

No Longer “Male and Female” (Gal 3:28)

Ethics and an Early Christian Baptismal Formula

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DOI: 10.25784/jeac.v1i0.98



Abstract

The controversial text of Gal 3:28 is classified as an early Christian baptismal formula with a remarkable reception in Early Christian Writings. It is argued that all baptized persons are qualified to be full members of the church and that no group defined by gender, ethnicity, social, or legal status may be excluded from any type of service in the church. With regard to the role of the text in current debate, this reading leads to strong claims regarding social ethics in contemporary church and society: for example, that it is wrong for church authorities to deny ordination to women on the grounds of gender. Practices involving gendered violence, sexual molestation and exploitation demean women and fail to acknowledge their inherent dignity and worth. The baptismal declaration of Gal 3:28 calls for a society in which all such mistreatment or exclusion of women will be shameful matters of the past.

Galatians 3:28 has been as influential in the ethical discussion about the role of women as it has been controversial. In the following article the verse will be read in a way suggested by the model for analyzing the ‘implicit ethics’ in New Testament texts as explored recently by Ruben Zimmermann.² The model takes different aspects of the text related to ethical issues into account (such as linguistic form, norms in cultural context, moral agent etc.) and allows each one of them to be considered in its own right. Some topics, e.g., reception in early Christian history, will be added.

Text and Translation

οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλληνι, οὐκ ἐν δούλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ, οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no slave nor free; there is no “male and female;” for you are all one in Christ Jesus.³

1. The Medium of Ethics: Moral Language

1.1. Linguistic Form

With regard to the linguistic form, it is a bold declaration. It refers to the distinction between Jew and Greek, one that was essential for Paul the Pharisee and fundamental to society as he and his addressees understood it. Similarly, it speaks of slave and free, a distinction with major legal, social, and economic ramifications. Finally it turns to male and female, a flexible polarity but one thought at the time to be in large part determined by nature. The saying declares that these basic distinctions somehow do not exist among those baptized into Christ.

¹ This article had its beginning in the decision of the Gutenberg Research College at the University of Mainz to award their Research Prize jointly to my husband, John J. Collins, and to me. Each of us was asked to speak at the award ceremony about how the Bible may have an impact today. I decided to address the topic of the role of women in church and society and chose to focus on Gal 3:28. When he heard about my topic, Ruben Zimmermann invited me to submit a longer version of my talk for this journal.

² ZIMMERMANN, *The Logic of Love*; IDEM, “How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically.”

³ My translation of Gal 3:28 is based on the Greek text of ALAND and ALAND, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th edition.

1.2. Genre

In determining the genre of the saying, it is difficult to decide how much of the immediate context to include. One possibility is that Gal 3:26–28 is the unit and that, whether in part or as a whole, it is taken from the liturgical context of baptism.⁴ Others have isolated only verse 28, with its introduction, “you have put on Christ,” as pre-Pauline.⁵ In any case, most interpreters agree that Paul is adapting tradition from the verbal part of a ritual of baptism. He alludes to the same baptismal tradition in 1 Cor 12:13. The author of Colossians is either dependent upon Paul’s letters or adapts the same tradition independently.⁶ The ritual context gives verse 28 a performative force: The saying is intended to create the social reality that it declares is the case.

1.3. Literary Context

The introduction to the baptismal material in 3:23–25 has most relevance for the distinction between Jew and Greek.⁷ The purpose of the law was to confine, guard, and guide the Jews to Christ, so that they might be justified on the basis of faithfulness.⁸ Since faith has come, there is no need for the guard and guide, since “in Christ Jesus you are all children of God.” Paul here seems to make an argument that the distinction between Jew and Greek has lost its purpose for those who are “in Christ.” Since a major aim of the letter to the Galatians is to persuade the addressees not to become circumcised, that is one concrete way in which the law has become irrelevant for those in Christ. Those Jews who are already circumcised should not reverse the operation; Gentiles should not submit to it.⁹ For those “in Christ” it has no significance.¹⁰ Another practical implication is that they

should practice unconditional table fellowship with one another.¹¹

Paul uses the Greek word-group related to slavery extensively in Galatians. In addition to 3:28, he refers to the legal slavery of human beings to other humans only in 4:1. In that passage he is constructing an example from everyday life to make a practical-theological point.

Part of his practical-theological argument concerns the notion of human beings as slaves to gods.¹² In a subtle way, Paul equates, or at least portrays in an analogous way, Jewish slavery to the law and the Galatians’ former slavery to their traditional gods.¹³ He begins to construct this analogy by stating that the law was “ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator,” probably Moses.¹⁴ Then comes the passage already cited, which states that the law “imprisoned” the Jews until faith came.¹⁵

The constructed example comes next, about the heir, who is no better than a legal slave as long as he is a minor. Immediately thereafter, apparently still speaking of the Jews, Paul says, “So also we, when we were minors, were enslaved under the elements of the world.”¹⁶ In this case “the elements of the world” must refer to the angels through whom the law was ordained. This interpretation is verified by the two verses that follow this statement: God sent his son, who was born under the law in order to purchase (us) from the slavery of the law so that “we might receive sonship.”¹⁷

The conclusion of this part of the argument includes his Gentile addressees in the metaphor of Christ’s manumission of the believing Jews from the law and the granting of sonship: “So you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son also an heir through God.”¹⁸ That the inclusion of the Gentiles in this metaphor is an analogy becomes clear in what follows. In a way analogous to the enslavement of the Jews under the angels who ordained the law, the believing Gentiles in Galatia, before their conversion, were enslaved to beings that by nature were not gods. Paul then asks why they want to return to this slavery “to the weak and impoverished elements to whom you wish to be enslaved once again.”¹⁹ This return is not to the worship of their former gods. Rather Paul claims that their potential decision to be circumcised is just as inappropriate as their return to “idolatry” would be.

The term “elements of the world” seems to include angels and beings that Paul would have understood as demons, but the Galatians, at least formerly, as gods. This broad usage is

⁴ BETZ, Galatians, 184. Betz also argues that this saying is a beatitude, even though the term “blessed” is missing (ibid., 183, 185); J. Louis Martyn also defines the unit as 3:26–28 and as a baptismal formula: MARTYN, Galatians, 373–79. Dennis Ronald MacDonald takes Gal 3:26–28 as the Pauline unit and reconstructs a “dominical saying” from vv 27–28: MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 5–9. Richard N. Longenecker takes what he calls a “baptismal confession” as represented by 3:27–28: LONGENECKER, Galatians, 155. James D. G. Dunn questions the hypothesis of Paul’s use here of a “baptismal liturgy”: DUNN, Galatians, 201.

⁵ MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 9.

⁶ Col 3:9–11.

⁷ On the context of Gal 3:28 in the context of the letter to the Galatians as a whole, see also Pauline NIGH HOGAN, No Longer Male and Female, 21–41; on the relevance of other Pauline letters, see ibid., 31–43.

⁸ For discussion of the various ways to translate *pistis*, e.g., HAYS, The Faith of Jesus Christ.

⁹ 1 Cor 7:18–20.

¹⁰ Gal 6:12–16.

¹¹ Gal 2:11–14.

¹² Gal 1:10; 4:3, 7, 8–9.

¹³ Jewish slavery to the law: Gal 4:24–25; 5:1.

¹⁴ Gal 3:19; BETZ, Galatians, 170; MARTYN, Galatians, 357.

¹⁵ Gal 3:23.

¹⁶ Gal 4:3.

¹⁷ Gal 4:4–5.

¹⁸ Gal 4:7.

¹⁹ Gal 4:8–9.

important for understanding the criticism Paul makes in the immediately following verses: “You observe days and months and seasons and years; I am afraid that I have labored for you in vain.”²⁰ Although Paul does not use specifically Jewish terms for cultic observances, some scholars argue that he refers to Jewish practices here.²¹ A better reading is that Paul uses general terms in order to include both the ritual practices of the Galatians in their pre-conversion lives and those that they are considering adopting from Jewish practices along with circumcision.²²

As with circumcision, Paul taught elsewhere that those who were called as slaves should remain so, and those who were free should not enslave themselves in a legal sense. Legal slavery is not important because the one called as a slave is a freed-person of the Lord; likewise, the one called as a free person is a slave of Christ.²³ So in Galatians Paul is not likely to be recommending the legal manumission of slaves. His practical intention for the saying “there is no slave nor free” is expressed in 5:13, “You were called for freedom, brothers (and sisters); only do not (let) your freedom give an opportunity to the flesh, but through love become slaves to one another.”²⁴

The third pair in the saying of 3:28 differs from the other two in its linguistic form. Rather than the form “there is no Jew nor Greek,” the form is “there is no male and female.” The different form of the phrase “male and female” strongly suggests that it is an allusion to the creation story in Genesis 1: “And God made the human being, in accordance with the image of God he made him, male and female he made them.”²⁵ The declaration “there is no male and female” may, given the allusion, suggest that being baptized into Christ and “putting on” Christ (Gal 3:27), like a garment, undoes the work of creation. In this case, those “in Christ” become a new Adam without sexual differentiation. The saying about circumcision and uncircumcision in chapter 6 is analogous to this pair also, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything but rather a new creation.”²⁶

Since Paul does not discuss the issue of maleness and femaleness in Galatians, it is hard to discern his position on

what the practical implications are for this part of the declaration. Since the creation of human beings as male and female in Genesis 1 is followed immediately by the command, “increase and multiply and fill the earth,” it may be that the saying calls for a change in the ideas and practices associated with marriage and procreation. Paul’s discussion of sex and marriage in 1 Cor 7 makes clear that his position on these issues was nuanced and depended on the individuals involved. So a simple abolition of sex and marriage in this world and the current age was not what Paul taught.²⁷

Nevertheless, another distinctive characteristic of the third pair is that nouns referring to persons are not used. Rather, neuter nouns referring to maleness and femaleness are employed. This indicates that biological functions are involved. So this part of the declaration concerns both the phenomena of sex, marriage, and procreation, as well as the social roles of men and women related to them.²⁸

2. Ethical Points of Contacts: Norms as indicators of Moral Significance

From the point of view of norms, as discussed in the field of ethics, the declaration in Gal 3:28 gives three formal principles and no material norms.²⁹ The declaration that follows in 3:29 gives another formal norm or principle, “For you are all one in Christ Jesus.” From a semantic point of view, the formal principle of verse 29 is the authoritative ground for the three principles of verse 28. From a pragmatic point of view, the norm or principle of verse 29 expresses the goal of the three principles in verse 28.

2.1. Norms in Cultural Context: Jew–Greek and Slave–Free

A discussion of similar norms in Second Temple Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman texts, and also the reception of Gal 3:28 in later Christian works may help in discerning its implications. Hans Dieter Betz has argued that the phrase “there is no Jew nor Greek” is a variant of the Hellenistic political slogan “Greeks and barbarians” and that Paul shared the Stoic idea that the unity of humankind “corresponds to the oneness of God.”³⁰

Analogously to the claim “there is no slave nor free,” Aristotle reports the position of the Sophists:

Others, however, maintain that for one man to be another man’s master is contrary to nature, because it is only convention that makes the one a slave and the other a freeman and

²⁰ Gal 4:10–11.

²¹ E.g., MARTYN, Galatians, 412–18; BETZ, Galatians, 217. Betz also argues that in v 10 Paul takes up the “literary topos” of the superstitious character and uses it here in a sarcastic way (*ibid.*, 217–18).

²² BETZ, Galatians, 218. Cf. HARKER, *The Colonizers’ Idols*.

²³ 1 Cor 7:17–24, especially vv 21–23. The difficult and controversial statement in 7:21b may be an exception or an intensification of the rule. In either case, the rule stands.

²⁴ Paul’s position in his letter to Philemon is similar; see IP, *Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*.

²⁵ My translation of the Greek text of Gen 1:27 from RAHLFS, *Septuaginta* 1, 2. See also the allusions to Gen 1:27 in Mark 10:6 and Matt 19:4.

²⁶ Gal 6:15.

²⁷ Even less is such the case in 1 Thessalonians; see 4:3–8. For a comparison of Paul’s teaching on marriage in 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 7, see YARBROUGH, *Not like the Gentiles*.

²⁸ Cf. BETZ, Galatians, 195.

²⁹ ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 42–48.

³⁰ BETZ, Galatians, 191–92. Cf. DUNN, Galatians, 205; NEUTEL, *Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 31.

there is no difference between them by nature, and that therefore it is unjust, for it is based on force.³¹

The Cynic and Stoic philosophers adopted this position. They shifted the discussion from the legal sphere to metaphorical language, however, arguing, for example, that a slave who lived a philosophical life was free, whereas a free man who was a slave to his passions cannot be called free.³²

The criticism of the legal institution of slavery as unjust argues that all human beings are the same by nature. The metaphorical redefinition of “slave” and “free” is based on the value of the freedom granted by the self-mastery of the philosophical life. Paul’s position is based on what it means to be “in Christ.” On the one hand, Christ has emancipated believers from a metaphorical slavery. According to Galatians that means emancipation from enslavement to the elements of the world. He emphasizes this aspect of Christ’s work in speaking about the slave as a “freed-person of the Lord.”³³ On the other hand, those who have been emancipated become slaves of Christ. It is this aspect that Paul emphasizes in speaking of the free person as a “slave of Christ.”³⁴ The phrase in Gal 3:28, “there is no slave nor free,” suggests that the legally enslaved person and the legally free person are one in their dependence on Christ.

2.2. Norms in Cultural Context: Male–Female

There is pre-Christian evidence analogous to the inclusion of slaves and women in the communities Paul founded. A Greek inscription dating from the first century BCE was found in ancient Philadelphia, a city of Lydia (western Asia Minor) and one of the cities addressed by John of the Apocalypse.³⁵ It presents the rules for a private association that met in the house of a certain Dionysius, who apparently led the association. These rules specify that access be given “both to free men and women, and to household slaves.”³⁶ Those who enter the house, which is sacred space, “both men and women, both bond and free,”³⁷ must take an oath that they will observe a list of specified moral rules. Following the rules is a declaration that the gods will bless those who obey these rules and punish those who do not. In the

conclusion of the inscription the goddess Agdistis is called upon to “show her good will to men and women, bond and free . . . who are faithful to this writing in which the commandments of God are written.”³⁸ The association apparently celebrated mysteries, since some members slept in the temple (in preparation for initiation) and “mysteries” are mentioned that were off limits to the immoral.³⁹

This document is similar to Gal 3:28 in the fact that men and women, slaves and free people are all welcome to join the association and to participate in whatever prayers and rituals may have been performed. In classical Athens at least, women were most actively engaged in the worship of goddesses.⁴⁰ The mysteries of Mithras admitted slaves but excluded women.⁴¹ The mysteries of Philadelphia are more analogous to the Eleusinian mysteries, to which non-Athenians, women, and slaves were admitted.⁴² This similarity suggests that at least from the early Pauline communities onward, women and slaves were admitted to full fellowship and thus shared in the benefits of being “in Christ.” The declaration in 3:28, however, is not limited to such inclusion.

Karin Neutel has argued that the understanding of Gal 3:28 is greatly enhanced by taking the three pairs together and seeing how they may be connected.⁴³ On the one hand, the opposing pairs reflect a widespread cultural practice of defining difference.⁴⁴ On the other, the same or similar pairs are used cross-culturally in Paul’s time to express an ideal of unity.⁴⁵ She proposed that Paul’s statement in Gal 3:28 may be understood as portraying his eschatological communities as living an “ideal way of life, in which there are no divisions between people, no divided loyalties and thus none of the conflict that results from such divisions.”⁴⁶ She has concluded that the “male and female” pair “is a statement about the eschatological end of male and female in procreation and marriage.”⁴⁷

3. Reception of “There is no Male and Female”

The early history of the reception of the phrase “there is no male and female” may be helpful in interpreting it.⁴⁸ 2

³¹ ARISTOTLE *Politics* 1.2.3 (p. 1253b 20–24); quoted by BETZ, *Galatians* 193, note 95.

³² BETZ, *Galatians*, 194. He points out (*ibid.*, note 102) that Philo shared these views: *Special Laws* 2.69; 2.122; *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain* 138.

³³ 1 Cor 7:22a.

³⁴ 1 Cor 7:22b.

³⁵ DITTENBERGER, *Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*, 985; English translation in GRANT, *Hellenistic Religions*, 28–30; for ancient Philadelphia see also Rev 3:7–13. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza cites this inscription: SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her*, 213–14.

³⁶ GRANT, *Hellenistic Religions*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ KALTSAS and SHAPIRO, “Introduction,” 13.

⁴¹ BURKERT, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 42–43.

⁴² Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.”

⁴³ NEUTEL, *Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30–42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42–66.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 70; cf. 140–43.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 232; cf. 240–42.

⁴⁸ NIGH HOGAN discusses the reception of Gal 3:28 in *Colossians*, *1 Timothy*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Andrew*, and *Acts of Thomas* (*No Longer Male and Female*, 48–55, 61–70). See also POLLMANN, “*Non est masculus et femina*”.

Clement is a work attributed to Clement of Rome but dating more likely to the first half of the second century.⁴⁹ In the context of a discussion of the kingdom of God, the author wrote:

For this reason, we should await the kingdom of God with love and righteousness every hour, since we do not know the day when God will appear. For when the Lord himself was asked by someone when his kingdom would come, he said, "When the two are one, and the outside like the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female."⁵⁰

The author then gives his interpretation of this saying:

Now "the two are one" when we speak truth to one another and when one soul exists in two bodies with no hypocrisy. And "the outside like the inside" means this: the "inside" refers to the soul and the "outside" to the body. Just as your body is visible, so too your soul should be clearly seen in your good deeds. And the words "the male with the female, neither male nor female" means this, that a brother who sees a sister should think nothing about her being female, and she should think nothing about his being male. When you do these things, he says, "the kingdom of my Father will come."⁵¹

The third interpretation suggests that the phrase "no male and female" in Gal 2:38 concerns sexual attraction and desire. Paul's phrase seems to be interpreted as a call for self-control. It seems likely that this call applies to all members of the community that belong to the opposite sex except one's spouse.⁵²

Clement of Alexandria lived approximately from 150 to 215.⁵³ He quotes from a work *On Righteousness*, written by Epiphanes, the son of Carpocrates, which therefore probably dates to the second century. Clement classifies this writer and his father, along with certain followers of Basilides, as "lovers of pleasure." He gives the following quotation from this work:

The righteousness of God is a kind of universal fairness and equality.⁵⁴ There is equality in the heaven, which is stretched out in all directions and contains the entire earth in its circle.

⁴⁹ Bart Ehrman dates it to the mid-second century, perhaps in the 140s; EHRMAN, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1.160.

⁵⁰ 2 Clement 12.1–2; translation (modified) from EHRMAN, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1.183. See also NIGH HOGAN's discussion of this passage (*No Longer Male and Female*, 74–76).

⁵¹ 2 Clement 12.3–5; EHRMAN, *ibid.*, 183, 185.

⁵² For an argument that the saying is not Gnostic and the interpretation not anti-gnostic, see KELHOFFER, "Eschatology (Part One);" I agree with the argument about Gnosticism and about the behavior that the interpretation of the "male-female" part of the saying was likely to elicit; on the latter point, see Part Two of the article in KELHOFFER, "Eschatology (Part Two)," 359. I also agree with the conclusion that the saying does not necessarily require sexual renunciation: KELHOFFER, "Eschatology (Part One)," 159–63.

⁵³ For discussion of Clement of Alexandria's use of Gal 3:28, see NIGH HOGAN, *No Longer Male and Female*, 88–107.

⁵⁴ Judith L. Kovacs translates "fellowship along with equity" in KOVACS, "Was Paul an Antinomian," 189.

The night reveals equally all the stars. The light of the sun, which is the cause of the daytime and the father of light, God pours out from above upon the earth in equal measure on all who have power to see. For all see alike. There is no distinction between rich and poor, people and governor, stupid and clever, female and male, free men and slaves . . . But the laws, by presupposing the existence of private property, cut up and destroyed the universal equality decreed by the divine law . . . And so also with marriage . . . God made all things for man to be common property. He brought female to be with male and in the same way united all animals. He thus showed righteousness to be a universal fairness and equality. But those who have been born in this way have denied the universality which is the corollary of their birth and say, "Let him who has taken one woman keep her," whereas all alike can have her, just as the other animals do.⁵⁵

On the one hand, this passage could be interpreted to mean that, just as slaves ought to be liberated from legal slavery, so also women should be freed from marriage, which involves their ownership by one man, so to speak. On the other hand, however, the inference drawn from the principle is androcentric. In the statement, "whereas all alike can have her," there is nothing about the agency of women in choosing a sexual partner. Rather than belonging to one man, she belongs to many.⁵⁶

Clement, unsurprisingly, focuses his criticism of Epiphanes on the issue of the community of wives and defends the teaching of both law and gospel against adultery.⁵⁷ Given the reference to slaves and free, we may take the principle of Epiphanes that there is no distinction between female and male to be an interpretation of Paul's phrase "there is no male and female." Epiphanes' interpretation clearly aims at abolishing marriage but not with sexual continence as a goal.

Another relevant text is a quotation of Clement from Julius Cassian that Clement says is part of the *Gospel of according to the Egyptians*:⁵⁸

When Salome asked when she would know the answers to her questions, the Lord said, "When you trample on the robe of shame, and when the two shall be one, and the male with the female (will be) neither male nor female."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA *Miscellanies* 3.2; translation OULTON and CHADWICK, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 42–44. See also the discussion by KOVACS, "Was Paul an Antinomian," 189–90.

⁵⁶ Diogenes, an early Cynic, also rejected conventional marriage and advocated a more limited community of wives; DIOGENES LAERTIUS 6.72; for discussion see DEMING, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 61.

⁵⁷ CLEMENT *Miscellanies* 3.2; OULTON and CHADWICK, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 44–45.

⁵⁸ On evidence for the views of Julius Cassian more generally, as attested by Clement, see KOVACS, "Was Paul and Antinomian," 192–93. She categorizes him as a radical ascetic (190).

⁵⁹ CLEMENT *Miscellanies* 3.13.92.2; translation (slightly modified) from OULTON and CHADWICK, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 83; cf. the German translation in MARKSCHIES and SCHRÖTER, *Antike christ-*

As noted above, the third pair in the saying in Gal 3:28, “there is no ‘male and female,’” seems to allude to Gen 1:27. The first part of the saying attributed to Jesus in this quotation from the *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to allude to Gen 3:7, 21. The former reads, “And the eyes of the two were opened, and they realized that they were naked, sewed leaves of a fig tree together, and made for themselves girdles around the loins.” The latter states, “And the Lord made leather tunics for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”⁶⁰

The connection between this fragment of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the passages from Genesis quoted above are strengthened by Gen 2:25, which reads, “And the two were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.”⁶¹ It seems likely, therefore, that “the garment of shame” in the fragment represents the clothing that human beings have worn since the disobedience of Adam and Eve. So trampling on this garment signifies a return to the innocence of the first couple. It is significant that the narrative says nothing about them having sexual relations until after they disobeyed and were driven out of the garden of Eden.⁶²

The statement that “the two shall be one” suggests, on the level of narrative and image, that the separation of Eve from the body of Adam will be undone. On a practical level, this unity suggests an end to marriage, since the result of the separation is the man leaving his father and mother, clinging to his wife, and the husband and wife becoming one flesh.⁶³ Unlike the text from Epiphanes, the end of marriage in this fragment seems to require the end of sexual relations as well.

Another interpretation of trampling upon the garment of shame takes the “garment” as the human body itself, which the soul “puts on.”⁶⁴ “Trampling” on the body could then refer to ascetic practices that allow the soul to pursue virtue and to contemplate God.

Philo of Alexandria is a major source for the latter view. He distinguishes between the human being of Genesis 1, which is in the image of God, and the human being created from earth, which is an object of sense perception and is either a man or a woman. The one after the image of God is an object of thought and is neither male nor female, being incorporeal.⁶⁵ Dennis MacDonald has argued that, in the reception of this tradition, the first human being, the one in the image of God, was often seen as androgynous.⁶⁶ A few

texts say so explicitly, and these will be discussed below. The extension of this hypothesis to other texts, however, rests on a slender foundation.⁶⁷

MacDonald cites a brief passage from Irenaeus, which is part of a discussion of the school of Valentinus.⁶⁸ One of the leaders of the “eastern” part of his school was a teacher by the name of Mark, whose followers Irenaeus names “Marcosians.” He says:

Some of them also hold that one man was formed after the image and likeness of God, masculo-feminine, and that this was the spiritual man; and that another man was formed out of the earth.⁶⁹

MacDonald also claims Julius Cassian as a witness to this interpretation: “Although we are not told explicitly by Clement that Cassianus thought Adam had been an androgyne, it is quite likely that he did.” This claim does not seem to be adequately warranted.⁷⁰

The next relevant text is the *Gospel of Thomas*, which dates to the second century.⁷¹ It includes a saying similar to those in *2 Clement* and the fragment from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The version in *Thomas* reads as follows:

Jesus saw some little ones nursing. He said to his disciples, “What these little ones who are nursing resemble is those who enter the kingdom.” They said to him, “So shall we enter the kingdom by being little ones?” Jesus said to them, “When you (plur.) make the two one and make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, and that you might make the male and the female be one and the same, so that the male might not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye and a hand in place of a hand and a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image—then you will enter [the kingdom].”⁷²

liche Apokryphen, 671; Greek text in STÄHLIN and FRÜCHTEL, Clemens Alexandrinus, 238. Cf. the discussion by NIGH HOGAN, No Longer Male and Female, 76.

⁶⁰ Gen 1:7, 21 LXX; my translations.

⁶¹ Gen 2:25 LXX; my translation.

⁶² Gen 4:1.

⁶³ Gen 2:24.

⁶⁴ See the discussion in MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 23–29, 34–35.

⁶⁵ PHILO, On the Creation of the World, 134.

⁶⁶ MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 30, 38.

⁶⁷ I agree with Nigh Hogan that the thesis that “the concept of the restoration of the primal androgynous human creation lies behind the phrase ‘no longer male and female’ of Gal 3:28 . . . is suggestive but not convincing” (NIGH HOGAN, No Longer Male and Female, 81).

⁶⁸ LAYTON, The Gnostic Scriptures, 267–69; on Irenaeus’ response to this school, see *ibid.*, 271–72.

⁶⁹ IRENAEUS Against Heresies 1.18.2; translation from ANF, 1.343; cited by MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 30.

⁷⁰ MACDONALD, There is no Male and Female, 38. His reading of the text from Nag Hammadi, The Exegesis on the Soul (II, 6), is problematic. Cf. his remarks on the work (*ibid.*, 36–37) with the English translation of it by William C. Robinson, Jr., and Maddalena Scopello: ROBINSON and SCOPELLO, “Exegesis on the Soul,” especially 131.16–132.1 (p. 194). There is little indication that the brother, the bridegroom of the soul, is one half of an androgynous entity of which the soul is the other half (132.7–133.15; p. 195).

⁷¹ LAYTON, Gnostic Scriptures, 377; SCHRÖTER, “Das Evangelium nach Thomas,” 1.483–522; here 498.

⁷² Gospel of Thomas 22; translation from LAYTON, Gnostic Scriptures, 384. See the discussion by NIGH HOGAN, No Longer Male and Female, 73–74.

This version of the saying interprets the notion that “there is no male and female” or “neither male nor female” with the idea of making “the male and the female” to be “one and the same.”

The last saying in the *Gospel of Thomas* seems to give further information about this idea:

Simon Peter said to them, “Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of life.” Jesus said, “See, I am going to attract her to make her male so that she too might become a living spirit that resembles you males. For every female (element) that makes itself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁷³

There is tension between saying 22 and saying 114. In the former, males will no longer be males, females no longer females, and both will be “one and the same.” In saying 114, Jesus’ promise to make Mary male and his description of the males in the group as “living spirits” may seem to contradict saying 22. The tension should be resolved by interpreting saying 22 to signify that males and females will put aside their socially determined gender roles, including sexual relations and procreation. When they do so, they will all be “male” according to the gender symbolism of the time, which identifies “spirit” as a masculine quality and “body” as a female quality.

Thus the male and the female being one and the same in saying 22 probably means that they will both be (metaphorically) male, not that they form an androgynous unity.

This saying should be read in the context of the use of human gender in an allegorical or symbolic manner. Philo makes extensive use of a symbolic system based on distinctions between the male and the female. He relates the creation story in Gen 2 to the present situation of human beings by identifying the serpent with pleasure, the man with mind, and the woman with sense perception.⁷⁴

His understanding of human nature is based on the distinction between a human being’s higher and lower nature.⁷⁵ The higher nature is an indivisible unity and is asexual. He associates the male and female polarity with the non-rational part of human nature. He uses both Gen 1:27 and 2:7 to establish the kinship between the rational human soul and God.⁷⁶ The “original state of oneness or singleness was interrupted by the appearance of woman.” The “sin of the first man was the result of sexual desire.”⁷⁷ Elsewhere, how-

ever, he interprets the first sin as the result of temptation, to which the woman was by nature more vulnerable.⁷⁸

In treating the lower nature of human beings, Philo associates maleness with the mind and all things spiritual and femaleness with sense perception and all things material. Philo uses the female terminology of the Bible to express “his depreciation of the irrational soul and of the perishable realm of creation.”⁷⁹

Given that views like Philo’s were widespread, sayings 22 and 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas* suggest that males and females may be united with the heavenly world by avoiding marriage and sexuality. Then both groups will become like the original man, characterized by “mind” and the higher human nature.

A few other sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* suggest that being “male,” that is, being a “living spirit,” entails celibacy and sexual continence, as opposed to marriage and sexual relations:⁸⁰

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are solitary and superior, for you (plur.) will find the kingdom; for since you come from it you shall return to it.”⁸¹

Jesus said, “There are many standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber.”⁸²

Jesus said, “Wretched is the body that depends upon a body. And wretched is the soul that depends upon these two.”⁸³

The *Gospel according to Philip* “is a Valentinian anthology containing some one hundred short excerpts taken from various other works.”⁸⁴ It must date before 350 CE, the approximate date of the Coptic manuscript.⁸⁵ It may be as early as the second half of the second century.⁸⁶

A prominent theme among the excerpts is the sacraments, which are called “mysteries.” The most distinctive is the “bridal chamber.” It is not clear whether this sub-theme concerns “an actual ritual or was merely a theological metaphor of salvation.”⁸⁷ In any case, “In ‘the imaged-bridal chamber’

⁷³ Gospel of Thomas 114; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 399.

⁷⁴ PHILO, *On the Creation of the World* 157, 165; for discussion see BAER, *Philo’s Use*, 38–39.

⁷⁵ Different terms are used in various texts; BAER, *Philo’s Use*, 14–16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 16–26.

⁷⁷ PHILO, *On the Creation of the World*, 151–152; BAER, *Philo’s Use*, 37.

⁷⁸ PHILO, *On the Creation of the World*, 156–158; BAER, *Philo’s Use*, 37–38.

⁷⁹ BAER, *Philo’s Use*, 40.

⁸⁰ MACDONALD associates “returning to sexual oneness” in such texts with “celibacy” (There is no Male and Female, 62). He also notes that “androgyny,” which he associates with sexual oneness, did not always imply “bisexuality” or “asexuality” but “perfected masculinity” (*ibid.*, 98).

⁸¹ Gospel of Thomas 49; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 389.

⁸² Gospel of Thomas 75; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 393.

⁸³ Gospel of Thomas 87; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 395. At least one plausible interpretation of a body being dependent upon a body is the marriage relationship. See also saying 112; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 399.

⁸⁴ LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 325. Cf. the discussion of the Gospel of Philip by NIGH HOGAN, *No Longer Male and Female*, 79–81.

⁸⁵ LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 326.

⁸⁶ SCHENKE, “Das Philippusevangelium,” 1.532.

⁸⁷ LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 326.

the soul or 'image' joins with an angel and becomes as it were an androgyne, safe against sexual" assault (no. 53). "This union rectifies the separation of Adam and Eve, the original androgyne" (no. 70; cf. *Revelation of Adam*).⁸⁸ "In such a union one embarks upon 'return' (*apokatastasis*) to one's spiritual home (no. 59); this is the reception of resurrection and the holy spirit (no. 83)."⁸⁹

The description of what happens in the bridal chamber is as follows:

Among the shapes of unclean spirits there are male ones and female ones. It is male spirits who have intercourse with souls who conduct their lives within a female shape, and female ones that mingle promiscuously with those within a male shape. And no one can escape if seized by them, unless by taking on a male or female power, namely (one's) bridegroom or bride. Now, one takes on this power from the imaged bridal chamber. Whenever foolish female (spirits) see a male sitting by himself they leap upon him and fondle him and pollute him. So also when foolish male ones see a beautiful woman sitting alone they seduce her and do violence to her in order to pollute her. But when they see a man and his wife sitting together, the female ones cannot make advances to the male, nor can the male ones make advances to the female. Just so, if the image and the angel join with one another none can dare to make advances to the male or the female.⁹⁰

The rectification of the separation of Adam and Eve is described in the following way:

If the female had not separated from the male, she and the male would not die. That being's separation became the source of death. The anointed (Christ) came to rectify the separation that had been present since the beginning and join the two (components); and to give life unto those who had died by separation and join them together. Now, a woman joins with her husband in the bridal bedroom, and those who have joined in the bridal bedroom will not re-separate. Thus Eve became separate from Adam because it was not in the bridal bedroom that she joined with him.⁹¹

The closest this *Gospel* comes to quoting Gal 3:28 is in excerpt 42:

If you say, "I am a Jew," no one will tremble. If you say, "I am a Roman," no one will be bothered. If you say, "I am a Greek—or a barbarian, a slave, free" no one will be disturbed. If you say, "I am a Christian," the [. . .] will shake.⁹²

This apparent knowledge of the declaration of Gal 3:28 allows us to infer how the author who compiled the excerpts

would have interpreted the phrase "There is no male and female." The excerpt on the rectification of the separation of Adam and Eve implies that the author would have recognized the allusion to Gen 1:27 and interpreted it as the creation of "the male (human being)." Gen 2:21–25 is then interpreted as the separation of the female from the male, a process that caused the death of human beings.

The rectification of this situation is not marriage of one human being to another of the opposite sex but rather the marriage of each human being to an angel of the opposite sex. The sexual intercourse, however, that takes place in human marriage is defined by this *Gospel* as "pollution."⁹³

Unlike the *Gospel according to Philip*, the account of the teaching of the Naasenes in the *Refutation of all Heresies* clearly refers to the androgynous character of the "new man." The *Refutation* was attributed to Hippolytus, probably wrongly. It was written soon after the martyrdom of Callistus, bishop of Rome, in 223. "The author's stated aim is to demonstrate that the heresies have their origin not in the Scriptures but in Greek philosophies, mysteries, and astrology."⁹⁴

The first five chapters of book five of the *Refutation* discuss the heresy of the Naasenes. In chapter 2, after an exposition of their teaching on the soul, the following remarks are made:

According to this account of theirs, the intercourse of woman with man is demonstrated, in conformity with such teaching, to be an exceedingly wicked and filthy [practice]. For, says [the Naasene], Attis has been emasculated, that is, he has passed over from the earthly parts of the nether world to the everlasting substance above, where, he says, there is neither female nor male, but a new creature, a new man, which is hermaphrodite.⁹⁵

The context suggests that this "new creature" is not the primal Adam but the second Adam, Christ. In any case, we may infer that this work portrays the Naasenes as rejecting sexual intercourse, and therewith probably marriage, and as interpreting the third pair in Gal 3:28 in a hermaphroditic or androgynous manner.⁹⁶

This brief survey of texts indicates that the phrase "There is no male and female" was most often interpreted to refer to desire, sexual intercourse, or marriage.⁹⁷ In the case of 2

⁸⁸ Layton argues that the *Revelation of Adam* presents Adam and Eve as an androgyne in their original state; if this idea is present, it is very subtle; see LAYTON *Gnostic Scriptures*, 55 and note k.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁹⁰ *Gospel according to Philip* 53; translation from LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 340.

⁹¹ *Gospel according to Philip* 70; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 343.

⁹² *Gospel according to Philip* 42; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 338.

⁹³ *Gospel according to Philip* 52; LAYTON, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 339.

⁹⁴ LIEU, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, 87–88.

⁹⁵ MARCOVICH, *Refutation of all Heresies* 5.2, 146; translation from ANF, 5.49.

⁹⁶ Compare the teaching of the Marcosians quoted above as reported by IRENAEUS *Against Heresies* 1.18.2.

⁹⁷ NIGH HOGAN also discusses the reception of Gal 3:28 by Origen (No Longer Male and Female, 107–15), Tertullian (*ibid.*, 115–20), the Cappadocians Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus (*ibid.*, 122–64), Eusebius of Caesarea, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Priscillian, and Jerome (*ibid.*, 165–92).

Clement desire is to be controlled. For Epiphanes, desire is natural but marriage, as an instance of private property, is to be abolished. In the other works, the ideal is a single life based on sexual continence. The latter approach is no doubt conditioned by cultural contexts in which the material world and the human body were valued less than the heavenly world and the human soul or spirit.

4. Ethics as a System of Values: Developing a Hierarchy of Norms

The question of a hierarchy of values⁹⁸ is difficult to answer with regard to Gal 3:28. If there is a movement from lowest to highest value, the male–female pair would be the most important. The rest of the letter to the Galatians, however, suggests a different view. The Jew–Greek pair is clearly the most important for Paul, at least in this context. It makes sense to infer that the slave–free pair is next in importance, since he uses metaphorical slavery extensively in the letter. The male–female pair would seem to be the least important for Paul.

Such a conclusion would be too simple. True, Paul does not mention the male–female pair in his use of the baptismal formula in 1 Cor 12:13. His successor or imitator in Col 3:10–11 uses the first two pairs but not the third. It seems likely, however, that the formula, with its three pairs, was used to baptize the Corinthians or was part of Paul’s foundational teaching. When he heard about practices of some women prophets with regard to head coverings or hairstyles after he left Corinth, he wrote to correct them.⁹⁹ The importance of the male–female pair and its interpretation regarding sexual relations and marriage, however, is evident in Paul’s response to a request for advice on these topics, which he gives in 1 Cor 7.

Apparently some Corinthian female prophets had discarded aspects of traditional female dress, perhaps in behaving more like men. Certain influential leaders in Corinth had argued that all members of the community should cease having sexual relations, including those who were married. These developments, in Paul’s view, went too far in implementing the male–female pair of Gal 3:28. This situation explains his omission of the pair in his discussion of baptism in 1 Cor 12:13. The author of Colossians may have had similar concerns.

5. Forms of Ethical Reflection: Generating Moral Significance

The saying in Gal 3:28 generates moral significance¹⁰⁰ in a metaphorical, symbolic, and ambiguous way. As we have seen, there was already a wide range of interpretations or applications of the metaphorical significance of the male–female pair in the first three centuries. At one end of the spectrum, it may have been read as affirming and celebrating the inclusion of people in the community from a variety of ethnic groups, people of diverse legal and social status, and both men and women. The inscription from Philadelphia in Lydia does not of course refer to Gal 3:28 but it is an affirmation of a similar inclusiveness. Another reading takes the pair as a call for controlling sexual desire. 2 *Clement* 12:3–5 is an example of such an interpretation, although from a saying that otherwise differs from Gal 3:28. Epiphanes is unique among Christian writers in arguing for an ethic according to nature, abolishing marriage but not sexual relations. Four ancient texts imply that sexual relations and marriage have no place in the pursuit of the ethical high road and salvation: the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, Julius Cassian, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Gospel according to Philip*.¹⁰¹

6. The Moral Agent

With regard to the question of moral agency,¹⁰² the language used by Paul is noteworthy. In spite of the singular adjectives and nouns in the baptismal formula, he consistently addresses his audience with second person plural verbs in the immediately surrounding literary context. This suggests that both the community and the individual members of it have moral agency. The ideal metaphorical character of the church is set out in the formula: individuals are to live in accordance with it and the community is to insure that the group as a whole embodies it.

This agency, however, is not entirely autonomous. By participating in the faithfulness of Christ,¹⁰³ by being baptized and “putting on Christ,” the members of the community voluntarily take on a new obligation.¹⁰⁴ The aim and goal of becoming a society in which there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, and no “male and female” is that all members become one in Christ. Christ then is the authority requiring this transformation.

⁹⁸ See ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 52–60.

⁹⁹ 1 Cor 11:2–16; 1 Cor 14:34–35 is probably an interpolation by a later editor of the Pauline epistles. See PERVO, *The Making of Paul*, 46–48; notes 152–162 (298–99).

¹⁰⁰ See ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 60–73.

¹⁰¹ I leave aside Irenaeus’ account of the Naasenes discussed above as more ambiguous than the others.

¹⁰² See ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 73–82.

¹⁰³ Gal 3:26; the relevant phrase may also be translated “through the faith of Jesus Christ” or “through faith in Christ Jesus.” See HAYS, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, especially 156–61. See now also MORGAN, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 270–272.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. ZIMMERMANN, “How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically,” 17–18.

7. Ethics and Social Reality: Lived Ethos

With regard to “lived ethos,” Zimmermann has distinguished between descriptive references to an extant ethos and prescriptive references to the ethos expected of the community.¹⁰⁵ In the letter to the Galatians as a whole, Paul is clearly referring to the expected ethos related to the pair “Jew–Greek.” In 1 Cor 7 his prescribed ethos for those who are slaves, free, married, and unmarried is that they remain in the state in which they were called because of the “present necessity.”¹⁰⁶ In the saying of Gal 3:28, the submerging of the distinctions in the unity of Christ is descriptive or extant on the semantic level but prescribed or expected on the pragmatic or illocutionary level.

8. The Purview of Ethics: The Realm of Validity and Application

Before turning to the ‘application’¹⁰⁷ of the third pair of Gal 3:28 to aspects of society today, some preliminary discussion is in order. First of all, the statement, “There is no ‘male and female,’” is symbolic and ambiguous. Such multivalence is characteristic of symbolic language. I would like to infer from this observation that application of the male–female pair need not be limited to how Paul and his earliest audience understood it. Furthermore, it need not be limited to the ways in which it is interpreted in its ancient reception. The saying, as such, has a surplus of meaning for interpreters today.¹⁰⁸

Krister Stendahl recognized this characteristic of the passage.¹⁰⁹ He characterized the “male and female” pair as a breakthrough passage, implying that it has implications beyond ancient understandings and applications.¹¹⁰ He notes that there is tension between its allusion to Gen 1:27 and the implication of a new creation,¹¹¹ on the one hand, and passages that use a notion of the so-called “order of creation” based on Genesis 2 in order to maintain the subordination of women.¹¹² Paul uses such a notion to enforce differing hairstyles or head coverings for men and women in 1 Cor 11:3–10. Although Paul did not use the “order of creation” to subordinate women in terms of what roles in the community

they could play, the language is androcentric and may have encouraged later writers, like the author of 1 Timothy, to argue for ecclesiastical and social subordination of women.¹¹³

A second observation is obvious and generally accepted, namely, that the cultural situation of the understanding of “male and female” today is significantly different from the cultural situation that Paul addressed. For this reason, the application of Gal 3:28 to the current situation must be different from its history of reception. Nevertheless, most Western cultures are still androcentric, that is, the culture continues to reproduce male power in subtle and systemic ways.¹¹⁴ In this situation, the saying still speaks to the issue of the role of women in the church and society yet calls for new applications in new situations. The hermeneutical rule of analogy is applicable only through a process of “augmentation by which we give a biblical paradigm case a level of detail sufficient for a viable comparison to a contemporary problem case.”¹¹⁵

A helpful starting point for application of the male–female pair has been formulated by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. She expresses an insight into this passage inspired by a well known prayer attributed to Rabbi Judah:

It was taught: R. Judah says, “A person must recite three blessings each day: ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe] who did not make me a gentile’; ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe,] who did not make me a boor’; ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe,] who did not make me a woman.’ [What is the basis for these blessings?] ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe,] who did not make me a gentile,’ because the gentiles are of no matter. [As it says, ‘All the nations are as nothing before him’ [Isa. 40:17]. ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe,] who did not make [me] a boor,’ for, *a boor does not fear sin* [M. Aboth 2:6]. ‘Blessed [art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe,] who did not make me a woman,’ for, women are not obligated to perform the commandments” [Tosefta 6:18].¹¹⁶

Schüssler Fiorenza’s insight is that this prayer expresses gratitude for male religious privilege. By (implicit) analogy, she suggests that the baptismal declaration of Gal 3:28 denies

¹⁰⁵ See ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 82–89.

¹⁰⁶ 1 Cor 7:8, 10, 12–13, 17–24, 26. This is a flexible, though prescribed, ethos because exceptions are allowed.

¹⁰⁷ See ZIMMERMANN, *Logic of Love*, 89–94 and comprehensively ZIMMERMANN and JOUBERT, *Biblical Ethics and Application*.

¹⁰⁸ For the term “surplus of meaning,” see RICOEUR, *Interpretation Theory*.

¹⁰⁹ STENDAHL, *The Bible and the Role of Women*. Cited also by MACDONALD, *There is no Male and Female*, 1–2.

¹¹⁰ STENDAHL, *The Bible and the Role of Women*, 32, 35–37.

¹¹¹ Paul explicitly invokes a new creation with regard to circumcision in Gal 6:15; presumably it applies in the case of “there is no ‘male and female’” as well.

¹¹² STENDAHL, *The Bible and the Role of Women*, 32.

¹¹³ 1 Tim 2:9–15; YARBRO COLLINS, “The Female Body as Social Space.”

¹¹⁴ BEM, *The Lenses of Gender*, 1–132, here 2.

¹¹⁵ COSGROVE, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate*, 72; see also 76–79. He also allows that some relevant biblical texts have a certain “semantic openness” (*ibid.*, 79).

¹¹⁶ Tractate Berakhot 9:1; translation from ZAHAVY, *Talmud of the Land of Israel*, 318. See also the Babylonian Talmud, Menahoth 43b–44a, where two versions are given; in the second “boor” (here “brutish man”) is replaced by “slave.” Cited also by LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 157.

men their traditional religious, legal, social, and political privileges, which are based on gender roles.¹¹⁷

In my view the baptismal formula at least calls all these privileges into question. It strongly suggests that all baptized persons are qualified to be full members of the church and that no group defined by gender, ethnicity, social, or legal status may be excluded from any type of service in the church. This reading implies, for example, that it is wrong for church authorities to deny ordination to women on the grounds of gender.

The application of the male-female pair to human society more generally may use the language of rights. Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued that, “A society is just insofar as its members enjoy the goods to which they have a right. And I think of rights as ultimately grounded in what respect for the worth of persons and human beings requires.”¹¹⁸ He defines inherent rights as normative bonds in the following way:

This normative bond is in the form of the other bearing a legitimate claim on me as to how I treat her, a legitimate claim to my doing certain things to her and refraining from doing other things. If I fail to do the former things, I violate the bond; if I do not refrain from doing the latter things, I also violate the bond. I do not break the normative bond; that still holds. She continues to have that legitimate claim on me as to how I treat her.¹¹⁹

He also holds that some rights are conferred by legislation or other means. Other rights are not conferred but are natural rights, which are “in good measure inherent to those who have them.” These inherent rights are based on the worth of each human being.¹²⁰

Wolterstorff has shown that, “The idea of natural rights was already common currency among the canon lawyers of the twelfth century,” and to some degree they were able to draw upon early Christian writers for support of this idea. Some such writers recognized natural rights, even though they did not yet formulate a concept about them. He has also shown that the concept was widely used from William of Ockham to John Locke and beyond.¹²¹ Finally, he made a good case that the Old Testament and the New Testament both express values, principles, and themes that constitute the roots of the concept of natural, inherent rights.¹²²

Another voice relevant to my topic is that of Marianne Heimbach-Steins.¹²³ She has pointed out that women and girls are absent from most discussions about human rights to

the point that some have been forced to ask polemically, “Are women human?”¹²⁴ One document, however, has emphasized the status of women’s rights as human rights. It is entitled “Equal Human Rights for All” and comes from a United Nations conference in Vienna in 1993. It reads in part:

The human rights of women and girls who are still minors constitute an inalienable, integral, inseparable, and essential part of human rights in general. The full participation of women, with equal rights, in political, civic, economic, social, and cultural life on national, regional, and international levels and the removal of every form of discrimination based on sex are goals of prime importance for the international community. Sex-specific violence and all forms of sexual molestation and exploitation, including those that derive from cultural prejudices and international trafficking of human beings, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and an end must be put to them. This goal is to be reached through legislation, as well as national initiatives and international cooperation in, for example, economic and social development, educational systems, legal protection of pregnant and nursing mothers, and health, and also through social welfare.¹²⁵

In light of this preliminary discussion, it seems appropriate to apply the third pair of Gal 3:28 to the issue of “sex-specific violence and all forms of sexual molestation and exploitation.” Such violence, molestation, and exploitation may of course be inflicted by men on other men and boys who are minors, as well as against transgender people. In this paper I focus on such activity perpetrated by men against women.

It should be clear that freedom from such experiences is an inherent right of women. Practices involving sex-specific violence, sexual molestation and exploitation demean women and fail to acknowledge their inherent dignity and worth. When men engage in such activities against women, they violate a normative bond, and those women have a legitimate claim against those men. Such behavior has long been and, unfortunately, continues to be systemic and viewed by many men as within the bounds of acceptable behavior.

The recent revelation of past behavior of this type by the film producer Harvey Weinstein has evoked a massive reaction. According to Cable News Network (CNN):

It’s been six months since the man once synonymous with Hollywood inadvertently caused a seismic shift and one of the most important conversations in the industry’s history—and even beyond the entertainment world. What began with a few brave women coming forward about mistreatment at the hands of Oscar-winning producer Harvey Weinstein has emerged into a movement against abuse that has reverberated across industries.

¹¹⁷ SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her*, 217–18. Making this analogy is not a case of Christian supersessionism since the implicit celebration or advocacy of such privilege is frequent in early Christian texts.

¹¹⁸ NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, xii.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10, 36.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 65–95 (Old Testament); 96–131 (New Testament).

¹²³ HEIMBACH-STEINS, “... nicht mehr Mann und Frau.”

¹²⁴ *IBID.*, 233, with reference to PEACH, “Are Women Human?”

¹²⁵ Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen (DGVN), *Gleiche Menschenrechte für alle*, 19; cited by HEIMBACH-STEINS, “... nicht mehr Mann und Frau,” 235–36.

In just half a year, dozens of once powerful men have been held accountable for mistreatment, thousands of people have raised their voices to say, "me too," and at least one industry—people hope, anyway—will never be the same.¹²⁶

The baptismal declaration of Gal 3:28, supported by the creation of women in the image of God (Gen 1:27), calls for a society in which men who sexually mistreat women are held accountable until a time when such behavior becomes a shameful matter of the past.

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