

FIVA SAVKOVIĆ

The Calling Metaphor in Paul's Epistles

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Fiva Savković

The Calling Metaphor in Paul's Epistles

A Study of Paul's καλέω-Terminology
in Light of Cognitive Metaphor Theory

Mohr Siebeck

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*For Tobias Nicklas and Jörg Frey,
whose involvement made all the difference*

Preface

This book is the result of the translation and revision of my doctoral dissertation, defended in 2025 at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Belgrade University. The possibility to study for a doctoral degree in theology was a special opportunity and a real challenge for me as a nun in the Serbian Orthodox Church. Writing a dissertation for one in my situation in life was a trail that needed to be blazed and was filled with numerous obstacles and difficulties, as is often the case for such an endeavour.

My initial inspiration to embark on this journey and the support and guidance that followed came from my supervisor, Professor Predrag Dragutinović. He encouraged me to venture into the world of theology and introduced me to its beauties. Without Predrag's guidance, the Serbian version of this dissertation would not have been brought to fruition, nor would I have had the opportunity to connect with the wider community of theologians who have helped me expand my horizons beyond my local environment. On this occasion, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to him.

Along the path, however, I also met Professors Tobias Nicklas and Jörg Frey, whose expertise and unofficial mentorship have helped me achieve my goals in a crucial way. While working on my dissertation, I translated it into English to benefit from their supervision. They reviewed it without reservation, exceeding all expectations. Their intervention in my studies was distinguished by its intellectual breadth, moral depth, and practical relevance. It was wholehearted, voluntary, enthusiastic, all-encompassing, and continuous. I found the collaboration with them to be a truly enriching experience, marked by a valuable exchange of knowledge and perspectives that not only deepened my understanding of the subject but also fostered personal growth and connection. It was this experience that led me to publish my dissertation with Mohr Siebeck. Therefore, I am delighted by the opportunity to dedicate this book to these remarkable individuals and theologians, with gratitude for their enormous support in bringing it to light.

Fiva Savković

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List of Abbreviations

AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AppL</i>	<i>Applied Linguistics</i>
ASE	<i>Annali di storia dell'esegesi</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>BibThBul</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BINS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BRS	The Biblical Resource Series
BSAW	Berlin Studies of the Ancient World
BThSt	Biblisch-Theologische Studien
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
<i>CognL</i>	<i>Cognitive Linguistics</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
<i>CSJ</i>	<i>Cognitive Science</i>
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early Christianity</i>
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
<i>EIUC</i>	<i>Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad Complutense</i>
EKK	Evangelische-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HBt</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament

<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
<i>HTSTS</i>	<i>HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies</i>
IBC	Interpretation Bible Commentary
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJMJS</i>	<i>Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSRC	Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture
LBS	Linguistic Biblical Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LiS</i>	<i>Language in Society</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>
LXX	Septuagint
<i>MetSy</i>	<i>Metaphor and Symbol</i>
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NCCS	New Covenant Commentary Series
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	New Testament Theology
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
PAST	Pauline Studies
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
<i>RInq</i>	<i>Religious Inquiries</i>
<i>RPP</i>	<i>Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Rhetoric Review</i>
<i>RSSI</i>	<i>Recherches Semiotique/Semiotic Inquiry</i>

SECA	Studies in Early Christian Apocrypha
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina Series
SS	<i>Sacra Scripta</i>
StBTh	Studienbücher Theologie
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WG-RWS	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplements
<i>WiBiLex</i>	<i>Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Research Horizon(s) of This Study

1.1.1 The Concept of Calling in the Letters of Apostle Paul

Unlike the apostles who were disciples of Jesus during his earthly ministry, Paul received his call for apostolic service from the risen Jesus Christ himself. He had previously been an opponent and persecutor of the new movement founded upon those who believed in Jesus Christ (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:9). By origin, he was a Jew, an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, and by his religious commitment, a zealous Pharisee (Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22; Rom 11:1). It is only his encounter with the resurrected Christ, which Paul refers to in some of his letters (Gal 1:15–16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–10; 2 Cor 4:4–6), and as reported in the Acts 9, 22, 26, that radically changed his religious attitudes and the course of his life. He became a witness, an ardent worshiper, and a preacher of Jesus Christ! Consequently, this meeting of Saul/Paul with the resurrected Christ was the basis for the establishment and spread of Christianity across the territory of the Roman Empire. This experience made him one of the first, greatest, and most influential heralds and proponents of Christ's message, primarily among the nations (Gal 1:16; Rom 1:1–7; Acts 22:21; 26:17–18). Therefore, upon discussing Paul's call, it refers specifically to this incident on the road to Damascus when a former adversary of believers in Christ evolved into a remarkable apostle for Christianity.

In New Testament exegesis, the primary consideration is how this event took place in Paul's life and what changes it entailed. The sources commonly utilized are Luke's narrative accounts in which his encounter with Christ is presented in detail on three occasions (Acts 9; 22; 26). Paul himself reveals almost nothing about his calling in his letters. Only in Gal 1:15–17 does he explicitly refer to this event, without speaking about the details. However, Paul often uses the term call in his letters to describe his position before Christ and his addressees (1 Cor 1:1; Rom 1:1); to address his recipients and indicate his connection with them (1 Cor 1:2; Rom 1:6–7); and to present and consider some essential aspects of their life as well (1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:24; Gal 5:8, 13; 1 Cor 1:9, 24, 26; 7:17–24; Rom 8:28–30; 9:25–26). These references speak in favor of the fact that by the term calling he meant an event of comprehensive proportions and implications which has a fundamental impor-

tance for believers in Jesus Christ. Therefore, *the focus of this study is the concept of calling as part of Paul's theological thought and epistolary communication.* In the research on this phenomenon, the starting point is the question of what Paul meant by the term call, how he interpreted it, and for what purpose he used it. We will not, however, address the historical question of how his call took place. In other words, the research horizon of the study is not a reconstruction of Paul's experience of calling, but an overview of those aspects of Christian life that he referred to when using this concept.

1.1.2 Paul's Usage of *καλέω* Terminology

Paul's understanding of calling will be illuminated in this study by investigating his use of *καλέω* terminology. The focus will be those aspects of the Christian experience that he refers to using the adjective *κλητός* and related terms. The key effort is that through a review of his use of *καλέω* terminology, insight into the meaning and importance of the concept of calling in his theological interpretation of the world will be improved.

The Greek verb *καλέω* has multiple meanings. It is primarily used to denote the following: "to call," "to summon," and "to name."¹ This verb was also used in the Old Testament to denote the act of God's calling, summoning, and naming various addressees, such as Adam, Moses, prophets, and even inanimate creatures. However, through its specific use by certain Old Testament authors, the range of meaning associated with the *καλέω* in the biblical context has been significantly deepened. It also denotes the non-verbal act God performs in guiding his creatures throughout the history of the world. In this sense – when the verb *καλέω*, which originally denotes a verbal act, becomes a marker of a specific non-verbal religious experience – one can speak of its non-literal, i.e., metaphorical use in the biblical context.

In the New Testament, *καλεῖν*, *κλησις*, and *κλητός* are terms used by authors to refer to the inclusion of believers in the event of eschatological salvation revealed in Jesus Christ.² Paul was the first author to introduce this terminology into the early Christian context. In employing these terms, he grounded himself in the Old Testament tradition, expanding the implications of *καλέω* terminology within the context of his missionary circumstances, goals, and requirements. He most often uses *καλέω* and its cognates to de-

¹ *LSJ*, s.v. "καλέω"; Franco Montanari, "καλέω," *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, ed. Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1995), 1020; Günther Schauerte et al., "𐤏𐤋𐤁 – qārā'; 𐤏𐤋𐤁 – miqrā' 'call,'" *TDOT* 13: 109–134; James Strong, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), s.v. "καλέω," 639; Lothar Coenen, "Call," *NIDNTT* 1:271–276.

² See Christian Strecker, "Berufung (NT)," *WiBiLex*, ed. Stefan Alkier, Michaela Bauks, and Klaus Koenen, <http://www.wibilex.de>, accessed on March 20, 2021.

scribe the identity and engagement of believers in Christ. When Paul uses this term, he reflects on and describes both his position and actions among his addressees, as well as their position, role, and significance in the history of salvation. Since the apostle reflects on different aspects of religious experience using *καλέω* terminology in different epistolary units, Paul's use of these terms is polyvalent within his letters: what he means varies depending on the argumentative context.

When Paul uses *καλέω* terminology and the concept of calling³ to denote non-verbal experiences of participation in the event of Jesus Christ, which have ontological and eschatological significance in the lives of believers, his use of calling is metaphorical. The observation that the calling is used metaphorically in some instances is important to gain deeper insights into the meanings and effects of this term in Paul.

1.1.3 Metaphor as a Means of Reflection and Interpretation

Recent research in the fields of philosophy and cognitive semantics, particularly in cognitive linguistics, has revealed that metaphor is not just a linguistic device or stylistic element, as previously thought, but rather a cognitive process that shapes our perception of reality. This understanding alters the emphasis on the interpretation of metaphor, shifting from linguistic expression to exploring the cognitive mechanisms responsible for its conception. The usage of a metaphor reflects an individual's experiences of reality and the manner of thinking, as well as the potential effects on the consciousness and behavior of those receiving the communication.

In a narrower sense, metaphor is understood in cognitive linguistics as a way to grasp new and abstract experiences using known concrete experiences. In the eyes of cognitive linguists, the transfer that takes place in a metaphor (*μεταφορά* – transfer) refers to this cognitive process of connecting two experiences, one of which is more familiar and the other has yet to be known through the first. Therefore, when employing a metaphor, it is no longer viewed as previously thought, i.e., as a simple exchange of meaning between words. Instead, it represents a more intricate process where established ideas are employed to comprehend novel information. In this light, metaphor is not seen only as an unusual, different, and potentially more beautiful way of speaking, but one of the necessary, constitutive, and daily used mechanisms in the cognition of reality and communication.⁴

³ The concept of a calling will be occasionally highlighted in capital letters in upcoming chapters, following the conventions of Cognitive Metaphor Theory.

⁴ See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. and Gerard J. Steen, eds., *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics: Selected Papers from the 5th International Cognitive Linguistics Confe-*

Metaphor proves to be particularly necessary in the articulation of religious experiences and communication about them. The reason is that these experiences are most often less familiar and abstract and therefore expressed only indirectly, i.e., through the transferred use of concepts that denote already well-known experiences in everyday life. Accordingly, for religious thinkers and writers, metaphor represents a tool without which authentic religious experiences could not even be perceived, expressed, and transmitted. Scripture is permeated with metaphors, which testifies to the fact that the use of metaphor as a means of understanding and interpreting the world is also valid for biblical authors.

The apostle Paul often used metaphors in his letters as well.⁵ He utilized them to express and clarify his experience, and persuade the recipients, thereby influencing their awareness and guiding their conduct. According to R. Hays: “Paul, the missionary preacher, is at least as much poet as he is Theologian ... throughout his writings, Paul’s language sparkles with the veiled energy of metaphor and allusion.”⁶ The calling is one of the many metaphors that he chained together and used to articulate, present, and consider the newly gained religious experience.

If metaphor is conceived as one of the “building stones of the structure of the Christian interpretation of reality,”⁷ then the study of metaphors used in

rence, Amsterdam, 1997 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1999); Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Zoltán Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015); Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ See, e.g., David J. Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999); Andrie B. du Toit, “Forensic Metaphors in Romans and Their Soteriological Significance,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, NovTSup (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 213–246; D. Francois Tolmie, “Salvation As Redemption: The Use of ‘Redemption’ Metaphors in Pauline Literature,” *ibid.*, 247–270; Cilliers Breitenbach, “Salvation of the Reconciled (With a Note on the Background of Paul’s Metaphor of Reconciliation),” *ibid.*, 271–286; Christine Gerber, *Paulus und seine ‘Kinder’: Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2012); Erin M. Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans: Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiothesia Metaphors*, BINS 153 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017).

⁶ Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, BRS, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), xxxiii. Italics original.

⁷ Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, trans. Wayne Coppins, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco: Baylor; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 203.

biblical literature is a fruitful, even necessary, theological endeavor. Starting from the linguistic aspect of the metaphor, it is possible, at least to some extent, to know the experiences and thought processes that are its basis. Because of this, interpreting the concept of call in Paul's letters from this point of view in cases where it is used metaphorically, provides a pathway to gaining a deeper insight into Paul's reflections on various aspects of the religious life that he associated with the concept of call and communicated in this manner.

Despite the significant time gap and cultural differences between us and Paul, interpreting his metaphors, including the call, from a historical perspective is not devoid of significance. This is because modern cognitive science has established that metaphors are not solely shaped by cultural factors but also by universal human cognitive structures. As a result, while acknowledging the cultural context in which Paul wrote, a diachronic interpretation of his metaphors can still provide valuable insights into his perspectives on various aspects of Christian life that he conveyed through these metaphors. Certain metaphors can be alive at any time and in any culture because they refer to basic human experiences that endure.⁸ Such metaphors are crafted by drawing upon fundamental and widespread patterns of human experience. They are part of everyday communication and imperceptibly but often functional in thinking and communicating.⁹ Since they are a means of our perception of the world, their use says a lot about how we interpret the world.

In this sense, universal metaphors are always current and relevant. Thus, the metaphor of calling, as one of the biblical metaphors that describe religious experience starting from basic and general human psychosomatic experiences, has become commonly used in many cultures today. This, in turn, does not support its perceived numbness but rather highlights its embeddedness in human cognition and its effectiveness in cross-cultural design and communication of experiences. Studying its meanings in the context of Paul's epistolography leads to gaining insight into how it initially entered the currents of Christian reasoning and communicating about the world and life, how it served to design the position and role of the first Christ-followers, and how it can influence the self-understanding and life of contemporary readers of Paul's letters.

⁸ Uta Poplutz, *Athlet des Evangeliums: eine motivgeschichtliche Studie zur Wettkampfmetaphorik bei Paulus* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 26.

⁹ George Lakoff, "The Death of Dead Metaphor," *MetSy* 2.2 (1987): 143–147.

1.2 The Current State of Research

Interest in Paul's call flared up in recent exegesis, especially under the influence of K. Stendahl's essay "Call Rather Than Conversion." It examines whether Paul experienced a religious conversion during his encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, or a calling as a task or commission that the God of Israel orders him to do, as this act was understood in the Old Testament context. In this discussion, Stendahl takes a critical look at the prevailing understanding of the events in Damascus as Paul's conversion from Judaism to Christianity in the Protestant exegesis of the time.¹⁰ He draws attention to the fact that in Paul's time, these were not religious systems in the way they exist today and that he could not experience conversion in the modern understanding of the word: "In the first place, the term 'conversion' easily causes us to bring into play the idea that Paul 'changed his religion': the Jew became a Christian. But there is ample reason to question such a model. To begin with, people in those days did not think about 'religions.' Furthermore, it is obvious that Paul remains a Jew as he fulfills his role as an Apostle to the Gentiles."¹¹ Therefore, contrary to the understanding

¹⁰ In classical Protestant exegesis, Christianity and Judaism were viewed as separate and opposing religious systems. In this light, Paul's call was interpreted as a conversion from Judaism to Christianity. For example, for F. C. Baur, a Protestant theologian of the second half of the 19th century, Christianity, like Hellenism, is a religion of universalistic character, in contrast to Judaism as a particularistic religion. He sees the apostle Paul as the first and representative figure who exalted Christianity to have an independent and absolute significance, breaking with Judaism. He claimed: "Paulinism, in contrast, is the most decisive break of Christian consciousness from the law and the whole of Judaism resting on the Old Testament. With the Apostle Paul, we become specifically aware, first of all, of Christianity's essential difference from Judaism.... All the epistles of the Apostle Paul, therefore, expresses the conviction that Judaism and all that pertains to it, has entirely lost its significance for Christians who, by faith in Christ, have become conscious of their own Christian salvation." Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 153. In his book *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre: ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (Stuttgart: Becher & Müller, 1845), Baur interprets Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus as conversion. Similarly, R. Bultmann, whose theology marked the first half of the 20th century, considered the core of Paul's teachings to revolve around the rejection of Judaic anthropology, as centered on moral and religious merit, in favor of a Christian anthropology grounded in God's grace. See Schubert M. Ogden, trans., *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 120.

¹¹ Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 11. As for the recent study dealing with this topic, see Jörg Frey, "The

that Paul converted to Christianity, according to Stendahl, he experienced himself as a Jew who received a specific engagement from God as the creator of Jews and gentiles:

Serving the one and the same God, Paul receives a new and special calling in God's service. God's Messiah asks him as a Jew to bring God's message to the Gentiles. The emphasis in the accounts is always on this assignment, not on the conversion. Rather than being "converted," Paul was called to the specific task made clear to him by his experience of the risen Lord of apostleship to the Gentiles, one hand-picked through Jesus Christ on behalf of the one God of Jews and Gentiles.¹²

Stendahl rightly raised doubts about the straightforward identification of Paul's call and conversion, which was a common practice in previous exegesis. His observation that it is anachronistic to talk about Paul's change of religion provided a very important horizon of observation and reversed the currents of thinking about Paul's calling. It could be said that Stendahl's essay was an invitation to rethink this topic with an approach more in tune with Paul himself, his language, and context, which initiated a series of further exegetical polemics on this topic.

Following Stendahl's critique, B. R. Gaventa in her book *From Darkness to Light* delves into Paul's perception of conversion by analyzing his letters and then comparing it with Luke's accounts of the event in question. Gaventa recognizes that Paul utilized distinct terminologies to denote the transformative experience in his own life and that of his followers. She notes that Paul uses prophetic language in Gal 1:11–17, which means that he remains faithful to existing traditions in interpreting his calling. Additionally, in considering Paul's references to conversion, Gaventa pays attention to both the appropriate rhetorical situation and the apostle's intent. In this regard, she emphasizes that in epistolary reviews of conversion "Paul's primary intent is not to write about himself nor is it to criticize Judaism. Instead, he is engaged in a debate with Jewish Christians who are offering perfection through the law to Gentile Christians."¹³ Therefore, through his references to his own experience, Paul does not talk about his break with Judaism, but based on his own experience, he argues why the views of his opponents are wrong. In this sense, the rhetorical situation in which he writes is seen as crucial to gaining a correct insight into what Paul meant by his calling. According to Gaventa, the change he experienced and described by calling can best be explained as a change in perception, i.e., Paul's "cognitive shift."¹⁴

Jewishness of Paul," in *Paul: Life, Setting, Work, Letter*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (London and New York: T&T Clark 2012), 57–95.

¹² Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7.

¹³ Beverly R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 33.

¹⁴ Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 37.

The debate that initiated regarding whether Paul underwent a conversion or was assigned a prophetic task, and the details surrounding this event, is further explored by A. Segal in his study *Paul the Convert*. He confirms Stendahl's views that Paul's perspective on his calling is different from Luke's portrayal of it and that the apostle did not break with Judaism by accepting faith in Christ, nor did he change his religion. Segal also agrees with Stendahl that Paul described the experience of radical change through the lens of prophetic mission, using the language characteristic of Old Testament prophets.¹⁵ However, unlike Stendahl, Segal claims that Paul did speak of his conversion according to the modern understanding of this word. Namely, although Paul himself did not use the term conversion in the descriptions of his experience, according to Segal, he did experience conversion from Pharisaism to another, apocalyptic Jewish sect, after which he lived as a Jew within the Hellenistic community of gentile Christians.¹⁶ That is why Paul can be said to have been a convert, because conversion, according to modern theories, also includes a radical transition within the same religious system.¹⁷ Thus, Segal does not understand Paul's conversion from Judaism to Christianity as a change of religion. By redefining the concept of conversion, Segal goes beyond the previously established dichotomy between Paul's conversion and calling. On these grounds, he claims that Paul did experience a kind of conversion and that he was talking exactly about that conversion with the call terminology.

K. O. Sandnes in his study *Paul – One of the Prophets?* also deals with Paul's calling, linking it to his apostleship. Interpreting primarily Gal 1:15–16a, and relating this passage to Paul's other references to calling, Sandnes concludes that Paul never understood and presented himself as a prophet, but he did use prophetic language to testify to and defend his apostolic authority. In his opinion, Paul used references to his call to publicly present and interpret the incident on the road to Damascus as a form of his legitimate introduction to the apostolic mission. In his words:

The challenge he was faced with was to argue that this was no private revelation (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1–5; see p. 17 n. 11) but had to be considered as an act of inauguration. In this situation Paul legitimises his call and apostolic task by referring to the biblical prophets as models. For the biblical tradition on the prophets witnesses to revelations and visions as God's way

¹⁵ Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 5.

¹⁶ Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 6–7.

¹⁷ “No historical prophet came around on his previous experience as Paul did when called to his task. In modern usage and social science the word conversion can denote moving from one sect or denomination to another within the same religion, if the change is radical.” Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 6.

of assigning a prophet in his task.... It is by recalling the tradition of the biblical prophets that Paul is able to lay a legitimate foundation for his apostolate.¹⁸

C. Strecker in *Die liminale Theologie des Paulus* also questions how the event in Damascus happened and what it meant for Paul. He revisits the historical interpretation of this incident, challenging the perception of Paul as a convert by employing contemporary sociological perspectives on conversion. In a narrow sense, he approaches the interpretation of sections such as Gal 1:11–17; Phil 2:3–21; 2 Cor 4:6–12; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–10 using the anthropological model of ritual initiation. Strecker concludes that in this model the experience of conversion (as a personal transformation) and calling (as a task or mission) are combined for Paul. Commenting on Gaventa's conclusions, Strecker says:

Nicht also allein "a cognitive shift", sondern vielmehr ein elementarer Status-, ja ein Seinswandel ist es, den Paulus thematisiert. Dies aber deckt sich voll und ganz mit der Wesensart von Initiationen, die ja für gewöhnlich ebenso eine fundamentale Umwandlung von Personen zum Inhalt haben, wobei gerade auch Todes- und Auferstehungssymbolik eine gewichtige Rolle spielen. Die in 2Kor 4,6 anklingende Schöpfungsthematik sowie die Geburtsmetaphorik in Gal 1,15 unterstreichen diesen Aspekt der elementaren Umwandlung und damit den Initiationscharakter des Damaskusgeschehens gleichfalls.¹⁹

Common to the previously mentioned research is the focus on Paul's experience of calling, as well as on his description of this experience. These studies take less account of Paul's references to the calling of his addressees and his comprehensive use of *καλέω* terminology. These aspects are the focus of the study that came from W. Klein, who explores the meanings of Paul's concept of calling through a linguistic and semantic analysis of his *καλέω* language.²⁰ Based on an analysis of all instances of Paul's use of this language, Klein concludes that the apostle used calling as a technical term. For Paul, calling signifies more than merely presenting a choice; it embodies a divine designation or appointment (cf. Rom 9:25).²¹ Furthermore, Klein classifies instances of calling in Paul into the categories of those with a source or origin (Rom 9:24); means (Gal 1:6, 15); circumstance (1 Cor 7:17, 18, 20, 21, 22,

¹⁸ Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul – One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding*, WUNT 2/43 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 242.

¹⁹ Christian Strecker, *Die liminale Theologie des Paulus: Zugänge zur paulinischen Theologie aus kulturalanthropologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 156.

²⁰ One of the recent studies that explores significance of the Paul's concept of calling taking into account his use of *καλέω* terminology is Annette Weippert, "Bedeutung, Entwicklung und Funktion der Vorstellung von Erwählung und Berufung bei Paulus und ihr frühjüdischer und griechisch-römischer Kontext" (PhD diss., Heidelberg, 2023).

²¹ William W. Klein, "Paul's Use of *Kalein*: A Proposal," *JETS* 27.1 (1984): 53–64, here 55.

24); and the purpose (cf., e.g., 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 1:9; 7:15) of God's call. After this classification, he concludes that Paul uses call terminology to refer to God's causal and effective action in the formation or designation of Christians. In his words: "To be 'called' is *to be appointed a Christian with all its attendant benefits and responsibilities....* It would appear that Paul uses *kalein* to mark the concrete and historical realization in a person's life of God's foreordained plan."²² With this insight, Klein pointed to a significant difference between what the call means in its basic sense and what it signifies in Paul's discourse. Furthermore, the fact that one becomes a recipient or a participant in what God has predestined for someone by calling, leads Klein to articulate a big difference between the concept of election and calling. Namely, the call, in contrast to the election, does not refer so much to the election itself, but to the *realization* of the divine intention.²³ Overall, Klein has made a very important contribution to the study of Paul's concept of calling by drawing attention to how much insight in this regard can be gained from a consideration of his use of *καλέω* language.

In the study *Conversion at Corinth*, S. Chester builds on Paul's consideration of conversion, referring, within that framework, to Paul's conceptualization of calling and the use of *καλέω* language. His study is significant in this regard for several reasons. First, it considers Paul's use of *καλέω* κτλ. as a means of describing important aspects of the Christian life in the overarching context of his epistolary communication with the communities of his addressees. Then, this communication was observed in his study as an intersection of different cultural backgrounds – the Jewish one, from which Paul himself originates, as well as the Greco-Roman milieu of his addressees. Chester analyzes the parallels and distinctions in Paul's understanding of calling in relation to the Septuagint and Greco-Roman authors. This leads to valuable insights into the unique aspects of Paul's perspective on calling. He observes that Paul primarily understands the call as an event through which God, Christ, and the believer enter into a relationship that essentially connects them and that shapes the behavior of Christians:

The fact that to be called is to be converted means that it also initiates a new identity in terms of belonging to a community.... *It is clear from both these examples that in using calling to denote conversion, Paul has developed a powerful conceptual tool by which to maintain the boundaries of the Christian community.* This is a fundamental consequence of

²² Klein, "Paul's Use of *Kalein*," 62–63. Italics mine.

²³ Klein, "Paul's Use of *Kalein*," 64.

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