

tor's Opportunities'. It follows 'The Pastor's Problems', which is now available in book form from T. & T. Clark at £4.95, pp. 225, ISBN 0-567-29117-0. The aim of the new series is the same: to give practical suggestions and help on matters of direct concern to parish clergy and ministers. We begin with an article on preaching. Other topics will include 'Special Occasions', 'Community Involvement', 'The Contribution of the Non-Stipendiary Ministry', 'Towards a Theology of Paid Employment', 'Running a Parish Magazine', 'The Arts in Worship' and 'The Use of Church Buildings'. I hope that readers will find it equally useful and interesting. If any readers have suggestions for future articles I shall be glad to hear from them.

The Pastor's Opportunities

I. The Spirituality of Preaching

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THE phrase is a suggestive one. 'Spirituality' is a vogue word, but it draws attention to an aspect of human life which is fundamental whether or not it happen to be fashionable to refer to it in these terms. I take it that spirituality refers to the concrete relating of humanity and God, that seeking and finding of God which is a central feature of faith. I also take it that spirituality embraces not only the lives before God that people live when they give themselves to prayer, but also the lives before God that people live for the other hours of the day. It is concerned with living in or by the Spirit, and that is a matter of prayer and a matter of action.

'Preaching' is not a vogue word, but perhaps relating it to 'spirituality' might contribute to the breathing of new life into what happens in the pulpit.

I

Preaching has many resources. Unlike Dennis Nineham¹ I have not preached on a text from Katherine Whitehorn, though I expect I have quoted her in sermons. Scripture itself (most systematically the wisdom books) suggests that it is quite possible to begin from human insight and experience when one seeks to declare the truth of God. Nevertheless scripture is the key resource to which the liturgy itself directs the preacher. This is particularly explicit, for instance, in the eucharistic liturgy, where the sermon follows on two or three passages from Old and New Testaments (four if we include the Psalm): as if to say, 'Now bring the word

of God to us in the light of these scriptures'. An analysis of the spirituality of preaching, then, begins with a consideration of the spirituality of scripture.

I spend much of my time encouraging ordinands to study the Bible historically and critically; I believe this study raises questions that have to be investigated even when it does not generate insights of immediate application to personal spirituality or world issues. Yet it is easy for critical, historical, and even for theological study of scripture to forget that the biblical documents did not come into being out of critical, historical, or even theological concerns. Even when they were at their most historical, in various ways the different writings were part of dealings between God and his people or God and individuals, in contexts in the life of Israel or in the life of the early church. With pardonable exaggeration Willi Marxsen called the New Testament 'a collection of sermons'²; he could have described the Old in the same terms. The object of these sermons, as with any preaching, was to do something to the people of God: to engender or to deepen faith, hope, love, repentance, obedience, worship (or, on occasion, anger or questioning). In order to do that, they were also involved in dispensing information (otherwise the response of faith, hope, love, and so on, would not be a *response*). But the point about the information (historical or theological) was to effect something in the lives of people.

In taking the Bible into the pulpit, then, we are not doing something inherently problematic, something alien to its nature. It belongs there. We open it before a congregation with a similar concern to the one which motivated its own authors, a concern with people encountering God.

The Bible is concerned with people's lives before God, with their spirituality. Yet often it does not speak at all directly to our lives. One major reason for this relates directly to that concern with spirituality which we and it share, for spirituality has to be contextual. It has to be a matter of how people relate to God and to life as the people they are in their particular context. Precisely in their concern with spirituality, both the Bible and the modern church are inevitably and firmly located in history – or rather, in separate histories.

It is this awareness that Bible and modern congregation belong to different histories which leads to the emphasis on hermeneutics within biblical study during recent decades. The importance of hermeneutics is that it approaches the task of understanding in a radically historical fashion. It recognizes that we are separated from the people of the Bible by a chasm formed by differences in how we live, what we believe, what we take for granted, how we think, how we react, where we live, what we feel, how we behave. This is no more true with

regard to the Bible than with other writings from different times or cultures, but it is also no less so. Preaching depends on having acknowledged the chasm and bridged it.

It is possible to exaggerate the difficulty of the task. The land on both sides of the chasm is the same: we share a common humanity with the biblical authors, as with other writings such as Shakespeare or Sophocles or the Gilgamesh Epic. That helps to make preaching on the Bible possible. Our spirituality, we are very aware, has to relate integrally to our humanness; it is only as full-blooded human beings that we are interested in encountering God. And it is fully human beings such as Jacob and David, Ruth and Hannah, that the Bible portrays God dealing with.

The air is also the same both sides of the chasm: we are children of the same heavenly Father, brothers of the same Christ, and partakers of the same Holy Spirit. Books on biblical preaching sometimes warn against moralism in the pulpit³, and in doing so they draw attention to a fundamental aspect of the atmosphere of the Bible which is often not the atmosphere of the church, even where it does align itself with the Reformation. 'Preach about God, and preach about twenty minutes' remains a worthwhile guideline for a preacher. When the Bible offers us long narratives about its heroes and heroines (or anti-heroes and -heroines), for instance, it usually does so not in order to tell you to go and do likewise (or not, as the case may be), but to encourage you to marvel at and be encouraged by the wisdom and the grace of the God who works out his purpose through (or as often despite) these human agents. The spirituality of the Bible is a spirituality of grace.

So we have more in common with the Bible than with other ancient writings; it is a series of sermons written on the same spiritual basis, and not merely out of the same humanity. Furthermore, it is not as if we were the first people to try to cross the chasm, like scholars working on some newly discovered ancient text. Each generation of preachers has to cross for itself, yet it profits from the way people have been going back and forth for centuries (some by principles of civil engineering which now look shaky, but which seem to have worked).

For reasons such as these, the chasm will often seem easy to cross. We will be almost unaware of it, like a family crossing the Avon Gorge on the M5. The gorge is still there, however, as they discover when the motorway is closed for repairs. Furthermore, the nature of the M5 is such as to make them miss many of the delights of Somerset unless they leave it and make their own way around. Our sense of being one with the biblical writers and their original readers both encourages the preacher into

an illuminating involvement with the biblical text, and threatens that involvement. We may think we understand when we have half-heard or mis-heard, and thus finally in the pulpit misrepresent. One of the importances of biblical criticism to the preacher is that it helps us to get back to what the biblical writers actually meant (even if the preacher needs to avoid the critics' classic error of forgetting why they were involved in building a bridge and becoming exclusively preoccupied with civil engineering for its own sake).

II

Preaching, then, flows from an interaction between the spirituality of scripture and the spirituality of the preacher. In Phillips Brooks's phrase, 'preaching is truth through personality'⁴.

It depends initially on an expectation I bring to scripture. It is my resource for preaching because it is my resource for living. Whatever my rationale for my doctrine of scripture, the living root of my convictions about scripture do not ultimately lie in theological argument. Like any other doctrine, my doctrine of scripture emerges from faith's reflection on experience. Since I began my conscious life within the people of God, I have been nurtured by scripture. When I seek to fulfil my calling to share in the nurturing of the people of God, I find that preaching from scripture does seem to bring nurture to people.

The two are related. I prepare to preach through a further seeking of that nurturing of scripture for myself. I doubt whether preaching that searches and nurtures generally results from attempting to discover what the Bible has to say to *them*. It issues from realizing what the Bible has to say to *me*.

The point should not be made too starkly. The congregation needs to be protected from subjection to my latest experience each week, and from being narrowed down to the limitations of my experience each week. Thus preaching needs also to issue from a 'vicarious listening'⁵ which has put itself into the position of both modern hearer and ancient writer (neither of which is the preacher's own position); it has sought empathetically to enter the experience of those to whom the text was originally addressed, and to enter empathetically into the experience of those who are now to be addressed, so that these two can come together first in the preacher's own person, then in his or her sermon. I thus forget about my experience and my needs: my listening to scripture is the priestly act which makes possible the prophetic act of preaching itself⁶. Nevertheless the exception surely proves the rule. I have discovered what scripture says to this new 'me'; and this acts as a safeguard against being able to preach only a message that applies to the likes of me. (In my ser-

mon preparation I sometimes find myself asking 'What would this mean for x or y or z [specific friends or neighbours or relatives]', and I find this can give an edge to my vicarious listening and thus to my speaking.)

Having granted that, I want to affirm the significance for our preaching of our own relationship with God, our openness to God, our experience of life, and our experience of God. While there will be distinctives and limitations to our experience, because each of us is only one person, underlying these is a human being and believer who is one with those to whom we preach, in our joys, our sins, our griefs, our needs, our doubts, our hopes, our anxieties. It is as a person who rejoices, sins, grieves, needs, doubts, hopes, worries that I come to scripture, that I hear it reassuring me, confronting me, jolting me out of this preoccupation with my own concerns. It is then as this person who has met with God by means of this text that I preach. I may not directly refer to the personal concerns which I brought to the text, or which it gave to me. Whether I do or not, I preach a living word because I have heard a living word.

'We drink from our own wells' (the phrase comes from Bernard of Clairvaux (*De consideratione* II. iii. 6. cf. Prov 5:15) and provides Gustavo Gutierrez with the title for his book on liberation spirituality). In our lives with God, we start from where we are, with our actual experience, with what God is doing with us, with what we have been led into. We decline to pretend that we are in any other place (the kind of place we ought to be in, or God ought to put us in). We acknowledge where we are, not merely because this alone is realistic, but because of the potential of doing so. Whatever is our vale of tears, when it is named as such it can mysteriously become that well from which we may drink.

It is *we* who drink from it – wells do not belong to individuals. The well I dig and from which I drink is also a well which belongs to those to whom I minister. The preacher listens to scripture concerned not merely with the spirituality of individuals but with the church's life as a body before God (often passages which seem to say nothing when we approach them out of individualistic concerns suddenly speak when we listen to them on behalf of the church corporately). Indeed, we listen to scripture on behalf of the world outside which will not hear the sermon but which is the world in which its hearers will go on to live their lives and fulfil their ministry (and passages which seem mute regarding the preoccupations of the church may suddenly speak when we listen to them with the world's concerns and needs in mind). My vicarious listening to scripture is sensitive to the personal concerns of the individual, to the corporate life of the church, and to

the world which may ignore God yet belongs to him.

If my interaction with scripture is actually to bring about the digging of a well from which both I and others may drink, then it has to involve a real listening on my part. If find actually that when I am seeking to listen to scripture not merely for myself but for the sake of a congregation to which I have to preach, it gives an extra edge to that listening. I am not sure that this ought to be so – perhaps I should listen just as keenly when I read scripture simply to hear what God may want to say to me through it, and perhaps that sharper listening to which I have referred reflects a sinful anxiety about having something to say which the congregation will appreciate and be impressed by. Even if my motivations are thus mixed, I am glad that the stimulus of having to preach sharpens that listening, because a sharpness in my listening is vital for those who have to listen to me. The key to being able to speak is being able to hear (cf. Isa 50:4-5).

There is another sense in which having to preach on a passage may help me to enter into it more effectively. We open the Bible before a congregation on the basis of having opened it on our own beforehand. As we do that, we will appropriately utilize the 'objective' approach which is academic study's traditional ideal and which helps to prevent us from too easily identifying our own concerns with those of the text. But we will be approaching scripture with a view to discovering what this text has to say to a congregation gathered to hear God speak and with a view to communicating that message. If the Bible is itself a collection of sermons, this very aim gives us the 'pre-understanding' (Bultmann?) or specific concern which can enable us to hear what scripture has to say more fully than purely historical concerns may. It corresponds to scripture's own concern.

A pre-understanding, however, is a notoriously mixed blessing. It is a *preliminary* understanding, which as such puts us on the start-line of understanding. It can easily harden into a final understanding, however – this start-line is allowed to coalesce with the finishing-line of understanding. It then becomes misunderstanding. I turn to a particular psalm or epistle because it has some immediate point-of-contact with my present needs or concerns, and it indeed speaks to those, but I stop, appetite satisfied, at the points I thought it was going to make, and thus miss the aspects of its own concerns which I have not yet shared and its capacity to arouse needs or open up questions which I have not yet become aware of. Understanding scripture involves the kind of listening the counsellor is called to, that listening which is not satisfied with its first rough-and-ready approximation to an understand-

ing of someone (an understanding which contains as much of the counsellor's imposition of what he or she knew already as it does of the individual uniqueness of the other person), but rather keeps longing to be refined by the object to which it professes to be paying attention.

The preacher's listening to scripture thus involves the whole person. It involves the mind giving itself to the text with the aid of the techniques of criticism and exegesis; the spirit seeking to move beyond the words to the people who wrote and read them, to the One to whom they were relating, and to what he might be saying now; and the will being softened so as to perceive challenges which we might prefer to avoid. And all these are processes in which the Holy Spirit is active, the author of thought, insight, and obedience, so that each of them will also be the subject of our prayer for God to open our eyes so that we may perceive what scripture seeks to teach us. That is true of us as believers; it is doubly true of us as preachers, who need to be given and to be exercising the charism of interpretation if we are to be those through whom the Spirit speaks.

III

The Spirit who indwells the preacher and works through him or her is also the Spirit who indwells the congregation and works in them. Preaching needs to relate to the spirituality of the congregation.

I am increasingly struck by the way scripture itself relates its message to the lives of those to whom it is addressed; or rather, I am increasingly struck by the diversity in the ways in which it does so. I suspect that most preachers settle into one particular way of preaching, possibly one especially valued in their own Christian tradition; I am struck by this diversity of approaches to communication within scripture itself, and I think we need to learn from its example.

The approach to preaching which first attracted me as a listener to sermons and then as a preacher is one which takes a passage, seeks to identify its own central concern and to perceive how its various parts or themes relate to this central concern, and presents the congregation with the analysis which results, following a structure which the passage itself suggests. As I describe it, it sounds profoundly dull, but it is a way of handling scripture which can open texts up for people very effectively. There are qualifications that I would now want to make in affirming this tradition. It is inclined not to seek to apply the text in specific ways to its hearers, to confine itself to 'saying again what St Paul had already said', in the conviction that applying the text is the Holy Spirit's business. What I now perceive is that St

Paul himself did not see it that way: he characteristically addressed specific congregations with specific needs, and made the concrete application of the message quite explicit. The Puritan approach to preaching focused the very structure of the sermon in the application of scriptural truth to the congregation's needs, in the light of the deep and broad pastoral knowledge of people which the preachers brought to their pulpits, and their approach does justice to that of the texts they preached on. Preaching which seeks to do justice to the epistles (or for that matter the prophets, who work in similar ways) will be as concrete, practical, and realistic in its contemporary application as the text was in its original context.

If we are to preach that way, it will only be on the basis of knowing our congregations and knowing the world in which we and they live. I am not just a preacher on Sunday or when I am in my study preparing a sermon, but throughout the week as I talk to people and listen to them, as I watch television and take part in a Bible study group or a prayer meeting, as I glance at the newspaper on my way out to church or converse with the organist in the vestry. It may be here that I discover what are the questions that have to be addressed from scripture and the terms and pictures in which its message has to be communicated⁸. Hence 'if I can preach the same sermons today as I preached 25 years ago, there is something wrong with my preaching' (Marxsen). As J. D. Smart put it, 'the interpreter of scripture has to live in two worlds. He has to be immersed in the world of the scriptures . . . But he also has to be immersed in his own world, a man of his own time'⁹. We have to be in touch with people's spirituality if we are to speak to where they are. It is on that basis that we perceive what aspects of the diverse emphases within scripture need to be brought home to a particular congregation. For scripture itself is addressed to a wide variety of contexts, and if we consistently purvey scriptural words of encouragement to the kind of people whom scripture seeks to disturb, for instance, or consistently make scriptural demands in situations where scripture would be more inclined to offer encouragement, we are false prophets. We need to be able to set individual scriptural insights in the context of a perspective suggested by the whole, and then to perceive what are the individual emphases that need to characterize our preaching to people where they presently are. Merely to be repeating things that the Bible itself says does not make us biblical preachers. The significance of any biblical statement depends upon the way it was designed to 'cut'.

The other qualification to my affirming of that tradition of expository preaching is to point out that it corresponds well to didactic material in scripture

such as the epistles and the prophets, but in its own way of working does not correspond well to other kinds of material which communicate in quite different ways. Admittedly, prophets and epistles communicate in very varied ways. The first 'sermon' in Isaiah utilizes symbol (father and son, 1:2-3), straightforward theological analysis (sin, turning from God, v. 4), metaphor (a man who has been mugged, vv 5-6), literal description (invasion, v. 7), simile (like an isolated hut, v. 8), as well as 'scriptural' allusion (Sodom and Gomorrah, v.9).

Of the broad scriptural genres, however, the most prominent is narrative (history or story). If there is a perspective on preaching which *is* in vogue at the moment, it is story, and we need to be wary of being carried away by this particular fashion, only to abandon it completely in due course for the next one. There is material other than story in scripture, and story will not do as our only approach to preaching, any more than the didactic approach will. Story is very prominent in scripture, however, and retelling aspects of the biblical story (as the different Old Testament historians and the New Testament evangelists are already doing) has an important place in the preacher's resources.

A story offers people a concrete embodiment of an alternative world. Its concreteness makes it easier to grasp, harder to escape (compare the prominence of story in television); its use of the past tense suggests the promise that it has been true and can be true again. The preacher's task is to do again what the biblical storyteller has already done. It is not to summarize the story, as something the congregation know well, then to give our real energy to its 'lessons', turning the concrete but subversive nature of the story into another victim of our didactic. It is once again to retell the story itself, incorporating its application in the way we do so, as the biblical storytellers did themselves. The application will often be between the lines, again as is often the case in scripture. With the story texts in scripture, our calling is indeed 'to say again what Genesis or Matthew has already said'. We will find ourselves leaving much unsaid, leaving much to the imagination of the hearer. They will still have touched our own lives before we preached on them; stories, too, make contact with the specific realities of our hearers' lives because they have made contact with ours, and that will be between the lines of the story as we tell it. Here, too, what we are doing corresponds to the nature of our texts: it is the nature of story to leave things open, and this will be the nature of our retelling. As preachers, I suggest we prefer to tell people something specific to go and do on the basis of the sermon - if they then go and do it, the sermon has justified its existence. There is another factor here that easily turns preaching into

moralism. Narrative texts resist that. They picture a world for you, and leave you to wonder whether you will live in that world and (if so) what it would mean. Even (perhaps precisely) in their lack of direct application to the hearer, there is extraordinary power latent in these stories treated as stories.

There is also extraordinary power latent in metaphor and symbol, which might be seen as the compressing of a story into an image. The images of scripture (father, redemption, failure [sin]) worked because they touched people's concrete humanity and spirituality. Dr J. S. Habgood has described how Paul's 'theology' began there. He stands in the market-place at Corinth and takes the symbols for his preaching from the scenes around him. There is the slave market where a man passes from one person's ownership to another's; so the gospel means being redeemed from bondage to freedom or to Christ's service. There are people going to the temple to offer sacrifice: so the gospel means Christ gave himself for us as the worshipper gives something valuable to God. There is an embassy arriving from another state which is seeking to resume peaceful relations after war: so the gospel means Christ effects reconciliation between us and God. There is a man being hauled into the lawcourts to pay the penalty for his crime: so the gospel means Christ pays the penalty for us. There are people queuing for the doctor's surgery: so the gospel means Christ saves us from death and from all which deprives us of fullness of life. The power of these symbols derived from their relationship to everyday life, but they became doctrine and died as image. Preaching's calling is to bring doctrine back to life as image in its relationship with the deep realities of life-experience, finding contemporary expressions of release, reconciliation, self-giving, acceptance, and renewal which can put people in touch with what is also going on and could go on between us and God.

The parables are a particular type of story, a more subversive kind. These stories are clearly designed to *do* something to people. They characteristically begin in a quite everyday world, concerned with their listeners' spirituality precisely by being so secular. As the 'new hermeneutic' has perceived¹⁰, they then make a backdoor assault on that spirituality. With a lightning speed which the evasive heart of the listener cannot match, they move from that familiar world to an upsidedown one in which the community workers get condemned and the National Front gets forgiven. Jesus's preaching reaches into the spirituality of his hearers because he reaches into their lives. He does this not just in his words, of course. His words are themselves a parable of what he is doing in himself.

He *is* God's parable¹¹.

It is perhaps most obvious that the Psalms need to be related to the spirituality of the congregation. After all, they are not directly God's words to us at all, but words addressed to God, giving expression to spirituality. They appear in scripture, I assume, as both models and measures of our spirituality. They present themselves to us as if to say, 'Are you able or needing or willing or wishing to pray like this?' I suspect that preaching on them (though I am only beginning to work out how to do this) involves setting alongside them the actual prayer and praise of preacher, congregation, and church, to see where they are inviting us into avenues of lament and worship that we have not yet entered.

IV

How we worship and how we pray. Preaching also relates to the spirituality of the service itself.

In the liturgy, God gives himself to us, and we give ourselves to God; preaching shares in this two-way movement. Worship is a matter of encounter with God¹²; preaching both emerges from and facilitates that encounter. In some Christian traditions, the service of worship can seem a mere preliminary to the sermon, which is the real business for which the people of God have gathered. In some Anglican contexts (where Parish Communion is *the* service and time pressure allows only a brief homily), priorities are reversed. What is required is a both-and (not a *via media!*). Preaching and sacrament, preaching and worship belong naturally together. They are not rivals; they support each other. Worship even facilitates the study of scripture which lies behind preaching, for it holds the people of God (gathered for worship) before our eyes. Our interpretation of scripture easily focuses on the individual – or alternatively on the world – and the context of preaching reminds us that the Bible is the church's book¹³. It belongs before the people of God, and adequate exegesis of it and reflection on its ongoing significance will emerge from keeping this context in mind.

Preaching in the context of baptism or the eucharist presumably needs to relate to the nature of those events. I take them to be moments at which God offers himself to his people, at the beginning for their new birth and week by week or day by day for their sustenance; and moments when they allow him access to their lives, making their initial commitment and offering themselves to him week by week or day by day. All of that is a working out of the significance of Jesus's offering of himself to them and on their behalf. The sacraments put us in touch with the historical reality of Christ crucified. Preaching at the sacraments will share some aspect of this wide aim; it will inform the act as the act

implements the words. This need not impose narrow constraints on the subject of the preaching (though it probably does suggest some constraints). It will suggest an angle for us to bear in mind. Retelling a biblical story may work especially well in this context: we do so in the light of how that story relates to the story which the sacrament embodies, the story into which it incorporates the recipients with their story. In most churches, much of the wording of the actual liturgy is fixed by tradition; the sermon is the part of the service which can be fresh and contemporary, the part which can most easily make the service personal and therefore real¹⁴, the part which can come in ordinary words (not in impressive or pseudo-heavenly rhetoric) – which actually match the incarnational events of which we speak and the ordinary bread, wine, and water which we use¹⁵. (I recently attended a baptism at a pentecostal church, where the minister gave each of the candidates a biblical text chosen for its appropriateness to them, and that seemed a nice idea. I tried it for the next baptism I took, taking the text from the lections and preaching on it in such a way as to suggest its significance for members of the congregation generally.)

Worship provides the natural context for preaching; preaching emerges from worship. In Morning and Evening Prayer the entire office precedes the sermon, and – all being well – we arrive at the sermon in touch with God and in a position to open ourselves to him. That also makes the arrangement slightly odd, however, because the service gives us little opportunity to respond to what we hear (rather as the Eucharist according to ASB Rite A comes to quite an abrupt end after the communion, for theological and liturgical reasons). The eucharistic liturgy presents the opposite problem for the preacher: the sermon comes rather early. Indeed, when the sermon is more a challenge to obedience than a message of grace, I wonder whether it should come after the sacrament (to give content to people's response to God's self-giving). Preaching needs to be set in a context of worship on both sides: to prepare for it and to respond to it.

The eucharistic liturgy also presents a problem with regard to another aspect of the response to preaching, petition and intercession. I have found preaching in the context of worship led by members of the Iona Community suggestive in several ways, one being the systematic and imaginative way they took up themes from the sermon in a time of petition and intercession which followed. Preaching might be expected to lead to prayer, but in the Sunday eucharist the creed has to follow the sermon, and then the set intercession has a mesmerizing effect on whoever leads the prayers which follow. We need to have ways of freeing space within the service for a

response of prayer to preaching. In the office, this can easily be achieved by having the sermon soon after the collects and keeping the customary further prayers to follow the sermon. Justin suggests this sequence in his description of worship as involving readings from the apostles' memoirs or the prophets, a discourse on these by the president, and then the prayers of the congregation (*Apology* i. 67). The pattern of the early church points towards an integrating of the spirituality of scripture, preacher, congregation, and liturgy, into a spirituality of preaching.

This article was read as an Anglican contribution (as will at some points be evident) to a combined clergy school of the Manchester and Salford dioceses in September 1985.

¹ See e.g. *Explorations in Theology* 1 (SCM [1977]), 106.

² Cf. *The New Testament as the Church's Book* (Fortress [1972]), 44-63, though the actual phrase comes from a lecture Professor Marxsen gave in Nottingham some years ago.

³ See e.g. L. E. Keck, *The Bible in the Pulpit* (Abingdon [1978]), 100-105.

⁴ *Eight Lectures on Preaching* (1877; reprinted SPCK [1959]), 5. Returning to this book recently reinforced my conviction that it remains the single best book on preaching.

⁵ See W. W. Johnson, 'The Ethics of Preaching', *Interpretation* 20 [1966], 425.

⁶ See Keck, 53-54.

⁷ See R. Bultmann, e.g. *The New Testament and Mythology and other basic writings* (Fortress [1984]), 145-53.

⁸ See J. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching* (Fortress/SCM [1985]), 25-26.

⁹ *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church* (Westminster/SCM [1970]), 163.

¹⁰ See e.g. R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God* (Harper [1966]).

¹¹ So F. H. Borsch, *God's Parable* (SCM/Westminster [1975]).

¹² See D. Forrester, J. I. H. McDonald, and G. Tellini, *Encounter with God* (T. & T. Clark [1983]).

¹³ Cf. P. A. Bird, *The Bible as the Church's Book* (Westminster [1982]).

¹⁴ See Killinger, 24.

¹⁵ Cf. J. -J. von Allmen, *Preaching and Congregation* (Lutterworth [1962]), 14-15.

and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying . . . (Mt 5:1-2). Should these two verses, which lead off the Sermon on the Mount, send our minds back to Moses and the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai? Were they intended by their author, the evangelist Matthew, to make Jesus appear as a new law-giver, the counterpart of the old law-giver?

While perhaps most modern commentators on the first Gospel have returned an affirmative answer to these questions, Terence L. Donaldson, in his recent study, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (JSNT Suppl. 8, JSOT Press [1985]), has given us cause for doubt. In a hefty tome which runs to over three hundred pages, he has examined in minute detail every mountain scene in Matthew, with this result: the dominant typology expressed by the mountain motif is not that of Sinai but that of Zion, the mount of assembly. 'The mountain motif is a device used by the evangelist to make the christological statement that Christ has replaced Zion as the centre of God's dealings with his people; in him all the hopes associated with Zion have come to fruition and fulfilment' (p. 200).

It is not the purpose of this brief note to subject Donaldson's major conclusions to critical scrutiny. His original contribution, which is rich in comparative source material and full of fresh observations, demands the sort of comprehensive review I cannot now afford to give it. I do, however, wish to express reservations concerning the exegesis of Mt 5:1-2. Should we now, in the light of Donaldson's painstaking work, give up the common opinion? Must we henceforth refrain from connecting the Sermon on the Mount with Mount Sinai? - or at least view the connection as greatly muted? The following four observations strongly incline me to think not.

(1) Jesus 'sits' on the mountain. Most commentators remark that this reference to posture emphasizes Jesus's role as teacher, for rabbis and others sat when they taught.¹ But there could well be more. In Dt 9:9 (a text which might be alluded to in Mt 4:2), Moses speaks these words: 'When I went up the mountain to receive the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water' (RSV). The word translated, 'remained', is *wā'ēšēb*. BDB lists, as the second and third meanings of *yāšab*, 'remain' and 'dwell' respectively. But the first meaning given for the verb is 'sit', and in b. Meg. 21a we find this: 'One verse says, "And I sat in the mountain" [Dt 9:9], and an other verse says, "And I stood in the mountain" [Dt 10:10]. Rab says: He [Moses] stood when he learnt and sat while he went over [what he had learnt]. R. Hanina said: He was neither sitting nor standing, but stooping. R.

Jesus and Moses (Mt 5:1-2)

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¹AND seeing the crowds he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him,