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JOHANNINE METAPHORS/ SYMBOLS LINKED TO THE PARACLETE-SPIRIT AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

ABSTRACT

The Johannine author uses metaphors and symbols to enable the primary and secondary readers to come to a better understanding of the Paraclete-Spirit. The study of particular Johannine metaphors is valuable in understanding the message and theology of John. The use of the dove, water and wind metaphors in the Johannine Gospel definitely has functional and theological implications for the Pneumatology of John. The Johannine author uses imagery freely in expressing his Pneumatological message. He does not express his message regarding the Paraclete-Spirit merely in the form of a theological discourse, but by using the metaphors dove, water and wind. By exploring the relationship between the various Paraclete-Spirit metaphors, a larger and more coherent picture emerges, which opens the view to the interrelatedness of various theological themes. Such a metaphorical description of the Paraclete-Spirit in the Johannine Gospel has genuine potential and deserves to be explored.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Johannine Gospel is well-known for its wealth and depth of figurative language, metaphors, and symbols. John uses many different images. Some of the most prominent Johannine images are lamb, king, bread, sheep, shepherd, vine, eating and drinking, and so forth.

In this article I am investigating the Johannine Paraclete-Spirit from the particular perspective of the metaphors and symbols the author uses to enable the primary and secondary readers to come to a better understanding of the Paraclete-Spirit. I will also consider the theological implications of the usage of these metaphors. I am furthermore suggesting that there exists a close relationship between the different metaphors and images in the Johannine Gospel.

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Looking at the theological debate of the past couple of decades, we could argue that one of the more modern trends in theology is that of metaphorical theology. Theologians and biblical interpreters argue that metaphors provide the key to a general religious language. To speak metaphorically is to speak of one thing in terms appropriate to another. S. McFague (1982) and G. Green (1989) are exponents of this trend. However, their approaches have noticeable weaknesses.¹

A further perspective is that often some core symbols are expressed in the form of metaphors. C. Koester (2003:6) indicates that symbols and metaphors are not identical, but are related in terms of a continuum.² However, we need to admit that Johannine metaphors linked to the Paraclete-Spirit are revealing more to us than what we often consider.

The usage of metaphors *per se* is neither a modern trend nor only limited to the theological domain. Aristotle, for instance defined a metaphor as:

... giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference (*epiphora*) being either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or on the grounds of analogy (*Poetics* 1457).

From a philosophical, methodological and epistemological perspective E. Botha (1983:29-44) discusses the impasse of modern scientific models and methodology. In her discussion, Botha focuses on the epistemological nature of metaphors. She alludes to the fact that the obtaining of knowledge is often metaphorical in nature.

2. WHAT IS A METAPHOR?

We can answer this question by focusing on the etymology of the word. Then we would note that originally, *metaphor* was a Greek word meaning “transfer”. The Greek etymology is from *meta*, implying “a change” and *pherein* meaning “to bear, or carry”. In modern Greek the word *metaphor* means “transport” or “transfer”. Historically it appears as if the two terms were used essentially as synonyms.

We can also answer this question from a lexicographical perspective. For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary (1975:1315) describes a metaphor as:

The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable; an instance of this, a metaphorical expression.

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- 1 One weakness of this theory as applied to the Bible’s witness is that it effaces differences among the varieties of Biblical genres. For a realistic proposal focusing on a narrative rather than a metaphorical approach, see H. Frei (1975).
 - 2 On the distinction between metaphor and symbol, see P. Ricoeur (1976:63-69).

Or we can attempt to address this question from the perspective of the effective use of language. If we follow this approach we can assert that within rhetorical theory, metaphor is generally considered to be a direct equation of terms that are more forceful and assertive than an analogy, although the two types of tropes are highly similar and often confused. One distinguishing characteristic is that the assertiveness of a metaphor calls into question the underlying category structure, whereas in a rhetorical analogy the comparative differences between the categories remain salient and acknowledged.

We could also argue that metaphors are figures of speech in which words or phrases that ordinarily designate one thing are used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison.

According to all these descriptions, metaphors are seen as figures of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object is used in place of another in order to suggest comparison between them. Taking all of the above into consideration, the implication is that metaphors are not merely ornaments for ideas that might just as well be expressed literally. Metaphors are used rather to convey specific knowledge in ways that communication in non-metaphorical terms cannot duplicate. Seen this way the use of metaphors provides us with a tool to bring forward understanding and knowledge in areas where we find it difficult to express adequately what we mean. I am suggesting that this is especially true when we consider a Johannine Pneumatology.

3. JOHN AND THE USE OF METAPHORS

B. Malina (1985) argues persuasively that metaphors play a significant role in the Johannine Gospel. He points out that many of the great Johannine metaphors emerge in conversations. Their metaphorical points are made in conversation, thus maintaining the resocialisation quality of the work in the reader's/hearer's being addressed by Jesus in these conversations as the dialogue becomes monologue. In the resocialisation process, conversation relies heavily upon foregrounding and highlighting of interpersonal meanings, and the great Johannine conversations surely do that. He rightly states that metaphors constitute the element of anti-language that is present in all language to some extent. For much of everyday language is in fact metaphorical, e.g., horsepower in an automobile, a cell in biology, or conceiving ideas.

The Johannine tendency to use metaphors to convey information is also mentioned by J. van der Watt (2000). For instance, in his discussion of comparison as a metaphorical device, Van der Watt (2000:87) indicates that a comparison differs from a metaphor in that it states the point that is to be compared clearly and in that it is more specific than metaphor. By way of com-

parison, two situations are paralleled. He also indicates that John makes good use of comparison on different levels. Among others, Van der Watt (2000:87) mentions the following examples:

In John 1:51 an implicit comparison is made through which the symbolic value of the Jacob narrative is applied to the Son of Man, while in John 1:32 the Spirit is compared to a dove. In John 3:8 the work of the Spirit is compared to the wind. It is not a single comparison (i.e., only one point is compared) but a complex comparison. A “story” of the wind is compared to a “story” of the Spirit.³

With the above-mentioned examples in mind, we could argue that metaphorical expression is part and parcel of Johannine style. It is an integral part of the Johannine author’s attempt to enable people to understand his message better. However, to complicate matters more we need to admit, when we consider for instance John 6:22-71, John 7:1-53a and John 10:1-19, that Jesus uses metaphorical language, but is, consequently, not understood fully or understood at all. The implication is that, although metaphorical language has the possibility to enlighten, it does not always achieve enlightenment.

We could argue the case by listing the proof texts. However, one example would suffice. In 1 John 1:5b the author states: ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν. The metaphorical image or vehicle here is the contrast between light and darkness and the theme or tenor is truth versus falsehood.⁴ This metaphor has one true subject, which tenor and vehicle conjointly depict and illumine and a secondary subject that is used since its attributes are known by the ones to

3 According to Van der Watt (2000:310), John develops the family imagery in a complex way; an integrated figurative world is created, which metaphorises aspects of the earthly world — an analogy is drawn between two different realities, namely the earthly and heavenly realities. Events that usually take place in the lives of ordinary people, such as birth, living one’s life, eating, drinking, talking, obeying, fearing or protecting, are used to project an analogical figurative world, which then serves to explain the spiritual dynamics relating to the relationship between God and man. The basis of the dynamics of metaphor lies in the incongruence that exists between the world above and the world below. According to Van der Watt, there are only few exceptions,

like the open heavens (John 1:51); the temple (John 2:21 or 1:14); the Word (John 1:1); the Spirit as dove or wind (John 1:32 and 3:8); the Lamb of God (John 1:29); the snake in the desert (John 3:14); the seed which dies (John 12:24) (Van der Watt 2000:311, footnote 23).

4 See, e.g., R. Bultmann (1973:15-18), G. Burge (1996:65-67), M. Eaton (1996:37-42), I. Marshall (1978:66-67), J. Painter (2002:34-40), S. Smalley (1984:18-22), J. Stott (1990:75-77), and R. Yarbrough (2002:183-188).

whom this metaphorical saying is addressed. The true or primary subject is ὁ θεός and the secondary subject is φῶς. In other words, through this metaphorical description John reveals to us that God is in himself unapproachable, infinite, omnipresent, unchangeable, the source of life and of safety because in those days this was what people thought of light. However, it is not only God's attributes that John has in mind, but what God means for man is also addressed by this metaphor. In other words, since God has all the abovementioned attributes, men must follow him and not falsehood.

It is therefore clear that a metaphor works through a system of associated implications that are known from the secondary subject. It selects, emphasises, represses, and organises characteristics of the primary subject through the implication of characteristics that are usually known about the secondary subject.

In the context of a metaphoric statement, interaction between the two subjects takes place. The presence of the primary subject causes the hearer to select certain characteristics of the secondary subject to apply to the primary subject. This implies that metaphors are alive and always dependent on the frame of reference of the hearers. It also means that metaphors will change their meaning as audiences with different frames of reference come into play. We should therefore restrain ourselves from giving metaphors fixed meanings applicable to all situations.

The frequent association of metaphor with image has led some commentators to suggest that all metaphors are necessarily visual.⁵ C. Koester (2003:2-3) states that earthly images could be used to bear witness to divine realities, because the earth is God's creation. These earthly images have the ability to communicate things that cannot be expressed adequately by other means. The Johannine author sought to disclose the abiding significance of what Jesus had said and done in the conviction that Jesus himself continues to abide among people through the Paraclete-Spirit (John 14:15-17 and 23).⁶ This Paraclete-Spirit will not bring new revelation of the same order Jesus did, but will manifest Jesus' presence and will disclose his message to people after his departure (John 14:26).⁷

5 See, for instance, Paul Ricoeur (1977:207-15).

6 See, e.g., T. Brodie (1993:463-466), A. Köstenberger (2004:434-438), T. Lincoln (2000: 22, 27, 110-114, 251-254), L. Morris (1995:575-577), and H. Ridderbos (1997:499-501).

7 See C. Bennema (2002:112-119, 126-145, 226-232), D. Carson (1991:503), C. Keener (2003:977-982), A. Köstenberger (2004:441-444), T. Lincoln (2000:110-111), and D. Wallace (1996:331).

4. JOHANNINE METAPHORS REFERRING TO THE PARACLETE-SPIRIT

A. van den Heever (1992:94) states:

The metaphors in John are all embedded in contexts made up by other metaphorical expressions: descent/ascent, living in you/you in me, partaking of me as food, walking in the light, etcetera. It means that the connoted micro-level metaphors must be understood macro-metaphorically.

With this in mind, we can ask *whether* and if indeed *what* metaphors are in use in the Johannine Gospel that reveal something about the Paraclete-Spirit.

In the exegetical undertaking of my study (Joubert 2006), I argued that we find three micro-level metaphors that the Johannine author uses to enable his readers to come to a better understanding of who the Paraclete-Spirit is and what we can expect from him. I am also contending that we should consider interpreting these metaphors on a macro-metaphorical level. The three metaphors I would like to investigate are those of dove, water and wind.

4.1 The Johannine Paraclete-Spirit and the Dove Metaphor

In John 1:32 the Baptist witnesses regarding Jesus: *τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡς περιστερὰν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν*. We need to interpret this text in its broader context.

Some scholars argue that, according to John 1:32, there must have been a physical presentation of a dove.⁸ Although this is of course possible, it does not take proper account of *ἔμεινεν*. Did this dove stay with Jesus? Therefore, it seems more appropriate to interpret this reference to *περιστέρα* in the metaphorical sense explained earlier.⁹

How should we interpret this reference to the dove? C. Barrett (1982:178) claims that the dove has no independent meaning in John and is to be seen only as a piece of traditional imagery. R. Brown (1982:57), however, sees it as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. To my mind, the dove is the secondary subject and the Paraclete-Spirit is the primary subject. John wants to convey something about the primary subject that he wants his audience to grasp. Therefore, he introduces this metaphor so that he could reveal something about the primary subject through the mentioning of a secondary subject. Putting it differently,

8 See, for instance, G. Johnston (1970:20-21) and C. Keener (2003:460) who mention a possible link with Noah's dove in Genesis 8:8-12. See also G. Burge (1987:56-59) where a link is also seen with the resting metaphor of Isaiah 11.

9 L. Keck (1970:41-67) suggests that we have an adverbial metaphor here.

something in the quality and characteristics of the dove served as a vehicle to portray something that John wanted to emphasise about the Paraclete-Spirit.

What would this be? We could say that John's emphasis might be the descent of the Spirit as a dove ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, which stresses that the Paraclete-Spirit has come from the presence of God in heaven. Interpreting it this way, it would say something about the origin of the Paraclete-Spirit — like Jesus he is from above. Van der Watt (2000:87) discusses this in chapter two of his study of the dynamics of metaphor in the Johannine Gospel. He rightly points out that the Paraclete-Spirit is compared to a *dove* in John 1:32.¹⁰ He interprets this as a clear-cut comparison between a dove descending and the Spirit descending, introduced by the comparative particle ὡς.¹¹ D. Carson (1991:151) remarks that “the choice of a dove to symbolize the Spirit's descent is not obvious, though there is some evidence in Jewish sources for a connection between ‘dove’ and ‘Holy Spirit’”.¹² In John's Gospel, the comparison serves a different purpose than in the Synoptics, which also reduces the possibility of symbolic influence here.¹³ This would, of course fit in very well with the distinct dualism clearly observable in the Johannine Gospel.¹⁴

Another possible inference for this metaphorical reference to the Paraclete-Spirit might be that the Johannine narrative emphasises that Jesus' divine anointing was not only a subjective experience of Jesus, but a demonstrable confirmation in time and space that Jesus truly is the incarnate Son of God who receives approval of the divine Family.¹⁵

10 B. Newman & E. Nida (1993:38) suggest that the text can be rendered either as “in the form of a dove” or “in the manner of a dove”. The latter would suggest a flutter-like sense that draws John's attention. Of course, in Christian symbolism, the descending dove has become the symbol of the Holy Spirit. For further discussion, see also L. Keck (1976:41-67).

11 See also A. Köstenberger (2004:69-70) and C. Kruse (2003:72).

12 See also D. Carson (1991:153, the additional note on verse 32).

13 The reference to the descent of the Spirit on Jesus in this Gospel differs from the account in the Synoptics. Here John himself saw the bodily form of a dove, whereas in the Synoptics it was Jesus who saw it. The dove may symbolize gentleness of character or be used as an emblem of flight to show the reality of the Spirit's descent. The contrast between this and the visible display at Pentecost is striking (Acts 2:2-3). Clearly, both descents were intended to be exceptional witnesses to the mission of Jesus. John received some special revelation (verse 33) that enabled him to identify Jesus as the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Spirit-baptism is vividly contrasted with water-baptism and is superior to it. We have another echo from the Prologue in the statement that Jesus is the Son of God, and this also ties up with the purpose of the Gospel stated in John 20:31. See also G. Borchert (1996:139), G. Burge (1987:58; 2000:74) and C. Keener (2003:460).

14 R. Gruenler (1986:27) interprets the function of this metaphor as a dramatic description that the Triune God was present at the inaugural baptism of Jesus.

15 See R. Gruenler (1986:28).

Still another metaphor from the mouth of the Baptist in the same passage (the reference is to Jesus in John 1:29 where the Baptist says “ἵδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ”) might help us to understand the second metaphor properly.¹⁶ The first metaphor (in verse 29) is used clearly with a Judaistic view in mind. This reference indicates then that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The Jewish audience would have immediately linked this to texts such as Isaiah 53:7, Genesis 49:9 and Isaiah 11:10. With this in mind, we could argue that the second metaphor (in verse 32) also functions as a messianic reference. The language is reminiscent of the common tradition of that time that the Spirit of the age to come descends from an opened heaven and remains on the Messiah just as the prophets (Isaiah 11:1-2 and 42:1) anticipated. To us the link between the dove and the Paraclete-Spirit is not that obvious. However, a contemporary of John, Rabbi Ben Zoma cites a rabbinic tradition to the effect that “the Spirit of God was brooding on the face of the waters like a dove which broods over her young but does not touch them”.¹⁷

16 Van der Watt (2000:86) interprets the reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God as incongruent. He investigates the commonplace element shared by Jesus and the Lamb. He indicates that the genitive “Lamb of God” may either mean Lamb for God or Lamb belonging to God. The interpretation however depends on the interpretation of ἀμνός. John 1:29 states that this ἀμνός takes away the sin of the world. The emphasis can fall on either the power to take away sin or on the fact that the ἀμνός deals with sin itself or perhaps on both. Apart from that, the genitive metaphor of source (of God) or possession (belonging to God) indicates that it is a special lamb, he is a lamb *par excellence*. Van der Watt concludes by stating that, for the purpose of his study, it suffices to say that on a theoretical level this is an ordinary copulative metaphor. If the idea of sacrifice is central, then the metaphorical dynamics take place on an interactive basis. Jesus is sacrificed like an ἀμνός is sacrificed. In this sense, the qualities of an ἀμνός are transferred to Jesus. His sacrifice is, however, not the same as that of an ἀμνός. The difference is found in the point of comparison. C. Barrett (1982:176-177) asserts that the relevant background for this metaphor is the Old Testament. He sees the common point in the act of sacrifice. See also G. Beasley-Murray (1999:24-24), G. Borchert (1996:125-136), G. Burge (2000:73-74), R. Brown (1966/7:59), D. Carson (1991:148-151), J. Frühwald-König (1998:91-92), E. Haenchen (1984:166), M. Hasitschka (1996:93-95), A. Köstenberger (2004:66-68), C. Keener (2003:452-454, especially 454), I. Marshall (1992:432-34), L. Morris (1995:127), H. Ridderbos (1997:73-74), D. Rusam (2005:60-80), C. Skinner (2004:89-104), and M. Stowasser (1992:100-109).

17 There are also other rabbinic references that link the Messiah and the Spirit. See for instance Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus XIV, I.

Resh Lakish said “*Ahor*” means [Man was created] the last on the last day, and “*kedem*” [i.e., foremost] means on the first day. In the opinion of Resh Lakish [that is the meaning], since it is said, And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, i.e., the spirit of the Messianic King.

With the metaphoric reference to a dove, the Johannine narrative brings to the fore certain characteristics of a dove; attributes like gentleness, pureness, innocence, graciousness, tenderness, peace and tranquillity.¹⁸ If this assumption about the metaphoric use is correct, it implies that the Paraclete-Spirit would possess similar attributes.

The dove portrays the Paraclete-Spirit coming upon Christ at the beginning of his public ministry and therefore emphasises the power of the Holy Spirit on Christ for his work.¹⁹ In the broader scope of the Gospel message this causes us to make sense of Jesus' apparent calmness and tranquillity in adverse situations and the promise that the disciples would experience something similar once the Paraclete-Spirit has arrived.

Or the reference to Isaiah 42:1 in Targum Jonathan to the prophets:

Behold, My servant, the Messiah, whom I bring near, My chosen one, in whom My memra takes delight; *I will place My holy spirit upon him*, and he shall reveal My law to the nations. *He shall not cry, nor shout, nor raise his voice on the outside.* The humble that are like the bruised reed, he shall not break, and the poor of My people, who are like candles, he shall not extinguish; he shall truly bring forth justice. He shall not faint and he shall not tire unto he establishes justice on the earth; and the isles shall wait for his Torah. Thus says the God of the universe, the Lord, who created the heavens and suspended them, who established the earth and its inhabitants, who gives life to the people who are upon it and *spirit* to those who walk in it: "I, the Lord, have anointed you in righteousness, and have firmly taken you by the hand, and established you, and I have given you as a covenant of the people, as a light of the nations. To open the eyes of the house of Israel, who have been blind to the Torah; to bring back their Dispersions from among the nations, they, who are like prisoners; and to deliver them, who are imprisoned like prisoners in darkness, from the servitude of the empires. I am the Lord, that is My name, and My glory, which I have revealed unto you, I will not give to any other people, nor My praise to those who worship idols. The former things, behold, they have come to pass, and new things I declare; even before they occur I announce them to you."

- 18 C. Kruse (2003:81) mentions purity and gentleness as the characteristics symbolised by the dovelike Paraclete-Spirit.
- 19 A crucial concern of the evangelist in writing the Gospel (John 20:31) is that Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, it seems likely that the Gospel ought to begin that way. Although John the Baptist may not have perceived the depth of the evangelist's understanding of Son of God, the expression, as Beasley-Murray has indicated, was used in Jewish literature of faithful Israel. If the Gospel of John is any indication, then the phrase "Son of God" must have been at the core of the Johannine witness concerning Jesus.

The metaphorical use of dove is therefore not without meaning as Barrett suggests, but indeed gives us an inside look into the character of the Paraclete-Spirit. He is a bringer and giver of peace, serenity, pureness, gentleness, tenderness, innocence, pureness, holiness, etc.

These characteristics are not only applicable to the dovelike Paraclete-Spirit; they are also the characteristics that he will foster in Jesus' followers. Here, in a nutshell we have the Johannine teaching about the Paraclete-Spirit as the one who comes from God and who points to Jesus. The climax of the Baptist's witness is the designation that Jesus is the Son of God. This testimony is based on the fact that the Paraclete-Spirit came to stay with Jesus.²⁰

The Johannine use of this metaphor allows us to see a link between Paul's concepts of the fruit of Holy Spirit as expressed in Galatians 5:22 and the Johannine dovelike Paraclete-Spirit. In other words, Paul did not bring to the fore something new when he referred to the fruit of the Spirit. It was implicitly stated when the Gospel authors referred to the Holy Spirit ascending on Jesus like a dove.

However, we must be careful that we do not focus so much on the dove-like Paraclete-Spirit that we miss the basic intention of this passage. John 1:32-33 is the heart and climax of John's testimony about Jesus: John saw the Spirit come down ὡς περιστέρα from heaven and remain on Jesus. He then "witnessed" in verse 33 that he would not have recognized the Messiah had not God, who had sent him to baptise, told him that the man on whom he would see the Spirit come down and remain, would be the one who was to baptise with the Holy Spirit. To this the Baptist added in John 1:34, "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." This Jesus thus both takes away sin and gives the Spirit — because he is God's Son.

With Van der Heever's distinction mentioned at the beginning of this section in mind, we can say that Jesus has an effective and interesting way of revealing himself and revealing the Spirit in the Johannine narrative. The Johannine author is drawing a parallel between what the dovelike-spirit has

20 G. Borchert (1996) warns that one must take great care not to focus this text on Christian baptism. The primary focus is on Jesus. The same basic distinction is made in the other Gospels between the baptisms of John and Jesus (Mark 1:7-8; Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16) except that in Matthew and Luke "fire" is added to the Spirit baptism of Jesus. The fire there probably is intended to convey the cleansing power of the Spirit. In this Gospel the evangelist did not use the fire motif because of his interest in the Spirit *per se*. Doubtless, the writer saw parallels between this Spirit experience and Jesus' role of sending the Spirit, the other Paraclete (the Supporter or Counsellor of John 14:15-17), and of his breathing on the disciples after the resurrection when he bestowed the Spirit upon them (John 20:21-22).

done (descended on Jesus) and what Jesus is doing in the community (coming to the community and doing his work). This argument is further strengthened when John 4:25 and 26 are also taken into consideration:

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

A parallel can be drawn between the Spirit and Jesus descending on the community, and Jesus' coming as and being the Messiah, both singularly to the Samaritan woman and also to the world in general.

The metaphor ὡς περιστερά implies the descent to be gentle and quiet. It is because of this event that the dove has become a symbol of the Holy Spirit to many in the Christian church. When John saw the Holy Spirit come down and dwell (live, or tabernacle) in Jesus, he knew the Messiah had come. He knew now that the purpose and direction of his ministry would be fulfilled. This brings us to the next metaphor.

4.2 The Johannine Paraclete-Spirit and the Water/Living Water Metaphor

R. Culpepper (1983:198) describes φῶς,²¹ ἄρτος²² and ὕδωρ²³ as the core symbols in the Johannine Gospel. He points out that there are countless rich and significant symbolic references, but none of the others do so with the frequency of the three core symbols.²⁴

21 The word φῶς occurs 23 times in the Gospel. All of them are to be found in the first 12 chapters of the book.

22 We find 24 references to ἄρτος in the Gospel. All but three occur in chapter 6.

23 The term ὕδωρ occurs 21 times in the Gospel. The theme water interlocks the first three chapters of the Johannine Gospel with seven references. But by far the most, almost half of these 21 occurrences (9 times), are to be found in chapter 4.

24 In his discussion of metaphors relating to the temple, U. Busse (1997:395-428) includes the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the dream of Jacob (John 1:51), the Samaritan woman (John 4), Jesus as teacher of the law in the Temple (John 7-8), the streams of water (John 7:37-39), the shepherd and sheep imagery (John 10), the calling of prophets (John 12:37-41), the vine (John 15) and the hate of the world (John 15:18-21.). Even the reference to the house of the Father in John 14:1-2 might qualify. Van der Watt (2000:89) indicates that some of these are indeed metaphors, while others seem to have symbolic tendencies. He mentions, that this, however, illustrates the network of metaphorical ideas that are formed throughout the Gospel.

The ὕδωρ theme that is developed in the first two chapters reaches a convergence in John 3. In this chapter, ὕδωρ is mentioned only briefly in connection with birth from above (John 3:5).

G. Burge (1987:97-99) comments that the Johannine Gospel is the only New Testament writing to mention living water. Among others Burge notes the following points:

- ὕδωρ was a metaphor for the Spirit in both Old Testament and Rabbinic thought.
- The Qumran also used ὕδωρ and Spirit as a metaphor, but from the standpoint of a ritual sense of purification.
- Jesus referred to ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα in the story of Nicodemus (John 3:5).
- The metaphor of the living water depicts two things:
 - ◆ The valueless institution which Jesus replaces in his person.
 - ◆ The newness Jesus brings.

In the exegetical sections focussing on John 4:10 and 14 and John 7:37-39 ὕδωρ, as a recurring Johannine core symbol, clearly refers to the Paraclete-Spirit. C. Koester (2003:14, 187-191) contends that those who receive the Paraclete-Spirit or who “drink” Jesus’ teaching will have the Spirit (living water) welling up in their hearts as Jesus promised the Samaritan woman in John 4:13-14. The water from Jacob’s well could extend life for a while, but the living water from Jesus would issue into life everlasting which, according to the Johannine perspective, refers to life lived in relationship with God. C. Koester (2003:191) comments on John 4:1-42: “If Jesus is both Messiah and Saviour of the world, the living water is both revelation and the Spirit.”

T.G. Brown (2003), citing several scholars, also notes that “living water” is interpreted as a metaphor for “spirit”. She also refers to the story of Nicodemus (John 3:5) where Jesus speaks of being born of ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα; she then notes that being born of the spirit “opens up possibility of receiving the eternal life available through Jesus.” She cites John 19:34 where Jesus’ side is pierced and “water and blood” came out of the wound. She concludes that drinking living water means a transition from the “earthly realm” into becoming one of God’s children. She notes that here too symbols are “integrally related concepts” where “living water/spirit” will become “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). The living water/spirit that Jesus offers opens up the “possibility of entrance into the realm of God and eternal life by allowing believers a new ascribed honour status as children of God.”

The theme of “living water” resurfaces again when Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles. During the final ritual at the Feast of Tabernacles, the priest brought water from the pool of Siloam and poured it in the funnel beside the altar, amid the singing of worshippers. The event was a joyous one, in anticipation of Messiah’s glorious reign (Zechariah 14: 16-21). During that event Jesus proclaimed, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” (John 7:37-38) The next verse gives the explanation: τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ὃ ἔμελλον λαμβάνειν οἱ πιστεύσαντες εἰς αὐτόν (John 7:39).

With the explanation given in verse 39, we have both primary and secondary subjects. The primary subject is the Paraclete-Spirit and the secondary subject is the life-giving water. We can again ask ourselves what the attributes are that water possesses that Jesus had in mind, according to John. We could suggest attributes like life, growth, nurture, etc.

When we take this into consideration, several points are noteworthy:

- Life-giving water as a quality of the Holy Spirit signifies that he is the source of eternal life. Who has the Paraclete-Spirit will have life in abundance (John 4:14; 7:37-39).
- Water signifies a reception of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27 and John 7:39).
- It announces that the blessings promised to be part of the Messianic Age would come when the Spirit comes. As our study of the background of John 7:37-39 has indicated, we need to interpret this metaphoric use against the backdrop of Isaiah 12:3 and Joel 2:28-32.

The implication of this is that Johannine Pneumatology is not different from that of Luke as seen in Acts. In his Pentecost speech, Peter quotes the Joel passage. The Johannine metaphor of living or life-giving water enables us to confirm that the New Testament message regarding the Holy Spirit is consistent. It is incorrect to suggest that John only focused on revealing the identity of the Paraclete-Spirit as a Person similar to Jesus while Luke and Paul focused only on the consequences of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the lives of believers. The metaphors used in John reveal that the Johannine perspective was much broader and comprehensive than what is often acknowledged.

4.3 The Johannine Paraclete-Spirit and the Wind Metaphor

Wind is a most natural representation of the Holy Spirit since the word πνεῦμα may be translated *wind* as well as *spirit*. English words like *pneumatic* derive their meaning from the word πνεῦμα. In explaining the new birth to Nicodemus, Jesus compared the birth by the Paraclete-Spirit to the wind (John 3:8).

We can again refer to the two subjects. The Paraclete-Spirit is the primary subject and wind is the secondary subject. What attributes of wind are in mind here? It seems that the text itself gives the answer. According to John 3:8, Jesus told Nicodemus: τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκοῖεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.

In John 3:8 the operation of the Spirit is metaphorically compared to the wind by means of wordplay with πνεῦμα. The wordplay on *wind* and *Spirit* in John 3:8 is different from that in the case of ἀνωθεν, because it works both in Greek and in Hebrew. The wordplay with πνεῦμα introduces a delightful little parable illustrating the nature of Christians as children of the wind or Spirit. The wind blows where it wishes.²⁵ When the people of Jesus' time thought of the wind, they could not locate either its place of origin or its final destination. This surpasses human explanation and understanding. But they certainly could feel and hear its force (its φωνή or voice). The composite metaphor interactively links the known operation of the wind with that of the Spirit. Van der Watt (2000:141) declares that metaphorically it can be said that the *Spirit is the wind*.²⁶

This composite metaphor serves as the basis for a comparison that is introduced with οὕτως. The question is what is compared to what. The sentence reads: "So is it with everyone who is born from the Spirit". The reference in John 3:8 is to the mysterious and even incomprehensible working of the Spirit. A person who is born from the Spirit will not understand but only experience this mysterious working of the Spirit. The comparison is therefore with the mysterious working of the Spirit within the person who is born of the Spirit. As the wind blows mysteriously and the Spirit acts likewise, the person will experience the same mysterious event when he or she is reborn

25 Van der Watt (2000:140-142) discusses this metaphorical use in depth. He asserts that P. Ellis (1984:54) and R. Sturch (1977/8:235-236) incorrectly call this a parable.

26 The wordplay makes this metaphorical use even more interesting. Apart from double meaning, the associated commonplaces are also utilized metaphorically. See C. Barrett (1982:210-211), E. Haenchen (1984:219), C. Keener (2003:556-558) and A. Köstenberger (2004:124-125).

as an ordinary person experiences when he or she stands in the wind. By these characteristics of the wind there was provided to Nicodemus and to the reader of John an example of how believers in Christ appear to outsiders. First-century outside observers probably knew little of how Christians became followers of Jesus, and they understood little concerning their eschatological destinies. But what they could sense was the presence and work of these children of the Spirit in the midst of pagan and Jewish societies. What they saw and heard from the Christians who were present in their societies was telling as to how they formulated their understandings of Christianity (John 13:35). Their lives were a witness to an unseen reality. Is this picture not also an appropriate word for today?

Let us consider this explanation:

- Like the wind, the Paraclete-Spirit cannot be tamed by man and cannot be told by man what to do. The wind blows wherever it pleases — τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ. In a similar way, the Paraclete-Spirit does whatever pleases the Godhead. Each operates above human understanding and according to its own will or plan. The Spirit, however, does not blow in the same way as the wind nor does the will of the Spirit work in the same way as that of the wind. Within these two verbs (*blow* and *will*), the *metaphorical interaction* takes place. Both the wind and the Spirit have a will that transcends human understanding, but the nature of those two wills as well as the way in which they function, differ dramatically. Spirit has clear animate qualities while wind is inanimate. The commonplace is that, in each case, the object determines its actions on its own and is not prescribed, especially not by man. In the case of blowing, the procedure is revised. The animate Spirit cannot blow in the same way as the inanimate wind does, although there are similarities with metaphorical potential. The commonplace in this instance is movement from location to location in a mysterious way that suits wind and Spirit.
- You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going — τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει. You know that the wind is real because you hear it, you can feel it, and you can see its work. In a similar way, believers know that the Paraclete-Spirit is real and is present, since they can hear and see and feel his presence and his work.
- So it is with everyone born of the Spirit — οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. In the context of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus we can say that, just like we cannot explain the wind (where it is coming from or where it is going) or prescribe to it what to do (for it blows wherever it pleases), we also cannot explain how people are born from above and

we cannot demand to be born from above, but we do experience the reality of this birth from above. The Paraclete-Spirit is as real as the wind. And the work of the Paraclete-Spirit is as real as the work of the wind (for example, the devastating evidence of a tornado). Yet, the Paraclete-Spirit also manifests “dove-like characteristics” as mentioned earlier.

What do we learn from this metaphor? The Holy Spirit of God is like the wind. Although there is lack of knowledge about the origins of both wind and Spirit, the effects of both are observable. Our knowledge of wind movements has vastly increased in modern times, but in those times, the wind was unpredictable. What comes over is the sovereign operation of the Spirit of God. The new birth was an inexplicable sovereign work of God. Just as the wind, blowing through the trees, is mysterious and autonomous, so is the new birth by the Paraclete-Spirit incomprehensible and sovereign. The Paraclete-Spirit does as he decides. No human being commands him just as no one prescribes to the wind what to do.

This metaphor reveals to believers at least two very important things that they need to keep in mind in their spiritual walk: 1.) They cannot tell the Paraclete-Spirit what to do, and 2.) They cannot receive the birth from above on their demand.

Being born of the Spirit requires a radical change, a new beginning. This life of the Spirit, this life on the second plane of existence, is such that nobody can attain to it by their own efforts. The gist of Jesus’ statement is that the character of those born is determined by the source that gives them birth. It is a pity that “born-again” has been debased in common speech as a scornful description of an extreme sect or even referring to old ideas renewed or new versions of motor cars! It would be very unfortunate to allow ridicule to deprive believers of a concept so vital and central to the Christian faith.

5. CONCLUSION

The Johannine Gospel presents the paradox that the divine message from above is made known through what is from below (earthly). The Johannine narrative functions as a testimony given in symbolic language, using metaphoric images as vehicles through which the Paraclete-Spirit’s work can take effect.²⁷

27 On the relation of the Paraclete-Spirit to the different levels of meaning in the Johannine narrative, see J. Martyn (1979:143-151). See also U. Schnelle (1998a: 17-31) and J. Ashton (1991:550-552).

The study of specific Johannine metaphors has been proven valuable in understanding the message and theology of John. The use of the dove, water and wind metaphors in the Johannine Gospel definitely has functional and theological implications for the pneumatology of John. We can conclude that the Johannine author uses imagery freely in expressing his pneumatological message. He does not express his message regarding the Paraclete-Spirit merely in the form of a theological discourse, but by using various metaphors (dove, water and wind.)

By exploring the relationship between the different Paraclete-Spirit metaphors a larger and more coherent picture emerges which opens the view to the interrelatedness of different theological themes. The metaphorical description of the Paraclete-Spirit in the Johannine Gospel has genuine potential and deserves to be explored.

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