

One of the most influential theological institutions in the evangelical world is Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia. Its influence extends beyond Australia to many parts of the world, both inside and outside Anglicanism. In recent years its influence has been particularly felt in the United Kingdom. 'Moore theology' refers to teaching associated with the college. As it happens, this year the college is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation so it is an appropriate time to consider the teaching and influence of this institution. While critical in some respects this assessment is not meant to be censorious but rather friendly with the intention of encouraging some constructive thinking and debate in an amicable spirit on the subjects raised.

Moore history

Moore College is named after Thomas Moore (1762-1840) who came to Sydney as a ship's carpenter in 1791. He became a landowner and magistrate and, dying childless, he left his house and grounds at Liverpool for the education of young men of 'the Protestant persuasion'. The Bishop of Sydney set in motion the plans for the foundation of a theological college in Moore's old home and the college opened 1 March, 1856. The College moved to Newtown in 1891 in order to be near the University of Sydney.

During its history, the College has had eleven principals and over three thousand graduates. Some of its illustrious principals in the 20th century have included T.C. Hammond (1936-1949), Marcus Loane (1954-58), D. Broughton Knox (1958-1985) and Peter Jensen (1985-2001) who has become the Archbishop of Sydney.

Since the late 1950s there has been a significant extension of the campus and this year the College boasts the largest number of students it has ever had – one hundred and forty in the first year alone. Not

all the students are going into the Anglican ministry and not all the students are Anglican. According to its literature, Moore College exists to serve the gospel of Jesus Christ by equipping ordination candidates, and other men and women, to deepen their knowledge of God as revealed in the Bible, proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, facilitate the building of the church, care for their fellow Christians, and develop in Christian faith, maturity and service.

Moore training

Moore College's ministry to students is based on a four-year full-time residential course leading to the Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degree and it is specially designed for those who desire a biblical and theological foundation for full-time Christian service. Postgraduate programmes are offered to those who desire to gain a recognised qualification at a higher level.

Since it is the conviction of the College that theology is best learned in the context of community, its courses (other than postgraduate) are full-time and residential. The students are part of a living community that is both a Christian family and an academic fellowship. In keeping with the subject matter of the course, attention is paid to the spiritual context of education and regular chapel services are central to the College's life.

Moore's Protestant credentials

The college has always been strongly Protestant and a thorn in the side of liberal Anglicans.² It was, however, under Broughton Knox that the College embraced Reformed and Biblical Theology in what Peter Jensen calls 'a new and powerful way.' Knox was strongly Protestant and something of a Puritan in sympathy, but as Donald Robinson, a former Archbishop of Sydney, explains, it was a stance

'within the constitutional breadth of the Church'. The Banner of Truth published a book of Broughton Knox in 1992 entitled *Sent by Jesus: some aspects of Christian ministry today*. The influence of the College on the diocese of Sydney has been considerable and St Andrew's Anglican Cathedral in the centre of the city is probably the most Protestant looking cathedral in the world.

Moore's sources

The best way to taste Moore theology is through the Matthias Media, the Good Book Company and books produced by lecturers and ministers associated with Moore. We are informed that the Matthias Media is a reformed, evangelical publishing house. It was the vision of Tony Payne and Phillip Jensen. Phillip Jensen is now the dean of St Andrew's cathedral. In 1988 Tony Payne, the church administrator at St Matthias' Sydney became editor of 'St Matthias Press and Tapes' which included the production of a fortnightly paper that soon came to be called *The Briefing*. The St Matthias Press (UK) is now known as 'The Good Book Company' and publishes resources developed in Australia including the UK edition of *The Briefing* and other literature for the UK market. In the last few years, Matthias Media has also established a strong distribution point in South Africa, and a co-publishing arrangement in the USA with Crossway Books. As a result, over the past twelve months it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of Matthias Media resources were sent out around the world. Well-respected lecturers of Moore have included Graeme Goldsworthy, David Peterson, Peter O'Brien and Barry Webb.

Moore's influence

It is because of the influence that this establishment is having, both directly and indirectly, on evangelicals

of an anti-charismatic persuasion that Moore's particular emphases are being considered. Many ministers and students in the UK take The Briefing, read books and attend churches, conferences or courses that are to some extent influenced by Moore College teaching. Some are even tempted to consider training for the ministry at Moore itself or follow the correspondence courses they offer.

Moore's evangelical credentials

Before embarking on the Moore theology that gives some cause for concern, it is only right to record our admiration for the people behind the publications, conferences and courses that are available. The influence for good that has emanated from Moore College should not be under-estimated, devalued or ignored. They are evangelical in the best sense of that word. Putting the tests that Lloyd-Jones gave at the IFES Conference in 1971³ you will find that the people associated with Moore and its theology believe that their sole authority is the Bible and they seek to submit everything to it, regarding it as divine revelation, entirely trustworthy and containing propositional truth. Though they are not reticent to fly the Anglican flag they would insist that they are not Anglican first and evangelical second.

They are watchful of the devil's subtleties and have no time for philosophising the faith. On the other hand, they are far from being anti-intellectual and aim for the highest academic standards but at the same time they are aware that scholarship can lead them astray and hide the truth of the gospel. They are strongly non-sacramentalist in their position concerning the sacraments⁴ and endeavour to act on their convictions. They are also concerned about right doctrine and warn against heretical views.⁵ Giving attention to prayer and the reading and expounding of Scripture is vitally important to Moore theologians. Furthermore, they regard the

preaching of God's word as of paramount importance and are always concerned about evangelism.

As for their fundamental beliefs they acknowledge God as creator; they believe in Adam and Eve, the Fall, the hopeless and helpless state of humanity in sin, the eternal damnation of the lost in hell, that there is only one way of salvation and in the necessity of regeneration. They believe in God's wrath, the penal substitutionary sacrifice of Christ and in justification by faith alone. For them there is only one way of salvation, Jesus Christ. They reject the notion of apostolic succession, the distinctions drawn between clergy and laity, and the notion that bishops are essential to the life of the church.

In addition, they believe in election and predestination, they are against women's ordination to leadership positions over men⁶ and they are strong in their stand for biblical morals. On the issue of hermeneutics they do not think that the supposed time and culture gap between Bible times and our own is as significant and central for reading and applying the Bible as many modern evangelical scholars maintain. They insist that it is the Bible that must be allowed to critique, challenge or reaffirm our own culture.⁷ They have no time for the charismatic movement and would prefer to sing nothing than sing some of the mindless ditties that are repeated *ad nauseam*. They are also strong in their opposition to the new perspectives on Paul including the views of Tom Wright.

Moore's distinctives

What then are the distinctives that set Moore apart from the Reformed evangelicalism we are accustomed to and concerning which there is some unease? There are three main areas of concern:

Understanding the Scriptures

We applaud them for their biblical emphasis. They are very opposed to exalting theology above the text

of Scripture and have no time for philosophical theology – apologetics yes, but philosophy no. Also abhorrent to them is the tendency to engage in proof texts to support a theological position. They believe strongly in viewing every verse in its context and encourage preachers and teachers of God's word to reflect on individual passages and verses in the light of biblical theology. In other words, the text must be viewed not only in its historical context but its place must be appreciated within the flow of the history of God's saving activity. This is an extremely attractive and helpful approach to the study of the text of Scripture for it not only enables the reader to understand better the particular passage, it guards against misapplying the text. However, if taken too far this method can lead astray.

There is a tendency to be too dismissive of systematic, dogmatic theology. It must be readily admitted that no one comes to the text of Scripture free of bias and prejudice. Our presuppositions will affect our approach to the text, which in turn will affect our interpretation and understanding. If we dismiss the value of historical theology and systematic theology and rely purely on biblical theology we shall end up turning that biblical reflection into a dogmatic theology of our own making that we then seek to propagate as biblical teaching. This is what is happening through Moore. They must reckon with the possibility that some of their teaching, because it is the product of their biblical theology approach, may well turn out to be defective because they have failed to take into account the wider scriptural teaching relating to the subject that is achieved through a more systematic approach and by examining the theological reflections of former generations encouraged by the discipline of historical theology. Here are some examples where the biblical theology approach and narrow study of words is leading astray those under the Moore influence:

1. *The 'Call' and the 'Ministry'*

In *The Briefing* October 2001 (pp.6-10), Michael Bennett has an article entitled 'Biblical Terms Evangelicals Consistently Misuse: "The Call"'. He rightly points out that the Greek verb *kalein* and the family of words associated with it are used with nine different senses in the NT, that it is not used in LXX in relation to priests and prophets being set apart for God and that it is never used in the NT to describe appointment to ministerial office in the church. The use of such language in Heb.5:4-5 in relation to the Apostles, to Christ and to Aaron, he insists, is not transferable to gospel ministers today. Bennett emphasises that while the prophets and Apostles were called by God to their special ministries the word 'call' is never used of an ordinary Christian being 'called' by God to a particular ministry. People are called to be followers of Christ, and Christians are then called to be holy. But statements like 'I feel God is calling me' and 'I think God is calling me' are totally absent from the New Testament. As the word 'call' is never used of an ordinary Christian being 'called' by God to a particular ministry, the new dogmatic theology of Moore is that the language of 'call' is inappropriate to describe what happens when a person is entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and teaching God's word and pastoring God's people. Moore dogmatics based on biblical theology concludes there is no such thing as 'being called into the ministry'.

'The Ministry' is another term Bennett highlights as being consistently misused by evangelicals. Such phrases as 'going into the ministry' are a misuse of biblical terms, he argues, 'which can lead earnest Christians into much confusion and heartache.' Bennett looks at the NT terms for the 'so-called ordained ministry' such as elder, shepherd, overseer

and servant and then asks in the light of these word studies 'what is the ministry?' He focuses on Eph.4:11-13 where the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teacher gifts are listed. These 'word-based' ministries have one job to do, to equip the saints, the people of God, 'for ministry' so that the body of Christ will be built up. Bennett remarks: "As I studied I suddenly realised the answer to my perplexing problem. Why was it that I had never felt 'called' to the ministry? Answer: Because I was already in the ministry. Every saint is already 'in the ministry' from the time he or she became a Christian."

If all Christians are 'in the ministry', the next question posed is why some people are paid to do it full-time and are called pastors or ministers? Bennett states that it is because some gifts are more important to the life of the church than others. He rightly shows that teaching the word of God and pastoring the people are essential for the good of the church. We consider them so necessary, he argues, that we are willing to pay some of our members to give up normal employment so that they can devote themselves fully to this work. Thus the question is not about looking for some 'subjective' call but an objective one. The question is, "Do I have the gifts that are required for a person to be a pastor-teacher?" Thus a person can look at his own efforts to see whether or not he has gifts in that area and more importantly the person can seek the advice of others. It is all a question of assessing gifts for teaching the word. It is suggested that there is no "better way to find out whether you are suited for the job of paid full-time Christian work than doing paid full-time Christian work." * Those going for full-time ministry must of course pass the tests required in the Pastoral Epistles, that include the assessment of one's life and abilities and one's

motives but also the desire. This desire we are told does not mean some special prodding from God, rather it is what Bennett describes as the “unspiritual” motive of “just wanting it”. In other words, someone is called to the work of pastor-teacher “by a rightly motivated and rightly tested human desire.”

There is much that we can go along with and we appreciate again their biblical approach to the subject and the implied warning concerning those who ‘feel called’ by God when clearly they are not. What Bennett and others of the Moore theology thinking fail to appreciate is that there is a theology that lies behind the word ‘call’ in the biblical instances that applies to all who are led to give themselves to the gospel ministry. Those who minister the gospel are gifts of God to the church that God himself sovereignly appoints. Insufficient notice is taken of the significance of such texts as ‘How shall they preach except they are sent?’ (Rom.10:15) and Jesus’ words urging us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would ‘send out labourers into his harvest’ (Matt.9:38). And the reason why those texts are ignored or dismissed is precisely because their biblical theology approach has paradoxically failed to present a full biblical picture. They have taken a certain set of texts of Scripture and formed their theology of the gospel ministry around those texts without taking sufficient notice of other important passages of Scripture that suggest a more direct inward personal experience of God’s dealings with an individual where it would not be out of order for the individual to believe that he was ‘moved by God’. We shall return to ‘the call’ at a later point.

2. *Worship*

This subject has been aired in *The Briefing* on numerous occasions and books have been written by Moore men.⁹ Looking at worship from a biblical

theology perspective they rightly show that Old Testament (OT) worship revolves around the tabernacle and later the temple whereas the New Testament (NT) shows that Jesus Christ fulfils the temple worship. They consider carefully the ‘worship’ group of words in the NT and conclude that worship is for all the people of God at all times and places, and it is bound up with how we live on a daily basis. This then leads them to think that worship is not what Christians specifically do when they come together on a Sunday. Rather, when Christians, who are worshipping all the time, corporately gather on the Lord’s Day, the distinctive element of their meeting together is not worship but edification.

This is why those churches following this teaching are so non-liturgical and non-charismatic in their appearance. They strongly resist the modern idea of dividing up a meeting into a worship time with a worship leader before the preaching session; nor do they believe in coming together ‘to worship’ and having ‘worship services’. The OT worship associated with priests, vestments, altars, lighted candles and choirs are out. We are urged not to make a big deal of ‘the worship service’.

Concerning praise, the argument is that we are not to see it in OT Temple terms as a cultic, religious activity or experience, set to music, to be conducted in church. Just as our spiritual worship is the sacrifice of our whole lives to God, so our praise is to be the lifelong and lifewide confession before the world of what God has done for us. Praise is advertising. It is remembering and declaring who God is and what he has done. It takes place in his hearing, but it is done by telling others. It is boasting about God to others and springs from salvation. Praise is the testimony of the redeemed. ‘Praise is part of our whole life of worship, but only one part

of it'. The call to give thanks and sing in Is.12 is not a call to gather in the temple but a call to mission. 'The greatest worship we can offer God is to gather more worshippers' and 'The job of the person leading the meeting is to provide a framework in which we can exhort one another to serve God and proclaim his glory to the nations.'¹⁰

Tony Payne, while sympathising with those who say we can do without singing in church, especially for new-comers who only sing when drunk or at birthday parties, states that the NT portrays singing as a helpful and worthwhile corporate activity, both as a means of teaching and encouraging one another and as a natural human way to express the inexpressible joy that is ours in Christ. But he refrains from describing this as worship in any special sense from what we should be doing in our lives as Christians all the time.¹¹ Singing 'in church' is regarded as 'one more avenue through which we can live for the sake of others as we follow in the footsteps of our Lord.'¹²

Moore theology sees Christians coming together on Sundays and other days to build each another up by hearing God's word preached and taught and by singing praises that express who God is and what he has done for the benefit of one another and others. Peter Jensen argues that the words 'worship' and 'fellowship' should be avoided in connection with church for worship degenerates into thinking of ritual observances, our offering to God, the holiness of beauty, the numinous, the symbolic, etc., while fellowship can degenerate into the cult of the informal, the trivial and the temptation to turn Christianity into a vaguely religious secularism. He encourages the use of faith and love. Faith focuses on Christ and his word, and love focuses on our brethren and the demand to serve them.¹³

Again, there is much truth in what these Moore men say. We admire the simplicity of their

buildings and dress and have much sympathy with their attitude to worship times and worship leaders. A more systematic approach in association with their biblical theology emphasis would reveal that the Lord's people are to come together specifically to worship God in the sense of bowing their heads and hearts before the Almighty, expressing heartfelt love toward God, directing their thoughts and words Godward, adoring God, responding to his word with humility and faith and godly fear and doing all this together in one place. Constantly in the book of Revelation we read of the heavenly beings falling down before him who sits on the throne and worshipping him who lives for ever and ever. John is exhorted not to fall down and worship the angel but to worship God. Surely, what is already being done in heaven and that John is called to do, Christians should engage in when they meet together. The Moore theology of worship is too wooden in its approach to the biblical text precisely because it does not take a more systematic approach.

3. *The Law*

Again, using the biblical theology approach Moore teaching rightly sees the implications of Jesus having fulfilled the law by his perfect obedience and sacrificial death on the cross. Christians are no longer under the law (Rom.6:14-15) in that it no longer stands condemning those who have faith in Jesus nor are all the detailed laws binding or authoritative for Christians as they were for the Israelites. Christians are not under the Mosaic Law but they are under Christ's law and the heart of Christ's law is at the heart of the Mosaic Law, namely, love for God and neighbour. While it is appropriate, like David, to meditate on the law because the law gives expression to a life of loving response to God, the claim is made that there is absolutely no obligation on the Christian to obey

the Mosaic Law just because it commands something. To do so would be a denial of the gospel so it is claimed. The Christian is free from the law and should staunchly resist any idea of obeying the law as an obligation (Gal.5:2-3). The imperative for the Christian life does not come from the Law of Moses but from our union with Christ. The Christian has been set free from obligation to the law.¹⁴ From Matthias Media Bible Studies on Deuteronomy the Mosaic Law should be thought of as one would view a retired professor: 'he is very useful to go to for advice, but he no longer sets the exams.' On the other hand, Moore teaching also insists that this understanding of the law from our position in Christ also means that Christians will never use the law like Israel did and seek to minimize our response to God. Rather as the Sermon on the Mount indicates we should seek to maximize our response. The commandment against murder is extended to include anger, and the one against adultery is stretched to include lust. Paul indicates that meditating on the law means finding principles behind the specific legislation (1 Cor.9:9) and by pointing to the fulfilment of the law's promises (Eph.6:2).

On this subject again, systematic and historical theology are not taken into account. The biblical theology approach, while so helpful in many respects, is being used to blinker the Moore people. While we agree that Christ has fulfilled the law for us, the Mosaic Law is more than useful advice for believers. The OT Scriptures are not to be thought of as a retired professor. They are still God's authoritative word. Paul states that all scripture is useful not only for teaching, but for showing us where we are wrong, for correcting us and instructing us to do what is right (2 Tim.3:16). That is more than useful advice. We are obligated to mend our ways and act according to God's good word. While

there is no disagreement that the Mosaic Law must be viewed from our position in Christ and his finished work, it is unbiblical and out of keeping with the way both Christ and his apostles use the Mosaic Law to say that there is no obligation on Christians to keep the OT precepts and principles as revealed in the law of Moses. Being 'in law to Christ' does not mean we have no obligation to obey all God's word.

This understanding of the law and of worship affects their treatment of the Fourth Commandment, although there is a variety of opinion on exactly how the Sabbath rest is to be applied today. While it is right to warn against legalism the Moore position comes dangerously close to an antinomian position. Paul's words in Romans and Colossians are used to suggest that every day is alike and that Sabbath days are but a shadow like the other ceremonial legislation. But some accept the principle of one day of rest in a week based on the creation pattern and as a pointer to the heavenly rest but this has nothing to do with worshipping God together as his people on the Lord's Day.¹⁵ While the biblical theology approach has rightly shown the discontinuity between Old and New Testaments it has prevented Moore students from appreciating the continuity that exists between the two epochs.

Understanding the Spirit

Moore College theology has a clear Reformed view of the Spirit in terms of his illuminating, regenerating activity and of the Spirit's indwelling presence in the lives of believers. It understands Pentecost as the once for all coming of the Spirit upon the church in a way that was not the case in the OT. All the Lord's people now have the Spirit. This means that in Christ, the Father comes and makes his home within each believer through his Spirit, so that he is constantly present.

It must be said, however, that over the years, in *The Briefing*, very little emphasis has been given to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The subject is usually raised only in connection with articles warning against the charismatics. This imbalance has recently been rectified by a book published for The London Men's Convention that seeks to present an understanding of the Spirit's work in the lives of Christians.¹⁶

Moore's repugnance of all things charismatic has had the effect of presenting a less than biblical view of the Spirit's activity in the church and the individual believer. Its biblical theology approach has not been done in a vacuum but has been influenced by its opposition to the charismatic movement. All the more reason then why Moore men should take on board a more systematic approach and learn from historical theology.

1. *'The Call'*

It is their view of the Spirit that has helped colour their understanding of the call to gospel ministry. We can appreciate that the dismissal of a person's inward call by God to the gospel ministry is due to a fear of opening the door to charismatic ideas. They are suspicious of any direct work of the Holy Spirit and it is this in turn that has affected Moore's biblical theology approach that we considered earlier. To deny or underestimate the Spirit's direct activity in this area of the ministerial call is a serious error. That which has often sustained a pastor under severe pressure to give up the Christian ministry has not been the call of the local church or the views of trusted friends for they can change but this inner constraint by the Holy Spirit.

Thornwell has an interesting chapter on 'The Call of the Minister'. It is as if he had Moore theology in mind when he states: 'That a supernatural conviction of duty, wrought by the immediate

agency of the Holy Ghost, is an essential element in the evidence of a true vocation to the ministry, seems to us to be the clear and authoritative doctrine of the Scriptures. Men are not led to the pastoral office as they are induced to select other professions in life; they are drawn, as a sinner is drawn to Christ, by a mighty, invincible work of the Spirit. The call of God never fails to be convincing. Men are made to feel that a woe is upon them if they preach not the Gospel. It is not that they *love* the work, for often, like Moses, they are reluctant to engage in it, and love at best can only render its duties pleasant; it is not that they desire the office, though in indulging this desire they seek a good thing. It is not that they are zealous for the glory of God and burn for the salvation of souls, for this is characteristic of every true believer; nor is it that upon a due estimate of their talents and acquirements they promise themselves more extended usefulness in this department of labour than in any other, for no man is anything in the kingdom of heaven except as God makes him so; but it is that the Word of the Lord is like fire in their bones; they must preach it or die; they cannot escape from the awful impression, which haunts them night and day and banishes all peace from the soul until the will is bowed, that God has laid this work upon them at the hazard of their lives.'¹⁷

2. *Worship and the Presence of God*

Again, when it comes to Moore's views on what happens when Christians come together for communal worship, there is an inadequate view of the Holy Spirit. Moore theology has no place for God being specially present when Christians meet together.¹⁸ It is claimed that this is an OT idea where God was especially present in the temple. They rightly discourage the creating of an atmosphere through music and singing where God's

presence is then thought to be manifest. But have they not gone beyond the Scriptures when they suggest that Christians do not need to pray for God's presence when they meet together?

Peter Jensen has a helpful article on 'Union with Christ' but again, as a reaction to the charismatic emphasis, he argues that because we are complete in Christ we therefore already have the Spirit in such a way that there is no need to expect more.¹⁹ He continually shies away from any direct experience of the Holy Spirit. For Jensen Christ is present in the assembly of Christians when Jesus is acknowledged as prophet, priest and king.²⁰ Much of what he has to say is very perceptive and helpful, but it falls short of the biblical spirituality that we have been accustomed to when we sing Charles Wesley's hymn, *Jesus, we look to Thee, Thy promised presence claim... Present we know Thou art, but O Thyself reveal!*

Along similar lines is an article in which a certain Geoff Bullock is quoted with approval. Take, for instance, the following: 'We almost try to create a temple experience where we are using OT theology and OT yearnings for something that has already happened. We try to create this climate of expectation that God is going to fall, rise, move, presence himself, turn up... Like worship leaders meeting before the service asking God to anoint their music. Or asking God to presence himself – God has already presenced himself, he hasn't gone anywhere. We ask God to bless us – he has already blessed us at the cross, we can't receive any more blessing than that with all the blessings in the heavenly places, what more could we possibly ask for?'²¹

Surely, if Christians have everything they can have in this world, why does Paul pray as he does in Eph. 1:15-23 that God would give the Christians 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the

knowledge of him' and in 3:14-21 'to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fulness of God'? Why are we urged to draw near to God so that he will draw near to us (James 4:8) if he is present already? How can Christ be outside the church and call for individuals to hear his voice and open the door so that he might have personal communion with them if he is present already?

In Moore theology, seeking spiritual experiences is frowned upon and again we can appreciate the reasons in the light of so much modern evangelicalism that can degenerate into pure mysticism. We would agree with this statement: 'Paradoxically it is a mark of true Christian experience not to be terribly interested in experience, but to be interested in Christ.' In an article on Edwards there is a warning about feelings and emotions that are fervent in praise of God where the people are not saved.²³ To ensure emotions are godly we are urged not to concentrate on our emotions but to think on God and his gospel. The article encourages us not to think that feelings are wrong, even strong, overwhelming ones. But we must train our hearts in God's word and take stock of our emotional trends, and this is certainly wise advice. But there is no mention of the need of the Spirit of God to revive his people or seeking God for those special assurances of his love and blessing that strong Calvinists like Augustus Toplady knew.

3. Revival

There is an article in The Briefing with the title 'A drug called Revival' by an unnamed Welshman who has little sympathy toward the 1904-5 revival in Wales and the emphasis on revival.²⁴ He is not happy with the use of the term 'revival' preferring to speak of such church phenomena as 'sudden spurts of church growth' that seem unpredictable. He does

not clearly distinguish between revival and revivalism. But it is clear that it is revivalism that deeply concerns him as it does many Bible believing people. But what does he mean when he says that the search for a spectacular media grabbing revival takes away from the gospel of Jesus who rose for our justification? The Easter faith, he declares, does not need to look for such future hopes in this world. But, surely, when God acts in astonishing ways the media will naturally be attracted and it leads to many lives being affected for good. In this era of the Spirit when the Church in this country is clearly in a low and sorry state, we are surely not wrong to look expectantly and to pray fervently that God would do something wonderful to vindicate his holy name and to revive his work in our land. The Easter faith and the whole of Scripture encourage us to look for times of spiritual refreshment. How are texts like Luke 11:13 to be interpreted that were spoken to disciples not to unconverted people?

Moore theology has no theology of revival. The most recent pocket guide from this stable on the work of the Spirit makes no reference to it. There is a right emphasis on every true Christian being baptised by the Spirit into Christ and having the Spirit. While it points out Luke's teaching on the Spirit specially empowering people for a particular purpose in line with OT examples, it fails to make clear how this is important today. In fact, the reader could be left with the idea that the Spirit's special empowering gifts to individuals is confined to the OT period.²⁵

4. *Word and Spirit*

John Woodhouse, the recently appointed principal of Moore, has three articles in early editions of *The Briefing* entitled 'The God of Word'.²⁶ He rightly emphasises the place of God's Word in evangelical Christianity. He concludes his first article: 'If our Christianity has become dry and dull and dead it

will be because the Word of God does not occupy the place it should... It is not that Evangelicals emphasise the Word of God while Catholics emphasise sacraments, and Charismatics emphasise the Holy Spirit and Liberals emphasise good works, and Anglicans keep it all in balance! The Word of God is not just the evangelical party flag, some arbitrary element that is our particular hobby horse. Our whole practice and experience of Christianity flows from this reality: that GOD HAS SPOKEN. Everything – and I mean everything – is a consequence of that reality.'

This strong emphasis on the importance of the Word of God, the gospel Word, is good and necessary. We warm to the insistence that it is the Word of God that must be central when Christians gather together. But from this firm foundation false deductions are made, suggesting that because Christians already have the Spirit all that is needed is to have gifted men who will faithfully preach and teach the Word. But is the Bible on its own the answer to our dryness, dullness, deadness, prayerlessness as is assumed? Surely we can be reading and studying the Bible and listening to biblical sermons by gifted men and still be dry, dull and dead. The church at Ephesus was doctrinally secure but had lost its first love.

In his second article entitled 'Word and Spirit', Woodhouse turns to experience. He is aware that some might take him to mean that he is arguing against all experience in the Christian life. Far from it, he exclaims, for the Christian life is characterised by deep and profound experiences. Explaining what he means he draws attention to the experience of being called through the gospel word by God himself. In addition, to be called believers means that they have not only been addressed by God but they have been brought to the experience of trust or

belief. Again, it is important to be reminded of how wonderful it is to be a Christian. But Woodhouse then goes on to answer the objection that this presents a too narrow emphasis on the *word* at the expense of the *Spirit*. As he counteracts this objection he has in mind particularly the charismatics.

He, therefore, discusses the connection between God's Spirit and God's Word, the Bible. He argues that throughout the Bible the Spirit of God is as closely connected to the Word of God as breath is connected to speech, reminding us that in both Hebrew and Greek the word for 'spirit' also means 'breath'. Gen.1:1-3 shows the close connection between breath of God and word of God. In Is.11:2 the attributes of the Spirit of the Lord are closely related to the attributes of the Word of God – wisdom, understanding, counsel and might, etc. In Is.59:21 God's Spirit is in parallel with God's words. He concludes from this that where 'the word of God is there the Spirit of God is also.' Word and breath cannot be separated. To back this up he includes Matt.10:16-20. The Spirit speaks through the testimony of the disciples. Acts 1:8 tells us that when the Spirit comes they will witness to Jesus, in other words they will speak the gospel. Acts 5:30-32 is taken to mean that when they preach the gospel it is not only the testimony of the Apostles but the testimony of the Spirit. There are not two separate testimonies but one, for the Holy Spirit speaks through the testimony of the Apostles. Concerning 1 Thess.1:4-6 he again asks: 'Are there two things going on here – "not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit"? No is the reply. Paul, we are told, is describing one experience: the thing they experienced "when our gospel came". The gospel is 'never just words.' Likewise in 1 Thess.2:13 he argues: 'The gospel comes in power and in the Holy Spirit precisely

because it is the word OF GOD.' And notice, he adds, that in this passage God is at work in those who believe. How is God at work? 'By his Spirit' he says would be a thoroughly Pauline way of putting it but here he says it is the word of God that is at work. 'Is there a difference?' he asks between by his Spirit and by his word. He answers, 'I suggest not. It is by his word that God's Spirit is at work.'

What then does he make of Rom.8:16? He believes that 'Like many NT statements, this refers to the subjective effect of the Spirit's work. The question, however, remains – how does the Spirit testify to me? The answer is: by the gospel, by the word of God. That after all is his sword!' There are not two witnesses but one. Unless you understand these passages in the way he presents them, he maintains that you will believe in two sources of revelation.

Thus the Moore view is that there is no need to pray for unction, for some special anointing on preacher or people. The Spirit is automatically at work when the word of God is proclaimed. The handling of such texts as Rom.8:16 is typical of the way Moore men operate. I know of no commentator worth his salt who exegetes Rom.8 in the way Woodhouse does. John Murray comments that in verse 15 'the witness is borne by the believer's own consciousness in virtue of the Holy Spirit's indwelling as the Spirit of adoption' but in verse 16 'it is the witness borne by the Holy Spirit himself'. Again, 1 Thess.1:5, as most scholars will agree, there is the human speech of the apostles and there is the convincing power of the Holy Spirit.

We can sympathise with the emphasis on the Bible word over-against any additional authority. But Woodhouse has gone too far and so identified word and Spirit that the Spirit has no separate identity and function. This has been a Moore characteristic and must be seen as a serious departure from the Puritan and Evangelical teaching of the past.

Because of their fear of charismatic influences they have re-interpreted texts of Scripture to silence any suggestion of a direct work of the Spirit.

Understanding the church

On the one hand Moore theology can say all the right things about the church universal gathered around Jesus in heaven and the local gatherings. Peter Jensen quotes John Owen with approval on the status of the individual congregation. But in practice, Moore people have a very low view of the church. This is inevitable given their views on worship, the Lord's Day and the Spirit. No great difference is seen between meeting in small groups, such as Bible study or cell groups and larger meetings called 'church'. The basic purpose is the same: mutual encouragement, building up the people of God, spurring one another to love and good deeds. The benefits of the smaller group are that it is easier to relate informally, to talk through issues at length, to answer individual questions, etc. In the large group, on the other hand, the gifted teacher can reach larger numbers of people all at once. It is also an important means of keeping the smaller groups together, and saving them from splintering off.

Moore theology can thus speak of 'small church' and 'large church'. Any assembly of Christians can be called a church gathering and the sacraments can be administered in any such context. The primary reason for going to 'church' is to enable Christians to have the opportunity to love and encourage other people in Christ.²⁷ On this understanding there seems to be very little difference between a Christian Union Bible Study and Sunday at St Philip's. I fear lest the Moore influence is behind some of the church partnership schemes that are currently being promoted.

Denominationalism means very little to Moore people. At best the denominations including Anglicanism are reckoned to be similar to para-church organisations. At other times denominationalism is a bit like the world in general. You live with it, work in it and you gather people together from it. Those of a Moore Anglican outlook act like nonconformists within the system especially those with large congregations. On the other hand, Peter Jensen was not embarrassed to come over to this country soon after he was appointed Archbishop of Sydney to speak on Anglicanism, of why he was proud to belong to this body and saw no reason for abandoning it. However, he would, if necessary, be prepared to sever the link with Canterbury.

There are clear dangers with a position like this, for it encourages a too pragmatic approach to the mixed denominations. The clarity that Lloyd-Jones brought to the subject is missing and this can only result in confusion and a weak view of the local church. Despite being nonconformist in terms of Anglican authority, Moore men remain very Anglican in their thinking and practice. True nonconformity means being captive to God's word when it comes to church government and practice. Despite all the good and noble features that have challenged and encouraged every biblically-minded Christian, what Moore College is producing and influencing has elements in it that could well be detrimental to the future spiritual life of gospel churches. What needs to be encouraged is that warm spirituality associated with the Puritans and the Great Awakening, and that has produced the kind of preaching in the tradition of Whitefield, Wesley, Edwards, Newton, Spurgeon, Ryle and Lloyd-Jones.

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References

1. The following article is the substance of a paper given at the Westminster Fellowship of gospel preachers, London and the Bala Ministers' Conference earlier this year. It was a subject that the author was asked to address and it was not presented in a censorious way. The author hopes that it will encourage some constructive thinking and debate in an amicable spirit on the subjects raised.
2. Cf. Muriel Porter, *The New Puritans: The Rise of Fundamentalism in the Sydney Anglican Church*, Melbourne University Press, 2006.
3. Cf. D.M. Lloyd-Jones *Knowing The Times*, Banner of Truth, 1989, pp.299-355.
4. Cf. *The Briefing* #203-205 for their views on baptism. Some have accused them of being more 'Salvation Army' in their view of the sacraments.
5. *The Briefing* warned of IVP's publication of Clark Pinnock's book on *The Openness of God*. The following edition had to make clear to readers that it was IVP in USA not UK who had published it (cf. ##204-205).
6. Cf. *The Briefing* #217.
7. Cf. *The Briefing* #209.
8. Cf. *The Briefing* #321, pp.22-23.
9. Cf. David Peterson's book *Engaging with God*, Apollos, 1992; Vaughan Roberts has done something similar in a popular style more recently. Cf. also *The Briefing* ## 227, 299, 301, 302, 305.
10. Cf. *The Briefing* ## 170, 227, 241 (p.14).
11. Cf. *The Briefing* #176.
12. Cf. *The Briefing* #208. In point of fact, Moore theology men do major on music more than their writings indicate.
13. *Explorations 2 Church Worship and the Local Congregation*, ed. B.G. Webb, Lancer, 1987, pp.119.
14. Cf. *The Briefing* #315.
15. Cf. *The Briefing* #293.
16. Pete and Anne Woodcock, *The Holy Spirit: Understanding His work in our lives*, The Good Book Company, 2006.
17. Thornwell's Works, vol.4, pp.32-33, Banner of Truth.
18. Cf. *The Briefing* #170.
19. Cf. *The Briefing* #223, p.6-11; #224, p.10-12; #223, p.6-11; #224, p.10-12.
20. *Explorations 2*, pp.114-118.
21. *The Briefing* #227.
22. *The Briefing* #85.
23. *The Briefing* #194.
24. *The Briefing* #204.
25. P & A Woodcock, *The Holy Spirit*, pp.62-85.
26. *The Briefing* ##10-12.
27. *The Briefing* #208.