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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

TYPOLOGY

It is no chance that the first important heresy to arise from within the non-Jewish section of the early Church was Marcionism. Dr. Burkitt (*The Gospel History and its Transmission*, Ch. IX) seems entirely justified in stressing that Marcion was the son of a Christian bishop—we do not consider that the denial of this tradition is adequately motivated—and that his heresy represented a Christian rather than a pagan problem.

Marcion may have been influenced by the Greek difficulty of grasping a truly historical religion, but fundamentally it was the apparent irrelevance of the Old Testament to Christianity, the apparent contradiction between the old covenant and the new, not merely in details but often in general tone, that drove him to a spiritual rejection of the Old Testament; he never questioned its accuracy as a historical record. The Catholic Church faced him with a firm affirmation of the New Testament teaching that the Church is the inheritor of the promises made through the prophets, and that the Old Testament is in very deed Holy Scripture for the Church. But for all its rejection of Marcion's teaching the Church has never been really happy about the Old Testament.

To-day in the Protestant churches outside the newer mission fields the Old Testament is in the hands of virtually every church member, but how many of them really know its contents? Of those that do there are comparatively few who can make an intelligent and spiritually profitable use of it. It is probably no exaggeration to say that some 80 per cent of Christians would feel no more than a sentimental loss, if 80 per cent of the Old Testament were wiped out or relegated to the status of a purely historical document. How much stronger must this feeling have been in the centuries when the personal possession of even a New Testament was an extreme rarity, and the bulk of the Old Testament was not heard read or expounded. In fact from the fourth century onwards, if not earlier, most Christian expositors and writers, while recognizing the authority of the Old Testament, emptied their acknowledgement of most of its value by handling the Old Testament purely allegorically, unless indeed they turned to it for a few proof-texts torn from their context.

We should not make little of the Church's difficulties. When we see a finished, or near-finished structure, the blue-prints,

estimates and progress-reports cease to have any special interest except for the expert. The Old Testament is the story of the preparation for the coming of Christ; when He came, the glory of the fulfilment was so great that we may be excused if we lose sight of those that prepared the way, though it is not God's will that we should do so.

Both Greek and Jew had prepared the way for the Church's treatment of the Old Testament. It has been well said that "piety is the mother of allegorical exposition". It was above all in their treatment of Homer that the Greeks developed the art of allegorical exposition, and it was the Neo-Pythagoreans who made a fine art of it about the beginning of the Christian era. It began as an effort to explain away passages that seemed offensive to a more sophisticated taste, but continued as the art of discovering in Homer things he had never dreamt of. Philo treated the Law of Moses in a similar way to impress and attract the educated Greeks of Egypt. Little could he have anticipated that he would influence the new-born Church far more deeply than either pagan or Jew.

It must remain a matter for conjecture how far allegory had taken root in Palestinian Jewry before the destruction of the Temple, but it is certain that it was well known and used in certain circles. The *Habakkuk Commentary* discovered at Ain Feshka shows that the Essenes in the first century B.C.—assuming that we are correct in attributing the cache of manuscripts to them—had already thoroughly mastered the art of complete allegorical interpretation. In any case the soil had been well prepared in Pharisaic circles as well. The main achievement of the early rabbis down to Hillel and Shammai and their disciples was to learn to use the Torah in such a way as to derive from it principles and rules for every conceivable contingency in life. This implied a thoroughgoing willingness to understand the Old Testament in a non-natural sense, and from this to allegory is only a very short step.

With such an environment it is easy to see why the Church rapidly fell a prey to allegorizing, especially of the Old Testament. The *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A.D. 75–120) exhibits the allegorical method in an extreme form. Geffcken says well (ERE I, p. 330a), "Allegory had, in fact, become to the men of the time a religious requirement". It is easy then to see how for centuries the Old Testament was stripped of both "offence" and meaning by allegory.

It would be foolish to object to allegory as a method of teaching and unreasonable to reject it as an element of the devotional life and its literature; there are, however, grave objections to its use in official or quasi-official interpretation of Scripture. The chief are:—

(a) The authority of the Word is made subordinate to man's fancy and intellectual skill;

(b) We are enabled to avoid the discipline of discovering the real message of God in difficult passages;

(c) We escape the necessity of facing the implications of Christianity's being a historical religion;

(d) By insisting on our own fancies rather than on the Word of God we run the risk of both false doctrine and schism.

It will, however, be urged that allegory is merely the sometimes unjustifiable extension of an entirely justifiable method of Biblical exegesis, viz. typology. The New Testament itself repeatedly uses the Old Testament as a picture book in which the pictures or types correspond to the realities or antitypes of the New Testament. (The not entirely similar use of type and antitype in the New Testament and in theological language is hardly germane to our subject—see A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 224–228.)

The difference between type and allegory has been expressed by Van Mildert (*Bampton Lectures*, 1815, p. 239): “It is indeed essential in a Type, in the Scriptural acceptation of the term, that there should be competent evidence of the Divine *intention* in the correspondence between it and the Antitype.” Much would be gained, if we could obtain general acceptance of some such definition of a type. It prunes away a mass of luxuriating fantasy masquerading as typology; strictly taken it would confine types to those that are definitely proclaimed as such in the New Testament, and rule out not a few of the more popular “types”.

A priori there can be no objection to the view that alongside the verbal prophecies of the prophets there were acted prophecies in ordinances or in the details of the Divine providence in human life. But, as A. B. Davidson has cogently argued (*Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 236 f.), this is either a truism, for the whole of the Old Testament economy was designed by God to be a schoolmaster to lead to Christ; or it is meaningless, for

there is no evidence that the Old Testament saints saw anything prophetic in the types. To suggest that the types were given merely to confirm the faith of those that should experience the antitypes seems otiose, and once again strips the Old Testament of any real revelational value.

Bishop Westcott expresses it much better (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 200): "A type presupposes a purpose in history wrought out from age to age. An allegory rests finally in the imagination, though the thoughts which it expresses may be justified by the harmonies which connect the many elements of life."

We can only give full weight and value to the Old Testament when we grasp that not only is the revelation of God at all times a self-consistent unity (a fact that dispensationalism of a popular type often overlooks) but also that its historic unfolding is essential to it. God has revealed Himself in history not merely because He chose to, but because it is the only way in which man can really get to know Him. Were the revelation of God fundamentally a theological one, we would be entitled to ignore the "sundry ways and divers manners" which prepared the way for the perfect revelation, for they would have merely antiquarian interest. But God's revelation is in history, and so the Old Testament, even though it only becomes fully understandable in the light of the New, yet remains necessary to our full understanding of the New and of God.

If this is granted, the position of typology should become clear. The types of the Old Testament are not so much prophetic pictures of Christ or the Christian as parallels and analogies given by God on another plane of revelation. That means that the type has a revelational value of its own, apart from the antitype, which in turn enables us to understand the antitype better.

Closer investigation of the actual types used in the New Testament supports this view. It is worth noting, that with negligible exceptions all the examples are drawn from the Torah, i.e. the Instruction rather than the Law. In a very special way its narrative portions have an instructional purpose in a measure we cannot so readily claim for the historical books.

The most obvious case of typology for the average man is the Tabernacle and the Levitical Sacrifices. The excavations at Ras Shamra have shown that the main types of Levitical sacrifices were already known in the West Semitic world before

the time of Moses. The sacrificial tablets of Marseilles and Carthage seem to indicate that the actual details of these sacrifices were not strikingly different in Israel and among the Phoenicians, i.e. Canaanites. Nor does archaeology suggest that there was anything striking novel about the Tabernacle and its furnishings. We need not feel surprised, therefore, that though the loving piety of Christians has found foreshadowings of Christ at almost every point, there is no evidence that any Jew, however pious, ever glimpsed a prophetic element. This seems confirmed by their use in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Though Heb. ix. 5 suggests that a lesson could be drawn from the details of the Tabernacle furniture, no attempt is made to do so. Though the Tabernacle, etc., is called (viii. 5) a copy (*ὑπόδειγμα*) of heavenly things, this is immediately qualified by "shadow". Furthermore the difficult passage ix. 23 is best understood, if we interpret the heavenly things that need purifying as "the sphere where men are to serve God" (A. B. Davidson). In other words the Tabernacle, its furniture and sacrifices are the projection into time and space and a particular historical situation of the eternal principles underlying the service and worship of God.

Much the same is true of the use of various incidents from Israel's wilderness wanderings as types. It will be found that probably in no incident is there any attempt made to stress the details of the events, e.g. I Cor. x. 5-11, Heb. iii. 7-iv. 11. The use of the types is merely to enforce the principle that God punishes all disobedience in the same way, only now on a higher and more serious plane than then.

In a number of important cases any attempt to press the detailed analogy between type and antitype ends in absurdity. Outstanding examples are the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism (I Cor. x. 2), the manna and the water as a type of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. x. 3 f.), the flood as a type of baptism (I Pet. iii. 20 f.). We have no difficulty in seeing a common spiritual law working in type and antitype, but the expression of that law in different historic and revelational settings has little common in its outward expression. Prophetic the types in these cases are not, in any normal meaning of the word, for it would have been impossible for anyone to have foreseen the antitype. It is not likely that they were even intended to be prophetic *post eventum*. The similarities in externals, such as they are, come rather from the nature of things than any Divine

ordering, e.g. the only method of blotting out life on the earth, while preserving a select group alive, miracle apart, was presumably by water, while we can hardly imagine the manifold aspects of the symbolism of baptism expressed otherwise than by water. That the similarity is really accidental is seen when we contrast the manna and the water of the wilderness with the elements of the Eucharistic meal.

The same principle is seen at work in the border-line case of Gal. iv. 21-31. Paul may say "which things contain an allegory" (ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα), but as Cremer (*Biblico-Theological Lexicon of N.T. Greek*, p. 97) points out, there is a wide gulf between Paul's and Philo's allegory, and that Paul's is virtually typology. He says, "He purposely uses ἀλληγορέω instead, perhaps, of ἀντίτυπα τῶν μελλόντων, because he does not and cannot point out a final and complete fulfilment of the prophetic fact. . . ." The only real difference between this case in Galatians and those earlier discussed is that while we have once again a common spiritual principle at work, no real similarities can be discovered in the physical expression of it in the two cases.

Some would claim that Heb. vii. 1 ff. and John xix. 36 constitute a serious challenge to the view being expounded, for in these passages the stress seems to be on minor details in the Old Testament types. It is questionable, however, whether this is really the case.

For the writer of Hebrews the vital point is not the minutiae mentioned in vii. 2 f. but Ps. cx. 4. Already in this psalm the superiority of the royal priesthood had been revealed, the reality of that foreshadowed but not expressed by the "divine kings" of the Fertile Crescent. Christ used the psalm as Messianic, and there is little doubt that it was widely so used by the Jews of the time—no stress should be laid on the lack of evidence in earlier rabbinic literature; a psalm so used by Christians would not have come to be regarded as Messianic by the Synagogue, unless the tradition had gone back to the first century at the least. Hebrews could and would have used Ps. cx, even if there had been nothing in the description of Melchizedek in Genesis that was applicable to Christ. In fact if we concentrate on these minor agreements, however striking, we are in real danger of losing the real significance of the type.

Much the same applies to John xix. 36. Christ had been identified with the Passover Lamb as early as I Cor. v. 7, some

years before the earliest of the Synoptic gospels. The casual mention shows that it was an accepted part of Pauline teaching. Since there seems to be unanimity among commentators that it is the Passover lamb that is referred to in I Pet. i. 19, we may reasonably attribute this identification to the Church of Jerusalem. But none of the Synoptic Gospels records that our Lord's legs were not broken. It should be obvious that the type was never based on or derived from this fact. For John it is an interesting confirmation, but no more.

We may deduce that *in many cases* God so ordered the details of ordinances or so caused incidents to be recorded that there is a striking similarity in detail between the type and antitype, but that the recognition of a true type depends not on the recognition of such similarities, which need not even exist, but of a common spiritual principle operative in both type and antitype. The Old Testament types point not to an acted prophecy, but to the fact that the whole of God's self-revelation is of a piece. The Old Testament is not merely a preparation for salvation, but part of the history of salvation. As we trace God's redeeming work until it reaches its climax in Christ, we find continuous parallelisms with the past; the climax is a virtual recapitulation of past revelation, but on the highest level, in Christ. The fulfilment in Christ enables us to understand the preparation better, but we only really understand the fulfilment as we trace the parallelism of the preparation. The frequent similarities in details are an assurance—if indeed such an assurance were necessary—that no part of the process has been haphazard, but the real parallelism is a spiritual, not a material one.

This principle helps us to explain the sometimes mystifying use of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, where the original context seems often to be completely disregarded. The question we must ask ourselves is not whether the Old Testament passage is an actual prophecy of the New Testament position, which very often it is not, but whether there is a true spiritual analogy between the two situations. The same spiritual principle may, perhaps, also explain why some of our favourite types of Christ, e.g. Joseph and David, are in fact never so used in the New Testament. We are all too readily attracted by superficial similarities.

A special word of warning is called for by a frequent misuse of some of the psalms. Only one psalm, Ps. cx, claims to be a

prophecy, and we are convinced that it is the only psalm which did not in the first place refer to the writer's own circumstances. To call psalms Messianic in the sense that they were written as conscious prophecies of Jesus Christ, and that they refer to Him and Him exclusively, is to do violence to the Psalter and to misunderstand the New Testament use of the Old. The "royal" psalms deal with human representatives of God, but because every king was but a shadow of the ideal, they look beyond the shadow to the one perfect king who is yet to come. Every righteous man in his joys and sorrows foreshadows in some measure the spiritual experiences of the one perfectly righteous man. So Jesus could take the Psalter as supremely His book in which His experiences and the purposes of His coming were foreshadowed. But to say that because any particular psalm is quoted in the New Testament, either by our Lord or by its writers, it is Messianic in the sense that it must be interpreted entirely and exclusively of our Lord does not make sense.

A few examples must suffice to prove the point. Ps. ii. 7 is three times quoted in the New Testament. Twice the setting of Ps. ii. 6 is ignored, and the third time (Acts xiii. 33) it is implicitly denied. I seriously doubt whether many expositors, even of the most literal type, can be found who will interpret Ps. lxxii. 15 b ("And men shall pray for him continually") of our Lord, unless indeed they join the corrupters of Watts and sing, "*To Him shall endless prayer be made . . .*". To apply passages like Ps. xxxviii. 3-5, 18; xl. 12; xli. 4; lxix. 5 to our Lord is to come near the end of exegesis; the outcome, if logical conclusions are drawn, is generally blasphemy or false doctrine.

Those who still indulge in such a travesty of true exegesis overlook that the New Testament *never* applies such verses to our Lord. It is true that not all Messianic prophecy is referred to explicitly in the New Testament, but its refusal to make any use of such passages should impose reticence upon us. It is one thing to see in the spiritual sufferings of the saints of the old covenant a foreshadowing of sufferings too great for us to grasp; it is quite another to see in them a literal description. Then too in such exegesis there is ignorance of the principle we have been trying to establish, that in types it is the broad spiritual parallelisms and not correspondence in detail that is of paramount importance.

The existence of types does not ask of the Bible expositor and preacher that he should try to show how wonderfully the life and work of Christ and the walk of the Christian have been foreshadowed in the worship and history of Israel. Rather he should so examine the type that he learns its spiritual implications and principles; then he will be the better enabled to draw out the spiritual lessons of the antitype.

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