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SYMBOLISM AND ITS USE IN  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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A Dissertation  
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The Faculty of the Department of Religious Education  
School of Theology at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Theology

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by  
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June 1967

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*This dissertation, written by*

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John Dale Foerster

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**I N T R O D U C T I O N**

## I. STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation is to make a study of symbolism in order to understand what is meant by the term; how it is structured; what is its function; what are its uses; and what are its purposes. This is done in order to discover ways and means of applying its principles and values to present life situations and experiences in the field of religious education. Also, it is hoped to be able to offer a means of reestablishing the ancient Archetypal symbols man's daily life, so his relation to nature and society may be secured, and the loss sustained by the iconoclasm of Protestantism and science may be remedied.

This study is vital at this time. Theologians and teachers and those who work in the field of art and drama are writing and speaking out concerning the need for modern man to find symbols that can aid him in his finding himself and relating himself to his world and his fellow man--both of the past and of the present. Men like Freud, Jung, and Fromm, and other leaders in the field of psychology and psychiatry, along with the Gestalt school of psychology, are stressing the need for man to return to a conscious and subconscious use of symbols. There is an awareness

of this need. Therefore, it is time religious educators began to implement their curriculum with this instrument, in order that the learner might be aided in his ability to conceptualize the truth about God and the Christian way of life.

"Our oldest values and traditions are rooted in religion", is a truth set forth by Ralph Ross in his book, Symbols and Civilization.<sup>1</sup> These values and traditions are being lost because religious belief is decaying. Religious belief decays when the most vital and persistent of our symbols and rituals die, or become lost and forgotten. Ross believes this may be the "overwhelming problem of the twentieth century".

Evidence of concern and apprehension about this general decay. A certain Monsignor of the Roman Catholic Church, speaking at a conference on the Rural Church Life in the state of Vermont, described the great town churches of his own communion as "perilously like efficiently run sacramental filling stations".<sup>2</sup> It would seem the general mechanization of urban life

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Ross, Symbols and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by F. W. Dillistone, Christianity and Symbolism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 285.

and the trend toward scientific explanations and applications to all problems of life has invaded and influenced the church to such an extent that the ancient symbolic forms, though continuing to be used, no longer relate themselves powerfully to the total structure of human life.

Father Gerald Vann's book, The Water and the Fire,<sup>3</sup> supports this view, as in it he deplors the loss of our roots in Nature; the lack of values realized today in the word "home". He not only decries the loss of these values, but "the loss of symbolism in general".

Even more serious than the rising evidence of concern in Catholic areas for this loss of symbolism, is the growing concern, or it should be called "awakening" concern, of Protestantism. For, due to the revolt of the Reformation leaders against the forms and institutions of the medieval church all symbolic forms were rejected, everything which seemed to stand in the way of the soul's direct communion with God, had to go. It was literally destroyed. All outward signs and

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<sup>3</sup>Father Gerald Vann, The Water and the Fire (New York: Collins, 1953), quoted by Dillistone, Op cit., p. 285.

and ceremonies (statues and ritual, etc.) were classed as adiaphora, especially was this true of the order of Nature.

Another voice is raised, against this decrease in the use of symbols, in the writings of Paul Tillich. In many of his works, this note of warning is sounded. To quote from one source, The Protestant Era:

The decrease in sacramental thinking and feeling in the churches of the Reformation and in the American denominations is appalling. Nature has lost its religious meaning and is excluded from participation in the power of salvation; the sacraments have lost their spiritual power and are vanishing in the consciousness of most Protestants; . . . .<sup>4</sup>

If Nature waits simply to be mastered and utilized, then its power as a symbolic medium is reduced to a minimum. Nature, in fact, "has lost its religious meaning".<sup>5</sup>

Even the psychologists are disturbed over the paucity of symbolism in the life of today's children and adults. Ira Progoff quotes C. G. Jung's concern in his book Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning,

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. xxiii. See further his chapter, "Nature and the Sacraments", Chapter VII, p. 94 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Dillistone, Op. cit., p. 287.

in these words: "Fundamentally, Jung's diagnosis of modern man is that he is suffering from a starvation of symbols".<sup>6</sup> Other leading psychologists and psychiatrists could be quoted as effectively who hold to this opinion.

A dearth of the use of this term symbol. One is surprised upon examining the books which have been written in the field of religious education since 1925, to discover the absence of this term, "symbol", or any comment on its place in thinking. (Except in some books on worship). Lewis Sherrill's book, The Gift of Power,<sup>7</sup> is one of the first to include a chapter on this vital subject and to suggest doing something with it educationally. This chapter opens the way to a needed reappraisal of, "communication through symbols" [His title]. It calls upon those who are responsible to teach to give serious consideration to this connotative process as a tool that does more than point to something beyond itself.

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<sup>6</sup>Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning (New York: Julian Press, 1953), p. 292.

<sup>7</sup>Lewis Joseph Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), Chapter VI, "Communication Through Symbols", p. 119 ff.

Further reasons for this dissertation will be seen as it progresses through the answers to the questions, What is a symbol?; What is its structure?; What is its purpose?; What is its use?; What is its function? It can be demonstrated that there are values to be received from ancient symbols of the faith when they are presented for renewal. It is hoped this activity will point to a method, suggesting ways of looking for new symbols, with some suggestions as to what one age group can do in the church school. It is also hoped a method will evolve for the teacher to make an approach toward creating new symbols out of the materials at hand that are appropriate for their day by day experiences.

The teacher will use symbols consciously, or unconsciously. Good communication demands their use. Many writers in the field of symbolism express the concept that there cannot be any learning if symbols are neglected, for there cannot be any communication without the use of symbols. In fact, many say there cannot be any thought without the employment of symbols --for man cannot think except in symbols.



## II. STATEMENT OF METHOD AND SOME QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

In presenting this dissertation, "Symbolism and its use in Religious Education", the intent is to aid the teacher in utilizing that which is considered a natural tendency of Man to conceptualize what would be otherwise un-understandable due to its profundity, its abstractness, or its unknownness, by means of signs and symbols. It will never be the intent nor the objective to suggest, or infer, the use of symbols as a substitute for faith or God, but rather as a help in developing a strong faith and an evaluation of facts and, thus, a better understanding of truth. Nor, will it be an attempt to rationalize the unseen, as is often the case in the mythopoetic approach.

While it may be true that man has repeatedly been concerned to create a symbol, and even use objects in order to try to visualize God or gods, or to enshrine his presence in order that "at will he could invoke that presence and that power", this is not our intent or purpose. Such use of symbols is akin to magic, and has theurgic implications for coercive purposes.

In this dissertation, the intent is to present

the symbol as a tool, or an instrument for learning, to serve as a bridge that will enable the student to go from the known to the unknown; to serve for the student as a guide or an arrow directing him as a good sign, to something that is greater (more full) than that for which he observes it to stand; to provide a better means of communication of ideas that will permit a more satisfactory and a more complete perception of basic truth.

It is hoped to show that this use of symbols will enhance the memory and be an aid in recalling an incident with which it was associated, or give a better understanding of the truth in the message received, thus, bringing about a change (learning) in the attitude and growth and development, so that a better way of life can be achieved. While it is thought such a facility would renew and reinforce choice behavior, it would never serve as a conditioned reflex type of action.<sup>8</sup>

An attempt will be made to show the teacher that many symbols are no longer valid or understandable in

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<sup>8</sup>As Pavlov's experiment which trained a dog to salivate at the ringing of a bell, which can be a wrong usage: "symbols for signs."

the form in which they were originally presented and, hence, if they cannot be up-dated, should be purged. Also, it would be most vital to the learning process, if the teacher could help the learner discover ways of transference of objects into usable symbols, and if symbols could be devised that would better aid the learner to live in, and adjust, to his environment because they were symbols that came out of his own experience.

Illimitable possibilities are inherent in this subject, and due to its vastness, certain limitations will be imposed on the scope of this dissertation. It is confined to a definition of the subject, and then an attempt will be made to answer questions that should give a basis for adapting the theory to practice and use. The treatment of this theme can barely serve as an adequate introduction to the subject and western concepts about it. (No attempt will be made to bring in any of the oriental concepts with its great mass of symbols). It will be necessary also to omit from this discussion, the role that sounds (language), words, music, art, myth, drama, metaphore and parables, as well as that of the wonder story play in the total gamut of signs and symbols. Still one is keenly aware of them and their toll in our world and life, and it

will be necessary to refer and contrast these subjects to the topic of symbols for clarity, or to add fullness to an illustration, or serve as a point of departure.

The attempt to answer the following questions is done in order to define and limit; to provide answers that will serve as a ground for the teacher's further development and application of this natural faculty of Man to conceptualize the abstract by means of the concrete materials at his disposal.

1. What is a symbol?
2. What is its structure?
3. What is its purpose?
4. What is its function?
5. Use of symbols in religious education.

The method of procedure will be that of commentator. Some speculative deductions will be made concerning possible applications to the field of education as a guide to the teacher and the worker in the field of religious education. Several examples of symbols are selected to relate the purpose of this dissertation to the practical experience of the learner.

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS A SYMBOL?

#### The Problem of Definition.

The "technique" or treatment of a problem begins with its first expression as a question. Dr. James M. Robinson, speaking on the subject "Kerygma and History in the New Testament", at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at its One Hundredth Anniversary in New York, began his paper by rephrasing the assigned question. He said, "the way a question is asked limits and disposes the ways in which any answer to it--right or wrong--may be given".<sup>1</sup> It is highly important, therefore, to start with a definition of the key word of this dissertation "symbol" as it is to be understood and used in this instance.

Definition of the term symbol. For a definition of the term symbol, according to the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, "A symbol is a visible sign or emblem of some thought, emotion or experience, interpreting what can be really grasped only by the mind and the imagination by something which enters into the

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<sup>1</sup>Writer's own notes at the time of lecture. December 1964, Union Seminary, New York.

files of observation".<sup>2</sup>

In western thought, a symbol is usually something which "represents", which "fits". We "apply symbols" for example, when we "apply words to things or names to persons; and these symbols "stand for" the things to which they have been "applied". We speak of "inventing" symbols. Our social scientist, worrying over this age which has lost its values, speak of the need to "create new symbols", as to impart value to meaningless life.<sup>3</sup>

In the New English Dictionary, symbol is defined as, "Something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else, (not by exact resemblance but by vague suggestion or by some accidental or conventional relation)".<sup>4</sup>

Definition of the term sign. Symbols have been defined as "signs". A sign is something that points to that which is greater than itself. An instance of which is the sign-post along the road pointing the direction for the traveler to the city toward which he is bound. A symbol is a sign, but it is much more than a sign, for while it points to that which is greater than itself, it can also enter into (participate) in

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<sup>2</sup>J. Gamble, "Symbolism", Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), XII, 139.

<sup>3</sup>Dorothy D. Lee, "Symbolism and Value" in Symbols and Value (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>New English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

the thing to which it points. One might illustrate this by introducing a Church spire. It is a sign pointing man's thoughts upward to God and at the same time it is part of the Church itself and suggests the corporate fellowship of the Kingdom of God participating in the role it plays. A symbol is a tool (an instrument) of communication. It conveys information, it suggests something to the beholder and can provide stimulation to action. Symbols, as tools of communication, begin as signs that have a special power of evocation (those symbols that cause emotion and can instigate action over and beyond their simple efficiency as indicators of meaning, which connote more than they denote, and which are frequently referred to as "charged"), a critical example of which is the flag as compared with the alphabet. Primitive man "created" and used power symbols (Charged with meaning and hereinafter referred to as "charged") to evoke action from the gods. We know that a flag flying will not win a battle, but what we do see and believe is that a man can be inspired by the flag to courageous action. It is also true that certain words or emblems, which have special meaning for him, can and do create courageous action when brought to his attention.

Differentia between symbol and theurgy. There is a real need to distinguish religious symbolism from other terms and uses that have either accrued to it over the years or which have been misapplied because of ignorance or deliberate intent. In addition to the important difference between sign and symbol, there is the need to distinguish carefully religious symbolism from theurgy. Mordecai M. Kaplan points this out in an essay, "The Future of Religious Symbolism--A Jewish View";

To get to the heart of religious symbolism, we must learn to distinguish it from theurgy. Genuine religious symbolism is a late development in religion. It obtains when rites and observances are practiced for what they do to stir the mind and the heart religiously. They are a means of enabling man to commune with himself or his fellow man about things divine. On the other hand, if they are supposed to influence directly any supernatural being to extend help or to withhold from doing harm, they are theurgic.<sup>5</sup>

Organizing function of emotions. It has been said above that certain signs and symbols have a special power--evocative--to cause emotion in a person who beholds them. This is another very important reason why symbols are necessary for learning. This point will

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<sup>5</sup>Mordecai M. Kaplan, "The Future of Religious Symbolism--A Jewish View", in Ernest F. Johnson (ed.), Religious Symbolism (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), pp. 204-205.



be discussed more fully under the subject of "Using Symbols to Discipline Emotions". Suffice it at this time to simply note that there is an aspect of the organizing function of emotions which appears in its relation to learning. There is very strong evidence for the view that emotion negatively effects the learning process.<sup>6</sup>

Comparative differences. Kaplan goes on to call our attention to the fact that there is a great amount of difference between religious symbolism and theurgy, suggesting the comparative difference to be noted as that which is between our understanding and use of astronomy and our understanding and use of astrology, as an example.<sup>7</sup>

Theurgy is the display of objects or the performance of actions with a view to setting in motion superhuman forces assumed to reside in animate or inanimate beings, or in the environment generally, so that they come to one's aid or are prevented from doing harm. Those forces, whether regarded as invisible or as residing in visible objects are of demoniac character. They lack the kind of divine personality that came to figure in the more developed religions of pre-Christian civilization. They act, as it were, automatically, in response to the

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<sup>6</sup>P. T. Young, Emotion in Man and Animal (New York: Wiley, 1943), pp. 29-30.

<sup>7</sup>Kaplan, Op. cit., p. 205.

theurgic object or action, just as the electric lamp lights up or the bell rings when an electric button is pressed.<sup>8</sup>

Theurgy is an attempt to master environment.

Theurgy is a result of early man's fear of unknown forces and an attempt on his part to overcome the dangers that beset him at every turn whose cause he could not determine. It was an attempt on his part to master his environment; to gain some measure of control over it. His belief in spirits, demons and ghosts as causes of effects he could not fathom, caused him to develop a vocabulary of terms to express his experiences and as a result such terms as mana, wakanda, orenda, beraka were used to express the unexplainable. When he went hunting or fishing, if an unusual thing happened and he had good fortune that day, he related the unusual happening to the odd thing and attributed his success to it (the unusual incident) and tried again to recapitulate the event or happening the next time--soon developing a ritual to invoke the "spirit" or bring about his success. This was true in all his experiences,

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<sup>8</sup>Demonic forces are those which Tillich defines as: ". . . the state of estrangement of man and his world from God. This estranged world is ruled by structures of evil, symbolized as demonic powers". Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), I, 27.

especially in hunting, war and marriage. This is strongly brought out in the history of Christianity and in the experiences of the Emperor Constantine when in the year 300 A. D., he was going into battle and he had a dream the night before in which he saw a banner in the sky with the cross of Christ emblazoned upon it and around the cross the words, "In Hoc Signo Vinces". When he awoke from his dream he caused such a banner to be made and fighting under it, he conquered his enemy. This victory then motivated him to later declare Christianity a legal religion in the empire. These procedures were not symbolic, as we define symbolic, nor is this proper use. For as Kaplan proceeds to say:

. . . there comes a time when, together with the complexity of human life and culture, the human mind acquires the intellectual capacity to distinguish between impersonal forces acting blindly or automatically and personal forces such as arise in human relations; hate, love, jealousy, anger or pity. It is then that the vaguely conceived spirits, demons, etc., acquire in the mind of man, humanlike traits and are regarded as entering into personal relations analogous to those of parents to their children, masters to their servants, or kings to their subjects. The inherited rites and observances are no longer merely theurgic, but begin to take on meaning of some kind, usually as part of mythology. The now divinized spirits and demons are thought of as playing a role which grows out of their presumed interest in man. That is the beginning, or promise, of genuine religious symbolism.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Kaplan, Op. cit., p. 205.

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Caution in creation of power symbols. One must be very careful in the creation of power symbols (charged) which would sustain or inspire our spiritual strength, lest one revert to magic. Christianity cannot tolerate magic or the theurgic use of symbols and signs. This use of them is coercive, it provides the person with a tool that forces that person's own desire on God's will and would, if this were possible, put man in control of God. Furthermore, magic is static and permits no action of the Holy Spirit.

The Relation of Symbol to Myth.

Differentiation. While it is not the intent to develop the place of myth in life and experience of man, it is necessary to differentiate between the terms of myth and symbol. It will clarify the concept of the symbol if it is understood in its relation to myth. The word "myth" gives rise to the term "mysticism", which in the Greek means "secrecy and silence". This is not to be supposed, as has been the tendency on the part of some to think of "myth" as a means of creating confusion and disguise. It will be seen later on that this only "seems" to be the case. Rather, the word "myth" is akin to the concept in the Indian word,

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"Upanished", which means when translated "secret wisdom".<sup>10</sup> This use of the word implies a revelation of a deeper understanding in simple terms in a more memorable form.

What is really meant by this term "Myth"? It is often confused with fairy tales and thought of as fiction and made up of materials that are untrue. Myth is often confused with symbolism and one is often mistaken for the other. This is due to the fact that they have much in common. Since they have this commonality in so many ways, it will be good to examine this instrument of thought in relation to symbols.

Myth is narrative. Originally mythos (muthois--  
 μύθος ) meant "that which is uttered by the mouth". Hence, myth is a narrative, a story. Not just any kind of story, but a particular type of story, not historical and yet dealing with events or facts that were, or are, historical. It stands for a narrative that deals with the chief aspects of the life of Nature in symbolical form. A myth may be a beacon that gives assurance, direction and meaning to life.

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<sup>10</sup>Martin Foss, Symbol and Metaphore in Human Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1949), p. 2.

dealing with an event that is rooted in the everlasting ground beneath the surface of history. A myth is a story that is truer than truth itself.

Purpose of myth. George Sebba writing in a chapter, "Symbol and Myth in Modern Rationalistic Societies" for a work edited by Thomas J. J. Altizer,<sup>11</sup> quotes from Sir Maurice Bowra as to the purpose of myths:

Myth is a story which aims, not at giving pleasure for its own sake but at alleviating perplexities which trouble pre-scientific man because his reason is not yet ready to grasp them . . . The mythical explanation . . . is more emotional than rational and works not by describing cause and effect, but by associating one kind of experience with another and suggesting a connection or similarity between them . . . Myths bring the unknown into relation with the known and help to break down the barriers between men and the intractable mass of phenomena which surrounds them.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Eliade's presentation of "Myth--Paradigmatic Model" is to be accepted as it sets forth the true work of myth because it "relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, ab initio", and so fulfills its function of "revealing a mystery", since the persons

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas J. J. Altizer, Truth, Myth and Symbol (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 150.

<sup>12</sup>Sir Maurice Bowra, The Greek Experience (New York: American Library, 1959), p. 115.

of the myth are supra human (gods or cultural heroes) and the acts they performed were done at the beginning of history and are an attempt to explain these cosmological events which would be otherwise unknowable. Hence, it is telling of "how something came to be, its origin, what really happened".<sup>13</sup>

Difficulty in giving a clear theory. It is almost impossible to give a perfectly clear theory concerning myth or mythology. Almost every writer on this subject has expressed the great difficulty in establishing a clear theory for it. Cassirer, for instance, in his great work, An Essay On Man, says that:

Myth is non-theoretical in its meaning and essence. It defies and challenges our fundamental categories of thought. Its logic--if there is logic--is incommensurate with all our conceptions of imperical or scientific truth.<sup>14</sup>

What to include in myth. Not only is there difficulty in establishing a clear theory of myth, but there is also difficulty in establishing an agreement as to what is permissible to include in myth--what materials can be used. However, Malinowski contends:

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<sup>13</sup>Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 95.

<sup>14</sup>Ernst Cassirer, An Essay On Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 73.

Every myth possesses as its kernel or ultimate reality some natural phenomenon or other, elaborately woven into a tale to an extent that sometimes almost masks or obliterates it. There is no agreement as to what type of natural phenomenon lies at the bottom of most mythological productions.<sup>15</sup>

It is no wonder then, that some think of myth as a faculty that endeavors not to clarify but to hide, to confuse, to disguise, to blur and above all to conceal that which man fears and would not face. While this is an ingenious theory it just does not obtain for the exact opposite is its intent.

Definition of myth. Van der Leeuw, as a religious historian, describes myth "as a verbal celebration of a religious event".<sup>16</sup> Or, as Altizer has said, "myth, like ritual, is a mode of encounter with the sacred which makes possible the continuous re-presentation, or re-evocation of a primitive sacred event".<sup>17</sup> "Myth negates the profane world of concrete time and space".<sup>18</sup>

Myth is sole language of the deeper moments of

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<sup>15</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth In Primitive Psychology (New York: Norton, 1926), pp. 12 ff.

<sup>16</sup>G. Van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, trans. J. E. Turner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 413.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas J. J. Altizer, Truth, Myth and Symbol (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 150.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 94.



religion.

(a) Myths are more or less modified accounts of historical facts, of people raised to the rank of gods, as happened in historical time with Alex the Great;

(b) Myths express the conflicts inherent in the natural world, for which reason gods had to be supernatural, cosmic symbols;

(c) Myths are the fabulous expression of philosophical or moral ideas. (Can be all three things at once). Or, better still, they are concrete historical realities, that they are at once cosmic and natural; myths then embrace history, the physical world, and the psychic world.<sup>19</sup>

It can then be said that myth is a story that relates a present day phenomena (experience of a reality) to its possible origin on creation by gods or cultural heroes in the unknown past and thus reveals a mystery. It is a method by which the symbolical can be expressed and its meaning interpreted and communicated. It is a memory device to perpetuate and disseminate truth (reality) to the literals and illiterate as it entertains and informs; as it brings security and unanimity to clan and individuals.

#### Source of Models For Myth.

Nature as a model. The chief stages in the

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<sup>19</sup>J. E. Cirlog, A Dictionary of Symbolism (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1962), p. XLIV.

life of Nature with which it deals were early and universally recognized: Creation, Re-creation, Birth, Death, Storm, (Struggle), Darkness and Light, the Changing phases of the Moon, the Seasons, and the Sun. Myth was the pattern (rather the mirror) of the universe expressed in pictorial language and served as a unifying framework within which the ordinary life of thought could find a norm of reference and a stability within which society could find a universal discourse. It is interesting to note that in every people there is a commonality (notitiae communes) "common notions", concerning the same experiences, found the world over in every tribe and peoples, and at all times (for myth must deal with time and space). These common notions deal with these same fundamental truths and there is an attempt on their part to explain and use this common knowledge to their advantage. This results in differences in detail and ritual by acts that are designed in liturgies to answer the same questions or coerce the unknown to do their bidding. Perhaps this is best seen in the stoic doctrine of "sympathy of the whole" ( συμπάθεια τῶν ὅλων ) which, according to Cassirer, "in a certain sense expresses very concisely that fundamental belief which is at the bottom of all

magic rituals".<sup>20</sup> It may be detected in such epics as the biblical "Creation Story" and in its counterpart (some say its inspiration and source) the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, to cite only one of many examples.

Society as a model. The French sociologist, Durkheim, and his disciples contend that myth has its origin in man's social life. That not Nature, but society is the true model of myth. That all its fundamental motives are projections of man's experiences in society; that by these projections, nature becomes the image of the social world. However much truth there may be in this approach, myth cannot be said to be the outgrowth of any one phase of man's existential experience, but rather, that myth is the reflection of any one or several or even the sum total of all of man's experiences at any one time or over a period of time. Myth is the result of "reflection from the over-flow of powerful emotions reflected in tranquility", as Wordsworth has said about poetry, as man tried to explain events, actions or reactions, either past or present with some hope of trying to understand the future. This sets forth three basic types of myth

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<sup>20</sup>Cassirer, Op. cit., p. 94.

for religion: (1) archaic religion (Past), (2) mystical religion (Present), and prophetic eschatological religion (Future).

Feeling as source and control of myth. As long as man has sensitivity--feelings--myth will be created and used to control such situations as man experiences but cannot fully explain to his own satisfaction and the satisfaction of others. Therefore, this elementary form of human experience can be easily reconstructed, for civilized man has not lost his original power to conceptualize in this manner. When one is under great strain or great emotional experience, one still has the ability of dramatizing them in a way that releases, satisfies and delineates so that it can be understood by others both for the present and the time to come. That which appears is not always its true phenomenological form, it no longer wears its usual face; "their physiognomy is abruptly changed; events and things become tinged with the specific color of our ruling passions, of love or hate, of fear or hope".<sup>21</sup> Myth has as its source and its control, man's "feeling--qualities".

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

Myth's Basic Drive.

Transference. This contrast of Christian belief and non-Christian belief in this symbol illustrates the universality of a symbol and the transfer of concepts within the framework of man's experience and the relatedness of how myth can verbalize the sign or symbol for an understanding of nature. Particularly is this true as it pertains to one of man's great fears and reflects, his drive to conquer that fear (death), and find an answer to his search for eternal life. This seems to have been a very dominant theme for mankind throughout his entire early history and in a large measure his chief concern today, but it now takes other forms of expression.

Myth is dynamic. It is very well attested that the world of myth is dramatic--and, as such, is dynamic. It presents a world of actions, of forces, of conflicting powers. In every phenomenon of nature it sees the collision of these powers. When a comparison is made of myth with symbol, it is easily seen that this is one of the characteristics that sets the two apart. For while symbols may cause one to act in a certain way, by no means can they be called dramatic or dynamic in themselves. On the other hand,

mythical perception is always impregnated with emotions. Whatever is seen or felt is surrounded by a special atmosphere--an atmosphere of grief, of anguish, of excitement, of exultation or depression. In this, it cannot be spoken of as a "thing" or dead or indifferent stuff. But, "all things are benignant or malignant, friendly or inimical, familiar or uncanny, alluring and fascinating or repellent and threatening", as Cassirer says so well in his Essay On Man.<sup>22</sup>

Myth as norm. The New Testament writers, particularly Paul, decried the use of myth in any form. They equated it with fiction as opposed to the Logos ( λόγος ) which for them stood for the true narrative. Logos was the symbolical language to be used, describing what otherwise could not be adequately represented--"God became flesh" or the doctrine of the Incarnation. Logos was the vehicle of the divine Word, and for them became the logos itself. Thus, it speaks of God and man in relationship one to another

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

and of the forms which the divine human encounter effects.

Necessity of a standard reference. It is necessary to have some permanent standard of reference, some biblical norm, to which theological conceptions can be referred, though this does not mean that the pictorial and irrational should have primacy over the definable and rational or that the historical should be subjected to the mythological. It does, however, mean that myth can communicate something which conceptual thought cannot. Since this is true, it behooves the religious educator to give thought to ways and means of employment of myth to enforce the symbol as a means of communicating the truths already received (Bible) and to give meaning and understanding to its relevancy for the present. Then the learner will have something concrete to refer to and not have to rely on his own evaluations but have a frame of reference that will give stability to his life.

Dangers To Be Aware Of In Use Of Myth.

Form instead of truth. Taking the last statement first, 'the stability and frame of reference' can become too stable and stylized. Thus, preventing the learner from getting a new Gestalt and so creating

a new symbol which might better convey the truth for his time and milieu. It may even make a fetish out of the Bible. The learner may come to worship the form instead of the truth which was meant to be conveyed.

Obscurantism. A second danger to be considered is that of obscurantism. Both myth and symbol may darken the mind instead of enlightening it due to past experiences or other associations. It may also produce distortion if it is misunderstood or misapplied. This may come about in time because the original application of the myth or symbol no longer obtains or its reason for use is long past. The symbol is dead and stands for nothing that is known presently. Its continued use is only a cluttering of the mind and needs to be purged. This continued use of a symbol long after it has ceased to be functional, tends to impute some secret power to it and it becomes an Icon (a picture of veneration for itself) and tends to lend itself to magic belief, a "thing" or "object" that would have power in itself--theurgic, to be used as a coercive force. Myth for myth's sake is of no value in religious education. Myth for chrystalization of thought and expression of truth in a form to be grasped and that will enable the learner to be "grasped by truth" is of infinite worth.



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Foundation Of Christian Symbolism.

What is the foundation of Christian symbolism?

One thinks of a symbol as standing for something else (representing something else) and one imagines that as soon as that "something else" is grasped, the symbol has served its purpose and is no longer of any use. However, it is this very thing, the "something else", to which it points that is the reality to be conveyed, that can be communicated each time the symbol is presented, that marks its true value and necessity.

"Symbols", as the primary meaning of the Greek word symbolon suggests, are tallies. They were two halves of corresponding pieces of bone or any other objects which two strangers or any other two contracting parties, broke between them in order to have proof of the identity of the presenter of the other part. In its more general use, symbol includes any token which serves to identify and any like guarantee in the relation of the affairs of men. The particularity and the universality of the symbol are inseparably conjoined; it is the mark, immediately and unmistakably recognizable, of a relation which requires, without question or argument, actions of a particular kind.

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As symbalo. Cyril C. Richardson, Washburn Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York, in an essay, "The Foundation of Christian Symbolism",<sup>23</sup> points out by means of using the symbols of the early church found in the Catecombs, what this means for him. He begins by going back to the etymology of the word symbalo, which takes for its meaning as a "Sign by which one knows or infers something", and from the extended sense of symbalo--to compare, hence, to conjecture or infer.

As medical term. Every area of life seems to use the word symbol and every area seems to use it in a slightly different way. In the medical world it was used to mean a symptom, or a distinctive mark for a special characteristic; in masonry it came to be used as a sign of identification of work performed by a master mason; in Church it has been used to many purposes; one of which was applied to the creeds and confessions and is identified with the "Symbolical Books", or the basic doctrines of the church. And yet, the deeper significance of the word "symbol"

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<sup>23</sup>Cyril C. Richardson, "The Foundation of Christian Symbolism", in Johnson, Op. cit., p. 1.

lies in the more original sense of the verb "to bring together". Richardson attempts to show in three ways just how the symbol "brings together".

First: It is the means by which something is made intelligible or accessible to us. For this to happen, events or truths must be brought together into a coherent pattern--that is what the symbol does.<sup>24</sup> (More will be done with this under the topic of "Function of Symbol". This will be seen to be one of its basic functions and worths).

To illustrate, he asked the question, 'Who is Peter?' and answers by showing that the painting in the Catacombs on a sarcophagi is not a series of events in Peter's life, but is a naive, simple picture of a bearded man striking a rock and of water flowing from it. This is not Moses, for Moses is depicted as beardless and as one removing his shoes while Peter, with a beard, is standing by him striking the rock. It signifies that Peter is the new Moses, and like Moses he receives the Law from God and, like Moses, strikes the rock so that the water of life can come forth from the law; Peter--Cephas is the rock and the founder of the Church (sic!). And he came to Rome to make available the water of Baptism. Peter baptized the first Gentile, Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), and

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

further there is depicted the Gentile legionnaires drinking from the water gushing from the Rock. Here the symbol tells all about Peter, the lawgiver, the rock, who brings the waters of baptism to the Gentiles. It is a unified, coherent whole.

Second: It is the cohesive factor in a society. It is the meaningful center. It gives shape and patterns to its belief and conduct. It is not society that gives symbol its meaning, but the symbol that gives society its meaning.<sup>25</sup> Not for nothing did the Latins speak of the Credo as symbolum. More was meant than that the Creed was the distinctive mark of the Christians. It was the Creed as the comprehensive affirmation of the Faith, which bound the society together and gave it direction and sustenance. It was the affirmation of truth to which the society gave unconditional allegiance. It was the core of their social beings.

Third: In its capacity to comprehend an almost infinite number of meanings and relationships. The fact that these are brought together into a simple single whole, gives the symbol its foundation. We can notice this in our dreams. A single figure or incident will sum up a whole complicated series of patterns and relationships.<sup>26</sup>

Here Richardson uses the sign of the fish to illustrate. He asks the questions, "Whence did it (the use of the fish) arise? Was it because it was discovered that I-ch-th-u-s formed an acrostic, being the initial

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<sup>25</sup>It was said of myth that it was engendered out of society and that society was the pattern for myth by the French Sociologist Durkheim and his disciples. N. B. this difference.

<sup>26</sup>Johnson, Op. cit., p. 1 ff.

letters of the words, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior?'<sup>27</sup> He then points out that there were two predisposing factors in the Christian environment which helped in the choice of this symbol:

- (1). The Gospel had its origin among the fisher-folk of Galilee.
- (2). The fish from time immemorial had appeared to man as a mysterious creature, fit to be venerated, for its existence depended upon conditions that are precisely opposite of those favorable to man.<sup>28</sup>

To hasten: Jesus was God, revealed in the water of baptism. But, the fish was also food. The tag of Augustine: "Piscus assus, Christus est passus". (The fish which was eaten is the Christ who suffered), gives us another connection. This God revealed in the baptism is also the God of the Eucharist. Coupled with it is also the idea of the heavenly banquet so that it is also eschatological. Add to this that the fish is also a symbol of the resurrection. For Christ reminded those who sought a sign that the only sign that would be given would be the sign of Jonah.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>Richardson, Op. cit., p. 10-61.

<sup>29</sup>Matthew 12:40; 16-4 (R.S.V.).

The fish noted is also thought to be the dolphin, which in the pagan world was believed to be the friend of man, the savior of the shipwrecked sailor, and the guide of the dead through the underworld. The dolphin also represented music--hence, it became the symbol of "the new song in the new world of the Christian".

The fish then means practically everything in the early Christian faith. Baptism, Resurrection, Eucharist, and the Kingdom are caught up into this one central symbol. Through the sign of the fish, the truths of the Christian faith are made into one coherent whole.<sup>30</sup>

This then, will serve to illustrate some of the

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<sup>30</sup>Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), V, 31 ff.

"To both Dolger and Cumont it seemed that the Christians first adopted the fish symbol in Syria, (Ichthys, I, 141,443). It seemed to Dolger that it was adopted as a missionary device to oppose the cults of Atargatis and of the Cabiri and the "Thracian Rider". Christians, he said, could not have 'borrowed the symbol out of any Mysteries', since the Christian fathers hated the Mysteries so thoroughly.

Cumont in PW, IX, 848, followed Dolger in this. See also an article in Journal of Biblical Literature LXIV, 1945, pp. 145-182., by Goodenough, "John A Primitive", and I certainly agree that it is the oriental fish symbol which appears in John VI, the earliest explicit acceptance of the fish

ways in which symbols "bring together many meanings". The symbol forms our contact with different aspects of reality, because it makes them an intelligent whole;

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as a eucharistic symbol and symbol of the Savior who was eaten in the Eucharist.

The fish, however, was frequently represented in the west as a substitute for wine in the scene of the Last Supper. The earliest of such scenes are in the Catacombs of St. Callistus in Rome; Fig. 47 (3) (From Wilpert, Pitture, Plate 41, No. 4; Cf. plate 27, No. 2 and 41, No. 3.) is one of the scenes in that Catacomb. The baskets in these scenes show that the painting interprets the Last Supper in terms of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, as does the Fourth Gospel . . . Schefftelowitz discussed the fish under four heads: First, the faithful were themselves little fishes in Judaism as well as Christianity; secondly, the fish in Judaism was the Messiah, as for Christians he was the Christ; thirdly, the fish was in both religions a sacramental food; fourthly, the fish was for Jews and Christians alike a symbol of the hope of immortality.

Another interesting study is to be found in R. Eisler, Fisch--Symbol, where he drew heavily upon Schefftelowitz's work for his chapter, "The Sabbatic Fish-Meal of the Jews and the Banquet of the Last Days", in his Orpheus, pp. 221-225.

"Tertullian, in a most important passage called the Christians little fishes: "But we little fishes, according to our Ichthys Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor are we saved in any other way than by remaining in the water". (De Baptismo, I). This statement comes out in sudden contrast to Tertullian's denunciation of the heretical teachings of a woman of Canaanite sect, who, because she denied the validity of baptism with water, says T., "was a viper of the dry land in contrast to us little fish".

it brings together society, knitting it into a cohesive group; the symbol comprehends a great number of meanings and relationships, bringing all into a single unit so that their intimate connection with each other may not be lost.<sup>31</sup>

#### Relation Of Symbol To Sign.

Definition. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition, "a sign is primarily a motion, action, or gesture, by which a thought is expressed, a command given, or a wish made known",<sup>32</sup> its purpose is to convey an intention or to give a direction. For the purpose of this dissertation, the use of the word "sign" shall be understood to mean a pattern, either static or dynamic, which is designed (de-sign-ated) to bring about an appropriate action immediately and accurately. The form of the sign usually has a direct correspondance to the appropriate reaction. One must be very careful in addressing the thought of "pattern"

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., V, 10, See also Franz Dolger; Ichthus (Aschendorff, Muenster, 1922-28). (A thorough discussion of the symbolism of the fish). C. Hopkins and P. V. Baur, The Christian Church at Dura-Europos (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

<sup>32</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. C. Merriam, 1951).



to "sign" lest one get involved in the concept of symbolism. For it is at this point that sign and symbol can merge and come to mean the same thing. This connection of sign and symbol can and does raise some real problems. The Jews asked Jesus for a sign and to this request Jesus replied, "No sign shall be given you except the sign of Jonah".<sup>33</sup> It can quickly be seen that Jesus refused the "way of sign" but resorted to a "way of symbols" to impart secret information.

Michael Roberts sets forth an interesting difference between sign and symbol in his book, Critique of Poetry, by suggesting that;

"Signs are logical and appeal to man's intellect; symbols are sensory and appeal to man's emotions. Signs develop out of experiences already familiar and out of assumptions already taken for granted; symbols introduce elements of surprise, of pleasure, of harmony, of resolution of conflict. Signs emphasize correspondance; symbols lay greater stress on contrast. Signs are constructed by the exercise of careful and sustained rational thought; symbols emerge out of the patient exercise of the imagination . . ." <sup>34</sup>

In this way, it can be readily seen that both of these terms are of vital importance in religious education and it is important to keep their origin and use

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<sup>33</sup>Luke 11:29-30 (R.S.V.).

<sup>34</sup>Michael Roberts, Critique of Poetry (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1934), p. 40-41.

clearly in mind, especially is this true when one is teaching the truth about the sacraments. Because a sign is not always intrinsically related to what it interprets, while a symbol is intrinsically related to what it represents or expresses, as Tillich has so well expressed in his theology concerning the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.<sup>35</sup> In which case, the material assumes the identity and the prerogatives of the spiritual and the results are either the establishment of a fetish or a theurgic use is made of it.

Types of sign and methods of presentation.

Further delination would direct us to the fact that most "signs" today are those used in connection with man's travels. On the road there are signs of direction, parking signs, speed limits, danger (curves, hills, crossroads, etc.,) some signs may be in the form of pictures (images) or in words, or in colored lights; some signs may be in the nature of sounds, sirens, buzzers, bells; some may be in the form of odors (as designed to detect leaking fumes of butane gas, a strong onion odor is added). Signs may be presented by way of eye, nose or throat, or even through other senses, such as heat or cold, but in all

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<sup>35</sup>Tillich, Op. cit., III, 123.

cases they are designed to bring about some appropriate form of action at a specific time and situation. In other words, a sign as we think of it in terms of today, is usually practical in its purpose. It is a short hand way of communication of information to one speedily, simply and clearly. The better the sign the more effective it will be in aiding one to make a quick and decisive action.

Basic quality of sign. Distinctions can be listed and contrasts set forth between the sign and the symbol and yet it is almost impossible to arrive at one agreed terminology that will adequately give a single, simple definition that is totally satisfying. One last addition may be made to give succinctly this opportunity: The basic quality of a sign is that it acts as a substitute either for a particular stimulus or for a response to the stimulus. To make another reference to the opening gambit in this section illustrated by the quotation from Cassirer's Essay On Man,<sup>36</sup> man communicates by sign and symbol, but animals communicate by sign. Man uses signs to indicate "things" but uses symbols to "represent things"--to go

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<sup>36</sup>Cassirer, An Essay On Man, p. 31-32.

beyond that which seems to be or appears in objective form.

The Relation Of Symbol To Metaphore.

Definition of metaphore. In order to establish a clear relationship of the term symbol to metaphore an explicit definition from Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary for metaphore is set forth as:

A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used for another, by way of suggesting a likeness or an analogy between them as (the ship plows the sea).<sup>37</sup>

Hence, for our purpose the metaphore may be used as a descriptive process by way of comparison or modification. And as such becomes an evaluation of the symbol and a device to relate by way of contrast or comparison. It is usable in religious education simply because the simile and the symbol are valuable to it in the same way as any word is valuable as a means of expression and impression, by way of communicating knowledge.

Term goes beyond dictionary meaning. Metaphore tends to convey a meaning that goes beyond the

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<sup>37</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

dictionary meaning of the word or words and thus extends knowledge. This is particularly true in drama and poetry. Martin Foss gives a clear working of the metaphoric process that extends knowledge in his chapter "Metaphore and Simile":

The metaphorical process, however, is different: here the known symbols in their relation to each other are only material; they undergo a complete change in losing their familiar meaning in each other and give birth to an entirely new knowledge beyond their fixed and addible multitude. Creation, judged from the level of fixed symbols, arises out of destruction, and out of seeming conflict and out of a loss of familiarity. And only in this way the "new" can come to life. "Creatio ex nihilo" means just this: that the parts are transformed to a "nothing" with regard to that which has become life.<sup>38</sup>

For Foss then, a "creation" is "new" and "unique" only in what is lost of the old or in what has disappeared, rather than a comparison with other objects. Hence, it "goes beyond the explicit definition which is usually found in dictionary forms of the Aristotelian logicians process of per genus et differentiam, and takes on more of the philosophers

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<sup>38</sup>Foss, Op. cit., p. 61 ff.

method of definition as in use".<sup>39</sup>

Relation Of Symbol To Allegory.

Definition. There is a relation of the symbol to allegory and it, too, is one that is often mistaken or contributes to confusion and thereby is misused and abused. The allegory is much more closely related to metaphore and yet it has a definite service to perform for symbolism, in that it uses actions that are symbolic of other actions. In reality, an allegory is a prolonged metaphore. Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan, is only needed to be called to mind to express the best example of the above definition. Here is a "veiled presentation, in a figurative story, of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated",<sup>40</sup> to again quote Webster.

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<sup>39</sup>Alfred Jules Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover, 1946), p. 59-60. To give Ayer's definitions completely so as to understand, explicitly and in use, a quote from Chapter III, "The Nature of Philosophical Analysis", would be helpful:

We define explicitly when we put forward another symbol, or symbolic expression which is synonymous with it . . .

We define a symbol in use, not by saying that it is synonymous with some other symbol, but by showing how the sentences in which it significantly occurs can be translated into equivalent sentences, which contain neither the difiniendum itself, nor any of its synonyms.

<sup>40</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

Danger in use of allegory. There has always been a danger in the use of this device that leads to disintegration because of excesses to which some have pushed it. This results when an attempt is made to give "another meaning" to every part of a story or act. This is especially true in interpreting the Bible or sacred literature. Hence, its use is discouraged in teaching the truth about God and the Christian way of life in the church school curriculum.

#### Summary

In the foregoing chapter the definition of symbol and the difficulty of treating the meaning was set forth in an attempt to confine and limit the treatment of the subject of this dissertation. In order to further limit and set the symbol and its use apart, various other relationships were discussed; that of Theurgy (magic) as primitive man sought to master his environment; the place of Myth, its dynamic force and its source was uncovered in the discussion of feelings, society and nature. It was pointed out that myth was often used to establish a norm in the instabilities of life. Myth, like all of man's efforts to change and control the forces of life, has elements

of danger in its use and so must be very carefully controlled by man for man.

The foundation of, and for, Christian symbolism were explored mainly by the examples of "Fish, Bread and Wine" as illustrated by Cyril Richardson and Erwin R. Goodenough, especially drawn from the magnus opus of Goodenough's Jewish Symbolism.

The contrasting difference between signs and symbols which are not often easily seen and are much confused in most persons thinking, often being indiscriminately interchanged in use, was shown. Particular attention was given to the fact that "signs are mostly mental, while symbols are emotional" effective; that "symbols and sign belong to two different universes of discourse; a signal is part of the physical world of being, while a symbol is part of the world of meaning; "that signals are 'operators' while symbols are designators".

Since metaphore is often employed to express a symbol or to interpret it, it was necessary to show forth its relation to the symbol and point out that there are meanings beyond the dictionary meaning of terms and this meaning is often discovered when philosophical definitions are used.



As a final presentation to in part answer the question, What Is A Symbol?, the allegory was alined to discover that in its use many pitfalls and dangers lurked for the teacher in the field of religion and because of its dangers, was discouraged--especially in the interpretation of the Bible and other sacred literature.

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## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS PURPOSE OF SYMBOLS?

#### Threefold Purpose Of Symbol.

Symbols have as many purposes as there are individual symbols and individuals to interpret and apply them. It is almost impossible to fit all of them into a neat group of categories or classification of purpose. However, in one sense it is possible to say symbols may be classified into three types which would also be identified as to function: (1) to preserve and enhance values, (2) to transmit (communicate) and (3) to bring to attention (either by way of a special characteristic of an object that is present, or to call attention to an event, or awaken the sense of the existence of a thing which is not present nor can be presently visualized for a direct observation). In short, this third purpose of a symbol is to make one aware of what, without the symbol being thrust upon his attention, he would have been unaware. While this is true for all of life's activities it is particularly true in the field of religious experience.

#### Symbols Enhance Values.

In line with the first of the threefold

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purposes of most traditional symbols is the one which is to enhance the values of that which is symbolized, be it word, idea, object or sensation. Thus, the symbol opens the mind to interpretation of the presentation and helps to discover the whole from its part and to transmit (communicate, in line with the second purpose) that interpretation to others by means of re-presentation of the symbol. The symbol takes many forms, as many as the imagination can bring forth. Often the symbol is in the form of a sign serving as an indicator, a direction to somewhere or to something else. Often, it is in the form of an emblem. This term is derived from the Greek word emblema (εμβλέμα) meaning a thing put on, or emballein (εμβάλλειν) meaning "to throw in". The explanation of a "thing put on" is self-evident and needs no further interpretation. This sign or symbol which is "attached to something" is usually spoken of as in regards to the emblems of the Saints. Its purpose is to "abstract" the essential characteristic of the person or work of the outstanding thing for which that person or Saint is to be remembered, revered or for which their aid is sought. For example, the Eagle is the emblem of St. John. It expresses the character of his "free soaring spirit".

The key is an emblem of St. Peter and stands for the responsibility which came to him as a result of his confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> It is a symbol of loosing or binding and as such teaches a lesson on forgiveness. Just to see an emblem of an "Eagle" suggests to the Christian oriented person the gospel of St. John. To see an emblem of a "key" suggests to that type of person the Church's power to forgive and unlock the gates of heaven. Thus, one gains a sense of the work of the Church and its necessity in this world.

Symbols Provide Emotional Stability.

Symbols further serve the purpose of giving emotional stability and mental security. Perhaps one of the foremost and most effective symbols for this purpose is Language. Not so much language in its bare function of expressing abstract ideas or of particular actual things, but rather that phase of language which communicates feelings and emotions and transfers ideas and expresses relationships of person to person. It is that use of words and phrases which will carry with them an enveloping suggestiveness and an emotional

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 16:16-21.

effectiveness. As for example, the use of the symbol "home", "mother" or "land" to one who has been away from home, a lost child or a shipwrecked sailor, in that order.

Symbols Serve As A Disruptive Force.

Just the opposite can also be true. Symbols can serve a disruptive force in upsetting the emotional stability and emotional security. Usually this is the result of human manipulation of objects charged with an imposed meaning in order to suggest an idea or control the impulses of individuals and society. Such conditioned responses can be seen in the use of a flag, or a particular symbol such as a cross--especially is this true of the Swastika, as it was used in Germany under Hitler.

Lack of symbols a threat. Then, too, for multitudes in today's world, old symbols have either been violently snatched away or have decayed and no fresh and commanding symbols have taken their place. Susanne K. Langer writes at the conclusion of her superb study of symbolism:

In modern civilization there are two great threats to mental security; the new mode of living, which has made old nature-symbols alien to our minds, and the new mode of working, which

makes personal activity meaningless, unacceptable to the hungry imagination.<sup>2</sup>

She reminds us of the monotonousness of automation and the deadliness of repetitive labor, such as turning thousands of labels and never seeing the product in an endless procession of hours, days and weeks. She points out the fact that this kind of work "is too poor, too empty, for even the most ingenious mind to invest it with symbolic content".<sup>3</sup> Since work is no longer ritualistic, one of the easiest and most accessible means of mental satisfaction is gone.

Time of transition. Man today lives in a very transitory world. It is a time of great mobility. War and industry have shifted people from place to place and with a rapidity that precludes settling down in one community for very long or establishing a permanent home and roots in the surrounding neighborhood. Langer cites the "displacement of the homestead by the apartment and tenement, now here, now there"<sup>4</sup> as one of the forces that has severed an anchor line of the human mind.

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<sup>2</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy In A New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 291 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

This lack of a home that could be a symbol of one's childhood and having no memory of a place that could serve such a purpose, together with the fact that even the mother tongue no longer serves as a vehicle that could enable one to express the deeper feelings of life, give rise to a malady that psychiatrists and their "couch" and their tranquilizers cannot relieve or cure. "All old symbols are gone, and thousands of average lives offer no new materials to a creative image--nation", is Susanne Langer's diagnosis of modern man's predicament.<sup>5</sup> Now that the diagnosis has been made, what can be suggested as a possible cure? A good answer can be had from Alfred North Whitehead as he sets forth "The Uses of Symbolism in his book, Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect, when he says:

Symbolic expression first preserves society by adding emotion to instinct, and secondly it affords a foothold for reason by its delineation of the particular instinct which it expresses.<sup>6</sup>

Not only can this be a cure to present malady but it also presents one of the grand purposes of symbols which formed for Whitehead the main thesis for

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Symbolism, Its Meaning And Effect (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 70.

his book, that of differentiation and delineation.

My main thesis is that a social system is kept together by the blind force of instinctive actions, and of instinctive emotions clustered around habits and prejudices. It is therefore not true that any advance in the scale of culture inevitably tend to the preservation of society . . . The symbolic expression of instinctive forces drags them into the open: it differentiates them and delienates them.<sup>7</sup>

### Symbols Express Ideas.

Symbols have a dual purpose in the way in which they express ideas--that is, man creates symbols to communicate his conceptions to his contemporaries; and symbols (either objects per se or parts of wholes) stand for, or suggest, gestalten that will bring an insight and give rise to a conception for man. Symbols can be the vehicles that carry the idea to the mind or they can be the meaning of what the mind has already conceived. As an example of their purpose, one need only look at arts and music. Symbols can express ideas either verbally or non-verbally inasmuch as they can convey ideas through emotions which exhibit themselves through physical deliverance, such as tears for the inward emotion of grief and laughter for the concept of joy. So that as Langer has said, "here in practical

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 68-69.



vision as that which makes symbols for thought out of signs for behavior, we have the roots of practical intelligence . . . it is conception anchored in reality".<sup>8</sup>

Just as myths have their source in the emotions and feelings of men, as noted before, so to is it with symbols. They receive their meaning and their power from this human awareness and the function of the mind as it responds to society and the material substances of the world. (As Aristotle once said, "the passions of Men" brought into relation of "things" create a conscious response).<sup>9</sup> Thus, we see that symbols have a conscious meaning and therefore express ideas.

#### Symbols Provide Abstractions.

In the economy of nature and because of the great mass of things to be mastered and stored in memory banks for future recognition and recall, the mind of man is so designed as to make a shorthand

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<sup>8</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Leroy E. Loemker, "Symbol and Myth in Philosophy, in Thomas J. J. Altizer (ed.) Truth, Myth and Symbol (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 111.

effectiveness that tends to make a "part stand for a whole" and enable the mind to grasp a full meaning from any part of that which has been presented to it. This often results in the development of stylized figures and signs that will shorten the time for scanning or enable the observed to be recognized, categorized and interpreted or related to previous ideas or forms and, thus provide for a quick response.

Symbols Serve As Substitute Signs.

This is the true representation of things and ideas as man uses signs not just to serve as an indicator of things, but to suggest or remind his fellows of other things and other ideas. These have sometimes been called "substitute signs" as they take the place of things that have been conceived in the past or even things that might have been in the past or may be in the future. They are not symptoms, but are truly symbols--but symbols that have been reduced to the bare essentials or the basic characteristic of the dominant impression left by a person, place, object or thought. The purpose of symbols as seen in abstractions is carried to the 'nth degree in the modern art form called "impressionistic", and in music as heard

in purely tonal arrangements. Abstraction is most useful and necessary in the scientific world but still is not devoid of use, but rather most helpful, in religion. The abstraction develops as a result of use and arrives only after a symbol has been in use for a long period of time. The abstraction tends to make a symbol universal, and the universal acceptance of the symbol tends to make it abstract.

Symbols Relate One Generation To Another.

Not only is "society held together" by acceptance of its symbols, as Whitehead has affirmed,<sup>10</sup> but one generation is linked to another through its symbols. Especially is this true if we accept C. G. Jung's theory of Archetypes. In this he has tended to show that certain uses of symbols are tied in with deep subconscious drives of the psyche, so that the repeated pattern of symbolic use throughout mankind is a reverberation from the biologic depths of man. The result of these studies indicates a community and a constance of content in the basic symbols that man uses. Many of them are variations of certain basic

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<sup>10</sup>Whitehead, Op. cit., p. 86-87.

types used since the very beginning of time and history. Jung has set certain ones out for us which are readily distinguishable in multitudes of other forms and in almost every generation. One needs only list a few, such as water, the Wise old man, mandāla,<sup>11</sup> the female in the male, the anima (the woman in the man) and animus (the man in the woman.)<sup>12</sup>

These archetypal symbols are instinctive to the race and tend to bind us to the past and to the future. In this way, one generation is linked through the psyche to the other. The symbols may take on different forms and added meaning but basically, they serve the same purpose to all generations. An awareness of this is important for the teaching of religion and its interpretation as it relates to life. While all areas of life are best understood and their meaning communicated through symbols, either archetypal or as new gestalten, yet of all the areas, that of religion

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<sup>11</sup>Mandāla; Sanskrit word used as a general description for all those symbolic representations of the circle motif, more specifically in its manifold combinations of the square. Jung regarded the general pattern of those images as the "Archetype of Wholeness". Carl G. Jung, "Mandāla", *Swiss Periodical Du* (April 1955), Quoted by C. G. Jung in Psyche and Symbol (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), p. xxxiii.

<sup>12</sup>Carl G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality (New York: Farrar & Rinehard, 1939), pp.23,52 ff.

and religious worship with its cultic practices is most dependent on man's ability to use these basic symbols intelligently (knowledgeably) and to invent, create and devise new ones, so that not only is man one with his past, but through the alembic of his awareness and personality he is able to pass on something better to future generations. All knowledge, following perception, is of a symbolic character, and the vast realm of the instinctive and unconscious symbolism investigated by modern psychologists, as witness to the work of Freud, Jung, et. al., further adds to its importance in the modern world.

Symbols Meet A Basic Need.

"Man is a symbol-making animal" declares Cassirer,<sup>13</sup> and so is in agreement with Langer when she sets forth her strong belief that the basic need in man, as man, is met by the making and using of symbols. To catch the full flavor of her belief it is necessary to read her statement as she has set it forth in her book, Philosophy In A New Key, in which the true purpose of symbols is thus proclaimed:

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<sup>13</sup>Ernst Cassirer, An Essay On Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 26.

. . . I believe that there is a primary need in man, which other creatures do not have, and which activates all his apparently unzoological aims, his wistful fancies, his consciousness of value, his utterly impractical enthusiasms, and his awareness of a "Beyond" filled with holiness. Despite the fact that this need gives rise to almost everything that we commonly assign to the "higher" life, it is not itself a "higher" form of some "lower" life, it is quite essential, imperious and general, and may be called "high" only in the sense that it belongs exclusively (I think) to a very complex and perhaps recent genus.

. . . This basic need, which certainly is obvious only in man, is the need of symbolization. The symbol making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. It is the fundamental process of the mind, and goes on all the time.<sup>14</sup>

Langer then proceeds to quote from A. D. Richie's book, The Natural History of the Mind, to substantiate her point. It is used here to underline the purpose of this dissertation as to the concept of value and the importance of coming to grips with the use of symbols intentionally, in such a way as to advance learning and so to affect "change" in the life of the learner.

Richie's statement, quoted by Langer, is:

"As far as thought is concerned, and at all levels of thought, it is a symbolic process . . . The essential act of thought is symbolization".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

The significance of this statement for this dissertation is made plain in Langer's further words:

The significance of this statement strikes us more forcibly now. For if the material of thought is symbolism, then the thinking organism must be forever furnishing the symbolic versions of its experience, in order to let thinking proceed. As a matter of fact, it is not the essential act of thought that is symbolization, but an act essential to thought, and prior to it.<sup>16</sup>

Summary.

Symbols and symbolic systems serve many purposes. There are as many purposes as there are symbols. Perhaps they all can be summarized under three heads as suggested by Loemker:

- (1). The theoretical or logical, in which the symbolical relation aims at knowledge;
- (2). The practical, in which the symbol means action;
- (3). The poetical or aesthetic, in which the symbol means a complex inward state of the soul, an emotional attitude or sentiment.<sup>17</sup>

No matter how symbols are defined or analyzed, it comes down to this fact, a symbol's basic purpose is to symbolize, to represent and to express that representation. Thus, they are communicators of the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>Leroy E. Loemker, Op. cit., p. 116.

seen and the unseen. They are to serve as directors, pointing to that which is greater than themselves. They are to serve as bridges, carrying the observer from the known to the unknown, advancing man from the animal stage to a more manly stage by means of conceptualization and insight, thus advancing civilization. Symbols serve the spiritual, the unseen, the soul of man in liturgy and worship by making real for him that which otherwise would be hidden, "using sensible signs symbolic of hidden realities".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.



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## CHAPTER III

### WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF A SYMBOL?

#### A Symbol Is A Real Concrete Object.

A symbol is always a real concrete object, a visible form or formula. It is never an illusion, although, as in the phi phenomenon, there may be an appearance of something that is the result of motion between two opposite points which is neither the one or the other, but suggests an action that is continuous. If a symbol was an illusion it would be magic and, as was said earlier, (Chapter I, "The Relation of Symbol to Magic") that this theurgic implication or use had no part in this dissertation. It was noted also that the purpose of the symbol is to represent the unseen and this becomes its true value. A symbol, then, must have a structure that can be grasped and is something that can be visualized and that becomes tangible, be it word, action, sound, taste, smell or feeling. While a symbol may tend to abstract a meaning to bare essentials and thus streamline an idea or object into a stylized figure, it in itself is never an abstract form or concept.

In order to fulfill one of its definitions, "that it is a de-sign-ator" and that its sign-function

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may be realized, it has to have a real existence and be "seen"--visualized; it must appear. However, it may appear only in its interpreted form or as a new gestalten when the mind-set (aufgabe) is such that the mind will accept or perceive the object standing for (representing) the thing to which it points.

#### How Symbols Arise.

Perhaps Paul Tillich is entirely correct when he says that it is impossible to create a symbol or invent one.<sup>1</sup> For symbols arise or are transformed out of material things. (Hence, they are concrete). One either "sees" an object and relates it to a concept or one has a thought and relates it to an object that one "sees", that seems to have a fundamental relationship to the thought. It can be readily seen, therefore, that there are no limits to symbolism if there are no limits to seeing--perception (seeing resulting in insight or coupled with thought processes). It is due to the power of conceptualization that a wealth of notions are formulated through which the mind can

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 19.

meet with experiences. Most new discoveries are suddenly seen things that were always there. "A new idea is a light that illuminates presences which simply had no form for us before the light fell on them. We turn the light here and there, and everywhere, and the limits of thought recede before it."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, symbols appear when the mind-set is such that it will accept or "see the object". (Aufgabe). Men had eaten bread all their life until Jesus took this common staple, blest it, broke it and commanded it to be eaten saying, "take and eat, this is my body".<sup>3</sup> Then, because their eyes were open, the common, ordinary, everyday substance bread, became "spiritual BREAD"--and men saw in it that which was salvation, eternal life, strength and hope. It is not so much what is the real physical structure of the object, but what does the object suggest to the mind that can give a "higher" meaning or open the way to larger "seeing" (conception). Thus, the words, "I am the bread of life"<sup>4</sup> and the common

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<sup>2</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>I Corinthians 11:24.

<sup>4</sup>John 6

daily bread blest and broken give rise to symbols that will become meaningful in the future to followers of the Master.

A Part Represents The Whole.

Often a symbol is an incomplete whole, a part or fragment, but that part of fragment suggests a whole and it can be and is completed in the mind. An arc suggests a complete circle. This is graphically portrayed in the concept of Romanesque architecture with its round arches, rotundas, and semi-circles; all parts suggesting a whole and something more than a whole.<sup>5</sup> The truth of the foregoing statement is given in Wertheimer's Gestalt Theory, in which he presents the axiom: "The whole is greater than the sum of all its parts". This theory also provides us with a term that explains what happens when the eye presents the mind with only a part or fragment of the whole--"closure" takes place. The mind completes the figure or "closes" the shape by mentally filling in the missing parts. Martin Foss has strength to add in support of this find in his treatment of Symbol and Metaphore in Human

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<sup>5</sup>In Romanesque architecture the arc suggests the circle which in symbol for God, no beginning or end, complete in itself.

Experience, when he says:

. . . The danger of destroying unity by breaking everything up into self-sufficient parts, is avoided if the self-sufficiency of the part enables it to stand for the whole, "signifying" the whole. The idea of 'signification', of 'meaning' is the magic tie between the part and the whole. The part stands for the whole, and the whole, as the meaning of its parts, assumes the roll of a 'systematic' whole in which every part has its true reality only in its direct representation of the whole. The parts as such in their relation to each other may remain discontinuous, closed in themselves, self-sufficient in their boundries, but in the 'meaning' of the whole they are welded together and tied into an unbreakable unity.

Meaning, signification is what counts in the rationalistic world. Everything is detached, isolated, but everything has in its detachment and isolation a 'meaning', everything is a 'symbol'. Symbol is the ingenious device of a rationalism. Signification and symbolism compensate for the abandoned inner context and continuity. They restore the lost unity of the world.<sup>6</sup>

It will be wise to introduce at this point the theory of Gestalt psychology in order that a basis for understanding the "part suggesting the whole" as well as to undergird the concept of symbolic structure. Further use will be made of this material in the last chapter of this dissertation as a comparison is made between the theories of learning, especially between

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<sup>6</sup>Martin Foss, Symbol and Metaphore In Human Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1949), pp. 8-9.

S-R associationist and Gestalt-field theorie.

Psychological Basis Of Symbols.

Wolfgang Köhler, one of the most vocal of all those who have accepted the theories of Max Wertheimer, says that this theory is one that denies that psychic processes are (or can advantageously be regarded as if) composed of elements found in them by analysis, and that it affirms that "experience presents itself phenomenally in the form of organized structures which, when relatively incomplete, reveal an imminent tendency toward their own completion".<sup>7</sup>

In order to better understand the process by which an object is "seen", either whole or in part, and transformed by the mind, either as it is or as it is reduced until it is stylized rather than accepted per se, it will be profitable to explore the process that takes place as Gestalt theory sets it forth. Therefore, to quote Köhler, from his classic work, Gestalt Psychology where he says:

In German the word "Gestalt" may be used as a synonym for 'form', or perhaps 'shape'. So Von Ehrenfels, taking the case of specific shape as

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<sup>7</sup>Wolfgang Köhler, Gestalt Psychology (New York: Liveright, 1929), pp. 192 ff.

the most important and evident among these qualities, applied the name "gestaltqualitaten" to all of them.

In the German language, however, at least since the time of Goethe, and especially in his own papers on natural science, the noun 'Gestalt' has two meanings". Beside the connotation of 'shape' or 'form' as a property of things, it has the meaning of a concrete individual and characteristic entity, existing as something detached and having a shape or form as one of its attributes. Following this tradition in gestalttheory the word 'gestalt' means any segregated whole, and in the consideration of gestalt-problem, the prevailing idea being that the same general type of dynamical process which leads to the formation and segregation of extended wholes will also explain their specific properties.<sup>8</sup>

Here is a clear statement of terms and a theory upon which an effort can be based for the clear understanding of symbolical structure (as it organizes itself or as the mind receives it and transforms it).

#### Historical Background Of This Theory.

Where or when the idea of Gestalt as a concept for a school of psychology first came into existence would be very difficult to determine. For one could trace it back through history to the time of Aristotle. However, many had observed the basic idea of the "Whole being greater than the sum of its parts", before

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 192-193.

Max Wertheimer, whose monograph on the "Perception of Apparent Movement"<sup>9</sup> which appeared in 1912, was to cause such a stir in the field of scientific research. But to him goes the credit of founding the school, in spite of the antedating work of Ehrnfels (1886). The reason Wertheimer received the credit is due to the interpretation that he put upon his work and the implications that his disciples were able to bring from it.

The phi phenomena. The main finding of the experiment was: that an object seems to move from one position to another when it was merely presented twice in two different places with an appropriate time interval between both exposures. This was well known to earlier experimenters and is familiar to all who go to the movies today. The explanation which he gave his work is as follows: He demonstrated that all the conventional theories offered at the time were inadequate to explain the occurrences of the event under all conditions, and that a wholly new interpretation was necessary. Traditional notions of retinal and brain action during visual perception were rejected

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<sup>9</sup>Max Wertheimer, "Expermentelle Studien uber das Sehen von Bewegung", Zeitschrift fur Psychologie LX, (1925.)



and a preferred substitute sketched by assuming the existence of cerebral "cross-processes" as the correlate of the psychic relations which seemed to be just as "original" in the experience as the fundamentals upon which they previously were supposed to attend. After eliminating all possible theories, such as Marbe's theory of after images, and Wandt's idea of "jump" in the eyeballs, Wertheimer proposed calling this concrete observation of apparent motion the phiphenomenon, the phi standing for whatever occurred between a, the first exposure and b, the second. Under special conditions, "pure" phi was obtainable; i.e., the observer saw neither a nor b nor the movement, but simply "something in motion". This is a genuine "dynamic" occurrence which neither a priori nor other grounds requires to be traced to a "static" base.

Between processes. Wertheimer's physiological hypothesis is built upon the existence of central "diagonal functions", (Querfunktionen in the original) or "Between processes". Whenever a central locus in the brain is excited a concentric neural spread of a certain magnitude occurs around it. If two such spots are aroused, two excitation rings are formed which predisposes the areas they embrace to further excitation.

If now, point a is stimulated, and shortly thereafter another point such as b, then some kind of a physiological "short circuit" occurs between a and b, and a specific excitation occurs over the intervening distance. If the concentric overflow from a is at its maximum and similar excitation rings now come from b, the direction of the neural processes is determined by the factor that a was there first. The nearer the two points a and b, the more favorable are the conditions for the arousal of the phi--process, which is in itself an extensive specific whole.

Real and illusory movement. Since Wertheimer claims that as far as the personal experience goes there is no difference whatsoever between the perception of real and illusory movements, he is implicitly proposing that "wherever two identical phenomena are found, it is necessary to assume that the corresponding brain-processes are identical".<sup>10</sup>

However, it is to the work of Kurt Koffka and to Wolfgang Köhler that much of the credit of founding the school belongs. For being zealous and acting as reformists they led a crusade against all other ideas,

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<sup>10</sup>George W. Hartmann, Gestalt Psychology (New York: Ronald Press, 1935), pp. 6-7.

they abandoned all the axioms and established postulates of their day, with one exception, that of the naturalistic standpoint. They were not content to dominate just one field, but pushed their conclusions on into other branches as well. The breadth of the application soon made it overflow the narrow boundaries of psychology. This implicit universality seems to have been felt by its adherents almost from the beginning and is in part accountable for the boastful and superior air with which it has been expounded. That the configurationists think well of their discovery is apparent from the statement made by Koffka:

The term Gestalt is a short name for a category of thought comparable to other general categories like substance, casualty, function. But Gestalt may be considered more than simply an addition to pre-existing conceptual principles; its generality is so great that one may ask whether casualty itself or substance does not fall under it.<sup>11</sup>

Köhler as a basic source. Gestalt can be said to have come of age in 1921 when Köhler was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, which was vacated by Stumpf, under whom he had taken his doctorate. This post carried with it the directorship of the Psychological Institute with its well

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<sup>11</sup>Kurt Koffka, "Gestalt", Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan, 1933), VI, 642-645.

equipped laboratory and other facilities offering ample opportunities for the "new school" to justify the scientific promises it held forth. Some critics say that it was the timely publication of, what many consider his magnus opus, the book with the title, Die Physischen Gestalten in Ruhe und im stationären Zustand, (Static and Stationary Physical Configurations).<sup>12</sup> This volume has become one of the basic works of the whole movement.

The Widening Field of Influence.

In this book Köhler has written two prefaces, one for philosophers and biologists and another one for physicists. This points to the widening field which Gestalt was fast invading. A paraphrase from this introduction is presented so as to refer to it in the application of these principles in relation to the field of education later on.

Appeal to the biologist. The appeal to the biologist appears in the similarity of the physical to the mental facts of organismic unity and adaptability. In his neurological and physical hypothesis, Wertheimer

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<sup>12</sup>Wolfgang Köhler, Die physischen Gestalten in Ruhe und im stationären Zustand. (Braunschweig: 1920, also Erlangen: 1924) Has never been translated into English.

had considered the brain action as a configured total process; if now, it is possible to demonstrate the existence of physical gestalten, a legitimate hope arises that the central brain processes are merely special cases of it.

Appeal to the physicist. In the physicists' introduction, the initial idea states "that physical systems reach a given state such as equilibrium only when a condition for the entire system is fulfilled". For the system as a whole, "the available work energy must be a minimum, the entrophy a maximum; and the scalar and vector magnitudes, whose grouping constitutes the system, do not assume definite amounts and positions", but through their joint organization relative to each other, produce a lasting structure.<sup>13</sup>

Appeal to the philosopher. Having observed the appeals made to both the biologist and the physicist by Köhler, in his bifrucated preface as he widens the scope of Gestalt, let it be noted in a brief way his appeal to the philosopher and his presentation of Gestalt's philosophical basis. For this, too, is important for the educator. Here one is forced to take

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<sup>13</sup>Percy W. Bridgman, Logic of Modern Physics (New York: Macmillan, 1928). p. 33.

recognition of the whole person in relation to his existential circumstance and to recognize that what happens in the whole person is the result of the sum of all the parts and that what effects or happens in any part of this whole is "determined by the inner structural laws of this entity", as Wertheimer proclaimed in a semi-popular address, "Ueber Gestalttheorie", published in Symposion. Here Wertheimer laid down broad principles of the Gestalt theory and characterized its basic doctrine of configuration as follows:

There exists a natural circumstance in which what happens in the total condition is not conditioned by the nature of the parts or their mode of combination but on the contrary, what occurs in any part of this whole is determined by the inner structural laws of this entity. All of Gestalt theory is embraced in this formula--neither more nor less.<sup>14</sup>

This philosophy destroys the atomistic approach to both the learner and the subject materials to be learned as well as presenting a new concept for the learner in relation to his situation.

There are two doctrines in the older position of psychology to which Gestalt psychology is flatly opposed:

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<sup>14</sup>Max Wertheimer, "Ueber Gestalttheorie", Symposion, I (1927), 29-60.

- (a). The mosaic or bund hypothesis and,
- (b). The Association Theory.<sup>15</sup>

It is absolutely and unalterably opposed to mechanistic philosophy, to connectionist theory, and to any additive or summation plan. Because for the holders of the theory, all reality is structured, formed or patterned with highly concrete total attributes and invariably obeys the law that "total processes define what shall take place in subordinate areas".<sup>16</sup> Consequently, fidelity to the facts demand that one speak of a stimulus "constellation" and never of a stimulus, of an "action-total" and not a movement. The Gestalt concept restores meaning to our conduct by its recognition of "the primacy of restricted wholes and the derivative and dependent nature of all part processes".<sup>17</sup>

Illustrated By A Closed Electric Circuit.

The simplest and perhaps ideal illustration is

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<sup>15</sup>Ernest R. Hilgard, Theories of Learning (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956), See Lewin's views, p. 258, the psychology of, on p. 222; functionalism, on p. 235-236, 322-342.

<sup>16</sup>Max Wertheimer, "Untersuchungen zur Lehre Von der Gestalt: I. Prinzipielle Bemerkungen", Psychologie Forschung, IV (1923), 47-58.

<sup>17</sup>Hartman, Op. cit., pp. 64-65.

to be found in a closed electric circuit in which the current at any point is determined by the conditions affecting all points. On the other hand, a group of mutually isolated neighboring circuits comprise a physical complex of independent systems. In the first place, the structure of the system presents an objective unity no matter how extended in space the system may be, since at no point does the local condition preserve itself unaltered; it is only in the total structure that it is maintained. In the second case, however, the parts of the physical complex are a pure summative multiplicity, depending on arbitrary human thought as to whether they will be combined or not.<sup>18</sup>

Applied to symbols. It is at just this point that we discover the applicability of this illustration for the structure of symbols, for while the presentation is made to the various sensory preceptors it remains the peculiar function of the mind to sort, select, adapt and apply through its interpretative function that which has been relayed to it for present or future use. So that it is the peculiar property of the mind

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<sup>18</sup>Hartman, Op. cit., pp. 31 ff. I am indebted for this interpretation to this passage from this work.



to assist in structure through abstracting what it receives and its readiness to perceive. All of which supports the basic concept that it is the mind plus the gestalt (configuration--symbol) which makes "man a symbol producing animal".

Illusions. Consideration of many striking so-called visual "illusions" lends plausability to this view: "If there are gestalten in visual space perception, as it was pointed out above, then it is true that the optical sector of the nervous system possesses the properties of a physical system".<sup>19</sup> How any object will be seen depends not only on the particular stimulus affecting a limited receptor region, but also upon the remaining stimuli which influence other regions.

#### Necessity Of Contrast In Structure.

It is plain from the last statement that the ability to observe gestalten is only possible when the spatially extended perceptual field is filled in with a non-homogeneous matter. A form must touch the body surface upon some restricted area, the pressure must be marked off against uninfluenced or more weakly

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

stimulated skin, before one can speak of a tactual configuration, and it is only when color differences appear in the visual field that it is possible to see patterns. The implication is [Köhler doesn't say so explicitly] that the contrast or opposition resulting from the "figure-ground" phenomenon is fundamental to all experience. There must be the stronger force to detract from the weaker; there must be the observable contrast made possible by black and white, or colors in conflict for dominance.

#### Physiological Basis For Receptivity.

In order to understand the physiological basis for Gestalt and its gestalten it is imperative that a view of Lashley's work in Cerebral studies be presented, particularly his extirpation of the cortical area.<sup>20</sup> Suffice it here to quote only a fragment of these studies. Lashley began his work as a behaviorist in 1916, convinced that the conditioned response and the reflex arc would provide an adequate account of the adaptive conduct of organisms. Barely ten years later, his finding had completely changed his position.

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<sup>20</sup>Karl Lashley, Brain Mechanism and Intelligence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928). pp. 58-60.

Death Knell Of Reflex Arc And Synaptic Change Theories.

The process that induced this change in his position was brought about from the studies Lashley had made by means of thermocautery, varying amounts and different sections of the cortex in a large group of rats were destroyed and their learning records made after recovery (10-30 days) compared with normal animals in such tasks as maze running discrimination, brightness, etc. Comparing the records of the two groups according to errors, time and number of trials, he found in general cerebral lesions were attended by an increase in the amount of practice necessary to solve a problem, but that the degree of deterioration in learning ability and retentiveness was proportional to the amount of brain tissue injured and independent of the area of the cortex affected. "Equal injuries in different cortical areas produce equal amounts of retardation . . . the magnitude of the injury is important; the locus is not".<sup>21</sup> The gap between the normal rats and those operated on varied with the nature of the problem to be learned; in the case of the brightness discrimination, the operated (upon) animals were even superior to the

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-60.

normals.<sup>22</sup> Further work on the part of Lashley sounded the death knell of the standard theories of the reflex arc and synaptic changes, etc.<sup>23</sup>

Findings Effecting Educational Realm.

One of the fundamental findings of Lashley's work which has effected the realm of education in line with the Gestalt theory and which makes a definite contribution toward the necessity of a wider use of symbols in religious education is implicit in the following quotation.

Neurologically, these relationships must be in the nature of ratios of excitation, patterns without a fixed anatomical substratum, since the sensory and motor elements of a situation may change fundamentally without altering its logical significance, we seem forced to the conclusion that a final common path may be somehow sensitized to a pattern of excitation so that it will respond to this pattern in whatsoever part of the nervous tissue it may occur. In the simplest of cases, the relationships forming the basis of reaction seem expressible as ratios of spatial extent or temporal distribution. The relationships involved in insight are more difficult to analyze, but there is, in some instances, sufficient similarity to cases of sensory discrimination to suggest that the basic mechanism, must be fundamentally the same.

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<sup>22</sup>A. G. Bills, General Experimental Psychology (New York: Longmans Green, 1935), pp. 15, 176, 178, 180, 217, 218, 219, 220, 263, 265, 266, 290, 323-24, 367, 369.

<sup>23</sup>Lashley, Op. cit., pp. 86, 114-115. (For more complete details).

The problem of reaction to ratio thus seems to underlie all phases of behavior to such a degree that we might be justified in saying that the unit of neural organization is not the reflex arc or system or reciprocal innervation, but is the mechanism, whatever be its nature, by which reaction to ratio is produced.<sup>24</sup>

Application of theory to learning. Here can be seen implications for this dissertation which will have a bearing on what is to be presented in the final chapter on how symbols may be used in religious education, especially in the area of controlled presentation, and "ratios of intensity of excitation". Köhler himself suggested that the field was an inclusive one rather than a narrow exclusive area and speaks in his opus to this broadening field effect:

According to the most general definitions of gestalt, the process of learning, of reproduction, or striving, of emotional attitude, of thinking, acting, and so forth, may be included as subject matter of gestalttheorie, insofar as they do not consist of independent elements, but are determined in a situation as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

This, then, gives us the license to apply the theory to all problems, especially to that of learning. However, after the insight has come as a possible

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<sup>24</sup>Köhler, Gestalt Psychology, p. 193.

<sup>25</sup>Wolfgang Köhler, "Gestaltprobleme und Anfänge einer Gestalttheorie", Jahresberichte über die gesamte physiologie (Berlin: 1924), Köhler, Gestalt Psychology, p. 194.

solution, the method and concrete application is vital. Symbols are structured out of concrete real objects as they are conceived to be able to stimulate (excite) the person and so bring about an insight that will produce change in emotion, acting, thinking for the betterment of the total individual (child) and his total environment.

Refutation of Thorndike's Restricted theory.

Thorndike maintains that if learning is restricted to particular synapses, there can be no influence of training upon other activities than those already practiced; any improvement in unpracticed functions must be the result of nervous connections which they have in common with the practiced activities. However, all recognize that there is some transfer of training, though slight, yet convincing enough; and the gestalt-theorie should do much to focus the attention on it with increasing vigor. For it was learned from Lashley that it is very doubtful if the same neurons or synapses are involved even in similar reactions to the same stimulus:

Our data seems to prove that the structural elements are relatively unimportant for integration and that common elements must be some sort of dynamic patterns, determined by the relations of ratios among the parts of the system and not by the specific neurons activated. If this be true,

we cannot, on the basis of our present knowledge of the nervous system, set any limit to the kinds or amount of transfer possible or to the sort of relations which may be directly recognized.<sup>26</sup>

Not only in matters of animal experimentation has Lashley shown the convincingness and correctness of the Gestalt hypothesis and opened doors to a larger field of related work, but also in the field of speech, he points out the great riddle of syntactical expression: (how we can learn one new word and use it in correct grammatical relations with limitless combinations with other words, without having to form new associations for each setting).<sup>27</sup> This must point to the fact that there is some transfer of learning and that it all fits neatly into the configurationists concept.

#### Effect Of Closure.

Because of the ability of the mind to see an image or an object against a new background or an old one in a new relationship through "configuration and ground" as set forth in the Gestalt theory, the effect

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<sup>26</sup>Lashley, Op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>27</sup>Karl Lashley, "Basic and Neural Mechanism of Behavior", Psychology Review No. 37 (1930), 1-24.

of "closure" or completeness will enable the learner to effect a new form or to conceptualize a totally different action response or symbol (image). It is important to have this background and to understand the psychological, biological and philosophical workings in order that the teacher may "use" or utilize the physical make up of the learner in a more adequate presentation of symbols, having chrystalized for herself this theory of learning as her tool of teaching.

Structure Of Symbol Is Vital To Basis Of Intelligence.

Structure of the symbol, as a real concrete object, a visible form or formula, as was stated in the opening sentence of this dissertation, is vital to basic intelligence. Its structure must be such as to have form (color-contrast); it must be visible, that is, it must be presentational; it must appear in order to be perceived. This is true even if it starts with a conception and be physically formulated to make the conception perceivable by others on as a "seen" object to stimulate conceptualization of an idea (a part suggesting a whole or that which infers more than a whole). It must be logical.

Susanne Langer shows the necessity of logicalness of signs and symbols in the chapter titled,



"Logic of Sign and Symbol", in the book Philosophy

In A New Key, where she writes:

Psychologically, any item that is to have meaning must be employed as a sign or symbol; that is to say, it must be a sign or symbol to someone. Logically it must be capable of conveying a meaning, it must be the sort of item that can be thus employed.<sup>28</sup>

Source Of Symbol Is In "Fact".

The first awareness of presented forms usually serves to label them according to their kinds, and they are added to the general knowledge, "by acquaintance". The basis of intelligent behavior is due to the fact that the first understanding of forms is normally literal comprehension of them as typical things, concrete objects. It is practical vision coupled with that subtile activity of the brain (transference--we see A and then B and the mind has a "Flash in the Pan"--Einstellung--activity) that changes the sign into a symbol. It is that which is conceived to be the source and context of signs to which one reacts.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the more one is aware of structure, the better one is able to conceptualize and give value judgments, that are acceptable to others and thus aid in the better

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<sup>28</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

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communication of ideas.

Summary.

In this chapter, the structure of a symbol has been presented as an object that is real and concrete, that it exists in time and space. In order to further delineate the structure, consideration has been given as to how the symbols arise and the function that "a part plays in representing a whole". Then, too, if one is to construct or invent symbols that can be used in religious education, one must know the physiological basis for their conception and what the biological mechanism is that enables the learner to respond to their presentation. A psychological theory was selected, Gestalt, and the whole broad base covering the physicist and philosophers as well as the educators concerns was made applicable to the development and use of symbols. The conclusion was reached that the structure of symbols was, and is, vital to man's intelligence as well as the best medium of communication.

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## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOLS?

#### Definition Of Function.

"A function is a pattern viewed with reference to one special term around which it centers; this pattern emerges when we look at the given term in its total relation to the other terms about it".<sup>1</sup> In addition to this definition by Langer, note in Merriam-Webster Dictionary two points to ponder: (1) "The natural, proper, or characteristic action, [*Italics are not in original of anything*] especially the normal and special action; (2) Special purpose . . . To perform or fulfill its function, act; operate; work".

It almost seems redundant to speak of the function of symbols after having discussed "The Purpose Of Symbols" in a previous chapter, for purpose and function seem to cover the same ground, and yet there is a difference: Purpose does not involve design (design is akin to structure) but it does involve "end" in the philosophical sense of the term "entelechy"-- the realization of that which a thing is by virtue of

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy In A New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) p. 56.

its form, to be complete; while function involves meaning and operation, almost the "how" concept of symbols.

#### Relation Of Function To Purpose.

Beside the fine line of distinction between purpose and function, there are certain truths that can be presented under the title function that cannot be said under purpose. Therefore, it is deemed advisable to include this chapter to "round out" or to see another phase of the symbol as was said in the opening statement from Langer: "in its total relationship to other terms".<sup>2</sup>

It could be asked, what does function do for the individual or how does it contribute to life and activity? Does it always act or perform as it is presented originally to the mind as an object, a sensation or an event? The answer to these questions should be forthcoming in the development of this dissertation, particularly in this chapter.

#### The Dynamic Aspect Of Symbols.

The function of a symbol is best determined by

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

its meaning and from the fact that a symbol's function stands in a one-to-one relationship to its meaning. But, of course, meanings can be, and do, differ from one person to another; even from one situation or event to another. Time and space (the existential situation) will vary the meaning as well. This is what gives to symbolism its dynamic aspects.

#### Symbols Function As Vehicles, Never As Proxies.

Symbols function as vehicles for the conception of objects, sensations, and events, seldom, (never if we refuse to think of them as magic, or theurgic instruments) if ever, serve as proxies for them. To conceive a thing or a situation is not the same thing as to react toward it. Man has to conceptualize the thing when he discusses it, rather than the thing in itself, hence, it is the conceptions and not the objects that symbols mean. If it were the objects themselves instead of the conceptualizations, then symbolism would lead to pure idolotry and one would fail to look beyond to that which the symbol is pointing.

#### Functional Difference Between Sign And Symbol.

In the first chapter of this dissertation the

difference between sign and symbol was set forth. It is necessary to again call attention to this difference, but for another purpose, and that purpose is to show the functional difference that exists between the sign and symbol. There is a difference of association and as such, consequently of use by another party to this meaning of function, the subject: Signs announce their objects to him, symbols lead him to their objects. This is seen particularly in the use of the word "lead"--in the way of education--educare--to lead out. This applies specifically to the needs of the educator and the role that symbols play in this area.

Langer makes this distinction very clear in her treatment of "The Logic of Signs and Symbols":

In an ordinary sign function, there are three essential terms: subject, sign and object. In denotation, which is the commonest kind of symbol function, there have to be four: subject, symbol, conception and object. The radical difference between the sign-meaning can therefore be logically exhibited, for it rests on a difference of pattern, it is strictly a different function.<sup>3</sup>

#### Significance Of Symbols Best Reveals Their Function.

The function of symbols is best seen in their significance. This significance is best seen in "How

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<sup>3</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 63.

they work". If the question is asked, "how do symbols operate in the life of man?, then one has a clue on which to build. And here Whitehead must be referred to in order to get such a clue:

Symbolism is no mere idle fancy or corrupt degeneration: it is inherent in the very texture of human life . . . Mankind, it seems, has to find a symbol in order to express itself. Indeed, 'expression' is symbolism.<sup>4</sup>

Symbols then function as "expression" of man's thought. It is the efficiency of expression that determines the validity and durability of the symbol.

Whitehead further says that "mankind must always be masquerading", but it is not "masquerading" that man is doing, but there is a necessity in man to play-act, or role-play and here is one of the important parts that symbols play. They function as the vehicle, or the object or character that man can grasp, and so fulfill his desire or penchant for public or private ceremonial. And symbols do fulfill this need. Hence, again we need to say the function of symbols is to enhance that which is being symbolized, either in itself or in the mind of the actor.

Bringing new meaning. Symbols function by bringing new meaning to that which has lost its meaning

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<sup>4</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 62.

or to things that have been adopted elsewhere. Old symbols do not need to be discarded just because the "thing" which caused them to come into being as it effected man in a previous milieu, (aroused their passion and response) is no longer relative or extant. But they may become relative and vital in a new situation due to a perspective which will create a new gestalt or suggest a new idea as it becomes visible against a new background. Always (a new "configuration") it is also true that a symbol does not express a single idea but may give rise to many ideas from a single presentation. It is to be noted also that the more general and universal the symbol the wider its application to different times and places. One only has to think of the Swastika and the new meanings it has engendered throughout the ages to different cultures and people, even its use today, as it brings new meaning to the American "beatnik" as compared to Hitler's German youth and the Nazi movement.

It is just at this point that Gestalt psychology assists the learner most ably to bring about new meaning and permits the mind to perceive additional meanings from the same symbol as presented. It becomes most effective as a learning theory and tool to construct new ideas and help establish new relationships.



Relate man to "ultimate concern". To quote from The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary: "Taken from the realm of human experience they [symbols] relate man to that which is of 'ultimate concern'".<sup>5</sup> This function is related to action or method by and through which the purpose of the symbol is accomplished. One instantly thinks of Paul Tillich when this term is used and rightly so, for in and through his great work, Systematic Theology, he is constantly referring and relating all activity in theology to this aim and objective of man. Since the idea, as well as the area, of "ultimate concern" is realized in the passions of men, it can only be recorded within symbolical terms. It is one of the real areas in which the symbol must function if understanding is to bridge the finite to the infinite, to enable man to perceive the imperceptable, to life "as if". As such, symbols have the function of relating the existential to the eschatological. They provide the teacher with a "handle" to give meaning to the intangible subject of "life after death" or the answer to eternal life.

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<sup>5</sup>V. H. Kooy, "Symbolism", The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 472 ff.

### The Attributes Of Symbols.

Symbols may be said to have the following attributes: The function of whose symbolic element is to be definite, manageable, reproduceable and also charged with their own emotional efficacy; symbolical transference invests their correlative meanings with some or all of these attributes of symbols and thereby lifts the meaning into an intensity of definite effectiveness which the meanings may or may not deserve on their own account. All three of these (knowledge, emotion, purpose) are intensely involved in the development of this dissertation. It is in these areas that the teacher is vitally concerned to accomplish the teaching objective.

As a bridging act. Erich Kahler believes that the essential function of symbols is that of a "bridging act". That it is symbols that make a "bridge" possible between outer existence (the world) and inner meaning; and that they arose out of man's capacity to separate inner meaning from outer existence. In this sense they function in an existential world.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Erich Kahler, "The Nature of the Symbol", Rollo May (ed.), in Symbolism in Religion and Literature (New York: Braziller, 1961), p. 54.

To disclose mysteries. Daniel J. Sullivan, writing about "Symbols in Catholic Worship", believes that the function of symbols is "to disclose the mysteries fragmentarily, of hidden realities".<sup>7</sup> In this sense, one could cite the church year as it is observed in the liturgy of the church. In it, or through it, the worshipper is reminded of the organic rhythm of the divine plan of salvation. There are three great seasons in the church year: Christmas--Epiphany, dramatizing the incarnation of The Saviour; Easter--Pentecost cycle, dramatizing the mystery of Redemption; and Trinity--dramatizing the life of the citizen in the Kingdom of God. The church year has designated symbolical colors to remind the worshipper of these events and with these colors the chancel of the church is appointed: Violet, for Advent, signifying humility and penitence, and the coming of the King of Kings; White, for Christmas, signifying the purity of The Christ and The Virgin Mother Mary; White is continued through the Epiphany season as The Christ is "manifested to the world"; Violet is again

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<sup>7</sup>Daniel J. Sullivan, "The Symbolism in Catholic Worship", in Ernst F. Johnson (ed.), Religious Symbolism (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), pp. 39 ff.

used during the forty days of Lent, signifying again to the worshipper the solemnity of the events that this occasion marks, also for the kingship of Jesus; White is used for the Resurrection; Red is used to commemorate the Day of Pentecost (fifty days after Easter) when the Holy Spirit came and descended on the disciples (approximately 120) who had gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem awaiting its promised coming; Green is used for Trinity season to make the worshipper aware of the Eternal Presence of God and the life of the citizen of the Kingdom that is to be lived (eschatologically) with Him in His Kingdom. This Trinity cycle is broken up into four smaller cycles celebrating the theme of the Kingdom of Heaven, each with its special theme. There are as many as twenty-seven Sundays in the Trinity season; The first through the fifth, (1-5), Sundays brings the theme based on "The Call to become a citizen of the Kingdom of Grace; sixth through the eleventh, (6-11), shows forth the right manner of life that is to be lived by a citizen of The Kingdom; twelve through eighteen, (12-18), sets forth the believers works of faith and love; nineteen, (19-), to the last Sunday in Trinity sets forth the completion of the life of the Kingdom with its punishments

and rewards.<sup>8</sup>

The Red paraments (appointments for Pulpit, Lectern, Altar and Stole worn by the celebrant) are used to remind the worshipper on such occasions as Thanksgiving, Pentecost, anniversaries and special events in the life of a particular church, (Reformation Day in Protestantism) and All Saints Day, of the blood of the Martyrs as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then too, Black is used on Good Friday to commemorate that "blackest day in man's history", The Crucifixion of Jesus. Black may also be used on special days of humiliation, but not for funerals in the church.

In like manner, Tillich's statement on function can be accepted and applied to our concept in this category of a symbol expressing a mystery through an object that transcends things in this world:

. . . religious symbols must express an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the world that is split into subjectivity and objectivity. A real symbol points to an object

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<sup>8</sup>The interpretation of these divisions was gleaned from essays written by Paul Zeller Strodach, The Church Year (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1924).

which never can become an object. Religious symbols represent the transcendent but do not make the transcendent imminent. They do not make God a part of the imperial world.<sup>9</sup>

Somehow, or in some way, which is inherent in the symbol or is the result of the neurological working of the mind, symbols transform that which is in part to a whole; they often abstract that which is a whole to a part; and they often make visible that which would be otherwise invisible.

#### Types Of Symbols.

In treating the functions of symbols one must ask the question, are there different types of symbols, for certainly the type or kind of symbol will effect its function. Michael Roberts, in his Critique of Poetry<sup>10</sup> attempts to establish a distinction of a general kind for symbols by pointing out that there are pure signs, such as mathematical symbols, which appeal strictly to man's intellectual nature, and those signs (or symbols) that are emotional (charged) as in art

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<sup>9</sup>Paul Tillich, "The Religious Symbol", in May, Op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Roberts, Critique of Poetry (Toronto: Thomas Nelson, 1934), p. 41.

forms.

From another poet, C. Day Lewis, in his book, The Poetic Image, (in which he deals with that which is the nature and content of all poetry--the image, and describes the process by which images are brought together to form a complete image, the poem itself) speaks only once of the symbol, but in that once, gives a very provocative concept of its function when he suggests a threefold answer to the question: That the function of a symbol "is to give freshness, intensity, and evocative power."<sup>11</sup>

Here, at this point, the whole study of the symbolical that is, or has to do with language, should be brought to bear, inasmuch as words are symbols, just as objects and gestures are symbols. For often the word stands for the object, and at other times the object can stand for the word. However, suffice it to say, words become cumulative and connote more than they denote, and they take on new meanings, but their function is perhaps the epitome of all symbols, in that they are designed to inform (give knowledge), to please (emotions) to enhance, to evoke, to change; and

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<sup>11</sup>C. Day Lewis, The Poetic Image (New York: Cape, 1947), p. 42.

to change is to educate. Which, of course, is the purpose of this dissertation: to establish a technique, or to at least evoke an awareness of the possibilities and the importance of symbols as tools in religious education, and as such, to enforce this function of the symbol and the symbolic process.

Function Of Symbols Decisive In Religious Life.

Under the sub-topic, "Structure of Aquatic Symbolism", Mircea Eliade presents the idea of both structure and function of symbols in his classic work, The Sacred and the Profane. In this chapter, it is his concept of function that is important. To substantiate it he treats, for an example, the religious valorization of the waters and gives two reasons for this procedure. The first reason deals with the passage from Genesis 1:2, which quotes the text as, "Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit moved upon (breathed upon) the face of the waters". His second reason is given in order to get a better grasp of the structure and function of the symbols by analyzing the religious values of the waters. He says in part:



. . . Now symbolism plays a decisive part in the religious life of humanity: it is through symbols that the world becomes transparent, is able to show the transcendent.

The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are the fons et origo, "spring and origin", the reservoir of all possibilities of existence; they precede every form and support every creation. One of the paradigmatic images of creation is the island that suddenly manifests itself in the midst of the waves. On the other hand, immersion in water signifies regression to the preformal, reincorporation into the undifferentiated mode of pre-existence. Emersion repeats the cosmogonic act of formal manifestation; immersion is equivalent to a dissolution of terms. This is why the symbolism of the water implies both death and rebirth. (This is very important for any discussion on Baptism, whether it has to do with the approach from symbolism or not). Contact with the water always brings a regeneration--on the one hand because dissolution is always followed by a new birth, on the other because immersion fertilizes and multiplies the potential life . . .

In whatever religious complexes we find the waters invariably retain their function; they disintegrate, abolish forms, "wash away sins"; they are at once purifying and regenerating . . .

One point is essential here: both the sacrality of the waters and the structure of the aquatic cosmogonies and apocalypses can be completely revealed only through aquatic symbolism, which is the only system capable of integrating all of the particular revelations of innumerable hierophanies.<sup>12</sup> This law, moreover, holds for every symbolism; it

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<sup>12</sup>Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp. 437 ff., For further information on this symbolism.

is the symbolism as a whole that valorizes the various significations of hierophanies.<sup>13</sup>

Here then, in a measure, is a symbol at the functional level, as it "works" in the structure of the aquatic, revealing a deeper meaning to what would otherwise be an ordinary libation, or washing act, lifting the thought over the hurdle of un-understanding the enigma of death, comforting the ones who remain with a hope of salvation for that part of the human which we term the soul and giving us patience, inspiration and faith. Thus, setting forth the fact that the function of symbols has a decisive effect on the religious life of man.

#### Symbols Function In Two Directions.

Another way of showing the function of symbols is suggested by Paul Tillich in his Systematic Theology, Volume I., in which he presents the following observation:

Religious symbols are double-edged. They are directed toward the infinite which they symbolize and toward the finite through which they symbolize it. They force the infinite down to the finitude

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<sup>13</sup>Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 129 ff.

and the finite up to the infinity. They open the divine for the human and the human for the divine. For instance, if God is symbolized as "Father" he is brought down to the human relationship of father and child. But, at the same time, this human relationship is consecrated into a pattern of the divine-human relationship. If Father is employed as a symbol for God, fatherhood is seen in its theonomous, sacramental depths.<sup>14</sup>

### Symbols Produce Faith.

It is interesting to note that C. G. Jung believes the function of symbols to be producers of faith:

This function is so important that feeling accords it the highest values. The symbol works by suggestion; that is to say, it carries conviction and at the same time expresses the content of that conviction. It is able to do this because of the numen, the specific energy stored up in the archetype. Experience of the archetype is not only impressive, it seizes and possesses the whole personality and is naturally productive of faith.<sup>15</sup>

For the purpose of this dissertation it is enlightening and impressive to note the fact that Jung considers the chief function of symbols is to be "productive of faith". Certainly one of the main objectives of the teacher of religion is to aid in this

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<sup>14</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), I, 240.

<sup>15</sup>Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 232.

growth and development of the learner, for faith is so desperately needed in their lives today. Hence, since the symbol is capable of function in this manner, it is vital that it becomes a part of their teaching technique. How much better it is to present symbols to accomplish this aim than to multiply the use of tranquilizers and sleeping pills that must be consumed by men, women and children to lull them into a false sense of trust (faith and security).

#### Function Of Symbol And Myth.

Another function of symbolism is to be noted in its close association with myth. As was said earlier in this dissertation where it was necessary to compare symbol and myth, it is extremely difficult to separate them, and one finds that religious beliefs cannot effectively be expressed without their use in some combination such as this. As Nicolas Berdaev has said of myth:

. . . Myth is a reality immeasurably greater than concept . . . Myth is always concrete and expresses life better than can abstract thought . . . Myth presents to us the supernatural in the natural, the super-sensible in the sensible, the spiritual life in the life of the flesh . . .<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Nicolas Berdaev, Freedom and Spirit (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 70,71. (See Chapter, "Symbol, Myth and Dogma").

And since myth is the language by which symbols are expressed or communicate their message, one can see that behind every myth there is a symbol pointing to that which is beyond or above (supra), which the myth enhances (embroideries) and so makes acceptable a truth or truths that would otherwise be unacceptable, an instance of this is the truth of death.

Lewis Joseph Sherrill suggests in his book The Gift of Power, that the function of symbols is to be seen in the treatment of the story of a marvel as a myth.

When this is done the value of the stories lies in their symbolism. Through symbols, they communicate meanings which defy any other means of communication. Viewing the Biblical stories of marvels as being primarily symbolic in character has brought a feeling of deliverance to many who have understood that we cannot prune out these stories of marvel without doing violence to that which the writers of the Bible were trying to communicate.<sup>17</sup>

#### Function Of Symbols Is To Communicate.

Taking a lead from Sherrill's statement as to the function of symbols, we add that of "communication". One only has to consider our modern mass media, especially radio and television, our "picture" magazines,

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<sup>17</sup>Lewis Joseph Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 135-136.

and the use to which Madison Avenue puts the sex symbol in order to discover that this is a powerful weapon or ally in the promotion of our daily wants; or to see it as a stimulator of our desires for good or evil; to realize that symbols have a vital and constant function in our daily life. Therefore, it is most important that we be aware of their force and use them to communicate the truth about God and the Christian way of life to those who come to the church school to be taught.

Symbols Act As Connectors.

A good function of symbols is seen in the way they make connected thought possible by expressing it and so automatically directing the action. They mark a growth (development) from instinctual force: society gains efficiency and efficacy by the use of symbols, which preserves both the common weal and the individual point of view. This connecting activity (expressing thought through language, albeit in mythopoetic form), is a "bringing togetherness", axiomatic of symbols, of the various unconscious urges and desires of both personal depth on the one hand, and the archaic archetypal depth on the other; uniting the conscious elements that present themselves in the day to day struggles with problems.

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The Healing Function Of Symbols.

From what has been said previously about symbols functioning as connectors, one becomes aware that in this capacity there is healing power in symbol and myth. This healing power has two aspects: (1) this power resides in the fact that the symbol and the myth evoke and bring into an awareness the "repressed, unconscious archaic urges, longings, dreads and other psychic content. This evoking is known as regressive function of the symbol. (2) However, the symbol and the myth may reveal new goals, new ethical insights, they make possible a break-through of meaning (perhaps by an enhancement of an idea) to what was present before. This would then be called the progressive function of the symbol. It is relatively easy to make the transference of this psychoanalytical effectiveness to the spiritual realm--for what is therapeutic for the mind and body is therapeutic for the soul. This function of "healing power" should be kept in mind and constructively used in the educational work of the church. This certainly presents a plus in the operative function of symbols.

One could point to the plus that many symbols have as an affect on and in our lives. The fact that

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very few words are purely technical and few images are purely utilitarian, gives to life a background of closely woven multiple meanings.

Every object that emerges into focus of attention has meaning beyond the fact in which it figures. It serves by turns, and sometimes even at once, for insight, and theory, and behavior, in non-discursive knowledge and discursive reason, in wishful fancy or, as a sign eliciting conditioned-reflex action. By that means we respond to every new datum with a complex of mental functions . . . We impress each other, and build a social structure, a world of right and wrong, of deamons and sanctions.<sup>18</sup>

Without much effort or mental gymnastics, one can easily conclude from Langer's observation the vital role functions of symbols play in the life and program of the educational work of the church, as well as the importance for the teacher to set the stage for instruction and usage for actual development of the learner as to insight, and balanced emotional control. It is evident that our moral life is negotiated largely by symbols and that, through power symbols, (charged) we have not only the ability to limit each other's actions, but to command them. Thus, symbols can function in the area of discipline.

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<sup>18</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 285.



### Function Of Symbols For Discipline.

The church school presents a unique problem in the area of discipline. The authority of the teacher rests on his or her ability to control the emotions by an appeal to reverence for the place in which teaching takes place and the support of the Pastor. No physical punishment is permitted and no one is to be "sent home" (expelled) from the group. This calls for an understanding of the motivation of the pupil and a control of his emotions. Emotions have always been a problem to cope with. Perhaps it is because we neglect this part of our training of teachers and so have little knowledge to bring to bear on the situation. Most teachers dismiss the disagreeable emotional problems as merely "states of mind". Because it is conceptualized by Hillman<sup>19</sup> that emotions are caused by symbols and that learning is influenced by emotions and vice versa, that emotions are influenced by learning, it is well to bring this to the attention of the teacher. Most educators admit that "climate" is vitally important in every learning situation. Hence, it is well to note

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<sup>19</sup>James Hillman, Emotion (Evanston:Northwestern University Press, 1961), p. 255.

that emotions often create, what will be called either a good or a bad "climate" for learning.

What moves emotions? If the teacher should then ask the question that Aristotle asked, "What moves the emotions?", the response would be, without going through the "four root principles", it is symbolism. To substantiate this vastly complex statement made simple by the one term, a quote from Hillman is presented:

The stimulus for emotion comes from conscious representations (presented from existential objects) or unconscious representations (ideas, perceptions, images or sensations) or a combination of both which is called symbol . . . , symbols are lived out emotions. And emotional behavior corresponds with the symbol aspect of object reality. [Italics in the original].<sup>20</sup>

The teacher must be aware that, emotion depends on learning insofar as "its arousal is always within a concrete context--even if not always by a concrete image".<sup>21</sup> It is a learned context; and in this emotion it is learner behavior because one aspect of the symbol which arouses emotion has been learned. This aspect of it is subject to conditioning and is in fact a product of learning. It is readily seen therefore that emotions can be manipulated by controlling the presenta-

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

tion of conscious representations.

The effective use of symbols at certain stages of life. It is important for the teacher to know what symbols are effective at the different stages of life or at the various age levels. Not all symbols can be used to motivate proper behavior or control emotions at any one stage of the pupils development. An example is seen in the way our sense of humor changes at various levels of maturation. Things that were very humorous when one was six, are no longer funny at the age of twelve. We laugh at different things as growth changes our conceptions. Children are cruel by adult standards. They have no sense of pity or mercy. The judgments of youth on their peers, and also on adult behavior, is often excessively severe. Therapeutically, this means that if the pupil displays undesirable emotions, they can be changed by one of two things; either change the symbolic fixation or substitute another emotion for the less desirable one, thus transforming and reordering the others. Hillman feels that:

It is not the emotion of hate, nor of desire, nor of fear that is to be changed, but the inappropriate symbol that arouses them . . . An alteration of the symbol alters the emotions . . . the therapy of emotions is a process of symbolization. It is a becoming conscious of the symbols which produce effects, and reordering the effects through 'symbolic circuitation'. Through the careful

elaboration and refinement of these symbols there takes place an educative, aesthetic and moral process which alerts the raw, red end of the spectrum making it serviceable and even creative.<sup>22</sup>

It is not intended that teachers should become therapists for mentally disturbed children in religious education, but if some knowledge of what representations upset the child's emotions or produce emotions that are conducive to learning for the self and others by effecting a change of symbols, then discipline can be improved and a satisfactory climate for learning and acceptance can be achieved.

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to give a complete step by step method of procedure for the mastery of this technique. This section has been included in order to set before the teacher another facet of the role symbols can and do play in learning. There are many sources where further information can be obtained.<sup>23</sup>

There are many other functions of symbols that could be noted as they "act" in behalf of mankind.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>23</sup>Particular attention is directed to a work by A. R. Luria, The Nature of Human Conflicts, or Emotion, Conflict and Will (New York: Liveright, 1932). Also, C. G. Jung, The Transcendent Function (Zurich: Jung Institute, 1957).

Since not all of them are possible to be noted for this dissertation, it is well to conclude with this principle function called to our attention by Loemker in his essay, "Symbol and Myth in Philosophy", where he stresses their primary functions as that which they were designed to do--"symbolize". He then proceeds to say:

. . . that is to represent, or express (it is to Libniz that we owe these two equivalent terms) something particular (a thing, an act, a relation, a quality, or a person) or a universal class of things . . . Symbols may express things present or things absent. They may also represent things non-existent and things whose existence is impossible. They may be used to discover things hitherto unknown.<sup>24</sup>

### Summary.

In this chapter, an attempt was made to define function as not only "the natural, proper, or characteristic action of anything", but also, as Langer defines it, "as a pattern viewed with reference to one special term around which it centers".<sup>25</sup> The difference between

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<sup>24</sup>Leroy E. Loemker, "Symbol and Myth in Philosophy", in Thomas J. J. Altizer (ed.), Truth, Myth and Symbol (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 114.

<sup>25</sup>Langer, Op. cit., p. 56.

purpose and function was given in order to avoid confusion of the two terms.

It was further shown that symbols have a dynamic aspect as they stand in a one-to-one relationship in their meaning, as well as a variance due to time and space.

The fact that one conception of a thing or situation is not the same as a reaction toward it serves to weigh heavily for the truth that the symbol serves as a vehicle and never as a proxie.

In the church year, an example was given of the function of symbols to bridge the unknown and disclose the mystery of the metaphysical through concrete images in the present.

It was stated that symbols are decisive for religious life, quoting from Mircea Eliade's great work, The Sacred and the Profane.<sup>26</sup> The fact that symbols function as communicators of thought ideas and representative projections, as well as connectors for one generation to others in the past, they then perform a healing function in that what is therapeutic of body is also therapeutic for the soul.

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<sup>26</sup>Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 129.

Thus, a knowledge of the function of symbols, "How they work", is necessary for the religious educator in order to provide symbols as a regulative move in the realm of moral and spiritual development.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

#### Introduction: Review Of First Four Chapters.

In the first chapter of this dissertation it was established by definition and discussion "What Is A Symbol?" In Chapter II, "The Purpose Of Symbols" and their relation to life was presented. "The Structure Of Symbols" was reviewed in Chapter III, with the thought in mind of establishing a basic knowledge of their form, so that a teacher could develop new symbols for present day situations. In Chapter IV, "The Function Of Symbols" was studied in order to see "How it works", as symbols are made available for application in learning.

In this final chapter, it is hoped to relate all the foregoing information to some key areas of religious teaching for which symbols can and do play a large part in the major concerns of Christian Education and enable a teacher to bring meaning and understanding to the task so as to aid the learner in developing his relationship to God and his fellow man.

Theories of learning. Over the years many persons in the educational field have worked out a theory as to how persons learn. Morris L. Bigge, in

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his book, Learning Theories for Teachers,<sup>1</sup> presents a comprehensive summary of ten possible theories of learning which have influenced educators and education. For the purpose of this dissertation, concern will be centered primarily on No. 5-6-7 for S-R Bond Associationist theories and No. 8-9-10 for the Gestalt-field theories. (See chart "Learning Theories" in Appendix B). These two theories appear to be the predominant ones which effect all modern learning. But what is more important (as attested in Chapter III of this dissertation) the Gestalt-field theory presents the best method of both a psychology and a philosophy for teaching and learning<sup>2</sup> through symbols, as a comparison will show.

Roots of the two theories. No theory of learning comes in to being "full blown" without having stemmed from some ideas out of the past. Hence, although these two theories were developed in the 20th Century, their roots extend far back into earlier centuries. For instance, the concepts of learning developed by Herbart

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<sup>1</sup>Morris L. Bigge, Learning Theories for Teachers (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that in 1952 the state of Pennsylvania chose to base its entire curriculum, both elementary and secondary, on the Gestalt psychology and philosophy.

in the late 19th Century, called today "Herbartanism", is not totally dead, but some of its principles still influence many teachers today. In the first third of the 20th Century, John B. Watson (1878-1958) and Edward L. Thorndike (1874-1949) can be called the fathers of a very influential movement known as "Behaviorism". Thorndike's theory was a variation of Watson's and while named "connectionism", is in its broadest sense still "Behaviorism".

While these two foregoing theories are no longer practiced in their original form, many modern leaders in the psychological field have similar orientation, and can be classed as "neo-behaviorists", as for example, K. W. Spencer (1902-); B. F. Skinner (1904-); E. R. Guthrie (1890-); J. M. Stephens (1901-); A. I. Gates (1890-), to cite only a few.

Gestalt: leaders and dates. Since, in a previous chapter (Chapter III) the Gestalt philosophy, as a basis for learning and its broad possibilities together with its relationship to, and for, all fields has been rather fully set forth, along with some facts about its founder, Max Wertheimer and other leading contributors, suffice it at this point to simply list them with their existential dates. Selecting, then, the four major leaders, we note: Max Wertheimer (1880-1943); Wolfgang

Köhler (1887-); Kurt Koffka (1886-1941); and Kurt Lewin (1890-1947). All four of these men migrated to the United States where they further developed their theory.

General Lack Of Concern For A Learning Theory.

Bigge says there is this fact to be considered that "in most life situations there is not much of a problem for many people how learning takes place, for in most situations, it is just taken for granted".<sup>3</sup> The average lay person believes that learning results from experience. Therefore, there seems to be no problem to it. Since the dawn of time, man has learned without taking the trouble to ask about the "how" or by what process does learning take place. Children learned by their observation of parents, master craftsmen taught apprentices, no one knew a need for a theory of learning. Often a system of rewards was used for a child; if he did well, he was given compliments; if he was doing poorly he was punished, either in the form of a scolding or something more severe. "A teacher simply taught the way he had been taught when he was a youth".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Bigge, Op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Personal experience still followed by many. Of all the teachers in the average church school today, only a few have had formal (academic) training. It is also true that only a small minority of the teaching staffs have been trained by (or for) the church they serve. The criterion followed by most persons so involved is that of "personal experience"--how they were taught, adding to this their observations of what others have done. However, today this condition is changing. The church's development of a new curriculum, incorporating the latest and best methods of teaching (and philosophy and psychology of learning theories), adopting the advance techniques and practices as presented in and through the public school system, together with the spirit of change (Zeit geist) demands a better preparation on the part of all teachers. This is true not only to the mastery of facts, but also it is true as to the mastery of new techniques and methods, as well as a better understanding of the philosophy and psychology of learning.

A theory is necessary. If there is to be purposeful action and time is to be economized in mastering the problem of the knowledge explosion with which teacher and learner are faced in this fast changing

time, a theory of learning is necessary. A look at secular (profane) education reveals this quickly when notice is taken of the methodology being devised for many of its subjects. This is emphatically shown in an article in the International Journal of Religious Education, by Cynthia C. Wedel, "God and the New Mathematics".<sup>5</sup>

First, we must realize that . . . children whose weekday education is almost totally different from the education most of us received, are coming into our Sunday [Church] Schools. Studies are presented differently, the children learn by different methods, and the content [of the curriculum] is very different . . . He has been taught to think, not just to remember and repeat. If Christian Education doesn't demand concentration and questioning and fitting together of data, he may develop contempt for such a lack of concern for truth. This will demand, quite soon [it already has] a totally different kind of curriculum material for Christian Education and a much more competent teaching staff.

The second great change relates to the teaching staff . . . It will require far more creative forms of teacher training and teachers who are humble enough to take it.

The third great change which must come underlies new curriculum and new teacher training . . . the church must discover what it means to "think theologically". For too long, we have assumed that Christian Education consists in knowing facts about the Bible, church history, Christian doctrine, the Christian life . . . We must work on ways of translating these truths into modern words and

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<sup>5</sup>Cynthia C. Wedel, "God and the New Mathematics", International Journal of Religious Education, XLIII:4 (December 1966), 6-7.

thought forms in order that they may be communicated to both adults and youth today and tomorrow.<sup>6</sup>

In such articles as this, one can hear the desperate cry for new methods to meet the changing demand of the future. To meet this demand an examination of past (or present) methods is needed, and insightful selection of what is good and usable and can be applicable to the future must be made. To this end an examination of the two dominant theories will prove fruitful.

#### Definition Of Learning.

Before developing the two predominant theories of learning, as treated by Bigge,<sup>7</sup> it will be well to establish what is to be understood by the term "learning". The best and most comprehensive definition to date seems to be one heard by this writer on a broadcast of Columbia University's Summer Course as aired on Channel 2 (C.B.S.) June 4, 1966 at 7:30 a.m. (P.S.T.).

Learning is the process by which an activity originates or is changed through reacting to an encountered situation, provided that the characteristics of the change in activity can't be explained on the basis of native tendency, matur-

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Bigge, Op. cit., p. 13.

ation, or temporary states of the organism (from drugs or fatigue).

What is learning to the S-R Associationist Theory?

Since learning theory is a distinct area within theoretical psychology and at present, most psychologists who are dedicated to a study of learning, are concentrating upon developing systematic theories supported by experimentation; and, since experimentation and theoretical literature on learning has grown to an almost impossible amount, a limitation has to be set to discuss (and very briefly, at that) only by comparison that which is related to each of the two predominant fields: S-R Association and Gestalt-field Theories.

Learning in the S-R Associationist Theory involves primarily "the formation of mechanical connections of some sort between stimuli and response".<sup>8</sup>

Everything a pupil does, be it thought or action, is explained by them (S-R Associationists) in terms of response following stimuli or vice versa. Stimuli are features of the environment which act on an organism to cause it to respond. (This presents an existential approach). Responses are reactions of an organism to stimulation.

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<sup>8</sup>Bigge, Op. cit., p. 9.

What is learning to the Gestalt-field Theorist?

As was noted before (in this dissertation on Gestalt, Chapter III) learning to a Gestaltist is a "process of gaining or changing insights, outlooks (attitudes) or thought patterns".<sup>9</sup> The Gestaltist prefers to speak of person to organism; psychological to physical; (mind activity to organismic behavior) biological environment and interaction to action or reaction. This choice of terms is not a mere whim, rather is it a "directive conviction", for with the use of these terms of person, psychological, environment, and interaction, there are great advantages for teachers in evading an atomistic approach to understanding the learning processes, but even of greater advantage to them, is to see the person (learner), his environment, and his interaction with his environment, all occurring at the same time, (this is what is meant by the term field in Gestalt-field Theory). Or, to put it another way, to see "the whole person" in a "total relationship". Here one thinks of, "whole in relation to the part, and the part in relation to the whole", as previously discussed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Supra, Chapter III.



Bigge summarizes the major differences between these two theories succinctly in this way:

S-R Associationist interpret learning, in terms of change in strength of hypothetical variables called S-R connections, associations, habits, strengths, or behavioral tendencies; and Gestalt-field theories define it in terms of reorganization of perceptual or cognitive fields or systems.

Whereas an S-R Associationistic teacher desires to change the behavior of his students in a significant way, Gestalt-field oriented teacher aspires to help students change their understandings of significant problems and situations.<sup>11</sup>

It is suggested that the teacher read in Hilgard<sup>12</sup> the detailed study, as he presents it, of eight learning theories which have currency in the United States today, as well as Boehlke's<sup>13</sup> thesis in which he attempts, not only to relate the eight learning theories set forth by Hilgard in relation to discovering a new approach for Christian Education, but also to present his own theory, which he terms, "creative-engagement". In order that the teacher may have a thorough basis of evaluating what has been done in the past and what is being proposed for the present, but

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<sup>11</sup>Bigge, Op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>Ernst R. Hilgard, Theories of Learning (New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts, 1956).

<sup>13</sup>Robert R. Boehlke, Theories of Learning in Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 186.

more so, that the teacher may develop his own theory using one or a combination of them to undergird his own program.

### Three Steps In Presentation Of Symbol.

In order that symbols may be used in children's educational development, there are at least three steps to be followed:

First step: The child must be taught certain basic symbols and the teacher must share his knowledge of the basic symbols with the learner. Thus, the learner is "given" a meaning for certain basic archetypal symbols and so comes to understand their meaning and application.

Second step: Is to "take the lid off", in terms of Franz Cizek,<sup>14</sup> a pioneer in child art, and so let the child give expression to his primal impulse to follow his imagination and, thus, creatively express his thought and feeling. This is as necessary to the future development of symbolic thinking as "babbling" is to the development of language and expression.

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<sup>14</sup>As quoted in Everett M. Stowe, Communicating Reality Through Symbols (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 60.

Third step: At this step the teacher will introduce new symbols and provide an incentive or motivation for the learner to create new symbols which can be devised for the learning situation so that communication of existential reality can be realized.

These expressions on symbolizations may come from two sources: "One has been experience based on the human response that is possible to a rational self, the other from the depths of the unconscious".<sup>15</sup>

Source: Meeting Of Image And Symbol.

We can see from Cassirer's analysis of symbolic forms of myth, language and art, that symbols also come from (have their source in) the meeting of image and symbol. Charles Hendel, in his "Introduction" to Cassirer's, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, shows this interdependence of image and symbol:

Cassirer does not mean that we are to dispense with images and substitute instead "symbols". Both image and symbol are necessary to understanding. Both have a role in the symbolizing function. They are distinct . . . and the difference is precisely that between "passive images" of something given and "symbols" created by the intellect itself. Images are given, but symbols are made. Made of what? Of the images, the content of perception

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

and experience. The intellect takes images and makes them serve as symbols.<sup>16</sup>

### Indispensable Aids.

Religious symbols are indispensable aids when used as living means for apprehension of meaning that transcends the limits of the phenomenal world. The symbolic expression which may have power for modern man in his distinctive needs of mind, spirit, and total self, need to be those rooted in the common life, alive with authentic realities of symbolic forms as mediated through the mythic search, the logos which may be found in words, and the inexhaustible expressive power of art.

### Learning Is A Complex Process.

As has been demonstrated in the preceding section, in which some learning theories were briefly presented and the Gestalt theory more fully delineated, persons learn in many ways such as through their perceptions, (insight) through problem solving, (trial and error) conditioned reflex, identification, success, rote and combinations of them all. Many, if not all

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<sup>16</sup>Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), I, 50.

the senses, can and do play an important part when learning takes place. It is difficult to single out any one special thing that contributes most to it.

No one theory or combination of theories has an exclusive (or inclusive) right to any sensory or extrasensory physical part of man to make any one method, or theory, right or wrong. All of them have strengths and weaknesses. But, because the Gestalt-field Theory leans so heavily on perception, it will be well to look at it first and keep it in mind as symbols seem to use this part of our learning faculty for communication of ideas and for furthering our relationships.

#### Role Of Perception In Learning.

Perception is used in two senses: (1) In its more limited sense it means picking up clues to new or revised ideas, understandings, apprehensions, and/or insights. Also involved in this is reflection upon experience and testing the results of reflection. (2) In its broad sense perception means the way a person sees the phenomena of experience and the way he feels about them. (That is, what conceptualization takes place within the mind after an object has been seen, or a word heard, or some other sense stimulated). In

other words, what interpretation is given by the learner to the stimulus received. To distinguish between these two meanings, it may be noted that the first (1) is one of the methods by which a learning task is engaged in, while the second (2) is the background from which it is approached. Hence, at all levels of education, one must be aware of the possibility of the eye-gate impression for conception and expression. It is this element that must be exposed and brought to the educators attention.

The Use Of Symbols To Attain And Organize Belief.

Altered man's concept of intelligence. In former times scientists demanded, and philosophers dutifully admitted, that all true belief must be based on sense--evidence, and that activity of the mind had to be conceived purely as a matter of recording and combining. Intelligence had to be the product of impression, memory and association. But now, epistlmology has had a new insight and has uncovered a more powerful but difficult factor, the use of symbols to attain, as well as organize belief. This at once alters the conception of intelligence. It isn't a higher sensitivity, nor a better memory, nor faster association that places man above the other animals,

but the power of using symbols. Not just using signs, which man has in common with all animal life, but the ability to transform signs into symbols and thus, bring new concepts into being that go far beyond the sign (symbol) that suggested it, is the real true mark of distinction. Man's ability to synthesize, delay, and modify his reactions by interpolation of symbols in the gaps and confusions of direct experience, and by means of verbal signs to add the experience of other people to his own, has given him the power to conquer and use, to far greater advantage, the material universe, as well as the spiritual resources, for his needs.

Provide economy of time and effort. Signs and symbols offer man an economy of time and effort as well as memory and aid his communication of great amounts of knowledge in the shortest and simplest forms, as well as in the shortest possible time. This is vital for teacher and learner in this day when there is the great "knowledge explosion" and children have so little time for religious education. It is far superior to learning (teaching) machines" because of the necessity of "determinism" and "conditioned" learning involved in the mechanization of the classroom to this end.

Provide means of communication of belief.  
Sherrill, in his book, Gift of Power, emphasizes the

fact that "communication between one person and another requires symbols".<sup>17</sup> He says:

. . . Communication between one person and another regarding human predicament, regarding revelation, or regarding man's encounter with God requires symbols. In order to communicate with one another about anything, we must use symbols; we must do so, that is, if we wish to transcend our animal nature and claim our human nature. This is true even in the simplest of matters, and as the matters of communication becomes more complex the importance of the symbols becomes greater. Some persons have come to associate symbolism with religion only. They have thought that, outside of religion, people get along without symbols; and they have sometimes maintained that it would be better if we abandoned symbolism in the religious community. A view of this kind has sometimes grown up because of the abuse of symbolism in the religious community; but quite as likely it arises out of misapprehension as to the nature of symbols. Symbols are means of discourse wherever men communicate with one another.<sup>18</sup>

Two basic concerns. Robert Boehlke sets forth in his book Theories of Learning in Christian Education, that:

. . . seven basic concerns that are to be learned, and which emerge to be answered by learning theory . . . they are: knowledge (an umbrella word covering informational subject matter), understanding, attitudes, values, skill-habits, motives, and changes in the self.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Lewis Joseph Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 122-123.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Boehlke, Op. cit. p. 32.



Every one of these are important and should be kept in mind by the religious educator. However, in this dissertation these seven basic concerns will be summed up under two heads: (1) How to impart (communicate) the truth about God, and (2) to impart an understanding of the truth about the Christian way of life. The responsibility of the educator is to communicate these truths in such a way as to enable the learner to have an effective encounter with God that will bring about change (for the better), a change that will permit the growth of the learner in his relation (attitude) to God and his fellow man, and that this growth will be a continuing experience. That through it he will be able to communicate with God in such a way as to deepen his faith and broaden his fellowship in his community (especially in the church).

### Three Classes Of Symbols.

Sherrill has called our attention to the resentment that has been manifest in recent times (especially in the latter part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th Centuries) against a use of symbols due to "their abuse in and by the religious community,"<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Sherrill, Op. cit., p. 123.

and lists three classes of symbols: arbitrary sign, icon and symbol. Two of these lend themselves easily to abuse--arbitrary sign and icon.

Even though some concern was expressed in the first chapter about the nature of symbols, it will be helpful to look at Sherrill's treatment in this respect in relation to their application and use later on.

But first some definitions:

An arbitrary sign is one to which meaning is assigned, but the sign has little or no discernible meaning in itself. An example of which is the alphabet or sign used in mathematics, the plus sign +, the minus sign - or the equal sign =.

An icon is a visible image of some object, especially of a person (picture rather than a statue). The actual appearance of the person may be completely unknown, but the icon "stands for" his presence. Usually one thinks of icons of a saint, Jesus or the Virgin Mary.

A symbol, as defined earlier, is "a sign or object representing something else to which it points; it "represents" that to which it points, not because it has been arbitrarily chosen for that purpose, but because it is intrinsically related to it in some way, such as association with it, or by participation in it.

Sherrill points out that of these three classes, he believes the "symbol" has the greatest importance for biblical use and theological thought.

. . . In the Biblical record of revelation, symbols make up the language through which God

discloses himself to man.<sup>21</sup> [Italics are in the original].

For this reason it becomes vital for religious education and its educators to develop the use of symbols for teaching so that the learner may be able to use them with greater facility and then have more receptivity of God's revelation.

#### The Nature Of A Symbol.

If the symbol is to be used to this end it is important to survey in ten propositions the nature of the symbol and set its limits.

1. While the symbol is real and concrete, that which it represents cannot be grasped (conceptualized) by ordinary use of the senses.

2. The symbol represents a meaning which it would be difficult or even impossible to communicate in non-symbolic ways. It "bridges" the known to the unknown, the finite to the infinite.

3. A symbol is related inwardly and organically to that which it points. This implies that the symbol is rooted in some historical situation or event (history of the race--Archetypal), or in something so familiar to people as to be a matter of common knowledge (as the cross).

4. Symbols are existential in that they are freely drawn from common life. Such symbols have profound significance for faith. (Bread and wine, water).

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<sup>21</sup> Sherrill, Op. cit., p. 123-124.

5. The symbol is often a part but represents a whole. It can be an abstraction of a total and thus provide a time saver in memory and mastery of detail.

6. A symbol participates in that to which it refers. If that to which it refers has power in it (charged--as cross, flag) the symbol has power in it. (Evocative power, intensifies, brings freshness as C. Day Lewis has pointed out).<sup>22</sup>

7. A symbol does not fully contain that which it represents, neither is it proxy for it. It is not identical with that to which it refers, nor is all that to which it refers present in the symbol.

8. A symbol is a vehicle that permits the presentation of an object, event or sensation to the mind for conceptualization and further insight.

9. While a symbol participates in the power of that which it represents, it can not exert that power unless man from his side, participates in it. Man participates when he "perceives" (sees) that in which the symbol shares.

10. A symbol serves to communicate meaning (reality), yet man adds to the meaning which the symbol suggests, by his response to it.

#### Survey Of Some Literature In The Field.

After surveying these ten propositions from the point of view of their value as symbols for use in religious education, one is surprised at the dearth of books by writers in the field of religious education that should deal with this subject or conceive of such

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<sup>22</sup>C. Day Lewis The Poetic Image (New York: Cape, 1947), p. 41.

a use of them. True, one finds the word in some books, but no real discussion or suggestion as to the power and place of symbols for education or discipline.

To illustrate the point, reference is made to David R. Hunter's book, Christian Education as Engagement, where the use of the term "Symbolization of Experience", occurs only in his chapter of "The Methodology of Christian Education", as he treats "Learning Theory" and suggests:

Both the occurrence of learning and the integration of learning depend upon the eventual coalescence of four elements of experience . . . These four are:

1. Immediate personal encounter
2. Identification of encounter
3. Symbolization of experience
4. The ordering of experience<sup>23</sup>

Hunter then proceeds to show how the "symbolizing of experience" occurs:

1. The immediate personal encounter with reality.
  - (a) A child touches a hot stove and recoils in pain . . .
2. The relating of immediate experience to the symbolization of past experience.
  - (a) The child relates the experience of heat and pain to the semantic symbol "burn". He may also relate pain and heat to his parental symbol of authority, the parent already having warned him not to touch the stove.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>David R. Hunter, Christian Education as Engagement, (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), pp. 45-48.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p.p 45-46.

While this is a good treatment and has value as a methodology for this dissertation's suggested program of using symbols, it does not go far enough--it is too brief.

Another example can be seen in Iris V. Cully's book, Dynamics of Christian Education.<sup>25</sup> There are only three references that speak to the subject of symbols. The first is in the section "Teaching from the Fellowship":

The fellowship yields further teaching in the task of explaining to one another the meaning of redemptive experience. This particular type of explaining springs from a subjective understanding which seeks to comprehend the significance of the experience for the totality of faith. It may even be expressed symbolically rather than verbally [sic!]. This was especially true of much of the symbolism of the primitive church. The simple outline of the fish would communicate nothing to the observer, but to the believer it signified Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Savior.<sup>26</sup>  
[I-ch-th-us <sup>27</sup>

It would seem to the writer of this dissertation that instead of using the permissive phrase, "may even be expressed symbolically", it could have been more

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<sup>25</sup>Iris V. Cully, Dynamics of Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>27</sup>See note under "Bread, Fish, Wine" in Chapter I and page 24 in this dissertation.

effectively said, either "it must be express symbolically", or "it is better grasped (understood) symbolically". In this way the dynamic force that symbols can have in communicating meaning to the learner would have been brought to the attention of the teacher and made possible the opening of the way for them (symbols) to be used in teaching.

In Cully's second reference, it is hard to grasp the relation she sets forth between "ideas" and "symbols" for communication, when she declares:

Not all communication, however, comes through the sharing of ideas; indeed there are many people for whom ideas are never important [sic!]. Salvation is by faith, not intellect. Although Christianity can challenge the most highly gifted intellect, it can be lived with equal devotion by one of small intellectual powers. Symbols are a means of communicating concepts for some people. They have been used in the church from the beginning. The sign of the fish is theological, in fact, kerygmatic. A symbol is a picture through which doctrine is explained without being closely defined . . . The use of symbols in Christian Education has been recognized in recent years, but the age at which symbols should first be used is still under discussion.<sup>28</sup>

Some criticism on Cully's second reference to symbols must be made. One wonders just what the author understands by "ideas" and "communication"

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<sup>28</sup>Cully, op. cit., p. 148.

She seems to imply that faith is one such thing that doesn't need an "idea", or an "intellect". Yet, without some intellect (or at least that which distinguishes man from animal) you can have no "idea" of God. Faith then "may" become simply a product of the emotions and be only a "feeling".

Age To Begin Using Symbols To Teach.

Also, to comment on the last statement in the quotation, it is good to note the growing use of symbols in Christian Education, especially since 1955. But, as to the indecision as to what age to begin using them, one must point out that it is a definitely known fact that as soon as the mind starts to function, objects which present themselves to the sight become symbols (stand for something) and conceptual ideation takes place. It is the normal function (the distinctive function) of the mind to "think" symbolically. Language is the result of this activity of the mind, and there would not be any speech if there were no symbolization with its transference and transformation. A child dreams, and the dream sequence is symbolical,-- he may not understand what he dreamed and may think the dreams are reality, they have to be interpreted



and explained to him and through this activity the child grows in understanding of the self. Symbols can be, and are, desirable to be used at the earliest possible age. Witness again Hunter's treatment of "Symbolization of experience" in the learning situation of the "hot stove" and "burn" concept linked with "Parental authority"--verbal commands given in warning to the child.<sup>29</sup>

Symbols To Be Used Consciously.

One needs to remember Jung's<sup>30</sup> treatment of symbols as archetypes and how these relate the individual to the experience of the race and his community. Here one is reminded that this need arises early in the unconscious of the individual but influences his conscious acts. Symbols are desirable to be used consciously and methodologically as early as possible. The earlier the child develops a conscious background

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<sup>29</sup>Hunter, Op. cit., p. 45. (See quoted statement by Hunter on p. 129 of this dissertation. Also for good illustration concerning early age at which to use symbols see story quoted in Erwin R. and Evelyn W. Goodenough "Myths and Symbols for Children", Religious Education Magazine, LVII:3 (May-June 1962).

<sup>30</sup>Carl G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), Introduction, p. 27. (See also Carl G. Jung, The Integration of Personality (New York: Farrar & Reinhart, 1939), p. 3., and Carl G. Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959).

of symbols and a method of this kind of thinking, the faster he can learn and become creative in thought and act.

In Cully's third and final reference in her book, there is in it that which amounts to a flat contradiction of thought. Note bene.

Free drawing is a customary part of any unit, but it is usually directed toward depiction of the outward events of the story. Newer understandings about the child, coupled with an awareness of the Bible in human life, could make possible some experiments in freer expression with young children. Symbolism has more of a place in emotional life of the child than has sometimes been acknowledged, and the meanings of the Christian faith lend themselves to this kind of interpretation.<sup>31</sup> [Italics not in original quotation].

While this is a good statement (especially the italicized part), and is very strongly supported and sustained by Hillman in his doctoral dissertation, published by Northwestern University under the title of Emotion,<sup>32</sup> and which is quoted in this dissertation in Chapter IV, in regard to using "symbols in the discipline of children", just because of this fact, that symbols do play a big role in their emotions, nevertheless, if one reads the quote just preceding

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<sup>31</sup>Cully, Op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>32</sup>James Hillman, Emotion (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961).

this statement one can see the area and implication of contradiction.

#### Importance Of Teacher To Plan.

Lesson plans are always important and necessary in any program for good teaching but it is especially so for modern education. The teacher must consciously incorporate a use of symbols in the lesson plans; not just for an occasional use, but strive to find many applications and opportunities in every lesson. This should be done in two steps:

First step: Symbols are not always self-explanatory, nor is the learner always able to "get the message" from the confrontation of a symbol. It is just at this point the function of the teacher is best understood. For it is the teaching responsibility to lead the learner into an acceptance of the symbol as a "representation" of that which is greater and to discover "the greater to which it points" or to make the "leap of faith" over the "bridge" from the known to the unknown. It is further the teacher's role to help the learner discover symbols out of his past (Archetypes) and present experience. Hence, lesson plans should deliberately include a place to discover, relate, and interpret the lesson with symbols.

Second step: It would further seem that the second step in "consciously planning" the use of symbols as a necessary technique in Christian education in order to execute the two bold concerns in this field (communication of the truth about God and the Christian way of life) would be to develop a vocabulary--verbal symbols that would enrich the experience and open the mind of the child to an understanding of the language of theology.

This vocabulary would be geared to the age level of the learner. Word lists for each age and area of experience should be provided the teacher as a basic part of her material of preparation. Since the Bible and its truths are to be communicated, (not as mere factual data), it must be recognized that biblical symbols make up the basic vocabulary of the Christian community, therefore, it behooves the teacher to make this material available by structure and interpretation. It is the teacher's responsibility to bridge the gap that exists between the oriental mind that first conceived the symbol and the modern mind of the westerner who is to interpret it. It is also the teacher's responsibility to aid the learner by "weeding out" such symbols as no longer have meaning to the present age. One classic example of an outmoded symbol would be "the blood" of sacrificial animals for the propitiation of sin. Even though in Hebrews (9:11-ff.) it speaks of Christ's blood (and it is the only book in the New Testament that does) as being necessary to cleanse us from our sins (9:22). In reality, when this passage is properly exegeted it is to be noted the author is really pointing to another concept--the "more excellent

way" of faith as set forth in the eleventh chapter (Hebrews 11:1 ff.).<sup>33</sup> Few old line churches emphasize or use this symbol today. It is true that many pentecostals still sing and speak of "the blood" but even so, few who hear, really understand its meaning or can be motivated by it. Hence, it no longer "speaks" or communicates anything to the present generation and should be purged.

#### Old Truths In New Dress.

The answers to the great questions of life asked by our fore-fathers are for the most part still true and important today. But the question may take a new form and the answer must speak to our day in figures (metaphores) and symbols that evoke a response. The question, "Does God exist?" and its answer, "The story of a watch demanding a watchmaker", is couched in the Altzer-Hamilton phrase, "God is dead", and the attempts to refute it with Heideggerian existentialism via Bultman de-mythologizing reconstruction of the New Testament; a growth concept of an out-moded God.

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<sup>33</sup>See further the section of exegesis by Alexander C. Purdy, Interpreter's Bible Commentary (New York: Abingdon, 1955), XI, 693 ff.; See especially Section B, p. 697.

But to the old and new cry, "How does God make himself known to us?" we have still the valid reply heard in Luther's answer in the catechism,<sup>34</sup> "God makes himself known to us partly through his work (symbolism, objects of nature),<sup>35</sup> but mainly through His word". His word is found in the Bible (vocabulary) and in preaching (sermons, again vocabulary). Sherrill is correct when he observes:

It is more important to observe that Biblical symbols, by their own nature, are evocative, designed to draw forth a response of some kind; and this in turn can set up an interaction which is actually two-way communication.<sup>36</sup> [dialogue].

#### Symbols Used To Motivate.

Use of curiosity. Another important use of symbols is as a prelude (pre-session) device to arouse the learners interest in Biblical events or stories. An example can be seen in having a candle burning in a pitcher, as the children enter class, in a prelude to the study of Gideon and his band of 300.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Luther's Small Catechism (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication House, 1893), p. 17

<sup>35</sup>See Psalm 19, (R.S.V.).

<sup>36</sup>Sherrill, Op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>37</sup>Judges 7:15-23, (R.S.V.).

Through it, curiosity is aroused, wonder, surprise, and incredulity are expressed, and the learner is motivated to ask questions; to perceive the event. The scriptures themselves encourage this approach. Note the story of the Passover meal with its ritualistic instructions to the family as recorded in Exodus 12:26; or the redemption rites in Exodus 13:13 following; and again the Cairn (pile of stone) marking the crossing over of the Jordan River into the Promised Land in the book of Joshua 4:6-- . The instructions read:

When the children ask, 'What mean these stones?' you shall say, "etc.,----".

Thus we see curiosity, wonder and surprise are aroused by symbols, (objects, events) especially ones that act in a strange way, as seen in Moses' action at the "burning bush", which, because it was not consumed, caused him to wonder why and to investigate it. Such a symbolic event can be the beginning of adoration and service. Surprise can open the way to new disclosures, such as the planned act of a teacher in producing unexpectedly a live turtle from a box she had concealed earlier, in order to get the interest of a junior boys class, as she tries to interest them in following St. Paul's advice to the Ephesians, "to put on the whole

armour of God",<sup>38</sup> and thus involve them in participation in the lesson.

Use of incredulity. Then there are the use of acts, or statements of truths that sound incredulous. Facing such an act, or hearing such statements (or see such a symbol), the response is one of doubt, "I can't understand it", or "I don't see it", or "I can't accept it". Look, for example, at the Gospel story of Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night and inquiring after truth is told "You must be born again", and he asks the question "How can these things be?" (John 3:9). Such questions, or doubts, serve a purpose even beyond the immediate questioner, they serve to bring our further disclosures. In the case of Nicodemus and his incredulity, we receive the basic teaching about a doctrine, that of baptism. Or Jesus answers the real question of the inquirer, "How does one become a member of the group of disciples known as "followers of the way". (How to become a Christian). The teacher can use this type of approach (symbol) to open the way to further disclosures.

Another example of this use is to be seen in the story of the samaritan woman at the well as recorded in

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<sup>38</sup>Ephesians 6:11 ff. (R.S.V.).



John's gospel (4:1-ff). Jesus startled her by speaking to her, which was forbidden by law--hence, he used surprise action. To further surprise her, he, a Jew, asked her for a drink of water. This act was contrary to custom, on two counts: (1) Jews had absolutely no dealings with samaritans whom they consider dogs, and (2) their dietary laws (ritual and ceremonial) forbade eating or drinking with non-Jews. This request was so unusual that it caused her to wonder and ask another question. This further question led to an opportunity for Jesus to make a further disclosure, the truth about worship. It is not a particular place or time where men worship but, "They who worship God, worship Him in spirit and in truth". God is not confined to a place, time or people. Hence, through the use of symbols, (drink, water, worship, etc.) the employment of the unusual, the incredible, wonder, and so forth, a way was opened for dialogue and further communication that enabled new ideas and concepts to be formed.

Use of signs and wonders. The religious educator may take any and all of the symbols or "signs and wonders" in the gospel and analyze them (exegete) and thus bring about a better understanding of their message and perhaps a better application of that

message for life today. But it is not enough to simply use those things out of the past and clothe them with present day meanings, the teacher will want to use instruments (symbols) out of today's experience, the natural world around, in order to discover meaning, explore the truth and make possible creative thinking (conceptualization) on the part of the learner.<sup>39</sup>

Simple scientific experiments can catch the attention and cause the modern learner to question truth and facts of nature and his day-to-day living, so that he will have a better understanding of God and be enabled to live the Christian way of life without quarreling with science. (God versus evolution).

#### Difficulty Of Child's Understanding Abstractions.

The question is often raised "Since very young

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<sup>39</sup>There are some startling studies on the subject, "What is Creativity?" One such study, J. B. Bronowski, "The Creative Process", Scientific American, CXCIX:3 (September 1958), 50, is an introduction to the whole issue devoted to the topic of innovation in science. Its sub-head reads: "The argument: Although science and art are social phenomena, an innovation in either field occurs only when a single mind perceives in disorder a deep new unity . . . A man becomes creative, . . . when he finds a new unity in the variety of nature. He does so by finding a likeness between things which were not thought alike before, and this gives a sense of both richness and of understanding. The creative mind is a mind that looks for unexpected likeness (or difference)". p. 63.

children do not understand abstractions, is it appropriate to introduce into the church school curriculum myth and symbols they do understand?" and Erwin and Evelyn Goodenough reply in their article in the May-June issue of "Religious Education" that:

There is nothing abstract about myth and symbols, but only adults explanation of them, explanations are always secondary to the concrete myth and symbol themselves. The value of both lies in their concreteness; and every religion that uses them presents them to children long before they have any notion of an abstract reference for their potency . . . So the little Catholic is taken to mass and taught to kneel and cross himself when mother and father do. The child senses the spirit of devotion in the parents and by the symbols is made into a Catholic long before anyone dreams of giving him abstract explanations.<sup>40</sup>

Example of use. Perhaps the best way to show "use" of a symbol for teaching is to present an example used by Goodenough in this same article:

An old Polish Jew told once how this happened to him (to bring the young mind into a rational acceptance of the concrete reality found within the symbol directly) in the ghetto years ago. The supreme symbol of Judaism is the sacred page. The old man told how his father took him to the synagogue at the age of 3. The rabbi met them and sat the child at a table with the Hebrew text before him. They had him bend over and look at what to him was meaningless marks on the page, and as he did so the Rabbi poured sugar over his head so that it fell on the paper. 'Lick it up with your tongue',

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<sup>40</sup>Goodenough, Op. cit., p. 172.

they said; as he did so, he got his first lesson that the Law of the Lord is sweet. He learned this from the taste of the sugar, not from the abstraction said with it. The taste was enough (for a small boy 3 years of age); it was as far as a little boy could go toward having a real symbolic experience.<sup>41</sup>

Early use of symbols enrich later life. If the man is to find joy and strength in abstract signs and symbols, it is vital that they be presented to him early in childhood. By enriching the child's life early he will have much to expand later, and it is not proverbs (teachings) that enrich so much as experiences that are real in themselves at the time--these experiences can then grow into symbols in later life: The act of going to church, act of family looking beyond itself to a greater reality, basic mother, father figure, holding hands, drinking water, eating food, family table, a cup of cold water--symbolized today in liturgy of the church they were acts of Jesus that for today mean salvation.

Symbols To Answer Mysteries Of Life.

There are many areas and activities of life for which symbols alone can provide a sense of security. Think of the question of life after death. How can

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

there be another world of ongoing life when one can't see it? Does sleep and one's dream life offer any clue? There are those who believe this is true. Perhaps an answer can be had from the analogy of a glass of water. Man could not believe that there was anything additional (bacteria) in a glass of clear "pure" water until he invented the microscope and observed a drop of that "pure" water under it. In that drop of water he saw a whole new world of life he never knew existed. Or again, man could not believe the great expanse of the universe until the telescope was invented, (now he has the radio-scope to catch sounds from outer space, revealing an expanding Universe) now he accepts a multiplicity of universes like his own. And so it is with spiritual things, one cannot know the world of afterlife unless one uses the "instrument" that will give one "eyes" to see (perceive) into the depths or out into space. The best "instrument" so far is the Bible, and its truths are best communicated through myth and symbol.

The question of prayer. The question is often asked, "How can God hear prayer when so many are praying at the same time?" In order to answer this question the teacher may use one of the scientific marvels of the day to demonstrate the possibility of God hearing and

answering prayer: The radio and television, for example. One only needs to have the right equipment and be tuned in on the proper channel, to receive the program desired. Then too, man is able to send thousands of messages on a beam of light (LASER) and separate them, directing them where he will. Why can't God do even more?

A Madison Avenue lead. Religious education could take a lead from the advertizers on Madison Avenue and note the symbols used to sell cars, naming them Mustang, Impala (strength and speed); to sell gas, "put a tiger in your tank"; to sell perfume they suggest a sleek cat, a tawny leopard, etc. Other examples might be the airplane, which may be too new to adapt to our use at the present time as the early church adapted the ship to serve in its representation of the church as a way of salvation and sail with Christ the Pilot over the rough and stormy seas of life. Someone will make the analogy soon, perhaps when the super carrying passenger ships and their increased speed will be achieved.

Astronauts. Certainly man's venture out into space and to the moon will open the way to new figures of speech (metaphore) and symbol for this space age into which he is moving. Perhaps more data is needed

before an application of this experience can be made to our faith and teaching. If nothing else, the prayer of Gordon Cooper<sup>42</sup> gives one the sense of adequacy still to be had in an expanding concept of universe and civilization, even though Krushchev's astronaut was unable to locate heaven or God "out there".<sup>43</sup>

Cultivate an awareness. Teachers and writers in the field of Christian education must be brought to an acute awareness of the importance of cultivating every experience, to train those who sit at their feet, in order that they may get a deeper insight, a new idea, a better way to express their faith.

Objects, events, persons, names. One could make an endless list of objects, such as blood, wine, bread, tables, stoves, sword, pen, salt, etc.; or forces of nature, such as life, death, birth, light, darkness, water, sea, sun, moon, stars, flood, fire, etc.; or

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<sup>42</sup>"Father, we thank you especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank you for the privilege of being able to be in this position, to be in this wondrous place, seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that you have created. Help us in our future endeavors that we may show the world that democracy really can compete and still is able to do things in a big way". Gordon Cooper, Jr., "Prayer", Time, LXXI:22 (May 31, 1963), 15.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

events such as the Exodus, Passover, Christmas (birth of Christ), Good Friday, Easter, founding of a church, anniversaries, etc.; these can become handles by which a deeper meaning can be grasped, and through which a connection with the past experience of the clan can be had. It will also strengthen the learner's sense of community for the present.

Feast of Booths. In this sense, one sees the wisdom of the celebration of the Jewish Feast of Booths, in which the Jew commemorates the wilderness wanderings at the time of the Exodus. It not only serves to commemorate one of the mighty acts of God in leading the people to the Promised Land, but also the continuing providence of God in His giving them a harvest. In this Festival they have a vehicle to pray, praise and thank Him for all His past care and concern and for the present bounty. But more than this, it gives the youth a wonderful opportunity for activity, recreation and fellowship.

Persons in a particular role. In addition, one can use the office or role of persons such as king, servant, clown, potter, carpenter, judge, shepherd, mother, father, etc.; or ritual acts such as baptism, anointing, kneeling in prayer, lighting a candle; or



add to this list the values of a person such as Jacob named Israel, Father Abraham, Isaac the friend of God. And this does not exhaust the possibilities, for they are infinite, one only has to "see" and let the mind have free reign to add many more.

### The Use Of Vision.

While one hears and reads much about vision in Bible times as a means of revelation (new knowledge for understanding past events), it is little regarded today. Sherrill speaks in his book, The Gift of Power, about vision and how it happens as:

Vision results when the mind thrusts into that which needs to be seen in a new configuration. In the "vision" that new configuration confronts one. In it he encounters that which is "unseen" by the ordinary operation of the mind. A new shape of things is "seen". This new shape is often regarded in the Bible as coming from God to man, the "vision" speaks to him, has something to tell him (communicates revelation).<sup>44</sup>

Three forms of vision. In the Bible and other literature visions come in three ways; dreams, trance or ecstasy, or in times of quiet reverie. The men of the Bible stories always took them seriously and felt they disclosed new meaning, either in the present or

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<sup>44</sup>Sherrill, Op. cit., p. 143.

for the future. Its importance for this dissertation is due to the fact that the vision by its very nature is very symbolical. All the "materials" in the vision represent something (Young Joseph's dreams as told in the book of Genesis). One should be warned, however, of the dangers that lie in this form of symbol: (1) In the vision what do the materials "stand for"--here is a problem of interpretation and application, because of their conveying "dangerous meanings" in disguise; (2) apocalyptic form with its lack of definiteness as to forms and a question as to the one for whom the message is intended. Since there are these dangers involved, the vital use can best be had in the teacher's understanding the vision and being able to instruct the learner in interpreting it to life and purpose.

Source of example. Many examples of vision are available in the scriptures, from Abraham, Jacob and the Prophets (Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.) to the New Testament of Stephen and Paul through the book of Revelation. There are many additional sources for the teacher to use from secular experience and literature. One thinks of stories told from war experience and traveler tales from sea and land. And now in our day one wonders at the experiences of vision

as a result of psychedelic drugs, such as peyote, L.S.D., (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) or marijuana and morning glory seeds. Certainly, no church school teacher would resort to use of such means to induce visions but it may be that literature will reveal results from scientifically controlled experiments that would produce usable symbols for further insight. Since Sherrill accepts the fact that, "in 'visions' new configurations confronts one",<sup>45</sup> it just may be that gestalten may be presented from insights induced by such stimulation.

Over Use And Under Use Of Symbols.

During the middle ages symbolism was excessively in use. One only has to observe the art (painting) of that day, listen to the Baroque music, note the architecture, or read the literature to see it was much in vogue. This exaggerated use is made sickeningly clear in a two volume work on The Mediaeval Mind, especially in the chapter on "Symbolism".<sup>46</sup>

It is not the thesis of this dissertation that a return be made to this exaggerated use, but rather

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Henry Osborn Taylor, The Mediaeval Mind (London: Macmillan, 1930), Vol. II, Bk. 5, "Symbolism", p. 68 ff.

that a TOXIN be sounded against it. However, it is time for a return to be made of symbols to their proper use and function. Gratitude must then be expressed to Freud, who called the attention from long neglect back to this valuable tool for teaching by his psychological study and interpretation of dreams. (Analysis and Interpretation of Dreams). He was aided by his friend C. G. Jung, (who from 1909-1913 associated with Freud but then departed and disagreed with him--not over dreams, however) and is followed also now by Eric Fromm (Art of Love), and others.

#### Need For A Knowledge Of Symbols.

While one is still impressed by the allegory of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and all its symbolism, it is necessary, in order to understand it, to have a annotated guide book to follow it with any intelligence. The same must be said for another classic that is still a favorite for today and comes from the hand of an able mathematician, Lewis Carroll, who gave us, Alice in Wonderland, which too, is full of symbolic meaning.

Not only is a knowledge of symbols necessary to interpret the old classics, but much of our literary output is sterile of illusion and symbols. This is

true either because present day authors are untrained to think in symbols or they are aware that the market (for whom they write) is not able to understand such writing. America (et. al.) is a nation of literate paupers in a world rich in the means of creative expression and ideas using symbols.

Symbols Encourage Faith In Action.

Religious symbols are like windows through which we may look into our own souls and into the nature and meaning of life. It is not the symbol that is important, but what the author is trying to say through the symbol.<sup>47</sup> Here Carol Wise helps us see the central place of the symbol for both teacher and student and with it offers a warning--never let the "window" obscure the view for which the "window" was designed. Warner L. Hall, writing for the Presbyterian Church's Covenant Life Curriculum in a unit on symbolism, points out a little known concept of Calvin as to the place of symbols, when he says:

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<sup>47</sup>Carol A. Wise, Psychiatry and the Bible (New York: Harper & Bros., 1965), p. 132.

John Calvin thought that creeds ought to be sung rather than said. A song carries the implication that faith is poetry [imagery?] that there is more to be believed than can be described or defined. Calvin thus recognized what many of his followers failed to grasp, that the Christian faith is a matter of heart and symbols, as well as head and theological propositions.<sup>48</sup>

As a basis of faith. An old man once confessed to this writer, that as a child he had to sit in a rural church for long hours. He passed the time by looking at, and studying, a beautiful stained glass window behind the altar, which was a copy of Plockhurst's "Jesus the Good Shepherd". Here was Christ carrying a lamb in his arms and leading the flock. The memory of this picture served to become the basis of his faith and belief in a kind and merciful God. Many parishioners find that the symbols that are in windows and chancel lead and aid them in meditation as they wait for the service to begin, or while waiting before and after receiving the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist.

To express intangibles. Wise also points out that the insights of the Bible are expressed in vivid

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<sup>48</sup>Warner L. Hall, Symbols of the Faith (Richmond: Covenant Life Curriculum Press, 1965), p. 10. (See companion book to this course, Ruth Singley Ensign, Make That Story Live (Richmond: Covenant Life Curriculum Press, 1964).

symbols such as "temple of God", "eye", "light and darkness" as well as many others. He believes that "intangible meanings" cannot be expressed directly or literally, but only through symbols . . . "The deeper meanings of religious experience must be expressed in symbols which are taken from the external world but used in a way that seeks to express inner religious meanings".<sup>49</sup>

#### Symbols Used In Contemporary Life.

It is vital for students to have presented to them a study of traditional symbols and some background as to definition; relation of signs to symbols, metaphores, myth and allegory; how they function; purpose and structure, before they can purposely create symbols for their thinking in today's world. How did Abraham think of God? Here mythological concepts are presented and it is not until the prophets' times that we begin to get symbols (usually anthropomorphic) such as "hand of God", "eye of God", "voice of God", "The Ark of the Covenant" and many more. No graven image (idol)

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<sup>49</sup>Wise, Op. cit., p. 132.

was permitted (Exodus 20:4) but mental and verbal images abound. In the New Testament symbols came from the family life and the new trinitarian concept of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", which resulted in the formation of signs as the triangle, three circles and so forth. But how shall the teacher utilize this important technique?

Procedures. Students should be encouraged to not only study traditional symbols but to think in terms of present day problems such as creating symbols to communicate truths involved in such topics as: "The Sovereignty of God in a Nuclear Age", "Christianity in the Space Age", "Youth-Adult Cooperation in the Work of the Church", "The Family and the Gospel", "The World Wide Church", "The Astronaut and the Kingdom of God", "Justification of Faith and Tillich's Concept of 'Acceptance'". Beside the development of such topics, projects of other sorts should be encouraged such as creating an illustrated book; create a 35 millimeter slide drama beginning with traditional symbols available in the local church and adding "new" ones created by class out of existential materials and experience; a mural using the same procedure; transparencies to resemble window using such a theme as the



Seven "I Am" of John's gospel and relating them to the seven "signs" of the same gospel.

Sources for ideas. Students should be alerted to possibilities for ideas as to adapting symbolical representations found in newspapers, magazines, illustrated books (see what Walt Disney has done with fairy tales and classics). In the Methodist publication, "Today", there are often contests offered to the readers to illustrate a Psalm or a Hymn with photos. These could be abstracted into symbols.

From architecture. Every building that is designed expresses some basic purpose, either for the architect who designed it, or the person ( or persons ) for whom it was designed. For example, as was pointed out in Chapter III of this dissertation, Gothic architecture represents the praying church, its arches being designed from hands held in attitude of prayer: Romanesque, with its rounded arches, suggests the completed circle, (Gestalt--"Part suggest the whole") the symbol for God and eternity. Students could be encouraged to design a church that will express to all who pass by, or enter in, just what the faith is, or what basic doctrine is taught by those who erected it and worship in it. Symbols can be created that express

"What type of building will aid in doing the full work of the church?" "Rooms can be designed (to suggest symbolically) from color and arrangement, just what work goes on in that room".<sup>50</sup>

Symbols from community. In a Life magazine some years ago, (1945) there were a series of pictures showing how the skyline in New York City had changed through the years. The first picture was taken when the dominant building was the church spires of the city. As time passed by, taller and taller buildings began to rise until the so called skyscraper became the dominant line against the sky and the church towers totally disappeared. One can easily note the symbol of secularism and commercialism that is presented in these comparison pictures. Or, one could study the themes of the various world's fairs and note the theme symbols of them and, thus, select the sign of changing times they reveal.

Symbol of church's outreach. Shortly after World War II, the United Lutheran Church in America (Now Lutheran Church in America) began a great program of relief (self-help for many people and countries); food, and housing for pastors and people, clothing

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<sup>50</sup>Hall, Op. cit., p. 42.

and rebuilding churches and servicemen's centers around the world, hospitals, schools, etc. It was called LUTHERAN WORLD ACTION. To promote the gathering of funds, the directors conceived a symbol of a large muscular arm flexed and lettered around it, LOVES WORKING ARM (L.W.A.) through LUTHERAN WORLD ACTION and used it on every piece of literature. Even today this symbol evokes a generous response from young and old to meet the church's outreach to all the world.

Use Of Kingdom Of God Concept.

Jesus' basic message was Repent, The Kingdom of God is at hand. He told many parables to illustrate this message (Kerygma), and used many symbols to provide "windows" for his followers to perceive what he meant. His constant cry "to hear" implies a call to action. While we know the Kingdom of God cannot be truly established as Jesus knew it to be, yet it is imperative the teacher try to help establish its beginning in the "now". A beginning is established when the concept of Christian social action is understood and lived as it was meant to be lived in the "future Kingdom" about which Jesus spoke when he said "The Kingdom of God is now (within you) and the Kingdom of

God will come". It is realized when love, (agape) as set forth in I Corinthians 13, is fully known, then it is come to pass.

Through art. The Christian artist attempts to symbolize the penetration of the Kingdom of God into the world and thus elicit from the viewer a heightened awareness of the reality and value of the world, and thus, by showing the world in imagination and symbol the Christians come to understand (conceive) its potential for change and transformation.

Symbolizing Christ's concern. It has been suggested by a cooperative planning committee<sup>51</sup> working in the field of curriculum that Christians could symbolize Christ's concern for the redemption of the world by associating themselves (identifying themselves) with groups or institutions in the world dedicated to the betterment of the common life--even though the cause for which they serve is unpopular. (Civil rights movement--CORE, etc.). This identification of Christians with unpopular causes may have a greater effect symbolically, by stirring the conscience of the world,

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<sup>51</sup>Cooperative Committee Project, The Church's Educational Ministry (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1965).

than the same persons could have through direct action, attempting to make their personal influence sway the decisions of those in positions of civil authority (government offices).

The influence of Christian (teachers) disciples upon the choice of forms in organizing governments and institutions can have both a tangible and a symbolic effect. As an example, the trial procedures defined as "due process of law" in both English and American courts offer real protection to individuals. These procedures are a powerful symbol of the value attached to the life and person of the citizens in countries where the heritage of leadership has included men who acknowledge personal Christian responsibility for their society and the world.<sup>52</sup>

Symbol of unity and our concern. One only has to think of the Negro movement for equal rights in America, the great march in Selma, Alabama and how the clergy of both Catholic and Protestant faiths, together with Jewish Rabbis, walked with both black and white laymen to demonstrate to all the world their Christian concern over the inequities of their Negro brethren under our laws, laws that were circumvented by the conniving of those who were sworn to protect these people and their liberties. The Christian witness in this and other acts of integration are symbolic of the Kingdom of God, both now and future. And these symbolic

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

acts so testify that the influence of the Church "is not dead but still speaketh".

Symbol of sound. The ringing of the Church bells on Sunday morning, the gathering of people to worship as disciples, to offer repentance, seek forgiveness, rejoice in prayer and praise, and then returning to their work on Monday morning refreshed and strong with new resolution to follow in Christ's Way, is a powerful symbol of the Kingdom of God coming into the world.

Symbolization Vital For Ethics.

There is a tremendous importance for ethics in the realization of the Kingdom. It is this:

"It keeps alive for the decision-maker an ethical relationship to reality in the extremes of hopelessness and futility. All moral choice is shrouded in uncertainty. One cannot know for sure whether the future results of even the most noble act will be more good than evil. Why act at all? One's life work may be wiped out by war or catastrophe; surely it will be wiped out by time . . ."53

Kingdom Offers Symbol For Faith and Hope.

Faced with experiences so conducive to moral skepticism, as are profound failure and the awareness

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

of one's own ultimate death, how can one remain ethical in his attitudes or care very much about the effect of his choices? The answer must be: He can remain ethical through the transcendence of the self in a faithful relationship to a reality that is imperishable. The Kingdom offers such a reality. Its symbolical realization elicits the effect in the life of the decision maker, of which Jesus spoke when he said, "But seek ye first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well". (Matthew 6:33).

"Such a self-transcendent faith makes possible for the decision maker a practical tranquility about the ultimate result of his choices, combined with a profound ethical involvement and willingness to exert himself rigorously for the goal he seeks".<sup>54</sup>

It is the work of the teacher that will make usable and clear such symbols in the life of the learner that they can be grasped in any time of need. Such symbolization is like water in a well. You can only draw water out if water has been put in. The objective or aim of such teaching is to help the learner do creative thinking when the crisis or emergency arises by opening the door to these possibilities of self-transcendence.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 202-203.

### Validity Of Symbol.

The validity of a symbol does not lie in its age, whether it is new or old makes no difference, what does make a difference is its ability to elucidate; to compress into a simple meaningful whole that which can be readily grasped and easily retained; that it can and does provide a center for the shaping of conduct or belief. Its true value then depends on its intelligibility, does it enable one to "see", (perceive) and does it communicate reality? Perhaps its validity can be summed up by asking the question which arises from Whitehead's statement as to its purpose or function, "A symbol's purpose is to symbolize something". Does it? If it does it is valid whether it be old or new.

### When Is A Symbol Not A Symbol.

A symbol should be discarded when it is no longer valid or has any value for the existent day and age. It is no longer a symbol when it becomes self-perpetuating and thus becomes an end in itself--an idol. For then it becomes more sacred than the God who himself commanded it. (Baptism or the Lord's Supper, for example). A symbol should be discarded



when it loses its power (charge) and no longer has any emotional impact on the observer; when it loses its power to inspire, discipline, motivate, evoke, or intensify, because their meaning is no longer the same or the meaning has become obscure, lost; or because they no longer are related to our way of life and have become stylized anachronistic art forms.

#### Old Symbols Can Be Useful.

Teachers are vital to the value of old symbols. It is their responsibility to refurbish them, "bring them, or the student, up to date", and interpret them. It takes a teacher to introduce the symbol, explain its meaning and suggest why and how it effected the life of the people who conceived it and how it can be used effectively today.

#### Summary.

In this final chapter a review of theories of learning was presented in order to strengthen the idea that the strongest and most effective one is the Gestalt-field Theory. It was further presented that symbols are valid instruments in learning and contribute to mastering the growing amount of materials to be learned.

They also provide a short-cut to their mastery as well as provide a valuable aid to memory (recall). It was further shown that the ability to understand and use symbols is the one gift (in more or less degree) to all mankind that sets him apart from animals and provides a means of communication (verbal or graphic) as well as a means of revelation through insight, vision, vocal and/or conceptualization.

Various suggestions were offered to teachers to enable them to make application of symbols to present day needs, and implications were given for the creation of symbols to meet today's need. Specific examples were given and one of the basic themes of the New Testament was used to show the importance and value of symbols to encourage and strengthen "faith through action", using the Kingdom of God concept as the example.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Man cannot exist without symbols. Man would be unable to communicate with his fellow man or cooperate with him if this faculty were denied him. Symbols are needed to convey what we see and cannot say. They are needed to "build a bridge" from the known to the unknown (and from the unknown to the known). Since man is faced with the problem of trying to convey what he sees and cannot say, a need for adequacy which is never achieved, and since there is an eternal disparity between the ultimate of man's power to be completely and satisfactorily expressive, symbols must be sought and used so that man may have (achieve) as great an understanding of his life in relation to his world, his God, and his eternal future, as is humanly possible. And it must not be left to chance or natural development, but must be consciously planned for, through teaching.

It has been said, it is impossible to think without symbols (Langer), and yet, what is intelligible to our mind, is but a small fraction of the profoundly undiscovered--only vaguely can the totality of the vast unknowable be approached. That which is ultimate

is impossible to symbolize. But man can approach an awareness of it, and so, life can be lived in the depths (or heights) of its certainty. Revelation is given through symbols and new insight is possible, like genius, as God wills.

The supreme reach of the symbol. The ultimate degree of symbolism that goes beyond mere representation is seen in art, drama, in story (fact and fiction) and poetry. It does more than imitate, duplicate, mimic, or rendering, what is already patent reality; rather it "evokes" a latent unseen reality and relates to an idea either from past experience or provides a new insight and so creates a new form (configuration) of reality.

The supreme reach of symbolism is realized then, when it moves one with a dynamic quality that drives toward the unknown and reveals the hitherto unseen and unexpressed; when it enables one to penetrate beyond the surface aspect of one's life; when it moves one along with it and communicates to one a feeling of kinship and communion. It gives one an immediacy of perception that pushes beyond the stale appearances of the normal and unearths virgin truth. Perhaps it awakens within the learner a desire to change, to achieve, or simply leaves him with an inner peace and

satisfaction. Such an accomplishment, after human identity of the person with the idea or the force of dynamic motivation, is the supreme reach of the symbol. When the image and symbol meet and the idea is perceived and merges with total self (body, mind and spirit) and an action results, is the symbol complete.

Importance of teachers role. When the teacher can present "a thing to be grasped" in such a form as to create a feeling of the reality of the real; as a first time experience; as a great discovery (Ah ha!, or Eureka!); that brings a vigor, a freshness, an originality to the teaching, one sees that which distinguishes the master from the disciple, a moulder of attitudes, a mover and controller of emotions and a true teacher. It is the ability to provide symbols that enable the student to "see" and "feel" that the story tells more than just some peculiar or interesting event; that it shows through the singular story a generally human or an epochal condition, from which can be gleaned further truth, or deeper insight that makes works of cultic practice into great and present representations, (makes that which was of historical moment a contemporary experience) and so gives zest and interest to creed and historical act, meaning and

life to those who must see in the past that which is vital for the "NOW", and gives promise for the future.

The purpose of this dissertation is achieved if, in the exploration of the symbol and its use in Christian Education, a window has been opened and new, or neglected, ways have been set forth to learn the truth about God and the Christian way of life.

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**A P P E N D I X**



## APPENDIX A

1. Significance of this thesis for the elementary level of children.

A. Readiness of the learner for this theme in terms of basic needs, interests, motivations, capacities, developmental tasks.

Elementary children can sense the nature and cause of broken relationships.

. . . are capable of experiencing remorse and sorrow, and they need release from these feelings through participation in worship that expresses judgment and forgiveness within a climate of love, acceptance and trust.

. . . are able to sense through worship the difference between the true and false, right and wrong, good and evil.

. . . are ready in worship to look for the eternal source of all true values.

. . . have a developing capacity for amazement at the mysteries of the world about them.

. . . can identify with others and are capable of identifying with biblical personalities in their acts of worship and prayer.

. . . are approaching the time of making important decisions and are becoming ready for participation in the self-commitment of worship.

. . . have a beginning capacity to seek in worship for needed help and guidance.

. . . have the capacity to enter sympathetically into the experiences of others, and can know through worship the experience of intercession.

. . . increasing capacity to symbolize makes it possible for him to be led in worship, to place his faith in God, who is the source of faith for those whom the child loves and trusts.

. . . face the fact that sin alienates and needs to participate in the confession of worship that is essential to restoration.

2. How may this content be communicated as the learner engages in the Learning Task? What are the methods and procedures by which the learner may explore the meanings and experiences within this theme, in the light of his readiness in order to discover significance and value?

(Symbolism aids, accomplishes significance and value).

By participating in worship experiences in his own group and the church congregation.

By discussing meanings and elements of worship.

By interviewing people (ministers and outstanding laymen), going to written sources of information (Bible, Hymn Book, Prayer Book, etc.), to explore ways in which his church worships.

By planning for worship; help carry out the plans; preparing poems, prayers, litanies, etc., to be used in worship.

By becoming acquainted with art, music, symbols which contribute to worship experiences.

By joining in the congregational observance of the sacraments, either actually or by observation.

By visiting churches that have varying forms of worship.

By hiking and camping where his contacts with the natural world will engender a sense of awe, wonder and majesty at the beauty and order of nature. Obtaining a sense of grandeur of the universe by studying the stars at night.

By studying the order of the church, its architecture, and its symbolism, both in and outside.

3. What may the learner achieve within this theme in the fulfillment of the Learner Task? What are possible changes or learnings on the part of the learner that may result from his appropriation of the significance of the value discovered? These changes

may be associated with skills, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, including understandings and appreciations.

. . . achieve an increased importance of worship.

. . . increase sense of awe.

. . . an increased ability to take an active part in corporate worship.

. . . can achieve an enriched understanding of the methods of worship and the various ways of worship.

. . . achieve some developing ability in personal devotions.

. . . achieve an increased sense that worship has vital connections with life's motives.

. . . may achieve an increased sensitivity to the presence of God in worship and the sacraments.

. . . the child may achieve an ability to see basic unity of mankind.

. . . the child may achieve a sense of how to make connections between thoughts and objects, discover the basis of faith through symbolization, and be able to transform outward forms to inward thoughts that will help him transcend self and problems of life.

So we might analyze each age group and include in the curriculum a place for the conscious use of symbols in order to clarify, speed up learning and economize thinking, and thus provide the learner with an instrument to deepen his awareness and understanding of what has been thought in the past and enhance what is valid for the present.

One whole term is given to worship in the new Curriculum of the Lutheran Church in America, at the

sixth grade level. The children's text is profusely illustrated with symbols of worship. Hand work calls for the making of symbols and an elaboration of their meaning and relationship. The total curriculum for all grade levels has this same profuseness of illustration, so that at each stage of development that which can be grasped, assimilated and used is included.

Source for these areas of readiness levels of elementary children are the results of a study of The Church's Educational Ministry, A curriculum plan, The work of the Cooperative Committee Project, St. Louis, Mo., The Bethany Press, 1965, pp. 200-201.

TABLE 1. Representative Theories of Learning

Theory of Learning	Assumption Concerning the Basic Nature of Man	Psychological System or Outlook	Basis of Transfer	Key Persons	Contemporary Exponents
1. Mental discipline	bad-active (mind substance)	faculty psychology	exercised faculties, transfer automatic	St. Augustine John Calvin J. Edwards	many Hebraic-Christian fundamentalists
2. Mental discipline	neutral-active (mind substance)	classicism	cultivated mind or intellect	Plato Aristotle	M. J. Adler St. John's College
3. Natural unfoldment	good-active (natural)	romantic naturalism	recapitulation, no transfer	J. J. Rousseau F. Froebel	extreme progressivists
4. Apperception	neutral-passive (mental)	structuralism	apperceptive mass	J. F. Herbart E. B. Titchener	many teachers and administrators
5. S-R bond	neutral-passive (physical or mental)	connectionism	identical elements	E. L. Thorndike	J. M. Stephens A. I. Gates
6. Conditioning (with no reinforcement)	neutral-passive (physical)	behaviorism	conditioned responses	J. B. Watson	E. R. Guthrie
7. Reinforcement and conditioning	neutral-passive (organism)	reinforcement	reinforced, or conditioned, responses	C. L. Hull	B. F. Skinner K. W. Spence
8. Insight	active (natural)	Gestalt psychology	transposition of insights	M. Wertheimer K. Koffka	W. Köhler
9. Goal insight	neutral-interactive	configurationalism	tested insights	B. H. Bode	E. E. Bayles
10. Cognitive-field	neutral-interactive (psychological)	field psychology or relativism	continuity of life spaces, experience, or insights	Kurt Lewin E. C. Tolman J. S. Bruner	R. G. Barker A. W. Combs H. F. Wright