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Homiletics: Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)

CANTATE

JOHN 17:9-17

Text is a prayer exclusively for Christians, that is, for you. Not for the world, because world cannot do what the Lord prays for. It has neither the power nor the motivation for it. Only Christians can accomplish these things—through the power of God, of course. Since Christ has withdrawn His visible presence, He depends on His followers. He depends on you. (V.9)

Use the Unique Blessings of Christ's Absence

I. *Since Christ is absent in body, it is up to His followers to mirror Him to the world*

A. At one time, Christ manifested forth His own glory, but now He is glorified by His church (v.10).

1. Miracles and parables of Jesus were primarily for His glory. Church year Gospels point to angels glorifying Him or Him glorifying Himself. Epiphany: "He manifested forth His glory" (John 2:11); Lent: "Hosanna, blessed is He" (Matt. 21:9). All of this was for the eyes of men to see. (Also John 17:1-5)

2. Today Christians witness to Christ and give Him glory. Every good work they do is not for their own glory but exclusively for God's (Matt. 5:16). Not only church buildings but the church, God's people, should be dedicated to the glory of God. The world sees the glory of Christ in His people.

B. The mystery of the incarnation is to be reflected in the unity of the church.

1. Christ's union with the Father was real (v.11). "This is My beloved Son, etc." "I and the Father are One." He was crucified on the charge of blasphemy. His life, words, works demonstrated this oneness. Church is to demonstrate this unity with God. Christ in us. We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son. If the church doesn't reflect it, it will not be reflected at all. (Eph. 3:14-19)

2. Christ has a human side, too. Just as real. Church shows this side as well. Made up of people, as He was a man. Their unity is to mirror Christ to the world. Divisions are Satan's tools. Unity is God's testimony. Fellowship with one another is demonstration of the Spirit of God at work. Again, only the church can show this to the world.

II. *Because Christ is absent in body, His followers care for one another*

A. They guard one another in faith and life (v. 12).

1. They pull one another toward Christ, helping one another see Him more clearly by their witness to Him. Relating all things in life to God. Confessing to one another. Forgiving one another. Loving one another even when there is no reason for it.
2. They seek to rescue those who are being alienated from their life in God by Satan. The Lord's care for Judas is part of the text. Also for Peter. Intercessory prayer, "but I have prayed for you" (v. 15).

B. They share the joys and rejection of the eternal Christ.

1. Christ found joy in doing Father's will, and that becomes the follower's source of joy as well (v. 13). In what does Christ find joy? Over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:7). Intake of God's love in Christ and output of obedience brings joy (John 15:9-11). This, too, is a gift of the Spirit, a mark of a Christian (Gal. 5:22). Our joy in these things is a testimony to one another and to the world.
2. The world rejected Christ as it rejects His followers (v. 14). This is to be expected. Christians strengthen one another at such times. Another mark of the church, the holy cross! Fellowship with other Christians desired at such times.

We can be the unique answer to this prayer of Christ (v. 15). Why? We are in the world; He is not. How? Secret is given in final verse (v. 17) — our holiness is derived from the Word, Christ, as He is revealed to us. Here is the motivation and the power that the world does not have. Both the worldling and the Christian must see Christ in you and me. It will work for their salvation, joy, comfort, and peace — or they will reject Christ. Whatever happens, we have the unique blessing of being in Christ, partaking of His work, His joy, His rejection, in His absence.

Portland, Oreg.

EDWARD MAY

ROGATE

JOHN 17:18-23

Much discussion of "church unity" in our day. Unparalleled union efforts. This at organizational level. But divisions at all levels—denomination, congregation, and individual—disturb every true Christian. In our text the Lord points the way to dedicated prayer of committed Christian for true "oneness" in the church at all levels.

I. We Christians should pray for the oneness in Christ of all true believers

A. Oneness in Christ

1. What it is.—Jesus sanctified Himself, set His whole self to the purpose of making it possible (v. 18). By His suffering and death He removed the sin that separates people from God (Is. 59:2) and from one another (Eph. 2:14). The forgiveness of sins, therefore, unites men to one another as well as to God in Christ. It is like Christ's oneness with the Father (v. 21). It is a complete harmony of will and affection.
2. How it comes about.—As people receive forgiveness for Christ's sake through faith, they are joined to Him. He is their Lord, their Head. Through Him they are joined to all others who are one with Him. It is the oneness of the members of a body that are joined with, and directed by, the Head of the body (Eph. 4:4-6). It comes about by the very fact of their being what they are.

B. Why we should pray for it

1. The expression of it can be perfected. Since the actual oneness of the church is through Christ, it cannot be perfected. Thus v. 21—"That they may be [not "become"] one." However, the working out of it in the earthly life of Christians can be perfected. Thus v. 23—"That they may be perfected in one." As we grow in faith (v. 19) and love, we come to a closer oneness in actual life with fellow Christians. Since the power for this growth is that of the Holy Spirit, we need to pray for it constantly.
2. It is the will of Christ—and therefore must be the will of every Christian—that all true believers be perfected in their oneness. This is not an extracurricular activity for Christians. Jesus, about to give His life to establish it, prays with everlasting concern about it. We are given the glory of fulfilling

His will in this matter, even as He had the glory of fulfilling the Father's will (v. 22).

II. *We should pray for it as an effective witness to the Gospel for the world*

A. *We should pray for it with fellow Christians in mind*

1. For the whole church — for all who come to believe through the witness of the apostles (v. 20). Confessing Christians all over the world are perplexed with the problem of expressing a unity that they know exists. We must pray for them. How often do you? Cf. portions of the Liturgy that include this.
2. For our congregation. — Here is where our life is involved. Pray that those who are one with us in doctrine may be one in love and purpose, that all impediments to this may be removed. Pray for a steadily growing unity in our work together that we may "grow up" in Christ.
3. For other Christians that we know — among our acquaintances, people who do not belong to our church but whom we know to be members of Christ. That barriers of disagreement and lack of love may be removed. For obedience to Christ and His teachings on everybody's part. Wherever two Christians meet, they should be found praying for each other.

B. *We should pray with the world in mind*

1. That the world may believe in Jesus (v. 21). "World" are those who do not believe. These people will come to faith in Jesus Christ only through the witness of Christians. Where Christians are strong in the oneness in Christ, this strength encourages more faithful witness to the Gospel. Pray for those who hear the witness — that the Spirit will open the hearers' hearts and bring them by faith into the oneness in Christ.
2. That the world may recognize the love of God (v. 23). Where the outward expression of oneness with Christ is strong, there love adds a resounding Amen to the witness. The old saw "What you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying" applies here. Pray for the world to see the unifying power of the love of Christ at work in the life of Christians and recognize it as coming from God.

We pray for what our heart is set on. Let us set our hearts on giving expression to the true oneness of believers. Let us draw on the power

of the Spirit through prayer, earnestly seeking the growth in faith and love for ourselves and all Christians. Let us show the world thereby the glorious meaning of God's redeeming and reconciling love in Christ.

South Weymouth, Mass.

KENNETH MAHLER

THE ASCENSION

JOHN 17:24-26

Don't hang crepe around the ascension. White on altar. Today we celebrate anniversary not of a death but of a birth. Our own birth in a sense because birth of body of Christ. A beginning, not a sad departure. Two dramatic things happen at a birth: infant separated from mother's flesh to become a person in own right; then a moment of choking suffocation, and tiny lungs quiver, suck in air, blood flows red with oxygen taken through own lungs. Infant is alive and separated from mother's flesh. So the infant body of Christ, little band of men who were to be His church, had learned pitiful dependence upon the *flesh* of Jesus. Still saying, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus ascends, severs young church from dependence on His flesh, no longer can they see and touch Him. But He does *not* go anywhere. With His church, even *within* the members, breath of their life.

Therefore the ascension does not mean that Jesus has gone away, but that He is simultaneously present with His church and in perfect unity with the Father and seeks to share with us this same fellowship with the Father, which is eternal life.

I. The ascension means that Jesus is always simultaneously with His church and in perfect oneness with His Father

A. The ascension means that Jesus is always here with His church.

Text: "With Me where I am." Where? He is not speaking of some other place, heaven. The ascension doesn't mean that Jesus, after spending 33 years on earth, now leaves it to go somewhere else. "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Disciples and Jesus were from now on to be together closer than ever before, He was to dwell within them so that they were literally His body. Hence we, today, see in the ascension story the guarantee that though Jesus' flesh is no longer visible, we are together, i.e., we are His hands, arms, feet, mouth—the body through which He now expresses His will and makes His way in the world.

B. The ascension means that Jesus is with His Father in perfect oneness and fellowship. Text: "To behold My glory which Thou hast given Me in Thy love from the foundation of the world." When Jesus goes "up" it does not mean that He is returning to a place located in that direction which He left to come to earth, but that the Father is acting to proclaim that this Man, who was separated from God on the cross as Sin-Bearer, has done enough to effect atonement for men and now has been restored to perfect fellowship with the Father, to the glory which He had from the Father from before the foundation of the world. Definition: "right hand of God."

II. *Jesus wants us to be with Him where He is, and that is eternal life, or knowing God*

A. Jesus wants us to be with Him now where He is. Text: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." Doesn't mean merely that He wants us to be with Him in heaven someday, but now, since He is right here. Notice what He is saying: Since He is in fellowship with the Father and simultaneously here, He wants us to be connected with Him so that we, too, can enjoy His fellowship with the Father now. Definition: This is what eternal Life means.

B. Jesus wants us to be with Him always to share this fellowship with the Father. At ascension He promised "with you *always*." Life is *eternal*. Death can't break it. Purely human fellowships break at death. As body disintegrates, so ties once so vital to us disintegrate also. Not this one. On the contrary, this fellowship with Christ and the Father is full and unimpeded after death as never before because we get rid of the sin which keeps us from sensing God's fellowship fully. *Now*, quite frankly, we sometimes doubt whether God is there at all; *then* we'll sooner doubt our own reality than the reality of the fellowship. *Now* we sometimes behave as if God were nowhere near; *then* nothing but God will rule our lives. *Now* this fellowship sometimes seems more a letdown than a lift; *then* we'll smile as we look back and wonder how we could ever have been so insensitive as to shut so much of God out of our lives.

C. Experiencing eternal Life is knowing God. Definition of "knowing God" in Upper Room discourse and in this text ("I have known Thee . . . I have made known to them Thy name"): not as one knows fact in encyclopedia, not admitting God exists.

People say: "Oh, yes, I believe in God, even though I don't practice formal religion," and mean that they accept existence of God as fact without proof the way some accept as fact that James Dean is still alive—without evidence. As if God considers it quite a feat to convince oneself that He exists though invisible. No, in N. T. knowing God means experience of the life and fellowship Jesus has for us. *Know* means an intimate experience of, or with, something. Examples: Hebrew marriage relationship called "knowing"; we speak of "knowing" the thrill of flying a jet or riding a fast horse.

III. *Therefore Jesus has made the Father's name known to us by His life spent accomplishing the Father's works and through the words of His disciples*

- A. Jesus has made the Father's name known to us by doing the Father's works. Text: "I have made known to them Thy name." "I have glorified Thee, accomplished the work Thou hast given Me to do. Now, O Father, glorify Me." *Now* means the climax of His life of making God known, the "hour of His glorification," which is very near. These words said on eve of crucifixion, *not* of ascension. *Now* He is about to die as the climax of His Father's work. At this hour, more than at any other, He will make the Father known to men. *Glorification* means making God's power and presence apparent, and at the cross God makes His presence and redeeming will known in Christ. There, in the final, supreme work of Christ, the Father peels back the flesh over His heart and shows you what He is like, His perfect wrath for sin, His perfect love and desire to overcome your sin and death and establish fellowship with you. Hence by His hour of dying Christ makes the Father's name known to you, and in Him you experience eternal life if you receive His death as your redemption.
- B. Now Christ seeks to make the Father known to us again and again through the Word of His disciples. Text: "those who believe in me through their Word. . . ." Definition: the Gospel message about Jesus Christ and His cross is the Word of the disciples. This word, which helps us know God through the cross, makes difference between us and "world" which "has not known" the Father (Text, v. 25). The Jews, the "church members" of His time, had the Bible (the O. T.), many of them stood around watching Christ die on the cross, yet did not see

God in it because they failed to hear and receive the Word of the disciples, the message of the Gospel. We can have the Bible and the cross and fail to hear, too, unless we keep seeking the message about Christ and listening for it, knowing our need.

Fellowship with God and with our Lord Jesus Christ, that is what the ascension means to us. Perhaps a bit thin and unsubstantial, maybe wonder whether even very desirable — this fellowship with a God and Christ you can't see. Often modern-day Christians "think when they read that sweet story of old how Jesus was here among men" that they wish they could see and touch Him. Evidently Jesus wouldn't agree. Prayer for His own on eve of His death was simply that they enjoy this fellowship always. Died to bring it to us. Committed to disciples the Word, which leads us to know it. Ascension a good time to remember that this fellowship is infinitely worthwhile to us!

Pleasant Hill, Calif.

D. WILLIAM BACKUS

EXAUDI

MATTHEW 10:24-31 (33)

There comes a time when the eaglet must fly, the student must graduate, the youth must become an adult, the son a father, the daughter a mother, the learner a teacher, the follower a leader, the listener a speaker, the disciple an apostle.

Such a time is the Sunday after the ascension. For now the Lord Jesus is gone from the disciples into heaven. They are on their own. He is no longer Spokesmen for them. They are now spokesmen for Him. They will have to depend upon His promise to be with them always, to send the Spirit of Truth, and to guard them with the Father's care.

Such a time is also now — for us. For Christ has called us to speak for Him in our generation. Our days of elementary training are over — nursery, Sunday school, confirmation class. The preceding generation of spokesmen for the Lord is receding and disappearing over the hill of time into God's eternity. Now it is your turn to speak for Christ. Like the frightened disciples huddled in Jerusalem between Ascension and Pentecost, you may be waiting for power from on High to energize you and give you courage.

Courage to Speak for Christ

I. *Afraid?*

A. Of course you are. It is not the fear of "mike fright" which leads you to stammer: "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking." It is the fear of consequences. You are not afraid to talk

about baseball, politics, weather, medicine, the news. You are only afraid to talk about Jesus — because of the consequences:

1. Ridicule. "Listen to the deacon!" "Hey, Holy Joe!"
 2. Isolation. The social deepfreeze. Who wants a fanatic for a friend? David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*) points out that we live in an "other-directed" society, where our groups determine the "acceptable" beliefs and behavior. We must have a built-in "radar set" to pick up others' moods and adjust to them. We dare not be nonconformist. "Belonging" religion is socially acceptable. "Witnessing" religion is still under the group ban and anathema.
 3. Self-consciousness. Feelings of inadequacy and hypocrisy. "Who am I to talk about Jesus? I'm not good enough."
 4. Fear-of-persecution complex, becoming maladjusted, wishing to retain the "power of positive thinking," "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, don't mess around with Mr. In-Between." Why disturb social and emotional balance?
- B. Good reason to fear.
1. They killed Jesus for speaking courageously. "He said that He was the Son of God."
 2. They killed His disciples and the early and late martyrs.
 3. They are killing Christians today in Communist lands. They often simply "disappear." (V.26 would describe simple *erasure* of Christians as a thing "hidden," or "covered," rather than a dramatic martyrdom like a public crucifixion. Today persecuted Christians are often "hidden" behind barbed wire — their martyrdom unknown and apparently ineffective.)
 4. These consequences do happen. It really takes courage to speak for Christ. Worse things have happened. Some have died for simply speaking about Christ. It's heartening to read about the courage of the martyrs, but who wants to risk the contemporary experience?

II. *Don't be afraid*

- A. Jesus does not discount the fear of speaking for Him. He knows the consequences, does not disallow death and persecution. (Cf. Matt. 5:11; 10:16-23, 28, 34-39; 24:9)
- B. He simply posits the proposition: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant is above his master" (vv. 24, 25, RSV).

If they called Jesus "Beelzebub," or "Satan," what should His followers expect to be called? It is not only a matter of "communicating the Gospel," of penetrating ignorance, overcoming prejudice, enlightening darkness. Their innocence will be confronted with virulent guilt, their peacefulness with militant hatred. When the enemies of Christ run out of arguments, they simply kill Him, and they kill His disciples to get at Him. God wants the Gospel spoken. Satan wants it silenced. This is the issue. Over this issue persecutions have flamed, wars have brewed, Reformations have taken place. The surprising thing is that we are always surprised when persecution happens to us when we speak for Christ, as if we thought persecution only a matter of history books and preachers' illustrations. We should have expected it.

C. But do not fear, says Jesus.

1. All sins will come to light. Exposure is sure. Some in time, all in the Judgment: "Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known" (v. 26, RSV). Examples: Jesus' mock trial by the midnight kangaroo court, Pope Alexander VI (Borgia) exposed even to Roman Catholics as an evil man, judgment of history against Inquisition, Roman persecutions, Protestant excesses, witch burnings (cf. Bainton, *Travail of Religious Liberty*). Present persecutions — bloody, bloodless, invisible, subtle, ridicule — will also be judged in history and ultimately by God. So do not fear. Evil always appears triumphant but is always at that moment defeated. Christ defeated Satan when He was on the cross and Satan apparently victorious.
2. "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul" (v. 28). Man's power is limited. He can only kill. He cannot conquer the spirit. Even political "Freedom" protests this: "Give me liberty, or give me death." Religious faith goes further:

Take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife.
Let these all be gone. *They yet have nothing won.*
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

MARTIN LUTHER

If fear is our dominant motive, then fear *all* the way — fear God, who can kill both soul and body in hell. If we fear

God, we will not fear man. This disarms persecutors. They have no weapon against those who fear, love, and trust in God alone. This was the secret of the courage of Martin Luther and all loyal Christians.

3. God cares for the sparrows (vv. 29-31). He numbers the hairs on your head. He searches the mind and heart. He knows your fears and hopes, faith and weakness, sins and sorrows. Have you forgotten that God is your Father and Redeemer? (Is. 63:16). He is about you busily creating, and preserving, and redeeming, and sanctifying. He will take care of you. He always does. Don't you know by now that the only way the justified can live is by faith? If you have forgotten, listen to the preaching of birds and squirrels and flowers—and be ashamed of yourself for such lack of confidence in God, who has let you try your wings a little now that you are no longer a baby eaglet. Did you think for one moment that God has forsaken you in the world of growing and living and protected things? Do you suppose He would forsake His Gospel and His children? Listen to the voice of Christians "risen from the dead" of solitary confinement—Ordass, Niemoeller, Lilje. They will tell you that Christ was with them in prison. You can't lose Christ, except by unbelief. So take heart. Believe. And confess.

III. *You have something to say*

- A. "What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops" (v. 27).
 1. The Gospel—it's yours to tell. Yes, there are those who do not know Jesus Christ—and you know who they are. You can tell them. You must. If you won't, who will? Tell them who Jesus is. Tell them what He did—for you and for them. Tell them where He is now. Tell them that He is coming back. Tell them like the really good news it is—salvation, forgiveness, redemption, restoration, eternal life—for each and for all.
 2. You're on your own. (With the promise and power of the Spirit.) Squeaky or resonant, your voice is the one God wants to use. God wants preachers in the pulpits and witness in the streets, neighborhoods, offices, and shops. It's the Sunday after the ascension. How many people on your block even know what day that is? Dare to find out? Ask

them. Perhaps 1 out of 10 will know. Prove me wrong. Then prove Christ right — by telling them what it's all about.

3. You don't have to get on the housetop. We have more effective methods — television, radio, missions, tracts, periodicals, Bibles — which you help supply and support by your contributions. Try it yourself quietly — in your casual day-to-day contacts with people — tell them about Christ. You do not have to convert. God only wants you to tell.
4. Still afraid? Well, don't be. The soldier is afraid, but he goes into battle anyhow. The surgeon has momentary fears, but he cuts anyhow. The preacher knows anxiety, but he preaches fearlessly anyhow. Have you never surmounted fear and proceeded upon faith — when you were married, when you applied for a job, when your first baby was born? Do not let fear paralyze you. Let it energize you. Take God at His word — and speak His Word without fear or favor. And take Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say.

You have this final promise: "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven; But whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Vv. 32, 33, RSV)

Oberlin, Ohio

WAYNE SAFFEN

PENTECOST

JOHN 7:37-39

The Epistle presents the two familiar picture-images of the Holy Ghost, the wind and the fire, rooted in the Old Testament, and well appreciated by the people (Acts 2:2-4; Matt. 3:11; John 20:22). Wind (breath) and fire (warmth), being forces without physical substances, are obvious essentials of life. Thus the Holy Ghost is "the Lord and Giver of life" (Nicene Creed), God renewing His "breath" in those who had lost it and died to Him (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 51:10; Titus 3:5).

Our text introduces a third, less familiar, picture of the Spirit and His work — water (cf. Is. 44:3). John recognizes in this brief and startling proclamation a precious definition of the meaning of Pentecost (v. 39). May we both understand and live the unique and blessed life God has restored to the world through His Son and by His Spirit, here described as

The Water of Life

I. "Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst. . . ." His proclamation is to the thirsty

A. Understand what thirst means.

1. Dryness stands for death (Ezek. 37:2). A vivid picture in a land of frequent drought.
2. Physical dryness and death are pictures of the spiritual. Vivid examples (Ps. 22:14, 15; 32:4; 42:2; 63:1).

B. The great "If . . ."

1. Sometimes we feel that thirst . . . (a) in fear or helplessness; (b) in a guilty conscience; (c) in moments of emptiness, frustration, futility, fallen pride, failure. Jesus found "thirst" in unexpected places—Nicodemus, woman at well, Zacchaeus.
2. Often the thirst is not felt. Man is smug, self-satisfied, secure, in need of nothing (Rev. 3:17). God make you thirsty. And thank God if you are! For . . .

II. "Jesus . . . cried, . . . let him come unto Me and drink!" His proclamation offers drink. (Cf. Is. 55:1)

A. "Come unto Me." Here is drink for the thirsty.

1. Daring statement, startling claim! Jews called it boastful blasphemy. No man can say such things of himself—except Jesus!
2. A precious offer. (a) Jesus knows what people really *need*—not satisfaction of human ambitions but knowledge of God, liberation from sin, deliverance from death. (b) He knows why He is here, sent to bring life to the world. (c) He knows He is true Water for the thirsty (develop from I, B, 1 above). And He is not afraid to say it.
3. Do we share His boldness? Do we see the dry world as He saw it, and Him as the full and only answer? Do we cry out as boldly as He, caring nothing for what the world may think of us if only thirsty sinners discover Christ? Such boldness was Pentecost's gift to the church.

B. "And drink!" What it means to drink. . . .

1. Not to inspect, evaluate, and judge Christ and His teaching,

as the Jews do throughout our chapter. Not even to render a judgment of approval. Man does not *decide* to believe.

2. "Come and hear, accept Me and My Word. Come without suspicion or pride, yield to my truth. See and know God in Me. Follow My teaching without reservation, surrender without resistance, love and trust Me without doubt. Drink, believe, and live!"
3. Beware, you who still reserve to yourself the right to judge what you will believe and how far you will go. You are still dry and dead. Rejoice, you whose heart God has humbled, that you believe without judgment, confess and surrender without bargaining for terms. This is God's life in you—the gift of the Holy Ghost!

III. *"Jesus cried, . . . He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The proclamation includes a promise*

A. "The belly" (a figure not grotesque but rich in meaning).

1. "Belly," because that is where water goes when we drink. In the water is life, and in the belly that life becomes central in the body.
2. Thus "belly" becomes the seat of life, the inmost nature, the core of our being. To drink Christ by faith is to receive His redemptive work, His character, His attitudes and outlook within ourselves—to become alive with His life. At the same time this drink repels the dryness of every contrary attitude and character. In Jesus God's life returns to a world that has lost it, and all true and eternal living derives from Him alone.

B. "The rivers of living water."

1. Life has power to sustain itself, to grow, and finally to reproduce. A river, emerging continually from a spring at its source, illustrates this.
2. Thus the life of Christ, now born in us, is not like "dead water" but a living power. It springs up in abundance within us, empowering and penetrating everything we do; it nurtures itself on the Word; it relieves every dryness, repels every vestige of death. Inexhaustible comfort and power!

3. But the rivers of water are so abundant, they flow out of the belly. The life we have received has power to satisfy the thirst of others, flowing out of us into their dryness, as we transmit Christ's proclamation and invitation boldly to the world (cf. Prov. 18:4). This also is the miracle of Pentecost, and it is our blessed opportunity.

More than a picture here. The living Spirit of the living Christ, at work in a living church. May we rejoice in the life we have received, and may it flow out of us into the dry world, like a river of living water.

New Orleans, La.

PAUL G. BRETSCHER