

Expository Preaching on the Wane?

By David Cook

I studied at Moore Theological College from 1973 to 1975, under the principalship of D. B. Knox. We always anticipated his Doctrine 1 lectures, held twice a week for the whole of first year. Dr Knox would usually open the lecture making reference to our text, *In Understanding be Men*, by a former principal, T. C. Hammond. These remarks would usually take about ten minutes and then the rest of the lecture consisted of questions and answers. Knox would occasionally correct Hammond, who wrote his book on an ocean liner, travelling from Ireland to take up his appointment in Sydney. Dr Knox would say: 'the archdeacon may have been seasick at this point'. What impressed me on these rare occasions was that Knox did so on the basis not of the Anglican doctrinal standard, the Thirty-Nine Articles, but on the basis of God's Word, the Bible. That was Moore's enduring legacy to me: through lecture room and chapel service, the Bible was taught and preached as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

I have recently been part of a committee discussing what it means to be 'reformed'.

The 5 Solas have been referred to, but finally, I think we have come to the conclusion that the foundation of Reformed theology and conviction, is that the Bible is God's breathed-out word and is our final court of appeal.

We believe what we believe, because that is what the Bible says. This was the core of Luther's argument with the Roman church in the sixteenth century. When called upon to retract his writings, Luther said: 'Unless I am convinced by the text of the Scriptures or clear reason, for I do not trust in the Pope or the

Councils alone...I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything...'

It is the influence of the Reformers and men like D. B. Knox, which have led me to seek to have the Scriptures at the centre of my life and preaching. Calvin referred to the Bible as a pair of spectacles, 'which dispel the darkness and give us a clear view of God'. The point of these remarks for preaching is that we preach the way we do because of what we believe about the Bible and how God reveals himself. J. I. Packer said: 'the text of the Bible is God preaching to us'.

The faithful preacher will be God's mouthpiece, by explaining, expounding, declaring the Bible. How foolish to have a word from the mouth of God and to displace it with our own thoughts and inclinations!

Does your preaching show your respect for God, your desire to honour Him, by faithfully and engagingly proclaiming the Bible? Is this consistently true, every time you take the pulpit?

My current screen saver is a quote from the late R. C. Sproul: 'I think the greatest weakness in the church today is that almost no one believes that God invests His power in the Bible. Everyone is looking for power in a programme, in a methodology, in a technique, in anything and everything but that in which God has placed it, His Word!'

David Cook was the former principal of SMBC.