

Feminist Interpretation of Galatians 3:28 and Its Relevance to Women's Liberation

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Abstract

The study aims at interpreting Galatians 3:28 from a feminist perspective with relevance in a contemporary context. This study was conducted for some reasons, namely: first, Galatians 3:28 has become the center of controversy, in recent years this text has become increasingly popular from a feminist perspective. In comparison with 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Col.3:11 which record the same idea, this text is considered positive for women and becomes the climax of the biblical statement about gender equality. Second, this text is unique and complex to interpret because it frames the baptismal formula for the new Christianity. Third, Galatians 3:28 is the text that underlies the message of liberation for women in the New Testament. This text forms the basis of fundamental Pauline theology which teaches a spirituality of equality between men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, economic classes, and age groups. This text uses a feminist hermeneutic method, which provides space for women's and men's participation as equal and mutual partners, both privately and publicly. The results of the research show several things, namely: first, Galatians 3:28 is an important verse against equality. Second, this text presents the theological consequences of the legitimacy of the New Testament for universal spiritual equality. Third, this text ensures equal spiritual status and opportunities in leadership for all. In essence, this text is based on equality that has an impact and is relevant to the work of liberation for women.

Keywords: Feminist, Interpretation, Galatia, Liberation, Indonesia.

Abstrak

Studi bertujuan menafsirkan Galatia 3:28 dari perspektif feminis merelevansikan dalam konteks kontemporer. Studi ini dilakukan dilatari beberapa alasan, yaitu: *pertama*, Galatia 3:28 menjadi pusat kontroversi, dalam beberapa tahun terakhir maraknya teks ini dari perspektif kaum feminis. Dalam komparasi dengan teks 1 Korintus 12:13 dan Kol.3:11 yang mencatat ide sama, teks ini dianggap positif bagi perempuan dan menjadi klimaks pernyataan

alkitabiah tentang kesetaraan gender. *Kedua*, teks ini unik dan kompleks ditafsirkan karena dibingkai formula pembaptisan untuk Kekristenan baru. *Ketiga*, Galatia 3:28 merupakan teks yang mendasari pesan pembebasan bagi perempuan dalam Perjanjian Baru. Teks ini menjadi dasar teologi fundamental Pauline yang mengajarkan spiritualitas kesetaraan antara laki-laki dan perempuan dari semua kelompok ras dan etnis, semua kelas ekonomi, dan semua kelompok umur. Teks ini memakai metode hermeneutik feminis, yang memberi ruang partisipasi perempuan dan laki-laki sebagai mitra setara dan mutual secara privat maupun publik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan beberapa hal, yaitu: *Pertama*, Galatia 3:28 adalah ayat penting yang menentang kesetaraan. *Kedua*, teks ini menyajikan konsekuensi teologis dari legitimasi Perjanjian Baru untuk kesetaraan spiritual universal. *Ketiga*, teks ini mengafirmasi status spiritual, kesempatan dan kepemimpinan yang sama untuk semua. Intinya, teks ini didasarkan pada kesetaraan yang berdampak dan relevan dengan karya pembebasan bagi perempuan.

Kata kunci: Feminis, Penafsiran, Galatia, Pembebasan, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

In the rise of feminist theology development, the issue of gender equality is not a new issue in theological discourse. This issue has become material for interesting and hot discussion in the realm of government, academia, legal practitioners, community and religious institutions, especially theology.¹ Gender equality is a phrase (term) that has an important meaning when talking about the relationship between women and men. This terminology is closely related to acts of discrimination, subordination, marginalization, and injustice against women.² Factually, the problem of gender inequality is a complex issue. In the Indonesian context, patriarchal culture is still closely attached to the mindset of the people, where there is no real gender equality in daily life.³ In married life in Indonesia, for example, men and women have separate roles. A man is positioned as the pinnacle of family authority who is responsible for providing for the family and making decisions for the family. In contrast, women are placed in the domestic area of the family, such as doing household chores, taking care of children and cooking. Social construction places women weaker and unproductive than men in completing work, so it is better to be in the domestic area.⁴

This issue is part of the problematic issues of theology that need to be given a theological answer. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and re-interpret the pro, con and neutral texts on gender injustice. This article is part of a theological answer by

trying to interpret Galatians 3:28 from a feminist perspective and make it relevant in a contemporary context. The framing of feminist hermeneutics requires a constant engagement with activism, a kind of cultural practice, which can open minor windows to look at the role and identity of women a new.⁵

I am interested in interpreting Galatians 3:28 from a feminist perspective for several reasons, namely: *first*, Galatians 3:28 has become the center of controversy, especially in recent years with the emergence of reading the Bible by feminists. In contrast to the text of 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Col.3:11 which record the same idea of interpersonal relations based on Jewish-Greek and slave-free pairs, the text of Galatians 3:28 adds gender pairs, male-female. This text is very positive for women and is the culmination of the biblical statement on gender equality. *Second*, this text is unique and difficult to interpret because it is used as a baptismal formula for the new Christianity. On a critical note, the baptismal formula even though comes from Pre-Pauline, but its rhetoric and writing are still purely Pauline. Therefore, the feminist interpretation of this text is framed from the formula of Baptism and the Galatian socio-literary context in general. *Third*, Galatians 3:28 is the text that underlies the message of liberation for women in the New Testament. This text is the basis of fundamental Pauline theology which teaches a spirituality of equality between men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups.⁶

In the study, the issue had been examined by many previous researchers including: *first*, Rhoda Ayomioan Bamisile with the title "Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in the Light of Feminist Theology" (2020)⁷ and *second*, Nikki Holland with the title "Philemon in Light of Galatians 3:28 (2018).⁸ In comparison with the two previous researchers, the novelty of this study is the emphasis on textual studies based on liberation theology and its relevance to the context of gender inequality in Indonesia. This text provides space for the participation of women and men as equal and reciprocal partners in the private and public sphere.

METHOD

This article employs the feminist hermeneutic method. In the last three decades, there has been a significant transformation in Pauline's studies based on a feminist perspective. That Paul's life and work is seen from a feminist perspective. In

this case, there was a shift in Paul's hermeneutics from hegemony to diversity.⁹ It presumes that there are contradictions and inconsistencies in Paul's writings which are influenced by Jewish particularism and patriarchy. Feminist theory is used as a tool to analyze traditional mainstream thinking patterns and transform women.¹⁰ Feminist interpretation begins with hermeneutics of suspicion of text production in ancient times and contemporary androcentric interpretations of biblical texts. In fact, there are certain texts from the Bible that are used as arguments against the struggle and liberation of women because of their patriarchal cultural constructs. This text is used to legitimize women's subordinate roles and secondary status in society and the patriarchal church. In this case, issues of particularity, identity, diversity, and relationality in text construction will be investigated and an egalitarian reinterpretation is carried out. Based on the above reasons, the author is interested in writing this article with the title "Feminist Interpretation of Galatians 3:28 and Its Relevance to Women's Liberation." The structure of this study is based on two things, namely: *first*, recognizing and articulating the feminist hermeneutic approach to Paul's letter with historical criticism and rhetorical criticism of the text. *Second*, the results of the interpretation of the text further contribute to its implications in the modern context. Based on the purpose and significance, this paper presents the main question, namely *"How to interpret Galatian 3:28 from a feminist perspective and make it relevant to women's liberation today?"*

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Historical Background

The hermeneutic study of Galatians 3:28 must consider the verse's position in the context of Galatians broadly. Paul did not discuss and write this text independently, but instead integrated it into the context of Galatians. This means that before interpreting Galatians 3:28, discussing its meaning and significance, it is necessary to investigate the emphasis of the problem and the broader arguments of Galatians.

Christianity in Galatian was built by Paulus from an urban community with members from Israelites and Gentiles from a variety of groups, both free people, slaves, men, and women. In social interactions with communities bordering the

congregation, the Galatian community was threatened with pressure from inside and outside. A crucial issue in the life of the Galatians was the emergence of opposition groups who opposed Paul's gospel teachings and attacked Paul's apostleship. They considered Paul's gospel flawed because it taught that salvation is available in Christ and does not oblige Gentile members to be circumcised and obedient to the law of Moses. There were Gentile members who were under pressure from the Christian leaders in Jerusalem to add circumcision rites and law-keeping to revise Paul's gospel. The danger is that there are people who want to leave the gospel Paul taught for a different gospel that is not really gospel at all (Gal.1:6-7). This opposition group required the law of Moses to be a prerequisite for obtaining truth for non-Jewish members. Some pagans even followed this rule by adopting the lower requirements of the law regarding the celebration of holidays (Gal.4:10). The second thing, this opposition group opposed was Paul's apostolic status as distinct from the leaders in Jerusalem. The Christian leaders in the Jerusalem church are genuine followers of Jesus who are directly connected and receive direct instructions from Jesus. Whereas Paul only accepted and continued the traditions of Jesus' followers. Therefore, Paul's gospel is used and lacking.

How does Paul view this group of agitators? Based on the primary sources in Galatians, there are five texts which directly refer to the agitator, namely 1:7, 3:1, 4:17, 5:7-12 and 6:12-13. In this text, Paul describes his opponents as follows: *first*, they were outsiders who disturbed (*tarassontes, anastatountes*) the balance of life of the Galatians. So, the term agitators are an apt description of these people. *Second*, this disturbance threatens the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul preached in Galatians. This group succeeded in getting and influencing many Galatians to follow Paul's "different gospel" (1:6) teaching from the gospel of Christ (1:7). *Third*, Paul views the agitator as cunning, deceptive, and hypocritical. Their presence confused the Galatians (1:7). *Fourth*, the central teachings of the agitator's are circumcision and obedience to the Law of Torah.¹¹ They obliged the Galatians with a number of Jewish laws and practices such as circumcision, eating manners, observing special days, months, seasons and years (5: 2-3,6: 12,4: 10). This evidence gives a strong indication that Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians. They probably came from Jerusalem with claims of support from some factions of the Jerusalem apostles.

Paul gives apologia about his teachings and apostleship in response to the opponents. Regarding the validity of the gospel and its apostleship, Paul apologizes by concluding his autobiographical resume that it is Christ who sent Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. This became the agreement of both parties at the council in Jerusalem. Regarding the teachings of his gospel, Paul provides several doctrinal apologies as follows:¹² *first*, Jesus, the promised seed of Abraham for all. Paul claims that having faith in Jesus Christ, a person becomes the children of Abraham, the children of God, otherwise not because of obedience to the law. *Second*, the Law and the Gospel. Paul emphasized that the gospel that was received was God's revelation and God's gift. To reject the gospel is to reject God's revelation and grace. People who feel the gospel is insufficient, without the law of Moses, consider God's grace to be insufficient. *Third*, the Holy Spirit. Paul taught the Galatians that living ethically be righteous before God, not by circumcision and law-keeping. Instead, live righteously through faith in Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the power of the Holy Spirit, a person can kill his fleshly desires and produce the fruits of life. Galatians 3:28 is interpreted in terms of a broad scenario from the historical context of Galatians. How Paul faced the strength of resistance to the teachings of the gospel and his apostleship. Paul counters this false teaching by focusing on the preaching of Jesus Christ as the basis of parallels for social, ethnic and gender differences. That in Jesus Christ, all people are treated equal.

The historical situation in Galatians can only be determined in general terms. Paul mentions several historical events that preceded his letter and led to its writing, namely: ¹³

1. The general events in the history of Christianity:

- The crucifixion of Jesus (1: 1; 2:21; 3: I, 13; 5: 11; 6:14)
- Paul's pre-Christian period (1: 13-14, 23)
- Paul's "Call" (1: I, 11-12, 15-16)
- Paul's journey to Arabia and his return to Damascus (1:17)
- Paul's first journey to Jerusalem "after three years" (1:18)
- Paul's journey to Syria and Cilicia (1:21)
- The Conference at Jerusalem "after fourteen years" (2:1-10)
- Conflict in Antioch (2:11-14)

- The beginning of the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (2:10)
- 2. Special events relating to the churches in Galatians:
 - The founding of churches (1: 6- 9; 4: 13-14,19)
 - The invasion of the church by the opponents (1: 6-9; 4:17; 5: 7-12; 6: 12-13)

Paul himself argued that his letter was necessitated by previous events at the congregation and that this letter was his response to this situation. In the letter itself we can distinguish between three periods: the beginning period of the Galatian enthusiasm (see 3:1-5, 4:13-15), the end of that period (4:15) and the appearance of the opponents. Finally, Paul struggled to regain the confidence of his church and responded to threats of false teaching from his opponents.

Structural Analysis

In analyzing the Galatian structure, there are three main approaches proposed, namely: 1) thematic-structural approach, 2) thematic-epistological approach, 3) rhetorical-critical approach, 4) rhetorical-structural epistolary approach. *First*, in the thematic-structural approach, Galatians are categorized based on a certain thematic structure. According to the traditional approach, Galatians is divided into three units, namely: narrative (1:1-2:21), doctrinal (3:1-4:31) and ethical discussion (5:1-6:18).¹⁴ Galatians 3:28 is considered to be part of the doctrine taught in Galatians.

Second, the following view regards Galatians as a letter product. Chapters 3-4 specifically consist of the practitioner of the letter dealing with a range of different themes, from justification, law, faith in Christ, Christology, realized eschatology, sonship, and inheritance of Abraham, and promises. In the thematic division of letters, Galatians are defined as follows: preascriptum (1:1-10), body of letters (1:11-10) and postscriptum (6:11-18).¹⁵ According to the second approach, Galatians 3:28 was included as an integral part of the letter written to the Galatians, thereby shaping the faith of the Galatians community.

Third, the rhetorical-critical approach is a development of conventional Hellenistic rhetoric. In this regard, Greco-Roman rhetoric of various genres was used to identify the problem in Galatia. Paul structured Galatians as a mixture of forensic rhetoric in 1: 6-4: 11 and deliberative rhetoric in 4: 12-6: 10. In the first section, there is the epideictic rhetoric by which Paul praises some people on the one hand and

blames others on the other. As for the second part, Paul uses this rhetoric to urge the Galatians to take certain actions and specifically reject the practice of circumcision.¹⁶

Fourth, in the rhetorical-structural epistolary approach the Galatians letter form and its rhetorical features are combined as a key tool for analyzing the contents of the letter. In this approach, Galatian letter is divided into eight parts, namely: the epistolary prescript (1:1-5), exordium (1:6-11), naratio (1:12-2: 14), propositio (1:15-21), probatio - consisting of seventh arguments (3:1-4:31), parenesis (5:1-6:10), and epistolary postscripts (6:11-18).¹⁷ At the structural level, specifically the fourth approach, Galatians 3:28 is included in the probatio section (3:1-4:31) which provides evidence of the arguments of the four Scriptures regarding references to the tradition of Baptism (3:26-28).¹⁸ In this context, Paul is outlining arguments or evidence of the reasons why Gentiles cannot be forced to become Jews. The fourth evident of Scripture in 3:26-29 serves to defend the argument that circumcision is of no value and need not be obligatory on Jews and Gentiles because Christians have experienced baptism into Christ. Based on the approaches above, I am interested in using the fourth approach to structuring Galatians. This approach elaborates on two genres, namely rhetorical criticism and structural criticism of a letter, especially Galatians.

At the thematic level, Galatians is analyzed from the perspective of gender language in Galatians. That all the words related to masculine and feminine are found in chapters 3:1-6:11 and shows how 3.28 and the rest of Galatians are bound by the common theme "The Struggle for Masculinity in Galatians". In analytical studies, it is found that there is a special emphasis on the language of masculinity in Galatians 3 and a special emphasis on the language of femininity in Galatians 4. That Paul's use of categories such as "fatherhood, motherhood, sonship, brotherhood, genealogy, kinship, inheritance, birth, and so on," are virtually summed up in the use of *arsen kai qhlu* in Gal. 3.28.¹⁹ The consequence is Gal.3.28 can be seen as a clue between Paul's use of masculine terms in chapter 3 and feminine terms in chapter 4. The determining issue is what Paul intends to do with gender language in Galatians. Paul's aim is to decentralize the physical fatherhood or genealogy and to centralize motherhood, even though the latter are defined in a-typical or non-biological terms," as the identity marker for Abraham's offspring's, heirs according to promises. This raises two important ideas, on the one hand, this idea helps support the fact that men of faith

were part of the audience in Galatia. On the other hand, it provides accessibility to help understand the place of femininity in the letter.

Reading Galatians 3:28 from Feminist Perspectives

I will interpret Galatian 3:28 from a feminist perspective, how to build feminist sensitivity and awareness in reading texts, because it is the main accentuation focused on gender issues. The text of Galatians 3:28 consists of three stanzas and one clause which has a causative relationship, where the last clause gives the reason for the negation of the previous three stanzas. The three pairs in this text are parallel with the first two stanzas using the correlative conjunction "*there is neither. ... nor*", while the third stanza is connected by the coordinating conjunction "*nor is and.*" Although the syntax of this verse is quite simple, its meaning and significance is hotly debated.²⁰ The longstanding debate about how to interpret Galatians 3:28 regarding the main question, is the interpretation of this text more dominated by soteriological or ecclesiological ideas? Whether this text is exclusive because it limits safety to oneself or vice versa, this text tends to be inclusive by extending salvation to all people from various social backgrounds.²¹ Some hermeneutic scholars understand that the idea of soteriology is understood as a counter-feminist school of thought that tends to criticize the broad application of this text's interpretation. For this school, this text should be limited to the aspect of justifying everyone by faith in Christ, where all people can be saved through faith, by the grace of God. This is an extraordinary statement of equality which guarantees equality between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people and men and women, through faith in Jesus Christ. However, the idea of equality in this text is considered not to speak specifically about interpersonal relationships based on the principles of ecclesiology, on the contrary, it speaks of soteriology. That this text only focuses on acknowledging equal status between men and women in the eyes of God, but it is not related to equality of roles. Therefore, feminists cannot claim this text as the main foundation of gender equality in general. The second school of opinion is pro-feminist, which views this text as a liberating part of the text, one of the most fundamental and liberating texts in the New Testament. Especially. liberation for women today. In the first century, this text was considered very relevant for the liberation of the Gentiles and in the 19th century, this text was very relevant to slaves,

but in the present context, this text made a significant contribution to the liberation of women in the church.²² This scholar view the passage as a statement of the basic principles that underline the rest of the New Testament regarding the interpersonal relationship between men and women. That Women can be leaders, preachers, or do whatever their gift is. If women have a sense of calling and ability, then they can contribute to any role in church life.

Regarding this polemic, I do not dichotomize these two opinions, on the contrary I tend to elaborate on both. Generally, Paul's exclamation in Galatians 3:28 is exalted as a New Testament statement which has a didactic element. This text is referred to as the "Great Egalitarian Text of the Bible" which emphasizes the egalitarian idea of elaborating soteriology-based theological transformation and ecclesiology-based social transformation. That ethnic, class and gender differences are ignored not only in Christ but also in the practical world. Paul uses Galatians 3:28 as a medium for social transformation in the New Testament in the new age. This text proclaims the end of all kinds of social discrimination including gender discrimination, that in the new era, there should not be any differences between God's people. This text establishes an interactive correlation between theological transformation and sociological transformation.²³ Theological transformation underlies sociological transformation, and sociological transformation is the actualization of theological transformation. This is indicated in the causative relationship between Galatians 3: 26-27 and Galatians 3:28. Galatians 3:26-27 provides the theological foundation for practical social implications in Galatians 3:28. Theologically, Galatians 3: 26-27 is the early church's pre-Baptismal formula which governs the vertical relationship of man and God. On the other hand, in practical terms, Galatians 3:28 is an actualization of social change that educates the horizontal relationship between human beings. The discussion of justification continues now into our focus verse (3:28). Galatians 3:28 must be seen in the general context of Galatians 3 which speaks of justification by faith. Paul reflected that the justification of faith comes from the strengthening of social discrimination in the church. The problem of ecclesiological discrimination is the cause of Paul's soteriological discussion. Because the 'horizontal' relationship of humans at that time did not reflect the 'vertical' equality

that humans in Christ have with God. The essence of this text is the creation of a new relationship in Christ, a relationship built on the principles of equality, justice, and unity in Christ. In this case, there was a new breakthrough by accepting Gentiles into the community of God's people. The theological transformation gave accessibility to social change that bridged the differences between, Jews and Greeks, servants, and free people as well as men and women. A change in social status with new roles.

This is confirmed in the comparison of Galatians 3:28 with two other texts, Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11 which discuss the same idea. In Galatians 3:28, Paul adds to the idea of gender differences in Galatians 3:28. This indicates that the issue of gender, namely men and women, is a key concept in Galatians. The reconceptualization of male and female is at the heart of Paul's messianic argument. Analytically, a number of vocabularies are found that refer directly to issues related to men or women in Galatians, including:²⁴ *First*, there are a number of terms such as fatherhood, motherhood, sonship, brotherhood, genealogy, inheritance, kinship and so on. The same thing family and kinship imagery are contained in Galatians 3-4. The semantic fields of the first creation account (Gen.1.27-28) and the flood story (Gen. 6.19-7.3) are built around the term *arsen/qlhu* which refers to procreation. Similar terms namely family and kinship imagery are at the central of Galatians 5:13-6:10. All these terms and concepts are considered theological arguments Paul developed by re-reading the "family stories" in Genesis. This semantic coherence is the first indication that Gal.3.28c is firmly integrated into the Galatians as a whole. *Second*, in Genesis 17:10-14 it is called the physical man (*arsen* or *arsenikoz*)) as the object of circumcision which is the most prominent problem in Galatians. *Third*, in terms of vocabulary, masculinity does seem to be a strong focus of the Galatians. There are hardly any New Testament documents that are so densely populated by male body-language such as the Galatians that the terms foreskin, circumcision/circumcise, and sperm occur 22 times, including references to castration in Galatians 5:12. Even with regard to the Gospels, Paul coined two striking phrases from male anatomy namely "the gospel of the foreskin" and "the gospel of circumcision" (Gal. 2: 7) and are not repeated anywhere else in the New Testament. This evidence not only shows that male and female are a key concept from Galatians, but also shows a tremendous emphasis on masculinity. In statistical terms, Galatians can be considered the most

"phallogocentric" document of the New Testament. It is interesting that the "phallogocentricity" of the Galatians is evidently articulated in the most anti-phallogocentric way by Paul in Galatians 3:28.

The gender equality proposed by Paul in Galatians 3 has created a concept of inclusive Judaism in which there is a fundamental subversion of masculinity that must change perceptions and positions on female partners. The counter-patriarchal logic of his theology is beginning to reshape Paul's language. It is evident that Galatians 4 is dominated by maternal terminology and birth terminology. For example, in Galatians 4 we find the terms the mother of Jesus (4.4), the mothers Hagar and Sarah (4.21-31), the mother Jerusalem (4.26), the barren and forsaken mother of Isaiah who get many children without a male (Isa. 54:1 - Gal.4.27). Gal. 4:19 can be the key to understanding the meaning of gendered sexual union in Gal. 3:28 and in Galatians as a whole. This represents the strength of Paul's feminist ideas. That this text became an ideological counter against the dominant ideology, namely patriarchy at that time, reflects Paul's very revolutionary and transformative feminist ideas. In Jewish culture, women were discriminated against as second-class citizens in society and in the church. Galatians 3:28 offers egalitarian principles towards women. This text gave women a new status and privilege as children of God. In this context, the status and role of women are legalized by men. That the new arrival brought about a change in status and equal roles for Gentiles, slaves, and women. In union with Christ, all people are recognized as having fair and equal potential, value, function, and responsibility. In Christ, the unity of the people is formed, without differences in ethnicity, social status, or gender.

Paul's concept of "you are all one in Christ Jesus" in Gal. 3:28 is a liberating vision of egalitarian inclusiveness. Paul rejects hierarchy but not essential human distinction. Lexically, Paul uses the word "one" in the masculine singular, to denote a unified whole. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used in the feminine noun form "one flesh" (Mark 10: 8) and in Romans 12: 5 it is used in the neutral form, "one body". The question is, if the statement "one in Christ" in Gal. 3:28 in the original Greek grammatically refers to masculine beings, does it seem that Paul wants to introduce men as the normative standard? This text indicates the strength of patriarchal construction, which makes men superior, the main and the center. From a

feminist perspective, it needs to be interpreted to provide room for acceptance of women's roles. The term "one" is usually interpreted in various ways, namely: "single", "once-for-all", "unique" or "only" or "unitary", "unanimous" or "one of two or many," only one ". In Galatians 3:28, this word is used by Paul to emphasize the unity of God's people. Just as the destiny of the old man was decided in Adam, so the destiny of the new man was determined in Christ. In Galatians 3:28, this term is used to denote a unity with certain differences. But the lexical meaning of this word does not mean the similarity or equality of different entities. So, the lexical option for "you are one" does not mean "you are equal."²⁵ Another assumption is that Paul may be speaking of messianic "unity" in male terms because this message is aimed primarily at men. Paulus used the rhetoric of male language as a persuasive gesture to transform his audience at that time.

This text is defined as an expression to unite different people and objects, separate elements. The term "one" is understood to be varied, on the one hand, the reference is not clearly stated, but on the other hand, it is called clear and varied, namely one flesh, one spirit and one community. This phrase wants to tell the reader how two different entities are similar and related to one another, not how each element is compared. Like husband and wife, two different individuals who are united into one flesh and are related to one another. This confirms that these different parts have connectivity in unity, unite in diversity or their respective uniqueness. In Galatians 3:28, this word is used to express unity in ethnic, social and gender differences: Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/ female. That the plurality of these entities is united in one Christ, namely Christ Jesus.

In Galatians 3:26-29, Paul uses several expressions to denote the reality closely related to Christ, namely: "in Christ Jesus" (vv 26, 28), "into Christ" (with the verb *to baptize*, v. 27), "with Christ" (with the verb *to clothe*, v. 27), and "belong to Christ" (v. 29). In this regard, it is generally accepted that the phrase "in Christ" is at the heart of Paul's theology, because he intensely uses this expression more than 160 times. Paul uses variations of this phrase not only in Galatians 3: 26-29, but also in Paul's other corpus. Instead, Paul prefers the expressions "in Christ" (twenty-six times), "in Christ Jesus" (forty-two times), and "in the Lord" (forty-seven times), followed by many other alternative phrases (such as "into Christ", 3:27) Today, most

scholars give two general conclusions regarding Pauline's evidence namely, *first*, the variation of the expression refers to a "field of meaning" rather than a technical sense and *secondly*, the variation is not only stylistic, but patterns can be observed that shed light on the precise nuances of a particular usage. Essentially, the theme "in Christ" is very important for Galatians 3–4, and especially for Galatians 3:26–29. For Paul, the compounding motive "be in Christ" had several components in Paul: (1) one for all; (2) one in all [and all in one]; (3) once for all. "Once for all" reveals the eschatological-historical events of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom.5:15–19;6:10) which marks the end of old age and appointment new age. The word "one for all" describes Christ's death as an act of God's grace for His people, who further participate in Him (cf. Rom.5:12–19, 1 Cor.15:22).²⁶

Paul often uses the term "in Christ" to denote the implementation of God's redemptive plan in salvation history. For example, "In Him we have redemption" (Eph.1:7). In Galatians 3–4, God's redemptive plan is clearly identified with "in the Language of Christ." That the blessings given to Abraham now come to the Gentiles so that both Jews and Gentiles, by faith can receive the promise of the Spirit (Gal.3:14). This is all done in / through Christ Jesus. "Being in Christ" has several meanings, namely: ²⁷ *first*, a person is raised into the sphere of God's redemption. *Second*, those who are in Christ are also included in Christ. This is shown by Paul's argument in Galatians 3–4, that those who inherit Abraham's promise are those who are members of Abraham; they are called the seed (v.29). Since Christ is Abraham's Seed, those who belong to Christ also share in Abraham's blessing. *Third*, being "in Christ" also means that a person is united with Christ to become a child of God and a recipient of God's promise (v. 26). *Fourth*, being "in Christ" is not just an individual matter, but also means being placed into a new community or body. The new creation is the community that Christ has established and who lives in Him, although it is admittedly related to a very personal matter. In Galatians 3:28, the communal nature of the new creation has various characteristics: Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female, all united in Christ. That is, being in Christ has consequences for how one relates to other members of the community. Paul appears to be using the subversive rhetorical strategy in Gal. 3–4 as a way of "confusing the hierarchy" of the historical and parenetic sections of Gal. 1–2 and 5–6.

It is a critical note that equality and unity do not reduce the differences in identity and essence of men and women. Because sexual difference is a gift given by God since the creation of the first human in Genesis 1:27-28. Paul counsels' people to accept and appreciate social differences as a reality of life. That Paul and all the early Christians lived in imperfect and divided societies. Christians are educated how to live during this social reality. For Paul, the soteriological unity of all believers in Christ does not negate the social differences between believers in the world but is recognized as an integral part of social reality. Christians are placed and live in the middle of this social reality is a call of faith to achieve a higher ethic of life as followers of Christ. Paul instructs Christians how to deal with the reality of social crises while still demonstrating Christlikeness. That as one body of Christ, we are equal in form but in different functions. In conclusion, through Galatians 3:28, Paul emphasized that the whole discussion about soteriology, namely justification by faith, is born from acts of social discrimination because the discriminator does not act in accordance with the truth of the Bible.²⁸ In conclusion, Paulus focused on a new life practice that transformed patterns of hierarchical opposition into patterns of mutuality and active solidarity. Throughout the Galatians parenetic passages, the concept of "oneness" of the new creation in Christ refers to the movement of "ones" going down to the level lowly and exclude "others" "of all kinds, to be in solidarity and community with them, to become "others" themselves.²⁹ One of the most striking examples of this paradigm is the "subversion" and "conversion" of the hierarchical polarity of slaves and liberties, male and female. In the concept of messianic unity, there is a process of transformation from exclusive, hierarchical, and practice of unity to inclusivity and horizontality.

Theological Theme

Paul's theological axioms illustrate his teaching understanding of man and woman. Paul's view of gender was influenced by the Jewish tradition contained in the Hebrew Scriptures. In contrast to the patriarchal conservative Jewish tradition, Paul's views on gender were very revolutionary. Paul establishes principles of freedom and equality between woman and man (e.g., Gal.3:28; 1 Cor.7:2–34; 1 Cor.11:10–12). In practice, Paul repeatedly emphasized the equal and privileged position of woman in

both church and marriage (e.g., Rom.16:1–15). Behind Paul's revolutionary attitude, it is recognized that there are two passages in Paul's letter that limit the role of woman's participation in the church: 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:12. Regarding this, it is evident that 1 Cor.14:34-35 is an interpolation which is not originally in the text of this letter. The textual idea that woman should remain silent in public meetings is considered contrary to Paul's assertion that accommodates the role of woman's participation in church worship and services. It is presumed that someone wrote it in the margins of the early manuscripts to counter the natural implications of Paul's assertions in this text and in 1 Cor.11:5–15 on the authority of women praying and prophesying in the church. The second text in 1 Tim 2:12, Paul limits the ministry of women in the church, the expression "I do not permit" uses the indicative verb *ἀνθεντεῖν*. This word means "taking authority". This text does not prohibit woman from exercising authority over men. This text simply prohibits woman from taking on the authority for themselves to teach men about false teachers. This text is some advice to protect and prevent woman from the influence of false teachings, therefore they must remain silent in congregational meetings. The point is that Paul's message and thoughts are very revolutionary towards woman because they provide freedom and equality between man and woman, all one in Christ, as contained in Galatians 3:28.

Galatians 3:28 is recognized as the central text in contemporary debate on the roles of men and women. This text forms Paul's fundamental theological basis for placing women and men as equal and reciprocal partners in all church services. This idea is based on four strong arguments, namely: *first*, Galatians 3:28 is a summative expression of an essential part of the central core of Paul's theology, as developed in Galatians. *Second*, the triplicate pair in Galatians 3:28 is deliberately used from an old tradition with a definite cultural diversity and formula. Thus, Paul's theological affirmation in Galatians 3:28 is recognized as a powerful statement with traditional and cultural nuances that identifies the text horizontally as well as vertically. *Third*, the choice of three partners in Galatians 3:28 is not an abstract, fickle, or innocent choice. In contrast, these three pairs represent the three most important and critical social and status divisions in Greco-Roman culture. *Fourth*, in the social realm, Paul actualized the horizontal dimension of the elimination of these three polarities in

Christ Jesus. Hermeneutically, the theological vision of Galatians 3:28 has Paul's relevance to the church.

There are some theological thoughts from Galatians 3:28 that contribute to women:³⁰ *first*, Galatians 3:28 is the most important verse about equality. Almost every reference to this verse is accompanied by a statement about equality. For example, Galatians 3:28 speaks of equality and spiritual unity for all believers under the new covenant. Galatians 3:28 teaches about spiritual equality. That spiritual equality can coincide with gender role differentiation. *Second*, Galatians 3:28 presents the theological consequences of the new covenant's legitimacy of spiritual equality for all, in contrast to the old covenant, which gave free-born Jewish men special and exclusive status. This text gives way to a new order, that there should be no more distinction in spiritual roles or privileges between Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male, or female. The new treaty order has abolished the old system of inequality, replacing it with the principle of equality. *Third*, Galatians 3:28 means not only that men and women are co-recipients of Christ's blessings, but also that men and women have the same opportunity to participate in leadership in religious homes and communities. The new covenant ensures equal spiritual status and opportunity for all. This text provides broad accessibility for women to develop their roles in the private and public sphere, in church and society.

Message for Today's World

In the feminist perspective, this text provides great access to the work of liberating women from patriarchal social structures. From a feminist perspective, the dominant issue in Galatians 3:28 is equality of woman and man in the society and in the church ministry. In the modern time, this text gives the alternative consciousness to counter dominant culture that is patriarchy and discriminant to woman. Factually, in modern context every year around the world many women are victims of prostitution, prostitution, trafficking in persons for sexual purposes and exploitation or similar oppression. That needs to be criticized is that there is an act of allowing discrimination because the community, including the church, is insensitive to this issue. This action is considered a normal social reality in society so that it is muted, even the victim becomes an unknown party. Silencing and allowing discrimination is a form of siding

with injustice and fosters dehumanization actions. This reality is also legitimized by the law that has not provided access to and protection against discrimination against women.

This text can be relevant for liberation work for women. An energizing apostolic attitude can begin by building a church's sensitivity and awareness about discrimination against women. Amnesia's attitude towards action will make the church lose its apostolic value. The church's apostolic attitude can be optimized as follows: *first*, the church must carry out a gender sensitivity training process for church members to be trained in gender sensitivity and awareness. A paradigm shift on gender equality must be conveyed through a variety of coaching content in families and congregations both in Sunday schools, youth, man and woman, catechism materials as well as seminars and workshops. *Second*, to increase the "Silent Revolution" movement which refers to the revolution of women who are mute and are muted in society. The movements are a) the work area where women are rarely penetrated, b) woman in Indonesia function as a significant economic support for the family, c) women are involved in a lot of economic activities, d) Indonesian government structures are given the opportunity to exist, for example Megawati has been the president of the Republic of Indonesia and other government officials who are women. *Third*, the Church promotes holistic pastoral care by involving multi-professional staff, including psychiatrists, doctors, traditional leaders, and other community leaders. Pastoralia to advocate for servants and people to get out of a culture of shame and become a culture that is more open to defending against cases of sexual violence. This attitude is an actualization of love, justice and liberation for social categories that specifically require women.

CONCLUSION

Reading Galatians 3:28 from a feminist perspective, there are several theological thoughts, namely: *first*, this text introduces the concept of gender equality. This is evidenced by the accentuation of statements about gender equality. Equality of social, political and spiritual roles. *Second*, this text presents the renewal of the concept of theological legitimacy regarding the renewal of the old agreement into the new agreement. Equality for all people from various backgrounds of gender, ethnicity

and race. *Third*, this text is relevant to women's liberation works. The apostolic prophetic attitude can be energized by building sensitivity and awareness of the church about discrimination against women. The church's apostolic attitude can be optimized by carrying out a gender sensitivity training process for church members to be gender sensitive and aware and promoting holistic pastoral care by involving multi-professional staff, including psychiatrists, doctors, traditional leaders, and other community leaders. This attitude is the actualization of love, justice and liberation for social categories that specifically need women.

Endnotes:

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- ⁴ Obde Bima Wicandra Christanti, Cherlita, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Iklan-Iklan Televisi Indonesia," *Nirmana* 18, No. 2 (2018): 66.
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- ⁶ W. Richard Hove, *Equality in Christ? - Galatians 3:28 and The Gender Dispute* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1999), 17–18.
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- ¹⁷ Hans Dieter Betz, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to Galatians," *New Testament Studies* 23, No. 01 (2001): 355–75.
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- ²² Jim Reiher, 273.
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- ²⁵ W. Richard Hove, *Equality in Christ? - Galatians 3:28 and The Gender Dispute*, 76.
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