

**THE MINISTRY IN THE  
CHURCH, IN RELATION TO  
PROPHECY AND SPIRITUAL  
GIFTS (CHARISMATA)**

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The ministry in the Church, in relation to prophecy and spiritual gifts (Charismata) by H. J. Wotherspoon

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IN RELATION TO  
PROPHECY AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS  
(CHARISMATA)

BY  
H. J. WOTHERSPOON, M.A., D.D.

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SIT IN MEMORIA LECTORI  
SICUT SCRIPTORI FUIT  
IOANNES MACLEOD  
VIR SIQUIS ALIUS HIS TEMPORIBUS PROPHETICUS.

## PREFACE

THESE lectures, delivered on the Alexander Robertson Foundation in the University of Glasgow, were written during August, September and October of 1914, months of distraction and anxiety for us all; and since their delivery the circumstances of the time have allowed of little leisure for their revisal:—I am extremely conscious that they are even less adequate to the subject than otherwise one might have hoped to make them. The subject is, besides, one which calls for an expert knowledge possible only to those whose main work lies along special lines, a knowledge to which I cannot at all pretend. So far however as experts are good enough to supply us with their data and reasons, there is opportunity for even the less well equipped to form an opinion upon the conclusions which experts reach, and to submit conclusions to which on consideration of the data they themselves have been led.

My interest was directed to this subject of the relation of Ministry to Charismata in connection with the inclination apparent in some recent apologetic to relate the Episcopate as we find it in the latter part of the Second Century with an earlier charismatic ministry, to which there seems to be



a thought of serving the Episcopate heir. The idea that such a relation may exist in no way repelled me. I was rather attracted than otherwise by the idea as, for example, it is somewhat generally stated by the late Bishop of Salisbury in his *Ministry of Grace*, and was willing to think that it stood for something more or less actual. One had been accustomed to assume that the hypothesis of a primary charismatic ministry offered a legitimate way of describing undoubted phenomena of the first age of Christianity; since men like Dr. Wordsworth, Dr. Gore or Mr. Turner, whose authority one very much regards, for whose work one is grateful, with whose general attitude to Church questions one is sympathetic, treated it rather as a critical result from which without further discussion it is possible to argue. I had taken for granted the genuineness of the *Didache*, while leaning to a belief in the earlier of the dates which are suggested for it, believing it to have issued from some semi-Ebionite eddy lying out of the main currents of Church life, and to preserve for us the type, not of a primitive Christianity so much as of a persisting Judaism—and therefore to be of the less substantial importance in any question of origins. One had taken for granted too the Christian prophet, puzzled as one might be by the place which St. Paul seems on any casual reading to assign to him, but indolently accepting current statements which include him with Apostles in a spiritual hierarchy, as in some sense probably true.

I was, however, startled by certain of the in-

ferences to which the effort to connect the Mono-Episcopate with this hierarchy seemed likely to lead, and yet more by concessions made in the interest of that connection. I found it said, for example, that "we can accept Dr. Lindsay's theory of origins," which I confess that I am reluctant to do; and again that "all that must be decisively rejected in the view propounded by Dr. Lindsay is the idea of the local Church as being independent of the main body"—whereas other statements occurring in the work quoted, as for instance that the Church has at one point changed its Ministry and can do so at any point, seemed to call for as decisive rejection. So again in the notable *Dissertation* on the organisation of the Church which enriches the first volume of the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, I found the distinction between the positions of the charismatic and of the local Ministry carried so far, and the charismatic so highly exalted at the expense of the regular, that the latter in effect ceases to be a ministry and becomes such a detail in the organisation of a laity as Sunday School teachers or District Visitors may be with ourselves. True, the statement is qualified with an "almost"—but there it is, and I found it, as coming from such a quarter, startling. One was the less surprised to find in *Foundations* an apparent willingness to contemplate without any great reluctance the surrender of Apostolic succession "as commonly understood," and a readiness to be, with Mr. Tyrrell, content if the claim of "general ecclesiastical continuity" can be maintained. Positions such as these seemed to me

to involve the collapse of that doctrine of the Holy Ministry which has hitherto been accounted the Catholic doctrine. Out of the ruin the Episcopate indeed purports to be preserved in esteem as in some way attached to the primary charismatic ministry, from which a function of rule and possibly a certain Heaviness of origin are thought to have devolved upon it. But even as an apologetic for Episcopacy this seemed to me a theory too expensive in cost and extremely uncertain in ultimate result.

Three premisses might seem to be involved for the theory in question :—

(1) It has to be shown that charismatic rulers (other than the Apostles: everyone admits the Twelve and claims from them) existed before Bishops who ruled came to exist. The theory of Twofold Ministry may either be assumed as true or argued for true; and is now generally assumed rather than re-argued.

(2) It has to be shown that the Bishop not only followed upon the prophet or other charismatic ruler, but that the Bishop validly inherited authority from the charismatic—inherited in a sense other than rhetorical; and probably also shown that something charismatic devolved upon the Bishop from the charismatic order.

(3) It has in a subsidiary way to be shown that the Presbyter did not occupy the position traditionally assigned to him, but traces only to some such place among a laity as that in which Mr. Turner thinks he is originally to be discerned, or to the place of such a "privileged senior"