

The Legitimacy of Typological Interpretation of the Scriptures

Introduction

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From the very inception of the history of the Christian church up until the Enlightenment, the manner of handling Scripture treated in this booklet was never called into question. What the Reformation opposed was allegory — a way of handling Scripture in which notions alien to the Biblical text were thrust upon it. Notwithstanding the Reformers' rejection of allegory, the profound unity between the Old and New Testaments never stood in doubt as far as they were concerned: the voice of the one God was heard in both Testaments. The Reformation discerned a great many cross-references between the two halves of Scripture.

For all that the Reformation was a movement that emphasised the literal meaning of the text, it was not one that had a banal conception of literal meaning. For instance, the Reformers spoke of the *sensus literalis duplex*, indicating that the literal sense can have a plurality of layers. The threefold acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King that is so essential to Reformed Protestantism would be unthinkable without a typological reading of the Old Testament. The old exegetes recognised that Christ was present in principle in the Old Testament prophets, priests and kings.

On the other hand, whenever the Bible is regarded as a compendium of human writings — even if there is an acknowledgement that these are writings that God takes up into His service — the concept of reading Scripture typologically flies out of the window. Even among those who are committed to treating the Bible as the Word of God, there are those who in practice cannot make head or tail of typology. Among such, the only vestige of typology that remains is that some attention is paid to the concept when New Testament passages that declare a typology are preached upon; when the Old Testament is expounded, they will shrink from identifying any types save those that are explicitly named in the New Testament.

What such preachers are actually admitting by this omission is that they are not properly familiar with the New Testament's treatment of the Old Testament. The assertion made by this category of expositors is that while the New Testament does give a right message in those numerous places where it cites the Old Testament, these truths are based upon claims about the message of the Old Testament that are in some sense mistaken.

The present article is a plea for typology to be accorded a fixed place in our treatment and exposition of Scripture. This does not mean that there is no place for devil's advocates, but the same could be said of all forms of Bible exposition. Having said that, our view of typology must not be determined by

a reactionary spirit towards those that challenge Reformed readings, but should rather be informed by facts and principles that are provided to us in this domain by Scripture itself. It is with that in mind that I carefully distinguish typology from allegory.

What is typology?

Typology is that branch of Bible exposition that regards persons, events, objects and places in the Old Testament as pointers to persons, events and spiritual realities in the New Testament.¹ Most especially, typology concerns the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, Jerusalem and Zion can be mentioned in this regard as expressing the New Testament church and ultimately the New Jerusalem. The pilgrims of the old dispensation making their way towards the sanctuary are representations of those, under both the old and the new dispensation, who proceed on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Conversely, Babylon in Scripture becomes the symbol, or type, of the society that opposes itself against God and His anointed — a society in which the church finds herself having to live but does not feel at home in it. The Sabbath is a type of the rest that remains for the people of God (cf. Heb. 4:9).

Down the ages, typology has been practised as a form of Bible exposition, in the settled conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament really does prepare us for the New. Typological exegesis does not coincide with the quest for the spiritual sense of a text, but it is closely linked with that. Quite apart from all appreciation of its historical reliability, the Bible is more than a historical book. Scripture has a *theological* message and opens to us Who the Triune God is and how He reconciles to Himself and redeems people.

The value of typology

Scripture has been read typologically through long ages. In the New Testament, typology is one of the ways in which both Testaments are bound up with each other. With the Enlightenment, typological exposition of Scripture came to be discredited in large swathes of the Christian church, and very much so in exegesis as practised at universities. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who has been described as the father of modern theology as well as of modern hermeneutics, regarded typology as a shabby attempt to make the Old Testament palatable to Christians. On the contrary, he claimed, the religion of the New Testament was a religion of an essentially different nature than that of the Old Testament. As far as Schleiermacher was concerned, if one interpreted the Old Testament historically rather than typologically, there was little difference between the religion of the Old Testament and heathen religions.² H.F. Kohlbrugge's short book *Wozu das Alte Testament? (What is the purpose of the Old Testament?)* (1846) is a protest against this view. In it, Kohlbrugge stresses that the Old Testament not only *can* and *may* be read christologically but that it *must* be read in that manner.

¹ W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 384.

² C. Houtman, *De Schrift wordt geschreven, Op zoek naar een christelijke hermeneutiek van het Oude Testament* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006), 155.

Schleiermacher's view of the Old Testament went hand in hand with a low regard for the Old Testament. It was possible in his day, and remains possible today, to have a higher regard than he did for the Old Testament. In this positive appreciation, the Old Testament will be read in its own right and sometimes will be seen to contrast with the New. Where typology is eschewed altogether as an exegetical method, the New Testament can no longer be seen as the fulfilment of the Old Testament. At most, what survives is an historical line connecting the two Testaments, with some scope to point out analogies. And, by the same token, there is then no reason in principle why analogies should not be drawn just as frequently and with just as much justification between the Old Testament and writings other than the New Testament, or between events in the Old Testament and events other than the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

What this means in practice is that rabbinical Judaism's appeal to the Old Testament is seen as being on just as sound a footing as the Christian church's appeal to the same writings: after all, both communities have an historical continuity with the Israel of the Old Testament. At any rate, what we cannot do if we are not prepared to go beyond the bounds of analogy is to view the Lord Jesus Christ as the exclusive and definitive fulfilment of the Old Testament.

No-one would deny that there is a reading of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Nor is there any doubt that in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ and His work are perceived in the personages, institutions and events of the Old Testament. In the view of the large majority of today's Bible scholars, however, that merely has something to say to us about the New Testament, and nothing about the genuine meaning of the Old Testament details that are raised by the New.

Under the influence of postmodernism, we are now seeing more positive attention being paid to typology, as well as to allegory (I shall return anon to the difference between the two). This has everything to do with the fact that in the postmodern approach, no distinction is acknowledged between exposition and application (the classic *explicatio* and *applicatio*); all exposition of a text is categorised as application of it. There is, we are told, no objective explanation of meaning, because there *is* no fixed meaning. Quite clearly, we can never go along with such an approach. In the classic view, typology has something to say about the text itself and is not confined to being an application of it.

Also serving to explain the positive attitude towards typology in recent decades is the great attention that has come to be paid to intertextuality (connections noted between distinct books, including in this case Bible books) and to intratextuality (internal connections within a work, in this case a Bible book). Intertextuality and intratextuality do present us with a good deal of anchoring points for a typological approach.

This can be seen as a step forward, since the text itself is now being allowed to supply the anchoring points, and these substantially (albeit by no means exclusively) arise from commonalities of wording. In the Old Testament itself, the Exodus is the master model for the LORD's salvific acts in history. The prophets describe the return from the Exile as a new exodus. David, the man after God's own heart, is the model of an ideal king. Even within the Old Testament itself, the name of David takes on a symbolic

significance: it becomes a reference to the coming Saviour who is to emerge from his house (cf. Ezek. 34:24, 37:24; Hos. 3:5). So we have examples both of a person and of an event that even in the Old Testament are used typologically.

What the prophets had to say about this new exodus was only ever partially fulfilled in the old dispensation in the return from exile. The return itself was not a complete one, and the circumstances in which the returned exiles dwelt fell far short of what had been prophesied. It was for this reason that there was a hope and a knowledge that these prophecies required a further fulfilment yet: a fulfilment that arrived in principle with Christ's first coming and will receive its definitive form in His final coming. No king in the old dispensation, be he never so godly, ever fully answered to the portrait of the Prince depicted in Psalm 72. It is for this reason that believers continued to look forward to One Who would come in the Name of the LORD.

What is abundantly clear is that the Mosaic laws have a spiritual dimension to them. If we consider the dietary laws and sacrificial code, there is a relationship there between cultic and moral uncleanness: for instance, leprosy serves as an illustration of sin. However, the only law that is explicitly identified in the Old Testament itself as typological is that of the Year of Jubilee. In Is. 61:1ff, this Year becomes a reference to the full redemption that is then yet to come. The reason why we do not see any employment of typological signification in the Old Testament regarding the laws of sacrifice has to do with the fact that the temporary nature of these laws was not foreseen by those under the old dispensation: the closing scene of Ezekiel is a vision of a new temple in which sacrifices are offered. That said, there is a relationship between the laws of sacrifice and the work of the Servant of the LORD as described in Isaiah 53.

Only under the new dispensation does it become evident that with the coming of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, the priesthood now being changed, there is of necessity also a change of the law. The one sacrifice of Calvary renders the service of sacrifices superfluous. In the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of the new covenant, as given to Jeremiah to announce, has a much more glorious fulfilment than had been expected. Not only is the law written in the inward parts, but even the covenant itself obtains an entirely different form as a result of the change of the law. It differs even more from the old covenant than is announced in the prophecies of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 31; Heb. 7-10).

In John's final vision, he is given to behold the New Jerusalem. He learns that it is — and how amazing this is in the light of the old dispensation — a city without a temple. For all that, there is nothing incomplete about the perfection of the New Jerusalem, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22). The New Testament fulfilment exceeds not only the Old Testament foreshadowings of Christ but also transcends on more than one occasion the Old Testament prophecies. One of the reasons for this is that with the coming of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, we have not only a change of priesthood but also a change of the law (Heb. 7:12).

Typology in the New Testament

Events, whether in the Old or the New Testament, are recorded in the Bible for a reason. They are not only part of salvation history but are also described in order that we might draw salutary lessons from them. Paul, for instance, alluding in I Cor. 5:7 to the fact that the Israelites were not permitted any leaven in their houses for seven days, can write: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." The apostle completes the very same verse with the words, "Our passover is sacrificed for us." Here, the Passover lamb is seen as a depiction of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Galatians 4, the same apostle draws spiritual lessons from the different circumstances of Isaac's and Ishmael's birth. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Old Testament service of sacrifice, and in particular the ritual of the Day of Atonement, are related to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The figure of Melchizedek is seen, with Psalm 110 prayed in aid, as a reference to Jesus Christ as High Priest.

Among the personages of the Old Testament, the forerunner of Christ par excellence is David. Not for nothing is 'Son of David' one of the names proper to the Lord Jesus. The writers of the New Testament were not only convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ was spoken of in the prophecies and psalms that mention a coming Prince from the House of David; they also knew that in the person of David — or, more generally, in the personage of the psalmist — the Lord Jesus was Himself present. From Luke 24:44-46, we know that the Lord Jesus demonstrated to His disciples from the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms that the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead the third day.

In the psalmist's groans, it is the Messiah Whose complaints we are hearing. Hence in His words in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38), the Lord Jesus was alluding to Ps. 42:5,11 — "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" On the cross, after the three hours of darkness, it was the plea of Ps. 22:1 that came to His lips — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*" The last of the seven words from the cross, too, is a word from the Psalms. To the prayer in Ps. 31:5, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit", Jesus — as eternal Son of God — prefaces the address "Father" (Luke 23:46).

In the night in which He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus sang the Hallel (that is, Ps. 113-118) with His disciples. He sang of the bands of death that encompassed Him (e.g. Ps. 116:3), but also of the joy with which He would enter the House of the LORD (e.g. Ps. 118:24). He was the Stone rejected of the builders.

The reason why the Book of Psalms can remain the definitive hymnbook of the church under the new dispensation has largely to do with the fact that the needs and joys of God's people do not substantially differ between the old and the new dispensation. Nevertheless, the church's continued use of the Psalms cannot be viewed in isolation from the fact that they may be read, and hence also sung and prayed, typologically and christologically. It is in the very words of the Psalms that Christ's humiliation and exaltation can be commemorated in song. This realisation is an especially important one in exclusive-psalmody churches.

Not only in the person of the psalmist, but also in the Israel of the old dispensation — and very much so in the remnant of Israel according to grace — do we behold the presence of Christ. Hence Matthew can unreservedly cite Hos. 11:1, “I called my son out of Egypt”, as referring to the Lord Jesus as the promised Christ (cf. Matt. 2:15). Here, too, the New Testament draws extensions of lines already present in the Old Testament. In the second half of the Book of Isaiah, Israel is called the Servant of the LORD. However, in a number of these passages, the Servant is not only distinguished from Israel writ large but is even distinguished from the faithful remnant within the nation of Israel. In Dan. 7:13, “*one like the Son of man*” stands for the oppressed people of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ was truly present in the Old Testament prophets, priests and kings. This is most definitely true of their actual offices. In physical Old Testament prophets, priests and kings, we see pointers to Christ when they reflect in their doings something of Him Who is to come. He is a prophet like Moses, but also the Prophet Who is greater than Moses. He is great David’s greater Son, and indeed David’s Lord, as Psalm 110 informs us. He is a prophet greater than Jonah (Matt. 12:41) and as a king is one greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:42).

This last declaration indicates to us that the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Jerusalem may be interpreted typologically. A typological interpretation of this event is supported by Psalm 72 and particularly vv. 10, 11. The Queen of Sheba is a type of the great and mighty of the earth who reach a point of confession that Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and who turn their power and influence to promote the flourishing of His church.

Next, we must extend the line to those for whom the testimony of the Word is the means by which they been enlivened by the overwhelming and unsearchable riches of Christ. Just as the Queen of Sheba heard of the wealth and wisdom of Solomon from her courtiers, so lost sinners hear from the mouth of Christ’s servants of Him in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Moved by the Holy Spirit, they flee to Christ and begin their pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem.

In the Old Testament, David is the definitive type of the coming Messiah. From the time that he is elected to the kingship by the LORD, and above all from the time of the promise given to him and his house by the mouth of Nathan (2 Sam. 7), David and his lineage are inextricably linked with the expectation for the coming Messiah. In all sorts of ways, David is in his life made a precursor of the Lord Jesus Christ. One can mention in this regard his way of humiliation and subsequent exaltation, but also the fact that people resorted to David when hounded by the demand of their debts, or with a bitterly distressed soul.

Another aspect is that in his reign, David dispensed justice to the poor and oppressed. The Lord Jesus Christ is a greater High Priest than Aaron, for He offered the sacrifice of His own life and that one offering never had to be repeated. As High Priest, He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, but He is also greater than Melchizedek, for all things were created by Him, and atonement and redemption were accomplished through Him withal.

The deepest meaning of the Old Testament eludes the reader who omits to read this division of Scripture Christologically and who does not really acknowledge Jesus Christ to be foreshadowed and present in the Old Testament. In this regard, we may quote the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) The imperative 'search' here (ἐραυνᾶτε) can also be translated 'discover'. The scribes searched the Scriptures but did not grasp that they testified of the Lord Jesus Christ. Evidently, they had not discovered the knowledge of the new birth as the key to the true understanding of the Scriptures.

Typology, prophecy and allegory

The forms of exegesis considered thus far were all denoted in antiquity as 'allegory'. To the ancients, allegory was a generally-accepted device for literary texts. What is distinct about the New Testament is that when it treats the Old Testament in this allegorical manner, the spiritual significance of the text is an extension of the literal meaning.

Moreover, the spiritual significance of the quoted passage is located within the wider whole of salvation history unfolded by Scripture. There are other types of allegory besides this, however. Examples of these looser types abound in the Jewish philosopher Philo and the Christian exegete Origen. The latter, for instance, relates the five stones chosen by David to slay Goliath to the five books of Moses, and sees in the commandment to Israel to destroy the original inhabitants of Canaan a reflection of the putting to death of carnal lusts. Going about allegory in this way, however, causes the literal meaning to vanish from view and leaves salvation history out of the event in question.

The use to which allegory is being put here is in fact to eliminate offensive elements of the literal text or to ascribe a faith-reinforcement meaning to all manner of elements of the text despite that meaning being alien to the text (without its necessarily having to be disqualified as an unbiblical message).

The early church had two schools of exegesis: the Alexandrine and Antiochian. The Antiochian school was far more concerned with the literal meaning of the Biblical text than was the Alexandrine school. This does not mean that the Antiochians had any difficulty with the use of the terms 'allegory' or 'allegorical' as such. This school had no objection to the application of allegory as long as it remained clear that Christ was genuinely present in Old Testament persons, events, matters or institutions. The allegorical meaning must, they held, be related to the literal and historical meaning.³ A well-known example of an Antiochian exegete is John Chrysostom. It is no coincidence that Calvin had a very high regard for this church father in matters of exegesis. While Calvin preferred Augustine theologically, he evidently regarded his exegesis as inferior to Chrysostom's.⁴

The Reformation strove to base itself on the literal sense of Scripture; its rejection of allegory has to do with that resolve. Accordingly, the Reformation opposed itself to insights that could not be derived from the Scripture in its literal sense. Typology, however, emphatically *was* accepted. Moreover,

³ F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 180.

⁴ W. Greef, *De ware uitleg: Hervormers en hun verklaring van de Bijbel* (Leiden: Groen, 1995), 197.

within Reformed Protestantism, one exegete will differ from another in the extent to which he sees scope for typological interpretation.

Calvin was clearly much more sober than Kohlbrugge (many would say, too sober). In practice, allegory was not entirely done away with, even if we omit from consideration the grey zone between typology and allegory. Not only can we find plenty of examples of allegory in Luther, but even Calvin exhibits a daring tinge of allegory now and again.

In imitation of the church father Ambrose of Milan, Calvin sees in Esau's garment, in which Jacob approaches his father Isaac to obtain the birthright, a reference to the righteousness of Christ: it is in this garment that we may go to the Father.⁵ Lovely and Biblical as this sentiment may be, it will be clear to us that we cannot trace any lineage from Esau to the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation history. An example of allegory in Luther is found in his handling of Ps. 137:9, "Happy *shall he be*, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

I shall refrain here from considering what this imprecatory prayer should properly mean for the church of the New Testament, noting only that it does remain germane to the people of God in the age of grace.⁶ Suffice it for me to note Luther's interpretation of this text. He writes that we can learn from the text that we are to seize sinful thoughts the moment they are conceived in us and must smash them against Christ, our Rock.⁷

This is a wonderful idea but — however Biblical it might be — we can hardly call it an exposition of the closing verse of the psalm at hand. What we must bear in mind is that this manner of handling Scripture was never used by the Reformers in seeking to prove any doctrine; they availed themselves of it merely for illustrative purposes.

It is from the nineteenth century onwards that a distinction begins to be drawn between typology and allegory. From then on, 'allegory' is used more narrowly than heretofore to mean forms of Scripture exposition in which a text is ascribed a meaning that bears no relation to the literal sense, and 'typology' is concerned with perceptions of the New Testament message in Old Testament persons, institutions and events.

More broadly phrased, typology is the visibility in persons, institutions and events of spiritual realities. In addition, typology is sometimes distinguished from analogy. When this is the case with a writer, 'typology' is the word used when persons, institutions and events quite clearly refer to things above and beyond themselves, especially when viewed in the light of the whole Bible. 'Analogy', as distinct from typology, is the word reached for when this is much less explicitly the case but a linkage can nevertheless be established between, for instance, a person's actions and those of God or of the Lord

⁵J. Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, translated and edited by John Kind (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 487.

⁶H.G.L. Peels, *Wie is als Gij? 'Schaduwzijden' aan de Godsopenbaring in het Oude Testament* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1996), 111; *God en geweld in het Oude Testament* (Apeldoorn: TUA, 2007).

⁷M. Luther, *Psalmen-Auslegung*, 3. Band. *Psalmen 91-150*, ed. Erwin Mülhaupt, (Göttingen: Van den Hoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 607.

Jesus Christ. It will be evident that the boundaries between typology and analogy are often far from sharply defined. My personal preference is to speak of typology in any and all cases where the Lord Jesus Christ is more clearly present in one person, event or institution than in others.

Prophecy, too, is related to typology. An obvious instance is Jacob's deathbed blessing of Judah: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:9, 10).

By extension from Judah, son of Jacob, we see the tribe of Judah being blessed here; behind the tribe, however, towers the frame of the coming Messiah, here called Shiloh; that is, 'He to Whom it is due' (following the Peshitta's rendering). Here once again, we see an example of how a person is interpreted typologically even within the pages of the Old Testament.

It is particularly in the prophecies that have regard to David and his seed that we see the relations between prophecy and typology. The boundary between the two idioms is often permeable here. David is the king after God's own heart. As king, he reigns in God's stead. The ideal Davidic king is given Biblical attributes that are not fully embodied in any one historical ruler. My thoughts run to the description of the king of Psalm 72. We could call this a prophetic psalm, but one could equally well give it the description of typology. The same is true of the Second Psalm. The historical setting is almost certainly the acclamation of a new ruler, yet he is described with accomplishments that outdo those of any historical prince. A commentary term used in this connection is *sensus plenior*, 'the fuller sense'. The *sensus plenior* is a subset of the *sensus literalis duplex*, which as a broader category we have encountered in the foreword. We know more about the referent of any prophecy than the first hearers did, and more than the prophet did who uttered it. This advantage of ours is strikingly evident in the third chapter of the Bible, with the first promise or Protevangelion, aptly called the 'mother of promises' by the Dutch church.

The legitimacy of typology

For centuries, allegory was explicitly distinguished from typology. However, it is indisputable that in the New Testament, the verb ἀλληγορέω (to allegorise, to be allegorical) occurs only once, namely in participial form in Gal. 4:24, and that even there it is deployed in what is emphatically a context of salvation history. If we are to maintain a distinction between typology and allegory, then, we must not be led astray by the etymology of ἀλληγορέω and are to take Gal. 4:24 as a typological rather than an allegorical usage.⁸

The words 'type' and 'antitype', on the other hand, occur in several places in the New Testament. In Rom. 5:14, Adam is called a type (τύπος) of the Christ that should come. Actually, the relation between

⁸ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations*, 1865, reprinted (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 180; F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 217-218.

Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ is on this point antithetical: Adam, as representative of the whole human race, plunged them into death and decay, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ, representing all His people, obtained righteousness for them and brought immortality to light.

After Paul has cited the people of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and receiving of the manna in the wilderness, and the water that flowed from the rock during their journey, he writes (I Cor. 10:6) "Ταῦτα δὲ **τύποι** ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν" — "Now these things were our examples"; literally, our *types*. The word *τύποι* is repeated in v. 11, where it is rendered "ensamples" in the Authorised Version (the Dutch Statenbijbel having *voorbeelden*, 'examples', both times). In I Peter 3:21, the apostle calls baptism the antitype (ἀντίτυπος) of the Flood. In the Epistle to the Colossians, it is said of the Mosaic law that it is a shadow of things to come (σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων, 2:17). The Mosaic law relates to the new dispensation as a shadow does to the object that casts it.

The concept of 'type' takes on a great significance in the Epistle to the Hebrews, even though the word as such occurs but once in the letter. No other New Testament writing applies typology as broadly as this epistle does. In this way, it offers us a key to the right handling of the Old Testament. Besides the one explicit mention of τύπος (AV: "example") (Heb. 8:5), we also find in the letter the Greek nouns ὑποδείγμα ("pattern") (8:5; 9:23), σκιά ("shadow") (8:5; 10:1) and παραβολή ("figure") (9:9). The Dutch Statenbijbel and its recent revision (HSV) use imagery-related nouns to translate the second and fourth of these.

Heb. 8:5 tells us that the earthly Tabernacle was made after the pattern (τύπος) of the heavenly sanctuary. The service of the Sanctuary on earth finds its fulfilment when the Lord Jesus Christ, having finished His work on earth, enters into the heavenly kingdom. This is fleshed out in various aspects of the law of the sanctuary. In the heavenly sanctuary, the Lord Jesus Christ does service as priest after the order of Melchizedek. Between Melchizedek the priest and the Lord Jesus Christ, as the writer to the Hebrews lays out for us, there are several remarkable agreements.

The apostle also perceives a relationship between the generation that could not enter the Promised Land through unbelief and those Christians who through unbelief fail to enter into the rest that remains unto the people of God.

In the multitude's expectancy upon the great Day of Atonement for the moment when the high priest would emerge for the second time from the Holy of Holies to pronounce absolution over the people, believers may see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His second coming will be seen by all who wait for Him and who will then give them an everlasting blessing. It is evident that a great variety of typological links are made in Hebrews from the Old Testament to the New. These links concern the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost, but by way of consequence also imply those who appertain to Him in faith or reject Him in unbelief as the case may be.

It is not only in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Mosaic dispensation is interpreted typologically; we have already seen that Paul also does so. In Col. 2:17, he lays out how the Old Testament dietary laws and its calendar of festivals are a shadow (σκιά) that has been fulfilled in Christ. In the Gospel according

to John, the evangelist makes clear by the manner of his description of the Lord Jesus' deeds that the Old Testament festivals — and, incidentally, also the festival of the Maccabean rededication of the Temple, which is of intertestamental origin — found their fulfilment in Christ and His work. In establishing all of this, the writers of the New Testament were doing no more than according with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself, Who in His earthly walk told His hearers, "But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple" (Mat. 12:6).

I would also remark that it is not only the instances of τύπος and αντίτυπος that permit us to describe typology in the New Testament. We must also bear in mind that the word τύπος has other meanings in the New Testament besides that of typological connections between the Old and New Testaments. By the same token, such connections are often made in the New Testament without explicit mention of the word τύπος (cf. John 20:25; Acts 7:43-45; Rom. 6:17).

A classic defence of the typological reading of the Old Testament is mounted by German New Testament scholar Leonhard Goppelt (1911-1973) in his book *Typos* (1939). Goppelt discerns the presence of the New Testament in Old Testament types, with the antitype being for him the dominant aspect of the type. In a contribution to *New Testament Studies* (2000), Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer has demonstrated that Goppelt's view is not entirely satisfactory.⁹

Goppelt called much attention to the distinction between the type and its fulfilment, yet what characterises a type is surely that it stands for a person or a matter. The type is not in the first instance about the contrast, but rather about the concordance between the type and reality. The type is actually present in the person, event or institution in question. Reviewing all these considerations, we may conclude that Scripture itself provides us with our pretext to read Scripture typologically. Typological reading does take due account of salvation history; typological interpretation is a fitting extension of the literal meaning. These definitions also serve as bounds within which we ought to keep our typological handling of the Bible.

Horizontal vs. vertical typology

Within typology, we may distinguish horizontal from vertical typology. Horizontal typology is concerned with the onward links in the chain of salvation history. As we have seen, these links are present even in the Old Testament, and all the more so between the Old and New Testaments. In fact, often when 'typology' is mentioned, it is in this sense alone that it is meant. Yet it is also possible to use the word to denote another aspect of what we encounter in the Scriptures; that is, vertical typology. By this term, we mean that an event is an earthly depiction of a celestial reality, or that a person is not so much a representation in Scripture of the coming Messiah but of God Himself.

An example is found in Hebrews, where the Tabernacle is declared (Heb. 9:11) to be a picture of the heavenly tabernacle. That said, the Tabernacle of the Old Testament finds its fulfilment in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, so horizontal and vertical typology do bear upon each other. In the Old

⁹ Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer, 'Typologie und Typos: Analyse eines schwierigen Verhältnisses', *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000), 112-131.

Testament, the Temple is — in congruence with the entire Weltanschauung of the Near East — the representation of the heavenly temple, and Jerusalem as the City of God is the depiction of His heavenly abode.

When the Psalms mention the Temple or the Sanctuary, this usually means the earthly sanctuary but sometimes also refers to the heavenly. Whichever of them is being referred to in any particular verse, there is a close connection between the two. When Isaiah receives his commission, he is granted a glimpse from the earthly Temple in Jerusalem of the heavenly throne room (Is. 6:1ff). So, when Jerusalem is used pictorially in the New Testament, both to represent the church of God and the New Jerusalem, this is congruent with the role that Jerusalem serves in the Old Testament. An Old Testament personage who is given the honour of pointing forward to the coming Messiah will also always be someone in whom the image of the God of Israel is discernible. When we find vertical typology in the Old Testament, it is an anchoring point for horizontal typology.

Quite frequently, a particular narrative can be characterised as both horizontal and vertical in its typology. The healings and miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, are horizontal in their declaration of the coming Kingdom of God, in which no-one will ever again say, "I am sick." They also point vertically above themselves: for one thing, healings are depictions of the redemption of souls, although it is not automatic that the latter should follow from the former — a bodily healing can be accomplished without a spiritual healing taking place.

On this score, we need only think of the ten cleansed lepers, only one of whom came back to Jesus to give God the glory (Luke 17:17). On the other hand, that afflicted man received forgiveness before he was healed. A remarkable aspect of Matthew's gospel is that in chs. 8-9, he recounts ten wonders done by Jesus, analogous to the ten plagues that struck Egypt. One of these wonders is the calling of the author, Levi (Matt. 9:9-13). This, then, is another indication that the healings enumerated in Scripture were never performed as an end in themselves. At their core is the proclamation that the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In the fourth gospel most particularly and remarkably, the wonders — or, as they are called there, the signs — have an indicatory function. The multiplication of loaves declares that Christ is the Bread of life; the healing of the man born blind, that Christ gives sight to the inly blind; the raising of Lazarus, that the spiritually dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

In several instances, we cannot strictly separate horizontal from vertical typology. The exemplary acts of David, or of any other prince in David's line, show us that the ruler truly understands that his duty is to hold the realm for God. The prince then becomes a type or depiction of the LORD Himself, but concomitantly also of the coming Messiah, whose person and work will evince none of the spots or blemishes of those who were given to foreshadow something of Him in their person or work.

When is typology proper?

In typological Bible exposition, the key question is *when* it is licit to see a type of Christ and of His work in persons, events, matters or institutions. This is not always a particularly tricky question. I can think of obvious types: not only the Exodus and the Flood, but equally David and the exemplary kings in his line, and the service of the Temple, and the city of Jerusalem.

But how far are we allowed to go with typological interpretations? Which persons, events and institutions are candidates for typological readings? We are not obliged to restrict ourselves to the events, matters, institutions and persons that are explicitly interpreted as types by Scripture itself. The Bible itself furnishes us with examples of how we are to treat it. Such examples extend to us a manner in which we may deal with the Scriptures.

The reader who feels that personal piety or exemplary dealings are a prerequisite for an Old Testament to be considered a type will see fewer types of Christ in that Testament than the reader who maintains the looser definition that types are simply about God's salvific acts being achieved through the personage concerned. The latter kind of reader will even be able to see types of God or of Christ in heathen princes.

To speak concretely, we may think here of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther: he was an instrument in God's hands to effect the salvation of Israel. What is incontrovertible is that Esther acts and deals as representative of, and thus as a type of, the people of Israel, and in a wider sense as representative or type of the people of God in all ages. It must be evident that one is on surer ground for the making of typological inferences if the Old Testament person whom one seeks to regard as a foreshadowing of Christ bears the likeness of Christ. Even though God has been pleased to award a place in His salvation history to the sinful deeds of those who were His, it is objectionable to give the deeds in question a typological interpretation purely for that aspect of them.

In several cases, it is perfectly clear that the text itself is referring above and beyond itself, and when that is so, it is not optional to give it a typological exposition, whichever one in particular is decided to be most fitting. Where that is less strongly the case, then it might be preferable to speak in terms of analogy. Such analogous reading of Scripture is not wrong-headed, although it is true that in it there is more application than exposition at work. I would underscore again here on this point that the dividing-line between typology and analogy (if indeed one wishes to draw one), and thus also the dividing-line between *explicatio* and *applicatio*, is not always straightforwardly established. The manner in which we determine that typology is at play must be determined in each case by the type in question and the context in which it occurs.

Boaz and Ruth

I should like to conclude with two worked examples of typology. In the first of them, we see both horizontal and vertical typology at work, and the text itself gives us indications that we ought to be interpreting it typologically. In the second example, we will likewise see both elements, albeit with

perhaps more horizontal than vertical typology and with admittedly fewer immediate grounds for a typological interpretation; these grounds are seen if we consider the broader Biblical frame of reference.

Our first example is Ruth, the young woman who through her relationship with her in-laws, and particularly her mother-in-law, arrives at her choice: “Thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). We can heartily endorse the preface to the reader of the book of Ruth penned by the Dutch translators of 1637, which describes her as a foremother of Christ according to the flesh, a mirror of God’s incomprehensible grace, and thus a woman who became an example of the calling of the Gentiles to the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Seed of Abraham. Ruth is an Old Testament example of a heathen who is blessed in the Seed of Abraham.

Through God’s providential leading, Ruth comes upon Boaz’ field. When Boaz speaks to her, one of the things he says is, “The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” (Ruth 2:12) In the way in which Boaz addresses Ruth, Boaz reflects the LORD Himself, of Whom the psalmist sings in Ps. 146:7-9 —

*Who righteous judgement executes
for those oppress’d that be,
Who to the hungry giveth food;
God sets the pris’ners free.
The Lord doth give the blind their sight,
the bowèd down doth raise:
The Lord doth dearly love all those
that walk in upright ways.
The stranger’s shield, the widow’s stay,
the orphan’s help, is he:
But yet by him the wicked’s way
turn’d upside down shall be.*

A very remarkable supplication asked by Ruth (3:9) of Boaz is, “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” The same Hebrew word for ‘wing’ (כַּנָּף, *kānāph*) is used here as in Ruth 2:12. There is, then, even a lexical link in the text itself between Boaz and the LORD. More than once in the Psalms, the theme of the song is the wings of the LORD under which the psalmist takes refuge (Ps. 17:8; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7).

In Ruth, it is not only Boaz who stands for something greater than himself but also Obed, the son born of his union with the protagonist. The book of Ruth ends with a genealogy for Boaz, in which the final name (being number ten, a figure to which the Bible ascribes a particular significance) is that of David, who was to become the king to deliver Israel from her foes. Just as Boaz is used of God to take away Naomi’s bitterness, so men rallied to David who had been in the gall of bitterness. A comparable testimony to that which we find on Ruth’s lips in Ruth 1:16 (“Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy

people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God”) is found in II Sam. 15:21, uttered by Ittai, a Philistine: “As the LORD liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”

Within the book of Ruth itself, Boaz is a vertical type of God as well as being a horizontal type of David and by extension of David’s great Son. The ideal portrait of the Prince of the House of David is painted in Psalm 72. David and his successors only very partially fulfilled this outline, and more than once failed all too sorely to do so. I turn again to the lyrics of the Metrical Psalter (Ps. 72:11,12) —

Yea, all the mighty kings on earth
before him down shall fall;
And all the nations of the world
do service to him shall.
For he the needy shall preserve,
when he to him doth call;
The poor also, and him that hath
no help of man at all.

Turning back from Psalm 72 to the book of Ruth, we see in the light of the psalm that Ruth is an early example of heathendom giving God the glory — a glory that in Psalm 72 is ascribed to the messianic Prince. It will be clear that we not only *may* connect this through to Jesus Christ but that we *must* do so.

It remains important, however, that we grasp the difference between types, or foreshadowings, of Christ under the old dispensation and Christ Himself. Even if we postulate with Ostmeyer that Christ Himself is present in the person or thing that typifies Him, this still does not mean that the type can be identified with Christ in all aspects. Ruth sets out for Bethlehem with Naomi with the testimony that Naomi’s people is her people and Naomi’s God her God. She confesses the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as her God. This is the God Who has previously said that in these first fathers, all families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

On the grounds of John 8:56, we may say that Ruth, from the faith here confessed, saw the day of Christ and rejoiced. In Boaz, she had found a man who vertically was a signpost to the God of Israel and horizontally was a precursor of the coming Son of David. We cannot be sure from her eponymous book whether Ruth lived to see the birth of her great-grandson, David. If she did, she must have enjoyed an exceptionally long life. Whether or not she did, it took more than a millennium thereafter for the greater Son of David to be born. What applies to all other Old Testament believers applies to Ruth, too: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb. 11:39,40) That which applies to the church under the new dispensation is: “GOD, who at sundry times and in

divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1,2).

David and Mephibosheth

Our second closing example concerns the manner in which David treats Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan. We find the narrative in II Sam. 9. This history shows us that David truly does act as a viceregent for God and not as the kings of the surrounding nations did, who were in the habit of extirpating to the last man the houses of their predecessors. David was obligated to entreat Mephibosheth kindly, arising from his covenant with Jonathan. We may view the covenant between David and Jonathan as a type of the Covenant of Grace: David stands for his own greater Son, while Mephibosheth's response to him is the model of how a sinner receives and experiences the grace of God. We need only think of the Syro-Phoenician woman or the centurion in this respect.

Clearly, not all aspects of David's conduct towards Mephibosheth are exemplary. This is evident from II Sam. 19, where he deprives Mephibosheth of his estate after Absalom's rebellion because he simply takes Ziba's word for it that Mephibosheth had been complicit. Even once it comes to light that the servant was lying, Mephibosheth has only half his goods restored to him. What is exemplary, however, is Mephibosheth's reaction to the decision: "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." (II Sam. 19:30) Let us once again how the Metrical Psalter phrases this attitude of heart, this time Ps. 73:25,26 —

Whom have I in the heavèns high
but thee, O Lord, alone?
And in the earth whom I desire
besides thee there is none.
My flesh and heart doth faint and fail,
but God doth fail me never;
For of my heart God is the strength
and portìon for ever.

Conclusion

What I have endeavoured to set out above is that persons, events and institutions in Scripture itself refer — sometimes very directly, at other times more indirectly — to the revelation of God in Christ, or point beyond themselves to announce how God is pleased to extend His grace to sinners for Christ's sake. Sound typology honours salvation history and makes it evident that the Bible is more than just an historical document, although even its historical data is outstandingly reliable. The Bible is the guide given to all generations that we might be made wise unto salvation. Accordingly, events, persons and institutions from Bible times have a message for us: a message that not only does justice to what the Bible says about salvation history but also what it says about the personal imparting of salvation. The reader who is brought to see Scripture in this way will learn to understand better and better the profound unity of the Old and New Testaments — a unity centred on Jesus Christ, Prophet, Priest and King. I end with the hymn of John Newton (1725-1807) that enunciates His centrality so powerfully:

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
in a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
and drives away his fear.*

*It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary rest.*

*Dear name! The rock on which I build;
My shield and hiding-place.
My never failing treasury,
filled with boundless stores of grace.*

*By thee my pray'rs acceptance gain,
Although with sin defil'd.
Satan accuses me in vain
And I am own'd a child.*

*Jesus, my Shepard, Husband, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest and King.
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.*

*Weak is the effort of my heart,
and cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art
I'll praise Thee as I ought.*

*Till then I would Thy love proclaim
with every fleeting breath.
And may the music of Thy name
Refresh my soul in death.*

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