

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

---

Graduate Papers/Theses

School of Theology and Seminary

---

6-21-2021

## Pauline Theology: The Interdependently Called Body of Christ

Katryna Bertucci

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, KBERTUCCI001@CSBSJU.EDU

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot\\_papers](https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_papers)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bertucci, Katryna, "Pauline Theology: The Interdependently Called Body of Christ" (2021). *Graduate Papers/Theses*. 1934.

[https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot\\_papers/1934](https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_papers/1934)

This Graduate Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Theology and Seminary at DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Papers/Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csbsju.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csbsju.edu).

Pauline Theology: The Interdependently Called Body of Christ

by

Katryna Bertucci

Virginia, Minnesota  
United States of America

A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Seminary of Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Theological Studies- History of Christianity

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY  
Saint John's University  
Collegeville,  
Minnesota

June 21, 2021

This paper was written under the direction of

---

Vincent M. Smiles, PHD  
Director

## Pauline Theology: The Interdependently Called Body of Christ

### Description:

Utilizing the mindset of theology defined as faith seeking understanding, this paper will explore the apostle Paul's theology on vocation and calling in relation to the "Body of Christ." It will first aim at exploring Paul's theology on calling and vocation of the Body of Christ by highlighting 1 Corinthians 12, followed by zooming out to consider recent scholarship on more general Pauline theology. It will then demonstrate how interpretations of Paul's theology have been utilized and/or critiqued over time in its implementation in relation to vocation and calling. It will conclude with an analysis of newer perspectives of how the present Christian community is "called" to respond to vocation and calling interpretations in order to better carry out our faith as the Body of Christ.

This paper aims to support the thesis that there is unity in the Body of Christ as baptized Christian believers to each carry out God's will and to grow and transform together as the Image of God, as well as diversity in where and how we are to do so through the church and secular social structures we are a part of. Additionally, God calls us all to live our faith in Jesus Christ through loving and serving our community, in diverse ways through using/embracing different (yet equally bestowed) Holy Spirit-given gifts, while in the numerous and diverse roles we play in the world. This thesis can be distilled into three main themes that can be seen throughout the researched interpretations and that emphasize the interdependence of the Body of Christ, also known as all Christian believers: unity, diversity, and community.

*This paper may be made available for electronic access in current and future electronic storage databases at Saint John's University Alcuin Library, Collegeville, Minnesota.*

---

## **Pauline Theology: The Interdependently Called Body of Christ**

It has been noted that the Apostle Paul felt an overwhelming call to his vocation to minister to the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> It's believed this mission had an immense impact on how he carried out his ministry to the margins and, accordingly, interacted with the secular world. Paul's relating theology on what "calling" and "vocation" imply for himself and the Body of Christ (Christian believers) has therefore affected subsequent generations of Christians in determining how they should and could live out their faith, both in the church and in the secular world. In the last century or so, there has been a revival in the interest of what vocation and calling mean to Christian living, affecting how the current community of believers view their faith and even redefining the history of how it has been derived from Pauline theology.

Utilizing the mindset of theology defined as faith seeking understanding,<sup>2</sup> this paper will therefore explore Paul's theology on vocation and calling in relation to the "Body of Christ." It will first aim at exploring Paul's theology on calling and vocation of the Body of Christ by highlighting 1 Corinthians 12, followed by zooming out to consider recent scholarship on more general Pauline theology. It will then demonstrate how interpretations of Paul's theology have been utilized and/or critiqued over time in its implementation in relation to vocation and calling. It will conclude with an analysis of newer perspectives of how the present Christian community is "called" to respond to vocation and calling interpretations in order to better carry out our faith as the Body of Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup> Marcus J Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon*. 1st ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 24.

<sup>2</sup> This is as defined by Anselm of Canterbury, Italian philosopher and theologian of the 12th century.

This paper aims to support the thesis that there is unity in the Body of Christ as baptized Christian believers to each carry out God’s will and to grow and transform together as the Image of God, as well as diversity in where and how we are to do so through the church and secular social structures we are a part of. Additionally, God calls us all to live our faith in Jesus Christ through loving and serving our community, in diverse ways through using/embracing different (yet equally bestowed) Holy Spirit-given gifts, while in the numerous and diverse roles we play in the world. This thesis can be distilled into three main themes that can be seen throughout the below researched interpretations and that emphasize the interdependence of the Body of Christ, also known as all Christian believers: unity, diversity, and community.

### **The Body of Christ- 1 Corinthians 12**

The words most repeated when describing Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 12 seem to be “unity” and “diversity.”<sup>3</sup> Though seemingly contradictory words, scholars seem to agree that Paul emphasizes both concepts in his letter to the Corinthians when responding to their use of spiritual gifts in and for community. One scholar states this beautifully.

First, there is interdependence and mutuality of church members since all are dependent on the charism given by God. Second, there is diversity of charisms: each has received according to the manifold grace of God. Third, the number of charisms is not fixed. Fourth, Paul emphasizes that every member of the body should conceive of himself /

---

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Durken, ed, *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Vol. New Testament* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2009), 432-4; Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel : Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 200.

herself as an active member (1 Corin 12:7,11). Ministry should not and could not by definition of ‘body’ be limited to a few.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, this section will look at the core perspectives of Paul that emphasize, first, the need for unity in diversity and, second, diversity in unity, and then finish by considering the active community application of Paul’s theology for the church. However, it will first provide the context of the first letter to the Corinthians that Paul was writing.

### 1 Corinthians Context

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is answering how the Christian community in Corinth should live in the present by using the freedom bestowed by Christ to preserve holiness and unity.<sup>5</sup> The people in Corinth are working out how to live their new faith in their pagan world, similarly to how Christians are presently doing so in a secular world.<sup>6</sup> “Christ has created the new order to which every believer belongs,” and is a “spiritual reality found only in Christ and experienced only in community.”<sup>7</sup> The core argument that Paul is addressing is that some of the people insist on the superiority of some gifts (speaking in tongues specifically) and the threat of division this creates within the community.

---

<sup>4</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “The Calling of the Whole People of God into Ministry: The Spirit, Church and Laity,” *Studia Theologica* 54, no. 2 (December 2000): 151, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003933800750059783>.

<sup>5</sup> Unity has both ontological and teleological aspects for Paul; Durken, 400-402; James M Howard, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation Within Pauline Theology* (Studies in Biblical Literature, V. 90. New York: Peter Lang., 2007), 150.

<sup>6</sup> Durken, 399.

<sup>7</sup> This belief is heavily founded in Paul’s identification with the Jewish apocalyptic belief of the “new day;” Howard, 170; Gorman, 180.

Paul pushes the community's need for unity in diversity and diversity in unity (verse 25),<sup>8</sup> as selfishness hurts all, not just the one seeking personal gain (even if for "spiritual" superiority) (verse 26).<sup>9</sup> One author points out that, "Some of the Corinthians have unfortunately mistaken uniformity for unity. Paul wants the latter, which is only truly achieved when each member's distinct contribution is valued and incorporated with all others to build up the whole body."<sup>10</sup> Thus, Paul utilizes the now key concept that the church is Christ's body, consisting of interdependent parts and varied roles for the healthy function of the whole, to demonstrate his point about unity and diversity.

This body idea, a common analogy used then in politics to try to remind each member of their place in society as the well-being of society depended on it, was used by Paul instead "not to subordinate but to stress the diversity, interdependence, and importance of all the members of the community, who together form one body," where "the body of believers is Christ, or the body of Christ, a metaphoric expression he employs to express what he believes to be the reality of Christian existence."<sup>11</sup> Another scholar expands on this employment by explaining that this usage is more likely beyond imagery and metaphor. Rather, it implies the vital tie of the individuals' unique mode of existence to participation in the shared life of the body. Paul sees the point as coexistence where, "The unity of Christians is that of a living person. No one possesses, but each one participates in a shared life," and each are part of something bigger than

---

<sup>8</sup> Durken, 432; Howard, 150.

<sup>9</sup> Howard, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Durken, 435; "Equal" does not connote "same," just as neither mean what "fair" denotes. This is a common mistake society makes today in regards to services, laws, and regulations, especially when civil rights or racial justice matters are involved.

<sup>11</sup> Durken, 434.



themselves.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, outside that organic unity, “The animation of life has given place to stillness of death.”<sup>13</sup> At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, “Paul develops and discloses the key motive that must inform the exercise of spiritual gifts:” Christian charity, i.e. love, for God and others in community.<sup>14</sup> Individual spiritual gifts are to be used in love of the whole and an individual's recognition of their place in the shared life of baptised believers in Christ.

### Unity in Diversity: Spiritual Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Paul first emphasizes that there is still unity within the situation of members having diverse spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit is the same source of the gifts for all members (verses 4-6 and 11). Each member is equipped by the Holy Spirit with “their own distinctive gifts to ministry and service.”<sup>15</sup> Paul additionally insists that even though these gifts are different, no gift, service, or working is inferior to another (verse 22-26).<sup>16</sup> The diversity of gifts “parallel each other’s importance.”<sup>17</sup> However, to be considered an authentic working of the Spirit in a person, it “must in some way benefit others,” i.e. be for the common good (verse 7).<sup>18</sup> For, “God has not differentiated among members as a basis for division, for there can be no division in the body, which relies on the interdependence of its parts for its functioning,” (verses 12-13).<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians,” *Worship* 50, no. 5 (September 1976): 374.

<sup>13</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, 373.

<sup>14</sup> Durken, 432.

<sup>15</sup> Kärkkäinen, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Durken, 433.

<sup>17</sup> Durken, 435.

<sup>18</sup> Durken, 433-4; Howard, 150.

<sup>19</sup> Durken, 434.

### Diversity in Unity: The Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31 lays out Paul’s perspective of the Body of Christ. As mentioned above, though members have separate roles and functions in the body, they are still one body (verses 12-13). “Within this body, God has gifted members with diverse gifts and functions,” just as the human body has many parts with many diverse purposes and processes (verse 18).<sup>20</sup> Just as with the human body, “No, all [members] cannot have the same gift or perform the same function, and no one person can have all the gifts and perform all the functions.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, each distinct believer's God-given “diversity within the community is not a reality to be obliterated, nor even merely tolerated. It is essential.”<sup>22</sup> This diversity in unity is therefore practical as believers work together (interdependently) to carry out the goals and functions of God “at both the individual and the community level.”<sup>23</sup>

### Active Community Application for the Church

Another point Paul emphasizes is that members must use the gifts, as the Body of Christ, for the common good of community (verse 7). This is noted by one author as an “[inevitable] missional consequence of being the body of Christ... as the ongoing presence of Christ in the world.”<sup>24</sup> Community engages together in the transformative process into the image of God, “thus increasing their capacity to reflect his glory to others.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, “relational

---

<sup>20</sup> Durken, 435.

<sup>21</sup> Durken, 435.

<sup>22</sup> Durken, 434.

<sup>23</sup> Howard, 150.

<sup>24</sup> Gorman, 201.

<sup>25</sup> Howard, 141, 105, 170.

involvement in community is essential for Christian growth to maturity.”<sup>26</sup> Meeting the needs of others is vital as the body of believers and Paul was concerned with the impact of the church’s practices of injustice or justice on the outside world.<sup>27</sup>

### Recapping Recent Pauline Theology

James D.G. Dunn is a prominent scholar in studies on Paul’s ministry and will be a beneficial starting point and guide for exploring recent scholarship on Paul’s more comprehensive theology in relation to vocation and calling for the Body of Christ. In Dunn’s book *Christianity in the Making*,<sup>28</sup> he points out the foundation of Jesus’ ministry message found in Paul’s ministry. Although this seems rather redundant (as Paul is a prominent known apostle of Jesus), Dunn points out, “Here the point I want to make is that Paul’s outreach to the Gentiles was so much like Jesus’ mission on behalf of sinners that some knowledge of Jesus’ mission almost certainly influenced Paul’s understanding of his vocation to take the good news of God’s Son to the Gentiles.”<sup>29</sup> This is also seen in how Paul believes Jesus followers should be living out their faith in faithfulness through works. This theme has been identified in Paul’s ministry (similarly to the above exploration of 1 Corinthians) in two major ways by Dunn. First, through a call to all for the deepening of love for neighbor. Second, through the realization of the kingdom of God in Christian living.

---

<sup>26</sup> Howard, 150.

<sup>27</sup> Gorman, 205-7.

<sup>28</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 24.

<sup>29</sup> Dunn, 104.

First, it is believed that for Paul a deepening of the love of neighbor is realized in actions and attitudes toward others (especially in the heart) and is given a key role in interpreting the law.<sup>30</sup> Love is the summary of the law and how to follow it.<sup>31</sup> Key personifications of this include openness to “sinners,” (or those we see as doing something different from us and, therefore, judge to be “wrong”) by breaking down barriers, separation, and ending judgment, and by also emphasizing caring for the poor.<sup>32</sup> For Jesus and Paul, acting out one’s faith in Christ through unconditional love and striving for purity of heart are more important than just following the basic standards of the day. Rather, reaching out to others in love and care is just as (if not more) important.<sup>33</sup> The Gospel of Matthew holds prime examples of this call to actively love one’s neighbor that Paul holds at his core. In Matthew 9:9-13,<sup>34</sup> Jesus makes the shocking decision to have dinner with the tax collector, Levi, despite the Pharisees expressing their displeasure. Matthew 5 emphasizes this love being internally embraced through not feeling anger toward another (verses 21-26), surrendering your resources and not retaliating toward another (verses 38-42), and even through taking the challenging step of going further by actively loving our enemies (verses 43-48).

The realization of the kingdom of God in Christian living is the second way Dunn believes Paul exemplifies Jesus’ message in his theology of calling and vocation. The kingdom is promoted as here and now through Christ’s coming and gifted salvation, yet not fully realized as this faith in the kingdom to come must now be carried out in the impact it has on the way one

---

<sup>30</sup> Dunn, 99-102, 104-106, 110, 112.

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, 110.

<sup>32</sup> Dunn, 99-102, 104-106, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Dunn, 111-112.

<sup>34</sup> This story can also be found in Mark 2:13-17.

lives and realizes that kingdom fully.<sup>35</sup> As Dunn summarizes, “It is by living out of faith (trust and reliance on God) that one does the will of God,” and will be ultimately judged and receive salvation/eternity.<sup>36</sup>

Katherine Grieb offers additional insight into this theme as she claims “much of Paul's leadership strategy involves reminding his churches of their vocation from God, who summons them to sanctification as they await the return of Jesus Christ and encourages them to imitate the same pattern of Christ in their life together that they see in their leaders.”<sup>37</sup> As with Dunn, she too insists on Paul’s emphasis to imitate Christ and/or others that imitate him. Grieb also expands on this in how a community of believers is strengthened and normal ways of living are uprooted as a result. Grieb points out that “Vocation implies both conversion and adoption into a new community of accountable others. Paul describes the church in ‘fictive kinship’ terms, as brothers and sisters in Christ, a family that rejoices in the midst of suffering and hardship, and lives ‘in holiness and honor’ (1 Thess 4:5).”<sup>38</sup> One example that she provides is the willingness to be humble and suffer as a servant of Christ when you are a leader,<sup>39</sup> where, “For Paul, nothing less than a complete and intense resocialization happens as part of baptism into Christ.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Dunn, 98-99, 103-104, 106-108.

<sup>36</sup> Dunn, 108, 113.

<sup>37</sup> Katherine A. Grieb, “‘The One Who Called You ...’: Vocation and Leadership in the Pauline Literature.” *Interpretation* 59, no. 2 (April 2005): 154–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430505900205>.

<sup>38</sup> Grieb, 162-163.

<sup>39</sup> Grieb, 158-162.

<sup>40</sup> Grieb, 162.

Tying this back into the first point's emphasis on love, Grieb highlights how acts/works of faithfulness done through and in response to God's drastic love are bound to upset the habits and social structures a person is a part of.<sup>41</sup>

Instead, following the crucified Lord, they are to renounce such church-destroying behaviors and to focus instead on the needs of their less powerful members, on the gifts of the Spirit that are likely to be ignored (because they are less glamorous), and to the practices that strengthen community over the long haul—such as truth-telling, generosity, forgiveness, and constancy in prayer. Because they are ambassadors of God's new creation, they are also ministers of reconciliation, proclaiming the joyful "nevertheless" of God's surprising mercy towards those with no claim upon God whatsoever.<sup>42</sup>

She points out that Paul sees a dedicated believer as being “committed to a way of life in tension with their surroundings,” continually being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and transforming to be more Christlike in the journey of faithful living.<sup>43</sup> The idea of “new creation” and kingdom realization means that life as one knows it must be reformed to reflect the new faith found in Christ's resurrection and love.<sup>44</sup>

### **Interpretations Over Time: Major Utilizations and Critiques**

This section marks a review of different interpretations of vocation and calling in the Body of Christ over the centuries, and the role and perspectives of what that body entails for Christian believers. An attempt at equality in the role community is called to have as Christians

---

<sup>41</sup> Grieb, 162.

<sup>42</sup> Grieb, 163.

<sup>43</sup> Grieb, 162.

<sup>44</sup> Grieb, 163.

(versus a purely hierarchical and/or elite/elect vocation) is seen as a movement in the later decades, as initiated by the Reformation.

### Universal to “Catholic” Church<sup>45</sup>

In New Testament times (50-110 CE), “vocation” did not really exist in the same way as is sparked in our recollection today. “Ecclesia” was the church, the called ones. The primary calling/identity of believers following Christ was discipleship. The Patristic era (100-500 CE) showed some separation, but not much distinction, between what was called the “laity” and clergy (*kleros*), but it wasn’t until the last two centuries of this era that order began to arise in church responsibilities in the sacraments and liturgies (a system adopted from Roman and Pagan empires). It wasn’t until the Early Middle-Ages (600-1000 CE) that “calling” became the act of entering into priesthood or the ordered religious life (sacred and celibate), and in the French School of Spirituality Baroque period (1600s CE) that the church was seen as the living essence of the Divine image. Additionally, “ecclesiology” was seen as a “mighty fortress,” with the priest an extension of Jesus Christ and set apart for worship and spiritual direction. The distinction between ordained and laity was solidified in the 17/1800s (congruent with the Enlightenment and Modern Era) with the “hierarchy of holiness” where vocation was known through a secret voice (a personal whisper of God to a person) and every person had a “state of life” as ordained, in a religious life, celibate, or married.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> This section stems from studies under Kathleen Cahalan at the Saint John’s School of Theology. She provided the most comprehensive overview of vocation over the centuries that I have experienced and therefore will be the main contributor to my knowledge: Kathleen Cahalan, “2.1 Catholic Approaches,” PTHM/SPIR 414: Theology and Spirituality of Vocation (class lecture, St. John’s School of Theology, Collegeville, MN, February 3, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> *Lumen Gentium* is a prime Catholic document on the Church’s stance on vocation and calling; Kärkkäinen, 145.

### Lutheran Reforms Vocation and Calling

Martin Luther was known for shaking up the church in regards to works and faith through the Reformation, but he is not always recognized as also revolutionizing Christian perceptions of vocational calling in the same sweep. In his “The Freedom of a Christian,” Luther continues on after a discussion of works and faith to describe the three powers (or benefits) of what he deems inner faith.<sup>47</sup> The third power of faith is that it unites and marries Christ and our soul, meaning then that what we have we hold in common with Christ, good and bad.<sup>48</sup> According to Luther, we ourselves become priests and kings<sup>49</sup> in Christ through this union. What Luther believes follows this spiritual kinship is that all things are subject to us and are “compelled to serve [us] in obtaining salvation,” or, in other words, as priests, we are worthy of appearing before God to pray for others and to teach each other the divine truths.<sup>50</sup> We have an equal authority to evangelize and carry out God’s work.

However, as we are additionally called priests, i.e. part of the priesthood of all believers<sup>51</sup> we are also called servants and are servants of all and made subject to all.<sup>52</sup> We don’t live and work for our bodies alone, but for all our neighbors. By conforming the contrary, selfish, and worldly will in our own flesh to consent to God (and trusting Him in that), this enables us to

---

<sup>47</sup> Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian” in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 41.

<sup>48</sup> Luther, 60-61; Howard, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Kärkkäinen, 145.

<sup>50</sup> Luther, 63-64; Kärkkäinen, 146.

<sup>51</sup> Kärkkäinen, 145.

<sup>52</sup> Luther, 67.



better serve others more sincerely and freely while we necessarily interact with each other.<sup>53</sup>

“Here faith is truly active through love,” as God did and continues to be active with us, by understanding that works are not the means of salvation, but are an expression of them and a way to conform the body to the inner will in order to better serve, you then must not solely rely on or entirely reject doing works.<sup>54</sup> Works are born out of faith and done in loving service to the community. A balance where works are expressions of an inner faith and renewal of the Image of God in us (in partnership with the Spirit)<sup>55</sup> was what Luther stood up for and deemed the correct path. In this is the belief that the roles we play in secular society are key to how we show love to God and others through service,<sup>56</sup> effectively bringing the realization of the kingdom of God.

These two roles are better described as general and particular callings<sup>57</sup> and can be summarized as the idea that all people have a general (spiritual) calling to be baptized<sup>58</sup> and live in the Christian faith (faith and discipleship) and a particular (external) calling to serve and love God and our neighbors through utilizing our gifts and talents in relationships and occupations (social structures) in the world.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Luther, 73; Howard, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Luther, 74, 79-85; Howard, 14, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Howard, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Kathleen A Cahalan, and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, eds, *Calling All Years Good : Christian Vocation Throughout Life's Seasons* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 12; Kathleen A. Cahalan and Douglas J. Schuurman, eds. *Callings in Today's World: Voices from Eight Faith Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 58 and 60-62; Howard, 21.

<sup>57</sup> Cahalan, Schuurman, eds., *Callings in Today's World*, 55-56; Cahalan and Miller-McLemore, eds. *Calling All Years Good*, 19.

<sup>58</sup> Baptism is central in this theology to Luther; Kärkkäinen, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Cahalan, Schuurman, eds., *Callings in Today's World*, 58-59; Howard, 16.

Luther also had what is deemed an “above” and “below” angle to his thesis, where the ordained are mainly there to serve as they are only entrusted to publicly carry out ministry efforts to prevent confusion. Since all the baptized could do such, practically speaking it helps to have fewer people given the responsibility to do so. Luther cut through the tendency to place “special” ordained in tension with universal (general) calling. He abolished the differences that were assumed and enforced in ontology between the ordained and laity.<sup>60</sup> This had a dramatic influence later on during the Second Vatican Council.<sup>61</sup>

### Vatican II Move<sup>62</sup>

Vatican II marked a move in the Catholic church from the old view that there was an ontological difference between the ordained and laity. A renewed concern for developing the ministry of all believers emerged from a rising pneumatological influence, viewing the church as the “Temple of the Holy Spirit.” Vatican II is where there was agreement with Luther’s priesthood of all believers, priest and kings, and charism gifts, and the Church “came to appreciate the role of all people of God in building up the Church and the advancement of the mission.”<sup>63</sup> “Laity” was defined as a person who has not received orders or doesn’t belong to religious life. They carry out the mission of the Christian people in the church and world, engage in temporal affairs, have a vocation to the building up of the Church, and is an apostate that shares in the salvific mission of the Church.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Kärkkäinen, 146.

<sup>61</sup> Kärkkäinen, 147.

<sup>62</sup> Cahalan has noted this as “Luther was right” time: Cahalan, “2.1.”

<sup>63</sup> Kärkkäinen, 147.

<sup>64</sup> Cahalan, “2.1.”

Although, the Catholic church still insists on an “essential” difference between the ordained and laity. This is believed to still hinder participation for “the majority of the church from an active, constitutive role in the life of the church.”<sup>65</sup> The ordained still hold particular power (*potestas*) which other baptized Christians do not have, and the Church continued the use of “priesthood” titling and differed it from the laity in how it is “hierarchical”<sup>66</sup> and understood in sacramental terms.<sup>67</sup> It’s stated that although “Every theological tradition nowadays agree about the importance of the non-ordained,” i.e. the priesthood of all believers,<sup>68</sup> “nothing much seems to change either in praxis or theology,” due to preconceived notions of power and/or authority in the Catholic Church regarding ecclesia.<sup>69</sup>

### **Conclusion: Implications for Christian Community’s Call Today- Involvement in One’s Own Social Structures for the Common Good**

But what is also crucial to grasp is that Paul did in fact expect his communities to be active agents of goodness, compassion, reconciliation, and justice in the world, not merely in the church. He expected them to practice the same kind of justice toward outsiders as toward believers.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>The claim is identified that this difference is based on the Eucharist meal and how an ordained priest must preside: Kärkkäinen, 147-148. Although, Godfrey L. Diekmann does take a look at the church hierarchy in the ecclesia and believes this foundational point of Paul's should be reflected in how it emphasizes the Church ecclesia's heightened responsibility in how they are to use their gifts as rooted in love for the service of the common good (versus their heightened authority over others, especially others in the church body): Godfrey Diekmann, “Nature of the Church and Its Government,” *Duke Divinity School Review* 30, no. 1 (Wint 1965): 21–32.

<sup>66</sup> Kärkkäinen, 148.

<sup>67</sup> Kärkkäinen, 149.

<sup>68</sup> Kärkkäinen, 149.

<sup>69</sup> Kärkkäinen, 144; See footnote #65 for relevant reference.

<sup>70</sup> Gorman, 207.

### Current Rising Interpretation

An interpretation of Pauline theology that is currently rising and again is revolutionizing perceptions of vocation and calling theology embraces the Lutheran concept of general and particular callings and goes beyond the idea of vocation and calling that applies to the clergy and religious orders highlighted more by the Catholic faith. This superb scholarship on vocation and calling has been contributed by Kathleen Cahalan (though she sees her scholarship as focused mostly on Paul's theology of charism).<sup>71</sup> Cahalan believes all people are called to a life of discipleship and have particular callings. If one is called to ministry, because the Holy Spirit blesses them with it, they have discerned and distinct charisms for the practice. Reflecting what this paper has seen so far in Pauline theology, there are distinctions but not discrepancies of one's gift(s) in calling/vocation to another's. Such practices can be various, including teaching, preaching, worship, social justice work, organization/administration, pastoral care, etcetera. One is not higher or holier, just distinct.

She additionally defines ministry as the calling to lift up and nurture the callings of all in the community for the sake of God's mission (i.e. realization of the kingdom). Her approach is done through an increased move to Trinitarian and Holy Spirit (pneumatological) theology and a decrease in Christology as the main/sole theology in consideration when regarding calling and vocation. As laid out in her book, *Calling All Years Good: Christian Vocation Throughout Life's Seasons*, one is called to such vocations across the lifespan, ever-changing and morphing when and how one is called to use their gifts for service of God and love of others. Cahalan approaches

---

<sup>71</sup> Cahalan, "2.1."

this interpretation as applicable and addressed to the baptized laity, but seems to still view its relevance to the general population.

### Praxis is Not Practiced

As discussed previously in this paper, it is believed that “Rather than rehabilitating the non-ordained, [the Catholic Church] isolates a category of Christians, those specializing in the work of the ‘world,’ from another category of those concentrated in interecclesial activities. The correction,” as it was insisted by Paul to the Corinthians in his time, “is that all people of God should take responsibility in both the world and the church.”<sup>72</sup>

However, it is not just the misstep of one group. Other denominations have been noted as also supporting the priesthood of all believers and the importance of the laity, but are likewise not fully putting into praxis the implications for church structure or lay involvement in the secular world. A proposal of a “participatory ecclesiology” in the church community by one scholar is held up in an article as “viable in that it takes seriously the role of the Spirit in ecclesiology, the necessity of the ministry of all people of God in concert with those who are full-time workers, and corresponds to the contemporary sociological climate with its call for equality and democracy.”<sup>73</sup>

The key point of this section is based on Gorman’s above quoted discussion of justice in his chapter, “Becoming the Justice of God: 1 & 2 Corinthians.”<sup>74</sup> This statement highlights the inward and outward call to action of the body of baptized believers that is found in Paul’s

---

<sup>72</sup> Kärkkäinen, 154.

<sup>73</sup> Kärkkäinen, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Gorman, 178-211.

theology. Though this call has been discussed and studied in the Corinthian context, the interpretation of it over time by the church's major denominations, and as the general call to baptized believers in this analysis, there remains the practical question of, "How do we, in the 21st-century, actually put into praxis this personally as a Christian believer? Therefore, this next subsection gives such beginning guidance and resources to explore one's vocation as an individual that is part of a 21st-century world and community, both church and secular.

### Community for the Common Good in Secular and Church Constructs: Justice & Liberation

Paul, as a Jew, has in mind the apocalyptic belief of needing to be in right relationship with God, as also demonstrated by Jesus Christ in his ministry. This right relationship (justification) also applies to relationships with each other and the earth, God's creation, and is exemplified and tied to the realization of the kingdom of God in the present on earth by the Body of Christ. Gorman touches on this as well.

For Paul, God is the God of justice, and the church is a community of justice; justice is both a divine trait and an ecclesial practice. Accordingly, justice is not an optional supplement to the Pauline and Christian gospel; it is who God in Christ is, and what the church in Christ is, and what it is becoming. It is the church's name: "the justice of God." Justification that is not inclusive of justice is un-Jewish, un-Pauline, and ultimately un-Christian."<sup>75</sup>

The church must practice the "cruciform justice of God" through mutual care, where "Cruciform ecclesiology" is the church as the locus of justice for the weak and does so (or not) "as the ongoing presence of Christ in the world" that is also an active witness to outsiders.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Gorman, 209.

<sup>76</sup> Gorman, 201.

A resource and example of such theology is exemplified by Gustavo Gutiérrez. In his work *A Theology of Liberation : History, Politics, and Salvation*<sup>77</sup> and *We Drink from Our Own Wells : The Spiritual Journey of a People*,<sup>78</sup> Gutiérrez highlights the need and ways to approach care for the poor and oppressed through what is an example of liberation theology. John Barclay stresses the importance of how our individual and communal choices regarding food affect global warming of the earth, touching on a Pauline approach that can shape how we care for creation.<sup>79</sup> A voyageur in how theology should shape our involvement in the economy and social structures (such as capitalism with our own business/careers and through our relationship with others) is Daniel K. Finn.<sup>80</sup> His work provides a framework for how the church looks at social sin and how we as Christians are faced with certain opportunities, restrictions, and incentives in a secular world where our actions can always affect another's life, even their well-being. These are only a few of the scholars that have applied theology in real-world contexts for application, but they are a starting point for one's own personal journey of acting as a member of the Body of Christ in their community.

### Closing Remarks

In closing, through exploring Paul's theology on vocation and calling in relation to the "Body of Christ," this paper first aimed at exploring Paul's theology on calling and vocation of

---

<sup>77</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, New York.: Orbis Books), 1988.

<sup>78</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books), 1984.

<sup>79</sup> Gorman touches on environmental justice on page 208 as well; John M.G. Barclay, "Food, Christian Identity and Global Warming: A Pauline Call for a Christian Food Taboo," *The Expository Times* 121, no. 12 (September 2010): 585–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524610376712>.

<sup>80</sup> A bibliography and list of publications can be found for Dan Finn here: <https://www.csbsju.edu/sot/faculty/staff-listing/sot-faculty/finn-daniel>.

the Body of Christ by highlighting 1 Corinthians 12, followed by zooming out to consider recent scholarship on more general Pauline theology. This paper intended to support the thesis that there is unity in the Body of Christ as baptized Christian Believers to each carry out God's will and to grow and transform together as the Image of God through the Holy Spirit's bestowing of spiritual gifts, and diversity in where and how we are to do so through the church and secular social structures we are a part of as the Body of Christ and Images of God.

It then attempted to demonstrate how interpretations of Paul's theology has been utilized and/or critiqued over time by the beginning universal/catholic (small "c") church, the later institutionalized Catholic Church, and the corrective attempt (and success) of the Protestant Lutheran Reformation in their implementations in relation to vocation and calling. The return and revival of unity of community was demonstrated as the focus through the considerations of these major denominations and prominent time periods.

It concluded with an analysis of newer perspectives of how the present Christian community is "called" to respond to vocation and calling interpretations in order to better carry out our faith as the Body of Christ. This paper attempted to provide examples and resources of recent/current Pauline theology of vocation and calling applied where all members of the body of Christian believers have an equally valuable and necessary call to carry out God's will and work to realize the kingdom on earth and the Image of God/Christ, but do so in diverse vocations utilizing our different gifts in different contexts and methods for the common good. Such examples of theology and applications in real-world contexts included Kathleen Cahalan's contributions to revolutionize perceptions of vocation and calling based on Lutheran and Catholic interpretations, Gustavo Gutiérrez's work with liberation theology by care and support



of the poor and oppressed, John Barclay's work in raising awareness of an individual's impact on environmental justice, and Daniel K. Finn's presentation of theological implications in social structures we are a part of.

This author hopes that the three main points of unity, diversity, and community that were distilled from the above thesis aided to portray how God calls us all to live our faith in Jesus Christ through loving and serving our community, in diverse ways through using/embracing different (yet equally bestowed) Holy Spirit-given gifts, in the numerous and diverse roles we play in the world. It is the author's deep wish that the reader takes these findings into deep consideration when evaluating how to live their life as a member of the Body of Christ.

## Bibliography

- Barclay, John M.G. "Food, Christian Identity and Global Warming: A Pauline Call for a Christian Food Taboo." *The Expository Times* 121, no. 12 (September 2010): 585–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524610376712>.
- Borg, Marcus J, and John Dominic Crossan. *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon*. 1st ed. New York: HarperOne, 2009.
- Cahalan, Kathleen. "2.1 Catholic Approaches." PTHM/SPIR 414: Theology and Spirituality of Vocation (class lecture, St. John's School of Theology, Collegeville, MN, February 3, 2020).
- Cahalan, Kathleen A, and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, eds. *Calling All Years Good : Christian Vocation Throughout Life's Seasons*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017.
- Cahalan, Kathleen A, and Douglas J. Schuurman, eds. *Callings in Today's World: Voices from Eight Faith Perspectives*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.
- Diekmann, Godfrey. "Nature of the Church and Its Government." *Duke Divinity School Review* 30, no. 1 (Wint 1965): 21–32.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Durken, Daniel, ed. *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Vol. New Testament*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.
- Grieb, Katherine A. "'The One Who Called You ...': Vocation and Leadership in the Pauline Literature." *Interpretation* 59, no. 2 (April 2005): 154–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430505900205>.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984).

Howard, James M. *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation Within Pauline Theology*. Studies in Biblical Literature, V. 90. New York: Peter Lang., 2007.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. "The Calling of the Whole People of God into Ministry: The Spirit, Church and Laity." *Studia Theologica* 54, no. 2 (December 2000): 144-162.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/003933800750059783>.

Luther, Martin. "The Freedom of a Christian." In *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, edited by John Dillenberger. New York: Anchor Books, 1962.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians," *Worship* 50, no. 5 (September 1976): 370-385.