

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HERMENEUTICS  
OF BIBLICAL SYMBOLISM

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Symbolic communication is a common means of expression in Biblical literature. Symbolic language is employed in the communication of abstract ideas and forceful expressions. Essential to symbolic communication is the use of a literal object and the expression of a conceptual idea through that literal object. Symbolic communication can be categorized according to the symbol's usage and intrinsic nature.

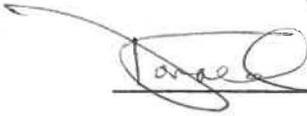
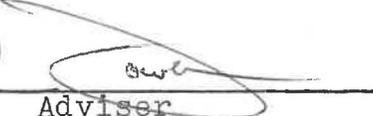
According to usage, the symbol can be classified by the terms non-comparative, active comparative, or passive comparative. These terms indicate the degree to which the conceptual idea can be understood in light of the qualities and characteristics of the literal object.

The non-comparative symbols are those symbols in which the qualities, characteristics, or associations of the literal object are not communicated to the conceptual idea. Active comparative symbols are those that express a strong element of comparison between the literal object and the conceptual idea. Passive comparative symbols are those symbols that express a weak element of comparison between the literal object and the conceptual idea.

The active comparative symbol sets forth an emphasis upon resemblances between the literal object and the conceptual idea. The major figures of speech used to express the active comparative symbol are simile and synchrisis. This symbol is further identified by the absence of the definite article, demonstrative pronoun, or personal pronoun. The passive comparative symbol sets forth an emphasis upon representation between the literal object and the conceptual idea. The major figures of speech used to express the passive comparative symbol are metaphor and metonymy. This symbol is further identified by the presence of the definite article, demonstrative pronoun, or personal pronoun.

In categorizing symbols according to their intrinsic nature, the interpreter seeks to classify the literal object according to its essential nature or constitution. This classification merely names the nature of the symbol, it does not interpret the symbol.

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Adviser

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### Reasons For Symbolic Communication

##### The Communication of Abstract Ideas

Language and literature use symbolic communication as a means to express abstract ideas and concepts in concrete terms. "Symbolization occurs early in written history and literature, and is deeply rooted in human nature which seeks to represent the abstract by the concrete and pictorial."<sup>1</sup> Meaning was better communicated to the understanding through symbolic language that could express abstract ideas in clear concrete and pictorial terms. For this reason an individual expressing the abstract idea of strength with regard to a particular warrior might say, "He is as strong as a lion," using the term "lion" as a concrete symbol for the abstract idea of strength.

##### The Communication of Forceful Expression

Language and literature use symbolic communication as a means to forceful expression. Bernard Ramm states, "The presentation of the ideational in pictures and images

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 233.

is also more forceful than mere verbal explication."<sup>1</sup> Ideas are expressed with greater force when symbolic communication is used. Emphatic communication is often expressed through symbolic communication.

### The Elements of Symbolic Communication

#### The Literal Object

Symbolic communication must involve the use of a literal object.

"The symbol itself is a literal object. It may be a boiling pot, a collection of good and bad figs, a ram and a he-goat, or riders on horseback. In each instance, the writer<sub>2</sub> describes an actual pot, or animal or men on horseback."<sup>2</sup>

There can be non symbolic communication without the clear expression of a literal object.

#### The Conceptual Idea

Symbolic communication must involve the expression of a conceptual idea through the literal object. The conceptual idea expresses the communication of some truth or lesson which is set forth by the literal object. For example,

"The two baskets of good and bad figs (Jer 24) stood for two groups in Judah. The good figs indicated those who had been carried away captive to Babylon. The bad figs stood for the rest of the people of Judah--Zedekiah, his princes, those who remained in Jerusalem and southern Palestine, and those in Egypt. Restoration is promised to those represented by the good figs. Divine judgment remains for those represented by the bad figs."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup>A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), p. 265.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The conceptual idea is being conveyed through a literal object by the communicator of the symbol.

The Definition of Symbolic Communication

Symbolic communication may be defined as communication through which a conceptual idea is expressed through a literal object. The literal object will represent, resemble, or stand in relationship to the conceptual idea.

The word "symbol" comes from the Greek word *σύμβολον* : a combination of *σύν* meaning "together" and *βάλλειν* meaning "to cast"; thus *σύμβολον* means "to cast together."<sup>1</sup>  
The term is

"used by the Greeks, much in the same way as we use the word 'coupon,' where one part corresponded with or represented another part. Hence, in language, the use of one thing to represent another; or, the use of a material object to represent a moral or spiritual truth."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 769.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### FIGURES OF SPEECH USED TO EXPRESS SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### The Major Figures of Speech Used With Symbolic Communication

##### The Metonymy

There are three major figures of speech that are used with symbolic communication in Scripture. The first of these is metonymy. Metonymy comes from the Greek word *μετωνυμία* which is a composite of the terms *μετά* , which indicates "change," and *ὄνομα* meaning name; or, in grammar, a noun.<sup>1</sup> Thus, "Metonymy is a figure by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation."<sup>2</sup>

E. W. Bullinger states with regard to metonymies in Scripture and symbolic communication,

"All metonymies are, in a certain sense, symbols. When, for example, 'cup' is used, by metonymy, for blessing (Ps. xvi. 5; cxvi. 13); or 'clay' for man (Isa. lxiv. 8 (7)); or, 'gate' for entrance, etc., the one is practically a symbol of the other:"<sup>3</sup>

Metonymies in many cases involve symbolic communication. In Psalm 16:5, the term "cup", found in the phrase

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 538.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 770.

"the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup," is the literal object used here to communicate the conceptual idea of blessing. Both elements of symbolic communication are present. The conceptual idea of blessing is communicated through the term "cup". This symbol is used in a similar manner in Psalm 23:5 where David states, "My cup overflows." "Blessing" is represented by the term "cup". The emphasis of the metonymy is upon representation.

#### The Simile

The term "simile" is from the Latin term similis meaning "like, similar, resembling closely, or in many respects."<sup>1</sup> Simile is not an unusual form of expression and is one of the most common forms of literary communication. Simile "is a cold, clear, plain statement as to resemblance between two words and things. The whole application of this figure lies in this resemblance, and not in representation, as in metonymy."<sup>2</sup> The simile points to the concept of resemblance between the conceptual idea and the literal object.

Similies are not difficult to identify in Scripture. Similies "are usually marked by the caph (ך) in Hebrew; and in the Greek by ὡς (hos), as; καθὼς (kathos), like as; or, by some seventeen other kindred words; and the English: 'as,' 'like as,' 'even as,' 'like,' etc."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 726.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 727.

The use of the simile is very common in Scripture. Psalm 1:3 states that the blessed man or individual "will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water." The use of the simile here sets forth a resemblance, not a representation. The blessed man is not represented by a tree, but the blessed man resembles a healthy tree. The literal object which is a healthy tree is used as a symbol that resembles the life and character of an individual who is blessed by God.

In Psalm 1:4 the ungodly are presented also in terms of the simile. Psalm 1:4 states, "The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff (  $\text{חֲבַל}$  ) which the wind drives away." In this verse the simile uses the literal object of chaff which the wind drives as a symbol that resembles the life and character of the ungodly.

One of the most important concepts to note with regard to the simile and symbolic communication is the concept of resemblance. The simile does not usually emphasize representation like the metaphor or metonymy, but rather resemblance. The simile characteristically emphasizes the resemblances between the qualities and the characteristics of the literal object and the conceptual idea, while the metaphor or metonymy characteristically does not. The basic emphasis of the metaphor and metonymy are upon representation. "Simile differs from metaphor, in that it merely states resemblance, while metaphor boldly transfers the representation."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 727.

## The Metaphor

The term "metaphor" comes from the Greek word *μεταφορά* meaning a transference, or a carrying over or across. The term *μεταφορά* is derived from the word *μετά* meaning beyond or over, and *φέρειν* meaning to carry.<sup>1</sup> Thus the metaphor is a figure of transference or representation.

The emphasis with regard to the metaphor is usually representation, not resemblance.

"We have a recourse to metaphor when we say of a picture, 'This is my father,' or 'This is my mother.' The verb 'is' means in this case represents; there may not be the least resemblance. The verb 'is' always has this meaning and no other when used as a metaphor."<sup>2</sup>

Bullinger also states with regard to representation,

"We must, therefore, banish the common and loose way in which the words 'metaphor' and 'metaphorical' are used, and confine the figure strictly and exclusively to this, its one true and proper signification: that of representation."<sup>3</sup>

It must be clearly understood that the metaphor as used in Scripture is not another way to record the emphasis made by the simile. The simile and the metaphor have two different and important emphases. "While, therefore, the word 'resembles' marks the simile: 'represents' is the word that marks the metaphor."<sup>4</sup> Bullinger further states, "While the simile gently states that one thing is like or resembles

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 735.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

another, the metaphor boldly and warmly declares that one thing IS another."<sup>1</sup> The metaphor characteristically is not, as many declare, simply a comparative like the simile with the only difference being the exclusion of the terms like or as. The metaphor has a much different character than the simile, and that character is one of representation as opposed to the simile's character of resemblance.

### The Minor Figures of Speech Used With Symbolic Communication

#### Introduction

The following presents material on the minor figures of speech that are used with symbolic communication. By minor figures of speech, it is not meant that these are of lesser value, but that these figures of speech appear less frequently in the Biblical text than metonymy, simile, or metaphor.

#### The Syncrisis or Repeated Simile

The figure of speech called syncrisis comes from the Greek terms  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$  meaning "together," and  $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  meaning a "judging or deciding," thus forming the word  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\kappa\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . "Hence, syncrisis is the judging or comparing of one thing with another; and is used of the figure which consists of a repeated simile or of more than one, or of a number of separate comparisons used together."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 735.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 734.

A good example of syncrisis is found in Isaiah 1:18 which states, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they will be like wool." This verse uses syncrisis because it presents a number of repeated similies. Several comparisons are made with the word "sins" through the use of the simile. "Sins" are viewed as scarlet, as white as snow, like crimson, and like wool.

Because the syncrisis is a repeated simile, it carries the emphasis of resemblance. When syncrisis is used in symbolic communication, the emphasis will be upon resemblance just as the simile.

#### The Hypocatastasis

The Greek word for hypocatastasis is ὑποκατάστασις which comes from ὑπό meaning "underneath," κατά meaning "down," and στασις meaning "a stationing," thus meaning a putting down underneath. As a figure of speech, hypocatastasis names only one noun while the other noun is implied or put down underneath where it is in a literary understanding out of sight.<sup>1</sup> Thus, "Hypocatastasis is implied resemblance or representation: i.e., an implied simile or metaphor."<sup>2</sup>

Bullinger illustrates the use of hypocatastasis by stating, "For example, one may say to another, "You are like

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 744.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

a beast.' This would be simile, tamely stating a fact. If however, he said, 'You are a beast' that would be a metaphor. But if he said simply, 'Beast' that would be hypocatastasis, for the other part of the simile or metaphor ('you'), would be implied and not stated."<sup>1</sup> In Bullinger's example, "beast" is used symbolically for the abstract characteristics of the individual stated or implied by the term "you". Symbolic communication is being made through implication or hypocatastasis.

It must be noted that hypocatastasis can carry the emphasis of either the simile or the metaphor. Because the hypocatastasis can be either an implied simile or an implied metaphor, it can also set forth either an emphasis upon resemblance or representation. The emphasis of resemblance or representation can not clearly be determined by the use of the hypocatastasis alone.

#### The Allegory

Symbolic communication is also set forth through the use of the allegory. The term allegory comes from the Greek word ἀλληγορία. Few figures of speech have caused greater controversy than allegory, or have been differently defined. One group of rhetoricians state that the allegory is a continued metaphor, while another group state that it is not. Needless to say, the allegory has caused a great deal of confusion among Biblical students who desire to un-

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 745.

derstand this figure of speech.<sup>1</sup>

E. W. Bullinger states that the allegory is a continuation of the metaphor or the hypocatastasis. Bullinger feels that this understanding clears the ground for understanding the difficulties, reconciling the two different schools.<sup>2</sup>

Bullinger further states,

"The allegory, therefore, is of two kinds; one in which it is continued metaphor (as in Ps. xxiii.), where the two things are both mentioned (Jehovah, and the shepherd's care), and what is asserted belongs to the principle object; the other, in which it is continued hypocatastasis (Ps. lxxx. 8-15), where the only one thing is mentioned (the vine), and what is asserted belongs properly to the secondary object; viz., to Israel. Israel whom it really refers, is not mentioned, but only implied."<sup>3</sup>

It must be recognized that while the nature of the allegory can be debated, the fact that the allegory uses symbolic communication can not be debated. If the allegory is an extended metaphor, then the emphasis communicated by the symbol will be upon representation. If the allegory is an extended hypocatastasis, then the emphasis communicated will be either representation or resemblance. The emphasis of the allegory is based upon how the allegory is understood.

#### Summary

Symbolic communication is expressed through figures

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<sup>1</sup>Bullinger, Figures of Speech, p. 748.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

of speech. Understanding the emphasis expressed by the figure of speech is of utmost importance, because it is through the figure of speech that the nature and categorization of the symbol is understood. When symbolic communication is expressed through the simile or other similar figures of speech, then the emphasis of the conceptual idea will usually be upon the qualities and characteristics of the literal object because the emphasis of the simile is characteristically upon resemblance. When symbolic communication is expressed through the metaphor or other similar figures of speech, then the emphasis of the conceptual idea will not usually be upon the qualities and characteristics of the literal object because the emphasis of the metaphor characteristically is upon representation, not resemblance.

It is important at this point to note that Bullinger's Greek structure and understanding with regard to figures of speech, does not always fit Jewish thought. For this reason, it must be pointed out and established that although Bullinger's Greek structure is generally true when applied to Jewish thought and literature, it is not essential that it be regarded as always true.

## CHAPTER III

### CATEGORIZATION OF SYMBOLS ACCORDING TO THEIR USAGE IN SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### Introduction

The categorization of symbols expressed through symbolic communication falls into two categories. The first category identifies the symbol according to its usage in its context. The usage of the symbol sets forth the degree to which the conceptual idea can be compared and understood in light of the qualities and characteristics of the literal object. The second category identifies the symbol according to its nature. The first category asks the question, "How is the symbol used?", and the second category asks the question, "What is its nature?"

#### The Non-Comparative Symbol

The non-comparative symbol may be defined as a symbol in which the qualities, characteristics, or associations of the literal object are not communicated to the conceptual idea. In other words, the qualities and characteristics of the literal object can not be compared to the understanding of the conceptual idea.

A good example of a non-comparative symbol is the

rainbow which God established to represent the idea that he would not destroy the earth with flood again. In this symbol the literal object is the rainbow and the conceptual idea is God's promise not to destroy the earth through flood again. This is a non-comparative symbol because the qualities and characteristics of a rainbow can not be compared to our understanding of what that rainbow means. Our understanding of this symbol can not be gained through understanding the qualities and characteristics of a rainbow because the literal object and the conceptual idea can not be compared. In other words, we might say that the symbol is a non-comparative symbol.

One important characteristic of the non-comparative symbol is that it requires explanation. A. Berkeley Mickelsen states, "For example, God established the rainbow as a sign, pledge, or symbol (ōth) that He would not bring another flood to destroy mankind. This particular symbol, like many others, requires explanation."<sup>1</sup> Required explanation is only reasonable in light of the fact that the non-comparative symbol can not communicate an understanding through the inherent qualities and characteristics of the literal object. Explanation of the non-comparative symbol in Scripture must be stated in the Biblical text, such as the rainbow in Genesis 9:8-17, or the Biblical interpreter will be at a loss with regard to a clear understanding and interpretation of the symbol.

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<sup>1</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 265.

Another important characteristic of the non-comparative symbol is that the literal object will not set forth many conceptual ideas, but rather one conceptual idea that is to be understood. The rainbow in Genesis 9:8-17 does not symbolize many conceptual ideas, but one conceptual idea, and that is God's promise not to destroy the earth with flood again. When men see the rainbow one conceptual idea is brought to mind. The emphasis of the non-comparative symbol is upon representation, not resemblance. The literal object stands as a representative of the conceptual idea. With regard to the non-comparative symbol, resemblance is not the issue nor the emphasis.

Another example of a non-comparative symbol is found in Joshua 4:1-24. In this passage twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, were commanded to pick up twelve stones from the Jordan river and to place the stones upon the shore. These twelve stones were to carry a symbolic understanding. This symbolic understanding is presented in verses 7 and 23-24. Verses 23-24 state, "For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

In Joshua 4:1-24, both elements of symbolic communication are present. The literal object is the pile of stones

that the men of Israel gathered and the conceptual idea is God's powerful strength and deliverance that dried up the Jordan and the Red Sea in order that the children of Israel could cross over. The symbolic communication in Joshua 4:1-24 is non-comparative because the qualities and characteristics of the literal object are not communicated to the conceptual idea. Understanding the qualities and characteristics of the literal object do not help in understanding the conceptual idea. With this symbol, explanation is necessary. Thus, explanations are given in verses 7 and 23-24 in response to the questions, "What do these stones mean?", verse 6, or "What are these stones?", verse 21. The stones in Joshua 4 did not resemble God's strength and deliverance, but represented God's strength and deliverance.

Many different kinds of symbols may be regarded as non-comparative in usage. For example, these may be the American flag, a high school mascot, the star of David, the number 666, or a wooden cross. In each of these examples, the literal object brings to mind a conceptual idea. But also in each of these examples, the conceptual idea can not be understood by understanding the qualities and characteristics of the physical object. Thus these symbols are non-comparative in their usage. Explanation for each of these literal objects is required in order to understand the conceptual ideas that are to be communicated. For example, the number 666 does not communicate the conceptual idea of the anti-christ without explanation. When the non-compara-

tive symbol is used without explanation, symbolic communication is left incomplete.

The non-comparative symbol is not difficult to identify or understand if the explanation is provided within the Scriptural text. If the explanation is not provided or clearly implied within the text then the symbol, while understood by the contemporary readers, is left incomplete to our understanding. In order to identify and understand the non-comparative symbol, one must first identify the literal object, and second identify the Scriptural explanation as to the conceptual idea. Once both elements of the non-comparative symbol are identified, an understanding of the symbolic communication will be gained.

The non-comparative symbol may be expressed through figures of speech. It must be noted that the usage of the non-comparative symbol requires that the figure of speech be a figure of representation and not resemblance. The non-comparative symbol is one in which no resemblance is present between the qualities and characteristics of the literal object and the conceptual idea. For this reason, figures of representation such as metonymy and metaphor can be used with the non-comparative symbol.

An example of a non-comparative symbol which is expressed through a metonymy can be found in Psalm 16:5. In Psalm 16:5 the literal object of a cup is used to express the conceptual idea of God's blessing. In this example, the symbolic communication that is represented by the term "cup"

can not be understood in light of the qualities and characteristics of that literal object. The metonymy is a very fitting figure of speech with regard to the non-comparative usage of the term "cup". The metonymy presents a representation rather than a resemblance. Thus the term "cup" used in this metonymy stands as a non-comparative representative for the conceptual idea of God's blessing.

The non-comparative symbol can also be expressed through synonyms parallelism expressed in the Hebrew text. In this form the non-comparative symbol will be expressed through the parallel structure of the conceptual idea and the literal object. The structure of the synonyms parallelism defines the meaning of the symbol. Without the structure, the symbol could not be properly understood.

A possible example of a non-comparative symbol that is expressed through synonyms parallelism and the metonymy is the symbol of the cup found in Psalm 16:5. Psalm 16:5 states, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; Thou dost support my lot." In the Hebrew this verse reads,

יְהוָה חֵלְקִי וְכֹסִי  
אֲתָהּ תִּשְׁעֵנִי גִּזְרִי

In this verse the symbol indicated by the term כֹּסִי is set in synonyms parallelism with גִּזְרִי. The conceptual idea of גִּזְרִי carries the meaning of "the lot taken out of an urn, which however, since decision by lot was regarded as God's act, has become in the Old Testament the symbol and

type of all grants of the royal righteousness and grace of God, as the possession thereby given is the foundation and essence of all divine blessing."<sup>1</sup> The conceptual idea of God's blessing here is set in synonyms with  $\text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀}$  meaning "my cup". The symbol or the literal object of a cup is defined by  $\text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀}$ , the term to which  $\text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀} \text{׀}$  stands in parallelism.

This example is, to some degree, open to challenge since the term "cup" perhaps was associated with refreshment because of the idea of drinking associated with the cup. If this association was made in the mind of the readers, then the symbol of the cup would not be non-comparative in its nature, since some understanding of the symbol could be gained through the observation of the characteristics or qualities of the literal object.

### The Comparative Symbol

#### The Definition of the Comparative Symbol

The comparative symbol is commonly used through out the text of Scripture. The comparative symbol may be defined as a symbol in which the qualities, characteristics, or associations of the literal object are communicated to the conceptual idea. In other words, the qualities and characteristics of the literal object can be compared to the un-

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Bernhard Moll, "The Psalms," trans. Charles A. Briggs, John Forsyth, James B. Hammond, and J. Fred McCurdy, in vol. 5 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. John P. Lange, 12 vols. (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 125.

derstanding of the conceptual idea. With the comparative symbol there is always an element of comparison, even if the element of comparison is not the emphasis of the author of the Scriptural text. With the comparative symbol, an understanding of the conceptual idea can be gained through understanding the literal object.

#### The Element of Comparison in the Comparative Symbol

The comparative symbol can be understood according to the degree to which the element of comparison is used. The author, when communicating the symbol, may either present a strong emphasis upon the characteristics or qualities of the literal object, thus presenting a strong element of comparison. However, the author may present a weaker emphasis upon the characteristics and qualities of the literal object, thus presenting a weak element of comparison. A strong element of comparison actively emphasizes the characteristics and qualities of the literal object, while a weak element of comparison passively emphasizes the characteristics and qualities of the literal object. The emphasis of the active element of comparison is upon resemblance. The emphasis of the passive element of comparison is upon representation.

From this point on in the thesis, the comparative symbol may be described as either an active comparative symbol or a passive comparative symbol. The terms active and passive take into account the element of comparison used by the author.

### Definition of the Active Comparative Symbol

The active comparative symbols in Scripture may be defined as those symbols that express a strong element of comparison between the literal object and the conceptual idea. The emphasis of the active comparative symbol is upon the resemblances between the qualities and characteristics of the literal object and the conceptual idea. Those figures of speech that emphasize resemblance are used in the expression of the active comparative symbol. The active comparative expresses many points of reference.

### Definition of the Passive Comparative Symbol

The passive comparative symbols in Scripture may be defined as those symbols that express a weak element of comparison between the literal object and the conceptual idea. The emphasis of the passive comparative symbol is upon a representation between the literal object and the conceptual idea. The passive comparative differs from the non-comparative symbol in that the passive comparative symbol carries an implied resemblance with an emphasis upon representation while the non-comparative does not. The concept of an implied resemblance in the passive comparative symbol simply indicates that the qualities and characteristics of the literal object must be in some way consistent with the conceptual idea that is being represented by the passive symbol or the symbol would appear ridiculous in the minds of the readers or hearers. If Christ were described in terms of a fox in John 1:29 it would appear ridiculous, because the qualities

and characteristics of a fox do not fit the sacrifice of Christ described within the context. Those figures of speech that emphasize representation are used in the expression of the active comparative symbol. The passive comparative symbol expresses one point of reference.

### Identifying the Active or Passive Comparative Symbol

#### Identifying the active comparative symbol

Identifying the figures of speech used. The active comparative symbol is expressed through those figures of speech that emphasize resemblance. Resemblance is the major emphasis in the active comparative symbol. The active comparative symbol places emphasis upon the resemblances between the literal object and the conceptual idea.

The major figures of speech that emphasize resemblances, thus indicating an active symbol, are simile and synchrisis. The hypocatastasis also can be used to express the concept of resemblance. The hypocatastasis can be either an implied simile or an implied metaphor. The active comparative symbol can be expressed through the hypocatastasis when it is stated through the implied simile. The active comparative symbol can also be expressed through the allegory when it is determined that the allegory is an extended hypocatastasis with an emphasis upon similarities.

Identifying the figure of speech is the most important step in identifying the active comparative usage or the passive comparative usage. Once the figure of speech through

which the symbol is expressed is identified, the interpreter can make a confident statement with regard to an active or passive usage. The figure of speech used will indicate the emphasis of the symbol either upon resemblance or representation. This will be the intended emphasis in using the symbol.

Recognizing the absence of the article, demonstrative pronoun, or possessive pronoun. Because the use of the article, demonstrative pronoun, or possessive pronoun particularizes the point of reference with regard to the symbol and carries anaphoric implications (explained further on in the paper), the active comparative symbol will lack these elements that are characteristic of the passive comparative symbol. The absence of the article, demonstrative pronoun, or the possessive pronoun indicates an active comparative usage of the symbol.

#### Identifying the passive comparative symbol

Identifying the figures of speech used. The passive comparative symbol is expressed through those figures of speech that emphasize the concept of representation. The concept of representation is the major emphasis of the passive comparative symbol. The use of the passive comparative symbol sets forth an emphasis upon a literal object which represents the conceptual idea.

Because the emphasis of the passive comparative symbol is upon representation, the figures of speech that are

used to express the passive usage of the symbol also emphasize the concept of representation, and by their nature are representative. The major figures of speech that emphasize representation, thus indicating the use of the passive symbol, are metonymy and metaphor. The hypocatastasis also can be used to express the concept of representation. The passive comparative symbol can be expressed through the hypocatastasis when it is stated through the implied metaphor. The passive comparative symbol can also be expressed through the allegory when it is determined that the allegory is an extended hypocatastasis with an emphasis upon representation.

Like the active comparative symbol, identifying the figure of speech used in expressing the symbol is the most important step in identifying the passive comparative usage or the active comparative usage. Once the figure of speech has been identified, the interpreter can make a confident statement with regard to usage.

Recognizing the presence of the article, demonstrative pronoun, or possessive pronoun. The use of the article, demonstrative pronoun, or possessive pronoun particularizes the point of reference with regard to the symbol, expressing also anaphoric implications.<sup>1</sup> Particularization is characteristic of the passive comparative symbol since the emphasis is not upon many points of resemblance, but upon one point of representation. The anaphoric idea expressed

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<sup>1</sup>See page 31.

through the article or the demonstrative pronoun is also characteristic of the passive comparative symbol, because the anaphoric idea points to one point of resemblance that is intended by the author and is understood or ought to be understood by the readers or hearers. This one point of reference is characteristic of the passive comparative symbol. Those aspects of language that tend to particularize an object indicating one point of reference, point to a passive usage of the symbol.

### Summary

This section on identifying the active and passive symbol is not intended to answer all the questions with regard to the active and passive symbol. This section sets forth a basic structure that is established upon an understanding of the emphasis present within the various figures of speech and the use of the article, demonstrative pronoun, and possessive pronoun. The active and passive symbols are developed through the following material within the paper.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE \*POINTS OR POINT OF REFERENCE EXPRESSED THROUGH THE COMPARATIVE SYMBOL IN SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### The Points of Reference in the Active Comparative Symbol

Within the usage of the comparative symbol, there may be either one point of reference or many points of reference between the literal object and the conceptual idea. Because the emphasis of the active comparative symbol is upon resemblance between the characteristics and qualities of the literal object, the active comparative symbol may often have many points of reference. The points of reference are areas of resemblance between the qualities and characteristics of the literal object and the conceptual idea.

An example of an active comparative symbol that presents many points of reference can be found in I Peter 5:8, which states, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." In this text, Satan's activity is symbolized by a roaring lion. The points of reference are in the areas of the desire to devour, the ability to

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\*The points or point of reference is another way to express that which is meant by the conceptual idea.

devour, or the ferociousness in devouring. These points of reference are areas of comparison between the literal object, which is a roaring lion, and the conceptual idea, which is the activity of Satan. These points of reference are common truths that can be applied to both the literal object and the conceptual idea.

The points of reference used in the active comparative symbol are often limited by a qualifying phrase that narrows down or limits the areas of comparison between the literal object and the conceptual idea. In I Peter 5:8 the qualifying phrase is "seeking someone to devour". Satan's activity, which is the conceptual idea, is limited in its points of reference to the literal object, which is a lion seeking to devour someone. Points of reference between a sleeping lion and Satan's activity would not be valid because of the qualifying phrase.

Another example of a qualifying statement that limits the points of reference between the literal object and the conceptual idea through the active comparative symbol is Isaiah 53:7 which speaks with reference to the suffering servant. Isaiah 53:7 states, "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open his mouth."

In this synchrisis or repeated simile, the suffering servant is presented through the symbol of the lamb. This active comparative symbol is qualified according to two

qualifying phrases. The two qualifying phrases are: "that is led to slaughter," which speaks with reference to the lamb; and "that is before its shearers," which speaks with reference to the sheep. These two qualifying phrases or statements limit the range of application or points of resemblance between the literal objects, the lamb and the sheep, and the conceptual idea which sets forth the manner in which the suffering servant would approach death. The characteristics, with regard to the manner in which the suffering servant would approach death, are symbolized by the lamb and the sheep, but the points of resemblance or reference are only valid as they are understood in terms of the qualifying phrases. The suffering servant's death can be symbolized by a lamb led to slaughter and a sheep before its shearers. Any interpretation that disregards the qualifying phrases is not valid.

In summary, the points of reference, with regard to the active comparative symbol, are often many. With the active comparative symbol it is important to understand the qualifying statement or phrase. The points of reference or resemblance are only valid when they are understood in terms of the qualifying statements. Because the emphasis of the active comparative symbol is upon resemblance, many points of reference are possible as long as they do not overstep the boundaries of the qualifying statement.

#### The Point of Reference in the Passive Comparative Symbol

The passive comparative symbol differs from the

active comparative symbol with regard to the point of reference. While the active comparative symbol may have many points of reference, the passive comparative symbol will have only one point of reference. The passive comparative symbol presents the idea of representation. Symbolic communication through the passive comparative symbol sets forth a literal object that represents the conceptual idea. The emphasis is not upon resemblance, but rather that point of reference or representation.

An example of a passive comparative symbol that clearly expresses one point of reference can be found in Revelation 5:5. In Revelation 5:5 we read this statement, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." In this passage, the symbol of "the Lion" is a metaphor that stands in representation to Christ who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. There are not many points of reference, but one point of reference. The one point of reference to which the symbol of "the Lion" applies is Christ.

The passive comparative symbol, like the active comparative symbol, often is expressed with a qualifying statement. While the qualifying statement that is expressed in conjunction with the active comparative symbol limits the scope of resemblance between the literal object and the conceptual idea, the qualifying statement that is expressed in conjunction with the passive comparative symbol indicates

the one point of reference that is intended by the author.

An example of a qualifying statement can be found in Revelation 5:5. In Revelation 5:5 the symbol of the lion is qualified by the statement, "that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David". This qualifying statement does not limit the scope of resemblances between the literal object and the conceptual idea, but rather this qualifying statement indicates the one point of reference or representation that is intended by the author. The lion in Revelation 5:5 can only refer to or represent someone who is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.

The fact that one point of reference or representation is intended by the author is indicated by the use of the article with the literal object, or the use of the demonstrative with the literal object. The use of the article or the demonstrative will indicate that one point of reference is intended, and that the author is using the symbol with a passive emphasis.

Dana and Mantey state with regard to the use and emphasis of the article, "The function of the article is to point out an object or to draw attention to it. Its use with a word makes the word stand out distinctly. Whenever the article occurs the object is certainly definite."<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the article particularizes the word to which it is associated with. Some have described this use of the

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<sup>1</sup>H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 157.

article as being individualizing. "By this term is meant that the article particularizes and points out definite and specific objects of thought."<sup>1</sup>

Sproule demonstrates the individualizing article from John 1:1. The first part of John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word." Sproule states with regard to ὁ λόγος,

"Here it is clear, John thinks of a particular 'word' (whom he presents as a person) and he individualizes it by the use of the article. It is to be assumed that, though this is the first statement of the book, 'the word' referred to is not an unknown entity. Whether all of John's readers would have made the identification correctly is not the point."<sup>2</sup>

Apollonius Dyscolus, an early grammarian, described the individualizing article as anaphoric. The term anaphoric presents reference back to what is already familiar.<sup>3</sup> "'The Word' is a definite figure in past history who, if not familiar already, ought to be. In this sense the article is anaphoric."<sup>4</sup>

It is important to remember that the article points toward particularization with anaphoric implications. With reference to symbolic communication, the passive comparative symbol will often have the article indicating that in the author's mind there is the concept of particularization with anaphoric implications. The concept of particularization

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Sproule, Syllabus--Intermediate Greek Notes (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

with anaphoric implications denotes a definite point of reference with the implication that the readers ought to be familiar with the point of reference to which the author refers.

John, in Revelation 5:5, uses the article with the symbol of the lion. John states in Revelation 5:5, "And one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.'" The use of the article with the symbol of the lion indicates that John had a particular point of reference to which the symbol would apply, as well as the implication that the readers ought to be familiar with whom the symbol referred. The qualifying statement, "that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," further indicates the one point of reference referred to by John. John here clearly communicates that the symbol of the lion stands as a representative title pointing to Christ. The emphasis is not upon the resemblances between a lion and Christ, but a lion symbolically representative of Christ.

The fact that one point of reference or representation is intended by the author in the passive comparative symbol is also indicated by the use of the demonstrative with the literal object. The demonstrative pronoun, like the article, places an emphasis upon the particularization of the literal object. This similar emphasis may have its origin in the fact that the Greek article arose from the old demonstrative pronoun. "The Greek definite article

arose originally out of an old demonstrative pronoun (found in Homer) meaning 'this one' or 'he'."<sup>1</sup>

Dana and Mantey state with regard to the use of the demonstrative pronoun,

"Sometimes it is desired to call attention with special emphasis to a designated object, whether in the physical vicinity of the speaker or the literary context of the writer. For this purpose the demonstrative construction is used."<sup>2</sup>

This demonstrative construction indicates a particularization of the literal object or designated object. The literal or designated object is given special attention or particularization in the author's mind.

A good example of the demonstrative pronoun used with reference to the passive comparative symbol that indicates one point of reference can be found in Luke 13:32. Luke 13:31,32 read, "Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, 'Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'" In this verse, Christ symbolically refers to Herod by using the symbolic term fox. The term or symbol of the fox in Luke 13:32 is particularized by the demonstrative pronoun "that". In the original language, ταύτη is clearly used to particularize the term ἀλώπεκι indicating the one point of reference that Christ had in mind when He used the symbolic

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<sup>1</sup>Sproule, Intermediate Greek Notes, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Dana and Mantey, Grammar of Greek New Testament, p. 127.

term fox.

The demonstrative pronoun, like the definite article, carries with it anaphoric implications. Anaphoric implications must be present in the use of the demonstrative pronoun in symbolic communication because of its close relationship to the definite article. When the demonstrative pronoun is used with the literal object, there is implied a degree of familiarity that the readers already ought to have with the point of reference intended by the author. In Luke 13:32, the readers' familiarity is presented in the preceding verses in which Herod is mentioned and spoken of.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETING THE POINTS OR POINT OF REFERENCE EXPRESSED THROUGH THE COMPARATIVE SYMBOL IN SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### Interpreting the Points of Reference in the Active Comparative Symbol

Understanding the points of reference expressed through the active comparative symbol is not usually a difficult task because of the active comparative symbol's emphasis upon resemblance. In discovering the points of reference expressed through the active comparative symbol, one must seek to determine those areas of resemblance between the qualities and characteristics of the literal object and the conceptual idea. These areas of resemblance can be discovered by understanding the following aspects of interpretation.

#### Understanding the Context

Understanding the context in which the symbol or literal object is presented is important to understanding the areas of resemblances between the literal object and the conceptual idea intended. The context must be examined according to its flow of thought and presentation of ideas in

the immediate context as well as an examination of other active uses of the symbol through out the whole context of Scripture. Both the immediate context as well as the broader context of Scripture must be examined for a thorough examination of the context.

The principle of parallel examination must be maintained when the interpreter is examining the broader context of Scripture. Merely using a concordance to "check other passages which use the same symbol,"<sup>1</sup> as Bernard Ramm suggests, is not enough, and at times it may be misleading. When the interpreter is examining the broader context of Scripture, a concordance will always be helpful, but it must so be remembered that the distinctions between an active and passive usage of the symbol must be determined and maintained. For a proper examination of an active comparative symbol, the interpreter must examine those passages which also set forth the same symbol presented in an active comparative usage. When determining the meaning of an active comparative symbol, it is an invalid practice to base the interpretation or points of reference upon the same symbol presented in a passive comparative usage. While the symbol may be the same, the usage is not and thus invalidates any parallel examination. The principle of parallel examination must be maintained for any consistent comparative study of symbols in Scripture.

An example can be presented that involves an invalid

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 234.

comparative examination of similar symbols. In I Peter 5:8 the symbol of the lion is used to express the conceptual idea of Satan's behavior and desire to devour Christians. This symbol is an active comparative symbol expressed through the simile. The symbol of the lion is also used to represent Christ. This symbol, according to its usage, is a passive comparative symbol expressed through the metaphor. A comparative examination of these two symbols would be a violation of the principle of parallel examination. While the symbols in I Peter 5:8 and Revelation 5:5 are the same, their classification is not.

A proper comparative study must recognize the principle of parallel examination. For example, when studying the symbol of the lion in I Peter 5:8, which presents the symbol of the lion in an active comparative usage, other passages that set forth an active comparative usage must be used. Passages that present the same symbol in the same usage can be used in a valid comparative examination. With reference to the lion, several verses which present the symbol of the lion in an active comparative usage are: Genesis 49:9, "He couches, he lies down as a lion,"; Numbers 23:24, "Behold, a people rises like a lioness, and as a lion it lifts itself; it shall not lie down until it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain."; Numbers 24:9, "He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him?"; Job 10:16, "And should my head be lifted up, thou wouldst hunt me like a lion; and again thou wouldst

show thy power against me."<sup>1</sup> The preceeding verses as well as many others could be used in a comparative examination with reference to the symbol of the lion, because both the symbol and the usage are the same.

When making a comparative examination of the symbol of the lamb or sheep, as it is found in its active usage in I Peter 2:25, several verses can again be used that do not violate the principle of parallel examination. Some of these verses are: Psalm 44:11, "Thou dost give us as sheep to be eaten, and hast scattered us among the nations."; Psalm 44:22, "But for thy sake we are killed all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."; Psalm 78:52, "But he led forth his own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."; Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;...".<sup>2</sup> All the preceeding verses present the symbol of sheep in an active comparative usage. These verses can be used in a comparative examination with I Peter 2:25. These verses will help in understanding the symbol of sheep when used actively in the broader context of Scripture.

A note of warning must be given at this point with regard to the qualifying statement presented with the active comparative symbol. The qualifying statement must never be disregarded when a comparative examination of the broader

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Young, Young's Analytical Concordance (Wilmington, DE: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.), p. 609.

<sup>2</sup>James Strong, The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), p. 915.

context of Scripture is made. For example, the qualifying statement in I Peter 5:8, "seeking someone to devour," must not be disregarded when examining other verses which use the same symbol and the same usage. The qualifying statement limits the scope of resemblances in particular passages. To disregard the qualifying statement is to disregard the author's particular conceptual ideas intended for the symbol in a specific passage or context.

The recognition of the principle parallel examination leads to the elimination of wrong conclusions that can be drawn as a result of double imagery. Double imagery is present in the symbolism of the Bible, since one literal object is at times used to represent two different conceptual ideas.

The principle of parallel examination is beneficial in understanding double imagery because it recognizes that a comparative study of the same symbol must involve the examination of those texts that present the same usage. Both I Peter 5:8 and Revelation 5:5 use the imagery of the lion, but both are different in their usage. I Peter 5:8 is active in its usage, while Revelation 5:5 is passive in its usage. Because the usages are different, it is impossible to make a comparative examination between the two. The principle of parallel examination, when properly applied, is beneficial in discerning the meaning of those symbols that can be categorized under double imagery.

When determining the points of reference or resemblances in the active comparative symbol, it is important

to understanding the context in which the literal object is presented. The context must be examined according to its flow of thought and the presentation of the symbol in the immediate context, the whole context of Scripture, as well as its literary context. A comparative examination of the symbol in the whole context of Scripture must recognize both the principle of parallel examination as well as the scope of the qualifying statement. Applying these principles helps the interpreter to avoid the problems and misinterpretations involved with double imagery.

#### Understanding the Qualifying Statement

Understanding the qualifying statement, which qualifies the scope of the symbol or literal object, is important to understand the points of reference or conceptual ideas intended by the author. With the active comparative symbol, the qualifying statement limits the areas of resemblance between the literal object and the conceptual idea. It is important to understand how the author is using the qualifying statement to limit the areas of resemblance. Once the limits of the qualifying statement are understood, they must be maintained.

#### Understanding the Literal Object

Understanding the literal object is important to understanding the points of reference in the active comparative symbol. It must be remembered that the active comparative symbol sets forth a comparison or resemblance between

the characteristics and qualities of the literal object, and the conceptual idea. Because this idea of comparison is so essential to the active comparative symbol, one must understand the characteristics and qualities of the literal object in order to properly understand the conceptual idea intended by the author. The conceptual idea intended by the author has a direct relationship to the characteristics and qualities of the symbol used by the author.

Examining the characteristics and qualities of the literal object often requires research. To understand the symbol or literal object of the lion, one must understand the characteristics and behavior of sheep. Research into the nature of the literal object is important because interpreters of today, in most instances, are not as familiar with the literal objects as those to whom the literal objects were given as symbols.

#### Understanding the Perception of the Literal Object

Understanding how the literal object was perceived by the people to whom the symbol was given is important to understand clearly the points of reference intended by the author in the active comparative symbol. The literal object must be not only understood according to its characteristics, but also according to the perception of the individuals to whom the symbol was given. The symbol of the roaring lion has a greater impact upon those to whom a lion is a real danger than those who never experience the danger of a roaring lion. The perception of the behavior of sheep

is much different to one who is familiar with sheep than one who is not.

Understanding how the literal object was perceived by the people to whom the symbol was given is often a difficult task because the interpreter must divorce himself from his present understanding of the literal object in order to gain an understanding of the literal object from the perspective of one to whom the object was given as a symbol. This task is difficult also because it involves not only a knowledge based on research, but a knowledge that can identify with the experiential knowledge possessed by those who lived at the time the symbol was given. In understanding perception, the interpreter must possess to some degree creativity and imagination so as to properly interpret facts of research into a structure and mind set that allows him to think, reason, and feel as another man would concerning a literal object that is presented in symbolic communication. The conceptual ideas intended by the author will be directly related to the characteristics and qualities of the literal object as well as how those characteristics are perceived by those to whom the symbol was given.

Interpreting the Point of Reference in the  
Passive Comparative Symbol

Understanding the point of reference expressed through the passive comparative symbol is a much more difficult task than discovering the points of reference in the active comparative symbol. The emphasis of the active com-

parative symbol is upon resemblances which are often obvious and clearly defined within the text. The emphasis of the passive comparative symbol is upon representation which is often less obvious and not clearly defined within the text. The characteristics and qualities, which are most helpful in understanding the conceptual ideas in the active comparative symbol, play a very small part in understanding the conceptual idea or point of reference intended by the author in the passive comparative symbol. For this reason, understanding the point of reference in the passive comparative symbol is a much more difficult task.

As stated before, the passive comparative symbol, which is presented with the article, demonstrative pronoun, or personal pronoun, contains anaphoric implications.<sup>1</sup> Anaphoric implications establish a reference back to that which is already familiar to the listeners or readers through past knowledge, implication, or context. The literal object expressed in the passive comparative symbol carries with it anaphoric implications meaning that the author in using the symbol intended there to be a definite figure or group in mind who, if not familiar already, ought to be. The responsibility of the interpreter is to discover that definite figure or group in mind that was intended by the author and understood by the readers or listeners. That definite figure or group will be the point of reference, the point of representation, or the conceptual idea intended

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<sup>1</sup>Sproule, Intermediate Greek Notes, p. 87.

by the author. It must be remembered that the anaphoric idea, the point of reference, the point of representation, or the conceptual idea are only different expressions used to describe the same idea. The point of reference in the passive comparative symbol can be discovered by understanding the following aspects of interpretation.

#### Understanding the Context

Understanding the context in which the literal object is given is important to understanding the point of reference intended by the author. Like the active comparative symbol, the context must be examined according to its general flow of thought, its immediate context, as well as an examination of the same symbol presented in passive usages throughout the whole context of Scripture. All these areas must be examined for a thorough examination of the context.

A recognition and observation of the flow of thought is important to understanding the point of reference intended by the author through the passive comparative symbol. In John 8:12, the metaphor and the article are employed when Christ states to the multitude present, "I am the light of the world." The symbol of light expressed through the metaphor here in John 8:12 is better understood when viewed in relationship to the general flow of thought in the context of John chapters seven and eight.

It must first be noted that John 7:53-8:11 does not appear in the majority of the oldest manuscripts that we

possess.<sup>1</sup> John 7:53-8:11 does not appear in the following manuscripts: p<sup>66</sup>, which is dated about A.D. 200; p<sup>75</sup>, which is dated in the early third century; X, known as Sinaiticus and dated in the fourth century; A, known as the Alexandrinus text which is dated in the fifth century; B, known as the Vaticanus text which is dated in the fourth century; C, known as the Ephraemi Rescriptus text which is dated in the fifth century.<sup>2</sup>

Because John 7:53-8:11 is not present in the majority of the oldest manuscripts existing, it is safe to conclude that this text at the least is questionable. John 7:53-8:11 is questionable with regard to its placement in the gospel and its authorship by the apostle John.

Because of the questionable nature of John 7:53-8:11, an examination of the flow of thought with regard to Christ's statement, "I am the light of the world" in John 8:12, must begin with John 7:1. In John 7:1, Christ begins a journey to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>3</sup> In verses 11-13, questions are raised by the crowds at the feast with regard to Jesus' identity. Some claimed that He was a good man, while others claimed that He was a deceiver of the people

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek New Testament, Third ed., ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren (Württemberg: United Bible Societies, 1975), p. xv 356.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Talmud: Selections from the Contents of the Ancient Book, Its Commentaries Teachings, Poetry and Legends, trans. H. Polano (Philadelphia: Leary, Stuart, & Company, 1876), pp. 349-356.

(John 7:12).

As the flow of thought continues in John seven, Jesus appears at the feast and begins to teach openly in the temple courts and the people are astonished. After Jesus' teaching, in verses 14-24, the crowds begin to ask more specific questions about Jesus. They ask, "Is this not the man they are seeking to kill?"; "The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?" Through the controversy, a division among the people, with regard to Jesus, develops. Some of the multitude said, "This certainly is the Prophet," verse 40. Others said, "This is the Christ," verse 41. Some others wanted to seize Jesus but did not, as is seen in verse 44. In the context of the questions raised about Jesus and the division of the people over Jesus, Christ states in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world."

Christ's statement in John 8:12 appears to be the climaxing statement to all the questions that had been raised about Jesus from the preceeding chapter. The basic question being raised by the crowds in John chapter seven was with the messiahship of Jesus. The crowds were questioning if Jesus was the Christ or not. This is the main issue being presented in the immediate context of John seven and eight. The flow of thought, with regard to the messiahship of Jesus, leads us to an understanding of the passive comparative symbol presented in Christ's statement, "I am the light of the world," in terms of a messianic proclamation. The crowds ask the question, "Is Jesus the Messiah?", and Jesus responds,

"I am the light of the world." The context of John 8:12 carries an implied understanding of the literal object, light, in terms of a messianic proclamation. Understanding the flow of thought in the context of John 8:12 is important to understanding the passive comparative symbol of light.

An example of a text in which an understanding of the immediate context leads to an understanding of the passive comparative symbol is Luke 13:31,32. Luke 13:31,32 state, "Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, 'Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill you.'" "And He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach my goal.'" In this text, Christ uses the passive comparative symbol of the fox. The literal object of the fox is clearly passive in its usage because of the use of the demonstrative pronoun and the metaphor in its presentation.

In the context of Luke 13:32, Christ is given a warning by some Pharisees of Herod's desire to kill Him. Christ's response to their warning is, "Go tell that fox." The context in Luke 13 clearly indicates the point of reference intended by Jesus when He used the symbol of the fox. The context clearly indicates that the symbol of the fox was being used passively to represent Herod.

It is also important when examining the context of the passive comparative symbol to examine the same symbol presented in passive usages throughout the whole context

of Scripture. It must be remembered that here, like the active comparative symbol, the principle of parallel examination must be observed when a comparative examination is made by the interpreter. When making a parallel examination of a passive comparative symbol, it is necessary to examine those texts that use the same symbol in a passive comparative usage.

An examination of the same symbol in passive comparative usages will present the interpreter with a number of possible understandings with regard to the passive comparative symbol being studied. Because of the nature of the passive comparative symbol, it must be remembered that only one point of reference is intended by the author. For this reason, the parallel examination of the passive comparative symbol only provides a background with regard to how other authors in Scripture have used the same symbol, not a basis. The parallel examination does not and can not demand a particular understanding or conclusion that must be applied in every passive comparative usage of the same symbol. Thus a comparative background is established, and not a basis.

When making a parallel examination of a passive comparative symbol, often the conclusions will not apply to the text being studied. In John 1:29, John the Baptist presents Christ as represented through the passive comparative symbol of the lamb. Several passages also present the symbol of the lamb or sheep through passive comparative usages. Some of these passages which present the symbol of the lamb or

sheep are: Psalm 95:7, "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."; Psalm 79:13, "So we are Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture..." ; Psalm 100:3, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture."; Ezekiel 34:11, "For thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out."<sup>1</sup> In each of the preceding verses, the symbol of the sheep is used in a passive comparative usage. In each of these verses the point of reference is Israel or God's people. While each of these verses are used passively, they do not establish a basis upon which John 1:29 can be understood because of our immediate contextual understanding of John 1:29, which uses the symbol of the lamb to represent Christ. While the Old Testament verses presented here do not provide a basis for understanding the point of reference in John 1:29, they do provide a background as to the variety of conceptual ideas the symbol is used to represent. A complete parallel examination of any passive comparative symbol will give a thorough background to the interpreter as to the range of conceptual ideas of which the symbol is used to represent.

In conclusion to the examination of the context, with regard to the passive comparative symbol, it is important to note that the key to understanding the symbol will lie in the understanding of the flow of thought and the immediate context more than in the parallel comparative examination. The conclusions or background discovered through

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<sup>1</sup>Young, Young's Analytical Concordance, p. 875.

a parallel comparative study must be subject to the conclusions gained from the flow of thought and the immediate context. The parallel examination does not provide a basis for understanding the point of reference, but a background for understanding and supporting the findings through the flow of thought and immediate context.

#### Understanding the Perception of the Readers or Hearers

Important to knowing the point of reference intended by the author in the passive comparative symbol, is an understanding of the readers or hearers and their understanding of the symbol as presented to them in a passive usage. The interpreter must be able to view the symbol from the perspective of those to whom the symbol was given. The interpreter is seeking to discover that point of reference that came to the readers' or hearers' mind upon receiving the symbol. Understanding the readers or hearers does not emphasize the Biblical text, but rather the readers' or hearers' perception of the Biblical text. This would include historical, political, sociological, and religious interpretations of the Biblical information. The question with regard to understanding the readers or hearers is not, "What does the Biblical text say?", but "How did the people perceive the Biblical text?" The people's perception may or may not be correct, but their perception will be important to understanding the impact and communication of the symbol. As stated previously, the passive comparative symbol carries anaphoric implications indicated by the use of the article

and the demonstrative pronoun. Understanding the perception of the symbol from the perspective of the readers or hearers is actually a search for that anaphoric idea that ought to be understood by the readers or hearers.

Understanding the anaphoric idea or the perception of the symbol by the readers or hearers requires research into the historical, political, sociological, and religious interpretations of the Biblical symbol. Basically the interpreter is seeking to generally develop a feeling and understanding of the symbol from a variety of influences that would effect the perception of the Biblical symbol in the minds of the readers or hearers.

Understanding the context and the qualifying statement can be helpful before the research is started, since these two will often suggest a conclusion, thus limiting the research to those areas demanded by the author through the context and qualifying statement. When examining the passive comparative symbol of the fox in Luke 13:32, it is important to understand the contextual reference to Herod first so that the research can be limited to the readers' or hearers' perception of Herod. In John 8:12, it is first important to understand the messianic questions in the context so that the research can be aimed toward messianic expectations by the people. Understanding the context and qualifying statement will save much time, keeping the interpreter from wasted research.

In the example of John 8:12, which uses the symbol

of light, the following articles can be examined in order to gain an understanding of the perception of the symbol in the minds and hearts of the hearers or readers. These articles with regard to light and messianic expectations are: "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs in Sectarian Literature in the Time of the Second Common Wealth," J. Liver; "The Jewish and Christian Messiah," Joseph Klausner; The Faith at Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls, H. Ringgren; The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, La Sor; "The Name and Personality of the Messiah," J. Klausner; The Dead Sea Scrolls, Burrows; "Aspect of Intertestamental Messianism," Klein; "Messianic Motifs of Qumran and the New Testament," Brownlee; The Message of the Scrolls, Yadin; "Further Messianic References in the Qumran Literature," Allegro; "An Analysis of the Treatise on the Two Spirits in DSD," Jacob Light; "The Essenes and Messianic Expectations," S. Zeitlin; "Jewish Expectations About the Messiah According to the Fourth Gospel," M. De Jonge; The Messianic Idea in Judaism, Scholem; The Bible in Its Literary Milieu: Contemporary Essays, Tollers & Maier; "The Origin of the Idea of the Messiah," Zeitlin.<sup>1</sup>

These articles and sections from various books give a good cross section of the type of materials that ought to be researched for a proper understanding of the readers' or hearers' perception of the symbol. With regard to John 8:12,

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<sup>1</sup>See the bibliography for further reference information concerning these articles and books.

these articles and books provide a background for approaching the symbol from the readers' or hearers' perspective. These articles give an understanding of the political and religious perspectives concerning messianic expectations and the terminology used to express various messianic expectations. All these factors are important for understanding the point of reference intended by the author or speaker and understood by the readers or hearers.

In understanding the readers or hearers, the interpreter is seeking to discover through research the point of reference that first came to mind to the readers or hearers upon receiving the symbol. Understanding the readers' or hearers' perspective does not involve a questioning of the Biblical text, but rather a questioning of how the people perceived and understood the Biblical text. Understanding how the symbol was perceived by the people requires research that takes into account historical, political, sociological, and religious interpretations of the Biblical information. Through this kind of research, the interpreter is placing himself into the mind set of those who first received the symbol, gaining a perspective that understands the symbol according to the background of experience to which the symbol was given.

#### Understanding Symbolic Evolution

With some symbols, it is important to understand the evolution of the symbol according to its usage. The evolution of a symbol involves a recognition that a symbol

can be developed according to usage from a predominantly active comparative usage to a predominantly passive comparative usage. For example, a particular city may speak of their local football team as having the ability to fight like lions out on the field. In time, the symbol of the lion may evolve from a predominantly active usage to a predominantly passive usage, and thus the term would be referred to as simply the lions. The symbol, pastor, is similar to the preceding example. The symbol, pastor, has evolved from a predominantly active usage to a predominantly passive usage.

Symbolic evolution involves an evolution in which the symbol is perceived as having been changed from an emphasis upon resemblance between the literal object and the conceptual idea to an emphasis upon representation between the literal object and the conceptual idea. In the example from the preceding paragraph concerning the football team, the symbol of the lion underwent a change in emphasis. The change in emphasis evolved from a resemblance to fighting lions to a representation by lions. When the symbol of the lion is used actively with an emphasis upon resemblance, the conceptual idea is perceived according to similarities between fighting lions and the fighting team. When the symbol is used passively with an emphasis upon representation, the conceptual idea is perceived as merely an official title for the team with little or no thought to similarities. With regard to the passive use of the symbol of the pastor,

the emphasis is no longer upon the similarities between the man who exercises local church leadership and a literal shepherd of sheep, but rather the passive usage merely presents the official title of the local church leader with little or no thought given to the similarities.

Once the symbolic evolution has taken place from the active comparative usage to the passive comparative usage, there becomes an anaphoric idea that is implied by the author and understood by the listener or reader. As stated previously, the anaphoric idea is grammatically expressed through the article or the demonstrative pronoun. This anaphoric idea expresses an assumed familiarity with the symbol that should be understood by the people or at least ought to be understood. Thus when a church secretary says, "Sorry, the pastor is not in today," there is an assumed familiarity with the symbol and the individual whom that symbol represents.

Symbolic evolution is a factor that must be taken into account when the Biblical symbol is studied. Sometimes it can be observed that the Biblical symbol has undergone a change from a predominantly active usage to a predominantly passive usage. This symbolic evolution will have had an effect upon the author's presentation of the symbol as well as the readers' or hearers' reception of the symbol.

Symbolic evolution is a factor that must be taken into account when the Biblical symbol of light is studied, as seen in John 8:12. At the time of the composition of

rabbinic literature there is recorded a "further development of the understanding of things that can be described in terms of light."<sup>1</sup> During this time period, there is a development with regard to the term light in which messianic expectations are described through the symbolism of light. The Pesikta Rabbati states,

"In that hour (i.e., when the Messiah manifests Himself) God will cause the light of the king, the Messiah and Israel to shine, and all the peoples of the world are in darkness and obscurity. Then they will all come to the light of the Messiah of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

"Light is used for the time of the Messiah and for the Messiah."<sup>3</sup>

This example reveals that a development had taken place with regard to the term light. The symbol, light, had developed into a predominantly passive usage in which light stood as a symbol that represented the Messiah. The emphasis in the Pesikta Rabbati is not upon the similarities between the Messiah and light, but upon light as a symbol representative of the Messiah. The understanding of light as a symbol had undergone symbolic evolution. The symbol had assumed a passive emphasis upon representation. It must be recognized that at least in the minds of some of the leaders and people who lived at the time of Christ, the symbol, light, stood as a passive representative term for the Messiah. When one spoke of the light, he would be speaking in

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, s.v. "φῶς," by Hans Conzelmann, 9:327.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

terms of messianic expectations.

Understanding the symbolic evolution with regard to the term light is important for understanding Christ's use of the symbol light in John 8:12. In John 8:12 Christ states, "I am the light of the world." According to the context, as discussed before, and symbolic evolution, the symbol light must be understood according to messianic expectations. The people present ask the question, "Is Jesus the Messiah?", and Christ responds according to messianic expectations as represented through the passive symbol light. Through symbolic evolution, it can be argued that Christ was using the symbol, light, as an official title, recognizing His messiahship to Israel. Understanding symbolic evolution, with regard to John 8:12, indicates that Christ was not ignoring the crowds' questions with regard to Himself, but was actually answering their questions according to their own expression of messianic expectations. Symbolic evolution indicates the point of reference intended by the author and understood by the people.

Researching symbolic evolution is not to be separated from the study which seeks to research the perspective and understanding of the people to whom the symbol was given. Understanding symbolic evolution is a part of understanding the perspective of the people with regard to the symbol. Researching the perspective of the people to whom the symbol was given sets forth an emphasis upon the understanding of the symbol, while researching symbolic evolution, in con-

trast, sets forth an emphasis upon the development of understanding with regard to the symbol. Both aspects are separate in their emphasis, yet related according to their objectives since both seek to understand the symbol according to the mind set of the contemporaries to whom the symbol was given.

In summary, researching the perspective of the contemporaries, symbolic evolution, if present, must be observed. Symbolic evolution answers questions with regard to how the contemporaries use and understand the symbol developed. If the passive comparative symbol has been developed into a particular point of reference, this point of reference must be incorporated into a complete understanding of the conceptual idea being expressed through the symbol or literal object.

#### Understanding the Qualifying Statement

In understanding the point of reference that is intended by the author and expressed through the passive comparative symbol, the interpreter must understand the qualifying statement that is expressed with the symbol. The qualifying statement expressed through the passive comparative symbol presents a different emphasis than the qualifying statement expressed through the active comparative symbol. With the active comparative symbol, the qualifying statement limits the scope of applications or resemblances between the literal object and the conceptual idea. In contrast, the qualifying statement that is expressed with the passive com-

parative symbol directs the interpreter to the one point of reference intended by the author. For this reason, understanding the qualifying statement will aid in understanding the point of reference in the passive comparative symbol.

The point of reference expressed through the passive comparative symbol must be consistent with the criteria expressed in the qualifying statement. Any interpretation that lies outside the criteria set forth by the qualifying statement is an invalid interpretation.

In Revelation 5:5, the apostle John sets forth the passive comparative symbol of the lion. The qualifying statement with this symbol is, "that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." The criteria of this qualifying statement helps to establish the individual who is being represented by the symbol of the lion in the text. Here in Revelation 5:5, the individual being represented by the lion must be: (1) from the tribe of Judah, (2) from the family of David, (3) one who is considered an overcomer so as to open the book and its seven seals. The individual expressed through the symbolism must meet these three criteria. In Revelation 5:5, the criteria indicates that Christ is the individual who is being represented by the symbol of the lion.

Understanding the qualifying statement is important for discovering the point of reference in the passive comparative symbol. The qualifying statement sets forth cri-

teria that points toward that group, individual, or concept that is being represented by the symbol. The point of reference in the passive comparative must always be consistent with the qualifying statement.

#### Understanding the Literal Object

Understanding the nature of the literal object is important to understanding the point of reference in the passive comparative symbol. As stated before, the passive comparative symbol differs from the non-comparative symbol in that the passive comparative symbol carries an implied resemblance with an emphasis upon representation, while the non-comparative symbol does not. The concept of an implied resemblance in the passive comparative symbol simply indicates that the qualities and characteristics of the literal object must be in some way consistent with the conceptual idea that is being represented by the passive symbol. If there were no consistency between the literal object and the conceptual idea, then the passive symbol would appear ridiculous in the minds of the readers or hearers.

If Herod was represented by the passive symbol of the lamb in Luke 13:32 rather than the fox, the symbol, although passive in its usage, would have appeared foolish and ridiculous. If John the Baptist had stated in John 1:29, "Behold, the fox of God who takes away the sins of the world," the passive idea of representation would have been communicated, but the symbol would have appeared ridiculous because there is no consistency between Christ and a fox in

the John 1:29 context. In both of the preceding contexts, the passive idea of representation would have been communicated, but the symbols themselves would have fallen short in their communication because of their lack of consistency between the qualities and characteristics of the literal objects and the persons being represented.

Because the passive comparative symbol carries an implied resemblance that must be consistent with the conceptual idea being represented by the literal object, understanding the qualities and characteristics of the literal object is important. These qualities and characteristics will either make the interpretation appear ridiculous or reasonable. The interpretation of the passive comparative symbol must be in some way consistent with the qualities and characteristics of the literal object.

#### Summary

Understanding the point of reference expressed through the passive comparative symbol is a much more difficult task than discovering the points of reference in the active comparative symbol. The emphasis is not upon the qualities and characteristics of the literal object, but rather the emphasis is upon that one point of reference that is intended by the author and understood by the readers or hearers of the symbol.

In understanding the one point of reference intended by the author, the interpreter must understand each symbol according to context, the perspective of the readers or

hearers, symbolic evolution, the qualifying statement, and the literal object. When these areas are researched, an understanding of the point of reference should be gained.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CATEGORIZATION OF SYMBOLS ACCORDING TO THEIR INTRINSIC NATURE IN SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

#### Introduction

As previously stated, the categorization of symbols expressed through Biblical symbolic communication fall into two basic categories. The first category identifies the symbol according to its usage in its context. The usage of the symbol sets forth the degree to which the conceptual idea can be compared and understood in light of the qualities and characteristics of the literal object. The second category, presented here in chapter six, identifies the symbol according to its intrinsic nature. The first category asks the question, "How is the symbol used?". The second category asks the question, "What is the symbol's intrinsic nature?".

The categorization of Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature is not a difficult task. By determining the categorization of Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature, the interpreter seeks to organize or classify the literal object according to its

"essential nature or constitution."<sup>1</sup> A basic structure for accomplishing this task is presented in the majority of hermeneutical books that deal with the subject of symbolism. Among these hermeneutical books, there is a high degree of agreement with regard to the basic categories that are employed to organize Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature.

In classifying symbols according to their intrinsic nature, there is a degree of flexibility. This flexibility is acceptable because categorizing symbols according to their intrinsic nature does not seek to interpret the symbol, as the categorization according to usage does, but to name the "essential nature or constitution"<sup>2</sup> of the symbol. For this reason, the determining of the intrinsic nature of Biblical symbols does not carry the importance that the determining of the usage does. The interpreter's concentration in understanding the Biblical symbol ought to be upon the usage of the symbol and thus the interpretation.

Briefly set forth in this chapter are nine basic categories that the majority of hermeneutic books which deal with symbolism have employed to categorize symbols according to their intrinsic nature. These categories are: visionary symbols, material symbols, miraculous symbols, symbolic numbers, symbolic names, symbolic colors, symbolic metals and jewels, symbolic animals and creatures, and sym-

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<sup>1</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1973), p. 606.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

bolic actions.

### Visional Symbols

Visional symbols are those symbols that are presented in the Biblical text through a vision. A. Berkeley Mickelsen states with regard to a definition for visional symbols,

"A visional symbol consists of those things which were seen by the prophet when all his mental powers were brought to new heights of perception. The symbol seen in the vision involved a common object from everyday life although it stood for something else."<sup>1</sup>

Visional symbols are those symbols in which the literal object, called the common object by Mickelsen, and the conceptual idea are presented through a vision perceived by a prophet.

Visional symbols are numerous in the Biblical text. Terry states, "...visional symbols are the most numerous and common, and many of them have special explanations,...."<sup>2</sup> Visionary symbols are numerous in the prophets because of the forceful communication that is expressed through symbolic communication. Ramm states, "The presentation of the ideational in pictures and images is also more forceful than mere verbal explication."<sup>3</sup> Visional symbols which communicate forceful expression are common throughout the prophetic

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<sup>1</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup>Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics. A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 258.

<sup>3</sup>Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 233.

literature in the Biblical text.

The majority of visional symbols are non-comparative in their usage. In these visional symbols, the qualities, characteristics, or associations of the literal object are not communicated to the conceptual idea. These visional non-comparative symbols will require special explanation from the Biblical text in order to be understood. In most cases this does not create a problem because, as Terry states, "...many of them (visional symbols) have special explanations, ...."<sup>1</sup>

An example of a visional symbol can be found in Jeremiah 1:13-16. Jeremiah 1:13,14, the heart of this visional symbolic passage, states, "And the Word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, 'What do you see?' And I said, 'I see a boiling pot facing away from the north.' Then the Lord said to me, 'Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.'"

The literal object in the visional symbol of Jeremiah 1:13-16 is a boiling pot or seething pot. The boiling pot is "facing away from the north," "that is, its front and opening were turned toward the prophet at Jerusalem, as if a furious fire were pouring its blaze upon its northern side, and was likely to overturn it and drive its boiling hot waters southward 'upon all the cities of Judah' (verse 15)."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 259.

The conceptual idea presented through the boiling pot is found in verses 14-16. The conceptual idea associated with the boiling pot is explained in the context to be an overwhelming calamity which was coming upon all the cities of Judah by means of a hostile invasion.<sup>1</sup> This visional symbol is given special explanation within the Biblical text of Jeremiah, thus giving the interpreter a certainty of understanding with regard to the conceptual idea presented through the boiling pot.

Mickelsen presents several examples of visional symbols. Mickelsen states, "For other visional symbols see: Jeremiah 1:13; chapter 24; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Daniel 2:31-35, 36-45; 7:1-8; 8; Zechariah 1:10; 1:18-19; 5:1-11; 6:1-8."<sup>2</sup>

#### Material Symbols

Material symbols are symbols which "...consist of things which can be seen, touched, felt, and used by chosen representatives of the people of God or by all the people. These are actual objects which convey a meaning beyond their material use."<sup>3</sup> Terry recognizes material symbols stating, "Other symbols are appropriately named material, because they consist of material objects, ..."<sup>4</sup>

The images of the carved cherubim, found in I Kings

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<sup>1</sup>Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 270

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Terry, pp. 257-258.

6:29-35 and II Chronicles 3:7, are examples of material symbols.

"As material symbols they stand for the holiness of God. By their location they also connote His inaccessibility (c.f. Heb. 9:8). Here are symbols of creatures who have an immediate and intimate relation with God. This symbol conveyed to the Israelites the exalted character of God."<sup>1</sup>

According to Mickelsen, other material symbols are: "the Tabernacle as a whole, the Holy and Most Holy place, the furniture in these two compartments, the altar of burnt offering and the laver of brass."<sup>2</sup>

The interpreter must beware and recognize that if a material non-comparative symbol is not given special explanation in Scripture, no definite statement can be made with regard to the meaning of the conceptual idea. "Material symbols do not constitute an opportunity for inventive genius."<sup>3</sup> In not recognizing this point, many works that deal with the hermeneutics of symbolism have fallen short.

#### Miraculous Symbols

Miraculous symbols are those symbols that are "sufficiently exceptional"<sup>4</sup> in relationship to the regularity of nature to be considered miraculous in nature.

"It is scarcely to be disputed that the cherubim and flaming sword placed at the east of Eden (Gen. iii,24), the burning bush at Horeb (Exod. iii,2), and the pillars

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<sup>1</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, pp. 271-272.

<sup>2</sup>Mickelsen, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 257.

of cloud and fire which went before the Israelites (Exod. xiii,21) were of symbolic import. In a scientific classification of symbols these are, perhaps, sufficiently exceptional to be placed by themselves, and designated as miraculously signal."<sup>1</sup>

Mickelsen also recognizes the classification of miraculous symbols in Scripture. Mickelsen states with regard to miraculous symbols,

"There are a very few external miraculous symbols. The cherubim and the flaming sword placed at the east of Eden (Gen. 3:24), testified to the rupture of fellowship between man and God. The burning bush at Horeb (Exod. 3:2) awakened Moses to a realization of the presence of God and to His awe-inspiring holiness. The pillar of cloud and fire which went before the Israelites day and night (Exod. 13:21-22) symbolized God's<sup>2</sup> presence among His people and His guidance of them."

#### Symbolic Numbers

Some interpreters recognize a symbolic import given to numbers. Ramm states with regard to the symbolic import of numbers, "There is no question that there is a basic symbolism of numbers in the Bible."<sup>3</sup> While it is not the purpose of this paper to make a judgment with regard to the validity of symbolic import given to numbers, it must be recognized that many interpreters of Scripture do recognize a basic symbolism of certain numbers.

Ramm confirms some symbolic import to numbers stating,

"Four stood for completeness and was used repeatedly with the diffusion abroad of blessings and cursings.

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<sup>1</sup>Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 235.

Some have thought seven represented the covenant of grace. Ten sometimes signifies an indefinite magnitude, and sometimes 'perfection.' Forty represents a generation."<sup>1</sup>

Although the symbolic import given to numbers is, in my opinion questionable, it must be recognized that many interpreters do accept a certain basic symbolism of Biblical numerology. The interpreter must exercise caution in this area, recognizing that no definite statement can be made concerning the symbolic import of a symbol unless there is a clear definitive statement of explanation in Scripture.

#### Symbolic Names

Names in Scripture can carry symbolic import. Personal names and places are sometimes presented in Scripture with symbolic import. Revelation 11:8 states, "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." In this verse "is an example of a place name (Jerusalem) that is identified with Sodom and Egypt because the Judaism it represented was very worldly."<sup>2</sup>

#### Symbolic Colors

Some interpreters recognize the symbolism of certain colors. The meaning given to these colors are stated from association rather than direct statement. Mickelsen states,

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup>Weston W. Fields, Hermeneutics--Syllabus (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, n.d.), supplement p. 3.

"...any symbolic import of colors comes from association."<sup>1</sup>  
 Because the symbolic import of colors comes from association, no strong definitive statement with regard to the conceptual idea of colors can be made. All conclusions with regard to the symbolism of colors based from association must be made with a degree of caution or reservation.

Mickelsen recognizes a symbolic import of colors in Revelation 6:1-8. Mickelsen states,

"The opening of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8) shows us colors in a particular context. There is a rider on a white horse, a red horse, a black horse, and a yellowish green or pale horse. From what they do, these riders seem to represent a conqueror, active combat in war, famine, and finally sickness, death, and Hades. Whether there is a symbolic correlation between color and the idea represented will always be a subjective decision."<sup>2</sup>

#### Symbolic Metals and Jewels

The validity of symbolic metals and jewels is questionable. "Of all the emblematic elements, metals and jewels are most difficult. They are usually found in lists. Whether they have symbolic import either totally (where more than one occurs) or individually is not easy to determine."<sup>3</sup>

As an example of symbolic metals, Terry states,

"The head of gold denoted Nebuchadnezzar himself, as the mighty head and representative of the Babylonian monarchy (vers. 37,38). The other parts of the image, composed of other metals, symbolized kingdoms that were subsequently to arise. The legs of iron denoted a fourth kingdom of great strength, 'forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and crushes everything' (ver. 40). The feet and toes, part iron and part clay, indicate

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<sup>1</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 275.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

the mingled strength and weakness of this kingdom in its later period (vers. 41-43)."<sup>1</sup>

### Symbolic Animals and Creatures

Animals and various creatures are presented in Scripture with symbolic import. The books of Daniel and Revelation commonly present symbolic animals and creatures to represent kings, kingdoms, or godless authorities.

Terry presents an example of symbolic animals and creatures from Daniel 7:1-8:

"The four great beasts, in Dan. vii, 1-8, are said to represent four kings that should arise out of the earth (ver. 17). The fourth beast is also defined, in verse 23, as a fourth kingdom, from which we infer that a wild beast may symbolize either a king or a kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

In the preceding example, we have animals or creatures that are used with symbolic import.

It must be noted that the symbols in Daniel 7:1-8 and similar symbols from the books of Daniel and Revelation could also be classified as visional, because they are presented through a vision. Although these symbols are visional, some interpreters have categorized them under this separate classification.

### Symbolic Actions

In Scripture actions are often presented as symbolic. Mickelsen states with regard to symbolic actions,

"Sometimes action symbolizes or suggests an idea that

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<sup>1</sup>Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 263.

lives vividly in the minds of those who observe it or who participate in the action. Emblematic action in Scripture is drama at its best. The actor not only conveys a message to himself and to others, but he is living his own life, not that of another. He and what he does become a symbol."<sup>1</sup>

The Old Testament and the lives of the Old Testament prophets are filled with examples of symbolic actions.

"In Ezekiel 4-5 the prophet builds a model of a besieged city (4:1-3). He lay on his left side for a long time and on his right side for a shorter time (4:4-8). He lived on a weighed diet and used cow dung to cook his food (4:9-17). He shaved his hair and beard, dividing the hair into three parts (5:1-4). All these are emblematic actions."<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present in summary form the categorization of Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature. These classifications are set forth in the majority of Biblical hermeneutic books with a high degree of agreement. The purpose of this chapter has not been to fully develop each classification or to argue their validity, but to merely state the classifications used by interpreters to categorize Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature.

Again it must be noted that in classifying symbols according to their intrinsic nature, there is a degree of flexibility. This flexibility is acceptable because categorizing Biblical symbols according to their intrinsic nature does not seek to interpret the symbol, as the classification

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<sup>1</sup>Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 277.

according to usage does, but to name the "essential nature or constitution"<sup>1</sup> of the symbol. Determining the essential nature or constitution of a symbol does not carry equal importance with the determining of symbolic usage.

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<sup>1</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 606.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION TO SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

A study in the field of the hermeneutics of symbolism is a difficult area of research for presentation. Few authors have given the topic enough thought to adequately develop their research into a systematic approach. This thesis has sought to set forth and develop principles that can be applied to the hermeneutics of symbolism.

The categorization of Biblical symbols expressed through symbolic communication falls into two basic categories. The first category identifies the symbol according to its usage in context. The usage of the Biblical symbol in context may be non-comparative, comparative with an active emphasis, or comparative with a passive emphasis. The second category identifies the symbol according to its intrinsic nature.

For this reason, each Biblical symbol can be characterized according to its usage in context and its intrinsic nature. The symbol of the rainbow in Genesis 9:8-17, could be categorized or classified as a passive comparative material symbol. The bread in I Corinthians 11:23-24 can be classified as a non-comparative material symbol. In

each example, the symbol's usage in context and intrinsic nature is stated.

## APPENDIX A

### SUMMARY OF THE COMPARATIVE SYMBOL

#### The Active Comparative Symbol

Major Emphasis: Resemblances

Many Points of Reference

Figures of Speech Used:

1. Simile
2. Synchrisis
3. Sometimes hypocatastasis
4. Sometimes allegory

Absence of:

1. The article
2. The demonstrative pronoun
3. The possessive pronoun

#### The Passive Comparative Symbol

Major Emphasis: Representation

One Point of Reference

Figures of Speech Used:

1. Metaphor
2. Metonymy
3. Sometimes hypocatastasis
4. Sometimes allegory

Presence of:

1. The article
2. The demonstrative pronoun
3. The possessive pronoun

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