5:16, 18, 25), and have become “children” and “heirs” through the Spirit in their hearts (4:6–7). The work of the Spirit is to transform Christians into the divine likeness, which is Christ.²⁸

Paul argues that the law and circumcision are no longer relevant. This entire chain of reasoning is perfectly summarized under the heading “the motif of transformation”, new creation. Paul seems to develop an idea of a God as a sovereign master over history and His own rules and commandments to Israel. God can change the rules after He had decreed that the fullness of time had come (Gal 4:4) and those who were under the law are redeemed.

Here I refer to the scheme by Moyer V. Hubbard. He has demonstrated that even a cursory reading of Romans 6–8 will detect an intriguing interplay between the concepts of law, flesh, sin and death (lower line A), and grace, Spirit, righteousness, and life (upper line B). There is a certain amount of synonymy among the words within each category, which means that they can, on occasions, be used interchangeably. Consider for example Romans 7:5–6: “You were in the flesh ... But now, you have been cut off from the law”. Hubbard has coined a surprisingly clear scheme that reflects the dynamic of God’s Spirit. Although Paul never spells out the relationship between categories (A) and (B) as explicitly as below,²⁹ this synopsis is easily confirmed by Romans 6–8.³⁰

(B) grace	Spirit	righteousness	life
>by means of the<	>produces<	> which leads to <	
(A) law	flesh	sin	death

Each idea has its natural antithesis, and each realm (law and grace) has its representative figure: “in Adam all die; in Christ, all shall be made alive” (1Cor 15:22; cf. Rom 5:12–21). Adam and Christ are of paradigmatic

²⁸ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 263.

²⁹ But Paul comes very close in Rom 7:5, where sin, the flesh, the law, and death are all connected.

³⁰ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 106.

significance to Paul, such that, to be “in” one or the other means, necessarily, to follow that existential paradigm.³¹ Keeping in mind these two spheres, it becomes more apparent why Paul is able to use “the law” interchangeably with “the flesh” (Rom 7:5–6) and why he is able to speak unapologetically of “the law-of-sin-and-death” (Rom 8:2). This scheme is hitting the mark also in that the “life line” (A) characterizes or can closely be associated with the “new creation line”.

Whether or not the distinction between inner person and inner activity fully persuades, one essential point remains: Paul’s new creation expresses a reality *intra nos* not a reality *extra nos*, and functions as an alternative formulation of his central Spirit affirmation – the Spirit creates life.³² However, it is incorrect to emphasize the individual aspect of new creation alone. In 2Cor 5:18, Paul’ approach to new creation and reconciliation is based on the new eschatological reality of the believer as a new creature in Christ. Through Christ God reconciled the world. “Paul did not only have the reconciliation of human beings in mind but, in light of the fall of the human being (Gen 3), speaks of a new creation in Christ as something that includes the universe as a whole”.³³ Paul confirms this view in Romans 8:18–23.³⁴

Paul’s new creation motif belongs to that family of passages whose foundational metaphor is the movement from death to life, and 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15 should not be treated in isolation from this crucial soteriological matrix. New creation in both letters functions as an aspect of Paul’s pneumatology. For Paul, the Spirit is a personal being who guides, teaches, etc. If one describes *καινή κτίσις* in Galatians and 2 Corinthians not so much in terms of an ontological transformation, but in terms of a pneumatological transformation, it is nevertheless suitable to characterize new creation as an existential change or transformation in any case.

There is an eschatological aspect of new creation that first becomes

³¹ Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 223 emphasizes the future aspect of life in Christ that will take place in *parousia* (ζωοποιήθῶσονται).

³² Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 232.

³³ Wanke, “Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5, 77.

³⁴ Randar **Tasmuth**, “Pauline Anthropology: On the Inner Human Being and the Human “I” – *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 2/67 (2014), 45–65, 63.

visible in connections to the Old Testament. The association of the Age to come with an outpouring of God’s Spirit is a familiar theme in Israel’s prophetic traditions (Joel 3:1–2). The eschatological Spirit was not only associated with the Age to come generally, but also with an individual particularly, who would be the bearer of the Spirit in a unique way (Isa 11:1–16; 42:1–9).

Reflecting the familiar Pauline tension between the already and the not yet, the problem is solved where the problem began, in the human heart, while the created order waits in eager expectation of the full consummation of God’s redemptive plan (Rom 8:18–25).³⁵

SUMMARY

Paul’s experience with Scripture is that of a devout Jew and to understand Paul we have to argue within the Jewish paradigm of hermeneutics. Paul seems to presuppose that his readers know Scripture too and while building his exposition of the new creation on Biblical creation narratives he felt no need to explain it in detail. His Christ-typology works like a reverse application of the Adam-typology of Gen 1–3.

The motif of the new creation as encountered in the literature of the Second Temple Judaism had its origin in the eschatological hopes of the later prophets, and the ideas of restoration and transformation in *Jubilees* and in *Joseph and Aseneth*. Convictions that God would renew the world and human beings in it were many-form and have been part of Jewish religious thinking for some centuries before Christ.

The tradition alone does not explain the ideas developed by Paul, his epistles contain a clear autobiographical element. He builds his case on his encounter with Christ that forced him to abandon his “former way of life in Judaism”. It appeared to have been a transformative encounter of pivotal significance. Paul recognised that it is only total fellowship in Christ, a shared destiny with him that matters and effects changes in human life. Paul expresses his personal commitment to Christ vividly by saying that

³⁵ Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 235–236.

he now feels himself as having been crucified with Christ. On this basis it is understandable why terms like transformation, metamorphosis, becoming another, becoming “a new man”, and “new creation,” are but a small sampling of expressions Paul used in his hermeneutical exposition of the new creation.

The metaphor of likeness becomes a central characteristic of the direction of the transformation. Through baptism human persons will certainly be united with Christ in a death like his, and after that in a resurrection like his. It follows from this metaphor that the transformation is in fact the re-creative work of God’s Spirit, which effects transformation into the image of Christ. Being in Christ is the sphere where transformation into new creation takes place.

The new creation applies to the community as well as to the individual. Participation in Christ is corporate and the renewed image of Christ in individual human beings means the appearance of the new humanity who lives by the Spirit and walks by the Spirit.

According to 1Cor 8:6, all things are through Christ and thus the new creation is not only the transformation of humans into the image of Christ. Paul finalises his hermeneutical construction in Rom 8:29–30 with the hope for a change for the whole creation. From the eschatological point of view, new creation is not easy to explain. On one hand, on an individual and ecclesial basis, the outer nature of humans is wasting away. At the same time the inner nature – new creation – is being renewed day by day. On the other hand, resurrection of the human beings is still ahead and the creation itself is waiting to be set free from its bondage. New creation is at the same time an ongoing process and an event in the future.

Paul looked at the new creation through Christ as the lens. Christ is the agent of the new creation and thus the source of Paul’s views on the new creation. New creation refers to the new inner dynamic of the Spirit who has given impetus to the process of restoring the *imago dei* marred by Adam’s sin. This process is not individual alone but also a corporeal event.