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# JOHN AND LAURA SWINK<sup>1</sup>

*In Memoriam*

by JOHN A. MACKAY

A sanctuary of sorrow, such as this chapel is this afternoon, is not a place for many human words. The words that are most fitting are the words that God Himself speaks to our hearts, and the words that our hearts speak to God.

And yet it is meet that there should be some words. Some very human, faltering words, are called for to interpret what it is we are engaged in, and how it happens that we are here.

The words that first come to our minds are words that come singing out of the heart of the Old Testament. "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." After the tragic occurrence which led to this, we made provision for one body to be the center of our service. Two bodies are here undivided in death, as she who remained last in the mortal coil would have wished it to be.

"They, being dead, yet speak." This is the other word which sounds. Last night I took some time to go through the field work records of John Swink. Those records revealed two great concerns. One was a concern that he might have a heart of loving sympathy for his parishioners, especially for lonely people and for those in hospitals. His other great concern was that he should be a Biblical, and not merely a psychological, preacher. He mentions in that record that two young psychologists were greatly amazed that a man so young as he should speak to people in his sermons right out of the heart of the Bible, telling them about an Eternal Word and a Presence that came from outside man's spirit, letting them know that salvation did not come from man but

from God. Thus John and Poppy lived in a Christian comradeship of service, for she, as much as he, was committed to a life of sympathetic care and of the proclamation of the Word.

There is evidence, too, that they died with life's chief concern upon their lips. They began to live and love together on the Wooster campus. The President of the College of Wooster has sent his condolences and those of the whole college. What was the concern upon their lips as they died? Where were they on the last fateful evening? Visiting an older member of the family, seeking advice as to how and where they might serve God most fruitfully. They were doubtless conversing together on their homeward way as to how, upon graduation, they might most fully serve their living Lord. On the road death met them. It is no sentimentality to say that for them that meeting was Graduation Day.

And so, the record of their lives, though brief, is full and Christian and inspiring. In a memorial that shall be more lasting than these flowers, we will remember on this campus what they were, what they said, what they did and how they graduated from this mortal life. In the meantime we affirm our Christian hope that they are now engaged in higher service. The same Lord whom they served here, and who is also there, will lead them towards ever wider frontiers in His heavenly Kingdom. Because that is so, "they, being dead, yet speak"—John and Poppy Swink.

<sup>1</sup> Words spoken in Miller Chapel, February 21, 1952.