

and titles given to ministers in the New Testament,' he comments, 'prove their calling.'<sup>1</sup>

In his lecture notes Alexander distinguishes between two kinds of calls: the first he describes as 'ordinary'; the second as 'extraordinary'. When discussing the subject of an extraordinary call to the ministry, he is careful to observe that this is no longer the way in which men receive a call to the ministry. Extraordinary calls were often the result of direct inspiration; on other occasions they came in some miraculous manner. Believing that the period of extraordinary miracles and revelation had ceased, he argued that the circumstantial aspects of extraordinary calls are no longer relevant for our time. Therefore it is with the ordinary call that we must concern ourselves.

This included an internal and external element. It has been the historic practice of the Christian church to inquire into the reasons a man has for believing he is called to the ministry: 'It has long been a custom to ask the candidate for ordination whether he believes himself moved by the Holy Ghost to undertake this office. It seems therefore to have been the opinion of the Church that there was some special internal call of the Holy Spirit of which a man might be conscious.'<sup>2</sup>

What criteria should be used to assess the 'genuineness' of a perceived call to the ministry? Some people act as though their call to the ministry has occurred in the *same manner* and is of the *same kind* as the prophets and apostles. Alexander rejects this position on hermeneutical grounds. Such claims amount to an extraordinary call – a position he believed was not representative of our period in redemptive history. He observes that people who advocate this position tend to be radical individualists who do not see the 'propriety in conferring with flesh and blood' or do not 'commonly feel themselves under any obligation to ask the permission of others to exercise their ministry'.<sup>3</sup>

The fundamental issue at stake is how God's people are to validate such claims. The claim of an immediate call to the ministry which is alleged to be of the same nature and kind as the extraordinary call of the prophets and apostles, will lack the evidential support needed to affirm its genuineness. Alexander comments:

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> *LPst/IT*, 'Call to Ministry', 11:50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.