

Social Representations of Call and Vocation Among Portuguese Evangelical Christians: An Exploratory Study

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude esquisse les contours des représentations sociales des concepts d'appel et de vocation professionnelle dans les milieux évangéliques portugais, au moyen de quatre questions : 1) Les deux concepts représentent-ils deux réalités différentes ou une seule ? 2) Représentent-ils une expérience universelle ou se

limitent-ils à certains individus ? 3) Offrent-ils une orientation générale ou une direction spécifique et individualisée ? 4) Un concept est-il tenu en plus haute estime que l'autre ? Après une description des représentations sociales, l'article présente une brève analyse des données bibliques, afin de montrer les différences entre les deux concepts. Il se termine par quelques conclusions pratiques.

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SUMMARY

This study traces the contours of the social representations of the concepts of call and vocation in the Portuguese evangelical community, using four questions: 1) Do the terms represent two realities or one? 2) Do they represent a universal experience or are they limited to certain individuals? 3) Do they offer generic orientation

or individualised and particularised guidance? 4) Is one esteemed more highly than the other? Following the description of the social representations, a brief analysis of the biblical data concerning the concept is offered as a means of highlighting variances between the two. The article concludes with implications derived from the study.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Studie skizziert anhand von vier Fragen das Konzept von Ruf und Berufung, wie es innerhalb der portugiesischen evangelikalen Gemeinschaft und ihres kognitiv-sozialen Interpretationsrahmens vertreten wird: 1. Beziehen sich diese Begriffe auf zwei oder nur auf eine Realität? 2. Stehen sie für eine allbekannte Erfahrung oder treffen sie nur auf gewisse Personen zu? 3. Bieten

sie eine allgemein gültige Orientierung oder eine detaillierte Wegführung und Anweisung für Einzelpersonen? 4. Steht der eine Begriff über dem anderen? Nach einer Beschreibung der kognitiv-sozialen Verständnisrahmens folgt eine kurze Analyse der biblischen Daten zu dem Konzept, um die Unterschiede zwischen beiden Begriffen herauszustellen. Der Artikel endet mit praktischen Schlussfolgerungen, die sich aus der Studie ergeben.

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1. Introduction

For followers of Christ, the biblical concept of calling¹ has the potential of serving as an aid in the construction of their self-identity and consequently for the interpretation of their vocational life.² Calling can function as a key descriptor of the

forms by which God interacts with his people: he calls them, and through that call he involves them in his salvific purposes and orients them toward a life that becomes integrated into his covenantal plans. Responding to that call constitutes the fundamental commitment by which a person decides to build their identity and life purpose on God and

his plans. As the following words illustrate, call has the potential of dramatically impacting one's vocational life:

You are called. You were not born by chance; you do not exist just by existing. There is a divine purpose for your passage on this earth... You are called. There are no exceptions. He brought man into being ... to make him useful. He created us to work, to be busy, to execute his personal will, to put ourselves [in his hands] as an instrument for the realization of his sovereign purposes and intents ... We all have a call (especially we, the children of God), a calling, an order to fulfil. Indeed, the call to serve is intrinsic to man, it is part of his personality, it is the plan of God for the believer. We are all to be committed to the kingdom of God.³

It is true that the concept of call has the potential of orienting the construction of a life project and its resulting vocational dimensions, thereby allowing people to encounter profound significance in what they do. However, I would propose that this same concept has the potential to limit their ability to construct a life plan. This is due to the possible interpretations of the concept within the evangelical community, some of which create potential obstacles to considering one's life as being participative in God's work and thus significant. The following study will explore a variety of interpretations found among Portuguese evangelical Christians of the concepts of call and vocation; it will also propose some potential implications for how believers shape their vocational life.

The present article summarizes key elements of an unpublished thesis that was based on a qualitative investigation carried out by the author.⁴ One of the study's principal objectives was to understand the diversity of perceptions within the evangelical community concerning the concepts of call, vocation, work and ministry, along with their interaction in interpreting vocational aims and options. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were carried out, each one lasting on average 45 minutes. The study resulted in a database of 277 responses to questions with a total of 53,489 words. The participants were youth and young adults who identified themselves with evangelical Christianity, all in an active phase of making vocational choices. They included students attending secondary school (grades 9-12), university, evangelical seminary or Bible institute, along with recent graduates who had started their professional career in the previ-

ous year. Among the participants some were preparing for professional church-related ministry and some preparing for 'secular' careers.

The theory of social representations was adopted to orient the analysis and description of the perspectives.⁵ Summarizing, this theory deals with the question of how the incomprehensible and strange becomes comprehensible and familiar for a social group. According to the theory, a social group makes use of the known to explain an unknown new reality within the context of its social interactions, thereby creating new cognitive and social constructions of that reality. The study attempted to identify the Portuguese evangelical community's cognitive and social constructions – their social representations – of the concepts of call and vocation, along with those of work and ministry.

In what follows, the contours of the social representations of call and vocation will be presented under four questions: 1) Do the terms call and vocation represent two realities or one? 2) Do they represent a universal experience or are they limited to certain individuals? 3) Do they offer generic orientation or individualised and particularised guidance? 4) Is one esteemed more highly than the other? Following the description of the social representations, a brief analysis of the biblical data concerning the concept will be offered as a means of highlighting variances between the two. The article then concludes with implications derived from the study.

2. Two realities or one?

The first question is whether the two words, call and vocation, are used as synonyms to represent one reality or whether they are used to represent two distinct phenomena, even though possibly interrelated.⁶ The study concluded that the representations mark a clear distinction between the two concepts. In the Bible, vocation and call are two ways of translating one theological concept.⁷ However, the people interviewed clearly affirmed the existence of two phenomena based on these two words.

Vocation is identified as the contours of an individual's vocational makeup formed by God and other agencies such as genetics and social shaping. In the responses of those being interviewed concerning the meaning of vocation, frequently used words were abilities, capacities, aptitudes, personality, desires, likes and dislikes. This vocational self-

identity should ideally function as an orientation for vocational choices. Another interesting point brought out in the study is that vocation is not considered as static but rather as somewhat fluid and able to be developed and reformed throughout one's life.

There exists a second representation attributed to the term vocation: the occupations which have the potential of fulfilling the believers' vocational self-identity and about which they therefore feel good in that they would be a good match for them. One can infer that not any job necessarily qualifies as a vocation, rather only those that potentially translate into the fulfilment of one's vocational identity.

Call represents a very different reality. Whereas vocation speaks of a reality inside of the person, call represents a communicative activity on the part of God toward individuals through which he orients believers toward a vocational objective. The interviewees used the following terms in their descriptions of call: speak, reveal, communicate, orient, invite. And, as we noted in the discussion of vocation, the term may also be used to represent the goal itself, as in the phrase, 'Being a missionary is my calling.'

A comparison of the representations of the two concepts reveals similarities and differences. The two concepts are similar in that both are considered means used by God to orient the believer toward an appropriate vocational objective. Both are forms of divine orientation for the believers' vocational life.

However, there are also differences. The first is obvious: the source where one seeks divine orientation is different, and as a result the obligation placed on the person changes in their pursuit of that orientation. With vocation, people seek orientation inside themselves, in their self-identity; this implies an obligation of self-understanding. They must grow in their self-awareness, discover likes and dislikes, and determine strengths and weaknesses. But with call, believers seek orientation outside of themselves, with the hope of receiving divine guidance; call therefore requires a spiritual listening, an ability to read the signs that God uses to communicate his will.

The second difference between vocation and call concerns the desired outcome. Generally speaking, those interviewed spoke of vocation as offering orientation toward work – an occupation or profession – and not normally of ministry, while call offered orientation toward ministry. That is, one is

called to the ministry, whereas one discerns what would be a potential fit for future work through understanding one's vocational makeup. This distinction, however, requires nuancing because the areas of work and ministry oftentimes overlap. Those who pursue a profession based on their understanding of how God has made them (i.e., vocation) will oftentimes embrace their professional work as ministry to some degree or another. And the opposite is also true: those who follow a call to ministry also accept it as their occupation. Nevertheless, in general, vocation is more strongly linked with work whereas call points to ministry. In this aspect of the social representations one begins to see signs of a dichotomy between the sacred and secular.

3. A universal or limited experience?

The second question explores whether what is experienced through call and vocation is universally offered to all believers or limited to select people.⁸ Maintaining the distinction identified in the previous section, all interviewees affirmed that vocation is universal: each and every person has a vocational self-identity that reflects the creative work of God. Their perspective concerning call was different and revealed a certain amount of ambivalence.

A majority, but not all, affirmed that not all believers experience a call. This view was represented particularly among those who believe that call applies only to God calling people to a particular ministry, that is, ministry in the more restricted sense of ecclesiastical service through ministerial roles such as pastor, evangelist, youth leader and missionary. Others affirmed that call is an experience that all believers could theoretically experience and that God uses it to orient believers to any vocational area.

Whatever position was taken concerning this question, what was unanimously affirmed in the responses was a belief that God actively desires to lead all believers in their vocational life. The participants verbalised the conviction that God offers everyone a supernatural orientation for their vocational life that goes beyond their discernment of vocational self-identity. Some used the word call to designate this sort of orientation, while others – those who limited call to traditional ministry – considered that this universal orientation is something distinct from call.

4. General or person-specific orientation?

The third question examines whether call and vocation offer a general orientation or specific, personal guidance toward one's vocational life.⁹ An initial observation to be made here is that the object of the orientation offered by both call and vocation is the vocational life. Both are considered means used by God to orient individuals in their vocational life, in contrast with other life areas such as personal relationships (for example, who should I marry) or ethics (for example, how should I respond in a certain situation).

The majority of the interviewees understood that call offers specific, individualised guidance. Through call God offers orientation that will lead to a particular vocational objective. For example, God may call someone to a specific ministerial role such as being a pastor, to a defined project such as active involvement in a particular social issue, or even to a specific location such as service as a missionary in Taiwan.

The self-identity described through vocation offers important clues for appropriate, potential vocational futures, but this sort of guidance is more generic in nature. This self-understanding marks out a variety of forms of work that would be appropriate for the person. As people grow in their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, their likes and dislikes, a number of vocational outcomes surface as potentially adequate in responding to their makeup. This, of course, sounds very much like what one encounters in the world of vocational assessment and testing.

5. Level of esteem

In considering these two concepts, receiving a call was generally esteemed more highly than discerning one's vocation.¹⁰ In other words, the interviewees expressed the value of vocation and appreciated the orientation it offered, but they very much desired to experience a call. There appear to be various explanations for this result.

One explanation is that experiencing a call is considered to be a more intense supernatural experience than discerning one's vocational makeup.¹¹ There may be a variety of reasons for this belief. First, when talking of call God is viewed as taking an active role in communicating his will to the believer. Call is defined as a form of supernatural communication in which God takes the initiative and speaks, sometimes very directly and

clearly, at other times more indirectly.¹² It is always God who initiates the process and is actively communicating. On the other hand, in vocation God's active role is not as clear or visible. He is seen as operating through the creation of a person's vocational makeup, but at the present moment he does not appear to be actively involved. Rather, it is the person himself who must take the initiative to discover their vocational makeup. Connected with this is the recognition that one's vocational makeup involves forces normally considered to be natural, such as heredity and social shaping. There may be an unconscious assumption that these forces, being natural in nature, are therefore not necessarily directly controlled by God. That being the case, one's vocational orientation would be somewhat influenced by chance or something untouched by God's superintendence.

Another explanation for the high esteem placed on call focuses on the fact that not everyone experiences a call; it is generally considered to be limited to certain individuals, as indicated above. Consequently, someone who believes they are being called senses that they are the object of God's special attention.

Also, the goal of a call is typically considered to be more spiritual. The interviewees generally held the belief that ministry is tightly linked to call as its goal, whereas vocation typically focuses on work.

Finally, there appears to be the belief that the result of a call places before the person a more specific vocational future. Being more specific, the call's guidance lessens ambiguity and therefore affords a higher degree of assurance in following God's will. In call, the roadmap has a higher definition and the route is highlighted.

6. Call in the Bible

The previous sections dealt with the social representations created by Portuguese evangelicals of the concepts of call and vocation. The following section will present an outline of the biblical testimony and compare it with those representations.¹³

A foundational quality of call is that it is relational and affects the believers' identity. It is God who calls in Christ (Gal 1:6; 1 Tim 5:24) and summons the believer to belong to him, to become part of his community and to assume a new identity in Christ (Rom 1:6; 9:26; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 3:1). Through call the believer becomes properly grounded in God rather than through any sort of self-grounding.¹⁴ God invites the person to sanc-

tify themselves to him (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2), to live a life worthy of him (1 Thes 2:12), to become part of his people and to live in community and union before him. This relational and identifying quality is foundational for the other aspects of call, whether in its universal or particular aspect.

The call of God is primarily to salvation. God calls the person from darkness to light (1 Pet 2:9); he calls them to salvation (Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:23; Rom 8:29-30) which is understood to be an eternal inheritance (1 Tim 6:12; Heb 9:15), a heavenly calling (Heb 3:1), an eternal glory (1 Pet 5:10) and a future hope (Eph 1:18; 4:4). It is a call into God's kingdom and glory (1 Thes 2:12).

This salvation to which believers are called has a future quality, but not exclusively. It is also experienced in one's present reality. A call to salvation implies a way of living that is ethically different, one that is worthy of the God who calls us (1 Thes 2:12). The believer assumes a form of being and acting that expresses their new identity. Therefore, they should lead a life worthy of the gospel (Eph 4:1; 2 Thes 1:11), one that reflects unity and peace with others (Eph 4:4; 1 Cor 7:15; Col 3:15) along with holiness (1 Thes 4:7; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:15). They should live in liberty (Gal 5:13), enduring any suffering because of being identified with Jesus (1 Pet 2:21; 3:9). This transformation ought to influence a person's entire life and bear fruit in all of one's assumed life roles (2 Pet 1:10).

A final aspect of the call of all believers speaks to one's collaboration with God's work. While there is no doubt about the reality of God inviting his people to collaborate with him in his work,¹⁵ it is rare to find the word call or vocation used in expressing this reality.¹⁶ Rather call is a word primarily used in regards to salvation and its resulting identity and ethic.¹⁷

7. Implications

There are a number of divergences between the representations identified through the interviews and the biblical testimony concerning the concept of call. All of these have implications for the vocational life of believers and, more generally, for the life of the Church.

7.1 Limiting call to the vocational area: broken links

The first divergence deals with the domain in which the representations of call and vocation operate.¹⁸ They focus almost exclusively on the vocational

life, while the biblical testimony speaks primarily of salvation in general and its resulting identity in Christ along with a new ethic that accompanies and exemplifies this identity. Call, in its biblical vision, does include the vocational life as an aspect of its operational domain, but it deals with it in the wider context of salvation and its resulting identity and ethic. The representations communicated within the interviews lost this direct connection between salvation, identity and ethic and the vocational life, thereby isolating and emphasizing the latter as the almost exclusive domain in which call operates.

Two possible consequences may result. The first and most obvious is that the evangelical community has stopped using call terminology in the way it occurs in the Bible: referring to salvation and its resulting identity and ethic. Without doubt evangelicals in Portugal have adopted other forms of talking about these themes, but the use of call has unfortunately fallen into disuse. One wonders what is lost in the community's perception of salvation through the sparse usage of some key terminology.

Secondly, one wonders what limiting call to the vocational domain has done to the community's perception of their vocational life. Could it be that a career is more easily kept separate from one's identity in Christ and its resulting ethic? A career choice may represent God's will for the believer if accompanied by a sense of call or by the fulfilment of one's vocational self-understanding, but it may not necessarily be a reflection of one's identity in Christ since the larger context of call has been generally dropped from the community's representations. Since vocational guidance through call and vocation is no longer a subset of the biblical richness of call, but isolated from it, the critical context of seeing that guidance as part of the call to salvation and identity along with its resulting ethic is probably lost.

7.2 Creation of two distinct concepts of call and vocation: a perception of second-rate guidance

A second divergence between the community's social representations and the biblical testimony is the clear distinction between call and vocation within those representations.¹⁹ As a result, believers are going to pursue orientation for their vocational life in two places, so to speak. The first is internal, inside themselves. Believers will seek to understand their vocational makeup, the way

in which God created them: talents, skills, likes, dislikes. They will, as a result, attempt to select vocational ends that are in consonance with their discovered makeup. The second place is outside of themselves, as they seek to listen for a supernatural orientation from God through divine calling.

It is important to note that this second type of orientation is more highly esteemed and desired, as presented above. While not disparaging vocational self-understanding, the interviewees strongly desired to receive a personal word from God that would define the key elements of their future vocational life. There was a sense that without such guidance a vocational self-understanding alone was of mediocre or inferior quality, something welcomed but not necessarily something that had a strong ministry orientation. This emphasis on individual call tends to create the hope (and perhaps the expectation) that believers ought to experience the kind of guidance described by individual call.

There are possible consequences. One may question what happens to believers who never experience a supernatural, individualised call but desire to follow God and serve him. They may experience negative emotions such as frustration or doubt. The interpretation of surrounding events may be affected, so that they are made to serve as indicators of a call.

A key question in these circumstances is whether the person's vocational self-understanding is sufficient for them to embrace their vocational life as being God's will for them and, as such, imbibed with significance. Or will that only happen when those vocational choices are based on a supernatural call? In other words, is vocational self-understanding strong enough by itself to translate one's vocational life into ministry? The sense that was regularly – although not exclusively – communicated in the interviews was that a supernatural call was given to certain people and resulted in a special life of ministry. A vocational self-understanding was considered to be good, but it was available to everyone and when followed simply resulted in appropriate choices for an occupation, something that is just part of daily life.

Another scenario deals with persons who do not necessarily desire that their vocational life be part of God's call over them. They are not seeking a supernatural call; instead they prefer a certain level of freedom to separate their life in God and their vocational activity. One wonders whether the creation of a distinction between supernatural

call and vocational self-understanding can create a platform from which this posture becomes more easily assumed. One interviewee felt this might be the case. In general her perspectives on work and ministry were quite holistic in nature, affirming an almost complete overlap between the two. During the interview she began musing on why so many of her Christian friends did not desire to live out their vocational life as ministry. She felt that some believers who chose to work in the secular world actually did so in order to avoid their responsibility of being involved in ministry. According to her, this could occur in two ways. First, believers may choose to avoid fulltime ministry and feel justified to do so since they did not receive a supernatural call. Second, believers may choose secular work to avoid being accountable; they choose not to embrace their work as ministry but rather to enjoy the liberty secular work affords to have a part of their life not come under the lordship of Christ. Here are her words:

[In the secular work context] no one points a finger at us, no one reproves us [for not exemplifying a Christian lifestyle] because we are in 'normal life'. In 'normal life' there is a lot of liberty [to live and act as one pleases]. Therefore it is much easier to adopt this lifestyle [of not being salt and light] because there I do not need to be accountable to anyone [for my Christian testimony].²⁰

Her belief is that this desire not to be accountable for a life of testimony, a disregard for the work of God and an aversion to the sacrifice involved in professional ministry, explain in part why there are not more young people pursuing fulltime Christian ministry.

Another scenario for vocational choice occurs when the person has no choice but is 'stuck' with a job; personal and economic pressures force them to accept or keep a job that is not intrinsically fulfilling. What are the implications for embracing that sort of vocational activity as significant when it is not accompanied by a call nor does it fit with one's vocational self-identity? When none of the processes for vocational guidance have resulted in something that is fulfilling, what is one left with? How does one negotiate the connection of their tiresome work to God's will? One wonders whether the social representations of call and vocation as outlined in the study exacerbate this situation.

7.3 Understanding the individual call as a call to ministry: missed opportunities

A third point of divergence is found in the emphases placed on call as being either an individual or universal call.²¹ The biblical evidence clearly highlights the universal aspect of call while the representations emphasise an individualised experience. Throughout the interviews call was represented primarily as an individualised process, as a subcategory of personalised, divine guidance specifically concerned with the vocational life of the individual. Beyond this and more specifically, in the majority of cases the interviewees identified call to be dealing primarily with a call to ministry, normally fulltime ministry.

The vast majority of those interviewed were firm in their belief that one needs to experience a call in order to enter the ministry, and this position is regularly heard and taught within the Portuguese evangelical community.²² From the standpoint of vocational psychology this belief can create a barrier for believers who desire to pursue a career in professional ministry, particularly when they have not experienced such a call.

There are many biblical instances of individual and specific calls to ministry; Moses, various prophets, the twelve disciples and the apostle Paul serve as examples. However, when examining Paul's teaching on the selection of ecclesial leadership, a personal call to ministry is not put forward as a prerequisite to serving in a pastoral ministry. Rather two compatible processes surface. First, the simple desire on the part of the individual can be a legitimate motivation for involvement in church ministry, as one sees in 1 Timothy 3:1: 'Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task' (NIV). The individual bases the decision on desire, not on a supernatural call. Second, the selection of appropriate people for ministry is carried out by the community and its existing leadership (Tit 1:5). This presupposes that candidates need to be examined and evaluated based on certain qualifications. Interestingly, however, experiencing a call to ministry is not found on the lists of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

I suggest that while God continues to call certain individuals to a particular ministry or to a particular circumstance, the normal process by which persons pursue ministry is that, sensing the desire to pursue church ministry, they enter into dialog with their ecclesial leadership in order to

be assessed as to their qualifications. One should not feel excluded from the possibility of ministry simply due to the absence of a call to ministry. We must consider whether in some cases believers unduly exclude themselves from a life of service in professional ministry due to the creation of an unwarranted prerequisite.

8. Conclusion

As already stated, the Christian concept of call is a precious gift which can guide the construction of a life project based on the plans of God and thus serve as a means of finding deep and universal significance in one's life. However, it is necessary to identify exactly what call is and is not. The biblical testimony points to God calling people to salvation and to a new identity in Christ. On the basis of this new identity, he calls his people to a new ethic and to participating in his work in this world. Such a view of calling is vital to building a life guided by and for God. As Guinness puts it:

Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.²³

The question arises, however, whether the social representations created by the Portuguese evangelical community encourage the pursuit of a vocational life full of divine significance or whether they become counterproductive to that pursuit.

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Endnotes

- 1 There are two word groups in the Bible to express this concept: *qārā'* and its derivatives in the Old Testament and *kaleō* and its derivatives in the Septuagint and the New Testament. Not all occurrences of these words represent the theological concept of call and other words are also used to refer to the concept. There are also other biblical-theological constructs that are related to the concept of call such as 'the will of God'.
- 2 I am using vocational life to represent instrumental activity, namely employment, the implied activities linked to one's various life roles, and life projects. I

- use employment as a representative and non-technical term for a conglomerate of concepts such as paid work, occupation, profession and career.
- 3 K.M.L. César, *Vocação: perspectivas bíblicas e teológicas* [Vocation: biblical and theological perspectives] (Viçosa, MG: Editora Ultimato, 1997) 17-18, author's translation.
- 4 T. Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional: representações sociais do conceito cristão de chamada e sua influência sobre a vida vocacional do crente evangélico em Portugal* [Call and vocational life: social representations of the Christian concept of call and their influence on the vocational life of the evangelical believer in Portugal], unpublished master's thesis (Lisboa: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Instituto de Educação, 2005).
- 5 For an introduction to the theory, see R.M. Farr and S. Moscovici (eds), *Social representations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); S. Moscovici, 'Notes towards a description of social representations', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18 (1988) 211-250; S. Moscovici, *Social Representations: Explorations in social psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).
- 6 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 146-149.
- 7 Vocation is derived from the Latin word *vocatio* which was used to translate the biblical texts referring to call.
- 8 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 150-151.
- 9 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 149, 163-164, 170.
- 10 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 172-175.
- 11 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 147-148, 173-174.
- 12 While affirming that call is considered to be supernatural communication, it should be stated that the interviewees also held the position that God may choose to use natural means along with supernatural. God reveals his call to the individual through means such as the Holy Spirit, the Bible, specific circumstances, the Christian community and key individuals. In all of this, an intimate relationship with God, especially through prayer, is central to discerning or hearing his will.
- 13 This section must be brief. Its general outline was primarily developed through an inductive study of biblical passages dealing with call. See Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 13-15 for a more thorough summary. A similar summary can be found in A. Geense-Ravestein, 'The beneficent appeal – the other side of vocation', *International Review of Mission* 89.355 (2000) 529-538.
- 14 See, for example, Walter Brueggemann, 'Covenanting as human vocation: A discussion of the relation of Bible and pastoral care', *Interpretation* 33.2 (1979) 115-129.
- 15 Various passages speak of the believers' participation with God in his work without specifically mentioning call, for example 1 Cor 3:9, 12:4-6; 15:58; Jn 9:4; Mt 9:37-38.
- 16 The major uses in the NT would be the following: Jesus called to be high priest (Heb 5:4), Paul called to be an apostle (Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1), Paul and Barnabas called to their missionary work (Acts 13:2) and later to a specific place to preach the gospel (Acts 16:10). On the reference to social position in 1 Cor 7:17, Fee comments: 'Although [Paul] comes very close to seeing the setting in which one is called as "calling" itself, he never quite makes that jump. At most "calling" refers to the circumstances in which the calling took place.' Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* Logos Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 309.
- 17 N.T. Wright identifies call as the central Pauline term used to represent conversion: 'I have already described how Paul understands the moment when the gospel of Jesus as Lord is announced and people come to believe it and obey its summons. Paul has a regular technical term for this moment, and that technical term is neither "justification" nor "conversion" (though he can use the latter from time to time): the word in question is "call".' N.T. Wright, *New Perspectives on Paul* (paper given at the Rutherford House 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference: 25-28 August 2003, see http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_New_Perspectives.pdf); retrieved 22 March 2014.
- 18 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 169.
- 19 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 170.
- 20 Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 127-128, author's translation.
- 21 Further discussion in Arabis, *Chamada e vida vocacional*, 170-171.
- 22 For example, an article by a high profile evangelical leader in Portugal: L. Reis, 'A chamada para o ministério' [The call to the ministry] in *Liderança Hoje* 3ª Série, Ano II (2003) 22-23.
- 23 Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and fulfilling the central purpose of your life* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1998) 4. See from a developmental perspective, J.W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult development and Christian faith* (revised ed.) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000) 75: Christian faith, in its classic story and vision, tells us that human fulfilment means recognising that we are constituted by the address and calling of God and responding so as to become partners in God's work in the world.