

The Acts of God.
A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament

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I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Rev. xxii. 13, RV.

Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Lk. xxiv. 27, RV.

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Introduction

For many years the typological study of the Old Testament was left to a very large extent on one side, and dismissed as allegorical and improper interpretation. But the revival of biblical theology has brought a new interest in it, as the theological literature of the past ten or twenty years evidently shows.¹ There is, however, among many Christian scholars a fear of typology because so frequently it has been contaminated by allegory.² The purpose of this lecture is to try to show that such a theological and eschatological interpretation of history has its roots deep down in the Old Testament itself.

Our study will be divided into three parts. First, we shall try to show the way in which the prophets and the writers of the Old Testament had, as the very basis of their understanding of the work of God in history, the conviction that His acts could be and were repeated, that as He had done, so He could and would do again — and this because He acts in accordance with principles of unchanging righteousness and mercy.

Secondly, we find in the Old Testament the hope and the conviction, not only that the past acts of God will be repeated, but that in the future they will be repeated on a scale greater and more wonderful than that of the past.

¹ Between the time of the delivery of this lecture and its publication an important re-assessment of the validity of typological interpretation has been made by Professor G. W. H. Lampe and Mr. K. J. Woolcombe in *Essays on Typology*, 1957. Only the decision that this monograph should stand substantially as the lecture was delivered prevents reference to a number of the arguments of their work.

² Indeed, among those who give greatest place to the typological study of the Old Testament there is still a danger of the confusion of typology and allegory. See P. K. Jewett, 'Concerning the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture' in the *Westminster Theological Journal* (Philadelphia), Vol. XVII, 1954, pp. 1-20.

Finally we shall consider briefly what is typological, as distinct from allegorical, interpretation, and try to understand how we should read the Old Testament in the light of the fulfilment in Christ of its history, as well as of its direct prophecy.

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I

The Repetition of The Acts of God

One of the deepest convictions that the prophets and historians of Israel had about the God in whom they trusted, and whose word they believed they were inspired to utter, was that He was not like the gods of other nations, whose actions were totally unpredictable, who had to be appeased by sacrifice when things went wrong, and under whose rule the people could never know what would happen next. They believed that He had not left them in ignorance of His nature and purpose. Rather He had revealed Himself to them, and had shown Himself to be a God who acted according to principles, principles that would not change as long as the sun and moon endured. They could assume, therefore, that as He had acted in the past, He could and would act in the future. By such an assumption the whole of the Old Testament is bound together and given unity. Men may be fickle and unfaithful, but He does not change.³ He dwells in the midst of His people and always cares for them.⁴ Each succeeding generation could know that He would be with them as He had been with their fathers.⁵ He keeps His word and His promise to a thousand generations.⁶ For to Him the passing of time is not as it is to men.⁷ It produces no change in Him; He was at the beginning and He will be at the end, and He is in the whole course of history in between.⁸

It is true of course that this understanding of Yahweh as the God of history stands out more clearly from some parts of the Old Testament than from others; for as He revealed Himself in the history of Israel, a growing apprehension of Him as the Lord of history becomes apparent. Yet there is evidence that in very early stages of the national life of Israel there was a looking back to what God had done for them in making them a nation and to the way in which He had covenanted with them that He would be their God and they would be His people. They came to look back in particular to three great 'moments' in their history, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, and the reign of David.

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Their God was the 'God of Abraham',⁹ or the 'God of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob',¹⁰ because of what He had done for the patriarchs,¹¹ and in particular because He had entered into covenant with them.¹² They saw that their existence as a people depended on the promises

³ See Nu. xxiii. 19; 1 Sa. xv. 29; Mal. iii. 6.

⁴ 2 See Nu. xxxv. 34; Dt. xi. 12.

⁵ See Jos. i. 5; 1 Ki. xi. 38; 2 Ki. ii. 14ff.

⁶ See Ex. xx. 6; Dt. vii. 9; Mi. vii. 20.

⁷ See Ps. xc. 1-4; Ps. cii. 12, 26f.

⁸ See Is. xliv. 6.

⁹ See Gn. xxvi. 24, xxviii. 13.

¹⁰ See Ex. iii. 6. 16; 1 Ki. xviii. 36; 1 Ch. xxix. 18; 2 Ch. xxx. 6. Cf. also references to the God of Jacob (Ps. xlvi. 7), or the God of Bethel (Gn. xxxi. 13).

¹¹ See Is. xxix. 22, and li. 2.

¹² Gn. xxxv. 12, 1. 24; Ex. vi. 8, xxxii. 13, xxxiii. 1; Dt. i. 8, vi. 10.

given to Abraham. 'I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse'.¹³ 'Unto thy seed will I give this land'.¹⁴ 'In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'.¹⁵

So also they spoke of their God as the God who brought them up out of the land of Egypt,¹⁶ and again and again they referred back to the Exodus. That was the great act of Yahweh that made of them a free nation. It was with them as a nation that He had entered into covenant. We will return to this later, but again it is the recalling of the mighty act of God in past days and of the covenant made that is significant.

Then thirdly, they looked back on the way that God had set up David on his throne, given him victories by which the monarchy was established,¹⁷ and promised that He would be with his seed after him on the throne.¹⁸

Such was the importance to Israel of their past history, the history of God's dealings with them, at these most fundamental points, and also at many others. Prophets and historians, sages and psalmists, looked in many different ways to what God had done in the past, and insisted that the past could be and was repeated.

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(a) *The repetition of the acts of divine grace*

The greatest act of God's grace and power to which Israel looked back was the Exodus. Because of its special significance, and the way in which Israel experienced a release from bondage which they thought of as a repetition of the Exodus, we must return later to deal with it separately. Independent of this particular significance of the actual Exodus, God's victory given to them over Pharaoh was taken as an assurance that He would lead them to triumph over all their enemies.¹⁹ Then, after the Exodus, there was the provision for Israel during the time spent in the wilderness, where Yahweh supplied all His people's needs and led them in the way that they should go.²⁰ This could be recalled by prophet and psalmist to strengthen the conviction that, as He had provided when there was obviously no other means of help, so they could trust Him to do again in every time of their need.²¹ The conquest of Canaan was a repetition of the way that God gave victory over Sihon and Og,²² and all these victories gave the assurance that He could always lead His people to triumph over their enemies. Like the victories over Midian, and over Jabin and Sisera, or over Oreb and Zeeb,²³ so could be the

¹³ Gn. xii. 2-3.

¹⁴ Ga. xii. 7.

¹⁵ Gn. xxii. 17-18.

¹⁶ See Ex. xxix. 46; Lv. xi. 45, xix. 36, xxii. 33, xxv. 38; Nu. xv. 41; Dn. ix. 15; Am. ii. 10, iii. 1. It was the greatest deception possible to ascribe the Exodus to other gods. See Ex. xxxii. 4; 1 Ki. xii. 28.

¹⁷ See 2 Sa. vii. 1.

¹⁸ See 2 Sa. vii. 13ff.; 1 Ki. xi. 12, 34; 2 Ch. xxi. 7; Is. xxxvii. 35; Je. xxxiii. 17, 20f.

¹⁹ Dt. vii. 18f., xx. 1ff.

²⁰ See Dt. ii. 7, viii. 2ff., 15f., xxix. 3ff., xxxii. 8ff.

²¹ See Ps. lxxviii. 52, cxiv. 8; Is. iv. 6.

²² See Dt. iii. 2f., 21, xxxi. 4.

²³ See Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 11.

future victories of the people over their enemies. The Psalms repeatedly use what God has done in history in giving deliverance and victory to His people, as reasons for the praise of His mercy and might, but also as a basis of faith in His power to deliver from present enemies, and to continue to guard and to guide whatever the problems and difficulties of the future might be.²⁴ A man, of faith might always say that, as God has delivered in the past, so He will for the future.²⁵

(b) *The repetition of the acts of divine judgment*

Yet not only could the deliverances of God be repeated; His judgments might also be repeated. The great judgments that stood at the beginning of biblical history were reminders of the righteousness of God, and warnings that He will judge those who utterly reject His ways. When, because Israel is under judgment, her enemies are said

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to come in like a flood, there is sometimes a reference to the Deluge.²⁶ In the apocalyptic language of Is. xxiv the Deluge clearly is taken as the type of judgment. ‘Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty and maketh it waste...’ (Verse 1). Verse 18 uses the language of Gn. vii. 11 when it says that ‘the windows on high are opened’. Then the following verse speaks of the consequences, which are those of a flood: ‘The earth is utterly broken, the earth is clean dissolved’. Future judgment will be on the pattern of the past. There is also the warning that, as God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, so He would judge His own people if they were persistently unfaithful.²⁷ Similarly this act of judgment is put forward as an example of the way in which He would judge the nations.²⁸ When men are spoken of as like Sodom and Gomorrah, it is implied that they deserve such judgment as befell those cities.²⁹ So also it is said that the judgment of God would be as the plagues of Egypt.³⁰ Or it is said that, as He judged the nations that were in Canaan before Israel because of their gross immorality, so He would judge again; He would even judge His own people as He judged them,³¹ if they persisted in making themselves like the heathen instead of living up to their calling as the elect people of God. Like the judgment at Baal-peor,³² like the destruction of Shiloh,³³ like the judgment of the house of Ahab,³⁴ so would future judgments be. His past judgments were

²⁴ See Ps. lxxviii, lxxx, cxiv, cxxxv, cxxxvi, cxlv, cxlvi.

²⁵ See I Sa. xvii. 35ff.

²⁶ See Is. xxviii. 2. In some cases the reference is to the waters of the Nile (Je. xlvi. 7f. and cf. Am. viii. 8, ix. 5) and in others it is uncertain. In Ps. xviii. 6-16 features of the description of the Deluge and the theophany at the Exodus seem to be combined. In Ps. xxix. 10, however, the Psalmist expresses his confidence that everything in history is under the control of Yahweh, and he makes explicit reference to the Deluge, and this is the only use of the Hebrew word *mabbul* other than in the Genesis narrative.

²⁷ Dt. xxix. 23; Am. iv. 11.

²⁸ Is. xiii. 19; Je. 1. 40.

²⁹ Is. i. 9; Je. xxiii. 14; Ezk. xvi. 46ff.

³⁰ See Dt. vii. 15, xxviii. 27, 60; also Am. iv. 10 where a repetition of such judgment is said to have taken place.

³¹ Lv. xviii. 28; Dt. viii. 19f.; cf. 2 Ki. xxi. 2, 9, 12ff. and 1 Ch. v. 25f. where it is said that the abominations of Israel were like those of the Canaanites before them, and consequently they were in the same way under God’s judgment.

³² Dt. iv. 3f.

³³ Je. vii. 12ff., xxvi. 6, 9.

³⁴ 2 Ki. ix. 9.

recalled to show that He is unchangingly a God of righteousness, and men must know that He will yet do as He has done in the past.³⁵

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God's chastening of His own people has a repetitive nature about it because the faithlessness and rebellion of His people are so tragically recurrent. Israel again and again vainly relied on other nations instead of on the Lord. Repeatedly, therefore, they had to learn the consequences of their infatuation.³⁶ Repeatedly they turned to serve other gods instead of the One who had so often saved them in their national history: and repeatedly they had to learn the futility of such actions.³⁷ Time and again in their history it had been shown that unfaithfulness and rejection of Yahweh led to failure and judgment;³⁸ for Yahweh is unchangingly a holy God who rules Israel and all the nations in righteousness.

Nevertheless the very fact that God judges His people again and again indicates that He is not only a God of judgment but of infinite mercy. 'The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.'³⁹ He seeks constantly to bring His people back to Himself, and to forgive them. It is this interplay of mercy and judgment that shows most clearly the repetitive nature of Israel's history, or rather of the acts of God on their behalf.

This is nowhere in the Old Testament made more clear than in the book of Judges. Here there is a pattern running through the book that is shaped by this understanding of history. Unfaithfulness leads to failure and defeat; repentance leads to renewed victory and in this way history repeats itself: So there is the reiteration of this sequence: rebellion, judgment, repentance, and then victory. through the God-given saviour.⁴⁰ The standard by which Israel was always measured, was the covenant; and to the significance of this for the Old Testament understanding of history we must now turn.

(c) *The significance of the covenant*

All of Israel's relationships with the God whom they worshipped were determined by the covenant that they had with Him. This was in essence the Abrahamic covenant, but no doubt they looked above all

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to the covenant that was made with the nation at the Exodus. There the Lord had promised to Israel that He would be their God and they would be His people. On their side they had promised to obey Him, and remain true to Him.

³⁵ For similar warning of future judgment being like specific judgments of the past, see Is. x. 26, and cf. 1 Sa. vi. 6.

³⁶ See 2 Ki. xvii. 4; 2 Ch. xvi. 7ff.; Is. xxx. 1ff., xxxi. 1ff.; Je. ii. 18. 36; Ho. v. 13, vii. 11.

³⁷ See 1 Ki. xi. 32-33; Am. v. 26f.

³⁸ For the sequence of unfaithfulness and judgment see the formula in 1 Ki. xiv. 21ff., xv. 3ff., 26ff., xvi. 18f., etc.

³⁹ Rom. xi. 29.

⁴⁰ See Jdg. ii. 11-23, iii. 7-11, 12-30, iv — v, vi — vii, viii. 33 — ix, x. 6 —xii. 7, xiii — xvi. Cf. also 1 Sa. vii. 2f., xii; 2 Ki. xiii. 2ff.; 2 Ch. xii, xv, xxxiii. 1-13.

The promises of God in the Old Testament are taken back to Abraham (and to Isaac and Jacob, after him), to Moses at the time of the Exodus, and then, in the days when the kingdom was established, to David. Later generations depended on the word of God's promise given especially at those times. And His word was pledged that He would never fail on His side of the covenant.⁴¹ He would never fail to be Israel's God, and to protect and deliver and bless them as His people, so long as they on their side were faithful. The blessings promised if the covenant is fulfilled are manifold.⁴² Moreover, it is said that, if they have been unfaithful and return in true repentance,⁴³ they will always find His mercy. Israel might always appeal to the covenant, and to the grace of God pledged in it.

On the other hand, if the covenant were not kept, and the people refused to acknowledge and repent of their unfaithfulness, then they had no claim on the grace and the blessing of God.⁴⁴ The covenant judged them and found them wanting.⁴⁵ The Old Testament history of Israel is in fact one long story of the nation's unfaithfulness to the covenant; and at intervals along that history God sent His prophets, 'rising up early and sending them.'⁴⁶ There were judgments, repeated judgments; and the prophets sought to show the people that their failures and defeats and distresses did not happen by chance. If they looked back into their history, they would see the same thing repeatedly happening.

This aspect of the Old Testament understanding of history is shown especially in the records of the monarchy. The reigns of the whole succession of kings of Israel and Judah are described simply on this basis of faithfulness or unfaithfulness to Yahweh. There are several standards of comparison; there is the rule of David,⁴⁷ who kept faith with his God, and there is the standard of Jeroboam or Ahab,⁴⁸ who

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rejected the Lord and despised the covenant. And the issues of the various reigns are shown to be in accord with this faithfulness or unfaithfulness. There is mercy and deliverance and victory and peace; or there is judgment with consequent failure, disorder and defeat. The covenant determined the history repetition of the acts of divine judgment or deliverance came naturally because Yahweh was an unchanging God.

(d) The possibility of prediction

It follows from this that predictions of Israel's prophets were not just mysterious or ambiguous utterances as those of the Delphic or other ancient oracles. The prophets saw clearly that history never followed a merely fortuitous course. When they warned of God's impending judgments, they were not beating the air; their words contained inspired predictions of future events. The prophet was not always given to see the time in which, in the purpose of God, the inevitable judgment or deliverance would come. Prophet and psalmist

⁴¹ Dt. iv. 31, viii. 18, ix. 5; 1 Ki. viii. 23f.; 1 Ch. xvi. 15ff.; 2 Ch. xxi. 7.

⁴² Lv. xxvi. 3-13; Dt. vii. 12-26, xi. 13-15, 22-25, xxviii. 1-14, xxx. 20.

⁴³ Dt. iv. 30f., xxx. 1-10; 1 Ki. viii. 30ff.

⁴⁴ Lv. xxvi. 14-35; Dt. iv. 25-28, xi. 16f., 28, xxviii. 15-68; 1 Ki. ix. 6-9; Je. xi. 1ff.

⁴⁵ Ezk. xvii. 19.

⁴⁶ See Je. vii. 25f., xxv. 3ff., xxvi. 5, xlv. 4; also 1 Sa. viii. 8.

⁴⁷ 2 Ki. xiv. 3, xvi. 2, xviii. 3, xxii. 2, etc.

⁴⁸ 2 Ki. viii. 18, 27, x. 31, xiii. 2, 6, 11, xiv. 24, xv. 9, 18, 24, 28, etc.

alike, as they shared the same understanding of history, were baffled by continuing successes of wicked men and nations.⁴⁹ But basically they understood the factors that determined the history of their own and other nations. They understood the principles of divine action that already had been revealed in history, and which would work themselves out in the future as they had done in the past.⁵⁰ A prophet might sometimes speak in ecstasy, and his own powers of thought and understanding, at least in part, be transcended, in order that he might be an instrument of divine revelation, but far more often prophetic inspiration consisted essentially in God's giving His servants clear understanding of the way in which He had acted in the past in accordance with His own nature and His covenant and therefore of the way in which He would act in the future. None of the great prophets of the Old Testament was simply a medium or an ecstatic. If the prophets saw men stubbornly rebelling against Him, and utterly refusing to repent and turn back to Him, then they knew that judgment must come. If they saw a people willing to return in repentance to obey Him, they could assure them that God would give them victory and prosperity, and encourage them with the promise of the good things that He has prepared for them that love Him. The possibility of such prediction thus depended largely on the warnings

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the promises of the covenant, and on the fact that prophets were convinced that, as God had done in the past, so He would do in the future. And repeatedly the prophetic word was vindicated.

Often, however, the prophet's prediction was not absolute. The judgment he announced was conditional. He still preached and implored and pleaded that men might return to God and so avert the judgment.⁵¹ Only when the prophet was given to see repentance as no longer possible unless God's chastening came, did he preach the inevitability of judgment. It was on the nations attitude to the covenant that the prophet's predictions were based.

(e) The basis of prayer

The covenant was also the basis for prayer. Prayer in the Old Testament derives its meaning from the conviction that Yahweh's covenant with His people will not fail; He has pledged His word and He is an unchanging God. Prayer is not an attempt to persuade or propitiate an unwilling God, a God who is to be prevailed upon by the intensity of man's prayers, or simply by the requisite offerings. Prayer is a turning to God in the confidence that those who come in repentance and faith, will receive the things that they ask. There is confidence because God has given His word, and because of what He has done in fulfilment of His word in the past.

One could pray: 'Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever'.⁵² Or similarly: 'Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old, which thou hast

⁴⁹ Ps. lxxiii. 3ff.; Je. xii. 1ff. ; Hab. i. 8 ; and cf. Jb. xii. 6, xxi. 7ff.

⁵⁰ See J. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, 1952, pp. 54f.

⁵¹ This is well illustrated in Jeremiah. He brought to the people of his day a message of judgment and doom (e.g. iv. 6-7, 11-18, vi. 1-7) ; but he still exhorted them to repent and put away their iniquity, that they might be saved from ruin and desolation (iv. 1-2, 14, vi. 8, vii. 1-7).

⁵² Ex. xxxii. 13 ; cf. 2 Sa. vii. 28f.

redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance'.⁵³ We see repeatedly in the Psalms that the acts of God in the past are the grounds of faith for present and future deliverances.⁵⁴ It is realized, too, that, as in the past, so in the present, an individual or the nation, having sinned against the Lord, can seek His favour only by the way of repentance.⁵⁵

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(f) Law and history

It is significant also that for Israel the Law is not just a statement of abstract principles, a carefully worked out code of behaviour formulated as such. The Law is the expression of the righteousness and mercy of God. It is the statement of the principles of the covenant. The Old Testament setting of the Law is the giving of the covenant at the Exodus.⁵⁶ The Decalogue begins, 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'.⁵⁷ Many of the individual laws have also direct reference to the Exodus. In some cases they referred back to the experiences of Israel in bondage. For example, there was an obligation to care for the stranger and the poor and the widow because in Egypt they themselves knew what it was to be in adversity, and God in His mercy set them free.⁵⁸ Or the laws might imply simply the obligation of obedience because of what Yahweh had done, and because of the covenant at the Exodus. For example, with the laws that commanded the details of the way offerings were to be made went the words: 'Ye shall not profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel; I am the Lord which hallow you, that brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord.'⁵⁹

The Law, therefore, contains not just a code for Israel to keep, but the principles of God's actions in the past, which remain the same for the present and the future. Such principles we have also in the Psalms and in the Wisdom literature. The significant fact is that they are never divorced from history to become mere abstraction. Yahweh is a living God, and the same yesterday, today and for ever. The Law as well as history and prophecy, furnishes examples of the way that history must repeat itself, or rather of the way in which God's judgments and deliverances will be repeated. This is made most clear in the sections of the Holiness Code of Leviticus and in the parts of Deuteronomy where the blessing and the curse are given, the promises of the blessings of obedience, and the warnings of the tragic consequences of disobedience. These bear reference to past history, and show how that past history can be repeated.

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(g) Memorials and feasts

The Law stood constantly before Israel, and the righteous man was to meditate in it day and night.⁶⁰ But there were other reminders of what God had done. There were names such as

⁵³ Ps. lxxiv. 2.

⁵⁴ See esp. Pss. ix, xliv, xlvi, lxxviii, lxxiv, lxxvii, lxxx, lxxxiii.

⁵⁵ See Ps. lxxxii. 8ff.

⁵⁶ See 1 Ki. viii. 9, 21.

⁵⁷ Dt. v. 6; cf. Dt. vi. 20ff., vii. 11ff.

⁵⁸ See Lv. xix. 34, xxv. 38; Dt. x. 19, xxiv. 18, 22.

⁵⁹ Lv. xxii. 32f.; cf. Nu. xv. 41; Dt. v. 15.

⁶⁰ Ps. i. 2; cf. Jos. i. 8.

Bethel, Gilgal, Achor, Ebenezer, Perez-uzzah and a host of others.⁶¹ The associations of these names for the ancient Israelites are not weakened by modern discussions of their etymologies. There were also ‘visual aids’ to the memory of Israel of various acts of God described in their written traditions: the stones at the Jordan, the heaps of stones at Achan’s grave, and at the grave of the king of Ai, the stone where the ark rested when it was returned by the Philistines.⁶² The Old Testament is full of such examples — each a visual reminder of the acts of God which were described in the written traditions of their history.⁶³

Most important of all, there were the feasts. Once again, we are not concerned with their origins, nor with their agricultural aspect. For the Old Testament, what is important is that they had historical associations⁶⁴, and, because of this, they renewed and kept alive constantly the faith of Israel in the God of history, the living and unchanging God.

Such was the Passover, and the feast of unleavened bread. Even if this feast began as an agricultural festival⁶⁵ — the festival that Moses asked Pharaoh for permission for the people to keep by going three days’ journey into the wilderness⁶⁶ — it came to be associated inseparably with the Exodus.⁶⁷ Its significance came to be much more than agricultural; it was national and historical. We know little about the observance of the Passover in the days of the monarchy, and it does not seem always to have been given prominence. But the occasions on which its observance is particularly recorded were times of great national religious revival in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah.⁶⁸ Through the traditions and records of the Exodus the

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faithful Israelite kept the Passover in remembrance of what God had done then in redeeming His people from their bondage. As Pedersen says, ‘The Passover meant a re-living of the old common history.’⁶⁹ It was a ‘feast through which the people re-experienced the event on which their existence as an independent nation was based’.⁷⁰ They ate it in haste, with staff in hand, taking only unleavened bread, all in order to live over again the history of their deliverance. And, in so doing, ‘the people fortified itself by commemorating its history’.⁷¹ Faith was stimulated to believe that, as God had done at the Exodus, so He could continue to deliver His people from their enemies.

Similarly the feast of weeks called to mind the fact that Israel was in bondage in Egypt.⁷² The year of jubilee recalled that the Lord set free His people and did not intend them to be in bondage again.⁷³ The offering of the firstfruits and the consecration of the firstborn⁷⁴ recalled

⁶¹ See Gn. xxviii. 19; Jos. v. 9, vii. 26; 1 Sa. vii. 12; 2 Sa. vi. 8.

⁶² See Jos. iv. 4ff., vii. 25f., viii. 29; 1 Sa. vi. 18.

⁶³ e.g. see Nu. xvi. 40; Jos. x. 27, xxii. 24ff.; 1 Ki. viii. 9; 2 Ch. v. 10; Is. viii. 1ff., xxx. 8.

⁶⁴ See J. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, pp. 40f.

⁶⁵ See J. Pedersen, *Israel*, 1926, III-IV, pp. 384ff., and G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 1925, chs. 21-24.

⁶⁶ Ex. iii. 18, viii. 28, and see J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, III-IV, pp. 398ff.

⁶⁷ Ex. xii. 1 — xiii. 10, xxiii. 15, xxxiv. 18f.

⁶⁸ See especially the record of these in 2 Ch. xxx. 1ff., and xxxv. 1ff. See also Ezr. vi. 19-22 for the celebration of the Passover after the return from the Exile.

⁶⁹ J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, III-IV, p. 85.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁷² Dt. xvi. 12.

⁷³ Lv. xxv. 42, 55.

⁷⁴ Ex. xii. 12f., xiii. 11ff.; Nu. iii. 11-13, viii. 17f.; Dt. xxvi. 1ff.

the Exodus and the possession of the land. The feast of tabernacles recalled the period that Israel spent in the wilderness, and God's provision for them there.⁷⁵ The much later feast of Purim is given its historical associations.⁷⁶ Whatever their original significance, and however much or little of this was retained, it is true to say that the feasts of Israel as a whole were historically orientated; they were orientated to recall the acts of God in history. In each one there was a reliving of the old national history, and consequently the strengthening of faith in the living and unchanging God.

(h) *The interpretation of history*

For Israel, history was never simply the narration of past events. throughout the Old Testament history is written theologically; and behind the actual writing of this history lay the practice, its roots far back in the nation's past, of the rehearsal of the former acts of God.⁷⁷ The people were held responsible for making these acts known

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to each succeeding generation.⁷⁸ In particular they were not to fail to pass on the story of what God had done at the Exodus.⁷⁹ They were to tell the meaning of the memorials that were set up to commemorate what God had done.⁸⁰ The true Israelite should always have been able to say with the psalmist: 'We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the days of old.'⁸¹ As we have noted, many of the psalmists rehearsed the national history⁸² to stimulate faith in and praise of the God who had acted in their nation's past. The Old Testament historians do not simply record facts, nor do they simply relate what the great men of the past did. They are concerned to show what *God* did. Victory. is attributed to the deliverance of God: defeat is to be explained by the unfaithfulness of man and his failure to rely on the strength of his God.

The people are urged to know and to remember history,⁸³ because history is instruction in the ways of God.⁸⁴ The history books of the Old Testament are 'the former prophets'. Whether we think of the writers of these books, or those whom we more naturally call prophets, we see that the task of the prophets was not only to denounce the sins of their own day, and to speak of what the future held in the judgment and the mercy of God, but also, and as a basis for what they said about the present and the future, to show God's judgment and mercy in the past. They were interpreters of history, and they made the past speak to the contemporary situation.

⁷⁵ See Lv. xxiii. 43 ; Dt. xvi. 13-17; Ne. viii. 13ff.

⁷⁶ Est. ix. 26ff.

⁷⁷ See Nu. xxxiii; Dt. i. 19ff., xxix. 2ff., xxxii. 7ff., xxxiii; Jos. xxiii-xxiv; Jdg. v. 4ff.; 1 Sa. xii; 2 Sa. xxii; I Ch. xvi. 8, 12, 15ff.; 2 Ch. xx. 6ff.; Ne. ix. 6ff.; Mi. vi. 3ff.; Hab. iii. In the Song of Deborah we have reference to a custom that may well have gone back a very long way: '...in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord...' (Jdg. v. 11).

⁷⁸ Dt. iv. 9f., xi. 19.

⁷⁹ Ex. xiii. 8, 14f.; Dt. vi. 20ff.

⁸⁰ Jos. iv. 6f., 21f.

⁸¹ Ps. xlv. 1.

⁸² See Pss. xlv; xxxiv ; lxxvii ; lxxviii ; lxxx, etc.

⁸³ See Dt. v. 15, vii. 18, viii. 2ff., xvi. 3, xxiv. 9, xxv. 17ff., xxix. 2ff., xxxii. 7ff.

⁸⁴ See Ps. lxxviii. 1-11.

God had judged unfaithfulness in the past, He had blessed His people when they turned to Him and relied on Him. The narration of history is prophetic: it is less an account than an address, not an *it* but a *thou*, not a *once upon a time* but a *now*.⁸⁵ Judgment is pronounced on all the past, so that it may become instruction, a very word from God for the present. As God has acted, so He is acting in the contemporary situation in judgement or in mercy and so He will act in all His future dealings with His people.⁸⁶

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The importance of this as a background for typology is obvious. History is recorded because history may be repeated, not of course exactly in detail, but according to the principle of the past acts of God among men. There is one case, however, in which the Old Testament writers saw a very close repetition of the past, and because of the importance of this for the development of typology it needs to be considered more carefully. The bondage of the nation in Egypt, the deliverance of the Exodus, the period in the wilderness, and the re-occupation of the land, were repeated in the exile and the return.

(i) *The second Exodus*

When in the days of the monarchy the prophets saw the moral and spiritual decline of the nation, and with it the increasing threat of aggression from the great powers that surrounded them, they gave warning that the consequences of rebellion against God and failure to depend on His strength would be a new captivity. 'They shall not return to Egypt'⁸⁷ Hosea said, and he implied not simply a new bondage, but that the nation had to begin again to learn to know the Lord; it had to be dispossessed of its land, and go back to the simplicity of living in tents, and in another wilderness experience relearn the lessons of trust and obedience. 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.'⁸⁸ Jeremiah lived through the period when the capture of Jerusalem and Judah by Babylon was imminent, but he saw through from despair to faith and hope, and the hope was in the God of the Exodus. 'The days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, As the Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, As the Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.'⁸⁹ In that second captivity, that second experience of 'Egypt', this hope began to burn in the hearts of the people. Dwelling among the nations, Israel came to know her God in a deeper sense than ever before as the God of all the nations of the

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⁸⁵ See E. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 1947, pp. 148f. Cf. A. Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, 1947, p. 188.

⁸⁶ 'Toute l'oeuvre des Prophètes, qui est la charnière de l'Ancien Testament, repose sur un double mouvement. Elle rappelle les grandes oeuvres de Dieu dans le passé; mais elle ne les rappelle que pour fonder la foi dans ses grandes oeuvres à venir. Elle est à la fois indissolublement mémorial et prophétique.' (J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri*, 1950, p. 4).

⁸⁷ Ho. viii. 13f., cf. vii. 16, ix 3, 6, xi. 1, 5, 11; cf. Dt. xxviii. 68.

⁸⁸ Ho. ii. 14f., cf. xi. 1 and xii. 9.

⁸⁹ Je. xxiii. 7f., and cf. xvi. 14f.

earth, the God who rules and overrules in history, and to whom the nations are as 'a drop of a bucket'. What God has done in the past, He will not merely do again; He will do a new and greater thing. In the former days the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, and 'dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep', He 'made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over'. He would do this again, the prophet said, 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing into Zion.'⁹⁰ The power of Babylon would be overthrown, as the horses and chariots of Egypt.⁹¹ There would be a new Exodus,⁹² though with a difference, 'For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight; for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.'⁹³ They would find in the wilderness the wonderful provision that God had made before, and more than that, the way would be prepared for the people there,⁹⁴ and the glory of the Lord would be revealed, as He led His people by a way that they had not known, giving them springs of water in the desert.⁹⁵ Waters would gush out from the rock again⁹⁶ and He would protect them from hunger and thirst and from the heat of the sun.⁹⁷

In Ezekiel the thought of the repetition of the experience in the wilderness recurs, but in a way more akin to Hosea's prophecies already quoted. The prophet in exile gave as the Lord's word to His people, 'I will bring you out from the peoples... and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God.' (Ezk. xx. 34-36.) Some of those wilderness experiences may be spiritualized as they are realized a second time, but as the dealings of God with His people they are repeated, in principle as they were before.

Thus the prophets spoke of the repetition of the captivity, release, and of the spiritual experiences of the wilderness. Here is that , repetition of history which is the basis of typology; and here too is an indication of that other fundamental of typology, the difference of degree between the former acts of God and the new.

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II

The Greater Glory of The Future Acts of God

The second great fact on which typology is based is that hope of Israel that not only would God act on the principles of His past action, but that He would do so on an unprecedented scale.⁹⁸ The faith of Israel as we see it in the Old Testament is constantly forward-looking.

⁹⁰ Is. li. 10f.; cf. Is. xi. 15.

⁹¹ Is. xliii. 17.

⁹² Is. Iii. 3f.

⁹³ Is. Iii. 12.

⁹⁴ Is. xl. 3.

⁹⁵ Is. xliii. 19f., cf. xli. 18f., and xxxv.

⁹⁶ Is. xlviii. 21

⁹⁷ Is. xlix. 10.

⁹⁸ This is what Bultmann calls the 'eschatologizing' of typology. (R. Bultmann, *Ursprung and Sinn der Typologie als hermeneutischer Methode.*)

There was the promise made to Abraham, the promise that the covenant at the Exodus involved, and the promises made to David. As long as the inheritance that God had for His people was not fully possessed, as long as they suffered defeat or were confined by their enemies and failed to enjoy peace and security and prosperity, they could feel that the promises were not completely fulfilled. Conscious of the failures and defects of the past, the more enlightened in Israel ‘felt that it required a more perfect future to render it altogether worthy of God, and fully adequate to the wants and necessities of His people.’⁹⁹ At least from the time of the earliest of the writing prophets, the people began to look forward to something more than a repetition of God’s acts of grace and judgment. They looked forward to a coming ‘day of the Lord’, when His people would be exalted more gloriously than ever before, and other nations would be judged. We find reference made by Amos to a popular expression of this hope in the eighth century B.C.¹⁰⁰ In this case, as the prophet points out, the hope is perverted, and divorced from the understanding of God’s moral demands on His people; but at least it was the hope of a climax of history, and of God’s revelation of Himself. We find it as an important part of the message of some of the later prophets. It is in Haggai and Zephaniah, and is prominent in Zephaniah, Joel and Malachi.

Yet even though the prophets and people believed that this ‘day of the Lord’ would be unique, they could not help but think of it in terms of the past. As Fairbairn puts it, ‘the expectations cherished of what was to be, took very commonly the form of a new and higher

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exhibition of what had already been.’¹⁰¹ They thought of the future in terms of the greatest leaders that God had previously given them, and the greatest acts of God on the behalf of Israel.

(a) *The Davidic Messiah*

The most important, and most obvious expression of this was the hope of the Davidic Messiah. Without doubt this was associated with the promises made to David, and God’s blessing of David’s reign. Part of the promise was that the line of David would continue;¹⁰² God had entered into covenant with him that there would not fail one to sit on his throne,¹⁰³ though it was said that the abiding line of David depended on the faithfulness of those who followed him.¹⁰⁴ In comparison with David’s few of the kings who followed him could be said to walk in his ways, and thus to enjoy the blessings and triumphs of his reign. Men longed for another David,¹⁰⁵ for the reestablishing of the house of David, for a second David of his line who would be the Saviour of his house and of the nation.¹⁰⁶ And, though there is a

⁹⁹ P. Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, 1953 reprint, Pt. I, p. 74.

¹⁰⁰ See Am. v. 18-20.

¹⁰¹ P. Fairbairn, *op. cit.* Pt. 1, p. 73. He says further: ‘In giving promise of the better things to come, prophecy to a large extent availed itself of the characters and events of history. But it could only do so on the twofold ground, that it perceived in them essentially the same elements of truth and principle which were to appear in the future; and in that failure anticipated a noble exhibit of them that had been given in the past.’

¹⁰² 2 Sa. vii; 1 Ch. xvii.

¹⁰³ 2 Sa. vii. 16; 1 Ki. xi. 12, 34ff.; 2 Ki. xix. 34, xx. 6; 2 Ch. xxi. 7; Ps. lxxxix. 3-4, cxxxii. 11; Je. xxxiii. 17, 20f.

¹⁰⁴ Ps. cxxxii. 12; Je. xxii. 4, 30.

¹⁰⁵ See p. 14 above.

¹⁰⁶ See Je. xxiii. 5ff., xxx. 9, xxxiii. 14ff.; Ezk. xxxiv. 23f., xxxvii. 24f.

diversity in the prophetic understanding of the person and work of the Messiah, this anointed one of the line of David was often spoken of in terms which made him greater than David. For example in Is. ix. 6f. it is said of him, 'The government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore' (RSV). Or we may compare the words of Mi. v. 2-5 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting... And

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he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of the .Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; and now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace...' In Is. xi. 1-9 the reign of the one who is described as 'a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots' is described in such a way as makes clear how exceedingly more glorious his reign is to be than that of the David of their history. In Is. Iv. 3f. the fulfilling of the 'everlasting covenant', the granting of 'the sure mercies of David', is described in terms that make the coming ruler 'a witness to the peoples', 'a leader and commander' not just for Israel but 'to the peoples'. The hope of a personal Messiah is based firmly on the experiences and the traditions of the greatest anointed king that Israel had ever had; like David, he would be, but far greater than David.

(b) *A new Melchizedek, a new Moses, a new Elijah*

There are other places in which figures of the present or the future are referred to in terms of personalities of the past; and even if these were in no sense Messianic in their original context, they became Messianic in interpretation. Whatever the date of Psalm cx, there is here clearly the description of one who can be called a new Melchizedek, one who like the Melchizedek of Genesis xiv would exercise the functions of priest and king at the same time.¹⁰⁷ If the picture this Psalm presents of the rule and victories and judgments of the priest-king is an idealized picture of the reign of a historical king of Israel, at least it could be applied more truly to the coming Messiah. Similarly Deuteronomy xviii. 15-19 speaks of another Moses bringing God's word to his people, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken... And the Lord said unto me... I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' From the following verses it seems clear that simply the typical prophet of Israel is intended. But in later times—as is seen in the New Testament¹⁰⁸—it is evident that the hope that was based on this passage was for a prophet greater than Moses, even the Messiah himself, and it must

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¹⁰⁷ See R. V. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (2nd edition), 1954, p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ See esp. Jn. i. 21 and vi. 14, vii. 40.

be said that the weighty words of verse 19 lend themselves to such an interpretation of the passage: 'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.'¹⁰⁹

In Mal. iv. 5 there is the hope of the coming of Elijah the prophet in the context of the hope of the great and terrible day of the Lord. Chapter iii. 1 is commonly associated with this, 'Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple...'. Whether this was to be thought of as the return of the prophet of the 9th century, or whether of the coming of a new Elijah, there is the sense of the repetition of past history, but in the setting of the glory of the coming 'day of the Lord'.

(c) *The Feast of Tabernacles*

The feasts of Israel were given an eschatological meaning. The Feast of Tabernacles was not only an agricultural festival, a thanksgiving for the land and its harvest: it recalled the dwelling in tabernacles in the wilderness days, and God's provision for the people before they entered their land. The Fourth Gospel probably reflects the ceremonies that later Jewish practice added to the celebration of the feast, as well as the fulfilment of its meaning in Christ.

But there is an eschatological hope connected with the Feast of Tabernacles even in Old Testament days. In Zechariah xiv the thought of the Feast as the harvest is connected with the ingathering of the nations. All the nations and families of the earth are summoned to go up to Jerusalem to keep it. Whether or not it can be said to be evident from this passage, it is clear that before the time of Christ, there was, connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, the hope of the future tabernacling of God in the midst of His people in a more glorious way than ever before. It has been sufficiently well established that the Jewish Lectionary antedates the Christian era,¹¹⁰ and in this Zechariah xiv and

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1 Kings viii, Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, were coupled as readings for the Feast of Tabernacles.¹¹¹ There can be little doubt of the significance of this fact. The presence of the Lord with His people in the wilderness and in the temple was a picture, or a type, of that more glorious tabernacling in their midst in the day that was yet to be, when the ingathering of the nations would be fulfilled.

(d) *The Passover*

We may be certain also that long before New Testament times such a future hope was connected with the observance of the Passover. Again it is difficult to find direct evidence for

¹⁰⁹ 'The terms of the description are such that it may be reasonably understood as including a reference to the ideal prophet, who should be "like" Moses in a pre-eminent degree, in whom the line of individual prophets should culminate, and who should exhibit the characteristics of the prophet in their fullest perfection.' S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 1895, p. 229. Cf. H. L. Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea for the Old Testament*, 1953, p. 18, [Now available on-line at: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_messiah_ellison.html] where also the suggestion is adopted that the Servant of Is. xlix. 1-9 is presented as a new Moses.

¹¹⁰ See H. St. John Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship*, 1923, pp. 43ff.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 64, 76f.

this from the Old Testament itself. From the Gospels, however, we learn that the hope of a new redemption or deliverance glowed in the hearts of devout Israelites before the coming of Christ and the preaching of His salvation,¹¹² and the thought of redemption must have taken their minds back to the Exodus. To the quietists the redemption that was sought was a spiritual deliverance; to the Zealots redemption was an intensely political hope. But for both we can understand that it burned most brightly at Passover time. We have already dwelt on the way in which the Exile was regarded as a new Exodus. We should also notice that the prophets 'spiritualize' some aspects of the Exodus and the wilderness experiences in a way which prepared for the hope of a deliverance of a spiritual nature. Hosea said that the new captivity would be in 'Egypt', but not in the literal 'Egypt'.¹¹³ In Ezekiel especially we see how Egypt is regarded as the place of moral and spiritual temptation and bondage.¹¹⁴ And the new bondage was, in a way that the old bondage in Egypt had not been, a punishment or chastening because of the nation's sin. Hence, as we have seen, the people were to re-learn through their experiences the knowledge and fear of the Lord, even as the nation of old had learnt to depend on Him in the wilderness. The second Exodus was a repetition of the first, but it was in a much fuller sense a spiritual deliverance. This must have affected the keeping of the Passover, so that its place in the religious life of Judaism, especially in post-exilic times, must have been such that, with its observance, there was a hope of eternal deliverance, of deliverance from all the bondage of evil, for

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which those of the Pharisaic tradition in particular hoped. Dalman says of the Passover:

'Every thought of the redemption from Egypt, of which it is a memorial, must have led to a comparison between what had taken place and the present. Everything imperfect in the latter and not quite in tune with that redemption from slavery, must have awakened the hope of new redemption. The reality of God's act at the Exodus, in so far as it was believed and perceived as the foundation of the character of Israel as a People of God, was an assurance of the fact that the second divine act could not but take place, when the success of the former one seemed to have been made void through human sin.'¹¹⁵

There is good ground, therefore, for the belief that, for devout Israelites, the Feasts were not only witnesses to the fact that what God had done in the past He could do again; but that they also made vivid the hope that God would step into their history in a new way; the Messianic age would dawn in which there would be a new deliverance, greater and deeper than anything before. It is this hope that provides the background for the true relationship between type and antitype.

(e) *The New Temple*

We may illustrate this further by considering Israel's institutions and in particular that of the temple. When, in Old Testament days, Israel thought of the presence of God in the midst of His people, they thought of the tent of meeting and of the temple. Before the days of the monarchy the ark and the tent of meeting were the particular symbols of God's presence; the

¹¹² See Lk. ii. 38.

¹¹³ See Ho. vii. 16, ix. 3, xi. 5, 11.

¹¹⁴ See Ezk. xix. 4, xx, xxiii and especially xxix.

¹¹⁵ See G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (English trans.), 1929, p. 124.

loss of the ark was felt to be the loss of the glory of the Lord from amongst His people.¹¹⁶ Then the temple was built, and it was regarded as in a unique sense the place of the Lord's dwelling in Israel. When God's judgment came on the nation, and the temple was destroyed, the prophet Ezekiel saw in his vision the glory of the Lord departing from the city.¹¹⁷ The return from the Exile saw the building of a second temple. To those who knew the old temple, and who saw the construction of a new and less magnificent structure, there could be only disappointment. But the answer of the prophet Haggai to them in their discouragement was that this new temple would be of more glory than that which had been destroyed.¹¹⁸

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In the latter days God would come to His temple. In the coming day of the Lord He would shake all nations, and cause them to bring their riches into the temple. Because of His acts then, which would surpass any of His acts on behalf of His people in the past, it would be a more glorious house than they had before.

In a different way we find in Ezekiel xl - xlviii the vision of a new and finer temple than that which had been destroyed. The temple of the prophet's vision was to be greater in dimensions and grander in structure than the old. But the one fact of transcendent importance was that to this house the glory of the Lord's presence would return¹¹⁹ and consequently the city would be called 'The Lord is there'.¹²⁰ In various parts of the Old Testament, however, we find the expression of the hope that, since the Lord's presence cannot be thought of as limited in any way to the temple, His tabernacling presence would in future be known in a more glorious way than could be realized in the temple. God's dwelling is apart from men, and 'heaven' is the place of His temple¹²¹; and no earthly shrine can adequately express or manifest the presence of God. In 1 Kings viii. 27, in the prayer of dedication of the temple, we have these words, 'But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded.' The prophet Isaiah clearly felt this as, in his vision, he saw that just the 'skirts' or the 'train' of the Lord filled the temple, and as he heard the seraphs cry, 'The fulness of the whole earth is His glory.'¹²² Yet perhaps the greatest expression of this in the Old Testament is in the words of Isaiah lxvi. 1, 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest?' As the sense of God's transcendence grew, so developed the awareness that the tabernacling of the holy and omnipotent God among men was yet to be more wonderful than the temple could express.

From a different direction, some of the Old Testament prophets reached the verge of the hope that the tabernacling presence would not be thought of as in a place or a building, but in the hearts of men. Prophets could look for the day when the Lord would give His Spirit to His people in a new way, indwelling them and so giving new life and inspiration¹²³; they could speak of a new covenant under which

¹¹⁶ 1 Sa. iv. 20ff.

¹¹⁷ See Ezk. ix. 3, x. 4f., 18f., xi. 22f.

¹¹⁸ Hg. ii. 1-9.

¹¹⁹ Ezk. xliii. 1ff.

¹²⁰ Ezk. xlviii. 35.

¹²¹ e.g. see Ps. xi. 4; Is. lvii. 15a.

¹²² Is. vi. 3 (Sir G. A. Smith's translation). See W. J. Phythian Adams, *The People and the Presence*, 1942, p. 51.

¹²³ Joel ii. 28ff., and Ezk. xxxvii. 9ff.

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there would be a new desire to obey the Lord and do His will, because the law would be set in their hearts¹²⁴ or because His sanctuary would be in the midst of them in a new way.¹²⁵ It needed, however, the fulfilment to bring together the understanding that was already there of the indwelling Spirit and of the tabernacling presence of God. In both there was a hope for the future, expressed in terms of what had been realized in the past, but which was to be experienced in a more glorious way.

(f) *The New Covenant*

This last point leads us to the thought of the new covenant. We have seen already that the basis of all the institutions of Israel, and all God's dealings with Israel, was the covenant. There was the old covenant made with the fathers and with Israel in all their generations, and there was nothing imperfect in the divine side of that covenant, no failure at any time in God's promises. Yet Israel had failed constantly. From time to time they were led back to renew the covenant and to make afresh their promises to their God who had pledged Himself to them.¹²⁶ The prophet Jeremiah saw such a renewal of the covenant under Josiah; but he lived to see its failure, for the people could not keep it from their hearts. He was enabled to see that God in His grace would give a new covenant¹²⁷, in which man's part would not be just a law written on tables of stone.' But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it... and their sin will I remember no more.'¹²⁸ Thus the Old Testament's own understanding of the covenant provides the basis of the later New Testament antitype: the new covenant fashioned on and foreshadowed by the old, but far surpassing it.

(g) *A New Creation and a New People*

The point of Jeremiah's words, however, is not just that there will be a new covenant, but new men who will obey God from their hearts. Those of the old Testament prophets and psalmists who were led to

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understand most deeply the nature of man's sin and of man himself, saw that only in new men, in a new creation, could the purpose of God be realized, and His people live in dependence on Him and in the victory and peace and obedience that He had planned for them. And here we are brought again to the repetition of the acts of God. For those who believe their God to be Lord of all, the supreme act of the past is the act of creation itself. He was at the beginning, He is author of all things. The action whereby God would overcome all the limitations and failures and sins of men is thus described in terms of a new creation. The word of the Lord through the prophets is, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the

¹²⁴ Je. xxxi. 31ff.

¹²⁵ Ezk. xxxvii. 20.

¹²⁶ e.g. under Hezekiah (2 Ch. xxix), under Josiah (2 Ki. xxiii), and later under Nehemiah (Ne. ix — x).

¹²⁷ Cf. Is. Ixi. 8 and Ezk. xxxvii. 26.

¹²⁸ Je. xxxi. 33f.

former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind...'¹²⁹ The Messianic age, whether with or without reference to the personal Messiah, can be described as a return to the conditions of Paradise.¹³⁰

We should associate also with this—although the themes are slightly different—the renewing or reviving of God’s people, their re-creation. Where it is said in Ezekiel that ‘this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden’,¹³¹ it is said in the same context, ‘A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.’¹³² The individual is to be made new, and so is the nation. This same prophet looked on the Israel of his day, and saw them, as it were, as dry bones; but he was enabled to see the Spirit of the Lord come and bring new life to the bones. They said, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost, we are clean cut off.’ But the answer was, ‘Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people.... And I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.’¹³³

We can understand some of the Servant passages of Isaiah xl - Iv best as we see there a people redeemed by the new Exodus, made anew the servant of the Lord to carry out His purpose among the Gentiles as they have never carried it out before. The repetition of the old work of redemption and the re-creating of a people come very close together here. The prophet passes from speaking of Israel as a

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nation and speaks of the Servant in terms that could never have been used of Israel in their past history. But the purpose of God for the Servant is based on the purpose of God for His people in the past.¹³⁴ Thus we have the two basic elements of typology that we have noted elsewhere brought before us again. And at the heart of the great statement of the work of the Servant in Isaiah liii is the revelation that his life is to be made an offering for sin; His is a sacrifice with all the meaning of the old ‘guilt offering’; but the victim is now not an animal, but the righteous Servant of the Lord, a greater sacrifice than any that had been known before.

Thus we find in the Old Testament the twofold basis of typology. We find that the belief in the unchanging God who is Lord of history leads to the understanding of the repetition of the acts of God. We find also that the Old Testament itself points forward to divine acts more glorious than any in the past. The Old Testament is an incomplete book, it is revelation developing towards a climax. There is the constant prediction of a ‘day of the Lord’, a consummation, a unique revelation of the power and glory of God in the person of the Messiah or in a Messianic age. Then God will reveal Himself in mercy and in judgment more fully than ever before. This hope is expressed in terms of the past, yet exceeds anything experienced in the past. There is to be a new David, but a greater than David; a new Moses but a greater than Moses; a new Elijah or Melchizedek, but one greater than those who stand

¹²⁹ See Is. lxxv. 17ff.; cf. Is. lxxvi. 22.

¹³⁰ See Is. xi. lff., lxxv. 23ff.; Je. xxxi. 27f.; Ezk. xxxiv. 25ff., xxxvi. 35.

¹³¹ Ezk. xxxvi. 35.

¹³² Ezk. xxxvi. 26.

¹³³ Ezk. xxxvii. 11-14.

¹³⁴ See P. Fairbairn, *op. cit.* Pt. I, p. 74, and also the conclusions of H.H. Rowley on the person of the Servant in *The Servant of the Lord*, 1952, pp. 49ff.

out from the pages of the old records. There is to be a greater and more wonderful tabernacling of God, as His presence comes to dwell in a new temple. There is to be a new creation, a new Israel, redeemed, revived, a people made up of those to whom a new heart and a new spirit are given that they may love and obey their Lord.

Old Testament prophecy, as we have seen, depended for much of its expression on the actualities of Old Testament history, and of its record. Its conviction of an unchanging God was the basis of that confidence that He would act in the future as He had done in the past. Its hope of a Messianic age provided for the relation between type and antitype, the latter greater and more excellent than the former. It needed only the coming of the One in whom all the prophecies of the Old Testament would be fulfilled, in whom all those themes of hope

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in the Old Testament would be gathered up and realized, the Fulfilment and the Fulfiler of all the types that the Old Testament history presented. The unity of the Old Testament depends on the unchanging nature of the God who is there revealed. The unity of Old and New Testaments provides the justification for typology as we understand it, as the theological interpretation of history. The superiority of the New is to provide the antitype, the fulfilment in Christ Himself, of the Old Testament type or foreshadowing.

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III

Typology As The Christological Interpretation Of History

Typological interpretation, strictly speaking, is not concerned with those parts of the Old Testament which have the form of Messianic prediction in the narrower sense. It is the interpretation of history. Predictive prophecy often, indeed, depends on the interpretation of a particular historical situation in the light of the revealed character of God; but the writing of history was itself 'prophecy' in the broader sense of the understanding of God's action in history. Old Testament history, as we have seen, is the record of the acts of God in judgment and mercy; it is history with a purpose and a goal. Manifestly incomplete, it is pointing forwards to a climax of the manifestation of God among men.

It is thus that the New Testament interprets the Old. It interprets not only its prediction but also its history, which is itself revelation because it describes the acts of God, in the light of the revelation of Him who is the Word Incarnate. It is only in Him that the partial revelation that is foreshadowing (and the confessed fact that it is partial), is able to be understood. Speaking of the use that the earliest Christians made of the Old Testament, Professor Tasker says '...it is the events recorded in the historical books, particularly the call of Abraham, the redemption from Egypt, the giving of the law on Sinai, and the triumphant establishment of the worship of the true God in the Holy Land in spite of much backsliding and many an attempt to compromise with paganism, which are represented as foreshadowing the final

salvation wrought in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Apart from these concluding actions the previous incidents remain unexplained and have no abiding significance...¹³⁵

We may look at this in two different ways. First, we may look at it from the point of view that history is itself prophetic. It is prophetic in the sense that all history, if understood *sub specie aeternitatis*, teaches us the principles on which God rules and will rule as Lord of history. Moreover the Old Testament record of history is prophetic in the particular sense that it describes a revelation and divine action

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which are shown to be incomplete. A divine purpose of judgment and mercy is revealed in the history; but it is yet to be fulfilled or fully wrought out in history. Alternatively, we may look at it from the point of view of God preparing the world, granting partial revelation as preparatory to the incarnation of the Word Himself, instructing a people in His ways of dealing with men, working towards the fulness of time when He would send forth His Son to be the Saviour of the world and the One by whom He will judge all men.

We may interpret the Old Testament typologically from either point of view, and, of course, fundamentally the two are one. Revelation is wrought out in history, and to the eyes of faith history is revelation.

(a) Typology and allegory

Typological interpretation of the Old Testament, therefore, is not to be dismissed as allegory. It is essentially the theological interpretation of the Old Testament history. It is the interpretation of the divine action in history, in the same way as the Old Testament itself sought to show that divine action, but in the fuller light of Him in whom alone history has its full meaning, Jesus Christ.¹³⁶ All the action of God in the Old Testament history foreshadows His unique action and revelation in Christ. We may say that a type is an event, a series of circumstances, or an aspect of the life of an individual or of the nation, which finds a parallel and a deeper realization in the incarnate life of our Lord, in His provision for the needs of men, or in His judgments and future reign.¹³⁷ A type thus presents a pattern of the dealings of God with men that is followed in the antitype, when, in the coming of Jesus Christ and the setting up of His kingdom, those dealings of God are repeated, though with a fulness and finality that they did not exhibit before. Typology depends on the fact that 'The same God offers in the two Testaments the same salvation. Both Testaments record certain divine acts in history, different indeed in execution and import, but one in their basic aim, viz., to create a people of whom God can say, "I am their God, they are my people" ... The

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¹³⁵ R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Cf. J. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, p. 15.

¹³⁶ A. Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, 1947, p. 189: 'Typological interpretation of the biblical history is based upon the actual course of that history, as recorded and interpreted by the prophetic and apostolic witness; it grows, as it were, out of the history itself and is not imposed upon history by the reading into it of fanciful meanings of our own.'

¹³⁷ Cf. M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul, Epitre aux Galates*, 1942, p. 123.

salvation that is offered in both Testaments is the same - life with God through the forgiveness of sins.¹³⁸ There is unity in principle and in purpose between the Old Testament type and the New Testament antitype. The difference lies in the incomplete and preparatory nature of the type compared with the completeness and finality of the antitype.

In our usual ways of speaking, allegory involves something different from this, and it is best to define it in such a way as to distinguish it from typology as a method of interpretation. We may call that method of interpretation allegorical which is concerned, not with the interpretation of history, but simply of words that are believed to be inspired symbols. It may completely ignore the context and the principles of God's dealings with man that are revealed in a passage. Allegory is an exegetical¹³⁹ or philological method rather than an interpretation of events and of principles of divine action.¹⁴⁰ Allegory is based on the conviction of the inspiration of the words of the narrative or passage of Scripture in question; but its danger is that it does not proceed from the understanding of the context, and it may easily be guided by the interpreter's own whims and fancies. The danger of tracing a symbol through Scripture is seen most clearly in the early Fathers to whom 'water', wherever it occurred in the Old Testament, might be taken to speak of baptism,¹⁴¹ and references to 'wood' or 'a tree' to the cross.¹⁴² The result of such interpretation may be the complete negation of the true theological understanding of a passage in its context. This is not the case with typological interpretation as we have defined it. Typology always depends on the context, and on the natural and historical sense of the context.

We say, therefore, that typology is not to be dismissed as allegory, like the foregoing. When St. Paul used the word ἀλληγορέω (in the one place in which it is used in the New Testament), he meant something different from what we commonly mean by allegorizing. He said of

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Abraham's two sons of the bondwoman and the free, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγοροῦμενα,¹⁴³ and he meant that he was speaking, or interpreting, with a meaning other than the literal, but neither to deny the reality of the literal (as was often the case with Greek allegories), nor to reject the principles of the context. St. Paul is taking the principles behind the differences between the children of Hagar and Sarah and applying them to another (ἄλλος) setting, that of the children of promise under the gospel and those who do not possess the promise but remain in bondage. This can rightly be classed as typological interpretation, because the theological principles involved in the old narratives are simply taken up and shown to find a new, and a deeper, meaning in Christ.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ J. Marsh in *Biblical Authority for To-day*, 1951, pp. 186f.

¹³⁹ Exegetical, in the sense of explanatory of words rather than interpretative of context; but in a stricter sense such allegory has been called *eisegesis*. See H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, 1954, p. 186.

¹⁴⁰ See J. Massie on 'Allegory' in *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I, p. 64. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1892, p. 200. G. Florovsky in *Biblical Authority for Today*, pp. 175f. A. Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 190.

¹⁴¹ See Tertullian *Bapt.* 8f.; Cyprian *Ep.* 63. 8.

¹⁴² See Justin *Dial.* 86. 6, 138. 2f., Tertullian *Jud.* 13, Origen, *Hom.* vii. 3 in *Ex.*

¹⁴³ Gal. iv. 24.

¹⁴⁴ See P. K. Jewett in 'Concerning the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture,' in the *Westminster Theological Journal* (Philadelphia) Vol. XVII, 1954; pp. 18-20.

Of allegorical interpretation, as we have defined it, we find very little in the New Testament. We cannot say that it is completely absent from the New Testament, but it is doubtful if it ever exists except as an elaboration of genuine typology. That is to say, there is first an interpretation of the theological principles of the Old Testament narrative, and then elaboration based on the symbolism of words. This is probably the case with the interpretation of Melchizedek in Hebrews vii. The basis of this interpretation seems clearly to be that Melchizedek stands out from the pages of the Old Testament as one who was priest and king, and the combination of these functions was perfectly fulfilled in Christ, of whom therefore Melchizedek may be called a type. Yet in the interpretation of his name 'king of Salem', we have the use and interpretation of words and symbols rather than the interpretation of the work and functions of the Old Testament character. So also when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of him as 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God'¹⁴⁵ he does so apparently because he believes that these facts about Melchizedek, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, have been left out of the sacred narrative in order that the picture of Christ as Priest-King, and as the Son of God, might be made more perfect.¹⁴⁶ This is a dependence on

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words, or lack of words, rather than the principles of the context; but it is to be noted that the interpretation begins with typology. There are one or two other cases of the use of the Old Testament in the New where the same appears to be true, but it is not possible to deal with them in detail here. What matters is that regularly we have the Old Testament interpreted by the interpretation of its history and of the principles of its institutions in the purpose of God, and not simply by using its words as inspired symbols in the way the Fathers so often did.

This is not to say that the words do not matter, or to deny the operation of the Holy Spirit in guiding and inspiring the writer of the history. Revelation in the Old Testament can never depend simply on the events, but on the prophetic interpretation of the events. It is not only the acts of God that matter, but the record of the acts, if we are to understand their meaning. So the history is rightly given the title of the 'former prophets'; men with prophetic insight and understanding of the ways of God wrote the history. So St. Paul, speaking of the Old Testament revelation, says, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.'¹⁴⁷ None the less it is necessary to distinguish typology from that allegorizing which has no concern with the revelation of the acts of God given in the particular passage of Scripture which it is treating. To take a word as symbolic of some spiritual truth without regard for the context in which it is found is always perilous as a method of interpretation.

(b) *Typological interpretation and the literal sense*

In one way it is true to say that typological interpretation involves a reading into the text of a meaning extrinsic to it. It takes more than the literal sense of a passage. The New Testament does this when it sees Christ as the theme and fulfilment of all the Old Testament, without limiting this to what is explicitly Messianic prophecy. It sees the antitype foreshadowed by

¹⁴⁵ Heb. vii. 3.

¹⁴⁶ See A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David*, 1941, p. 203, and R. V. G. Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹⁴⁷ Rom. xv. 4; cf. 1 Cor. x. 11 and see J. K. Mozley on 1 Cor. x. 6-11 in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* (edit. Gore), 1928, p. 501, and C. H. Dodd in *Biblical Authority for To-day*, p. 159.

the types, and interprets the types accordingly. It sees in the Old Testament 'by divers portions and in divers manners'¹⁴⁸ what is revealed uniquely in the Word Incarnate, in whom all the fragments of the past revelation are brought together. Typological interpretation shows that the partial and fragmentary

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revelation in the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ. It interprets the types by referring them to the Antitype, and by showing that their meaning can be understood fully only in relation to Him and in the light of the knowledge of Him.¹⁴⁹ Typology reads into Scripture a meaning which is not there in that it reads in the light of the fulfilment of the history. This is not exegesis, drawing out from a passage what the human author understood and intended as he wrote. Nevertheless it does not read a new principle into the context; it interprets the dealings of God with men from the literal context, and then points to the way in which God has so dealt with men in Christ. It does not necessarily say that the writer was conscious of presenting a type or foreshadowing of the Christ, although we have seen that there was sometimes in the Old Testament the consciousness that the acts of God in the past pointed forward to similar but much more glorious acts in the future. We, therefore, do not necessarily read the Old Testament, and say as Origen was prone to say, that the Old Testament writers spoke consciously of Christ. Nor do we read in such a way as to lift the Old Testament to the level of the New as the Fathers of the mid-second century were in danger of doing. But we read, recognizing the incompleteness of the Old Testament, and the true relationship of type and antitype. Then it is right to see the Old in the light of the revelation that we have in Christ, to see it as partial, a foreshadowing of what is revealed in Christ.¹⁵⁰

Thus, also, it is not true to say that typological interpretation is a static method of interpretation which views the Old Testament simply as a closed corpus of inspired writings, and disregards the living faith of Israel and the experience of the prophets, and the way in which those of old time were led to the knowledge of God that was given to them. Allegory, then it takes up words as symbols, and disregards the context is always in this danger. True typology, on the other hand, involves the study of the living faith and growing apprehension of Israel, and the prophetic experience of God in order to understand more intimately the knowledge of God and of His ways that the prophets had, and which they were given in order to teach to men. It takes the history of Israel, wrought out in the trials and failures and triumphs that they as a nation experienced in the grime of battle and

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in the enticements of heathen cults around them; and it follows the Old Testament historians in seeing the hand of God in all of these, revealing itself in judgment and in mercy. It sees the Old Testament as a progressive and as an incomplete revelation. But because God was then revealing in part what He revealed uniquely in Christ, it finds in that history, as recorded, foreshadowings of the Christ.

This, in fact, is the way in which we as Christians must read the Old Testament, following the precedent of the New Testament interpretation of the Old, and supremely the use that our Lord Himself made of the Old Testament. We should not look back to this part of the Bible

¹⁴⁸ Heb. i. 1.

¹⁴⁹ See A. Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, pp. 189f. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 1952, pp. 128f.

¹⁵⁰ See H. Cunliffe Jones, *The Authority of the Biblical Revelation*, 1945, chapter 5.

just for the history of the Jewish religion, nor just for moral examples, nor just for its Messianic prophecy, nor to see the excellence of the faith of Israel in contrast to the religious faith and understanding of other nations of antiquity. In actual fact Israel was often faithless, and it is God seeking to show Himself to man, rather than man searching after God, that we need most to see. We look to the Old Testament to see God in His grace revealing Himself in the history of Israel in preparation for the sending of His Son, the Incarnate Word and the Saviour of the world.

If we understand typology in this way, it does not mean that we are limited to following the particular cases of theological interpretation that the New Testament gives to us. We have there a method of interpretation for which we have the background in the Old Testament itself. It is a method of interpretation of history. Its basis is in the Old Testament understanding of the unchanging nature of God and His unchanging covenant and principles of dealing with men; but for us that unchanging nature of God is made more clear in 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, yea and for ever'.¹⁵¹ Its basis is also in the Old Testament hope that the acts of God in the past would be repeated in yet greater glory ; but for us - although we still wait for its final manifestation and the summing up of all history in Christ - that great glory has been revealed. Therefore we study the Old Testament typologically, for we study it to gain a theological understanding of history; and that theological understanding is Christological understanding, for it is only in Christ that the history of Israel, or of any nation or individual, past or present, is able to find its meaning.

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¹⁵¹ Heb. xiii. 8.