Ernst Conradie follows Arnold van Ruler in arguing that the relation between creation and redemption is a matter not of *nova creatio* (the Anabaptist error, as Van Ruler calls it) but of *re-creatio*.¹ Both Conradie and Van Ruler are concerned here to underscore the continuity between creation and the redeemed world. God does not annihilate the present order, but sanctifies it. As Bavinck puts it, in a colourful passage cited by Conradie: “Christ came not to destroy the works of Father, but only those of the devil!”²

These concerns are of course legitimate. Nevertheless, from an exegetical perspective the critique of *nova creatio* seems curious, given that this is precisely Paul’s own way of describing the salvation event: “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation [*kaine ktisis*, Vulgate *nova creatura*]; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17, NRSV).

It is easy to sympathise with Conradie’s concerns, especially since his concept of *re-creatio* is aimed at shoring up theology against the threat of heterodox misunderstandings (such as the Gnostic idea that we are saved from creation). But I suspect Conradie is playing it a little too safe. There may be something to learn from the sheer riskiness of Paul’s language of “new creation”—a riskiness one also finds in Karl Barth’s conception of the Christological continuity between redemption and creation.

I will try to sketch out these themes in the discussion that follows—not by developing a sustained critique of Conradie, but simply by offering a counter-proposal, a proposal which, I hope, will be both theologically coherent and exegetically responsible. My remarks will be oriented around some broad exegetical observations concerning the relation between redemption and creation. Finally, drawing on Barth

and Bavinck, I will try to show that the Pauline theme of *nova creatio* can be affirmed without surrendering the continuity between nature and grace. Here, I will turn to the doctrine of election as a means of articulating a continuity which is not merely given in creation itself, but which lies in the teleological ordering of creation towards God’s redemptive act in Christ. Ultimately, I will argue that the doctrine of election is the best way of securing a proper continuity between creation and redemption. The redemptive Logos is the same agent through whom “all things were made” in the beginning (John 1:3).

**Creating from Within History**

One finds the priority of redemption already in the creation theology of the Hebrew scriptures. Several of Israel’s traditions give expression to the inseparable connection between the exodus and the creative act of Yahweh. Originally Yahweh is one tribal deity alongside others. But the exodus teaches Israel to confess her own god as the one true God, the God of all the earth. As such, this God must also be the Creator, the one who was acting from the beginning for the salvation of Israel, and of all the nations through Israel.

Although Israel’s exodus experience gave rise to diverse creation theologies, the image of Yahweh’s defeat of a primeval sea monster is a recurring motif. But while this imagery is borrowed from Babylonian and Ugaritic mythology, the faith of Israel effectively “demythologises” such imagery by linking it concretely to the redemptive act of God in history. For example, both in Deutero-Isaiah and in the Psalms, creation is designated as that which takes place in the exodus:

> Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh;
> awake, as in days of old,
> the generations of long ago.
> Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
> who pierced the dragon?
> Was it not you who dried up the sea,
> the waters of the great deep,
> who made the depths of the sea a road
> for the redeemed to pass over?
> (Isa 51:9–10, my translation)

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