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R. W. L. Moberly
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Prophecy and Discernment

If people claim to speak for God, what enables us to know when to credit or discredit the claim? This book analyses the criteria for discernment of prophetic authenticity in the Old Testament, and for discernment of apostolic authenticity in the New Testament; and also considers their validity and viability in a contemporary context.

After explaining the biblical concept of prophetic and apostolic speech on God's behalf, Moberly offers close readings of the biblical text so as to bring to life the distinctive voices, especially those of Jeremiah and St Paul, which speak of critical discernment. He addresses contemporary difficulties with the whole idea that humans might speak for God and analyses the nature of authentic spirituality. Throughout the discussion the premise is that the biblical treatment of discernment illuminates the fundamental human issue of the need to know who may be trusted and why.

R. W. L. MOBERLY is Reader in Theology at the University of Durham. He is author of *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (2000), also in the Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine series.

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To R. B. M.
magna cum pietate

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Preface

This book is a sequel to my *The Bible, Theology, and Faith*, in which I argued the in-principle case for, and sought to demonstrate in practice, a robust contextualization of academic biblical study within the theology and spirituality of the Christian Church; hence the presence of works of biblical interpretation within a series on Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, this sequel is unlikely to be placed on the library shelf next to its predecessor, even though in my mind they belong together. Here I seek to extend the thesis of the first book by showing how a key issue within Christian theology and spirituality – the critical discernment of claims to speak on God’s behalf – might be articulated and developed within the context of Christian Scripture as a whole, with a view to its contemporary appropriation. I have tried throughout to keep in appropriate tension both the concern to read the biblical texts as ancient texts and the concern to read them for their bearing upon the present within the context of the continuing Christian tradition; the fusion of ancient and modern is fraught with difficulties, and yet is a nettle which the Christian theologian must firmly grasp. Although most of the book is a cumulative sequence of exegetical studies of prophetic and apostolic texts, its stance and thesis are alike theological, hermeneutical, and spiritual in outlook.

The content of this book has been germinating steadily over the last decade or so, primarily in the context of my Biblical Theology lectures in Durham; I am grateful to my students whose questions always force me to become clearer in my own thinking. However, the material was for the first time brought together in something like its present shape in the context of my delivering the Speaker’s Lectures in Oxford in late October and early November 2002. I am grateful for the honour of being

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invited to give these lectures; and I am grateful to Ernest Nicholson, the then Provost of Oriel College, and to John Barton, the Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, for their generous hosting of me in Oriel College and for chairing my lectures. Although the book considerably expands, and sometimes modifies, the content of those lectures, I hope it will be recognizable to any who were present as the book of those lectures.

Quality time for reading and writing is ever harder to come by in the contemporary university – or so, at least, it feels to me (and the failure of half a dozen grant applications in relation to this project has not exactly helped). So I am the more grateful to my friends and colleagues who have generously given of their scarce time to read and comment on draft chapters of this work as it progressed: John Barclay, Stephen Barton, David Day, William Ford, Richard Hays, Robert Hayward, Paul Joyce, Joel Kaminsky, Paul Murray, Michael Sadgrove; and my eagle-eyed wife Jenny. I have, I think, incorporated suggested improvements from all of them; and if at times I declined their suggestions, there is only myself to blame for the result. I am also grateful to my CUP editors, Kate Brett and Jackie Warren, and copy-editor, Pauline Marsh, whose friendly efficiency has made it a pleasure to work with them. My thanks too to William Ford for compiling the indices.

I have tried to write with two audiences in mind. One is my fellow professional scholars, the other is interested non-specialists – clergy, teachers, students, general readers. Whether I have succeeded must, of course, be decided by my readers. My basic strategy has been to try to keep the main text accessible to the non-specialist, while including in footnotes and excursus extra material for the specialist; though some of the footnotes and some of the excursus are there not because they are technical but because their content is interesting yet did not conveniently fit within the main flow of the argument. Because I recognize that many read a book such as this without a biblical text open beside them, I have included an English translation (NRSV) of every passage that I discuss in the main text; though I have indicated with a broken underlining where I think the NRSV translation is open to question and have suggested an improvement in a footnote, or occasionally, if sufficiently significant, in the main text.

Despite the numerous footnotes and the reasonably substantial bibliography, I am aware that all this gives a quite inadequate guide to my real intellectual debts. For example, a seminal moment for me was my

sitting in on Rowan Williams' lectures on Christian spirituality at Westcott House in early 1979 (subsequently published as Williams 1979) where, among other things, I was first introduced to critical discernment within the Carmelite tradition. Subsequent reading of literature in this tradition, both the classics of the sixteenth century and their twentieth-century interpreters, has been of enormous heuristic significance in helping me recognize what was going on in certain biblical texts with which I was familiar but whose pattern of thought had hitherto eluded me. Since none of this receives reference or footnoting in the following argument, it seems to me important to acknowledge it here at the outset. My hope is that the book may contribute as much to spirituality as to theology or to biblical study, or rather that it will help hold together that which too often is inappropriately put asunder.

Finally, two technical notes. First, in the biblical exegeses it has sometimes been important to note the usage of particular words, and so there is some Hebrew and Greek in transliteration. Although transliteration of Greek is relatively straightforward, I to-ed and fro-ed about the best way to render the Hebrew. Although almost all Hebraists prefer proper diacritical marks, these tend to be off-putting for the non-specialist; while Hebraists can always recognize what a transliteration without diacritical marks is meant to be. So I have eschewed regular diacritical marks but put in indications of vowel length to assist pronunciation; thus, for the Hebrew verb 'to turn/repent', instead of *šûb* I have used *shūv*, with the macron on the *u* to indicate that the pronunciation is 'shoov' rather than 'shove'.

Secondly, although not unaware of feminist difficulties, I refer to God with a masculine pronoun. However, I periodically, though not consistently, capitalize it – partly as a small gesture towards the recognition that gendered language is applied analogically to God who is beyond gender, but also to stand in the tradition of reverential reference to God.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AV	Authorized Version
BADG	<i>A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd edn, revd and ed. by F. W. Danker, based on the 6th edn of Walter Bauer’s <i>Griechisch–Deutsches Wörterbuch</i> , Chicago & London, Chicago University Press, 2000
BB	Biblische Beiträge
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, Oxford, Clarendon, 1953 (1907)
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K. Elliger, W. Rudolph et al., Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984 (1967/1977, 1983)
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BNTC	Black’s New Testament Commentaries
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CCT	Challenges in Contemporary Theology, ed. Gareth Jones and Lewis Ayres
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English Translation
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>

FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament (ed. B. Janowski and H. Spieckermann)
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, as Edited and Enlarged by E. Kautzsch, and Revised by A. E. Cowley</i> , Oxford, Clarendon, 1976 (1910)
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IBCTP	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JM	<i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , by Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, SB 14, Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LF	Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	<i>Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version</i> , Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>

NTT	New Testament Theology
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
SB	Subsidia Biblica
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCHNT	Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNT	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SO	<i>Symbolae Osloenses</i>
SVT	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
TBS	Tools for Biblical Study
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974– ; ET from German of 1970–)
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
Vg	Vulgate
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>