

SYMBOL AND TYPE

In determining the function of the ceremonial law we must take into consideration its two large aspects, the symbolical and typical, and the relation between these two. The same things were, looked at from one point of view, symbols, and, from another point of view, types. A symbol is in its religious significance something that profoundly portrays a certain fact or principle or relationship of a spiritual nature in a visible form. The things it pictures are of present existence and present application. They are in force at the time in which the symbol operates.

With the same thing, regarded as a type, it is different. A typical thing is prospective; it relates to what will become real or applicable in the future. In the New Testament the word 'type' occurs only once [Rom. 5.14] where Adam is said to have been a type of Christ. This is the technical, theological meaning of the word, which, therefore, must have been in use before the time of Paul. The Jewish theologians

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doubtless had their system of typology. The word came to this technical meaning after a very natural fashion. Its primary, physical sense is that of a mark or impression made upon some soft substance by a thrust or blow (*tupto*, 'to strike'). This meaning occurs in John 20.25. Out of this developed the sense 'form', 'image', possibly from the fact that the impression struck on coins produced an image [Acts 7.43]. But the meaning 'image' easily passes over into that of 'model', 'example' [Acts 23.25; 2 Thess. 3.9]. To this third usage the technical use, observed in Rom. 5.14, attaches itself.

To 'type', the impression, corresponds 'antitype', the counter-impression. This also is used technically in the New Testament. Both Peter and the Epistle to the Hebrews employ it. It stands for the copy taken of the technical type. There is, however, a difference between these two writers. Peter finds the technical type in the history of the Old Testament. The water of baptism to him is the antitype of that of the deluge [1 Pet. 3.21]. The writer of Hebrews finds the type, the model, in the heavenly world. To him, therefore, the same Old Testament things that Peter would call types are already antitypes [Heb. 9.24]. The former is a more theological, the latter a more purely historical view of the relationship.

The main problem to understand is, how the same system of portrayals can have served at one and the same time in a symbolical and a typical capacity. Obviously this would have been impossible if the things portrayed had been in each case different or diverse, unrelated to each other. If something is an accurate picture of a certain reality, then it would seem disqualified by this very fact for pointing to another future reality of a quite different nature. The solution of the problem lies in this, that the things symbolized and the things typified are not different sets of things. They are in reality the same things, only different in this respect that they come first on a lower stage of development in redemption, and then again, in a later period, on a higher stage. Thus what is symbolical with regard to the already existing edition of the fact or truth becomes typical, prophetic, of the later, final edition of that same fact or truth. From this it will be perceived that a

type can never be a type independently of its being first a symbol. The gateway to the house of typology is at the farther end of the house of symbolism.

This is the fundamental rule to be observed in ascertaining what elements in the Old Testament are typical, and wherein the things corresponding to them as antitypes consist. Only after having discovered what a thing symbolizes, can we legitimately proceed to put the

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question what it typifies, for the latter can never be aught else than the former lifted to a higher plane. The bond that holds type and antitype together must be a bond of vital continuity in the progress of redemption. Where this is ignored, and in the place of this bond are put accidental resemblance's, void of inherent spiritual significance, all sorts of absurdities will result, such as must bring the whole subject of typology into disrepute. Examples of this are: the scarlet cord of Rehab prefigures the blood of Christ; the four lepers at Samuray, the four Evangelists.

These extravagances have produced in better-trained minds a distaste for typology. In order to weed out the worst, it was proposed to deal only with such types as were recognized to be types in the New Testament. These were called *typi innate*, 'inborn types'. The others whose typical significance had to be discovered by research were called *typi illati*. Then the Rationalists went one step further, claiming that all instances of typology in the New Testament are but so many examples of Rabbinical allegorizing exegesis. This would discredit our Lord and His Apostles as fanciful exegetes. But even the distinction between *typi innate* and *typi illati* cannot be upheld. The mere fact that no writer in the New Testament refers to a certain trait as typical, affords no proof of its lacking typical significance. Types in this respect stand on a line with prophecies. The New Testament in numerous cases calls our attention to the fulfilment of certain prophecies, sometimes of such a nature that perhaps we might not have discerned them to be prophecies. And yet we are not restrained by this from searching the field of prophecy and looking in the New Testament for other cases of fulfilment. The instances of typology vouched for by the New Testament writers have nothing peculiar to themselves. To recognize only them would lead to serious incompleteness and incoherence in the result. A system of types is something rational, the shaping of which we may expect from a God of wisdom, but the insertion here and there of a few isolated allusions would be out of harmony with the evidence of design in revelation.

We have, besides, the direct encouragement of the New Testament to heed the typical import of the Old Testament Scriptures. On the way to Emboss, our Lord, beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, interpreted to the disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Since the law of Moses is included, some of these things must have been of a typical nature. He rebuked his companions, because they were slow of heart to understand and believe these prefigurations concerning His work and career. The author of

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Hebrews intimates that about the tabernacle there was much more of typical significance than he was able to work out [9.5]. After the same manner he speaks of Melchizedek as a

typical figure whom his readers had failed to appreciate [5.11ff.]. Of course, it is inevitable that into this kind of interpretation of Old Testament figures an element of uncertainty must enter. But after all this is an element that enters into all exegesis.

Besides ritual types there are in the Old Testament historical types. With some of these we have already become acquainted from the foregoing narrative. There had been also ritual types previously. But all this had been more or less sporadic. The new thing is that now, in the time of Moses, a system of types is established, so that the whole organism of the world of redemption, as it were, finds a typical embodiment on earth. The types are shadows of a body which is Christ. If the body called Christ was an organism, then also the shadows of it, that came before, must have borne the same character. In Gal. 4.3, Col. 2.20 Paul speaks of the ritual institution as 'first rudiments of the world'. He ascribes this rudiment-character to them because they were concerned with external, material things. In a certain sense (though not in point of formulation) Paul placed the ceremonies of the Old Testament on a line with similar customs of pagan religions. In paganism the religious rites possessed this character through their general dependence on the inclination towards symbolism. In the Mosaic institutions this natural symbolism also lay at the basis, but here there was a special divine control in the shaping of the materials. Because thus the truth found expression in physical forms, we say that it came on a lower plane. Under the New Testament this outward mode of expression has been retained in the two instances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper only, but the entire Old Testament still moves in this physical sphere. Hence, in Heb. 9.1, the tabernacle is called 'a worldly sanctuary', that is, a sanctuary belonging to this physical world. It was appropriate that after this fashion a sort of artificial substratum should be created for the truth of redemption to rest upon. The truth shuns suspension in the air. In the New Testament it has the accomplished facts to attach itself to. While these were yet in the making a provisional support was constructed for them in the ceremonial institutions.

From the foregoing it follows that the symbolic and the typical understanding of the ceremonies could not be expected to keep equal pace. Its symbolical function the law performed in virtue of its own inherent intelligible character. It was different with the types. Even

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though the defective provisional efficacy of the ceremonies might be to some extent perceived, it was far more difficult to tell what was intended to take their place in the future. Here the type needed the aid of prophecy for their interpretation [cp. *Isa.* 53]. We must not infer from our comparatively easy reading of the types that Israelites of old felt the same ease in interpreting them. It is unhistorical to carry back into the Old Testament mind our developed doctrinal consciousness of these matters. The failure to understand, however, does not detract from the objective significance these types had in the intent of God. But it is also possible to commit the opposite error, that of perpetuating the Old Testament typical form of religion through importing it into the New Testament. This the Romish Church does on a large scale. And in doing so, instead of lifting the substance of the types to a higher plane, it simply reproduces and repeats. This is destructive of the whole typical relation.

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