
Surprise, Hope and Gift: A Pneumatological Account of the Unexpected Nature of Vocation

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Abstract: God's call can be surprising and unexpected. This article evaluates theologies of vocation in light of this potential for surprise. Contemporary Protestant theological interpretations of vocation are critiqued as incomplete due to their tendency to present vocation as the expression and utilisation of innate abilities without giving sufficient account of how an individual might be called to something totally new and surprising. It will be suggested that this arises from a focus on creation as the dominant theological lens for interpreting vocation. An alternative focused on eschatology and pneumatology will be proposed in which both natural talents and new abilities are recognised as gifts of the Spirit given for the purpose of anticipatory proleptic participation in the coming Kingdom of God.

Introduction

At the Royal Wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton in April 2011, the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, began his address by citing the words of St Catherine of Siena: 'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire'.¹ Although his words were directed to the newly married couple, they were also heard by millions of onlookers who tuned in for the pageantry and historic significance of the wedding of the future king. Drawing from Christian tradition, Chartres offered a theological vision of vocation to connect with a contemporary social context whose dominant narratives about personal

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1 Richard Chartres, 'The Bishop of London's Sermon', 29 April 2011, <https://www.royal.uk/bishop-londons-sermon> (accessed 20 September 2022).

purpose are individual choice and self-expression,² and whose greatest fear is not condemnation but meaninglessness.³

Within this cultural context, it is interesting to note the increase of psychological and sociological research into the concept of vocation, focusing particularly on employment and work satisfaction.⁴ This has not been matched by theological engagement with this topic, prompting Edward Hahnenberg to comment that ‘the category of vocation has been overlooked by theologians and not well understood by Christians’.⁵ It is possible that this can be attributed to historical developments in which ‘vocation’ has been variously interpreted to refer to the call to discipleship, to the religious life or as a broad category encompassing employment and professional occupations, thus complicating and confusing conversations on this topic.⁶ Protestant and Catholic theologians have taken distinctively different approaches to addressing the subject of vocation since Martin Luther’s seminal contribution during the Reformation, which Hahnenberg comments has resulted in ‘a fundamental difference in the “location” of vocation: Protestants placed vocation within the doctrine of creation; Catholics treated it within a theology of supernatural grace’.⁷ This article will focus primarily on the Protestant and Reformed theological trajectory, while acknowledging the significant contribution offered by Catholic theologians to this debate.⁸

2 Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), pp. xii–xiii.

3 Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd edn. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 61.

4 Marco Rotman, ‘Vocation in Theology and Psychology: Conflicting Approaches?’, *Christian Higher Education* 16 (2017), p. 24.

5 Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, p. xii.

6 William C. Placher, ‘Introduction’, in William C. Placher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 6–9.

7 Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, p. 27.

8 For example, for chapters and articles on the contribution of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, see: Gill Goulding, ‘“The Irreducible Particularity of Christ” – Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theology of Vocation’, in Christopher Jamison, ed., *The Disciples’ Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 115–38; Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, pp. 125–58; Meredith Secomb, ‘Responding to the Call of God: How Mission Makes the Person for Hans Urs von Balthasar’, *The Way* 54 (July 2015): pp. 79–92. For a wider exploration of vocation in Catholic theology, see: Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*; John C. Haughey, ed., *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation: Theological Explorations* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2004); Christopher Jamison, ed., *The Disciples’ Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); For popular level texts exploring vocation from a Catholic perspective, see: Kathleen A. Cahalan, *The Stories We Live: Finding God’s Calling All Around Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Russell Shaw, *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church: Living Out Your Lay Vocation* (New York, NY: Chartwell Press, 2014); Marie Dennis, *Diversity of Vocations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

In this article, I will explore the theological foundations of vocation by considering how we make sense of the repeated pattern seen throughout Scripture in which the call of God comes as a surprise to those to whom it is directed. This will be contrasted with contemporary secular and theological writings which conceive of vocation as the sense of purpose which arises when a person identifies and fully utilises their innate skills, gifts, talents and abilities. I will suggest that, in this context, vocation is often viewed through an operative doctrinal lens focused on creation. Possible reasons for this theological perspective will be acknowledged and I will offer an evaluation of creation as a doctrinal foundation for vocation. Interpreting vocation as that which is congruent with the talents of a unique individual who has been created by God offers a compelling narrative within a culture of self-discovery and self-expression.⁹ However, I will suggest that it fails to sufficiently account for the theme of surprise developed throughout scripture in which unexpected people are called by God to accomplish tasks which exceed their abilities.¹⁰

Having argued that vocation is incompletely interpreted in a creation-focused paradigm, I will offer an alternative by exploring the possibilities presented by a pneumatological focus on vocation. Such an approach would, I suggest, challenge any notion of a Pelagian quest for self-expression and self-determination in vocation. Rather than placing the emphasis on who an individual is through their natural abilities and social circumstance, there would be an increased consideration of who, by obedience and the Spirit's gifting, they are called to become. I will argue that this pneumatological interpretive lens for vocation gives a more comprehensive account of the surprising nature of God's call than when the focus is on creation, and offers opportunities for theological exploration of the topic of vocation which are distinct from the ways in which contemporary culture has appropriated and interpreted this concept.

Discussions on this topic are complicated by the myriad of concepts which have been used to interpret the word 'vocation'. Writing within the field of occupational psychology, Bryan Dik and Ryan Duffy offer definitions of the words 'calling' and 'vocation' before concluding that 'the overlap of calling and vocation obviously is considerable, but their distinction is important'.¹¹ Karl Barth also seeks to outline the ways in which these two words differ, suggesting that 'vocation' is the social, personal and historical situation in which an individual experiences 'calling' as a summons from

9 Graham Tomlin, *Why Being Yourself Is a Bad Idea* (London: SPCK, 2020), p. 1.

10 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 pts., ed G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010) (hereafter *CD*), III/4, pp. 595–96, 629–30.

11 Bryan Dik and Ryan Duffy, 'Calling and Vocation at Work: Definitions and Prospects for Research and Practice', *The Counseling Psychologist* 37 (April 2009), p. 428.

God.¹² However, as the words in their root form are closely connected linguistically, making such distinctions can complicate and confuse discussions on this topic unnecessarily.¹³ Therefore, in this article, ‘vocation’, ‘calling’ and other related words will be used interchangeably whilst recognising that they are multi-faceted in meaning.¹⁴

Surprise and the unexpected in vocation

Barth seems to be one of few Protestant theologians to have given serious, sustained thought to the question of the surprising and unexpected nature of calling.¹⁵ He describes how ‘man [sic] is . . . summoned by the calling and command of God to his own new and daring decision and deed’.¹⁶ This call is experienced within a wider vocational landscape in which the individual recognises the limitations and opportunities presented by their created human nature and unique socio-historical situation, including their physical age, social context, innate aptitudes, and daily work.¹⁷ While Barth is at pains to emphasise that these factors do not determine or dictate the direction of an individual’s life, he identifies them as presenting the contextual realities in the midst of which God’s call is to be discerned.¹⁸ Despite his focus on what it means to experience and respond to God’s command to pursue a new and unexpected purpose, role or task, Barth highlights that this will not be at odds with one’s created being. While personal aptitudes and abilities are not a sufficient indicator of God’s call in and of themselves, they should not be disregarded for their potential to be used by God to accomplish his purposes and plans. Hence, Barth’s comment that, ‘The command of God is the call to wake up, to recognise ourselves and to take ourselves seriously in the totality of what we can actually do’.¹⁹ He is keen to emphasise that the call of God is not placed in competition with an individual’s own being or as an imposed

12 *CD III/4*, p. 598.

13 Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 3; Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), p. 27; Sally Myers, ‘New Directions in Voicing a Vocation’, *Theology* 122 (May 2019), p. 175.

14 Bonhoeffer highlighted the need for ‘vocation [to be] understood simultaneously in all its dimensions’. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 292.

15 Nimmo highlights that the subject of vocation in Barth’s work has often been overlooked and has ‘received little thematic attention in the literature’. Paul T. Nimmo, ‘Barth on Vocation’, in George Hunsinger and Keith L. Johnson, eds. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), p. 317.

16 *CD III/4*, p. 622.

17 *CD III/4*, pp. 607–41.

18 *CD III/4*, p. 621.

19 *CD III/4*, p. 626.

requirement for actions which are painfully at odds with who he has created them to be. Instead, Barth describes the discernment of calling as an act of ‘co-ordination’ or cooperation between creature and creator.²⁰

Throughout Barth’s writing on vocation there remains a dynamic tension between the call and command of God experienced as an interruption in which something completely new and unexpected comes into being, and that which is a predictable development of what is already present through God’s grace and providence. Barth identifies the call and ministry of Paul as an example of this dynamic in practice.²¹ Paul’s encounter with the risen Lord Jesus is a definitive and unexpected interruption in which the social situation and personal inclinations of his former way of life are shown to be insufficient as sources of human advantage and indicators of godly purpose (Philippians 3: 4-14). Nevertheless, Paul recognises that his aptitude for scriptural study, his social position and his religious zeal were somehow indications of the grace, call and direction of God who ‘set me apart before I was born’ (Galatians 1:15 NRSV).²² Paul is called by God to a startlingly new task, but his former way of life and natural attributes are not dismissed entirely, rather they are given over to God to be used in obedience and response to his call. ‘This’, Barth suggests, ‘is the way in which the divine calling affects the human element’.²³ So fundamental is the transformation in Saul as he is filled by the Holy Spirit for the task to which God has called him, that he adopts the new name of Paul; yet in this re-naming there is linguistic continuity with the man he once was.²⁴ Paul is called to something entirely new, but he does so as one ‘who has his former humanity behind him and brings it with him’, so that there is both a complete break with what is past and a singular coherency to his whole life story.²⁵ Paul’s created being is recognised, honoured and utilised, although it is not determinative of his calling and purpose, which are only discovered when he is literally halted in his tracks and given new direction by an encounter with Jesus.

Further developing this theme from Barth, I wish to suggest that a similar dynamic of continuity and discontinuity can be identified in the story of the call

20 *CD III/4*, pp. 566–7.

21 *CD III/4*, p. 604.

22 *CD III/4*, p. 605.

23 *CD III/4*, p. 605.

24 *CD III/4*, p. 604; This name change may be the usage of a Hellenistic alternative to the Hebraic ‘Saul’ reflecting his new focus on mission to the Gentiles as discussed in: Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), pp. 401-2. Alternatively, it may be a narrative device introduced by Luke to indicate the fundamental transition in his identity and purpose from ‘god-fighter’ to an opposed herald of the Gospel as discussed in: Michael Kochenash, ‘Better Call Paul “Saul”: Literary Models and a Lukan Innovation’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138 (2019), p. 449. It is indicative of the transformation of purpose and identity which occurred when Paul encountered the risen Jesus.

25 *CD III/4*, p. 604.

of Peter in Luke 5:1-11. This story holds particular significance as the call of Jesus to his first disciples is often taken to be paradigmatic for later disciples who are challenged to respond to Jesus by leaving behind the things in which they had previously placed their trust in order to follow him.²⁶ As Michael Ramsey notes, ‘the readiness of members of the Church to respond to particular calls [depends] upon the depth of their realisation of the supreme call whereon their faith is founded’.²⁷

Luke’s account of the call of the first disciples is an expanded version of the stories found in Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20 in which Simon Peter, along with Andrew, and moments later, James and John, respond to the call of Jesus to ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people’. (M 1:17). In Luke 5:1-11, the focus is primarily upon Simon Peter and his interactions with Jesus.²⁸ John Hemer comments that this ‘much fuller account . . . tells us something about the anthropology of vocation’ with its focus on Peter’s emotional, practical and verbal responses to his encounter with Jesus.²⁹

Luke’s account commences with Jesus’ request for assistance from Peter and the other fishermen. He wishes to use their boat to continue teaching the crowd and requires their skill, experience and strength to hold the boat steady against the currents of the lake as he teaches.³⁰ From the outset, Peter is invited to meet a genuine practical need and to play an active role in facilitating Jesus’ teaching ministry.³¹ In a departure from the usual pattern of call stories, Luke presents the call of Peter as initially a human encounter before a moment of divine revelation through the miraculous catch of fish results in a reaction and a commissioning.³² This reordering of events in the Lucan narrative emphasises both the human and divine elements of this story, bringing added depth and meaning to Jesus’ call to Peter: ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people’ (Luke 5:10).³³

26 For example: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1959), pp. 19–20; Stuart Buchanan, *On Call: Exploring God’s Leading to Christian Service* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2001), pp. 28–30; John Hemer, ‘What Theologies of Vocation Are to Be Found in the Bible?’, in Christopher Jamison, ed. *The Disciples’ Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 22–5; Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today*, 2nd edn (London: SPCK, 2009), p. 101.

27 Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today*, p. 100.

28 Chad Hartsock, ‘The Call Stories in Luke: The Use of Type-Scene for Lucan Meaning’, *Review and Expositor* 112 (2015), p. 587.

29 Hemer, ‘What Theologies of Vocation Are to Be Found in the Bible?’, p. 23.

30 Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2008), p. 140.

31 Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 230; Hemer, ‘What Theologies of Vocation Are to Be Found in the Bible?’, p. 23.

32 Hartsock, ‘The Call Stories in Luke’, p. 586.

33 Hartsock, ‘The Call Stories in Luke’, p. 588.

It is apparent that Peter is called to relinquish the security and inevitability of his way of life as a fisherman and to '[leave] everything and follow [Jesus]' (Luke 5:11). Yet, inherent within both the narrative and Jesus' command, Peter's gifts, personality and experience are recognised, utilised and transformed. Rather than catching fish and profiting from their death, Peter is called to gather in people and to bring life.³⁴ Hemer comments, 'There is continuity with the old life; they will continue fishing, but now in a different way'.³⁵ These first disciples are called away from their previous occupation, and yet their skills are also redefined and used by Jesus in his ministry as throughout the Gospels we see Jesus and the disciples taking numerous boat journeys in which the fishermen's experience is required.³⁶ Nor is the presence of the other disciples incidental. Luke focuses his narrative on the response of Peter, but also present are James and John as Peter's fishing partners who similarly respond to the call of Jesus.³⁷ Joel Green comments that the shift from the technical phraseology 'business partner' in verse 7 to the more general 'those who share with Simon' in verse 10 'may be deliberate, a way of hinting that these business partners are about to undergo a change of relationship in which they will share much more'.³⁸ There are also indications of the particular personality traits and temperament that Peter will bring to the group of disciples as his forthright nature is apparent in his initially sceptical questioning of Jesus' command and in his passionate recognition of the work of God in the miraculous catch of fish. In this way, the call of Peter does not completely disregard his past experience and innate abilities, rather 'taking his former skills with him, he moves forward into a new venture of faith',³⁹ although his background as one who was 'uneducated and ordinary' (Acts 4:13) would continue to provoke comment.

In both the stories of Peter and Paul, we see the surprise and unexpectedness of the call of God to follow Jesus and to participate in his mission. For both men, there was a total break with their former way of life and yet their learnt skills and innate abilities were to be used in the task to which they were called. Their vocation had elements of both continuity and discontinuity wrapped up in its surprising and unexpected nature.

Paul and Peter are two examples from many within the scriptural narrative for whom God's call appears to be unexpected, and seemingly unlikely people are enabled to play an active role in God's purposes and plans. As God reminds

34 Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, p. 144.

35 Hemer, 'What Theologies of Vocation Are to Be Found in the Bible?', p. 24.

36 Ched Myers highlights the symbolic and structural significance of these repeated boat trips in the Gospel of Mark: Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), pp. 194–7.

37 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 234.

38 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 234.

39 Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, p. 146.

Samuel during his selection of one of Jesse's sons to be the future King of Israel, 'the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (1 Sam. 16:7). Many of those called by God express their surprise and yet respond with a willing 'Here I am' (*hineni*) as they consent to be used by God. This includes Abraham (Gen. 22:1), Jacob (Gen. 31:11; 46:2), Moses (Exod. 3:4), and Mary (Luke 1:38). It appears that scripture frequently highlights the way in which God calls, enables and equips unlikely women and men to do more than they would be able to do reliant on their own skills and abilities.

The call narratives in scripture can give the impression that vocation is primarily conveyed by God to an individual in a startling, life-changing encounter. Rowan Williams challenges this interpretation of vocation, stating that, '[vocation] happens from birth to death; and what we usually call vocation is only a name for the moment of crisis within the unbroken process'.⁴⁰ As well as dramatic instances of calling in scripture, there are also numerous stories in which the Spirit is identified as giving gifts which go beyond the natural abilities of certain people to enable them to achieve the less prominent tasks to which they are called. For example, in Exodus 31:1, the artistic skills necessary for constructing the tabernacle were given to Bezalel; and those selected to serve at tables in the early church, including Stephen, were understood to be 'full of the Spirit and wisdom' and, only because of this, considered suitable for the task (Acts 6:3-6). While scripture presents a variety of ways in which the call of God might be experienced and discerned, it is often the case that vocation is presented as exceeding individuals' natural abilities. Contemporary Christian experience suggests that this pattern of calling continues with some experiencing moments of clarity about God's call to a particular task, while others find it easier to recognise the unexpected development of their vocational journey over time through retrospective reflection.⁴¹

Hence, scriptural examples and contemporary experience give impetus for a re-examination of the theological frameworks for vocation to ensure that they account for the unexpected and surprising call of God. To recognise calling as potentially surprising requires that we consider the part that innate personality, unique gifts and socio-historical context and life experience play in vocational discernment, as well as the extent to which these factors convey God's purposes for an individual. In theological writings on vocation, these questions often seem to be viewed through a doctrinal lens in which creation plays a central role and these features of an individual's life and being are interpreted as the gifts of God to his creature to be used for his glory.

40 Rowan Williams, *Open to Judgement: Sermons and Addresses* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1994), p. 174.

41 Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, p. 94.

Vocation interpreted through a creation-focused doctrinal lens

The imagery of a theatre in which actors are selected and directed to play their part is one to which theologians writing on vocation frequently turn.⁴² Williams suggests that this is because many people assume that to be called is by necessity something ‘dramatic’ akin to being cast for a role in a play.⁴³ He goes on to identify the problem with this analogy, commenting, ‘there will always be the danger of suspicion that we’re not really being used, stretched, and so on, and a flicker of resentment at being consigned to undue prominence or unjust obscurity’.⁴⁴ In seeking to counter this instinctive interpretation of vocation with its attendant emotional responses, Williams turns to humanity’s created nature as offering a constructive framework within which to conceive of calling. He traces the close conceptual relationship between calling and creation in the Old Testament before concluding that, ‘God’s call is the call to *be*: the *vocation* of creatures is to exist . . . *as themselves*’.⁴⁵ Within this interpretive framework, he advocates for vocation to be recognised as the discovery of how life is to be lived in a manner congruent with the unique individual that God has created and in response to moments of crisis in which a person realises ‘how far I have really been from myself’.⁴⁶ While in a subsequent essay on the subject of vocation, Williams recognises that ‘vocation may be to be what we are; but it doesn’t leave us *where* we are’ he continues to develop the theme of self-discovery and honest evaluation of a person’s created abilities as the framework within which vocation is to be identified.⁴⁷

Williams is not alone in making a close connection between an individual as God created them to be and the way in which God calls them. *Kingdom Calling*, a recent document published by the Church of England outlining a theology of lay vocation, opens with the statement that ‘God’s call to humanity begins with creation. To be made in the divine image and likeness is to be called for a purpose, to respond to God’s speech to us’, and the whole opening chapter is structured around a vocational exploration of the doctrine of creation.⁴⁸ Others do not explicitly cite creation as the lens through which they view vocation, but recommend reflection on how the individual might express their created self as part of their calling. This prompts Francis Dewar to describe it as a ‘disaster’ if an individual feels compelled to live their lives going against their inner self, as ‘God invites you to sing *your* song, *your* words,

42 For example, see: CD III/4, p. 579; Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 171.

43 Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 171.

44 Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 171.

45 Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 173.

46 Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 176.

47 Williams, *Open to Judgement*, p. 184.

48 Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling: The Vocation, Ministry and Discipleship of the Whole People of God* (London: Church House Publishing, 2020), pp. 19, 18–42.

your music'.⁴⁹ He later comments that '[t]his is the universal call of God to every human being. The secret, silent voice of God calling you into being, inviting you to offer your song, your part in the hymn of creation', thus making explicit the link he conceives between living as one's true self and that being an expression of created being.⁵⁰ This approach to vocation is not unique to Protestant writers. Christopher Jamison, for example, seemingly implies that vocation is to be recognised as an expression of 'the authentic self' despite urging caution over the potential for self-deception and narcissism⁵¹; while, also writing from a Catholic perspective, Kathleen Cahalan considers that 'God is calling us to truth, authenticity, and integrity' and that the storied nature of our lives can act as an indicator of our vocation.⁵²

The origins of this epistemological focus on the individual have been traced back to 'Augustine's reflexive identification with his own subjectivity' shaped by his engagement both with Neoplatonism and his personal experience of the Christian God.⁵³ However, it is with the Reformers that an emphasis on discerning vocation through interpreting an individual's socio-historical location, personal skills and unique relationships begins to grip the theological imagination. Martin Luther considered vocation to be found in living in relationship with others and recognising the contribution one makes as a co-creator with God through productive work in the social position in which one was placed by God's providence.⁵⁴ While Luther was cautious about the potential for seeking self-fulfilment,⁵⁵ it is often thought that it was John Calvin who introduced the notion of personal abilities, gifts and talents as indicators of the ways in which one might be tasked with serving others.⁵⁶ Calvin's own vocational path was not straightforward. In 1538, he decided to follow his own desires and step back from being a pastor and teacher. It was only the intervention of Martin Bucer, who challenged him and told him that he was resisting his call, likening him to Jonah, which brought him back to his ministry in obedience rather than through a personal sense of ambition or self-fulfilment.⁵⁷

49 Francis Dewar, *Called or Collared?: An Alternative Approach to Vocation* (London: SPCK, 2000), p. 32.

50 Dewar, *Called or Collared?*, p. 40.

51 Jamison, *The Disciples' Call*, p. 2.

52 Cahalan, *The Stories We Live*, p. 25.

53 Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 2: The Works of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 97.

54 Martin Luther, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 46; Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), pp. 64–5.

55 Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, p. 6.

56 J. Stuart Bunderson and Jeffery A. Thompson, 'The Call of the Wild: Zookeepers, Callings and the Double-Edged Sword of Deeply Meaningful Work', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 54 (March 2009), p. 33.

57 Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), p. 22.

Nevertheless, Calvin comments on Matthew 25:15: ‘God, as he has assigned to everyone his place, and has bestowed on him natural gifts . . . presents to him the opportunity [for responsibility],’⁵⁸ and in his sermon on Galatians 6:9-11 writes, ‘For after as God bestoweth any ability or gift upon any of us he sendeth him to such as have need of him and as he is able to help’.⁵⁹

During the Reformation and over the subsequent years, there was a subtle but significant shift from the identification of vocation with the situation in which one finds oneself to the discovering of vocation through recognition and utilisation of one’s talents. This instigated something of a theological, cultural and historical transition.

Over recent centuries, this trajectory has developed to place an increased emphasis on the individual and the perceived need for outward behaviour to reflect and express the inner or ‘true’ self.⁶⁰ This is reflected in contemporary secular research by Duffy et al., who found that the most common definition of what it means to experience vocation is finding a career which is ‘an ideal match for one’s interests, values and skills’.⁶¹ This seemingly removes the need to identify a transcendent source for calling, as the call is to be found internally rather than originating externally and detaches the secular concept of vocation from its Christian origins.⁶²

Barth recognised the potential for the focus on the individual to skew theological discussions on vocation.⁶³ His counter-perspective highlighted the primacy of the call of Jesus to discipleship and wrestled with how human beings are to live active lives of obedience and service in response.⁶⁴ Throughout his discussion on human agency (‘The Active Life’), on identifying particular tasks to undertake (‘The Unique Opportunity’) and on his theology of vocation more generally (‘Vocation’), he refers to God as the one who is both ‘Creator and Lord’.⁶⁵ As Creator, God knows his creature intimately and has determined the biological and socio-historical limitations within which an individual lives.⁶⁶ As

58 John Calvin, *John Calvin's Commentaries On The Harmony Of The Gospels, Vol. 2*, trans. John King (eBook: Jazzybee Verlag, 2012).

59 John Calvin, *Sermons on Galatians*, trans. Arthur Golding (eBook: Books for the Ages, 1998), p. 581.

60 Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM Press, 2002), p. 319; Tomlin, *Why Being Yourself Is a Bad Idea*, pp. 1, 1–14; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 475; Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019), p. 107.

61 Ryan Duffy et al., ‘Does the Source of a Calling Matter? External Summons, Destiny, and Perfect Fit’, *Journal of Career Assessment* 22 (2014), p. 563.

62 Duffy et al., ‘Does the Source of a Calling Matter?’, p. 564.

63 CD III/4, p. 623.

64 CD III/4, pp. 475–77.

65 CD III/4, p. 470.

66 CD III/4, pp. 567–68.

Lord, the appropriate human response to the ‘majesty and power’ of God is obedience to one who communicates his will as a loving, but imperative command.⁶⁷

While Barth seeks to challenge the tendency for vocation to be interpreted as self-expression and explores how God can make known a ‘special intention’⁶⁸ for an individual, he nevertheless places significant emphasis on creation as foundational for understanding the call and command of God.⁶⁹ He states,

although man cannot simply read off God’s command from what he has so far been and become on the basis of the creation and providence of God, yet in that which God wills of him according to his command he will recognise himself as the one he already has been and become by the will of the same God.⁷⁰

In this way, Barth invites further reflection on how a theology of vocation viewed through a creation-focused lens can allow for the call of God to surpass natural and predictable patterns of behaviour and bring into being something truly new and unexpected. It is helpful that Barth’s contribution highlights some of the strengths and the weaknesses of founding a theology of vocation on the doctrine of creation and these will now be further evaluated.

Evaluation of creation as a doctrinal foundation for vocation

It is apparent that there are a number of pragmatic and pastoral reasons for interpreting vocation within a creation-focused paradigm. As outlined previously, doing so counters the simplistic and misleading impression that God has a precise, specific plan for every person and that to be called means that this plan will be revealed in an obvious and definitive manner. Gary Badcock notes that such a conceptualisation of calling is ‘something of a temptation, for it resonates . . . with the deep-seated individualism of modern culture. But it is totally foreign to biblical thought’.⁷¹ By reinterpreting vocation as reflective of the person whom God has created each individual to be, it is possible to challenge the idea that only those who have experienced a moment of crisis and conviction can describe themselves as having ‘a calling’. Instead, the focus will be on congruency with the individual’s created being, alongside continuity and coherency in their life’s story.

This approach resonates with contemporary Western culture and may allow for fruitful engagement with those who are seeking to define and understand

67 *CD III/4*, p. 568.

68 *CD III/4*, p. 596.

69 Nimmo, ‘Barth on Vocation’, pp. 317–9.

70 *CD III/4*, p. 596.

71 Badcock, *The Way of Life*, pp. 82–3.

themselves in order to make decisions about the direction of their life. Hahnenberg comments that spiritual seekers may find the concept of vocation attractive, as it ‘taps into the deep-seated sensibilities of [their] quest – integrity, identity, itinerary – but in a way that resists self-absorption. It acknowledges the importance of discernment and decision – the virtues of choice – but recognises that our decisions come as a *response* to something or someone beyond’.⁷² In this way, conceiving of vocation as a process of discovering the purposes and plans of a Creator may be both attractive and meaningful to Christians and those who are open to a more general sense of spirituality and personal development.

While there may be some good pragmatic and missional reasons for drawing on creation as the primary theological paradigm for the concept of vocation, it is concerning that such a conceptualisation so neatly interprets and articulates the contemporary quest for self-expression and choice. Within this context, it is easy for the focus to slip off of the Creator as the one who calls and onto the individual who discovers their sense of purpose through reflection on their innate abilities as a created being. There are also considerable theological objections to relying on an individual’s sense of self to identify the ways in which God has created them and is calling them to use and express their created gifts.⁷³ It is questionable how possible this is when, as the prophet Jeremiah puts it, ‘The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse – who can understand it?’ (Jeremiah 17:9). Introspection and self-knowledge are not sufficient or reliable sources for determining one’s steps in life nor in identifying the call of God.⁷⁴ It is no wonder that Ignatius of Loyola, whilst advocating a reflective, subjective approach to vocational discernment,⁷⁵ recognised the need for a process of ‘preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affection . . . [before] seeking and finding God’s will’.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the call of God is not to be confused with the desire for self-expression and self-fulfilment, rather it is to be interpreted in light of the One who ‘told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”’ (Matt. 16:24). This challenges any interpretation of vocation as that which is to be found through reflection on

72 Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, p. xiii.

73 Cara Lovell, “Do You Believe That God Is Calling You to This Ministry?” Subjective and Objective Factors in Discerning Vocation in the Church of England’, *Theology and Ministry* 6 (2020), pp. 73–5.

74 Jenson, *The Works of God*, p. 104.

75 Gemma Simmonds, ‘The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and Their Contribution to a Theology of Vocation’, in Christopher Jamison, ed., *The Disciples’ Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 85.

76 Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), p. 21.

oneself and identification of the unique contribution one might make in the world, and instead places the focus on self-denial and faithful service. For this reason, Badcock comments that, ‘vocation is always to be understood in terms of bearing a cross: it is something we share with Christ in some small measure, a part of his mission in the world, something that requires death to self for the sake of God and other people’.⁷⁷ This cruciform shape to vocation is not emphasised when creation provides the primary interpretative paradigm for this concept.

The potential for vocation to be painful, difficult and self-negating highlights the inadequacy of conceptions of vocation which focus on that which arises from an individual’s created nature and in continuity with their gifts. These do not account for the potential for surprising twists and turns in the vocational path whereby God calls the individual to go beyond those natural tendencies which self-reflection would identify. Critics of Luther on the concept of vocation highlight that his influential contribution was forged in a feudal society in which stability and conformity were prized as expressions of God’s providence, thereby favouring the *status quo* and downplaying the potential for an individual to pursue significant changes in role, social standing or location in response to God’s call.⁷⁸ Although he considered that ‘insecurity’ and ‘uncertainty’ were necessary components of life in order to develop trust in God’s providence, Luther did not develop an account of the unexpected as a feature of calling.⁷⁹ This continues to be underplayed or omitted from many theologies of vocation to this day.

Eschatological and pneumatological interpretations of vocation

Luther’s enduring influence on vocation has led to a perception that to engage theologically with this concept is to refer to something static and unchanging from which choice and change are inherently excluded.⁸⁰ Hence, Miroslav Volf suggests that it is necessary to disentangle theologies of work from the concept of vocation because employment today is more fluid and varied than in Luther’s feudal medieval social context.⁸¹ He explains his motivation for writing a theology of work, stating, ‘It was clear to me that the dead hand of “vocation” needed to be lifted from the Christian idea of work’.⁸² His alternative proposal is for ‘a shift from a vocational to a charismatic

77 Badcock, *The Way of Life*, p. 72.

78 Badcock, *The Way of Life*, p. 40; Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, p. 16; Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), p. vii.

79 Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, pp. 35–6.

80 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 105–6.

81 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. vii, 107–9.

82 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. vii.

understanding of work⁸³ in which creation no longer provides the dominant theological interpretive framework, but rather is replaced by a focus on pneumatology developed within an eschatological doctrinal paradigm.⁸⁴ Volf claims that the potential for a reinterpretation of the concept of vocation is insufficient to offer a robust contemporary theology of work.⁸⁵ However, the move that he proposes from a focus on creation to pneumatology is similar to one which I will argue is necessary on a broader level for the concept of vocation in order to make sense of the potential for God's call to be surprising and unexpected.

The move towards pneumatological and proleptic eschatological theology gathered pace throughout the twentieth century with significant contributions made by theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. With differing agendas and concerns, Moltmann and Pannenberg prioritised eschatology in their epistemology and explored the ramifications for such a move on systematic theology. It appears that the subject of vocation is an overlooked aspect of Moltmann and Pannenberg's theological contribution. By comparing and contrasting the eschatological visions for theology offered by Moltmann and Pannenberg, I will identify alternative interpretations of vocation with an eschatological focus and the potential for these to account for the element of surprise in vocation within such a paradigm.

Moltmann's theological approach was marked by a commitment to hope as the central feature of Christian theology which he defines in its relation to eschatology: 'eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it'.⁸⁶ Throughout his work, Moltmann explores the significance of hope as the expectation of God's activity in the world and promise of what is to come, whilst emphasising that the certainty of this future is predicated by God's consistent and faithful activity throughout history.⁸⁷ The direction and emphasis of Moltmann's work is on the implications of eschatological hope for theological understanding as he considers eschatology to be 'the universal horizon of all theology'.⁸⁸ For Moltmann, to be called is to be invited to 'join in working for the kingdom of God that is to come'.⁸⁹ He makes a distinction between this fundamental call, with its eschatological focus, and 'callings', which are the ever-changing set of social circumstances in which a person must express the hope of their 'call'.⁹⁰ He identifies eschatological hope as the unifying driving force behind the diverse callings in which individuals engage

83 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. viii.

84 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. ix.

85 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 109–10.

86 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 2.

87 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 130.

88 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 124.

89 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 316.

90 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 316–17.

and seeks to distinguish this from the impetus to express one's own unique identity through activity for the purpose of self-fulfilment.⁹¹ He notes that there is a temptation to frame this desire for self-expression in terms of a theology of creation, but considers that this fails to 'rescue man's personality from being turned into a thing' within a society which is shaped by humanistic and functional priorities.⁹² Moltmann offers the concept of 'creative discipleship' as his constructive proposal for how life is to be lived in coherence with the fundamental call to eschatological hope and with a flexibility and responsiveness to the opportunities and challenges of the present.⁹³ While this suggests an approach to vocation which is open to the potential for the unexpected to develop within the life of the individual, the concept appears somewhat disconnected from God's expressed will and purpose, and is instead a reactive response to social circumstance and situation.

Pannenberg was a contemporary of Moltmann and his theological approach was similarly eschatologically focused, although the sources from which they drew their inspiration and the nature of their constructive contributions differed considerably.⁹⁴ While Moltmann explored eschatology through the interpretive lens of hope and expectation, Pannenberg's theology was shaped by a commitment to eschatology understood as 'retroactive ontology'.⁹⁵ This arose from Pannenberg's identification of two central themes which were to prove foundational for his theological project – the kingdom of God and the resurrection of Jesus.⁹⁶ He determined to explore the significance of the centrality of the kingdom of God revealed in the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus, and believed this necessitated a focus on eschatology as an imminent and concrete expectation for the future.⁹⁷ The unique move that Pannenberg made from this central commitment was to propose that, instead of understanding history to be progressing inevitably towards a final consummation, 'it is more appropriate to reverse the connection between present and future, giving priority to the future'.⁹⁸ This ontological priority is apparent as the driving force for all of Pannenberg's theological writing, including his distinctive presentations of the Trinity,

91 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 317.

92 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 317.

93 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 318.

94 Christiaan Mostert, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), pp. 4–5.

95 Andrew Hollingsworth, 'Back from the Future: Divine Supercomprehension and Middle Knowledge as Ground for Retroactive Ontology', *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 61 (2019), p. 517.

96 Mostert, *God and the Future*, p. 89.

97 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 51–2; Hollingsworth, 'Back from the Future', p. 519.

98 Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 54.

time, creation, history, science, and anthropology.⁹⁹ Moreover, this is a dynamic process in which the Kingdom of God is not merely an abstract future reality, but was declared by Jesus to be ‘interrupting into time and history in himself’.¹⁰⁰ For these reasons, Pannenberg interprets human existence and identity as anticipatory, rather than fixed or determined. Human purpose, identity and being are only to be understood with reference to their ‘openness to the future, for the meaning of anything includes its outcome, which, at the time of its happening, is “still hidden in the womb of the future”’.¹⁰¹ Rather than being determined by prior events or proceeding along a pre-planned route, the meaning and significance of human history and personal identity only find their unity and coherence eschatologically.¹⁰²

Theological approaches focused on eschatology emphasise the activity of the Holy Spirit in bringing the future reality of the Kingdom of God into the present lived experience of human beings in proleptic anticipation of the eschaton.¹⁰³ This is particularly evident in the work of Robert Jenson. Whilst agreeing with Pannenberg’s prioritisation of the eschaton, Jenson further developed the metaphysics of such a move as he explored the potential for God to be understood as constituted by decision and event such that ‘to be God is to be the power of the future to transcend what is, and just so to fulfill what is’.¹⁰⁴ Jenson considered that Pannenberg did not give sufficient consideration to the nature of temporal infinity and instead, in his own project, sought to rework an account of time and eternity in light of God’s trinitarian nature and activity in time and space, in particular in the exodus of Israel and the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁰⁵ In doing so, Jenson described the person and work of the Holy Spirit in eschatological terms: ‘the Spirit . . . is the eschatological reality of God, the Power as which God is the active Goal of all things, as which God is for himself and for us those “things not seen” that with us call for faith and with him are his infinity’.¹⁰⁶ The Spirit is the means by which eschatological openness to the future enters into the present and meets human beings who live their lives in a linear temporal progression of past, present and future, and whose sense of personal identity is constituted by the telling of a coherent story of the self within this paradigm.¹⁰⁷ This

99 Mostert, *God and the Future*, pp. 19–20, 76–7.

100 Hollingsworth, ‘Back from the Future’, p. 519.

101 Mostert, *God and the Future*, p. 23.

102 Mostert, *God and the Future*, p. 78; Hollingsworth, ‘Back from the Future’, p. 522.

103 Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, pp. 30–7; Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 102.

104 Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), p. 167.

105 Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, p. 177; Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1: The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 46–8.

106 Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, p. 160.

107 Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, p. 55.

reflects Barth's exploration of the nature of Christian hope in *Church Dogmatics* IV/3 in which he focuses on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer who lives out their calling in community through daily acts of faithful witness to Jesus' death and resurrection.¹⁰⁸ The Christian finds their purpose, meaning and vocation, Barth argues, in eschatological hope and the expectation that all of their works of service and witness will find their interpretation and significance at the end of their life as they are located in the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁹

It is apparent that it is the Spirit at work in the life of the individual who enables them to respond to the gospel call; who develops the character and behaviours which are indicative of discipleship ('the fruit of the Spirit' spoken of by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23); and who equips and enables through the variety of gifts for the purpose of service and ministry (1 Cor. 12:4-31).¹¹⁰ Paul refers to these unique and particular gifts given by the Spirit using the word *charismata*, with its linguistic connections in Greek to grace, joy and thanksgiving.¹¹¹ These Spirit-given abilities are unique to each individual and 'are fundamentally gifts for service . . . not private internal qualities, meant for self-improvement. They are to be embodied actions, lived out and expressed in word and deed'.¹¹² Charisms are both distinct from and related to the innate talents which reside in the individual from birth.¹¹³ Cahalan defines talents as those natural tendencies and personal strengths which are present from birth, which are given by God to the individual as a created being and can be used as 'God works through the created order to bring about the divine will and purposes'.¹¹⁴ Charisms, on the other hand, are 'the manifestation of the Spirit for the divinely ordained purpose'.¹¹⁵ In this way, both talents and charisms are interpreted within a pneumatological framework as the gifts of God by the Spirit and directed towards the outworking of his will.

Such a pneumatological focus clearly does not preclude the interpretation of vocation outlined earlier and characterised as having a 'creation-focus', although it does go beyond these interpretations in its scope. Creation-focused interpretations were previously critiqued for their failure to account sufficiently for the frequently surprising and unexpected nature of vocation. The alternative presented here as a pneumatologically-focused interpretation of vocation recognises that individuals receive gifts from God by the Holy

108 *CD* IV/3/2, pp. 902–42.

109 *CD* IV/3/2, pp. 940–2.

110 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 111–13.

111 Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p. 31.

112 Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p. 33.

113 Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p. 35.

114 Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p. 35.

115 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 112.

Spirit both as created beings and as those who live the life of discipleship in proleptic anticipation of the eschatological *telos*. Viewed through such a lens, vocation cannot be seen as static, deterministic or functional; rather, vocation is a Spirit-enabled lively dynamic in which there is always potential to be surprised.

Conclusion

This article has suggested that contemporary theology has often overlooked the surprising and unexpected elements of God's call when exploring vocation. I have argued that the surprising nature of calling is apparent throughout scripture and is inadequately accounted for by a theological narrative focused on the created being of the individual. Conceptualising vocation as the utilisation of one's natural abilities mirrors the wider cultural interpretation of calling as self-expression and self-fulfilment, rather than as an obedient response to God's initiative in calling individuals to participate in his purposes and plans. This focus on innate abilities as indicative of calling has contributed to vocation being presented as static, passive and unchanging, rather than dynamic, surprising and unexpected.

The eschatological theologies of Moltmann and Pannenberg offer a distinctive, alternative framework within which to interpret the concept of vocation. I have suggested that Moltmann's description of 'creative discipleship',¹¹⁶ while it disentangles vocation from the determinism implied by a focus on created being, nevertheless remains responsive and does not fully account for the surprising element of God's call. Pannenberg's 'retroactive ontology', on the other hand, offers a more dynamic perspective in which vocation can be correlated with the imminent nature of the Kingdom of God breaking into the present, although its final significance and meaning will only be fully determined by its eschatological *telos*.¹¹⁷

In drawing on the work of Moltmann and Pannenberg along with contributions from Jenson and Barth, I suggest that a theological approach focused on eschatology would provide a constructive theological lens for vocation and would enable both the continuity and discontinuity of calling to be recognised. Rather than the coherency of vocation being located within the created identity of the individual, it is instead to be fully revealed and determined eschatologically. This move is 'immensely liberating [as it prompts us] to think of human persons as not simply the outcome of their past history, but as the anticipation of their future identity'.¹¹⁸ Such a shift in directionality challenges conceptions of vocation which may appear deterministic or functional, and instead places the emphasis on potential and possibility.

116 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 318.

117 Hollingsworth, 'Back from the Future', p. 517.

118 Mostert, *God and the Future*, p. 122.

An eschatological paradigm for vocation requires that the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasised, and I identify Paul's presentation of *charismata* as a helpful description of how the Spirit enables individuals to recognise their talents as God's gracious gift and to be open to the potential for God to call and equip them beyond their natural abilities. I suggest that this pneumatological account of vocation offers a more comprehensive, holistic and dynamic interpretation of the concept of vocation than one focused on creation. God's call is often surprising and unexpected, and this requires theological and pastoral interpretations of vocation which place less emphasis on who God has created someone to be and instead on who they are becoming by the gift of God's Spirit.

Thirty years before the Bishop of London gave his charge at the wedding of Prince William, Archbishop Robert Runcie preached to William's parents on their own wedding day. He offered them, and the watching world, a vision of Christian marriage: 'Our faith sees the wedding day not as the place of arrival but the place where the adventure really begins'.¹¹⁹ It is the contention of this article that vocation is not fixed and determined by one's created being, but rather that it is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit which has the potential to be a surprising and unexpected adventure.

119 Robert Runcie, 'Our Prayer for Charles and Diana', 30 June 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/30/world/our-prayer-for-charles-and-diana.html> (accessed 20 September 2022).