

*Types and Typology*  
Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh

On the road to Emmaus the newly risen yet undisclosed Lord speaks with two of his disciples inquiring of them the nature of their conversation and the reason for their cheerless countenance. “And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’” As they relate the extraordinary events which had recently transpired in and around Jerusalem, they express incredulity that the one who is traveling with them had not heard of these things: “‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’” In response to their having related the specifics of what had happened, Jesus opens up their understanding to the Scriptural evidence for what transpired and how it proves that the one of whom they speak is the Christ. Along with this divine exegesis, however, is a rebuke indicating that they should have understood these things: “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’”<sup>1</sup>

This account tells of the Lord’s assurance that the witness to God’s purposes, related in what the report refers to as “the Scriptures” (what we designate as the Old Testament) was sufficient to reveal the fullness of what transpired in the accomplishing of redemption through the setting forth by God of Jesus as a propitiation for sin. And,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:13-35. All Scripture quotations are taken from, *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*, Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville: 1982).

because of this sufficiency, the Lord offers what appears to be a gentle rebuke to those who are confused and disheartened in the wake of the events of Holy Week.

This assurance is evident elsewhere when Jesus offers a much sterner rebuke to the Pharisees for their claims of allegiance to Holy Writ while not believing its message. This unbelief is manifested in their rejection of the one about whom the Scriptures speak: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life . . . For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”<sup>2</sup>

This expectation, that those who had the Old Testament Scriptures should have been ready to receive the one of whom they spoke, is also alluded to in Jesus’ explanation of a parable. In this parable is described the ill treatment of servants successively sent by a vineyard owner to collect his portion of the harvest from the vinedressers. In the end the son who is sent is killed. Jesus goes on to explain to the suspicious hearers, “Have you not even read this Scripture:

“The stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone.  
This was the LORD’S doing,  
And it is marvelous in our eyes”?”<sup>3</sup>

In all of these instances it appears that Jesus expected his hearers to have known the nature and ministry of the Messiah because they had the “Scriptures” to reveal these things to them. These statements of Christ would seem a reasonable and appropriate

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<sup>2</sup> John 5:39-47

<sup>3</sup> Mark 12:10-11

starting point for a consideration of how the truth and substance of his mediatory work was communicated to the pre-incarnation elect.

This consideration arises out of a desire to reflect upon the doctrine articulated in the Savoy Declaration of Faith under the heading “Of Christ the Mediator.” The particular portion of the article that this paper will consider is found in Chapter VIII. vi. that reads:

*Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his Incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy and benefits thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world in and by those promises, types and sacrifices wherein he was revealed and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the Serpent’s head and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being yesterday and today the same, and forever.*

Far-ranging considerations are opened up by the claims of the article before us. Chief among them, it could be asserted, is the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament.

The precise nature of this relationship has been something closely debated from the opening centuries of the church age to the present. In the second century AD, Marcion was branded a heretic and excommunicated from the church in Rome in 144 for an interpretation of Paul’s letters which lead him to the conclusion that “the God of the Mosaic covenant and the God of Jesus and Paul were two quite different things.” Undaunted, he formed a separate church and sought to establish “a canon of authoritative Christian writings which he carefully expurgated of all passages that seemed to lend authority to the Jewish Scriptures.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church, Fourth Edition*, Charles Scribner’s Sons (New York: 1985) 68-9

With the rise of historical-criticism in the nineteenth century the question was visited again in earnest. Scholars holding historical-critical presuppositions conclude that it is a vain enterprise for the Christian church to maintain a unity between the Old Testament and the New. Their work leads them to assert that the religions of the Testaments are vastly different and the church's continued attempt to unite them is nothing less than unenlightened religious syncretism. A. Harnack's opinion is representative: "To cast away the Old Testament in the second century was an error which the church rightly rejected; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the Reformation was unable to escape; but for Protestantism to conserve it as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is a sign of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis."<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from the Savoy's article that the ones who generated the confession are to be counted among those whom fate had offered no escape. And though we might make no apologies for being, in Harnack's estimation, afflicted with paralysis, we must recognize that the relationship between the two Testaments is not something that the scholar alone ponders. Many are the times when the man in pastoral ministry must try to help the layperson sort out the confusion that arises from an untutored reading of the Bible. It can appear to such a one that vastly different worlds are portrayed in the two Testaments. The Old seems much less accessible to our understanding being, as it is, populated with strange peoples and practices. Additionally, the focus is so very much on a particular people and God's dealings with them (including others seemingly only as an addendum) that one could view the writings as the myopic history of a particular people. Furthermore, it seems that God's dealings with people are much harsher and less personal

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in, Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig, Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, MI, 1982) 4 n.9.

than how they are portrayed in the New. And, more to the point, it would appear that the Old Testament offers the benefits of God's salvation in a manner quite different than how they are offered in the New.<sup>6</sup>

In response to such persistent questions, the Savoy asserts a unity of the two Testaments. There is no question in the minds of these close beneficiaries of the Reformation that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New. This provides an historical basis upon which to contend continuity in God's dealings with his people in the unfolding of his promised redemption. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Nor is there expressed any doubt that the nature of salvation as put forth in the Old is inherently the same as that in the New. In truth, as one observer notes, the unity of the bible is a unity which "is to be found, not in the first instance in the biblical documents themselves, but in the continuity of the history of the Yahweh-Israel relationship (including the mass of Gentile believers drawn into the scope of that relationship through the Christian mission) established by Yahweh's initiative and administered by means of his covenant . . . to this history the biblical document bear witness - or, so we could also say, out of this history the biblical documents arose."<sup>7</sup>

This avowed unity of history and salvation, or what we can call salvation-history, allows the Savoy to declare that latent within the pre-incarnation revelation of God is evidence that there would be a Mediator along with the nature, ministry and benefits of his mediation. This was communicated, the Savoy indicates, in "all ages" through

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Leviticus 18:5 "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD;" Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

<sup>7</sup> John H. Stek, *Biblical Typology Yesterday and Today*, Calvin Theological Journal, 1970, 34:333-343

“promises, types and sacrifices” which refers, we may assume, to the promises, types and sacrifices recorded for us in the Old Testament. In this the apostles and writers of the New Testament would agree. The reality of this is evident in the way they used Old Testament Scriptures in the early proclamation of the Gospel to establish that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah.

In the ministry of the apostle Paul it was his “custom” to rely upon the Scriptures when he sought to persuade those in the synagogues of the cities to which he traveled that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>8</sup> Of course, the Gospel accounts themselves liberally quote the Old Testament to demonstrate how the things that transpired in Jesus’ earthly ministry fulfilled what had been spoken of prior to his coming. Typical is the designation, “as it is written,” as in John’s account of the ‘Triumphal Entry’ prior to Jesus’ passion: “Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; *as it is written.*” Set apart by this imprimatur John then goes on to quote the pertinent passage from the prophet.<sup>9</sup> In a similar fashion there is often indicated that something transpired in the course of Jesus’ ministry that “fulfilled” Scripture. From Jesus self-designation in the synagogue in Nazareth in the opening days of his ministry (“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,” Luke 4:21) to the events surrounding the crucifixion (“these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled,” John 19:36), for the biblical writers the life of Jesus was foretold in the sacred record of God’s dealings with his people and fulfilled in the events of Jesus’ life. In fact, it is because the events and circumstances of the Messiah

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 17:1-3, “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.””

<sup>9</sup> John 12:14; Zechariah 9:9

were universally understood to be anticipated in the authoritative Scriptures that the apostles and Gospel writers utilized them to make their case.<sup>10</sup>

The thrust of the present article, however, is not to establish the unity of the Old and New Testaments; rather such unity is presumed, alluded to in passing in a previous article.<sup>11</sup> The article before us deals primarily with the question of how the mediatory work of Christ was effective for the pre-incarnation people of God. It teaches that what was revealed in the advent of Christ was previously revealed through the means outlined and sufficiently so that those who lived from Eden forward gained the benefit of Christ's obedience in their own lifetime.<sup>12</sup>

It would certainly do in this particular portion of the discussion of "Christ the Mediator" to consider each of the avenues of saving grace identified in the article but, for the sake of brevity, I will concern myself with the use of types. This means of communication is important for us to consider for in relation to the other two mentioned, typology has perhaps been the most greatly abused. As a consequence, it has produced some of the most regrettable attempts at unifying the salvation-history found in the Old and New Testaments.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. John 10:27-38. The brief and dramatic opening of the Gospel of Mark (an account given to brevity and drama) illustrates this point: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" (Mark 1:1-3; Malachi 3:10; Isaiah 40:3)

<sup>11</sup> ". . . the consent of all the parts," Chapter I. V. A unity of salvation-history is also taught in Chapter VII, "Of God's Covenant with Man," sub point v.: "Although this covenant has been differently and variously administered in respect of ordinances and institutions in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet for the substance and efficacy of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is one and the same; upon the account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament."

<sup>12</sup> That is, they were not held in some interim state awaiting the work of Christ to be accomplished within the flow of history before they could receive of its benefit.

The word ‘type’ comes from the Greek word *typos*. Though in English, ‘type’ is a commonly used word, in the Septuagint and the New Testament it appears only seventeen times. In both of these works “there is one basic meaning.” The word *typos* in the Greek Bible can be (and is) variously translated but, despite some nuanced disagreements among translators over particular instances of its occurrence, “the conclusion is straightforward: the evidence of biblical terminology suggests the meaning ‘example, pattern’ for ‘type.’”<sup>13</sup>

This leads to the notion of the type functioning as an analogy to, or possessing correspondence with, something else. This phenomenon is something with which we are all very familiar. When we explain something to someone we often give an example of what it is that we are talking about so that the one with whom we are speaking can better understand the issue under consideration. The example offered is chosen because it has a direct, or inherent, connection with what it is that we are trying to explain. The example, it could be said, is in substance the same as that which is being explained even though it is not exactly the same in detail. So, too, are the types or typology of Scripture: one element found in Scripture possessing an inherent correspondence with something else found in Scripture.

Typology improperly understood devolves into allegorizing. Allegorizing is to be distinguished from allegory. Allegory, defined as an “extended metaphor,” is used effectively in the Scriptures to teach truth. Notable among the occasions in which this device is used is Jesus’ discourse, found in John 10, on his being both the Door and the Good Shepherd. Also, the description in Psalm 80 of Israel as a vine and Paul’s

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<sup>13</sup> David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible, a Study of the Theological Relationship Between the Old & New Testaments*, InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, IL: 1991), 185-6

description of the “whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11-17) qualify as allegory. Allegory, however, is different from allegorizing. Allegorizing can be described as “making the narrative convey ideas different from those intended by the original author.” Allegorizing proves to be an “arbitrary way of handling any narrative.” Once the original intent of the author is left behind, there is no constraint upon the interpreter in determining what any one detail of the narrative means. What results is a Bible that no longer speaks with cogency or clarity.<sup>14</sup>

Typology, by contrast, though akin to allegorizing in that “they are both figurative methods” deals not with words but actual people, places and historical events.<sup>15</sup> It is “to be understood as a form of historical interpretation, based on the Bible itself.”<sup>16</sup> It takes seriously the truth that “God revealed himself not only in words, but also in facts . . . The words explain the facts and the facts give concrete embodiment to the words.”<sup>17</sup>

In typology “the interpreter finds a correspondence in one or more respects between a person, event, or thing in the Old Testament and a person, event, or thing closer to or contemporaneous with a New Testament writer. It is this correspondence that determines the meaning in the Old Testament narrative that is stressed by a later speaker or writer.” The correspondence exists, we are to understand, because God is in control of history. As such, it is he who determined that the events, places or people who will

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<sup>14</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, MI: 1963) 230-2. Mickelsen does cite a positive incident of allegorization by the apostle Paul in his Hagar/Sarah comparison in Galatians 4:21-31. Paul’s “explicit indication that he was allegorizing” shows this to be intentional on his part. Nevertheless, the “Old Testament narrative itself, which provides the illustration, was in no way talking about an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem.” 231

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 236

<sup>16</sup> Baker, 181

<sup>17</sup> L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Baker Book House (Grand Rapids: 1952) 142

afterward be considered would “embody characteristics which later he will cause to reappear.” This control by God of history is “axiomatic with the New Testament writers.”<sup>18</sup>

To reiterate, then, a biblical type is not a linguistic device, as is metaphor or allegory, but something that is a fact of history (person, place, event or thing) that has a corresponding, or analogous, reality in subsequent history. This later corresponding or analogous reality is called the antitype.

When it comes to the interpreting of biblical types, because they are facts and not propositional statements, which by definition are more explicit as to intention of meaning, they are fodder for speculative analysis. Types have the potential of devolving into the allegorizing previously spoken of unless there are guidelines established which govern the interpreter. In the late nineteenth century, even while the leaven of higher criticism was affecting biblical scholarship, Patrick Fairbairn sought to establish typology as a scientific method of interpretation. He felt that if “the typology of Scripture cannot be rescued from the domain of allegorizings, it will be impossible to secure for it a solid and permanent footing.”<sup>19</sup> David L. Baker is not willing to go so far as to call typology a system but he does affirm the place of typology in understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments:

“Typology is not a system for interpreting the Old Testament, but a way of thinking. Its concern is with the understanding of the New Testament, both with respect to individual passages and to theological ideas. It is an aspect of the New Testament’s own awareness of being part of the history of salvation: the New Testament is both typological fulfillment of the Old Testament salvation history and a typological prophecy of the consummation to come . . . In the New

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<sup>18</sup> Mickelsen, 237

<sup>19</sup> Stek, 134 n.4

Testament . . . the Old Testament is viewed as a unity which is valid in its own right, and typology is used in a historical rather than a mystical sense” (Baker, 183)

Given the tendency toward liberality in the interpretation of types, it will do to briefly consider the nature of the type/antitype correspondence so that we might more properly understand their role in salvation-history and more effectively appropriate their usefulness in our contemporary proclamation of the Gospel.

First of all, “typological thinking is part of all human thought, arising out of our attempt to understand the world on the basis of concrete analogies . . . it follows that there is nothing surprising about the application of this method to the biblical world.”<sup>20</sup> Baker quotes Archbishop Trench who observes:

The parable or other analogy to spiritual truth appropriated from the world of nature or man, is not merely illustration, but also in some sort proof. It is not merely that these analogies assist to make the truth intelligible . . . Their power lies deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and the spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations . . . They belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity (Baker, 187).

Baker goes on to state that “the biblical writers and many of their interpreters throughout the centuries . . . all base their use of typology on the conviction that there is a ‘secret affinity’ between the natural and spiritual orders, as well as between different events in the same order.”<sup>21</sup> Given this conviction it would not be unexpected for biblical writers to see correspondence between things on earth and things in heaven (the tabernacle a shadow of heavenly realities, Hebrews 8:5), Christ’s actions and ours

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<sup>20</sup> Baker, 187

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 187-8

“receive one another, just as Christ also received us,” Romans 15:7), Israel’s history and that of the church (1 Corinthians 10:1-6) and perhaps most significantly in our discussion of salvation-history, the actions of the first Adam affecting his posterity and the actions of the ‘Second Adam’ affecting his (Romans 5:12-18).

The conviction of innate correspondence between such elements, coupled with the belief that God is sovereign over all of history and so can prepare the type for the later revelation of the antitype, and the “basic assumption that the history of God’s people and of his dealings with them is a single continuous process in which uniform patterns may be discerned,” leads to the assessment that for biblical writers “typology is the dominant and characteristic method of interpretation for the New Testament use of the Old Testament.”<sup>22</sup>

To keep us from an improper handling of the biblical types, Louis Berkhof offers the following guidelines. First of all, for a type to be a type there must be a corresponding antitype and the connection must be a “notable point of resemblance” between the two. Secondly, the type must be designed “by divine appointment.” That is, the connection cannot be accidental or coincidental. It must be supported in Scripture as having been designed by God to serve this function. Thirdly, a type always “prefigures something in the future.” This distinguishes, he asserts, the type from the symbol. A symbol, though akin to a type in that they are both “indicative of something else,” may “refer to something either past, present or future,” but a type “always prefigures a future reality.” He further explains the distinction between symbols and types by quoting A. Davidson: “A symbol is a fact which teaches a moral truth. A type is a fact which teaches a moral

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<sup>22</sup> Baker, 182-3

truth and predicts some actual realization of that truth.” But, Berkhof says, “It is well to bear in mind that the Old Testament types were at the same time symbols that conveyed spiritual truths to contemporaries” and “the truth represented by these symbols for contemporaries was the same as that which they prefigured as types, though in its future realization that truth was raised to a higher level.”

Berkhof then suggests that the proper way of understanding a type is to first determine what its meaning was for the contemporary in order to properly understand its “higher” meaning revealed in the New Testament. The essential meaning must be the same even though in the New Testament the meaning of the revelation becomes “realized on a more higher plane.” If we reverse the order, that is to start with the New Testament and then look back into the Old, we are in danger of “all kinds of arbitrary and fanciful interpretations.”

However, the immediate meaning and import having been established, the interpreter can then turn to the New Testament for a “real insight” into the truth typified. This movement of realization from the lower plane to the higher is fundamental to an understanding of the use of types in the Bible. “It is patent that the types present the truth in a veiled form, while the New Testament realities dispel the shadows and make the truth stand forth with undimmed luster.” As an example, he cites the Epistle to the Hebrews as an instance of when greater light is shed on “the truths embodied in the tabernacle and its furniture.”

Of two final principles he mentions, the first is “that types, which are not of a complex nature, have but one radical meaning.” By this he means that the interpreter is not free to “multiply the significations” of the type. If it is a type, then by definition,

Scripture establishes what the type typifies. The last principle he offers is that the interpreter is to have “due regard to the essential difference between type and antitype.” The essential difference, alluded to previously, is that the one “represents truth on a lower, the other, the same truth on a higher stage.” He continues, “To pass from the type to the antitype is to ascend from that in which the carnal preponderates to that which is purely spiritual, from the external to the internal, from the present to the future, from the earthly to the heavenly.”<sup>23</sup>

Given this portrayal, the type being of an obviously lower nature in terms of its revelatory significance, it might be tempting to some to assert that we no longer need the Old Testament. After all, only in the New Testament is the truth fully realized. Since the Old Testament is a veiled revelation and only in the New Testament can we understand the intent of God’s revelation, the inherently inferior revelation can be left behind, or, at the least, not given serious consideration.

To counter this, as we must in order to avoid “all kinds of arbitrary and fanciful interpretations,” it may be asserted that the type works the other way as well. That is, an interpretation of doctrine based upon what is revealed in the New Testament which in conflict with the Old would seem to demand a reexamination. We have seen that our understanding of types includes the idea that God is consistent and we can expect to see in his previous dealings a pattern that will be reflected in his later dealings. That is to say, looking in reverse order, there is enough correspondence between historical realities that we can see in the antitype the type.

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<sup>23</sup> Berkhof, 144-7

In particular, the authority of the Old Testament rests in the fact that it is the source of the promises and types which are fulfilled in Christ. We cannot, therefore, rightly understand who he is apart from the Old Testament. To divorce the New from the Old would be akin to a person suffering from post-traumatic amnesia; the past forgotten they do not know who they are or where they are. To truly understand an individual a right logic dictates that we know the forces and circumstances that shaped that individual. Additionally, as was noted previously, Christ's self-awareness includes his quoting of the Old Testament to demonstrate that he is who he says he is and the apostle Paul goes into synagogues and reasons from the Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the awaited Messiah. The Old Testament was called upon as the divinely inspired authority to determine the proclamation of the New so to assert that the two are unrelated in character or substance is misguided.

Having established the presence and nature of typology in biblical revelation we may turn ourselves to the particular doctrine found in the Savoy article, namely, that through the means outlined the benefits of the mediatory work of Christ were communicated to the elect prior to its actual accomplishment. Before we do, however, we must keep in mind the doctrine consistently taught in the New Testament, that a soul is saved by faith

In the other means listed in the article, promises and sacrifices, it is much easier for a reader to see how these means might readily communicate the mediatory work of the Messiah. God's gracious promise in the wake of the very first human failure that one born of a the seed of the woman would come who would have the power to overcome the results of man's rebellion, was a direct word given by God of his purposed intervention in

the affairs of men. It is this fundamental promise which is reiterated and sustained throughout the history of God's dealings with his rebellious creatures.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the promise of a Suffering Servant, one who would bear the wrath of God in an act of self-sacrifice that would result in our peace, could be readily understood as an explicit promise of salvation.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, we can understand how the sacrifices ordered under the Mosaic law could serve to communicate the substitutionary atonement that would be later realized in its fullness with the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. In the sacrifices, the mercy and grace of God was evident and the one who was honest had to realize that the law was a "shadow of the good things to come" for the sacrifices "which they offer continually year by year" could never "make those who approach perfect."<sup>26</sup>

But as was indicated previously, the type is less explicit than the spoken word of promise or the dramatic blood letting of the sacrifice. Furthermore, though the type has a "secret affinity" with that which it typifies as well as symbolic significance for its contemporary, by definition it could not have been recognized as a type by its contemporary. Not unlike prophecy, the type looks to the future and the future is yet to be. But even the prophetic word has an explicit indication of what will come to pass. The existence of the phenomenon as a type is something known only by the God of eternity. The creature of time does not understand it as a type until after it has been elevated to the higher plane with the appearance of the antitype.

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<sup>24</sup> Genesis 3:14-15

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 52:13-53:12

<sup>26</sup> John 1:21; Hebrews 10:1

So in what way could the type have communicated the benefits of Christ's mediatory work to the pre-incarnation elect? Perhaps it was in some unspoken, even visceral manner, though it is not tidy to say so. Conceivably the force and significance of the historical phenomenon created a yearning for an even greater reality than what the immediate reality presented. For, as we have said, the type and antitype are in substance the same. The soul then would receive through the type the benefits of the antitype, despite the lack of understanding on the part of the contemporary that when they partook of the type they also partook of the antitype. If we were to consider the Passover as a type to the antitype of the Lord's Table we can understand how this might be.

In the Passover we have a profoundly significant event for the people contemporaneous with its institution. Fraught with symbolism, the meal offered far more food for the soul than it did for the body. The circumstances of that night, with the shrieks of terror and cries of mourning that must have accompanied the passing of the angel of death, provided the backdrop for the awe-inspiring protection and deliverance of the people of God. This meal, consisting mainly of the lamb that had been slain in order that its blood might be placed between them and death, was like no other and was to be marked out as such for all subsequent generations of God's children.

Yet it is not hard to imagine the Israelite who yearned for a meal which would speak not only of a past deliverance from death but a permanent one. They may have been delivered from the bondage of Egypt and protected on that night from the wrath of God, but what awaited them in the future? Could they be confident that when their days were over that there would be a final deliverance from death? The God they served was eternal and he was merciful to save and powerful to deliver. It is possible, therefore, to

conceive that they could eat the sacred meal and believe that in it was realized not just God's deliverance in the past but also his deliverance in the future. God would supply the necessary blood of the lamb for their salvation both now and forever.

Of course, in the Lord's Table, what was veiled in the type is fully disclosed in the antitype. The type is indeed brought to a "higher plane." The correspondences between the two are numerous and marvelous and clearly qualify as typology. But there is a way in which a look at the type may prove enlightening in our understanding of the antitype. The type, by definition, communicates truth without words. In the phenomenon is the power to "speak." This leads to the idea that with the type God intends for truth to be as much experienced as it is explained. The events surrounding the institution of the Passover are cinematic in scope and communicate volumes about the human condition. The ease with which we enter into the moment with the Israelites is possibly meant to be inform our to experience at the Lord's Table. Instead of trying to understand the antitypical meal only by means of propositional statements, perhaps God would also have us experience the meal on some unspoken, visceral level. In this light, we are to be mindful that the celebration of the Lord's Table is an action, or event, in which we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). In this regard the bread and the cup are, to use Augustine's memorable description, "visible words."<sup>27</sup>

How did the pre-incarnation elect receive of the benefits of the yet unaccomplished mediatory work of Christ? By faith. The benefits, whether communicated by promise, sacrifice or type, were received in faith by those who "having

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<sup>27</sup> See Keith A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, P&R Publishing (Phillipsburg, NJ: 2002)

seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them.”<sup>28</sup> A lack of information or clarity as to all the particulars of something has never stood in the way of faith. In truth, it is the fact that something is not present that urges the soul to reach out in faith and realize what is yet to be. Indeed, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>29</sup>

Extraordinary is considered the man who envisions something long before it comes to pass. Leonardo di Vinci is hailed as a genius for anticipating, if only in a rudimentary fashion, both the helicopter and the submarine. But consider the Old Testament saints who had only promises, sacrifices and types upon which to ruminate. Hebrews 11 is full of the names of such who saw in these things reason to believe in what these things anticipated. The patriarch Abraham was he who by faith “dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And Moses was one who when “he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” These, and others like them, “all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

I would like to close with a few reflections upon the preacher’s use of typology to communicate God’s truth.

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<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 11:13

<sup>29</sup> Hebrews 11:1

The usefulness of types for the contemporary preacher in communicating the Gospel begins with the preacher being persuaded of the notion that truth can be communicated apart from words. This reality is upheld in Scripture. Whether it is the declaration that the heavens declare the glory of God or Paul's assertion that the things which are created reveal the nature of the Creator and do so to such an extent that even his eternal Godhead is revealed, Scripture teaches that propositional statements are not the only way to make the truth of the Gospel known.<sup>30</sup> Though the types of the Bible are brought to us in the words of Scriptures their power lies in their being a non-verbal form of communication. It would seem, therefore, that part of the preacher's task is to not merely point out the type and its antitype but to try to capture the effect, even the experience, of the things utilized.

Additionally, there is the need to acknowledge that much of Scriptural truth exists in the form of a story. This has always been a remarkable phenomenon to this observer. The fact that some of the greatest gems of spiritual truth to be found in the Bible must be mined from the *narrative* of the Gospel of John, speaks not only of the power of metaphor and allegory, but of typology. I have found, at least for the layman, that there is a basic mistrust, perhaps due to a lack of familiarity, of treating the language of Scripture as though it is anything but "literal." To suggest that the Bible, at times, contains forms

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<sup>30</sup> Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21. Both of these passages suggest that the message communicated is unavoidable and sufficient to hold the creature accountable for offering reverence to the one who stands as the first cause of all that is.

less unequivocal than propositional statements is to suggest that it is therefore at times “untrue.”<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, as stated previously, typology is not so much a system as a “way of thinking.” Accepting this allows the preacher to look at all of the biblical stories for patterns in God’s dealings with his people and make application accordingly. The preacher should recognize that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit these particular stories were purposefully chosen because they were ‘typical’ of the kinds of things that happened and sufficient for communicating the truth that desired to be communicated.<sup>32</sup> Even those stories that are under debate as to their historicity can serve as powerful ‘examples’ or ‘patterns.’ Whether or not Job or Jonah were actual people does not preclude their experiences to be used typically by the preacher for “there remains a fundamental correspondence between the lives of Jonah and Job as portrayed in the biblical story and those of Christians.”<sup>33</sup>

Typology, though subject to abuse, should prove a powerful means of communicating the mediatory work of Christ even for our contemporary listeners.

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<sup>31</sup> A representative incident is the insistence on the part of a Bible study participant in the light of the Scriptural statement, “For the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD’S, And He has set the world upon them,” that somewhere, somehow, despite the photographic evidence to the contrary, there are real, literal pillars holding up the earth.

<sup>32</sup> John 20:30-31: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

<sup>33</sup> Baker, 195 n12