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If anyone is in Christ – new creation!

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Abstract: This article investigates the metaphysical transformation that occurs when a believer becomes a new creation, something which hasn't yet been explored in the literature. I start by setting out what this ontological transformation involves, and then provide two models as to how it might go. The first is a type of substratism, based on a theory of mixing, while the second thinks about this transformation in terms of replacementism. Throughout the article I seek to resolve difficulties that both of these models bring, while also showing how other aspects of Christian thought can be explained by these models.

St Paul tells us that 'if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17).[1] This passage seems to imply that some type of ontological change takes place in the believer, such that they are now 'new'.[2] Investigating this type of change, something often neglected in contemporary thought,[3] is important for Christians because it is a change they have supposedly undergone. Exploring this question will give Christians a better understanding of their new identity. I set out two ways of thinking about this,[4] one being a form of substratism, the other a type of replacementism, and address problems that arise from these conceptions.[5]

Newly created believer

Becoming a new creation, so many think, requires an ontological change to take place in the believer.[6] I take this to be the case even if one thinks 'new creation' refers to the restoration of a believer, as this restoration will be ontological.[7] For clarity I propose to use the term 'transformation' to refer to the ontological change that happens to the believer such that they are now a new creation. There are two further things about this transformation which this article shall assume. First, I shall assume that this transformation affects everything that is essential to the believer. Some might think it a radical requirement, but I say this due to thinking that that which is saved is a new creation,[8] and given this,

everything essential to the believer will need to be transformed for them to be saved.[9] Second, I shall assume that the transformation is instantaneous (Grudem (1994), 701; Erickson (1998), 957). Here it is important to note that the transformation I am interested in is also sometimes referred to as 'regeneration' (Erickson (1998), 955–958).[10] This transformation is distinct from the Christian doctrine of sanctification, which happens after regeneration and occurs throughout the rest of the believer's life, at least until their resurrection. As such, transformation in my sense doesn't make the believer perfect, but through becoming a new creation they are enabled to partake in the spiritual life and seek sanctification.[11] Unfortunately, I cannot further explicate or defend these claims here; however, I will provide a few passages of scripture and reference a number of theologians who appear to agree or implicitly imply much of what I have said.

The following passages of scripture seem to provide some motivation for thinking the change which happens at transformation is ontological and encompasses the whole believer:[12]

> A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)
>
> You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)
>
> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The first passage talks of getting a new heart and spirit, and while this might lead some to think this change affects only part of a believer, the Hebrew terms for heart and spirit make it such that we should understand the change as affecting all core aspects of them (Eichrodt (1970), 499). The second text speaks of being born anew, with this *prima facie* implying some type of change of the whole believer, since birth language seems less applicable to merely parts of a believer. Finally, the last passage is perhaps most explicit about the change being ontological and expansive, since we are told everything old has passed away and the believer is now in some way new.[13] In addition to these passages, many theologians also seem to explicitly affirm much of what I have claimed thus far (Grudem (1994), 699; Erickson (1998), 957), while others say things which seem to imply that an ontological change of the believer takes place (Hays (2000), 344–345; Wright (2007), 240; McCabe (2010), 41; Wright (2013), 1072).

Given this *prima facie* biblical support, and further backing from theologians, I shall take it that the transformation which takes place when a believer becomes a new creation is both ontological and encompasses everything essential to them.[14] For those who are sceptical that Christianity claims something as radical as this, they may either wish to see the remainder of this article as an interesting metaphysical exercise, or deem the models given in this article either to raise the probability of this interpretation or lower it.

What then are some of the problems that new creation raises? Here I focus on two. The first concerns how this transformation comes about and whether we can provide any possible metaphysical models of it. The second is noted by theologian Bauckham who writes, 'is this new identity wholly discontinuous with the old?' (Bauckham (2015), 140) The difficulty is how the believer retains their identity through this transformation, since we don't want to claim their identity is wholly lost through this change. Perhaps we can put the problem a bit more formally as follows: let *A* refer to the believer before they are transformed and *B* refer to them once they are a new creation. In some sense *A* is the same person as *B*, but in what sense are they the same given that everything essential to them has been transformed? The models I explicate give two different answers to this question. Before turning to them, however, I need to address one final preliminary.

I have stated that the believer is transformed, but I haven't yet specified what the believer is, what is essential to them. I suggest there are two broad ways of thinking about this. The first says that the believer is strictly his/her soul, as traditional substance dualism has it. The body is merely a vessel that the believer, being a soul, inhabits and uses. The second holds that a believer's fleshiness is in some way essential to them.[15] This thought accommodates reductive materialism, property dualism, Thomistic dualism, and many other views held by Christians. The answer concerning what one thinks the believer is is important, since it will determine what of the believer needs to be transformed. For instance, if one thinks a believer is merely their soul then their fleshiness doesn't need transforming to become a new creation. Their flesh is just something they inhabit, much like a car, and not properly part of them. By contrast all views that suggest fleshiness is an essential part of the believer will have to give an account of the transformation that takes place in the flesh when one becomes a new creation. Not doing so will amount to a failure to give an account of being a new creation. I don't here take sides on either account but show how the models I give can accommodate either position.

Mixing

The first model is a type of substratism, where this holds that something remains constant before, during, and after a believer's transformation. Given this, retaining the believer's identity over time and through this transformation will hold in virtue of the thing that remains constant. However, given this, showing that the change affects everything essential to the believer is challenging. The model I give here relies on a view of mixing given by Aristotle and Aquinas,[16] and in explicating it one will come to see further complexities which arise when trying to understand the believer becoming a new creation.[17]

Aristotle and Aquinas suppose that a mixture occurs when there is a transformation of two components of equal strength into some third thing. This is to be distinguished from both an aggregation, such as when two components are stuck

together, and a substantial change, when two components change to become one component. Mixtures can be thought to occupy the space in-between these types of changes. The metaphysical constituents in a mixture are thought to change into something different, but they are not thought to assimilate into a new substance (Scaltsas (2009), 251). In other words, in a mixture generation and corruption does not occur, but rather something distinct. Thus, Aristotle writes,

> Since, however, some things *are potentially* while others *are actually*, the constituents can be in a sense and yet not be. The compound [mixture] may *be actually* other than the constituents from which it has resulted; nevertheless each of them may still *be potentially* what it was before they were combined, and both of them may survive undestroyed. . . . The constituents, therefore, neither *persist actually*, as body and white persist; nor are they *destroyed* (either one of them or both), for their potentiality is preserved. (327b23–31)[18]

Given this, in the case of a mixture we have some type of survival of the original constituents, although the way they survive differs significantly from the way they were originally. They used to be in actuality and now they are in potentiality. Some will no doubt think this requirement of act and potency is costly; however, since there are many today who do accept this metaphysics I explore this model further as it seems potentially fruitful.

In addition to the survival of the mixants, there is another characteristic of mixtures, namely that they are uniform. The thought here is that all parts of the mixture are of the same kind as the whole mixture. This too is important since the mixants are often different in kind from the mixture, for instance quarks are mixants, and a proton can be thought a mixture (Bobik (1998), 275–276). Thus, there are two conditions that need to be met for something to be a mixture: survival and uniformity (Scaltsas (2009), 250).

Applying this theory to our question, the thought will be that the newly created believer is a mixture of two components, and I will discuss what these are presently. The mixture will be uniform and the mixants will be retrievable, existing in potentiality in the mixture.[19] It will be this survival that enables us to give an account of the continuity between the believer as a new creation, and the believer prior to this change, since something remains constant before, during, and after the change.

Assuming, for present purposes, that this is enough for persistence, what are the two mixants that make up this mixture? The first component is easy to identify since it is the believer in their untransformed state. When it comes to the second component we have a choice to make. Many Protestants would suggest that it is the Holy Spirit, while Catholics would take it to be created grace.[20] Whichever one chooses the model suggests that the believer, now as a new creation, is a mixture of the two components, both of which in their previous state now exist in the transformed believer in a state of potentiality. The transformed, newly created believer is the mixture of the two.

A question, however, naturally arises, namely: what happens in this mixing? I can answer this in part, although the reason for this isn't particular to this case.

To see why, note that I cannot give a full explanation of what happens in the mixing of quarks into a proton. What happens in this mixing, how the quarks are altered such that they are now a proton, is for the scientist to explain. My job is to ascertain the type of composition we find in the proton and the consequences of it. I can explain what generally happens in mixings, namely that there will be survival and uniformity, and apply it to cases, but as to specifics, that will be difficult. Perhaps theologians could do better here. Nonetheless, I think even this partial understanding is better than the often 'mystical' response.

First, think about the mixture between the Holy Spirit and the person, either as purely soulish or fleshy, which is a view I take to be ultimately more metaphysically problematic. Nevertheless, it is helpful to see why. In this mixing at the very least we need to say that survival and uniformity occur, since this is essential to mixtures. But an initial worry might be that it is hard to understand how mixing might even take place until we know the nature of the Holy Spirit. For perhaps mixtures can't occur between substances and properties, say, but only between things of the same type.[21] Here I suggest some options for how this mixing could occur due to thinking the Holy Spirit is of the same category of being as the person, where I think the first two options are more plausible than the latter two. First, one might think of the Holy Spirit as a type of form, as Rahner (1978, 121) seemed to. Here the mixing would occur between forms, where we understand form as the set of essential properties of the thing. Or perhaps one could follow Jonathan Edwards, who continues 'the Augustinian tradition and equates the *love of God* with the Holy Spirit . . . [where] the disposition of love that draws us to God is the very same mutual love that binds the Father and the Son – the Holy Spirit' (Yeo (2014), 213). Given this, and thinking that dispositions are properties, there could be a mixture if one takes a person to be a bundle of properties.[22] Another option would be to assume Swinburne's Trinitarian theory, where the three members of the trinity are thought of as persons in Boethius' sense, that is being an individual substance with a rational nature, and as such there are three souls which are of the same kind, 'divinity' (Swinburne (1994), 180–191, 194; *Idem* (forthcoming)). Given this, we could say that mixing happens between two substances, the person and the Holy Spirit. Finally, one might think that taking them both to be a kind of 'stuff' is enough to do the job, and although this is far from a usual way of conceiving of the Holy Spirit, since the Trinity has been thought about in this way before (Hughes (1989), 176), perhaps it isn't wholly inappropriate.[23] These are speculative proposals, but they will hopefully alleviate some worries about the possibility of a mixture with the Holy Spirit.[24]

Yet, there might be further difficulties about the Holy Spirit being a mixant. First there is what Adams (2013, 25) calls the 'Special Connection Problem', namely: how can the Holy Spirit be especially present in the life of the believer when she is omnipresent? This is a difficult problem and seems analogous in some ways to problems of real presence within the eucharist and the incarnation. Perhaps if presence is thought of as spatial in some sense, where many biblical passages

might be interpreted in this way, some type of kenosis related to omnipresence would be required for the Holy Spirit. If one holds to kenosis, this shouldn't be deemed too problematic since there seems to be no principled reason why kenosis must be restricted to the second person of the Trinity (Forrest (2000), 128, 132, 136). Thus, we can say that the Holy Spirit limits her omnipresence, such that she can be located merely in believers rather than everywhere.[25] Worries about how a person could be located at many places will have to be bypassed due to space, but see Le Poidevin (2011, 228–241) for suggestions. Another option might be to say that assuming the Holy Spirit is the 'disposition of love', it is more present in places as dispositions come in degrees of intensity (Manley & Wasserman (2007)). As such, the greater the intensity the more it is present. Perhaps, the intensity of this disposition is greater in the life of the believer than it is in the other locations. Again, these are speculations, but it seems we can make some sense of the idea.

Another concern might be that it is hard to make sense of the Holy Spirit being altered in a mixture. Perhaps this concern can be mitigated by also adopting kenosis, understood as a freely chosen self-limitation. If this is acceptable we can parallel moves made within discussions of the incarnation and claim that 'the kenotic God . . . out of love abandons absolute power, while retaining sufficient power to warrant total trust' (Forrest (2000), 131) such that the Holy Spirit is able to be mixed with the believer. This move seems acceptable to me insofar as one is willing to embrace kenosis, but will be unacceptable to those who do not.[26] Perhaps there is another way of making the model acceptable without accepting kenosis, but this is made all the more difficult by another requirement of Aristotle's theory of mixing. This is that 'the ingredients should be "more or less equal in strength" (328a29)' (Scaltsas (2009), 252). Yet it doesn't seem that the untransformed believer can be thought of being equal in strength to the Holy Spirit. Rather, for this condition to be met kenosis in the Holy Spirit would *have* to take place.[27]

There are other problems too.[28] First, since Chalcedon specified that in Christ the divine and human are not mixed, yet saying that they are mixed within ordinary believers seems to result in the thought that the divine and human are more closely united in Christians than they are in Christ. This is a consequence that will be unsavoury to most. Second, since the Holy Spirit is a person, as too is the untransformed believer, it seems the Christian is two persons mixed together, akin to the Nestorian conception of Christ and all the problems that it brings. Third, a problem arises when the transformed believer sins. Since the Holy Spirit is perfect she cannot sin, but the transformed believer does sin, even though the Holy Spirit is a constituent of them. The issue then is whether we should or could predicate the sin on the transformed believer such that it wouldn't implicate the Holy Spirit. These are difficult problems, and not the only ones needing to be overcome (Adams (2013), 25; Martin (2017), 36–38),

and though I don't want to say definitively that they cannot be, they nevertheless provide good reasons to turn instead to a mixing model based on created grace.[29]

In order to think about this type of mixture, we must also ascertain what created grace is. As far as I can tell, most people think of it as some type of quality (Ott (1974), 255; Martin (2017)). As it is a quality, I take it to be a type of property, and as was suggested above, sense can be made of properties mixing. One might worry that one property, created grace, might only mix with some of the properties of another being, but assuming an ontology where persons are properties, I think we can make sense of one property being mixed with all the others. For instance, suppose that one becomes infected by some superbug, or in our case some superbug property, perhaps a superbug trope. This could, at least over time, affect the whole person. It might also, given that most dualists think there is two-way interaction between body and soul, affect the soul. Given this, I don't see why a property, particularly one which is called 'divine' (Ott (1974), 255), as created grace is,[30] couldn't affect the whole person instantaneously when it was mixed. Alternatively, we might think enough created grace is given such that it mixes with everything essential to the believer.

Thankfully, created grace overcomes many of the worries given above concerning the Holy Spirit. Since it isn't omnipresent we needn't worry about that, neither is it impeccable, unchangeable, a person, nor do we get confronted with Nestorian concerns. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to think further about where the mixing takes place and the effects it has. I suppose that here, due to space, sense can be made of the essential mental aspect of a believer, or the soul, being changed through mixing without too much difficulty,[31] and that the real problem arises when we think of it changing something fleshy. This is because mixing seems to imply that the mixed flesh isn't as it was before transformation, yet at the phenomenal level, it does seem to be the same. After all, the flesh still decays and the body still dies. What could be said to this? I suggest that the defender of this model should say that the flesh has changed, where this change takes place at a level deeper than the phenomenal. Given this, what new properties can we say the flesh now has? All I need to do here is provide some possibilities, and here I give two.

First, one might employ Russellian monist considerations to avoid this worry where there are two aspects of a property: an extrinsic or structural aspect which we have phenomenological access to and an intrinsic or non-structural aspect which we do not. Perhaps one could claim that change in the flesh only affects the intrinsic aspects and hence it is not phenomenologically detectable. It may seem *ad hoc* that no changes take place in the external aspects of the flesh, yet given our theoretical pressures to explain fleshy transformation we may happily bite this bullet.

Second, perhaps we could say the flesh, through this mixing, gains at least one additional property. The particular property I have in mind is the ability to resurrect. Adjusting Zimmerman's (1999; 2010) proposal the thought would be that the

flesh gains a budding power, which is a 'miraculous power to produce an exact duplicate at a certain distance in space or time (or both), at an unspecified location I shall call "the next world" ' (Zimmermann (2010), 36). If this is right, it will no longer be a good objection to this view to claim that we are unaware of this property while it is not manifesting, since if this property is a power/disposition it can exist even while not manifesting.[32] As such I suggest this difficulty can be overcome.

How then should we think created grace affects a believer's sinful proclivities, many of which will be mental, since it is apparent that the believer who is a new creation continues to sin? The answer will be that given this essential change in the believer, non-essential properties will also be affected. In particular, we can say that the original sinful proclivities are lost, now existing only in potentiality, and slightly different ones come to be, as theories of mixing have it. In fact, we might think that, if the mixing model is correct, being able to sin after transformation should be expected, albeit with some alteration. Perhaps, the way in which these proclivities have been altered now means they are surmountable whereas before they were not, a view that will be appealing given certain theological views.

We can even extend this thought further so as to account for another theological doctrine, sanctification, in which the believer is thought to grow in perfection through leading a good and virtuous life of faith. The idea here is that in a mixing, when the two components come together both need to 'cooperate' to result in a mixture, 'if not, the result is either the compresence of different (unmixed) materials, or destruction of one or both of them' (Scaltsas (2009), 252). Employing this thought, perhaps we can distinguish between grades of mixing, where a mixture is said to be of a better kind proportional to how well the components in the mixture cooperate.[33] Given this, maybe we could postulate that the believer's free will determines how well the components cooperate, such that it determines how good the mixture is. Perhaps initially there is a poor grade of mixing, while nevertheless still being sufficient to count as a mixture, and as such, even though the properties of both the believer and created grace are somewhat altered, there is nonetheless a bias towards the old sinful proclivities of the believer. However, as the believer comes to freely embrace the other component of the mixture, created grace, these sinful proclivities are overcome.[34] Given this, the grade of mixing changes such that created grace becomes dominant, all the while not destroying the believer's identity. This, therefore provides a speculative metaphysical explanation of biblical passages such as:

> You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22–24)

Given that the model can be extended to account for sanctification, this should be something else that counts in its favour.

Nevertheless, there may be drawbacks to the model. First, some might worry that created grace is doing the work the Holy Spirit is meant to. That is, even though the Holy Spirit is especially present in knowledge and goodness on this model, that isn't enough. Second, it might be thought created grace cannot provide us with a ready explanation of passages where believers are said to 'become participants of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4); the doctrine of deification or theosis (Yeo (2014), 213). The first worry seems to be one of interpretation of what is required for a model to be successful according to Christian thought, and one I cannot adequately assess here. As for the second, Aquinas suggests that created grace can give one a likeness of the divine nature (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, q.110, a.4, co.), and perhaps this will be enough for those wanting to embrace theosis. Otherwise, since theosis is not universally held one could drop it as a doctrine.

As such, it seems to me that we have a fairly good, *prima facie* conceivable, model of the change that takes place in the life of a believer when they become a new creation. Furthermore, the model allows us to say that this affects the whole of the believer, while nevertheless allowing us to say that in some sense something remains the same through this change. Whether what remains the same, the untransformed believer but now in a state of potentiality, is sufficient for the believer's identity to remain throughout this change will no doubt be questioned by some. In response I first note that one must realize that the untransformed believer existing potentially in a mixture exists in a special way, such that it can't become something other than the untransformed believer when it is retrieved.[35] As such something constant seems to remain. Alternatively, one might think that what remains is only accessible through performing abstractions on the mixture, such that one can see that some type of substratum remains constant. For instance, perhaps the quantity of matter/stuff remains constant through this change, or a deeper level of substratum remains, namely potentiality or physical potentiality where this is that which underlies the transformation of elements into one another, whilst not being propertyless like pure potentiality (Marmodoro (forthcoming *a*)). Finally, maybe one could suggest that a believer's memories and causal continuity between them can play the role of a substratum, and since these are not forgotten even though they are changed somewhat in the transformation, enough remains that they can retain a believer's identity.[36] Some of these options are speculative, and more investigation is needed. However, since there is widespread disagreement as to what is required for identity to be retained amongst philosophers, this probably need not be overly worrying. Some at least will think enough remains constant.

Radical replacement

The second model is based on the replacementist view of identity, where persistent objects are thought of as composed, in some way or another,[37] from

temporal parts. Koons and Pickavance nicely summarize the view: 'Replacementists imagine a world that is literally filled with instantaneous objects, each fundamental and each existing for a moment. . . . these instantaneous objects sometimes form persisting wholes that persist for some finite period of time' (Koons & Pickavance (2017), 542). On this view nothing *endures* through the transformation of the believer. Therefore, when God transforms the believer, He goes from creating one temporal part of the believer, which is untransformed, to creating the next temporal part of the believer, which is transformed.[38] This gives us a way of thinking how the believer can essentially change, since this happens merely in virtue of replacementism. Yet it is harder to ascertain how the believer's identity is retained through this transformation.

Supposing that objects have material and structural/formal constituents,[39] the model I suggest here is that in transforming the believer God changes both of these.[40] So, to explicate the model further, a distinction needs to be drawn between types and tokens. On replacementism an object's life is made up of numerous instants, with the sum of these comprising the life of the object. In each instant we have a new token of the object, since on replacementism nothing endures through time. Thus, at every moment I exist there is a new token material constituent, and a new token structural/formal constituent. However, although we have many tokens here they are all of the same type, this being true for both the material and structural/formal constituents. Thus, suppose my structural/formal constituent is of the type human being, then at my next moment of existing even though I will have a different token of this constituent, it will be of the same type. The same will be said for the material constituent that composes me. Given this distinction we can more fully lay out the model. The idea will be that when the believer is transformed, becoming a new creation, God doesn't just create new tokens of the same type, but rather tokens that are new types, where this is true for both the material and structural/formal constituents. This then is a change that affects everything essential to the believer, and as such we can affirm strongly with Paul, 'everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Starting with the material constituents, what is the new type that God creates? This will depend on whether you hold that the believer is essentially fleshy in some way, or not. Supposing you think that persons are immaterial souls, it will be difficult to ascertain what the difference in the type of material constituents will be, since it doesn't seem that souls are composed of any material type.[41] However, if one could make sense of souls having material constituents, then once the believer is transformed this constituent they are created with is different, where this difference will most likely be due to the different properties it possesses. Yet, if one cannot make sense of this, it might be best to think that on the view where believers are souls, the only category of constituent they fall under is structural/formal. As such there will be no change in their material constituents because they have none.

Turning to those views which hold that believers are essentially fleshy, there are a number of options one could take to explain what the change in type is here. I have already given two suggestions above which we could employ to answer this. First, perhaps the transformed believer's matter differs in its intrinsic rather than extrinsic nature, and second, perhaps the transformed matter has a new property, such as the power to resurrect. Finally, another option, which differs from everything I have said thus far, is that we might understand the flesh's transformation as analogous to transubstantiation. Toner summarizes this doctrine nicely:

> The whole substance of the bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ – which implies that there is no more bread and wine left after the consecration, and which further implies that the presence of Christ on the altar is not merely spiritual or symbolic, but rather quite real indeed. But since what remains after the consecration still looks and feels like, and otherwise displays the properties associated with, bread and wine, the status of those properties is a further question. Obviously, they don't inhere in the bread and wine any more, since those things are no longer present. But the Church also denies that they inhere in Christ himself, for it seems false to say that Christ is round or white. Thus, the Church tells us that while the accidents of bread and wine remain, they 'continue without a subject in which to inhere'. (Toner (2011), 218)

The suggestion would then be that something similar happens to a believer's flesh when they are transformed. Perhaps the transformed believer actually possesses their resurrection body, which differs from non-resurrection bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35–54; Philippians 3:21), while the properties associated with the believer's earthly bodies remain. However, these properties no longer inhere in the believer, but continue to exist without a subject to inhere in, just as in the transubstantiation case. This is obviously a speculative proposal, and one many will deem extremely costly. Yet if transubstantiation is possible then this ought to be too, and for those already committed to this doctrine the cost of applying it to something similar may not be considered severe.[42] As a result, those who take it that a believer is in some way essentially fleshy have a number of ways to explicate this transformation.

Turning now to the change of type in the structural/formal constituents of the believer, I suggest that the biggest change is likely to involve a believer's mental structures, since these seem to be emphasized most in scripture as having changed in some way. My proposal then is that God creates the transformed believer with a new type of structural/formal constituent, perhaps such that the believer is now able to overcome sinful proclivities, come to know God more fully, etc. This structural/formal change might also occur physically in the believer with some kind of change in the physical 'chemistry' and neuron patterns in the human brain.[43] As such it seems structural replacement can be applied to both views of what the believer is.

Given this, our replacementist model seems to make it clear that the transformed believer is really a new creation with everything essential being gone.[44]

However, there are two worries with this type of model, namely how it accounts for the believer's identity remaining the same over this transformation and why God would re-create a believer's sinful proclivities. It is to these I now turn.[45]

If everything essential to the believer is replaced in type at their transformation, what is it that stops us from thinking that we now have a radically new entity with no continuity of identity? After all, if a table were to transform into a hippo we would probably think that there was no continuous identity. One answer to this question would be to claim that what enables the believer to maintain their identity is that the temporal part *t1*, the believer before their transformation, and the following temporal part *t2*, the believer after their transformation, are contiguous with each other and occupy the same region of space. However, worryingly, this picture would also enable us to say that the believer's identity remains given other very radical changes, as the temporal parts will be contiguous and will often occupy the same region of space. However, surely there are some changes that could occur to the believer which would be such that their persistence ceases. Further, a similar problem would seem to occur if we claimed that their identity remained due to a common causal history between temporal parts.

An alternative solution would be to postulate a quiddity. However, this would be to give up on radical replacementism because something would remain the same before, during, and after the change, and so is off the table here. Perhaps instead one could claim that identity remains due to resemblance relations between the untransformed believer and the transformed believer. However, it isn't clear how many aspects of resemblance there are, and how strong the resemblance would need to be in order for this to enable the believer's identity to be retained.[46] Further, some might think that resemblance is just plainly inadequate to ground this view, and so is a non-starter. Another option might be to say that God initially baptizes the untransformed believer with a name such that it becomes their rigid designator, yet after their transformation,[47] with the old being wholly gone, God baptizes the transformed believer with the same name such that it becomes the transformed believer's rigid designator. Since the old believer is wholly gone, the rigid designator no longer designates them, but instead designates the new believer.[48] If this is possible, and I would suggest that it is highly controversial whether it is, it seems to be one option for how the believer retains their identity through this radical replacement.[49]

A final option, which seems somewhat related to the previous, would be to follow Jonathan Edwards, and claim that personal identity over time depends upon God's decree. This is what Hill calls the divine voluntarism thesis, where 'identity through time depends entirely upon the will of God, who is able to regard two or more discrete objects at different times as identical, thereby making them identical' (Hill (2018), 182). If one finds this plausible, then this too will be another way in which the believer's identity is retained post-transformation, just in virtue of God's will.[50]

The second worry asks why God would recreate a transformed believer with their sinful proclivities. Surely, it is thought, God would create a transformed believer without their sinful proclivities, so they were purely good.[51] In response it could be suggested that one reason God might create the believer with their sinful proclivities intact is due to the good of soul-making, such that the believer has the opportunity to perform good works and cultivate the virtues through discipline and practice. Yet soul-making might not require sinful proclivities, since we can make a distinction between overcoming sin and growing in maturity. The latter might be thought sufficient for soul-making, while it is only the former that requires sinful proclivities.[52] Given this, soul-making may well be insufficient. Instead, another reason God might have for recreating these sinful proclivities is to allow for sanctification, which seems an essential part of one's spiritual journey. But this explanation also seems misplaced, because if God had chosen not to recreate the believer with their sinful proclivities then the believer's need for sanctification wouldn't be an essential point of doctrine to begin with.

A final reason God might have for recreating these proclivities is that it may help solve the identity problem raised previously. The old believer is the same as the transformed believer as they have exactly the same sinful proclivities. Perhaps these proclivities are so specific that no other person ever has the same number, type, and amount of them as anyone else at the moment of their transformation and hence it can be used to preserve identity. However, we would need to assert that there was some sort of change that took place within the believer's sinful proclivities, perhaps in their nature, such that now post-transformation they are able to overcome them, since without this caveat we would have a substratist model as something would remain the same throughout the change. If this approach is successful in preserving a believer's identity through this change, then we will have killed two birds with one stone. We will have found a reason why God might recreate these sinful proclivities in the transformed believer and discovered a way to account for the believer's identity being retained through this change. Thus, assuming we have a successful way of overcoming these problems, we have also found a *prima facie* conceivable replacementist model for understanding the transformation of the believer.

Conclusion

In this article I've attempted to show that there are at least two conceivable models which can be given when one interprets a believer becoming a new creation as involving an ontological change that affects everything essential to them. However, the reader may think neither option possible or plausible. For the reader who feels that way, one way forward is to come up with other models, whilst assuming my interpretation of what it means to be a new creation. Or, one could drop this interpretation for another and show why this should be

preferred.[53] Whatever one decides, I hope this article will have provided some motivation for a renewed interest and further work in this very interesting topic.[54]

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Notes

1. All biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
2. Some also seem to think there is a sense that creation in general, or aspects of it, are also or will become new. The models I give here could be adapted to account for this as well.
3. The only discussions I've found *related* to this problem, where the focus is usually on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are: Alston (1988); Stump (2013), 45–51; Yeo (2014); Adams (2016).
4. I take the proceeding terminology from Koons & Pickavance (2017), 537–551.
5. These models are unexhaustive, speculative, and might overlook some subtleties both in doctrine and metaphysics, but I take them to be nonetheless insightful.
6. Though by no means all, for instance Bultmann writes: 'No break takes place; no magical or mysterious transformation of man in regard to his substance, the basis of his nature, takes place' (Bultmann (1951), 268–269).
7. I think it is a mistake to contrast these as distinct options, as Hubbard (2002, 235) seems to.
8. One could think of this as an adaptation of what Gregory of Nazianzus said when he wrote 'For that which He has not assumed He has not healed' (Nazianzen (1995), 440), where our case holds that that which God has not made new He has not saved.
9. Hill (2018, 178) also thinks something like this must be the case: 'By changing the identity of sinners, they escape sin conceived in ontological terms as a kind of corruption of human nature, because they are refashioned without it.'
10. How this doctrine relates to others such as 'justification' or 'conversion' does not concern me here.
11. Given this distinction, which is fairly common in systematic theology, sense can be made of New Testament language where transformation is sometimes thought of as instantaneous and at other times as a process. The former is to do with 'regeneration', the doctrine I am interested in, and the latter 'sanctification'.
12. Some other scriptures that might also imply this are: Ezekiel 11:19–20; 37:4–6; John 1:12–13; 3:3–15; Galatians 2:20; 6:14–15; Titus 3:5.
13. For instance, Martin (2014, 311) writes of this passage, 'There is even an ontological dimension to Paul's thought.'
14. There are probably many other things that also become true when a believer becomes a new creation, but here I am merely interested in the ontological aspect.

15. Although perhaps surprising to some, this view has been held by many Christians, with both theological and philosophical reasons being given for adopting it. For some discussion see Wright (2011) and Hudson (2001), 167–192.
16. Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*; Aquinas, *De Mixtione Elementorum*. For more on the particulars of their views see Scaltsas (2009) and Bobik (1998) respectively.
17. This is only one theory of mixing, as others can be given. For details on theories given by Anaxagoras, the Stoics, and Plotinus, see Marmodoro (2017; forthcoming *b*).
18. All references from Aristotle are taken from Barnes (1984).
19. This has theological implications, since it appears to allow that the believer could lose their salvation as the mixants are retrievable and therefore separable. For those who want to avoid these consequences they could claim that this type of mixture is *sui generis* such that separation is impossible. This shouldn't be seen as *ad hoc* since the Stoics claimed something similar for some type of mixtures (Marmodoro (2017), 172–174).
20. Catholics still think the Holy Spirit is especially present in the believer, but its presence is often thought of in terms of knowledge or goodness (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.43, a.3, co.), not composition as I suggest for Protestants.
21. However, one might claim that the mixing here is *sui generis* since it is miraculous, as new creation seems to be, and therefore this could occur. In order to show that it couldn't one would have to demonstrate that the mixing of different types is metaphysically impossible, which seems a difficult task.
22. For a recent defence of the bundle view see Ehring (2011), 98–135.
23. Alston also appears to think the language of how the Holy Spirit acts on the believer is at root material, although he takes this analogously (Alston (1988), 137–138).
24. Another speculative proposal, if one thinks about the Holy Spirit's presence as a relation (Adams (2013), 38–41; *Idem* (2016), 85–87), might be to adopt some non-standard form of ontic structural realism and claim that the mixture is between relations.
25. The Spirit might retain other aspects usually associated with omnipresence; universal awareness and causal power at every place.
26. Perhaps one can make a good case for kenosis, since it seems that those who advocate a libertarian view of freedom are likely to need to think that God's causal acts become constrained by libertarianly free creatures (Forrest (2000), 128, 136, 139).
27. Perhaps one might be able to drop the 'equal strength' condition Aristotle gives for mixing, but I don't investigate this here.
28. My thanks to a reviewer for making me aware of these additional difficulties.
29. Perhaps some ways of overcoming these problems could be adapted from Flint's work on eschatology, where the ultimate end of all human beings who attain salvation will be that they are assumed by the Son. See Flint (2016) for a defence of his view and references to other works where he discusses it further.
30. Or at least this type of created grace, sanctifying grace, is.
31. One might adapt some of what Stump (2013) or Marmodoro (2014, 219–220) say to account for this.
32. We also might be able to partially explain the 'not yet' aspect of the new creation found in the New Testament (Wright (2013), 1101) in this way too. For we are waiting for the budding power to manifest, which will bring about part of the 'not yet' aspect of new creation.
33. This is somewhat like the Stoics' 'unequal partners' in a mixture (Marmodoro (2017), 177).
34. This proposal seems similar in ways to Adams's (2016, 95–97) idea of functional integration.
35. For further elaboration on this see Scaltsas (2009) and Bobik (1998).
36. For more on psychological views of identity see Shoemaker (1970).
37. For instance, the worm or stage view (Sider (2001)).
38. Replacementism may have some theological arguments in its favour, e.g. it seems to fit better with continuous creation (Quinn (1983); Vallicella (2002)), a view of how God conserves creation, where God creates all creation at every moment *ex nihilo*.
39. I use the language of constituents to prevent myself from being wedded to any particular view of composition.
40. This would seem to be a divine fiat model (Alston (1988), 128–131), although this shouldn't be troublesome since here I am only talking about regeneration rather than sanctification, and many of Alston's concerns about this type of model only arise since he treats these together (*ibid.*, 127).

41. Here one can take material constituents as synonymous with stuff to see that I am not ruling out this possibility just because of the word 'material' in material constituents. That is, it might make sense to say there could be immaterial stuff.
42. Perhaps given the virtue of simplicity this should be preferred to the other options given.
43. See Stump (2013, 46–51) for some thoughts about how this might happen.
44. Note that this replacementist strategy need not say anything about the relation of the Holy Spirit or created grace to the believer and could adopt many models for how this interacts with them.
45. Another worry might be with replacementism as a theory, thinking it implausible. However, since this is a view that has many prominent defenders within metaphysics I don't consider this concern here.
46. One could perhaps argue that a believer's identity through time is maintained due to their memories and causal continuity between their thoughts. However, since replacementism replaces both the believer's material and structural/formal constituents, it isn't clear which of the believer's memories and psychological states remain the same. As such, depending upon how drastic this change is, this suggestion may be insufficient.
47. I am assuming something like Kripke's (1980) causal account of names here.
48. It seems that this move needs it to be the case that the untransformed believer is no longer possible. However, this may be impossible and seems a big cost of the view.
49. Another option might be to argue that only a very weak notion of identity is needed, and therefore previous suggestions I have given might be sufficient.
50. Hill (2018) may contain other suggestions as to how the believer's identity could be retained through this transformation.
51. If one thinks this worry is related to the problem of evil, then one might not think of it as a problem particular to this view.
52. Thanks to Ray Yeo for this point.
53. For instance, one might think a believer becoming a new creation *only* involves an epistemic and personal change and therefore not an ontological one, where a model of this might take inspiration from Paul's (2014) work. I note here that these two accounts of transformation do not seem to be incompatible, so the defender of the ontological change view could also incorporate the epistemic and personal account of transformation. I shall seek to explore this further in future work.
54. A talk called 'The Ontological Root of the Gospel' by Michael Ramsden of the Zacharias Trust and the questions raised from this provided the inspiration for this article. Many thanks also to Laura Page, Anna Marmodoro, Ray Yeo, and a reviewer, for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.