

## Foreword

I TAKE THIS TO be an important book because it brings together ideas that, if they reach their final fruition, will alter the shape and state of the worldwide church in the twenty-first century. I cannot, of course, be sure of this, and none of us can with any certainty predict what adventures and adversities, what plateaux of calm prosperity, and what maelstroms of destruction, will reveal themselves. No one standing on a pinnacle in 1913 could have foreseen the carnage of the two world wars, the horrors of Auschwitz, the mushroom cloud of the Cold War, or the sudden global hyper-connectivity of the internet. Nor could they have predicted the rapid advance of Pentecostalism or neo-Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement (whatever nomenclature you choose) to every continent, to north and south, and even to the heartlands of Catholicism and the edges of the Islamosphere.

In around 1970, talk of the emergence of charismatic apostles began to circulate the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. There had been earlier trumpet sounds announcing that apostles were back: Edward Irving in the nineteenth century had said something similar; the Welsh Apostolic Church in 1910 had made bold claims of this kind; the Latter Rain Movement in Canada in the period after 1948 was similarly outspoken—but none of these quite managed to be heard with such clarity and over so wide a constituency as happened after the 1970s. This book is not a history of the idea of apostleship. It does not trace the spread of ideas but instead picks these ideas up and examines and classifies them and then, once it has done this, looks back to church history and sideways to contemporary scholarship to test and weigh the theology of apostleship. In doing so, it demonstrates not only that apostolic activity continued well beyond the New Testament period but also that one can now discern at least three different concepts that carry the apostolic label. These concepts are carefully distinguished and attached to the teachers who formulated and developed them (e.g., Derek Prince, Terry Virgo, Peter Wagner, and others), and then put through the fire of cessationist argument (Grudem

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and Stott). The cessationist case is then itself weighed and found to be flawed (Ruthven). All this is done without personal animosity or polemic, and, for my money, is convincing in its range and rigor. The final sections of the book look at apostolicity and ask how it might be applied ecumenically within the ecclesiology of all the main Christian groupings, including the various branches of Protestantism, as well as Roman Catholicism itself and Orthodoxy.

All this explains why this book is important. If the theological examination to which apostolicity has been subjected by McNair Scott is fair, and if apostolicity is indeed valid, then the twenty-first-century church is going to incorporate a reality that will eventually have an impact on its normative functioning and effectiveness. And, in saying this, one draws attention to the reasons behind the diffusion of apostolic ideas at this point in time: the church is facing intellectual and social challenges designed to accelerate the dissolution of Christendom and the legal and attitudinal presumptions that have been cherished in the West for more than a thousand years.

Prediction, as we have noted, is a tricky business. One can do so, as Philip Jenkins did in *The Next Christendom* (2003), by using current demographic data to estimate the future size of various religious populations. One can make deductions from biblically-based eschatological schemes and map these onto world events. One can construct complex computer models with multifarious types of data and, as has been done by climate scientists, make projections about average temperatures and weather patterns.<sup>1</sup> This book does none of these things. Rather it notes the breadth of the work of the Holy Spirit and accepts that, when charismatic gifts are restored to the church, other gifts, including those shown by apostles, will inevitably follow. Its projections are based on a confidence in the Holy Spirit and a recognition of the numerous cultural and ecclesial contexts impacted by this divine Person.

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1. See W. K. Kay, "The Future of Global Pentecostalism: Evaluating Prediction." Paper given at the fortieth meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 2011.