

# New Creation Theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2

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## Abstract

This analytical essay deals with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. The major premise is that new creation theology is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. The biblical and theological analysis of this passage indicates that the Lord Jesus is the beginning, middle, and culmination for all of physical and spiritual reality. More specifically, Paul disclosed that the Son's atoning sacrifice at Calvary makes reconciliation possible between the Creator and repentant, believing sinners. In turn, the Messiah's redemptive work has inaugurated a new era in which the conversion of individual believers is part of God's larger plan to bring about the renewal of the entire universe, concluding with the new heavens and new earth.

## 1. Introduction

This analytical essay deals with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2.<sup>2</sup> The major premise is that new creation theology

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

<sup>2</sup> Within academia, an analytical essay examines and interprets a literary text (such as a portion of scripture). In this case, the threefold goal is as follows: to articulate a major premise; to exposit the relevant biblical texts in their original languages, especially as they relate to the major premise; and to selectively engage pertinent scholarly sources, particularly to ensure the discourse remains factual and objective.

is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. To contextualize the treatise, section 2 broaches the concept of new creation theology within the Pauline corpus. Next, section 3 summarises what Genesis 1–3 reveals about the old, Adamic creation. Then, in section 4, additional background information from other relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings, is presented. Together, these two sections help to establish the narrative framework and theological context from which emerges Paul's discussion of salvation history in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, the latter being the focus of section 5. This is followed by the Conclusion in section 6, which synthesizes and elucidates the major findings of the discourse.

## 2. The Concept of New Creation Theology within the Pauline Corpus

Smith (2012) identifies the 'mission of God' as a key 'unifying theme of Scripture' (28). He further clarifies that the *missio Dei* encompasses God's redemptive activity 'across time' to 'reconcile all people' (112) to himself (referred to as 'salvation history' or *Heilsgeschichte* in German) and his efforts to reestablish his 'righteous and benevolent reign over all creation' (referred to as the 'kingdom of God'). In their deliberation about the 'mission of God', O'Brien and Harris (2012:147–8) go further when they reason that the *missio Dei* encompasses more than just the notion of 'salvation history centred on' the Messiah. Just as important is the Lord's active involvement throughout 'creation

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This approach is considerably different from an argumentative treatise. The primary aim of the latter is not to undertake an erudite exposition of scripture (though it may involve this as a secondary aim); instead, it is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the assumptions, claims, and conclusions of various secondary sources. Doing so requires presenting and evaluating multiple sides of diverse viewpoints, especially as

history’, which extends from the old Adamic ‘creation’ narrated in Genesis 1–3 to the ‘new creation’ described in Revelation 21–22.

Emerson (2013:73) narrows the focus when he observes that the ‘narrative context’ of Paul’s writings ‘emphasizes Christ’s work of new creation’. In this regard, the Greek phrase *kainé ktísis*, which is rendered ‘new creation’,<sup>3</sup> occurs two times within the Pauline corpus: 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15.<sup>4</sup> As Marshall (2004:294) points out, it is as if this ‘terminology’ was ‘accepted language’ readily grasped by the apostle’s ‘readers’. The first text pertains to the spiritual union believers have through faith in the Messiah. The second passage reveals that in order for the lost to be spiritually regenerated, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision makes any difference; instead, it is a person’s humble response in faith to the truth of the gospel. Corresponding to the imagery of the ‘new creation’ is that of ‘new life’ (*kainótetē zōēs*), as seen in Romans 6:4. Paul wrote that just as the Son was ‘raised from the dead’, so believers are joined with him in his resurrection to experience the fresh quality and vitality of new life.

In order for there to be a new creation, it must be preceded by an old creation. Noteworthy is the contrast Paul made in his writings between the ‘old self’ versus the ‘new self’. For instance, Romans 6:6 states that the believer’s ‘old self’ (*palaiòs ánthropos*; literally ‘old man’) was crucified with the Son. Paul was referring to everything people were before trusting in the Son for salvation, when they were still enslaved to

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they relate to the central theoretical argument developed by the author (cf. Booth, Colomb, and Williams 2008:13–15; Mouton 2001:xii–xiv; Vyhmeister 2008:4–5).

3 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from scripture are taken from the 2011 NIV.

4 A scholarly explication of Galatians 6:15, particularly as it relates to the theme of Paul’s new creation theology is beyond the scope of this essay. Such an undertaking

sin (cf. 3:9), were ungodly (cf. 5:6), and were an enemy of God (cf. vs. 10). In short, the 'old self' is a person's metaphysical state before being born again. The apostle declared in Ephesians 2:15 that prior to the advent of the Messiah, Jews and Gentiles existed as distinct human entities; but now with the Son's resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, he 'creates' (a rendering of the Greek verb *ktízo*) believing Jews and Gentiles into one 'new humanity' (*kainòn ánthropon*; literally 'new man'), that is, an entirely new metaphysical body known as the Church.

In Ephesians 4:22–24, Paul figuratively referred to the removal of the 'old self' (*tòn palaiòn ánthropon*; literally 'the old man') and the donning of the 'new self' (*tòn kainòn ánthropon*; literally 'the new man'). As in Romans 6, the 'old self' in Ephesians 4:22 denotes the sinful nature within people, which gives rise to unholy ways of thinking and acting. Like worn-out clothing, this deteriorating and wretched state of existence is replaced by the spiritual transformation that comes through faith in the Son. Moreover, verse 24 discloses that the 'new self' is 'created' (a rendering of the Greek verb *ktízo*) in God's image or likeness (literally, 'according to God'). Similarly, in Colossians 3:9–10, Paul made a sharp distinction between the 'old self' (*tòn palaiòn ánthropon*; literally 'the old man') and the 'new self' (*tòn néon*; literally 'the new [man]'). The apostle also referred to the latter as 'being renewed' (*tòn anakainoúmenon*) to become increasingly like the 'Creator' (*tou ktísantos*). The picture is that of believers stripping off all the disgusting habits they had when in their unregenerate state and clothing themselves with godly behaviour that reflects the 'image' (*ekóna*) of the Lord.

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(tentatively) remains the focus of a forthcoming journal article that seeks to build on and extend the insights arising from the present analytical essay.

### 3. The Old Adamic Creation in Genesis 1–3

The information broached in the preceding section is representative of the new creation theology that appears in the writings of Paul. Westermann (1974:39) explains that the ‘New Testament message receives its historical place’ from the ‘source and context’ found in the creation texts recorded in the Old Testament. In particular, Genesis 1–3, with its account of humanity’s creation and subsequent fall, provides a crucial literary backdrop and theological foundation for Paul’s teaching.

For instance, in Romans 8:19–22, the apostle explained that the present metaphysically corrupted state of the old creation is the result of sin and death entering the human experience (cf. 5:12). Paul noted that at the end of the present age comes the revealing of the ‘children of God’ (8:19) as well as the ‘redemption’ (v. 23) of their ‘bodies’. Apparently, both occur simultaneously, related as they are to the release of the entire cosmos ‘from its bondage to decay’ (v. 21), in which the term ‘cosmos’ denotes the ‘entire universe as an organized entity’ (Oden 1992:1162). In the meantime, ‘creation waits in eager expectation’ (v. 19) and believers ‘groan inwardly’ (v. 23) for their promised freedom.<sup>5</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of the present section to undertake a detailed biblical and theological analysis of the Genesis creation narrative, it is beneficial to provide a cogent elucidation of what chapters 1–3 reveal about the old, Adamic creation.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, the

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5 For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of Romans 8:1–39, cf. Lioy 2011:142–151, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works this monograph cites that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

6 For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of Genesis 1–3, cf. Lioy 2005:23–55; Lioy 2010:5–15; and Lioy 2011:13–23, 25–37, 86–104, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works these monographs cite that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

old Adamic creation was predominately theocentric in outlook and stressed the following three doctrinal truths: God's supreme reign over the cosmos; his active presence and involvement in the world; and his care and provision for his creation, including humankind.

Regarding the aetiology of humankind, several affirmations arise. One key tenet is that the emergence of *homo sapiens* was God's final and decisive act of creation. His choice to make people in his image encompasses both a special character (or quality) and a role (or task). Also, while the first human couple existed in a genetically pristine state as persons having moral integrity, they wilfully sinned against God. As a result, the primeval pair experienced spiritual separation from him and one another. A further dire outcome is that to this day, all Adam and Eve's physical descendants are born as mortal creatures for whom the *Imago Dei* has been defaced (though not obliterated).

From a New Testament perspective, the teleology of the human race is centred in the Saviour. As the underlying agent of creation, he brings the promise of new life to fruition, along with the assurance that future glory will supplant present suffering. The Messiah's resurrection from the dead is also the guarantee that at his Second Advent, believers will receive resurrection bodies that are glorious and imperishable. Furthermore, when the Saviour returns, he will bring about for his followers a final victory over Satan, sin, and death. In the interim, he enables them to become increasingly more like him.<sup>7</sup> These observations point to a shift in emphasis from a predominately theocentric outlook in the old Adamic creation to a Christocentric

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of the New Testament perspective on the teleology of the human race centred in the Saviour, cf. Lioy 2005:57–87; Lioy 2010:87–134; and Lioy 2011:127–212, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works these monographs cite that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

orientation in the writings of Paul, including 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, which is the principal focus of this analytical essay.

#### **4. Background Information from Relevant Old Testament Passages and Extra-canonical Jewish Writings**

Paul's new creation theology, including that found in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, did not arise in a conceptual vacuum; instead, he formulated his views within the context of a vibrant literary tradition that extended beyond the opening chapters of Genesis to include other relevant Old Testament eschatological passages, as well as pertinent Jewish apocalyptic literature written during the Second Temple period (commonly understood to extend from 530 BC to CE 70). It is conceded that Paul nowhere directly quotes extra-canonical Jewish writings. Echoes and parallels occur, but not explicit citations on the intertestamental literature. That said, it is reasonable to surmise that the apostle, as a highly educated and accomplished Pharisee, was familiar with this literature.

In light of the preceding observations, and in order more fully to appreciate Paul's distinctive perspective, it is worthwhile to consider the general outlook for the renewal and restoration of creation foretold in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, along with the viewpoints expressed within selective extra-canonical writings of Judaism.<sup>8</sup> To begin, in

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<sup>8</sup> The scholarly literature on this topic is extensive. Also, it is beyond the scope of this essay to undertake an exhaustive analysis of the pertinent background information from relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings. Instead, given the modest intent of this section, the following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse: Brueggemann (1997); Chisholm (1991); Clifford (1985); Dyrness (1977); Harner (1967); Harrison (2009); Jacob (1958); Lessing (2010); Marlow (2012); Motyer (2001); Ollenburger (1987); Osborn (2000);

Isaiah 42, the prophet spoke about a coming 'servant' (v. 1), the Messiah, through whom the Lord would bring justice and salvation to people. Verse 8 affirmed that the prophecy about the Servant was given by God and not the 'idols' venerated by the inhabitants of pagan nations. Verse 9 related that earlier predictions had come to pass for God's people, including Israel's epochal departure from Egypt (43:16–17).

In 43:18–19, the Lord directed the redeemed not to limit their thoughts to those past events; instead, he urged them to direct their attention to a completely 'new' undertaking. It was a time when God would defeat their oppressor and restore his people to the Promised Land. According to 48:1–5, long ago Israel's God had foretold their defeat and captivity. He did this so they would not conclude that the idols they worshiped brought about the cataclysmic episode. Then, in verse 6, he declared 'new' events—particularly, Israel's restoration to Judah—which previously he had concealed from their conscious awareness.

Similarly, new prophecies foretelling redemption—such as those about the Servant—would be fulfilled. Only the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator could successfully disclose these unique salvific oracles in advance. Moreover, passages such as Jeremiah 31:31, 33:25–26, Ezekiel 11:19, and 18:31 pointed to a fresh beginning in which God would usher in the renewal of creation (both its physical and metaphysical aspects), the spiritual transformation of his redeemed people, and an unparalleled opportunity for him to dwell with them. Isaiah 65:17–25 and 66:22 bring this future-oriented perspective into sharper relief. On the one hand, these prophecies applied in part to the exiles who returned from Babylon, especially the transformation of

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Reumann (1973); Schifferdecker (2008); Smith (1993); Towner (1996); and Waltke and Yu (2007).



Judah, Jerusalem, and its temple; on the other hand, the language clearly went beyond any fulfilment in ancient history.

For instance, the prophet recorded God's declaration that at his initiative, he would 'create' (*bore*; qal, participle, masculine, singular; Isa 65:17; cf. Gen 1:1) a 'new heavens' (65:17; 66:22), along with a 'new earth', and these would replace the old heavens and earth. Also, the new creation would 'remain' (66:22) or 'endure' forever; likewise, the 'descendants' (*zarakem*; lit. 'seed') of the redeemed, along with their collective 'name', would abide for unending generations to come. Corresponding oracles are found in Revelation 21:1, where the visionary declared that he saw a 'new heaven', as well as a 'new earth'. The latter would be total replacements for their old counterparts, which the Creator had destroyed. He evidently did this to eliminate any corrupting presence or influence of sin (cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12).

The preceding notwithstanding, the seer was not thinking merely of a world free of sin and hardness of heart. More importantly, the eschatological vision consisted of a creation new in all its qualities. Accordingly, Revelation 21:2 depicted the 'new Jerusalem' as a 'holy city', which the Creator sent down out of 'heaven'. Also, he magnificently adorned the New Jerusalem (the 'bride') for her husband (the 'groom'). The implication was that the city surpassed the beauty of everything else God had previously made. There is no consensus on whether this domicile should be taken as a literal city where God's people would dwell for all eternity or a symbol of the redeemed community in heaven. In either case, the seer declared that a new world was coming, and it would be glorious beyond imagination.

Second Peter 3:13 mentioned that Christians awaited with expectancy a 'new heavens' and a 'new earth', for it was there that 'righteousness' (i.e. equity and virtue) truly existed. Verse 14 added that the redeemed

longed for such an elysian future. Consequently, they were to ensure that whenever the Messiah returned, he would find them living in concord with each other and striving to be morally unsullied and irreproachable in their relationships. This sentiment is reinforced in 1 John 2:28, where the writer directed his readers to remain in living communion with the Saviour. Doing so would ensure that at his second advent, they would feel confident assurance, rather than shame, in his holy presence.

The grandeur and glory of the new creation depicted in Isaiah 65 would eclipse any recall the righteous experienced of past traumatic events. Even weeping and crying would give way to gladness, rejoicing, and delight. For this reason, the Lord commanded his people to 'exult' (v. 18) and 'rejoice' always and for all time over what God would 'create' (*bara*). Specifically, he pledged to 'create' (*bore*; qal, participle, masculine, singular) the New Jerusalem as a place of happiness, and the people inhabiting the city would be a source of joy for the community of the redeemed. Even the sovereign of the cosmos would delight in the New Creation. According to verse 19, he would 'rejoice' over Jerusalem and 'exult' over the city's inhabitants. No one within the eternal abode would ever again hear the voice of 'weeping' or the cry of 'distress'.

Likewise, the seer revealed that in the eternal state the Creator would permanently 'tabernacle' (Rev 21:3) among the redeemed of all ages. They would always be graced by the 'tent' of his divine presence. In fact, he would claim them as his chosen people, and they would revel in him being their God. Also, at least five scourges of human existence would no longer exist in the celestial abode—tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain. The new order of things would eliminate all these forms of anguish (v. 4). The Creator assured the righteous remnant that he would fulfil his promise to do away with the old order so that every

aspect of the cosmos would be made 'new' (v. 5). What was inferior and transitory would give way to what was superior and everlasting.

In Isaiah 65:20–25, the prophet described what the new creation would be like for God's people. Interpreters differ over whether these verses refer to the heavenly state (the metaphorical view) or to a future period in which the Messiah would rule on earth (the literal view). Regardless of which hermeneutical approach is preferred, the passage contains four promises of blessing. Those who made the newly created Jerusalem their domicile would experience the following: (1) long lives; (2) productive labour; (3) God's prompt response to their prayers; and (4) an environment free from hostility. When taken together, these blessings suggest that the Creator would reverse the effects of the Fall when he inaugurated the new order.

As noted, the first blessing is longevity (v. 20). The Old Testament indicates that lives stretching to hundreds of years was the rule in early human history. Similarly, in the new creation, infant mortality would drop to zero, for all would live to adulthood. Moreover, a tombstone recording a life span of 100 years would not be remarkable for denoting a long life, but for denoting a short life. The second blessing in the new creation was fruitful endeavours (vv. 21–23). The people of Isaiah's time lived and died with the vagaries of agricultural life. Droughts and pestilence caused great damage. The pagans prayed to fertility and weather gods and goddesses; but the Lord's chosen people were supposed to trust him to supply all their needs.

After the Fall, God's curse on humanity included the declaration that labour to earn food would be difficult (cf. Gen 3:17–19). In the new creation, people would continue to work, but they would have no worries about harvesting the yield resulting from their undertakings. Others (perhaps unscrupulous rich people or invaders) would never take

what the redeemed had earned with their own hands. Generation after generation, the people of God would be blessed. Isaiah related these truths in terms that could be understood. For instance, God's people would live in the houses they built and eat the fruit of their vineyards (Isa 65:21). The Lord would prevent invaders from taking these from them. In fact, God would enable his people to live a long life and enjoy what their hands produced (v. 22). The labour of the redeemed community would not be in vain, and their children would not be destined for calamity (v. 23). After all, the Lord would grace innumerable generations of parents and their children with safety, health, and prosperity. Such blessings would be both physical and spiritual in nature.

The third blessing in the new creation was answered prayer (v. 24). In the ancient Eden orchard, Adam and Eve enjoyed the immediate presence and conversation of the Lord. Similarly, while people in the new creation were praying, even before they made their request, God would answer them. This described a close fellowship between God and people. Such a circumstance is echoed in Revelation 22:3–4. The seer noted that in the new creation the Father and the Son would be seated on their thrones, and the redeemed would worship and serve them continually. God would establish unbroken communion with his people, and he would claim them as his own.

Of noteworthy mention is the fourth blessing in the new creation, namely, peace (Isa 65:25). The Fall introduced hostility into the world, and murder was committed by each successive generation; but in the new creation, even the animals would stop preying on one another, for perfect harmony would reign. This expectation for wellness and wholeness was repeated in the Apocalypse. God promised to give water from the life-giving fountain to everyone who was thirsty (Rev 21:6). This pledge was a vivid reminder of the refreshment and satisfaction

believers would enjoy in heaven. In the eternal state, God would satisfy the yearnings of their soul. This assurance was grounded in the Lord's own nature. Those who prevailed over temptation and persecution during their earthly sojourn would receive an everlasting inheritance as children of the eternal Creator (v. 7).

In the seer's description of the great heavenly city, he referred to the tree of life, first mentioned in the book of Genesis (Rev 22:2; cf. Gen 2:9). In fact, many themes introduced in Genesis find their fulfilment in Revelation. For instance, in Genesis: the sun is created; Satan is victorious; sin enters the human race; people run and hide from God; people are cursed; tears are shed, with sorrow for sin; the garden and earth are cursed; paradise is lost; and people are doomed to death. Then, in Revelation: the sun is not needed; Satan is defeated; sin is banished; people are invited to live with God forever; the curse is removed; there is no more sin, tears, or sorrow; God's city is glorified; the earth is made new; paradise is regained; death is defeated; and believers live forever with the Lord.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Paul's new creation theology was influenced by non-canonical Jewish writings penned during the Second Temple period. It was an era in which pagan governments oppressed religious communities. In response, the visionaries authored apocalyptic treatises declaring the Creator's eventual triumph over the wicked and his vindication of the righteous remnant. Admittedly, the primary focus was on the redeemed as a group, rather than the Creator's transformative work within each believer by his Spirit (especially as seen in Paul's writings, including 2 Cor 5:11–6:2). Furthermore, just as Isaiah 65 and 66 foretold God's establishment of a new created order, so too, pertinent Jewish literature written during the intertestamental

period spoke about a glorious era in which the Lord would renew the cosmos and reign sovereign over it.

By way of example, 2 Baruch 32:6 points the faithful to an eschatological day when the 'Mighty One'<sup>9</sup> would 'renew' his 'creation'. A future 'hope' is noted in 57:2 when the 'world' would be 'renewed', including the 'promise' of 'life'. Later on, God's 'Servant, the Anointed One' (70:10; cf. 72:2) is portrayed as reigning in 'eternal peace' (73:1) over the divine 'kingdom', and establishing worldwide 'joy' and 'rest' (cf. Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–9; Zech 14:9). In like manner, Tobit 15:5 depicts the Creator restoring his chosen people to their homeland and enabling them to 'rebuild the temple'. They also witness the conversion of the nations and marvel at Gentiles worshipping the Lord 'in truth' (v. 6). The Sibylline Oracles 3:808 adds that the Gentiles would offer sacrifices to the 'great king' (cf. Isa 2:2–4; 56:6–7; Mic 4:1–4; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19).

First Enoch 72:1 refers to the 'new creation' that 'abides forever'. Similarly, 91:16 speaks of the 'first heaven' retreating and ending, along with a 'new heaven' appearing and all its celestial 'powers' shining 'forever'. Likewise, Jubilees 1:29 comments on the 'day of the [new] creation' as a time when God would renew the 'heavens', the 'earth', and whatever they contained by his mighty power. In that future day, the Lord would establish his 'sanctuary' in 'Jerusalem', which was located on 'Mount Zion', and bring about an era of 'healing', 'peace', and 'blessing' for 'all the elect of Israel'. Later, in 4:26, it is declared that in the 'new creation', God would consecrate the 'Garden of Eden', the 'Mount of the East', 'Mount Sinai', and 'Mount Zion'. In turn, this would lead to the 'sanctification' of the 'earth', including the

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9 All quotes from the Pseudepigrapha are taken from Charles (1913) and Charlesworth (1983). Also, all quotes from the Deutero-Canonicals/Apocrypha are taken from the NRSV.

elimination of planet's 'guilt' and 'uncleanness' for innumerable 'generations' to come. In 4 Ezra 7:75 is recorded the priestly scribe wondering whether, following his 'death', he and his pious colleagues would be preserved in 'rest' until the moment when God renewed the 'creation'. Finally, the Apocalypse of Abraham 9:9 depicted God pledging to show the patriarch what the Creator brought into existence and subsequently 'renewed' by his 'word'.

In stepping back from the preceding discourse, several insights arise. Whether it was the end-time writings authored during the Old Testament era or the Jewish apocalyptic literature penned during the Second Temple period, the focus was on a future messianic age of redemption when God delivered his people. The salvation could be from their own sinful inclinations or the oppression of their pagan foes. In both cases, the emphasis was on the faith community as a group, rather than the lives of individual believers. Prior historical events, such as the Israelites' exodus from Egypt or their return to the Promised Land from exile in Babylon, became archetypal of the Lord's deliverance. Indeed, the Servant's atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world accomplished a new exodus and established a new covenant.

The righteous remnant's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, along with their subsequent restoration to their homeland, became the basis for convincing them that the Creator would vindicate them, especially by dealing decisively with their antagonists. The people of God were encouraged to look beyond the limited scope of past historical events, as well as the confinements associated with their own temporal circumstances. They were to recognise that the Lord intended to replace the old order with a completely new one. In both canonical and extra-canonical Jewish writings, the latter were referred to as the 'new heaven' (or 'heavens') and the 'new earth'. These designators, which

also appear in eschatologically-oriented New Testament literature, pointed to a metamorphosis so radical and far reaching that it would result in a fresh beginning for the regenerate inhabitants of God's kingdom.

The divine promise of the material transformation of the universe was accompanied by his pledge to spiritually renew the righteous remnant. He would also bless his redeemed children with an unparalleled opportunity to commune with him. They would become people known for their virtue and equity, which suited their residence in an eternal domicile known as the 'holy city' and the 'new Jerusalem'. In short, both the people of God and their magnificent abode would be characterised by righteousness. Concord would replace acrimony, and piety would supersede debauchery. Furthermore, the prior traumas connected with temporal earthly existence would give way to gladness and rejoicing, especially as God's people exulted in the blessing of his glorious, sustaining presence. Indeed, the joys of the new cosmic order would so eclipse the sorrows of the old order that the latter would soon be forgotten and never again recalled.

## **5. The New Creation Theology of Paul in Second Corinthians 5:11–6:2**

As noted in section 1, sections 3 and 4 help to establish the narrative framework and theological context that emerges from Paul's discussion of salvation history in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. In 5:9–10, the apostle emphasized the importance of believers' living in a way that pleased the Lord, for they knew that at the end of the age he would appraise how they conducted themselves during their earthly sojourn. The future time of reckoning motivated the apostle to please the Lord by serving others in His name as long as Paul lived on earth. Also, by his example, he encouraged his readers to do the same. The apostle's reference in verse



11 to the ‘fear of the Lord’ (*phóbon tou kyríou*; an objective genitive) is an intentional link to the preceding passage.<sup>10</sup> Paul did not have in mind a cringing dread, but rather a reverential disposition produced by an awe of one’s accountability before the all-knowing Creator (cf. Prov 1:7; 9:10; 14:2; 15:33; Eccl 3:14; 12:13).<sup>11</sup>

A superficial overview of 2 Corinthians 5:11 might lead to the incorrect supposition that the Greek phrase *ánthropous peíthomen* (‘trying to persuade people’) mainly referred to unbelievers; however, the immediate literary context indicates the apostle had in mind at least

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10 In this section, the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland / United Bible Societies’ *Novum Testamentum Graece* have been used. Also, unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are my personal translation of the respective biblical texts being cited. Moreover, I have intentionally refrained from filling every paragraph and page in this portion of the analytical essay with an excessive number of formal citations from secondary sources. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the lexical and grammatical sources I consulted in the researching and writing of the corresponding discourse: *A dictionary of biblical languages: Greek New Testament* (J Swanson); *A grammar of the Greek New Testament* (N Turner, JH Moulton, and WF Howard); *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (FW Danker, ed.); *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* (H Balz and G Schneider, eds.); *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains* (JP Louw and EA Nida, eds.); *Greek grammar beyond the basics: an exegetical syntax of the New Testament* (DB Wallace); *Greek New Testament insert* (B Chapman and GS Shogren); *New international dictionary of New Testament theology and exegesis* (C Brown, ed.); *The Lexham discourse Greek New Testament* (S Runge, ed.); *The new linguistic and exegetical key to the Greek New Testament* (CL Rogers); *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (G Kittel and G Friedrich, eds.); and *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (C Spicq; JD Ernest, ed.).

11 The scholarly literature on 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2 is extensive. Also, the majority of relevant exegetical and theological works frequently convey the same sort of information on this Pauline passage. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse: Balla (2007); Barnett (1997); Beale (2011); Best (1987); Bruce (1980); Garland (1999); Gundry-Volf (1993); Guthrie (1981); Harris (2005); Hughes (1962); Keener (2005); Kistemaker (1997); Ladd and Hagner (1993); Lenski (1961); Levison (1993); Lowery (1994); Martin (1986; 1993); Marshall (2004); Morris (1986); Mueller (1934); Plummer (1978); Sampley (2000); Schreiner (2008); Stott (2006); Thielman (2005).

some of the Christians at Corinth. This understanding is reinforced by the fact that Paul had to spar with several sets of opponents, including false prophets from outside the congregation as well as antagonists from within the fellowship. In trying to convince his readers about his honesty and truthfulness in proclaiming the gospel, Paul opened himself up to them. He was confident that the sincerity of his motives was clearly evident (*pephanerómetha*; perfect, passive, indicative) to God; and the apostle hoped (*elpízo*; present, active, indicative) that the moral sensitivities (*syneidesesin*; lit. 'consciences') of his readers would lead them to a similar conclusion.

Paul explained that, in choosing to be so transparent, he had no desire to solicit any acclaim (*synistánomen*; present, active, indicative; lit. 'commend' or 'request approval'; v. 12) from the believers at Corinth. The apostle's previous decision to defend the integrity of his ministry (cf. 3:1; 4:2) was due to the fact that outsiders had come to the church and questioned his authority. For this reason, Paul sought to remain above board in his conduct as a minister of the gospel. He also wanted to give his readers a favourable 'opportunity' (*aphormén*; or 'occasion'; 5:12) to respond to his antagonists, who revelled (*kauchomévous*; present, either middle or passive, participle; lit. 'boast') in having a showy ministry (*prosópo*; lit. 'appearance'), rather than in cultivating a genuine, virtuous character (*kardia*; lit. 'heart').

Barnett (1997:282) explained that outside the New Testament, the Greek noun *aphormé* ('opportunity', 'occasion') was used as a 'military' metaphor to refer to establishing a suitable base of operations or a beachhead for troops. In verse 12, the idea was that of Paul providing the Corinthians with an appropriate starting point for them to affirm (*kauchématos*; lit. 'boast about') the purity of his motives to his detractors (cf. 1:12–23). Paul did not think it was necessary for him to prove his claim to be an apostle, especially since his God-given

authority as a church leader was the basis for his mandate to establish a congregation in the city (cf. Acts 18:9–11; 1 Cor 1:1–2; 2 Cor 1:1). In persuading the Corinthians, the missionary wanted them to objectively consider the evidence. By doing so, they could discern that Paul’s heart-driven ministry contrasted sharply with the pretentiousness of his opponents.

There are at least three different views regarding what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 5:13 when he used the Greek verb *exéstemen* (aorist, active, indicative; ‘beside ourselves’). He could have been referring to a charge levelled by his critics that he was guilty of making outlandish claims as an apostle, or that he was off-centre in his presentation of the gospel, or that he was characterised by aberrant religious behaviour. The corresponding verb *sophronoumen* (present, active, indicative) emphasized Paul’s ability to reason in a lucid, sensible way. On the one hand, some concluded that Paul was insane; on the other hand, he insisted that whatever he did was intended to glorify God and benefit Christians. Accordingly, the apostle rejected the charge of his rivals that he was merely concerned about making a name for himself.

In verse 11, Paul noted that his accountability before the Saviour was one incentive for the apostle to be virtuous in his ministry to others. According to Keener (2005:184), verse 14 disclosed that the ‘love of Christ’ was a second motivating factor. The Greek phrase *agápe tou Christou* is best understood to be a subjective genitive, namely, the love that originated from the Saviour. Expressed differently, the mercy he showed to humankind, as evidenced in his atoning sacrifice, compelled Paul to serve others sacrificially. The Greek verb *synéchei* (present, active, indicative) denoted exercising continuous control over something. Here, it was as if Paul felt the grip of an outside celestial force exerting itself on him. Specifically, he had received Jesus’

unconditional love; in turn, as Harris (2005:419) states, the apostle was left with no other 'choice' than to reach out to the lost with the gospel, and minister to the needs of his fellow believers.

There is no scholarly consensus concerning the best way to understand the Greek statement rendered 'one has died for all; therefore all have died' (v. 14). In particular, does 'all' (*pánton* and *pántes*, respectively) refer to all people or all Christians? If it means all people, then perhaps Paul was emphasising two important and interrelated theological truths: (1) Jesus' death confirmed the spiritual death of unbelievers (cf. Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1); and (2) his substitutionary, atoning sacrifice (cf. the use of the preposition *hypér* in 2 Cor 5:14) caused believers to die to their unregenerate self (cf. Gal 2:20). Regardless of which interpretation is preferred, the implication was that through faith in the Son, repentant sinners received new life in their baptismal union with him and had a mandate to serve the lost rather than their sinful nature (cf. Rom 6:3–7).

In 2 Corinthians 5:15, Paul reiterated the importance of being spiritually regenerated and transformed in the way one lived (cf. the dual use of Greek verb *záo*, 'to live,' i.e. *zontes* and *zosin*, respectively). The historical reality of the Son's death (*apothanónti*; aorist, active, participle) and resurrection (*egerthénti*; aorist, passive, participle) provided the motivation for the redeemed to live for him (cf. the use of the conjunction *hína* to express purpose). This meant that believers were no longer to adopt the pagan mind-set and mores of the present age; instead, they were to let the Spirit, through the ministry of the Word, metamorphose their intellect, emotions, and will (cf. Rom 12:1–2).

This ongoing process of change included refusing any longer to evaluate (*oídamen*; perfect, active, indicative; 'know' or 'understand'; 2 Cor 5:16) people according to selfish human considerations (*sárka*; lit.

‘flesh’) or assess them from an external human perspective. For Paul, the latter included discontinuing the use of an unregenerate mind-set (*sárka*; lit. ‘flesh’) to appraise (*ginóskomen*; present, active, indicative; ‘perceive’ or ‘comprehend’) Jesus of Nazareth (in which the Greek verbs *oída* and *ginósko* are more or less synonymous). The apostle inferred, however, that before his conversion he had mistakenly regarded (*egnókamen*; perfect, active, indicative) the Son as a mere human being, as well as a blasphemer and lawbreaker who deserved to experience God’s curse in an ignoble form of death (cf. Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13).

Having a transformed perspective was the result of the new birth changing a believer’s life. Paul declared that repentant sinners became a ‘new creation’ (*kainé ktísis*; 2 Cor 5:17) when they were united to the Son by faith (cf. the use of the Greek phrase *en Christo*). (In this context, the rendering of *ktísis* as ‘creature’ seems less accurate.) As Levison (1993:189) observes, there are three aspects operative in Paul’s thinking about the ‘new creation’: (1) ‘individual converts’; (2) the ‘community of faith’; and (3) the ‘cosmos as a whole’. While of primary concern here for the apostle was the spiritual status of each believer, being born again also had ramifications for the body of Christ, as well as the entire universe. Put another way, the believer’s change in status had broad metaphysical and ontological implications.

To illustrate, God radically reshaped the sinful lives of the regenerate, and in a sense, recreated them. Consequently, what previously existed (*archaia*; esp. the old, sinful nature) was removed (*parelthen*; aorist, active, indicative; lit. ‘pass away’ or ‘cease to exist’) to make room for what was ‘new’ (*kainá*) both chronologically and qualitatively. The triune God was the sovereign source and agent in bringing about this completely different existential reality. Put another way, he alone

inaugurated and accomplished the inner recreating of the believers' fallen human nature. Indeed, the Greek phrase *tá pánta ek tou Theou* (lit. 'all [these] things [are] from God'; v. 18) emphasised that he was the sole author of this second creation, just as he was of the first. Furthermore, with the advent of the Messiah, a new era of reconciliation was inaugurated (cf. the use of the verb *katalláxantos* and the related noun *katallages*).

Fittingly, as Barnett (1997:296) elucidates, the conversion of individual believers (an anthropological-existential emphasis) was part of God's larger plan to bring about the renewal of the entire universe, concluding with the new heavens and new earth (a soteriological-cosmological emphasis; cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Specifically, the initiative the Father took in 'reconciling' (*katalláxantos*; aorist, active, participle; 2 Cor 5:18) the lost to himself (*hemas heauto*) was accomplished through (*diá*) the agency of his Son. In turn, God entrusted (*dóntos*; aorist, active, participle) to evangelists such as Paul (along with all believers; cf. the use of the inclusive first person personal pronoun *hemas*, 'us') the 'task' (*diakonían*; or 'ministry') of proclaiming the good news, namely, that the Creator wanted to reestablish the broken relationship (*katallages*) between himself and the unregenerate.

In verse 19, Paul clarified the core teaching of the gospel. Specifically, it was through the Son's atoning sacrifice that the Father was establishing peace (*katallásson*; present, active, participle; lit. 'reconciling') between himself and the creation (*kósmos*; lit. 'world'). The preceding truth indicated that Paul, in his teaching on the atonement, did not just have individual believers in mind. As Martin (1986:136, 146, 152, 158) noted, the apostle was also emphasising a broader theological 'horizon', namely, one that included the entire universe (cf. Col 1:19–20).

Even so, as Barnett (1997:298–9) pointed out, in 2 Corinthians 5:19, *kósmos* also included earth's human inhabitants, all of whom were estranged from the Creator, languishing as slaves to Satan and sin, and existing under the dominion and censure of the Mosaic Law. The Greek verb *katallásson* (lit. 'reconcile') denoted the overcoming of ill will and alienation, along with the renewing of love, peace, and harmony between two parties. When sin entered the human race and established control over people, God in his absolute holiness could not allow human beings to remain in his presence (at least in the same sense as before). Sin caused people to rebel against God and live without any consideration of their Creator. Because of their sinfulness, the Lord stood opposed to them.

Amazingly, the Father, out of his unconditional love for the lost, allowed his Son to die on the cross. In turn, the Son's love for the unsaved prompted him to become an atoning sacrifice. Through the work of the Redeemer, a change of relationship was made possible in which enmity could be replaced by harmony and fellowship. God was the one who took the initiative to bring people back to himself in a new sphere of existence; and the peaceful relationship repentant sinners experienced with the Father was based on what the Son did at Calvary.

In turn, the Lord conferred (*thémenos*; aorist, middle, participle; v. 19) on believers such as Paul the responsibility of urging others to receive the message (*lógon*; lit. 'word') of his gracious offer of peace and forgiveness (*katallages*; lit. 'reconciliation'). The apostle responded to this profound display of God's mercy by becoming a steward of the gospel the Father entrusted to his care. This consisted of announcing that the Son's redemptive work on the cross made it possible for the Father to pardon the lost and re-establish their relationship with him. Paul explained that God, instead of keeping an inventory (*logizómenos*;

present, either middle or passive, participle; lit. 'count' or 'reckon') of past 'transgressions' (*paraptómata*; or 'trespasses'), graciously offered forgiveness and peace to all who believed. The apostle felt privileged that the Creator had bestowed on him the task of declaring the good news to others.

Paul regarded the Christian's role in proclaiming God's reconciliation as that of 'ambassadors' (*presbeúomen*; v. 20) on behalf of the Messiah (in which the Greek phrase *hypér Christou* appears at the beginning of the verse for emphasis). As Harris (2008:446) remarked, the apostle considered himself to be 'God's mouthpiece' to the Corinthians, as well as to others around the world who needed to hear the gospel. Through Paul (and other heralds of the good news; cf. the use of the inclusive first person personal pronoun *hemon*, 'us'), the Saviour urged everyone to be restored to friendship (*katallágete*; aorist, passive, imperative; lit. 'be reconciled') with God. The tenses of the two verbs the apostle used—*parakalountos* (present, active, participle; lit. 'make an appeal or plea') and *deómetha* (present, middle, indicative; lit. 'beg,' 'implore,' or 'entreat')—indicate that an ongoing effort was put forth to convince people of their need for redemption.

In the first century CE, ambassadors represented the leader of one country to another. These officials did not act on their own authority or promote their own agendas; instead, they communicated and advocated the position of their nation's leader. During Paul's day, this title was usually reserved for Cæsar's legates in the East. The duties of such an appointee were varied. As representatives of the Roman Empire, Cæsar's emissaries were constantly putting out political fires, which would ignite in conquered lands. While Rome's first priority was to maintain its power, it was also interested in upholding law and order.



The empire's ambassadors were essential to maintain the *Pax Romana* (or Roman peace, as it was called) between Cæsar and his dominions. His representatives were given a great deal of authority, as well as the power to negotiate. On the one hand, they pledged never to compromise Cæsar's interests; on the other hand, they sought to achieve some sense of reconciliation with each of the conquered countries. For this reason, ambassadors were usually considered messengers of peace, even when Rome's vassal states and client kingdoms sometimes regarded Cæsar's directives as provocative. Because they were his representatives, his envoys had the rights of a diplomat in any country, regardless of the possibility that their right to safe conduct would sometimes be violated. Indeed, the ambassador of an occupying power was often in personal danger.

Verse 21 provides one of the most incisive and significant explanations in scripture of how the Son objectively, decisively, and completely accomplished the reconciliation of transgressors with the Father. As Hughes (1962:211) affirmed, the passage is a theological *tour de force* that overflows with 'wonder'. On the one hand, throughout the Messiah's earthly sojourn, he never violated God's commands, which indicates that Jesus led a life totally free from sin (cf. the Greek phrase *tón mé gnónta hamartían*; 'the one who did not know sin [experientially]'; John 7:18; 8:46; Acts 3:14; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:22; 3:18; 1 John 3:5); on the other hand, in what Stott (2006:148) labels a 'mysterious exchange', God literally 'made [Him] to be sin' (*hamartían epoiesen*; 2 Cor 5:21) or (in accordance with Hebraic idiomatic usage) to become a sin offering to propitiate humanity's iniquities (cf. Isa 53:6; Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 2:24).

At Calvary, the Redeemer took the place of the lost as their sacrificial substitute and bore the punishment they deserved (cf. the use of the

Greek preposition *hypér*, twice in 2 Cor 5:20 and once in v. 21). The *hína* conjunction (adverbial to denote purpose and result; v. 21) indicated that the Son willingly became humanity's representative sin-bearer, not only so that repentant sinners could have their iniquities forgiven, but also so that they could be made right with the Father. If the phrase *dikaíosýne Theou* ('righteous of God') is an all-inclusive genitival construction, then it would mean that the Father was simultaneously the possessor, source, and agent of righteousness, which through the Son, he imputed to believers (cf. Rom 1:17).

The 'four arms of the cross' (Wittmer 2013) are a useful illustration for making sense of what Jesus did on behalf of the lost: (1) 'downward, toward Satan'—this *Christus Victor* 'aspect of the cross' was a reminder that the Son 'died to defeat Satan', the archenemy of believers who 'held the power of sin and death' (cf. Col 2:15; Heb 2:14–15; 1 John 3:8); (2) 'upward, toward God'—this 'penal substitution' aspect of the cross was a reminder that the Son appeased the 'Father's wrath' and 'satisfied' his eternal justice by 'bearing' the 'penalty' of humanity's sin in their 'place' and as their perfect substitute (cf. Rom 3:25–26; Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 2:2; 4:10); and (3) 'sideways', toward the lost—this aspect of the cross provided a 'moral influence' and 'example' by demonstrating how much God loved humankind (cf. Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16: 4:7–12). In short, the divine 'goal' was *Christus Victor*, the 'means' was 'penal substitution', and one 'benefit' (among many) was the Messiah's 'example' of 'love' for all people.

God worked (*synergountes*; present, active, participle; 2 Cor 6:1) through bondservants such as Paul to unceasingly urge (*parakaloumen*; present, active, indicative) individuals such as the Corinthians not to ignore or squander the divine gift of 'grace' (*chárin*; 'unmerited favour') they had 'received' (*déxasthai*; aorist, middle, infinitive) by faith. There are at least two different ways of interpreting the Greek

phrase *eis kenón* ('in vain' or 'uselessly'). One view is that the apostle's pointed remark was for those in Corinth who heard the gospel but remained unregenerate. Because they refused to believe, they were not reconciled to God, despite listening to and understanding Paul's proclamation. Another view is that receiving God's unmerited favour without result or efficacy implied that the behaviour of the Corinthians was not measuring up to their Christian profession. Expressed differently, their lifestyles had become a denial of what they professed to believe.

In either case, in verse 2, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8 to illustrate the urgency of his appeal. In its original context, the verse foretold that at the divinely appointed time (*kairo dekte*, 2 Cor 6:2), the Lord, through his chosen Servant, would restore the faithful remnant of Israel from exile to their homeland. Ultimately, the promise of liberation from captivity, freedom from sin, and pardon from iniquities was fulfilled in the Saviour. Here, the Greek phrase *heméra soterías* is taken as a descriptive genitive; in other words, it refers to a day in which salvation from God was revealed and inaugurated.

Through the use of the Greek verb *idouí* (aorist, active, imperative; 'behold' or 'listen') twice in verse 2, Paul stressed to the Corinthians that 'now' (*nyn*) was the divinely appointed time (*kairós euprósdektos*) for them to welcome the gospel; likewise, this was the day for them to experience the offer of salvation (*heméra soterías*). The apostle wanted his readers to know that if they procrastinated—namely, if they put off their decision to respond appropriately to the Son—they put their souls in mortal jeopardy. For this reason, Paul urged them to embrace and act on the message of reconciliation while they still had the opportunity to do so.

## 6. Conclusion

This analytical essay dealt with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. The major premise was that new creation theology is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. To properly contextualize the endeavour, background information from Genesis 1–3 concerning the old, Adamic creation was cogently deliberated. This undertaking drew attention to two important realities: (1) the absolute, creative power of God is the backbone for properly understanding the origin and development of the cosmos; and (2) the Saviour operates as the underlying agent of creation.

It is reasonable to infer from a biblical and theological analysis of the Genesis creation texts that whereas the latter narrative concerning the old Adamic creation is primarily theocentric in outlook, the Pauline writings concerning new creation theology are predominately Christocentric in orientation. This statement is brought into sharper relief in light of the following affirmations: whereas physical and spiritual death came through Adam, new life comes through the Messiah (cf. Rom 5:1–21); present suffering one day gives way to future glory (cf. 8:1–39); Jesus' resurrection from the dead serves as a pledge of the imperishable, glorious nature of the believer's resurrection body (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–58); Jesus makes it possible for believers to share in his glory (cf. Heb 2:5–18); and at Jesus' second coming, he brings about a final victory over Satan, sin, and death for believers (cf. Rev 20:1–22:21).

To help further establish the narrative framework and theological context of Paul's discussion of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings were considered. In turn, the analysis resulted in several pertinent emphases. For instance, what was inferior and transitory in the

non-human natural world would give way to what was superior and everlasting. Also, the Creator would reverse the effects of the Fall when he inaugurated the new order and caused perfect harmony to reign throughout the cosmos. Moreover, the Lord's chosen people were to trust him to supply all their needs, for God promised to bless unending generations of the redeemed with wellness and wholeness. Finally, the eternal Creator would grace his children with an everlasting inheritance. The latter included God establishing unbroken communion with his people and claiming them as his own.

The contextualisation resulting from the preceding investigation fostered a more nuanced examination of Paul's new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. Specifically, the prevailing doctrinal outlook from the Old Testament era and intertestamental period informed the apostle's understanding of the Christian life, the way in which he pastored the believers in Corinth, and the approach Paul took in addressing the spurious allegations made by the false teachers plaguing the congregation. For instance, the reality of all people one day standing before the Lord's presence invigorated Paul to be a minister characterised by integrity, to clarify that the religious frauds were self-serving, and that Jesus' true followers in Corinth were to remain virtuous in their conduct (cf. 5:9–10).

The future eternal focus of Paul's new creation theology contrasted sharply with the temporal earthly perspective of his detractors. Whereas they were characterised by arrogance and ostentation, the apostle served others from a sincere heart. Furthermore, on the one hand, Paul's antagonists exaggerated their talents and accomplishments; on the other hand, Paul sought to honour the Creator and edify those being recreated after the image of the Son. It was Jesus' love for the lost, as seen in his sacrificial death on the cross, which impelled Paul to give of himself to

others unstintingly. The latter included proclaiming the good news to the unsaved and offering pastoral care to the apostle's brothers and sisters in Christ.

The cross event provided the basis for Paul's new creation theology. For instance, Jesus' crucifixion established that the lost existed in a state of spiritual death. Also, the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice indicated that the spiritually regenerate were to die to their pre-conversion selves. The latter included renouncing depraved and narcissistic desires and striving to convey the Saviour's love to unbelievers. Moreover, as Christians paid attention to the celestial realities awaiting them in the eternal state, they had greater incentive to abandon the pagan attitudes and moral principles dominating the current age.

Paul's new creation theology was not an esoteric, philosophical premise; instead, at the heart of the apostle's teaching was the reality of repentant sinners being born again and experiencing the spiritual transformation of their minds. Just as God was the sole author of the first creation, so too, he was the exclusive agent of the second creation. In broad terms, the latter involved the renewal of the entire universe. More specifically, the dawn of a new era included the inner recreating of the fallen nature of Jesus' followers. Indeed, the salvation of the lost was necessary to and could not be separated from the Creator's reconciliation of the world to himself.

Through the believers' proclamation of the gospel, God invited the lost to experience a restored relationship with him, one characterised by concord rather than ill will, and pardon in the place of recrimination. This was an ongoing ministry the Creator entrusted to all members of the Church. As benefactors of the new birth, his followers had the privilege and obligation to convince the lost of their need for redemption. It was imperative for them to know that when Jesus

became a sin offering on their behalf at Calvary, he defeated Satan, appeased the Father's wrath, and made it possible for divine righteousness to be reckoned to repentant sinners. For the Saviour's disciples, the present moment was the opportune time to conform their lives to the gospel they proclaimed to the unsaved.

In summary, the new creation theology Paul articulated in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2 depicts the Messiah as the *télos* (i.e. purpose, goal, and fulfilment) of the human race. In this Christ-centred way of thinking, the Saviour is deemed to be the intrinsic author of creation. He alone is the source of temporal and eternal existence, as well as the one who brings to pass the promise of new life and future glory for the redeemed. Likewise, he is the sole agent who holds the cosmos together and carries it along to its divinely-intended consummation.

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