


The theological-ethical implications of Galatians 3:28 for a Christian perspective on equality as a foundational value in the human rights discourse



Author:

Jakobus M. Vorster¹ 

Affiliation:

¹The Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Koos Vorster,
koos.vorster@nwu.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 27 May 2019
Accepted: 31 July 2019
Published: 23 Oct. 2019

How to cite this article:

Vorster, J.M., 2019, 'The theological-ethical implications of Galatians 3:28 for a Christian perspective on equality as a foundational value in the human rights discourse', *In die Skriflig* 53(1), a2494. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i1.2494>

Copyright:

© 2019. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

This article considers equality as a constitutional value from a Christian perspective. In view of the current questions about equality in the emerging post-secular paradigm, the specific aim of this study is to ascertain the relevance of Galatians 3:28 for the value of equality in the human rights discourse. The research focuses on this biblical passage, because Galatians 3:28 has enjoyed considerable prominence in biblical research over the last 30 years. The passage has often been cited in church debates about slavery and racial discrimination, the ordination of women in ecclesiastical offices, gay and lesbian matters, and as the foundation for the equality of all people. Here, I interpret and apply this passage in view of the classic Reformed hermeneutics, which entails that biblical perspectives should be developed taking into account the recent interpretations of the cultural-historical contexts of the biblical material, the ongoing revelation of God in biblical history, the thematic exposition of biblical theology in the classic text (*tota Scriptura*), the grammatical exegesis of passages within these broad perspectives, and the implications within the context of the modern reader. Based on this approach, I argue that Galatians 3:28 was a revolutionary statement describing the total destruction of any form of social superiority and the introduction of a new principle in all human relationships. The central-theoretical argument of the study is that Galatians 3:28, seen within the context of *tota Scriptura*, presents a valuable perspective on the equality of human beings and this perspective can be advantageous to the foundation of the constitutional value of equality in the present post-secular worldview. As part of the interpretation of the passage in light of biblical theology, the subsequent sections deal with the following topics: the formation of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of creation; the deformation of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of sin; and the restoration of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of salvation.

Keywords: Equality; Human Rights; Galatians 3:28; Constitutional Value; Image of God; Creational Gift; Patriarchalism; Racism; Gender; Class.

Introduction

Contemporary democratic philosophy maintains that the equality of all people is a basic principle that could be derived from what people have in common by virtue of their human nature. The focus moves away from what separates them by gender, culture and creed. This principle became part of the discourse on the development of democracy due to the influential political philosophy of Locke and Tocqueville (Rahe 2012:7). Eventually, it found its way into the post-Second World War human rights debate and became the point of departure of the pioneering Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in 1948.¹

The human rights discourse is one of the most important conversations on social and religious ethics since the end of the Second World War (see Tödt 2007:142). Two factors contribute to this state of affairs. Firstly, the idea of constitutional democracy has become a contentious issue in the global political debate, especially in the developing world. This fact is evident from the annual conferences of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, where global human rights

1. This classic document states in Article 1: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood' (United Nations 1948:1). Article 1 expresses the basic value underlying an ethos and bill of human rights. In the South African Constitution of 1996, Article 1 reads inter alia: 'The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights ...' (Republic of South Africa 1996:3). Devenish (1999:35) explains that there can be no doubt that the guarantee of equality lies at the heart of the constitution and that it permeates and defines the very ethos upon which the constitution is premised. Equality is, in his view, an immanent premise of Western liberal and democratic thought. Having said this, Devenish also points out that this concept has been, and still is, frequently misunderstood and that equality has proven to be the most problematic to convert from merely an ideal to the hard world of reality. He refers to 'pernicious racial inequality' in various parts of the world to prove his point (Devenish 1999:36).

violations, such as the practices of unpaid house slaves, debt slaves, child soldiers, child prostitutes and human trafficking, are scrutinised by member states and prominent international non-governmental organisations. Secondly, the role of religion in the public domain has become more prominent over the past few decades (Venter 2015:208). This development results from the fact that the secularism paradigm of the 20th-century modernist worldview is being questioned by post-modernism. Scholars such as Tracey (1994:104), Brown (2004:37) and Cliteur (2010:1) agree and refer to valid findings in modern historical, sociological and philosophical research that show that the secularism paradigm has failed and that a new interest in religion and spirituality is evident. This has had the consequence that the notions of a secular state and privatised religion have become debatable. New options for the implementation of the fundamental right of religious freedom are nowadays under discussion from the perspective of a post-secular worldview.²

The new interest in religion and spirituality raises a fair amount of concern, as it is accompanied by the advancement of extremist theologies within the broad framework of emerging religiosity.³ Emerging extremist theologies pose a threat to the human rights discourse because of its religious justifications for inequality relating to religion, race, gender, class and the resurgence of patriarchal systems. Furthermore, the rising new interest in extremist religion and its perceived role in the public domain, offers new credibility to the mounting political campaign for the recognition of the 'undisputable right' of personal identity above all other rights. This emphasis on personal identity relates to ethnic, sexual, gender, racial, tribal, religious, cultural and other social identities. The quest for the manifestation of personal identity even feeds and justifies certain partisan ideologies. In this respect, the religiously motivated resurgence of patriarchy, xenophobia, racism, homophobia and androcentric preferences in the arrangement of social structures come to mind (see Howland 2005:157). This trend is strengthened by the fact that some mainline conservative Christian traditions still question the concept of equality, justify androcentric and patriarchal family structures, and nullify the role and place of women in church structures.⁴ Furthermore, 'in' and 'out'

2. In her recent evaluation of options for implementing religious rights, Warnink (2005:1) distinguishes between the active neutral option and the active plural option as far as the implementation of the fundamental right of freedom of religion is concerned. This author has considered these and has come to the conclusion that there is the possibility of identifying three more options that arise from the debates about options for the implementation of religious freedom in a liberal democracy. These are the active state-religion option, the active universalistic option and the active theocratic option. These five options, the meaning of each, examples, a discussion on how each would function in a liberal democracy as well as a critical evaluation of each are discussed in one of my other publications (see Vorster 2007:198)

3. Scholars working on 'The Fundamentalism Project' (Marty & Appleby 1991:vii) even speak about emerging 'fundamentalisms' and indicate how this phenomenon is currently equally alive in all the traditions of Christianity, Islam, Jewish Zionism, Hinduism, the Sikh religious tradition, Buddhism, Confucianism and in Japanese religions. Religious fundamentalism, and even religions themselves, have indeed become a focal point. This is not only because of its disturbing influence on world peace, but also because of the tendency to violate human rights and its threat to democracy at large.

4. Roman Catholicism, the Orthodox traditions and certain traditions in Protestantism and Pentecostalism still hold the opinion that women cannot serve in the official structures of churches because of their inferiority according to the doctrine of creation (see Jantzen 2007:36). Male domination, justified by this theology of inferiority, according to Maguire (2007:1), leads to religiously led discrimination against and even implicit abuse of women. Furthermore, 'in' and 'out' group

identification is still present among Christians. It colours their view of people of other persuasions, religions and creeds, and inhibits association and cooperation with the 'others' in the social domain. The tendency to view women as inferior and to reject the otherness of the 'outsiders' is also apparent in many other religions (Gudorf 2007:9).

The emerging extremist theologies introduce certain concerns about the values underlying the ethos of human rights in democratic philosophy, especially the exposition and application of the foundational value of equality. Questions such as the following are raised: Can the naturalist definitions of human dignity and equality, as present in the democratic philosophy and the human rights discourse, be translated into a religious value, taking into account that some religions operate with a pessimistic view of the nature of humans? Are all people really equal by nature and is social cohesion over and against human differences really possible? How can the apparent God-given values of social stratification in religious texts be accommodated in an equalitarian society? These and other questions have entered the human rights discourse as a result of the new relevance of religion (see Bucar & Barnett 2005:3).

This article considers the constitutional value of equality from a Christian perspective. In view of the current questions about equality in religious ethics, the specific aim of this study is to ascertain what the relevance of Galatians 3:28 is for the equality discourse. The research focuses on this biblical passage, because Galatians 3:28 has been prominent in liberationist, feminist, post-colonial and critical theory readings of the Bible over the last 30 years (Aune 2010:162; Lategan 2012:274; Punt 2010:141; Riches 2008:209; Smith 2005:528; Tolmie 2014:105; Woodward-Lehman 2007:39.1). Paul's statement in this text is even called the *Magna Charta* of Christianity (Lennox 2012:211). It has often been cited in church debates about slavery and racial discrimination, the ordination of women in churches, gay and lesbian matters and as the motivation for the equality of all people.⁵ Galatians 3:28 reads: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

.....
identification is still present among Christians and determines their view of people of other persuasions, religions and creeds, and inhibits association and cooperation with the 'others' in the social domain.

5. In the history of biblical interpretation, most major theologians concurred that Galatians 3:28 cannot be applied to human relationships in general, but only to the new relation between Jews and non-Jews in the realm of the church (Eisenbaum 2001:521). However, research on the interpretation of Galatians 3:28 over the past 30 years has resulted in many different and opposing views regarding the social implications of this passage. Hove (1999:97) identifies two major trends in these interpretations, namely an egalitarian reading that interprets Galatians 3:28 as a strong Christian statement on equality not only for the church, but also with respect to universal human relations, and a complementarian approach that suggests, as was done over the centuries, that this passage deals primarily with the inclusion of all peoples in the blessings of God in Christ. In his research about interpretations of this passage over the centuries, Riches (2008:204) discovered that theologians were in the past much more concerned with the issue of the law and not so much about the implications of being one in Christ. Some scholars today continue this tradition and disregard any social implications in favour of a mere spiritual and ecclesiastical reading (see Aune 2010:181-183; Punt 2010:162; Walden 2009:45). Others argue that the passage definitely refers to equality as a universal principle brought about by the redemptive sacrifice of Christ (see Kahl 2001:49; Keener 2018:172; Schüssler-Fioranza 1983:141 & 211-213). It seems that the differences emanate from different hermeneutical approaches to the passage and the different contexts of the readers (see Horrell 2017:125; Kartzow 2010:364; Uzuwke 2010:131). Scholars who depart from a mere grammatical reading of the biblical texts (*sola text*), tend to resort to the complementarian and spiritual interpretation. Scholars who depart from feminist and liberationist readings, as well as a reading from the premise of a consistent biblical theology (*tota Scriptura*) developed by a revelation-historical or salvation-historical approach, lean towards an egalitarian reading.

I interpret and apply this passage by using the classic Reformed hermeneutics. This entails that biblical perspectives should be developed while taking into account the recent interpretations of the cultural-historical contexts of the biblical material, the ongoing revelation of God in biblical history, the thematic exposition of biblical theology in the classic text (*tota Scriptura*), the grammatical exegesis of passages within these broad perspectives and the implications of the context of the modern reader. Using this method, I argue in favour of the egalitarian approach. The central-theoretical argument of the study is that Galatians 3:28, seen in the context of *tota Scriptura*, offers a valuable perspective on the equality of human beings. This perspective can be advantageous to the foundation of the constitutional value of equality in the present post-secular worldview. In an effort to interpret the passage in light of biblical theology, the subsequent sections deal with the following topics: the formation of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of creation; the deformation of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of sin; and the restoration of the principle of equality according to the doctrine of salvation.

The biblical formation of the principle of equality

The creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 highlight several of the unique characteristics of the human being. Firstly, the human being is created in the image of God as a creature who lives in a close relationship with the Creator (Barth 1961:116; Moltmann 1993:221). In the development of a doctrine of creation, the *imago Dei* has been interpreted and applied in different ways, both spiritually and physically. In ancient Eastern creational narratives, the idea of human beings with a divine nature, created as the equals of gods, were widespread (see Kotzé 2019). Conversely, the biblical theology of creation refrains from equating the human being with God in any way. It asserts that the *imago Dei* constitutes a certain quality of the human being. Schwarz (2013:23) argues that being created in the image of God does not imply a special ontological quality; it is rather an assertion of the function of humanity, which has been created and is called forth to rule over the rest of creation. In his view, proof of this can be found in Psalms 8 where the psalmist praises the status and task of humans. He suggests that being created in the image of God:

... is not intended to deify or idolize humanity; it is no license to exploit creation and to subjugate it to one's desires. Being created in God's image means rather to act in God's place, as his administrator and representative. (Schwarz 2013:23; see also Van der Kooi & Van den Brink 2017:263)

Kotzé (2019) entertains the same idea about the meaning of the *imago Dei*.

This point of view is valid, but more can be said about the significance of the human being. Where this concept is used in other passages of the biblical text, it relates to inter-human conduct. Genesis 9:6 prohibits the shedding of human blood

and James 3:9 reprimands humans not to curse others 'who have been made in the likeness of God'. These passages indicate that the human being is more than a mere administrator and representative. The created human being has a certain inherent value. Creation in the image of God awards the human being with a certain characteristic that can be described as human dignity. The human being has a dignity that should be respected and protected by other human beings. This dignity is not a divine attribute, but a gift from God that enables the human being to be a *humane* being in its relationship with God, other human beings and creation. In the development of theology in the biblical text, human dignity is a vital theme that determines the ethic of inter-human relationships and human conduct. The idea is also deeply embedded in the idea of the covenant in the Old Testament as well as in Christology and Pneumatology (see Moltmann 1997:10; Vriezen 1966:186).

Secondly, the human being receives a certain capacity due to the 'breath of life' given by God. Welker (2013) describes this capacity as follows:

Through this capacity, an enormous wealth of not only optical, but also acoustic-linguistic impressions can be accommodated, organized, and variously associated, combined and contrasted with the world of intellectually or mentally accessible images and image sequences. (p. 137)

This capacity also includes a sense of morality and a search for religion. The human being becomes a human person, and these capacities qualify its personhood. This personhood differentiates the human being from other creatures. Modern socio-biology questions any divine involvement in the moral capacity of the human being. For instance, Ruse and Wilson (1985:50) argue that the basis of ethics does not derive from God's will; it is merely an adaptation put in place to further our reproductive ends. Morality is thus simply part of a general and flexible human behavioural programme. According to Pope (2007:253), socio-biology asserts that divine commands and metaphysics are not necessary for the functioning of ethics, and that the human being's sense of morality is the result of its evolutionary development as just another living species (also see Ruse 2009:38). The doctrine of creation contradicts this idea. Considering the biblical notion of the gift of the 'breath of life', the Christian ethicist can conclude that the sense of morality comes from God. Accordingly, the human being is not just one species among others as evolutionary biology advocates, but is distinct in spirit, intrinsic value, character and calling. Furthermore, the human being has a sense of morality and religion, and becomes, in essence, a moral personality and a religious being (see also Bonhoeffer 2004). The next section discusses what bearing evil has on this creational condition.

Thirdly, the human being is created as male and female in a heterogeneous, monogamous marital relationship. Although the practice of polygamy is *described* in biblical history, monogamy is *prescribed* as the order of creation (see Witte 2015:1675). In Genesis 1 to 3, marriage is shown to be rooted

in God's creative act of making humanity in his image of male and female. Both male and female bear the same God-given attributes. Furthermore, God assigns them representative rule, and this rule is the joint function of the man and the woman. Köstenberger and Jones (2004:34) point out that the plural pronouns are used in Genesis 1:28. 'God blessed *them* and said to *them* ...'. Both receive the same mandate. The woman is created as a suitable helper of the man. Köstenberger and Jones (2004:35) are of the opinion that a contextual reading of the expression suggests that the woman is placed alongside the man as his associate (see also Douma 1996:246). However, the word *helper* (Hebrews *Ezer*) does not entail subordination, as the same word is sometimes applied to God himself. In this respect, they refer to Exodus 18:4 and Psalms 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 115:9–11; 121:1–2; 146:5. Vorster (2010:601) as well as Schwarz (2013:28) comment that the Yahwist creation narrative (Gn 2) does not intend to devalue women, but to express a personal correspondence between men and women. Also, in the priestly account in Genesis 1:27, there is no indication of a primal archetypal androgynous being, because sexual differentiation is something given with creation. In consideration of the viewpoints of Köstenberger and Jones (2004), Vorster (2019) and Schwarz (2013), we can conclude that 'helper' merely indicates a functional differentiation between a husband and wife within the margins of marriage – a differentiation that can change according to time and context. The functional differentiation has no universal social meaning that limits the dignity, mandate and freedom of all women.

The above-mentioned characteristics of the human being culminate in a fourth distinct qualification of the created human being and that is the God-given equality of all people. God created men and women as equals. Genesis 1:27 refers to the creation of the human beings as male and female. They both receive the 'breath of life' and are created in the image of God. They have the same mandate. In the second creational narrative, Genesis 2:18 indicates that Eve was created as Adam's equal (Vriezen 1966:445). The equality of men and women should thus be seen as an additional creational gift. Nowhere in the creation of humankind can any indication of the inequality or subordination of women be found. Early Protestant thought regarded Genesis 2:18 as the institution of marriage and as a covenant that entails a true contract of mutual obligation (Johnson 2006:131). Equality lies beneath mutuality and human activity. It will be fair to argue that, in the creational order, the principle of equality is the foundation of the marital relationship.

However, this creational gift of essential equality does not apply to the gender relations only. Ontologically, it applies to all people. The gift of equality extends to humanity as a whole. People are born equal. They are not alike in gender, capabilities, character and culture, but they are inherently equal in the most basic features of human life, namely in being moral, rational and religious beings. The creational gift of equality overarches all differences imposed on them by history such as, among others, racial, ethnic, cultural, social,

and any other differences that may emerge in the life and existence of humans. This principle should thus be the ethical benchmark for the evaluation of political and economic systems and ideologies favouring forms of superiority and inferiority of people. Christian anthropology therefore approaches human relationships from the premise of the equality of all people as a creational principle.

The Christian anthropological principle of equality is thus in concert with the idea of equality in modern political philosophy and can add value to the political discourse on equality as a foundational value in the human rights discourse. In political philosophy and the theory of justice, equality is seen as a natural condition which, according to Rawls (1999:441), determines the range and application of conceptions of justice. Humans have the natural capacity 'of moral personality' and are therefore entitled to equal justice (Rawls 1999:442 footnote 30). He explains that, in this respect, equality applies to three levels. The first is to the administration of institutions as public systems of rules. The second is to the substantive structures of institutions, and the third is to moral beings who are entitled to equal justice. Moral beings are capable of having a 'conception of their good' and they are capable of having 'a sense of justice, a normally effective desire to apply and to act upon the principles of justice, at least to a certain minimum degree' (Rawls 1999:442). These ideas are in line with the creational gifts of the basic dignity of the human being, the human being as a moral personality and equality of the human condition.

The creational perspectives on equality can, on the other hand, not be separated from the hamatology (doctrine about evil and sin). Evil radically influenced the human condition. Due to the fall, the human being lost its capability to serve God and to act as a moral being in a responsible way. Humans became beings without God. How does this new condition affect the principle of equality? This question is addressed in the next section.

The deformation of the principle of equality

Genesis 3 describes the entrance of sin and its effect on the good creation and the human being. Due to the human being's revolt against God, both humans and the good creation fell into evil and lost their created splendour. Reformed theology developed a doctrine of sin, although a confession of sin is not a separate article in the Apostolicum. Only two crucial aspects of this doctrine are mentioned here, as they relate to the theme of this article. In this doctrine the effect of sin is described with the dictums *original sin* and *total depravity*. Firstly, as descendants of the first Adam, all people 'inherited' an evil nature and the judgement of God upon it. This evil nature is described by Jesus as follows in Mark 7:21–23:

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil, thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from the inside and make a man unclean.

Humankind was surrendered to a depraved mind (Rm 1:28). Regarding the effect of evil on creation, Paul says: 'We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Rm 8:22). Thorns and thistles impede the cultural mandate. Evil has distorted the nature of the human being and the nature of creation. Secondly, this total depravity means the 'total misdirection' and 'complete disorientation' of the human being in its attempt to find meaning and purpose in life. Due to their sinful inclination, humans defame God and defy their neighbours, and are unable to fulfil their creational mandate of humaneness and serving God (see Spykman 1992:322).

Van der Kooi and Van den Brink (2017:294) raise a valuable point in their explanation of sin as a phenomenon in the here and now. Their point deals with the involvement of humans in the continuation of evil. The biblical story about sin does not portray people as naïve spectators or mere victims. Humans play a key role in this drama, as they permit evil to continue. The biblical narrative portrays the fallen human as a transgressor of God's commandments – thus as sinner. Immediately after the description of the fall, the biblical narrative reveals how people got involved in the destruction of God's glory and the dignity of fellow human beings. Disobedience to God, violence against each other and the vandalising of creation became the character of human conduct.

Van der Kooi and Van den Brink (2017:305) define sin as an act, power and estrangement. The third depiction is important to the argument put forward in this article. To speak of sin as estrangement explains how people become strangers to each other when they violate the relational ties with which God created them. It refers to a withdrawal from communion with God, other human beings and creation into isolation and self-centredness. In the grip of sin, the human being withdraws from the covenant. Furthermore:

... by withdrawing to its own supposed autonomy, the human persons fail to do justice to people, relationships, animals, the environment, themselves and above all, God. (Van der Kooi & Van den Brink 2017:308)

The authors also argue that estrangement is not a passive condition, but may take a very active form, namely that of rebellion. Taking their argument further, it will be fair to reason that, due to the fall into the grip of sin, human beings aggressively and resolutely rebel against their own nature, their God-given mandate, their fellow human beings and against the reign of God. In this process the virtues of God's kingdom are rejected and replaced with vices emanating from people's urge to reign and to replace God and his kingdom with a human-made utopia. In this revolutionary process, the God-given creational gifts of dignity, humaneness, compassion, equality, servanthood and accountability are replaced with self-serving ideals. Self-centred ideologies, resulting in discriminatory social institutions, have entered the stage of creation.

The first institution under attack is the marital relationship. God created husband and wife as equals in a symbiotic relationship to fulfil their cultural mandate. The heterosexual monogamous marriage reflects a relationship of love, mutual respect and life-long commitment (see Geisler 2010:300). The equality of male and female has fallen by the wayside and has made way for patriarchal marriage and family structures. In the early history of Israel, it was apparent that women were treated as inferiors. In his seminal study of the life and institutions of ancient Israel, De Vaux (1988:39) indicates that women had to call their husbands 'master' as was the case with slaves, as she was the possession of her husband; he could repudiate her, but she could not claim a divorce; she remained a minor all her life; she and the girl-children did not inherit from the husband; the vow made by a girl or a married woman had to be validated by the father or husband, otherwise it was null and void. The social and legal position of an Israeli wife was even more inferior to the man than the position she occupied in the surrounding countries. Over the centuries, the inferiority of women became part and parcel of virtually all social institutions in the Mediterranean world. Besides the various constructs of monogamous and polygamous marriages, women were marginalised in the mainline ecclesiastical structures, had limited rights in political processes and were inhibited in economic activities. Modern society inherited many social structures characterised by male domination and female exclusion or unequal treatment. The creational principle of equality was intrinsically deformed by evil.

The same happened in other social relations. Fallen humans' urge for domination overshadows the God-given creational gifts. Domination replaced the creational covenantal relationships. In inter-human relationships, dominations lead to the idea of superiority of some and the inferiority of others. Besides the establishment of patriarchy, domination resulted in slavery where some people took ownership of others. It also resulted in forms of social stratification between in-groups and out-groups based on all kinds of differences between human beings. Human history became known for wars between nations, tribes and religious groups. Colonisation of vulnerable peoples and countries by 'superior' powers marked the development of humankind, and ideologies such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, ethnocentrism, colonisation and sexism led to the oppression of many by others and to inhuman conduct. Humans revolted, not only against God, but also against each other in search of power. The human being rejected its own personhood.

But, in spite of this revolt, God did not abolish the equality of human beings, nor does he withdraw 'the breath of life'. In this respect, the grace and love of God for his creation break through the fallen creation. The basic virtues of humans remain intact, but the enactment of these virtues is deeply disturbed. The human being rejected the reign of God, and as a result, evil tarnished the *imago Dei*, challenged equality, discarded human dignity, and revolted against the mandate

of stewardship and obedience to God. Equality still stands as a creational gift, but in the realisation of this gift humans fail due to their incapacity to be as they were created, to do what they were intended to do, and to fulfil their divine calling in love and obedience. In spite of this condition, God calls his people over and over again to respect the vulnerable, such as the stranger, the widow, the poor, the children and the slaves. God, as the God of grace and love, resolved to restore the creational order and the covenantal relationships in a new creation. He sent the 'second Adam' to break the yoke of rebellion and to restore, *inter alia*, the creational gift of the equality of all human beings.

The restoration of the principle of equality

The conclusion in Galatians 3:28 can be seen as the foundation of human relationships under the reign of Christ in the present dispensation. The equality of all people in Christ is the heart of all human relationships in the new covenant. This statement is argued in the next paragraphs with reference to relevant new research.

In his exposition of new research, Keener (2018:3) explains that the theme of the gospel, law and promise dominates the argumentative section (Gl 1–4) and the theme of the Spirit, the ethics section in Galatians 5–6, although these themes are interrelated in the theological focus of the epistle. In broad terms, the epistle can be described as an apologetic discourse against certain Judean teachers in the congregations of Galatia, who questioned the authority of Paul and taught that non-Jews (Gentiles) can only be redeemed by observing the law (Gl 3:1–5). They believed and taught that Gentiles, who wished to become children of Abraham and heirs of Israel's promised covenant blessings, had to convert, starting with the initiation ritual of circumcision. Over and against this religious sentiment, the apostle proclaims that true redemption is possible only by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Gentile converts are full heirs of Israel's promises, because they have embraced Christ and received the Spirit just like Jewish believers. They also receive the gifts of the Spirit and are called upon to live by the Spirit by bearing the 'fruits' of the Spirit. It is the Spirit and not external laws that enables true righteousness and freedom. The theology of Galatians is quite similar to the theology of Romans, where the apostle explains the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by observing the law as a condition to inherit salvation.

The argumentation of the apostle in his letter to the Galatians is well structured and can be encapsulated as follows:

- Greetings and the distinctiveness of the gospel of Christ. The judgement of God on everyone who teaches another gospel. (Gl 1:1–10).
- The apostle defends his apostolic authority (Gl 1:11–2:10).
- Justification by faith alone and the gift of faith by the Holy Spirit (Gl 2:11–3:14).

- The promise of God to Abraham and the true purpose of the law. The law did not contradict God's promises and led God's children to Christ (Gl 3:15–25).
- The baptism into Christ and its outcomes: freedom of the supervision of the law, equality in Christ, children of God and heirs of the gifts of the Spirit (Gl 3:26–4:7).
- His concern for the Galatians (Gl 4:8–20).
- The covenant of slavery (Hagar) and the covenant of freedom (Gl 4:21–5:1).
- The ethic of Christian freedom and its consequences – the life by the Spirit. The acts of the sinful nature and the fruits of the Spirit; the fulfilment of the law of Christ (Gl 5:2–6:10).
- The importance of being a new creation (person) (Gl 6:11–17).
- Benediction (Gl 6:18).

Galatians 3:28 is part of the argument about the baptism in Christ and its outcomes.⁶ In his thorough research on the grammatical structure of Galatians 3:26–29, Hove (1999:52) notes that verse 28 is not an isolated saying, but rather an integral part of a larger argument that is framed by the two clauses in verse 26–27 and 29. Three expressions are prominent in verses 26 and 27, namely 'sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus';⁷ 'baptised into Christ' and 'clothed yourselves with Christ'. The believers are no longer under the supervision of the law, but children of God, and there is no distinction when it comes to the household of God. The basis of this blessing is that they are in Christ by accepting Christ in faith. Paul uses the expression *in Christ* more than 80 times in his corpus of epistles. He employs this saying in Galatians for churches (1:22), freedom (2:4), justification (2:17), Abraham's blessing (3:14), being God's children in the Son (3:26) and unity (3:28) (Keener 2018:163). Being 'in Christ' entails a new relationship with God and this new relationship changes all other relationships profoundly. This status also exceeds the historic differences between Jews and Gentiles.

'Baptised into Christ' as a baptismal formula or as an indication of the believer's initiation into Christ, expresses the union with Christ that comes from faith. Unlike circumcision, baptism applied to women as well as men in biblical times. The expression points towards the 'non-differentiation of gender with respect to membership of God's people' (Keener 2018:166). 'Baptised into Christ' is explained by the expression *clothed yourselves with Christ* (Betz 1979:187). Paul is possibly using an old Semitic idiom (see Is 52:1; 61:10; Zch 3:3–4) that points to a life-changing event. This metaphor indicates that people who become

6. Early commentators regard this passage as a baptismal formula in the baptismal ritual used in the early Christian tradition that dates from a pre-Paulinian source (see Uzukwe 2010:112). Betz (1979:186), Martin (2003:124) and Keener (2018:164) discuss this point of view with reference to the various other possibilities for understanding of Galatians 3:28. Lategan (2012:274–279) also addresses this thesis and concludes with valid arguments that 'the focus on the ritual of baptism may be a false trail that keeps us from discovering the full impact of Paul's statement'. In his socio-historical and critical reading of the text, Aune (2010:163) concludes that an understanding of the meaning of Paul's statement does not really depend on a reading of the verse as a baptismal formula. This research will not enter into this debate, because the arguments about a pre-Paulinian source does not influence, to my mind, an eventual egalitarian application of the verse within the context of biblical anthropology.

7. The son-metaphor is inclusive and should be interpreted as 'children' (Cutler 2016:21).

immersed in Christ undergo a change of character and a change in relationships (Hove 1999:60). Galatians 3:26–27 therefore points to the new life and new relationships of Christians that must be realised in a world of alienation and moral decay. Paul explains this new life as a life of freedom 'by the Spirit' in Galatians 5 and 6. Galatians 3:29 uses the image of inheritance. There were limitations with respect to inheritance in the Old Testament. God promised an 'inheritance' of the land to Israel and not to Gentiles, and women were allowed to inherit only under certain circumstances (Nm 27:8; 36:6–9). Furthermore, in Roman law, a slave's testament was not legally binding. The apostle deals with the changes in these limitations as a result becoming 'sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus'; being 'baptised into Christ' and 'clothed yourselves with Christ'. 'Now, in Christ Jesus, all – Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female – are heirs according to the promise' (Gl 3:29; Keener 2018:166). The inheritance language strengthens the argument about the new relationships established by Christ (Cutler 2016:24).

Galatians 3:28 moves from this foundation to the field of political and social ideals and practices (Betz 1979:189). The verse explains, in the present tense, the consequence of these three expressions in terms of race, gender and class. The new relationships encompass the whole of humanity (Snodgrass 1986:174). This statement corresponds with passages such as 1 Corinthians 7:21–24; 12:13 and Colossians 3:9–11.⁸ The anthropological principle becomes clear: Jew and Gentile, male and female, and slave and freeman are equal in the eyes of God. Lategan (2012) explains the principle as follows:

If all believers are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, if all who have been baptized into Christ have been clothed with

8. In spite of this radical statement, certain ostensible contradictions regarding gender relations and slavery existed in the life and ministry of the early churches. In the past, some theologians attempted to harmonise these apparent contradictions, while others such as Raisanen (1986) argue that Paul merely contradicts himself and that it is futile to attempt to harmonise the contradictions. Punt (2010:140) opines that Paul, in spite of his statement in Galatians 3:28, later restored his default position on the inferiority of women. This research does not intend to discuss the reasons for these ostensible contradictions in details, because it has no bearing on the social implications of Galatians 3:28. Yet, a few remarks with reference to thorough research on these contradictions can be made (see also Snodgrass 1986:171; Vorster 2019:162–168). In two passages, namely 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 and 1 Timothy 2:12, the apostle admonishes women to be in submission, because it is disgraceful for women to speak. She must be silent and have no authority over a man. Yet, in 1 Corinthians 11:5, women were allowed to 'pray' and 'prophecy' as long as they wear a veil to honour their head (authority). Furthermore, there are also many examples in the New Testament of women who act as stewards and leaders in the churches (see Alexander 2013:16; Aune 2010:176–177; Heine 1988:219). Women were also fully included in the Spirit's eschatological activity (Snodgrass 1986:175) and were bestowed with the charismatic gifts of the Spirit just like men. Why this apparent contradiction? It is probable that Paul dealt with the default positions in early Christianity while under social pressure (see Downing 2006:181). Corinth was a congregation with many divisions and he wanted to establish order and peace. Therefore, he requested women not to *gossip* (a possible translation of the Greek *lalein*), and in doing so, disturb the peace in the congregation. His instruction to Timothy may also be advice to tolerate the default position of women in ancient society in order: 'to live peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness'. Similarly, Galatians 3:28 can be read as an abolishment of slavery (Betz 1979:192), but the apostle, in his letter to Philemon, does not request him to set free the run-away slave, Onesimus, but to accept the latter as a brother in faith (Phlm 1:15). The reader must distinguish between the *doctrine of equality* of which Galatians 3:28 is the *locus classicus*, and the *pastoral guidelines* issued for certain problematic circumstances. These pastoral guidelines were applicable in the early congregations for the sake of orderly ministry in a culture of gender discrimination, racial differentiation and slavery, but cannot be elevated as universal doctrines applicable to all churches for all times. The radical and revolutionary precepts of Galatians 3:28 must overrule the practices of discrimination in the early churches. Alexander (2013:21) is, to my mind, correct when he concludes his research about the contradiction between the precepts and the practice in some of the New Testament congregations with the statement: 'The radical ideal of Galatians 3:28 functions as a canon, a hermeneutical key to unlock the apparent contradictions of precept and practice.' Therefore, the 'household codes' should also be illuminated by an egalitarian reading of Galatians 3:28.

Christ (3:26–27), there can be no longer Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (3:28). Verse 28 is the climax of a carefully constructed theological argument – consistent with the precepts of an alternative symbolic universe and prepares the ground for ethical implications for believers that will be elaborated in Ga 5–6. (p. 283)

Lategan's explanation corresponds with the earlier view of Ridderbos (1971:56) that the coming of a new age (2 Cor 5:17),⁹ a new reality and a new social dispensation on the strength of the cross and resurrection of Christ is one of the foundational and driving principles in the theology of Paul. A new society (new creation) with a new ethic, encompassing everything, emerged. This nullifies all the previous prescriptions regarding the limitations of equality (see also Fee 2005:179). The principle of equality in Christ cuts through the social structures that came into being after the fall.¹⁰

Galatians 3:28 was indeed a revolutionary statement in the social milieu of the early Christian churches (Betz 1979:190). The Mediterranean world at that time was a male-dominated hierarchical society where people were perceived and treated according to the social standards of superiority and inferiority (see also the socio-historical reading of Aune 2010:176). This caste system was founded on the belief in the intrinsic inferiority of women, non-Greeks and slaves, brought about by the influential philosophical-anthropological ideas of Aristotle and his school of thought (Downing 2006:178). According to Lategan (2012:279) and Rahe (2012:14), Paul intends with his statement to oppose certain degrading statements in Greek and Rabbinic sayings of gratitude. In the 'three sayings of gratitude' in Greek sources, ascribed to Thales and Plato, a man could express his gratitude for 'being born as a human being and not as an animal, as a man and not a woman, and as a Greek and not a barbarian'. In Rabbinic literature, a male, in his morning prayer, could thank God that he 'was not made a woman or a slave'. Paul could not have been unaware of this ethos and therefore his statement in Galatians 3:28 is indeed revolutionary (Lategan 2012:278–279; see also Campbell 2003:62; Chopp 2017:259 who responds to the latter's eschatological interpretation of Paul's ethics). Alexander (2013:14) describes this statement as a radical deconstruction of the basic divisions that structured ancient society, namely divisions of race, class and gender. Campbell (2003:69) defines it as an: '... irreducible radical and therefore also a political and liberationist text' and Snodgrass (1986:161) maintains that this verse contains the 'most socially explosive statement in the New Testament'. Also arguing from this egalitarian point of view, Eisenbaum (2001:506) describes the apostle Paul as '... one of the first people in the Western civilization to deal directly with the problem of multiculturalism'.

9. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he (she) is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor 5:17 – NIV).

10. Equality should not be confused with sameness (see the study of Vorster 2010:601). Equality does not mean sameness in the sense of the abolition of culture and gender (Eisenbaum 2001:518). Man and woman are not elevated to a new androgynous sex; Jews and Gentiles do not abolish their language. Employers can employ employees, but employees do not become the property of the employers to be exploited at will. In spite of differences, people are equal human beings.

Conclusion

With reference to the aim and central-theoretical argument of this study, the question is whether the statement in Galatians 3:28 about ecclesiastical relationships can be translated into a Christian-ethical norm for all human relationships. Does this statement only refer to an equality in faith within the confines of the church, or does it have universal social implications? Can it be offered as a Christian understanding of the equality of all people and a motivation for Christian theology to pursue this essential equality in all relationships, social planning and human rights? When the statement in Galatians 3:28 is argued against the broad framework of biblical theology (creation, fall, Christology and Pneumatology), the universal meaning becomes apparent. The equality of all people is a creational principle. This principle is deformed by evil and resulted in inhumane social institutions. However, Christ brought a new reign and a new humanity that overarches the dispensation of evil with all its destructive forces (see Ridderbos 1971:377; Snodgrass 1986:174). The dispensation of evil is known for inhumane relationships such as patriarchy, racism and exploitation, among others. The new reign of God in Christ restores the creational principle of the equality of all people. This equality must be realised among the people of God (church) and must be pursued as a universal principle for all human relationships. The equality of all people is a new condition for human life brought forward by the reality of God's kingdom in human history. This passage is indeed the *Magna Charta* of Christianity.

Galatians 3:28, seen within the context of a biblical theology that departs from the paradigm of *tota Scriptura*, presents a valuable perspective on the equality of human beings. This perspective can be advantageous to the foundation of the constitutional value of equality in the present post-secular worldview. Christian faith can add its voice to the political philosophy's call for the equality of all people in the formation of modern institutions and the promotion of an ethos of human rights. Christians (and churches) should, with other role-players in politics and civil society, be custodians in the global campaign for the development of the principle of equality in emerging constitutional democracies, especially in the developing world.

Acknowledgement

Competing interest

I declare that I have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced me in writing this article.

Author's contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

Ethical consideration

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

References

- Alexander, L., 2013, 'Women as leaders in the new testament', *Modern Believing* 53(1), 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.3828/MB.54.1.14>
- Aune, D.E., 2010, 'Ga 3:28 and the problem of equality in the church and society', in P. Walters (ed.), *From Judaism to Christianity: Tradition and transition*, pp. 153–183, Brill, Leiden.
- Barth, K., 1961, *Church Dogmatics, volume III: The doctrine of creation, Part 4*, Clark, Edinburgh.
- Betz, H.D., 1979, *Galatians: A commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Bonhoeffer, D., 2004, *Creation and fall*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Brown, C.G., 2004, 'The secularisation decade: What the 1960s have done to the study of religious history', in H. McLeod & W. Ustorf (eds.), *The decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000*, pp. 29–47, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bucar, E.M. & Barnett, B., 2005, 'The "why" of human rights', in E.M. Bucar & B. Barnett (eds.), *Does human rights need God?*, pp. 1–21, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Campbell, D.A., 2003, 'The logic of eschatology: The implications of Paul's gospel for gender as suggested by Galatians 3:28a', in D.A. Campbell, (ed.), *Gospel and gender, a trinitarian engagement with being male and female in Christ*, pp. 58–81, T & T Clark, London.
- Chopp, J.T., 2017, 'Unearthing Paul's ethics: Douglas Campbell on creation, redemption, and Christian moral life', *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11(2), 259–276.
- Cliteur, P., 2010, *The secular outlook: In defence of moral and political secularism*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.
- Cutler, C.S., 2016, 'New creation and inheritance: Inclusion and full participation in Paul's letters to the Galatians and Romans', *Priscilla Papers* 30(2), 21–29.
- De Vaux, R., 1988, *Ancient Israel, its life and institutions*, transl. J. McHugh, Darton Longman & Todd, London.
- Devenish, G.E., 1999, *A commentary on the South African Bill of Rights*, Butterworths, Durban.
- Douma, J., 1996, *The Ten Commandments, manual for the Christian life*, transl. N.D. Kloosterman, P&R Publishing, Philipsburg.
- Downing, F.G., 2006, 'The nature(s) of Christian women and men', *Theology* 108(843), 178–184.
- Eisenbaum, P., 2001, 'Is Paul the father of misogyny and antisemitism?', *Cross Currents* 50(4), 500–524.
- Fee, G.D., 2005, 'Male and female in the new creation', in R.W. Pierce, & R.M. Groothuis, *Discovering Biblical equality, complementarity without hierarchy*, pp. 172–185, Intervarsity Press, Downersgrove, IL.
- Geisler, N.L., 2010, *Christian ethics, contemporary issues and options*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Gudorf, C.E., 2007, 'Violence against women in world religions', in D.C. Maguire & S. Shaikh (eds.), *Violence against women in contemporary world religion*, pp. 9–28, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH.
- Heine, S., 1988, 'Diakoninnen – Frauen und Amter in den ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten', *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 78(4), 213–227.
- Horrell, D.G., 2017, 'Paul, inclusion and whiteness: Particularizing interpretation', *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 40(2), 123–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X17739204>
- Hove, R.W., 1999, *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the gender dispute*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL.
- Howland, C.W., 2005, 'The challenge of religious fundamentalism to the liberty and equality rights of women: An analysis under the United Nations Charter', in E.M. Bucar & B. Barnett (eds.), *Does human rights need God?*, pp. 156–201, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

- Jantzen, G.M., 2007, 'The courtroom and the garden: Gender and violence in Christendom', in D.C. Maguire, & S. Shaikh (eds.), *Violence against women in contemporary world religion*, pp. 29–48, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH.
- Johnson, T.J., 2006, 'Marriage as covenant in early protestant thought: Its developments and implications' in J. Witte & E. Ellison (eds.), *Covenant marriage in comparative perspective*, pp. 124–152, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Kahl, B., 2001, 'No longer male: masculinity struggles behind Galatians 3:28?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2001(79), 37–49.
- Kartzow, M.B., 2010, 'Asking the other question: An intersectional approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian household codes', *Biblical Interpretation*, 18(20), 364–389. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851510X517591>
- Keener, C.S., 2018, *Galatians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Köstenberger, A.J. & Jones, D.W., 2004, *God, marriage and family: Rebuilding the biblical foundation*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL.
- Kotzé, G.R., 2019, 'Reproduction and the responsibility of royal representation: A reading of Genesis 1:26–28', in M. Kotzé, N.M. van Velden & N. Marais (eds.), *Reconceiving reproductive health: Theological and Christian ethical reflections*, pp. 97–124, AOSIS, Cape Town. (ILV Reformed Theology in Africa 1).
- Lategan, B.C., 2012, 'Reconsidering the origin and function of Galatians 3:28', *Neotestamentica* 46(2), 274–286.
- Lennox, S.J., 2012, 'One in Christ: Galatians 3:28 and the holiness agenda', *Evangelical Quarterly* 84(3), 195–212.
- Maguire, D.C., 2007, 'Introduction: The religiously induced illness of women's subordination and its cure', in D.C. Maguire & S. Shaikh (eds.), *Violence against women in contemporary world religion*, pp. 1–8, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH.
- Martin, T.W., 2003, 'The covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14) and the situational antithesis in Galatians 3:28', *Journal of Biblical Languages* 122(1), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3268093>
- Marty, M.E. & Appleby, R.S. (eds.), 1991, *Fundamentalisms observed: A study conducted by The American Academy of Arts and Sciences*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Moltmann, J., 1993, *God in creation*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Moltmann, J., 1997, *The source of life*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Pope, S.J., 2007, *Human evolution and Christian ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Punt, J., 2010, 'Power and liminality, sex and gender and Ga 3:28: A postcolonial, queer reading of an influential text', *Neotestamentica* 44(1), 140–166.
- Rahe, P., 2012, 'Tocqueville on Christianity and the natural equality of man', *The Catholic Social Science Review* 17(1), 7–20. <https://doi.org/10.5840/cssr2012172>
- Raisanen, H., 1986, *Paul and the law*, Fortress, Philadelphia, PA.
- Rawls, J., 1999, *A theory of justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Republic of South Africa, 1996, *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*, South African Government, Pretoria.
- Riches, J., 2008, *Galatians through the centuries*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Ridderbos, H., 1971, *Paulus, ontwerp van zijn theologie*, Kok, Kampen.
- Ruse, M., 2009, 'The biological sciences can act as a ground for ethics', in F. Ayala & R. Arp (eds.), *Contemporary debates in philosophy of biology*, pp.1–44, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford.
- Ruse, M. & Wilson, E.O., 1985, 'The evolution of ethics', *New Scientist* 108, October, 50–52.
- Schüssler-Fiorinza, 1983, *In memory of her: A feminist theological construction of Christian origins*, SCM Press, London.
- Schwarz, H., 2013, *The human being: A theological anthropology*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Smith, S., 2005, 'Biblical interpretation: A power for good or evil?', *International Review of Missions* 94(375), 524–534.
- Snodgrass, K.R., 1986, 'Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or solution?', in A. Mickelsen, (ed.), *Women, authority and the Bible*, pp. 161–181, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Spykman, G.J., 1992, *Reformational theology: A new paradigm for doing dogmatics*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Tödt, H.E., 2007, *Authentic faith: Bonhoeffer's theological ethics in context*, transl. D. Stassen & I. Tödt, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Tolmie, F., 2014, 'Tendencies in the interpretation of Galatians 3:28 since 1990', *Acta Theologia Suppl.* 19, 105–129. <http://doi.org/10.4314/actat.33i2S.6>
- Tracey, D., 1994, 'Theology and the many faces of postmodernity', *Theology Today* 51(1), 104–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004057369405100109>
- United Nations, 1948, *Universal declaration of human rights*, UN document A/RES/217A/III, 10 December, 1948, United Nations, New York.
- Uzukwe, G.N., 2010, 'The church father's interpretations and modern exegesis of Galatians 3:28c, A comparative analysis', *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 27(2), 109–131.
- Van der Kooij, C. & Van den Brink, G., 2017, *Christian dogmatics: An introduction*, transl. R. Bruinsma with J.D. Brat, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Venter, F., 2015, *Constitutionalism and religion*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.
- Vorster, J.M., 2007, *Christian attitude in the South African liberal democracy*, Potchefstroom Theological Publications, Potchefstroom.
- Vorster, N., 2010, 'Are freedom and equality natural enemies? A Christian-theological perspective', *The Heythrop Journal*, 51(40), 594–609. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2010.00576.x>
- Vorster, N., 2019, *The brightest mirror of God's works: John Calvin's anthropology*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, OR.
- Vriezen, T.C., 1966, *Hoofdlijnen der Theologie van het Oude Testament*, Veenman & Zonen, Wageningen.
- Walden, W., 2009, 'Galatians 3:28: Grammar observations', *Restoration Quarterly* 5(1), 45–50.
- Warnink, H., 2005, 'Religious freedom: Current Issues in Belgium', paper delivered at the Conference on Church/State Relations in South Africa on 27 October 2005 in Stellenbosch. (Copy in possession of author).
- Welker, M., 2013, *God the revealed: Christology*, transl. D.W. Stott, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Witte, J., 2015, 'Why two in one flesh?', *Emory Law Review* 64,1675–1746.
- Woodward-Lehman, D., 2007, 'One in Christ who lives within: Dispersive universality and the pneuma-somatics of identity', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3(3), 39.1, 39.19. <https://doi.org/10.2104/bc070039>