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**GRADUATE ADDRESS | Saturday 20 November 2021**

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Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, staff, and fellow graduates. Thank you for the privilege of sharing today. Thank you for the privilege of sharing today.

My research explored the relationship between the Spirit, Christian identity and New Creation in Galatians; with a focus on Paul's pneumatology and his new creation motif in Galatians 6:15. A number of things led to my research focus.

The roots of my pursuit are located in three major influences: Firstly, my family, and, secondly, my earlier church community, both helped inform and shape a deep love of God, a profound understanding of the value and worth of the human individual, the value of belonging and identity, my love of the Bible, and my passion for questioning and learning. Thirdly, my current counselling context has enabled me to see the value an individual has in being able to experience freedom in discovering their true identity. For Christians, this is as children of God within the context of new creation—a new creation reality that is inaugurated by Christ as Lord and empowered and transformed by the Holy Spirit—and the resulting change of praxis that comes from this.

My church background growing up was in Presbyterian and Anglican Churches in New Zealand during the Charismatic renewal of the 1970's and 80's. This was a dynamic time of focussed engagement with scripture and mission, where ideas of personhood and the role of the Spirit were broadly explored. My Anglican context emphasised a balance between spirituality and ministry—Word and Spirit—where a deep appreciation of the text was developed in a context of learning and missional praxis, with a growing emphasis on a personal experience of the Holy Spirit. Moving to a Pentecostal context in the early 90's, I noticed a different focus. While mission and ministry were encouraged, in my new context these were often expressed through a more experiential-spiritual lens—where greater emphasis was placed on the ecstatic activity of the Spirit. Additionally, this was supported by a more dualistic apocalyptic eschatology that emphasised a greater disjuncture between flesh and spirit, and personhood and spirituality (Thankfully this has changed).

Within my pastoral ministry and my counselling practice, I have come to recognise that many are deeply and, at times, negatively impacted by similar dualistic thinking—especially in the area of personal identity and personhood. Teaching Galatians over a 10-year period prior to, and during my PhD, highlighted to me that a number of these issues often resulted from poor theological frameworks around personhood, the Holy Spirit and identity—frameworks which, at times, stem from a misreading of Paul's thought. My teaching also highlighted a gap in both textual and practical theological scholarship concerning the themes of Holy Spirit, new creation and identity in Galatians.

Looking ahead, I have already had the privilege to teach, minister, and counsel throughout my studies, so I am already seeing the fruit of my PhD. Over this time, I have become a better thinker, researcher and (hopefully), a better writer (thanks to the keen eye, red pen and continual challenges of my supervisor, Dr Sean Winter). I have been deeply impacted by Paul's passion for God, for his church communities, and his desire to see those who accept God's grace in Jesus Christ, and who receive the Spirit, discover their true identity. My family, local church community, and my students and Alphacrucis College and Harvest Bible College before that, have experienced firsthand my struggles and musings, but have also benefitted from my studies. Future-wise, I hope to further explore and better integrate the concepts of Identity, New Creation and the Holy Spirit in Paul's thought with that of Counselling, Psychology and Pastoral Ministry.

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**Grant David Buchanan, Doctor of Philosophy, Pilgrim Theological College**

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