

the supreme revelation of the love of God for man. Let us not forget that this is the love which saves us from the anger of God. We believe that the deliverance which Jesus wrought is a real deliverance which no man can accomplish for himself. The reality of the redemption is as great, no more and no less, as the reality of God's anger. For if there were no anger, there would be nothing from which we would need to be delivered.

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THE QUENCHING OF THIRST:
REFLECTIONS ON THE UTTERANCE
IN THE TEMPLE, JOHN 7:37-9

THE invitation of Christ to come and drink, as recorded in John 7:37-9, is of the most direct appeal possible, and yet to judge by the numerous and often contradictory comments made on it, beset by difficulties: must we put a full-stop after 'let him come to me and drink'? from whom do the rivers of living water flow? what exactly is the 'scripture-text' referred to?—and others. All these questions must be answered as far as it is possible to answer them, but perhaps in trying to do so we neglect to see the text in a larger field of vision. The object of these brief reflections is to attempt to show one or two ways of doing just that—in particular by concentrating not on these individual problems but on the literary form of the passage and the motif which it contains.

Even a superficial reading of St John's Gospel would suffice to bring to our notice the recurrence of some short phrases which were evidently meant to serve as notes explanatory of more difficult or obscure points in the gospel, or to emphasise sayings or actions which were seen to be of special significance. Some are merely topographical, mentioning the place where certain words were spoken or some miracle performed. Thus, at the end of John the Baptist's witness to Christ, we are told: 'These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John was baptising' (1:28), and so for the miracle at Cana, the eucharistic discourse in the synagogue at Capharnaum, and elsewhere. Others have as their object to clear up obscurities for such as were not familiar with the Palestinian scene or to introduce some new *dramatis persona* and establish his or her identity, as with the sister of Martha who was the same as the woman in the incident in the house of Simon the Leper (11:2). Others again, and the greatest

number, were inserted to explain the sense of words spoken by the actors in the drama; the parents of the man born blind (9:22-3), the high-priest who makes his mysterious prophecy (11:51-2), Judas who complains of the wasted ointment (12:6) and even the words of the prophet with which John ends the 'Book of Signs.'¹ More important than all these, however, was comment required after the great utterances of Christ which this gospel records, and we notice how often recurs the theme of the non-comprehension of his words by the hearers. In some cases this is mentioned only in passing, but elsewhere the explanation takes on a definite and recognisable physiognomy. The saying about the Temple (2:21-2), the prophetic gesture of the messianic ride into the city (12:16) and the invitation to drink (7:37) all have reference to an action which communicates, in the language of symbol, the living truth of the messianic presence of Jesus. In the first two cases it is Jesus himself who acts, at the feast of Booths. His words were spoken at the time of and very probably with reference to the joyful and meaningful liturgy of the Water Libation.² In all three cases the symbolism of the act is given depth by the quoting of a scripture text, and it is stated that the hearers did not understand at the time but that the meaning only went home with the coming of the illuminating presence of the Spirit, itself dependent on Jesus being glorified. In these texts, then, we find a definite pattern which consists of prophetic sign or saying, scripture text and interpretative comment. This gives us the cue for reading our text in the following way:

On the last day—the Great Day—of the feast, Jesus stood up (or perhaps, was standing) and cried out:

Saying: If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink (that is, the believer in me).

Text: As the Scripture text says: Rivers of living water shall flow from his midst.

Interpretation: This He said of the Spirit which the believers in him were going to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified.

Read in this way, it is seen as an example of a literary pattern which in its turn reflects the basic thematic structure of the work as a whole; and is very revealing of the theology which dictated what that structure

¹ The term is used of the first part of the gospel up to the Passion by C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1955.

² Lev. 23:33-5 has caused some difficulty in regard to the chronology of the feast; some writers have placed the last of the water-libations on an eighth and even a ninth day; see G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 1946, p. 43. It is, however, more generally accepted that this liturgy took place only up to a seventh day, the 'Great Day.'

should be like. Thus we can readily understand that the giving of the Spirit is, theologically speaking, the watershed of the Fourth Gospel; on the one side, incomprehension, on the other, the illumination which is not denied to the believer, to him who 'comes to' Christ.¹ That is why the first part of the gospel, the signs and sayings which are spoken 'in figures' (Jn. 16:25-9), ends on the sombre note of the quotation from Isaias which was, as we know from the Synoptics, the *locus classicus* for the scandal and mystery of the rejection of the Christ; after that point the author goes at once into the account of the Passion or 'glorification' which culminates in the giving of the Spirit in accordance with a promise often repeated.

Coming back to the saying which we have seen to be central in the passage, we note that it is prefaced by the statement that Jesus stood up and cried out. The author here uses the solemn verb *krazo* to denote an enunciation of special importance as is the case elsewhere. In Rom. 9:27, for instance, we find it used of a declaration from Isaias which is given special importance, and also in the Fourth Gospel itself where it introduces a series of sayings on messianic faith and rejection, strongly reminiscent of similar sayings in St Matthew, while both have strong points of contact with some expressions in the Wisdom literature, especially Proverbs.² This provides a valuable clue to the literary milieu of the utterance we are considering and is confirmed by another consideration, namely, that the invitation formula, found likewise in John and Matthew, introduces many expressions in the sapiential books. Thus, in Prov. 1:20:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street;
In the markets she raises her voice

and further on, she takes up her stand (using the same verb as in Jn. 7:37) and calls out (Prov. 8:6). We find an invitation even closer in form to that in our text in the next chapter of Proverbs where Wisdom 'has sent her maids to call from the highest places in the town: Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!'—all of which suggests that standing up and crying out was a common literary convention applied to Wisdom personified.

¹ To 'come to' Christ in St John is synonymous for 'to believe.' cf. 6:35; 3:20 (to come to the Light); 5:40.

² Jn. 12:44-5 and Mt. 10:40-1, which latter follows three sayings on discipleship which use expressions echoing strongly sapiential sayings. Thus, the verb *philein* (to love) for the relationship between Jesus and his disciples and the adjective *haxios* (worthy) with gen. of person; cf. Wis. 8:2 and Prov. 8:17. On this point see remarks of A. Feuillet in *Biblica* 1958, pp. 295-6. It should be noted, however, that *philein* in the sense given, though unusual, is not quite *hapax* in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 16:22 it is used of Christ and also in Jn. 16:27, due perhaps to the earlier 'the Father loves (*philei*) you.' There is also the curious interchange between the verbs *philein* and *agapan* in the threefold affirmation of love on the part of Peter in Jn. 21:15-17.

It is striking in reading these texts how often literary formula and pattern go hand in hand with motif, taking this latter in the sense of a concrete, non-conceptual figure (e.g. making a feast, drinking living water) which, like a motif in music, is significant because it tends to recur in a given context. Thus, to take an example mentioned already, we find that when Wisdom cries aloud this saying is put on her lips: 'They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,' which we have practically in the same words from the mouth of Jesus, in a saying placed very near to that uttered at the feast of Booths (Jn. 7:34). With this we can also compare the little collection of sayings on prayer in Mt. 7:7-11, transcribed presumably from an earlier source to which St Luke also had access, and note in particular the recurrence of the verb 'to seek' (*zeēteîn*) and the motif of the quest which is classic in the sapiential books and the literature which has been, directly or indirectly, inspired by them.¹ We find another example of motif recurrence in Prov. 9, where Wisdom is a king issuing his invitation to a banquet, and in the parable of the king (or, a certain man in Luke) who made a marriage feast. Indeed the evangelical *mašal* develops motifs, many if not most of which are prominent throughout the Wisdom literature. There are, in fact, apart from the full-length *mešalim* or parables, several shorter specimens introduced by the formula: 'To what shall I compare? . . .' reminiscent on the one hand of rabbinical didactic methods and on the other of Wisdom formulas.² This brings us back to the text on the quenching of thirst which illustrates and is illustrated by this tendency. The use of the figure: 'living water' or 'fountains of water' or water *tout court* for Wisdom was a commonplace in the literature of all that long epoch in which the sapiential genre was current—right through from the sapiential Psalms and Proverbs to the allegorical exegetes of the Alexandrian school. It often spilled over into other genres in use at that time, and is found more than once in the apochryphal gospels and apocalypses. In reference to secret gnosis or doctrines communicated, Jesus, in the recently published coptic book of Sayings, is made to say to Didymos Thomas the *mustēs* or initiate: 'I am not thy master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out.' In Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) the God-fearer, in the same way, is said to drink the waters of Wisdom (Sir. 15:3) and in the well-known twenty-fourth chapter of the same book it is said of the Thorah—

¹ e.g. Wis. 1:1-2; 6:12; Prov. 1:28; 8:17

² cf. Mt. 11:16-9 with Prov. 1:24 and Ben Sirach 4:11. In the Lukan parallel (7:31ff.) the saying is referred explicitly to Wisdom. Other themes treated in this way are: the rich fool, the great feast, hidden treasure, calculations for war—all of which can be easily illustrated from both the Synoptics and the Wisdom books.

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personified as Wisdom in accordance with the religious and philosophical propaganda of diaspora Judaism :

They who eat of me will yet hunger,
And they who drink of me will yet thirst,

words which are strongly reminiscent of *logia* in John and are not without bearing on our text as we shall see. In fact in the same chapter there is a passage which I suggest is of some significance for the study of the invitation to drink in Jn. 7:37. The author—in keeping with a type of midrashic homily common in that literature, compares Wisdom (the Law) to the life-giving river which in old biblical tradition flowed out of Eden forming four other tributary rivers, and he makes the wise man say :

I am like a water course coming from the river and like a waterway leading into paradise . . . and lo, my water course has become a river and the river has turned into a sea.

The similarity of these words to the Johannine text which speaks of living water, striking though it is in terms of literary comparison, is even more so in the light of the thought-world—the *Gedankengang*—of the gospel as a whole. In fact, what Ben Sirach, an Alexandrian Jew, says of the Thorah, John predicates of Christ ; both are considered as hypostases or personifications of Wisdom, and it is surely not an accident that John should have made one of the basic themes of his gospel the antithesis between Christ and the Thorah, as he has enunciated in the prologue :

The Thorah was given through Moses,
Grace and Truth through Jesus Christ. (Jn. 1:17)

The same idea underlies many of the 'signs' or miracles : the water for the rites of purification, the wine that is given by Christ, the well of 'our father, Jacob' contrasted with the living water promised to the Samaritan woman, and others. We know, in fact, that in the thought-world in which the gospel was written and to which it contributed, two tendencies were at work which can be at least indirectly illustrated from the gospel itself, and throw some light upon its major themes. In the first place, under the influence of Greek speculative thought and Stoic ideas in particular, Wisdom as an hypostasis or person tended to merge with the Logos, the divine principle at work in the creation and ordering of the world. In Philo, Wisdom and Logos are practically identical and in the Christian Alexandrians the identification is complete. This tendency could be illustrated further from other literary currents which emerged in the

inter-testamentary period. In the Book of Henoch, for example, Wisdom is seen as having her place in heaven, coming to earth only to be rejected, and returning whence she came to be poured out in the latter days as water from which all who are thirsty may drink their fill.¹ We have already seen that the quenching of thirst with the water that makes wise is thematic in the Apocryphal writings and among those who attempted a synthesis between the words of Christ and the currents and cross-currents of thought which we refer to summarily and inclusively as Gnosticism.

At the same time another tendency was at work, this time within normative Judaism, which aimed at resisting the dangers inherent in this process of hypostasising abstract qualities—the old danger of polytheistic superstition in particular, so that the Torah came to be regarded as the only legitimate and adequate object of which Wisdom could be predicated. All this was doubtless a reaction against what was going on in the enemy camp after the schism of the Christian or Nazarene sect. In this context of contemporary history and against this background John's concept of Christ becomes more fully intelligible. We know in fact from early tradition that he wrote the gospel as a counter-blast to the gnostic heretic Cerinthus, and it is not unnatural that in doing so he should fight his opponent with the latter's own weapons. In this light the saying on living water would illustrate admirably John's doctrine of spiritual, Christian gnosis—which, for St John, is the same as eternal life (John 17:3). In this connection we can note that Origen who, more perhaps than any other commentator on this gospel, brings us near to the inner world of ideas in which it was written, goes not to the many parallel passages in the prophets for the source of the quotation, but to the Wisdom books. He quotes, for example, from Prov. 5:15 and 9:4 where 'Wisdom which, according to hypostasis is the same as the Word (Logos) of God' stands up and cries out.² He found ample material in these writings to justify and expand his teaching that the Christian himself must become a source of knowledge and therefore of life for others. Such texts as the following from Prov. 5:15-16 were read by him with this meaning :

Drink water from your own cistern,
 Flowing water from your own well.
 Should your streams be scattered abroad,
 Streams of water in the streets ?

This served him as an illustration for the Christian gnosis which begins as a well, overflows and becomes a stream, and then grows

¹ Henoch 84:3 ; 94:5 ; 98:1 ; 99:1

² Homily on Ps. 2:5 in *Opera* ed. Delargue, II, p. 550.

into a mighty river. The idiom which he speaks here is not essentially different, it seems, from that in Jn. 7:37-9.

The *logion* of Christ at the feast of Booths is therefore sapiential both in form and in content—with reference, that is, to the sapiential motifs of living water which is poured out and the quenching of thirst. There is also, as we have seen, evidence for supposing that what we have here is a text, which represents Jesus as hypostatic Wisdom hidden indeed in his real identity from the eyes and the understanding of those who heard that cry in the Temple on that day, but revealed through the ministry of the Spirit which enlightens the baptised intelligence. A corollary to this would be that we have here a valuable point of contact with the Synoptic Gospels going beyond the text referred to as the Johannine Logion (Mt. 11:25-30 par.) and this could raise the question whether both they and John were able to draw upon, to a greater or lesser extent, some earlier collection or collections of *Logia Kuriaka* or Sayings of Our Lord which had already, in the early years of the bitter polemic between Church and Synagogue, presented him to the contemporary world as not only greater than Solomon (Mt. 12:41 and Lk. 11:31) but—in opposition to the false claims of the Torah—as Christ, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

We saw at the beginning how the structure of this passage illustrates a typical process in the Fourth Gospel. It presents some facet of the mysterious identity of the Protagonist by means of a symbolic action or utterance, accompanied by a Scripture quotation and interpretative comment. Here there is the specific difference that the prophetic action is not performed by Jesus himself, but was witnessed by him and his hearers in the course of the liturgy of the last day of the feast of Tabernacles. Coming in the month of Tishri—the end of September and the beginning of October—it corresponded to the time of year when expectation of the winter rains was at its highest. From the regulations which governed the observance of the feast and its liturgy (Lev. 22 ; Num. 29:12-39) we can get some idea of what it meant to the faithful who took part in it. It had been originally superimposed upon a harvest festival, the rain-making character of which was explicit, and this aspect was never really lost sight of, as later writers testify. In the rabbinical tractate *Roš ha-Šanah* (New Year's Day) we read : ' Why does the Torah say : Make a libation of water at the feast ? The Holy One (blessed is He !) says : Make a libation of water before me at the feast that the rains of the year may be blessed to you.' The bearing of the Lulab in one hand and the Ethrog in

the other—three water plants bound together and an orange or lemon respectively—the waving of these three times to the four points of the compass and the procession seven times round the altar seem to have had, originally at least, the same significance. As for the libation of water itself, it took place on each day of the celebrations but climactically on the last, the Great Day. It consisted in a procession of the priests to the pool of Siloam whose waters were fed from the spring of the Virgin by means of Ezekiel's tunnel. Here a gold jug was filled with water; then they returned by the Water Gate where their coming was announced to the crowd by three blasts on a trumpet, and finally there was the seven-fold procession round the altar. Then one of the priests mounted the ramp at the side of the altar and raising his hands on high so that all could see them,¹ poured the water into a silver funnel whence it flowed into the ground. All this was to the overwhelming applause and joy of the worshippers present who, as Josephus and the rabbis give us to understand, followed every detail of the ceremony with passionate interest. This joy was, to the onlooker, the most spectacular thing of all and was the climax of all the religious enthusiasm which the great feasts always occasioned. We are told: 'He that has never seen the joy of the *Beth ha-She'ubah* has never in his life seen joy.'²

This ceremony was moreover accompanied by the singing of the whole or a part of the Hallel-psalms 113-18 and especially Psalm 118 in which occurs the phrase:

This is the day which the Lord has made;
 Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
 Save us, we beseech Thee, O Lord!
 O Lord, we beseech Thee, give us success!

This invocation was repeated many times. It has been pointed out too that the first of the psalms of this collection contains the reference to the giving of the water from the rock in the desert (Ps. 113:8), a text associated in its turn with that of Isaiah 12:3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation'—which good rabbinical tradition has associated with the water libation at the feast. In view of the other examples of images or 'types' occurring in this Gospel and which can be traced to the Exodus—the Brazen Serpent and the Manna in particular—it is possible that the author had the incident of the rock in mind but this would not, of course, prejudice the

¹ Admonished by the example of Alexander Jannaeus who poured it over his feet and was pelted by the crowd and almost lynched! See Josephus, *Ant.* XIII, 13, 51 and the rabbinical tract *Sukkah* 4, 9.

² *Sukkah* 4, 9. The Hebrew phrase means 'the place of the drawing' (of water).

question of the literary form of the saying which is, as we have tried to demonstrate, sapiential.

If, as it seems, this was in fact the actual historical context in which Our Lord made this invitation to drink and quench the thirst, we see how the symbolism achieves deeper resonance and a new dimension. In his comment the author has referred the outpouring to the Spirit which was to be given, and it is significant that a constant theme of rabbinical tradition has connected the water-libation of the feast with the outpouring of the Spirit in the Age of the Messiah. According to Rabbi bar-Kahana (c. A.D. 130) the feast holds within itself the promise of the Messiah, and a vague expectation that he would appear in the month of Tishri persisted long after the days of Jesus Christ. Again, the tractate on this feast in the Jerusalem Talmud explains the name of the ceremony by referring to the Isaian test quoted above, explaining the name 'Place of Drawing' from the fact that it was 'from there that they drew the Holy Spirit.'¹ This is very close to the quotation which St Peter made from Joel on the day of Pentecost to account for the ecstatic phenomena which took place at that time.

In the Quenching of Thirst passage, then, we have a combination of symbolic action and sapiential saying which refers to the action, accompanied by a word of explanation making the spiritual context plain for the Christian reader. The whole is symbolical in the sense of being a sign (not, however, in the strict Johannine sense of sign as synonym for miracle) pointing to the ultimately mysterious identity of the central figure. It speaks in a language at once more complex and more direct than that of definition, namely, in the idiom of symbolism, in the way that Jung has defined a sign or symbol as 'the best possible expression of a relatively unknown thing.'² In this sense the quenching of thirst is, for the man open to the persuasive force of this idiom, that deep and lasting satisfaction and utter self-fulfilment that comes through the knowledge of and association with the living God. Not that it was understood so at the time, as the comment makes clear, but addressed to the baptised Christian it would be fully comprehensible. This too was part of the sapiential tradition—the necessity of initiation for gnosis and comprehension of the Christian mysteries, and it is natural that just as Christ was represented vividly to early Christians as the element into which they were baptised and, in point of fact, 'living water' was prescribed for baptism where possible,³ he himself should be referred to as the Living

¹ *Sukkeah* 55a

² In the chapter on Definitions in *Psychological Types*, trans. H. G. Baynes, 1938

³ *Didache* 7, 1; Hippolytus 5, 14; *Acts of Thomas* 52, etc.

Water.¹ Though St John nowhere speaks explicitly of the two great Christian sacraments in the gospel—probably due to the discipline of the secret then considered binding—no Christian would have missed the strong sacramental associations of this and other sayings and signs strewn about the gospel. In this way, as we saw at the beginning, the text speaks on two levels : to those who having ears could not or would not hear, and on the other hand to the baptised intelligence of those who have received the Spirit ; and the need of the Christian of today to quench his thirst at the mystery of Christ participated through the sacramental life of the Church is no less great than that of John's Christians at Ephesus.

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THE LORD IS WITH YOU

THE last few lines of St Matthew's gospel are familiar, perhaps too familiar to every apologist. Indeed they are part of his stock in trade. They are quoted to demonstrate so many points of Catholic teaching. This, of course, is not surprising when we consider how comprehensive a text Mt. 28:18ss. is. In the space of two verses Matthew tells us of the extent of Christ's authority, the mission of the Apostles, the importance of baptism ; he names the three Persons of the Trinity, and ends with Christ's promise to be with his Apostles until the end of time. So concise a text deserves to be familiarly known. And yet, while the first parts of this text are often explained at length, the last sentence is apparently somewhat neglected. 'Behold I am with you all days until the end of the world.' This phrase is quoted usually in connection with the stability and infallibility of the Church, but it is very seldom that very much comment is passed upon it. The reason for this is probably that the words are so clear in themselves that any comment would seem to be superfluous. In fact it is difficult to express what they say in any simpler words. Of course we can start with this phrase as a premise, and argue to further conclusions—that the Church will last until the end of time for instance, or that Christ will always protect his church. But such are conclusions and not comments on the meaning of the words themselves.

¹ We might mention here a curious ascription to Thymoteus, one of the early Manichaeans, 'About baptism he spoke in the same way, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ was himself the Baptism and that there was no other, in accordance as it is written : I am the Living Water.' This is found in Petrus Siculus, *Historia Manichaeorum*, PG 104, 1284 ; where it was written must remain a matter for speculation.