



Scripture Study Course 2014

Daily Study – Readings and Meditations

Week 5

Old Testament Types that Foreshadow Christ

- Morning Meditations (20-30 minutes daily): meditations prepared by Don Schwager
 - The bronze serpent and the cross of Christ: Numbers 21:4–9 and Hebrews 11:17 (page 2)
 - Old Testament sacrifice and Perfect sacrifice of Jesus: Exodus 29:38-42 and Hebrews 9:15-28 (page 3-4)
 - Jacob's dream of heaven's stairway and Christ's fulfilment: Genesis 28:10-22 and John 1:51 (page 6)
- Readings for study (30-40 minutes daily):
 - Old Testament Types, by Don Schwager (page 6-7)
 - Typological Interpretation, by Steve Clark (page 8)
 - Christ in All the Scriptures, by John Yocum (page 17)
 - Passover Sermon, by Melito of Sardis and At the Garden Gate, by John Damascene (page 26)
 - Christ in All the Scriptures, by A M Hodgkin (page 27)

The Bronze Serpent and the Cross of Christ

Numbers 21:4–9 (RSV translation)

⁴From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” ⁶Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷And the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Points for reflection

1. When Moses led the people of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years, God provided daily manna and quail for them, as well as water and shelter. And he protected them from their enemies. Many times, however, they bitterly complained to Moses and to God. They were ungrateful for the gift of daily manna (bread from heaven). They wanted to return to Egypt and they tried to rebel against Moses. In Numbers 21 we see the worst of their complaint and rebellious spirit. Their constant complaining and “impatience,” had produced a great “loss of soul” and “discouragement” among the people. God, who is “slow to anger” decided to punish them for turning against Moses and God himself.
2. How does *speaking against God* lead to trouble and chastisement? Why did God remove his protection from the people? Why did so many die from the poisonous bite of the serpents? Who might the fiery serpents symbolically represent?
3. How does repentance lead to pardon, healing, and restoration?
4. Why did Moses make a bronze serpent and raise it up on the pole made from a tree?
5. Who might the fiery serpents symbolically represent?
6. Why did Moses make a bronze serpent and raise it up on the pole made from a tree? And why did God command the people to fix their eyes upon the raised pole with the bronze serpent? God wanted the people to know that only he could deliver them from the fiery serpents – and only he could heal them. In Exodus 15:26 the Lord declared to the people: “I am the Lord, your healer.”
7. In John’s Gospel, chapter 3, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that the bronze serpent in the wilderness is a type or symbol of what the Messiah has come to do to bring healing, pardon, and restoration. What do you think Jesus means when he says to Nicodemus:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”
(John 3:14-15)

Old Testament Sacrifice and the Perfect Sacrifice of Jesus

Exodus 29:38-42 (RSV translation)

"Now this is what you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; and with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a libation. And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a cereal offering and its libation, as in the morning, for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you.

Hebrews 9:15-28 (RSV translation)

Christ has put away sin once for all by the sacrifice of himself

Hebrews 1:10-15 Therefore he [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. ¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**

²³ Thus it was necessary for the **copies of the heavenly things to be purified** with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For **Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, **he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.** ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Point for reflection

God had instructed Moses to erect an altar before the Tent of Meeting (which was later replaced by the Temple at Jerusalem). Every morning and evening an unblemished lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the people (Exodus 29:38-42). How does the sacrifice of the lamb in the temple *pre-figure* Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross? John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). How does Jesus present this "once for all" sacrifice before the throne of God in heaven?

Hebrews 11:17-19 (RSV translation)

A type and symbol of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence he did receive him back, and **this was a symbol**.

Point for reflection

How does the sacrifice of Abraham's only son Isaac *pre-figure* or *foreshadow* the sacrifice of Jesus, the only-begotten Son of the eternal Father in heaven? How does the offering up of Abraham's son and then receiving his son back serve as a *symbol* or *type* of Christ's resurrection (Hebrews 11:19)?

The Gate of Heaven and Christ's Interpretation

Genesis 28:10-22 (ESV translation)

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, ²² and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

Points for reflection

1. Jacob, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, was fleeing from his twin brother Esau, who had vowed to kill him. Esau was furious with Jacob because Jacob had stolen Esau's birthright, the Jewish claim to inheritance and blessing. Why did God give Jacob a revelation of the ladder between earth and heaven? What was God saying to Jacob through this dream?
2. In John's Gospel, chapter 1, Jesus tells Nathanael that the revelation (dream) which God gave to Jacob at Bethel is being fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah. What did Jesus the Messiah offer to Nathanael?

⁵¹ And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51)

Old Testament Types of Christ

A “Type” as it is used in the Scriptures is a representation or **pre-figuring** of something that is to come. We might think of it as a template or even a **shadow** (or *foreshadowing*) that dimly represents what is to come.

The Old Testament is full of “Types” of Christ (God’s Anointed Son and Messiah). These are intentionally placed in the Scripture to describe and identify the Messiah when he came. They were designed by God to prefigure some aspect of the person of Jesus Christ. They are Old Testament “anticipations” of Christ and since they dealt with a future person (the Messiah), they were “prophetic.”

Some “types” are **people**, such as Melchizedek who was both a priest and king without end (Psalm 110:4 “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”), or Isaac, the only begotten “son of promise” (Hebrews 11:17) whom Abraham was prepared to slay as a sacrificial offering to God (Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice, and was bound and laid upon the wood, but was substituted by a lamb which God provided for Abraham).

Some “types” are **things** such as Noah’s Ark and the Temple. The Temple in Jerusalem represented God’s dwelling with his people. Jesus told the Jews, “destroy this temple (referring to himself), and I will raise it in three days” (pointing to his resurrection).

Some “types” are **events** or ceremonies such as the Passover, Day of Atonement, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Pentecost. Each of them beautifully picture some aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ hundreds of years before his Incarnation – when *the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us* (John 1).

Two other words, **copy** and **pattern**, are also used in a similar way in the Scriptures. A copy or pattern gives us a sketch, draft, or outline that foreshadows or serves as a type of the reality that will be revealed in Christ when he comes.

Comparison of four Old Testament figures with Christ

Adam

Both Adam and Christ are called the *son of God* in the Scriptures. Both entered the world in a unique way. Both entered the world sinless. Both were appointed as God’s representative and “head” of the human race. Paul the Apostles tells us that Christ is the second Adam, the perfect and obedient Son of God who reverses the curse of Adam’s disobedience and fall.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

1 Corinthians 15:45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit.

Isaac

Isaac is the only son of Abraham. He pre-figures Christ in several aspects:

His miraculous birth/Sarah barren, old (Gen. 17:15-19); Christ's miraculous birth (Luke 1:34-35)

Isaac is declared "only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17); Christ is only begotten Son (John 3:16)

Isaac was offered up as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22); Christ offered as sacrifice (Romans 8:32)

Isaac being brought back to life is a *symbol* of Christ's resurrection (Hebrews 11:19).

Joseph

The early fathers of the Christian church saw Joseph, the favoured son of Jacob (Genesis 37 – 50) as a type of the Messiah.

A comparison between Joseph and Jesus:

1. Both were loved by their father (Genesis 37:3).
2. Both were sent to their brethren (Genesis 37:13 and John 1:11-12).
3. Both were rejected by their brethren (Genesis 37).
4. Both were falsely accused (Genesis 39).
5. Both were put into prison (Genesis 39-40).
6. Both were exalted after their suffering (Genesis 49:22-26).
7. Both offered forgiveness (Genesis 50:15-21).
8. Both were saviors to their people (Acts 7:9-16).

Melchizedek

Jesus is explicitly compared with Melchizedek in the New Testament (Genesis 14:18-20) because both held the position of Priest and King for eternity. (Hebrews 5-7; Genesis 14/ Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6)

Melchizedek's name means "King of Righteousness." He ruled over "Salem" which means "peace." He was the King of Peace. As a Priest, he was superior to the Aaronic priesthood of the Jews in the sense that even Abraham, (great-grandfather of Levi – Aaron and the priests of Israel all came from the tribe of Levi), paid tithes to Melchizedek. The Letter to the Hebrews makes the argument that even Aaron paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.

Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 5:5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "You are my Son, Today I have begotten you"; 6 just as He says also in another passage, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." ...10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6:20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Type Studies

From *The Psalms Course Book* written by Steve Clark

We study types because they allow us to understand God's plan for creation and redemption better, especially the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Since we are studying the Psalms, an Old Testament book, studying types is particularly important. It is one of the keys to praying the psalms as a Christian.

Summary of truths about types

- 1) A type is not an idea or a general truth. It is something that existed at some time in the past, like a person (David), a place (Jerusalem), a thing (the temple), an action (a feast), or an event (the Exodus).
- 2) A type is like what it points to in some significant way. By learning about the type, we can see something about the antitype. If we do not understand what a temple was, we will not understand the meaning of the Christian people as a temple. Likewise, by learning about the antitype, we can see something about the type. If we do not understand that God's goal is to be present in his people through the outpouring of the Spirit, we will not understand that the abiding significance of the temple as the first place of access to God's presence (not as a spatial location for worship). When we study types and their antitypes, we learn more about both the types (the Old Testament realities) and the antitypes (the New Testament realities).
- 3) There is a causal connection between Old Testament types and the New Testament realities they foreshadow. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament may have been influenced by circumstances, historical customs or the people who used it, but the essential features of it were determined by God in such a way that it could reveal truths about the death and resurrection of Christ and the worship of the Christian people.
- 4) A type has a spiritual significance of its own independent of its function as a type. We are often mainly interested in a type because it shows us something about the Christian's relationship with God, but there is more to it than that. The temple was not just a type of the church, it was also the place of God's presence to the Israelites. Their worship was not just a type of New Testament worship, but it was also true (not false) worship that was acceptable to God. The Old Testament may not have contained all the spiritual reality of the New Testament, but it contained spiritual reality and Christ was working in it.
- 5) Old Testament realities are types and shadows of New Testament realities, both in their first-coming form and in their second-coming form.

Some important helps in type studies

- 1) Ask what the significance of the type is for God's purpose for the human race. We might understand the temple in Jerusalem in its sociological significance as a social

institution, but that does not take us very far in learning, for instance, how to pray the Psalms. On the other hand, when we understand that the temple is the special place where God's presence dwelt and where his people had access to him, we understand a great deal more about the significance of the temple and see its connection with the Christian people (or the individual Christian) as the temple of God in the world.

2) Ask what stage of God's plan the type existed in. That will help to locate it in God's plan and see what it was leading up to. Use the chart "The Stages of God's Plan" to locate the types and see what they lead up to. Often the items in each column for stages I–V are types of the items in that same column in stages VI and VII.

3) Look at how the New Testament understands the Old Testament type. By reading the New Testament passages we can see what about the Old Testament type was of abiding significance to God. It takes revelation to discern God's hand in the past. Historical studies can help, but they are not enough.

4) The approach of a word study and of a type study are similar in that we can do both by tracing a word through various passages in scripture. The difference, however, is that when we do a word study we are trying to understand the meaning (the semantic meaning or signification) of that word. We are trying to understand how the word is used. In a type study, on the other hand, we may be using a word to find the passages we will consider, for instance, the word "temple". But we are mainly interested in the actual temple and its significance in God's plan. We, therefore have to look for more than how the word is used. We have to look for an understanding of the reality the word refers to. That usually means we have to look at a larger selection than we would with a word study.

Types and Fulfillment

The letter to the Ephesians begins with a prayer blessing God:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...

In this prayer Paul sums up what God has done for us in Christ with the phrase “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”. Christ brings us the fullness of such blessing, but that blessing was foreshadowed, predicted, and prepared for in the Old Testament.

Many read and study the Old Testament with a historical interest in mind: to understand the book as a historical document that tells us something about history. For such a purpose, the primary interest in any Old Testament writing is the way the author himself understood his writings. Those writings can be a living example of someone of a different age speaking to his contemporaries. For such a purpose, the question of fulfillment does not often arise.

Christians who read and use the Old Testament the way Christ, the apostles and the fathers did, approach it somewhat differently. They approach it as the sacred scripture or writings, useful for spiritual growth as Christians and useful in daily Christian living. For such a purpose, a main question is how a new covenant person can use writings that were written with an old covenant understanding.

New Covenant Blessings

For a Christian reading the Old Testament, the question of fulfillment is a central one, especially in knowing how to use prayers, because many prayers pray for blessings of some sort. It is also important for any promises of blessing, but these too are often prominent in prayers. Praying the Psalms, or any prayer, then, raises the question of how that prayer might be fulfilled in our own lives. Moreover, in order to understand how to pray the Psalms, we need to understand how the blessings of Christ are spoken about in the Psalms, because as new covenant people, we receive a new covenant blessing, not an old covenant blessing.

The blessings of the covenant of Sinai are, to all appearances, blessings of this world. The people of Israel were given a physical land to live in. They farmed that land which was “flowing with milk and honey”, and it provided them with good things to eat and drink. As they lived in that land, they increased and multiplied, becoming numerous and strong. Enemies, pagan nations who worshipped false gods, surrounded them; but God protected them from those nations, gave them victory in battle and freed them from enemy oppression. They went up regularly to the temple in Jerusalem, where God was present, and worshipped him, acknowledging him as their king, receiving his law and thanking him for the blessings he gave them. As long as they were faithful to his covenant and kept his commandments, these blessings were theirs.

These blessings of the people of Israel were real and worthwhile, but they are not well described as “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”. They prefigured and foreshadowed those blessings, but they were earthly, not heavenly blessings, natural or physical, not spiritual blessings (1 Cor 15:46–47). The blessings in Christ are different.

Paul in Ephesians 1:3 describes the blessings given through Christ as “spiritual”. “Spiritual” here does not mean “immaterial”, but rather it means “of or in the Spirit”. The

blessings in Christ are given to us by the agency of the Holy Spirit. They do not make us or our lives immaterial or nonhuman. Rather they spiritualize us and our lives, filling us with the power and presence of God, allowing us to live in a higher, more godly way.

Paul describes these blessings also as being given “in heavenly places”. In 1 Corinthians 15:47–49, he says the blessing given to us makes or will make us “of heaven” rather than “of earth”. The heavenly character of our call or blessing does not mean that we leave the earth or cease to function on earth. Rather it means that we come into a new relationship with God with a freer access to his presence which is “in heaven”, his throne room. With such blessings our life is lived more for God and more from his presence and power, even while we are still living this present life on earth.

The spiritual, heavenly blessing Christ gives us is a new life in God, the life of the kingdom of God, the life of the Spirit. The primary content of these blessings is a better relationship with God — our sins are forgiven, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us, we are allowed into the presence of God in a new way, we have the relationship of sonship with God, he dwells inside of us. To live in such a relationship is a higher life, a spiritual or heavenly one.

At the same time we are changed. The gift of the Spirit gives us new power to live the new life; the character of God is formed in us; we are freed from the oppression of evil spirits; we experience charismatic gifts working through us. This is life on earth “spiritualized” and made “heavenly”.

Finally, we also have a share in the kingdom to come. When the kingdom comes fully or when we ourselves “go to heaven”, we will experience the blessing of God in a full way, including the blessing of having all our material needs and desires satisfied. As a result we look forward to the time when God will fully reign and we will live with him “face to face”. This future orientation likewise makes our life heavenly.

Spiritual Interpretation

The perspective of the fulfillment in Christ allows us to understand much of what is said in the Old Testament in a different way than old covenant people could have. We can interpret it “spiritually”. “Spiritually” in this case does not mean “allegorically” in the Medieval or modern literary sense. The Old Testament realities do not stand for ideas (e.g., knights standing for virtues). Nor do they refer to something purely immaterial. The scripture does not ignore our life as material beings, nor can we escape a real human life.

Rather, a spiritual interpretation means that we can interpret the Old Testament as fulfilled in the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament realities are understood as types of New Testament realities. Hence:

- The life that God offers us is not just a long life before our earthly death, but eternal spiritual life in Christ.
- Our inheritance is not just a portion of the earth (the land of Canaan) that we possess and live from, but it is a portion of the kingdom of God to come.
- The enemies whose oppression we are freed from are not just pagan nations or personal enemies, but they are spirits and angelic forces from the kingdom of darkness.
- Our redemption and salvation are not just redemption and salvation from physical dangers and earthly enemies but from sin and Satan.
- Access to the presence of God is not just in the temple in Jerusalem, but within us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

If we look carefully at how the New Testament speaks about Old Testament realities like life, inheritance, enemies, redemption, salvation, access, we find that they are most commonly understood in such a “spiritual” way, except when the New Testament is speaking about old covenant circumstances. A spiritual interpretation of the prayers of the Psalms, then, interprets their meaning the same way that the New Testament does — namely, as fulfilled in Christ.

A spiritual interpretation is partly based on the Christian understanding of the promise to Abraham. The promise to Abraham did have an initial fulfillment in the nation of Israel that lived in the land of Canaan. The promise, however, was greater than that fulfillment.

In a Christian understanding, the sons of Abraham are not just the circumcised Israelites but all who share the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:16, Gal 3:9). The blessing of Abraham was not just the blessing given through the covenant of Sinai but the blessing with which all the families of the earth were blessed in him (Gen 12:3), that is, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit given to all who have faith in Christ (Rom 5:5, Gal 3:14). The land promised to Abraham was not just the territory of the Canaanites, but the gift of the Spirit in the kingdom of God (Rom 4:13, Matt 5:5).

The initial fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that took place in the people of Israel under the law of Moses, then, was a foreshadowing of the greater fulfillment in our Lord Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 8:6 puts it:

...the covenant he (Christ) mediates is better (than the old covenant), since it is enacted on better promises.

Not only are the promises better in what they point to in the future, that is, when we “go to heaven”, but also in what has been given to us here and now. Hebrews 10:34 describes our spiritual blessing, relative to our earthly property, as “a better possession and an abiding one”.

Understanding spiritual interpretation gives us an answer to a chief question for Christians in praying the Psalms: how we pray the Psalms when they ask for great blessings in this life. For instance, the following areas can provide problems for a Christian use of the Psalms:

- Long life: long life seems to be an unqualified good in the Psalms, although as Christians we are ready to have a short earthly life in view of the eternal spiritual life given to us, and sometimes we are ready to have an earthly life cut short if it is God’s will (2 Cor 4:17–5:1, 8).
- Great wealth: the Psalms seem to presuppose that the wealthier one is, the more one is blessed by God, although as Christians we live simply (1 Tim 6:6–8, 17–19) and are ready to be destitute for Christ (Phil 4:11–13).
- Defeat of our enemies: complete defeat of our enemies and victory for us seems to be an expectation of the Psalms, although as Christians we expect to face temporary “defeat”, that is, persecution and martyrdom, for the sake of Christ (Matt 5:11–12) and also we do not see personal defeat as that serious (1 Cor 6:7–8).

Spiritual interpretation gives us a partial answer to how we approach these areas. We now have a new perspective, because we know the changes that have been brought to the life of God’s people by the fulfillment of God’s promises through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we pray the Psalms we understand many of the words in a new way. For instance:

- Long life: what God has in mind for those blessed by him is a life that is longer than this earthly life, namely an eternal life.
- Great wealth: what God has in mind for those blessed by him is a wealth that is greater than the material possessions of the wealthiest men and women on earth, the wealth of the heavenly inheritance and the spiritual goods that are given to us in Christ and are not subject to earthly decay (Matt 6:19–20, 1 Pet 1:4, 1 Tim 6:17).

- Defeat of our enemies: what God has in mind for those blessed by him is the defeat of the real enemy, the enemy that is behind the defeats and misfortune of life, Satan, with his kingdom and the sin it produces in our lives.

If we pray the Psalms, then, with faith in the gospel and with minds enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we will pray them as fulfilled in Christ. We will primarily pray for eternal life, heavenly treasures and the defeat of spiritual enemies. Our normal and primary way of praying the Psalms will be in a way that allows us to celebrate the basic Christian truths, including the truth of our inheritance in Christ.

Earthly Needs Now

But that raises the further question: is there no other application of these human, earthly passages? Do they not apply to the practical needs of our day-to-day lives? Is God not interested in our getting enough to eat and drink, in our preservation from our human enemies, in our living a healthy life? The answer, of course, is yes — God knows that the disciples of Jesus have need of all these things, and he is interested in providing them for us (Matt 6:32).

Moreover, when we experience a need for these things, there is no reason we cannot pray for them. In fact, we should pray for them (Phil 4:6) as a way of acknowledging that God is our source of life and help and of expressing our faith in him. God's concern for our welfare in this earthly life did not come to an end with the old covenant. It continued on into the new. Therefore, even though the primary way we pray the prayers in the Psalms is in terms of our inheritance in Christ, we can and should also pray them for practical help here and now. The answer is not either/or but both/and.

On the other hand, we do need to pray about our daily earthly lives in a way that is instructed by New Testament teaching. That means first of all that we live by order of values of the kingdom of God. Earthly life is a good and there are often spiritual reasons for living longer, but dying to be with Christ is far better (Phil 1:21–24). Wealth on earth is a good and can be used to meet our needs and the needs of others, but when God provides us with treasure in heaven (1 Tim 6:17–19, Matt 6:19–20), we will be much better off. Security in this world from enemies that can damage us, even by killing the body, is a good, but the security of dwelling in the heavenly kingdom with full victory assured is incomparably better (Luke 12:4–5).

Moreover, we recognize that our earthly life will not go as well as our heavenly life. This is not only true because we do not yet experience the full enjoyment of our heavenly inheritance, but also because God allows us difficulties and setbacks here to train us to share in his holiness (Heb 12:10), to live for the city to come (Heb 11:13–16; 13:14) and to put the kingdom first and not our passions (Luke 12:31, 34; Jam 4:3).

We also approach our daily life with the discipleship truths that teach us that we will be called upon as disciples of Christ to suffer loss and undergo tribulation in this life. Even more, enduring such loss and suffering will lead to great reward when the Lord comes again. Therefore, while we can pray for rest from our enemies, we should rejoice when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matt 5:10). While we can pray for money when we need it, we should learn how to be in want for the sake of Christ (Phil 4:11–13). While we can pray for health and victory over our enemies, we should still expect to have to face martyrdom in the spirit of Jesus, ready to be harmed or put to death (Acts 14:21–22).

As disciples of Christ, we do not expect full vindication and victory in this time of spiritual warfare and incomplete fulfillment. We expect our fate to be like his. We also expect God's promises of blessing to be fully given to us only after the second coming when we receive the complete inheritance.

In our Christian experience of life, we find ourselves in two ages. In the Holy Spirit we have the first installment of our inheritance (Eph 1:13–14). We can already live the life of the age to come and experience the powers of the kingdom to come (Heb 6:5). We experience a better life here and now precisely because we have a more spiritual life but also because our heavenly Father provides for the earthly needs of the disciples of his Son.

Yet at the same time we still wait for the deliverance of our bodies and of all creation when we will possess the full inheritance and the earth will be fully transformed in the kingdom of God. Our earthly, material lives are now changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, but we are not fully transformed and therefore not fully able to enter into the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). Consequently we experience lacks and needs due to the unredeemed state of the world around us, the incomplete state of our bodily transformation and the fact that this unchanged earth is not our real home. We, in fact, sometimes experience even worse tribulation because of the enmity of the kingdom of darkness against the true disciples of Christ (John 15:18–20). In short, we are part-way to the full blessing that is the complete fulfillment of God's promises.

The Israelites in the Old Testament were likewise part-way to the full blessing but in a different way than we are. They did experience the blessings of relationship with God and covenant with him, and to the degree they had faith in his promises and faithfulness to his teaching they already were given something of true spiritual life. They were just (righteous) men, "Old Testament saints". However, in terms of spiritual blessing and standing with God, they were incomplete and needed to be completed (RSV: "made perfect") in Christ (Heb 12:23). They had some share in true spiritual life, and were not just earthly materially minded men, but they lacked the fullness of the blessing of Christ (Rom 15:29).

As a consequence of the incompleteness of the blessing the Israelites had, the primary form of their life with God was this-worldly and pre-Christian: as a nation among nations in the land of Canaan. When they were faithful, they experienced material prosperity, victory over enemies and long life. When they were not, they experienced deprivation, defeat and death. In other words, they experienced the fulfillment of God's promises in a more literal way.

Although this more tangible approach to God's promises was valid, the results turned out less predictable than one could wish. The material fulfillment of God's promises to the individual Israelite was often disturbed by the unfaithfulness of other Israelites, many times the king or ruler, and by the vicissitudes of spiritual warfare occurring in ways the faithful Israelite could not completely understand (see Job 1; Dan 10). Hence, they did not always receive all the blessings they were led to expect by the covenant and often pondered the question of "retribution".

To these "failures" of God's promises, the Old Testament does not give a full answer. The Old Testament does recognize that God's promises are not completely fulfilled in this life, and justice can only be done after death. It lacks, however, that fuller teaching on the resurrection, the last judgment and the coming of the kingdom that allows someone to see how God will be faithful to all his promises to each individual worshipper of his. For this, we need the New Testament, and so the Old Testament covenant and teaching needs to be completed by the New Testament covenant and teaching. In short, the Israelites in the Old Testament not only lacked the greater blessings that came in Christ, but they did not experience the completion of what they were led to expect in the this-worldly terms of the Old Testament, since that too could only happen in the new heaven and new earth after the second coming of Christ (Isa 64:17ff; Rev 21:1ff).

Material Creation in the Kingdom of God

Another question that gets raised by these issues is the question of the place of the earth, that is, earthly, material creation and the worldly life in God's plan. Since the New Testament speaks of our inheritance as in heaven, or heavenly, some Christians have thought that there would be no place for the earth in the age to come. We will simply live in the heavens, before the throne of God, praising him eternally. Other Christians have tended to understand the future world, or at least part of it, as being simply earthly with all the flaws taken away, an abundance of material health, pleasures and security that is not too different from the Mohammedan paradise.

Most Christians, however, would say that there will be a place for earthly realities, but they will be different from the way they are now. They see both an earthly and a heavenly aspect to the inheritance of the saints, so that our life in the age to come will be both heavenly and earthly. We will be before the throne of God, seeing him face to face, living from the blessing of his presence the life that comes directly from contact with him. Yet we will also live on earth, a new earth, a transfigured one, one that no longer veils the presence and glory of God, but that reflects it fully. Heaven and earth will come into a new relationship with one another, so that we will be able to say that heaven is on earth. Our land will be the place where glory dwells (Ps 85:9).

In order to understand the place of material creation, we need to look again at how the end and the beginning come together. God created man, Adam, placed him in a garden and walked with him. That purpose of God at the beginning will be fulfilled in Christ, the new Adam at the end. In Christ, the human race will be the son of God, and the new earth, the transfigured creation, will be the garden of delights, the place of God's presence. We shall reign on earth, ruling the material creation as sons of God and offering creation to God as priests before his throne, blessing him for the kingdom he has given us as our inheritance.

It is in such a perspective that we can understand the fulfillment of all of God's promises. Ever since Adam, the human race has lived in a fallen creation that is being redeemed by God and freed from the kingdom of darkness. God's plan has always been the same: a human race, made in his image and likeness, with the access of sons and daughters to his presence, blessed with all we need so we can live the way he has created us to be, protected by his presence from all disease, damage or decay.

Yet that purpose of God is only fulfilled under his rule or kingdom, when he is honored as the lord of the universe and obeyed. Since the fall, therefore, he has been re-establishing his reign and in so doing he has been bringing full blessing to the earth. Among the people of Israel, his kingship was expressed by establishing a nation among nations in the land of Canaan. In the new covenant, his kingship was expressed by pouring out his Spirit on those who received his son and became sons through adoption in him.

But until the restoration of all things, God's plan will not be fully accomplished and his kingship will not be fully expressed because of the interference of sin and Satan. Stage by stage humans who know God progressively experience God's purpose further realized in them and God's blessing and its effects more fully imparted to them than it was to those who preceded them. But even now we only experience the promised blessings partially. What we experience is a down payment, a first installment (Eph 1:14), of the great blessing, the life of the age to come. That time we await in hope, that is, in full confidence in the promised consummation (Rom 8:18–25).

Summary

- 1) The blessings of the old covenant should primarily be seen as types of the fuller blessing in Christ.
- 2) The fuller blessing in Christ is spiritual heavenly life, the life of the Spirit, the life of the kingdom.
- 3) The blessing in Christ also includes God's provision for our material needs, but there are some limitations on how disciples of Christ will experience that provision in this age of spiritual warfare and unredeemed creation.
- 4) We look forward to the new heaven and the new earth after the second coming when the fullness of the blessing of Christ includes both our spiritual inheritance and the complete meeting of our material needs and desires, although, since we will be changed, we probably will not experience many of our needs and desires the way we do now.

Guidelines for praying the Psalms

- 1) The blessings of life, wealth and security promised in the Psalms primarily refer to our life in Christ, both now in the Holy Spirit but even more fully when the kingdom comes at the end.
- 2) We can and should also pray psalms for earthly blessings in a more immediate way.
- 3) We need to be guided by Christian teaching as we pray the parts of the Psalms that speak about material blessings so that we pray them according to the mind of Christ (e.g., Jam 4:3). We especially need to pray them according to the kingdom perspectives of the New Testament.

As the course continues, we will consider more fully some of the New Testament truths important for praying for the Psalms both in the primary spiritual application and in the secondary application to our daily life needs.

CHRIST IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES

The Long Common Thread of Christological Interpretation

By John Yocum

What a difference a century makes when it comes to interpreting the Bible. A hundred years ago, as G. W. H. Lampe has pointed out,¹ the English reader of the Bible took for granted that the imprecatory (“cursing”) psalms (e.g., Psalm 58) applied to the enemies of Israel, and so to those of the Church, and to the spiritual enemies that assail the individual Christian in temptation. He knew that in the Song of Songs Christ addressed the Church, wooed her, and made her beautiful by virtue of the love for her that led him to the Cross. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah was, of course, Christ himself. These views were shared by most Christians regardless of denomination.

But now we are told that the imprecatory psalms are not suitable for Christians, because, in light of Jesus’ command to love our enemies, they manifest a sub-Christian attitude of vengeance. And is not the Song of Songs best read as what it most simply appears to be: an erotic love poem? To spiritualize it is to miss its wholesome, earthy message. Finally, the Servant Songs of Isaiah do not really speak of Christ, but of Israel, or perhaps of the prophet himself and his sufferings.

We also now use “study Bibles” in which the Old Testament is cross-referenced in the New Testament, but New Testament citations are absent from the Old Testament. We are told, both directly and more subtly, that it is not quite kosher to find Christ in the Old Testament, especially where the New Testament does not explicitly apply a particular passage from the Old Testament to a New Testament reality.

Christ the Cornerstone

The christological interpretation of the Old Testament, however, is not expendable. It is the foundation of the Christian attitude to the Bible and the New Testament’s understanding of the Old Testament. It is the normative, unitive, and uniquely biblical hermeneutic,² by which the Old and New Testaments are fused into a single book with a coherent message.

Christological interpretation is normative in that some form of this species of interpretation has characterized Christian biblical interpretation since the first century, despite the modern challenge to this norm by the historical-critical method, first in the academic world, and recently even on a popular level, as the historical-critical method influences culture.³

Christological interpretation is also unitive in that it binds together the Old and New Testaments—both of which are made up of diverse literary material—into a single Bible that can be published between two covers as something more than an anthology.⁴

This biblical hermeneutic is also unique in that there is nothing else like it in all the world of literature.⁵ This is apparent even to secular literary critics, who often view the Bible in a more sober and reasonable way than the enlightened purveyors of a pure historical-critical method. For the Christian, to lose such a reading of the Old Testament is to lose much of this capacity to have his heart and his perception of the world shaped by the Word of God spoken to his people in every age.

Two Testaments, One Bible

The New Testament claims a continuity with the Old. The God of the people of Israel and the God who has made himself known in Christ are one and the same. Christ is understood in the context of the revelation of God to his people beginning in the Old Covenant. In 1 Cor. 15:3–5, Paul sets out the basic lines of the tradition handed on to him:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (RSV)

The phrase “in accordance with the Scriptures” occurs twice, in order to underline the assertion that all this is in fulfillment of the plan of God, his action, and his promise, as set out in the Old Testament. The same thrust appears in Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, which centers around Joel 2, Psalm 11 and Psalm 110: Christ’s death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit are a fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament.⁶

Perhaps the most important single presentation of the Old Testament as a “context of understanding” is Luke 24:44–47, in which Jesus responds to the disciples’ puzzlement over the events they’ve witnessed:

Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

It was through the understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures that the disciples came to understand the person and work of Christ.⁷ The quotations of the Old Testament are not simply used to back up a prior understanding—they create understanding. Yet, while the Old Testament establishes the framework for understanding Christ, Christ is also the interpretative key to the Old Testament. Leonhard Goppelt sees Luke 24:27 and 24:45 as, on the one hand, a frame of reference for understanding Christ in light of the Old Testament, and on the other, an interpretive key to the Old Testament.⁸ Paul portrays the Jews as having a veil over their eyes when they read the Law, “but when a man turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (2 Cor. 3:16). To read the Old Testament with understanding is to read it as fulfilled in Christ. Indeed, Christ himself was present in the life of the people of Israel, as Paul makes clear:

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1–4)

Biblical Types & Narrative

Paul goes on to say that what happened to the people of Israel was the genuine contemporary action of God, but that those events are recorded in the Scripture as “warnings” (RSV) or “patterns” or “types” (*tupoi*) for us on whom the end of the ages has come. The history of God’s dealings with men have reached their climax in the age of the New Covenant. The history of the people of Israel is a pattern for God’s dealings with the Church of this New Covenant. The Old Testament sets up a temporal horizon of understanding, a framework of history over which God rules, and within which his revelation or purpose may be achieved.⁹ This understanding is found not only in Paul, (“when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son. . . .” [Gal. 4:4]), but also in other New Testament writers. One notices the recurrence in the New Testament of such phrases as “in these last days” (Heb. 1:1), “it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18), etc.

This much is apparent even to secular literary critics. There is broad agreement that the New Testament itself takes a temporally based interpretative approach to the Old Testament. This approach is commonly called “typological,” from the Greek word *tupos*, by which the New Testament designates people, institutions, and events in the Old Testament as “types,” or patterns, of realities that are fully revealed in the New Covenant, as Paul does in 1 Cor. 10:6. (Cf. Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Pet. 3:21.)

Even where this terminology is not insisted upon, there is still an underlying notion of a temporal progression from the Old Testament realities to their fulfillment in Christ. Speaking strictly as a literary critic, Northrop Frye frankly states:

This typological way of reading the Bible is indicated too often and too explicitly in the New Testament for us to be in any way in doubt that this is the “right” way of reading it—“right” in the only sense that criticism can recognize, as the way that conforms to the intentionality of the book itself and to the conventions it assumes and requires.¹⁰

It would seem reasonable, then, if one accepts the New Testament as authoritative, that one would read the Old Testament in this typological framework, not only as the “right” way in the literary-critical sense, but also as the true interpretation of the history of God’s dealings with his people.

Calvin, an Exemplar

The reading of the Old Testament in christological perspective was the normative Christian approach up until sometime in the eighteenth century. Hans Frei has shown in his magisterial work, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, that the era of biblical interpretation preceding the rise of eighteenth-century rationalism was characterized by a reading of the whole Bible as a narrative of salvation. This narrative, since it rendered the world as it actually is, embraced the experience of any age and any reader. The reader fit his life and his experience into the biblical narrative, both by typological interpretation and by his manner of life.¹¹ This narrative reading is not all there is to reading the Bible as a Christian, but the conviction that the Bible tells the true story of the human race, in which God has personally and decisively intervened, serves as a foundation for all else.

Frei’s study is important in that it takes John Calvin (1509–1564) as an exemplar of the precritical tradition. Calvin is a pivotal figure in the history of biblical interpretation, important for discerning points of agreement in the precritical approach to the Bible. He came upon the scene when the humanist renaissance in language and literature was in full flower, and, in vigorous reaction to the theological teaching of the Schools, demanded a new approach to the relationship between study of the Bible and doctrine. He was a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation, which denied scriptural warrant for the authority of the pope, the sacrament of confession, and many other doctrines. He stood for a new relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical powers, based on principles derived from biblical exegesis. Calvin is thus rightly identified with a radical change in the order of Christendom and with tumult and reform in Western theology.

Yet, as a biblical exegete, Calvin—Protestant Reformer, humanist, and standard-bearer for change—is more akin to his Roman Catholic and Lutheran opponents in outlook and presuppositions than to the historical critics who emerged later in the Protestant tradition.¹² Calvin stands in a broad tradition that holds to the divine authority of Scripture, which, when interpreted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reveals the historical plan of God to bring about redemption in Christ, a plan consummated in the coming of the New Jerusalem, and worked out in the life of every individual believer. This outlook is evident in his treatment of Old Testament figures that the New Testament does not explicitly cite as types.

Calvin is extremely wary of finding christological meaning where it does not cohere well with the grammatical sense of a text. Calvin goes so far as to reject the traditional “protoevangelium” seen in Gen. 3:15 because the Hebrew noun normally translated “seed” or “offspring” is plural.¹³ The Reformers in general took a dim view of what they referred to as “allegory.” But what was it they were reacting to?

The Meaning of Allegory

The term ‘allegory’ itself is a difficult one. Etymologically, it is related to the notion of saying one thing and meaning another. Allegory may also refer to a method of interpretation, known before the first century B.C. as *ashuponoia*.¹⁴ This method deobjectifies and departicularizes a myth in order to

eliminate what is scandalous or to derive ethical or philosophical principles from it.¹⁵ Allegorization seems to have first been used by Theagenes in the sixth century B.C. in order to make use of Homer's anthropomorphic stories, and a century later by Metrodorus for the same purpose. It is characterized by an unease with the text as it stands, because of its crudity or unseemliness, and builds on the premise that the author said more than he knew; thus, it is left to the interpreter to mine for the hidden meaning in the text. The interpreter thereby makes use of a respected text in a contemporary and novel way.¹⁶

Allegorical interpretation was similarly applied to the Old Testament by Philo, a first-century Jew living in Alexandria, who attempted to find points of contact between the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. Philo was fundamentally apologetic. He used the Old Testament texts primarily to make philosophical points relevant to the interests of the Hellenistic culture of Alexandria, and thereby bring to them a new religious perspective.¹⁷

This, however, is not the meaning attached to allegory by ancient Christian theology, which used it in a very general sense to refer to the mysteries of Christ and the Church as they appear in Scripture. The allegorical meaning was historically rooted, and intimately connected to the letter of the text. At times, however, allegory was employed in a manner similar to the Hellenistic.¹⁸ Noting all this, Henri De Lubac favors the term "spiritual interpretation" to denominate the traditional approach. He approves of the term 'typological,' which has come into use in the last hundred and twenty five years or so, but sees it as inadequate for expressing the range of interpretation encompassed by the term "spiritual interpretation," though it has sometimes been used synonymously with it. Typology is too far limited to the historical sense.¹⁹

The Reformers, Clarity & Continuity

The Reformers' reaction to allegorical interpretation rose from the context of sixteenth-century polemics. The Reformers faced a three-fold challenge that evolved in relation to the method and role of exegesis. First they were engaged in doctrinal disputes with the Roman Church and claimed scriptural warrant for their side. This naturally raised the second question of the proper interpretation of Scripture, which led ultimately to the third and fundamental issue of authority: If the authority for interpretation resides in the Church, how is the Church itself to be tested and, when necessary, reformed?²⁰

The Reformers often contended with Roman polemicists who, adducing support from Clement of Alexandria among others, claimed that, to some degree, Scripture was intrinsically puzzling.²¹ To this the Reformers objected, first, that Scripture is not by nature puzzling. It is "perspicuous," as Luther said, or "effective," as Calvin would more likely put it. It is clear enough to be a sure guide to human action.²² It is, secondly, self-interpreting, requiring no extrinsic tradition to open its secrets. It ought to be interpreted in the light of tradition, to be sure, but that tradition is simply the christocentric criterion of interpretation handed down from the earliest era of the Church.²³ Finally, that tradition is public, and so public appeal to that tradition ought to be available in the Church.²⁴ Thus, the present state and teaching of the Church must be tested against Scripture, not vice versa.

There are genuine differences between the Reformers' approach to Scripture, especially in relation to tradition, and the Roman Catholic approach. It would be a misreading, however, to see the Reformers as rejecting the predominant patristic and medieval stance toward biblical interpretation as essentially christological. While Calvin is perhaps the harshest of the Reformation critics of what he saw as excessive, or fanciful allegory, he often evinces deep respect for the patristic tradition.²⁵ Despite the antagonism he felt toward some aspects of medieval exegesis, when it comes to reading the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, and allowing it to speak in the voice of Christ, he stands in continuity with the earliest interpretative tradition of the Church, a tradition visible throughout the medieval period as well.

Calvin's Subtle Approach

Calvin's approach to interpretation of the Old Testament was a subtle one. There are similarities and differences between the two Testaments, as Calvin so meticulously demonstrates in *The Institutes*, because God works in perceptible patterns. Therefore Calvin can speak of *anagoge*, or "transference," by which a text that in its Old Testament context referred to one thing, may be applied to another. The "rough goat" of Dan. 8:24–25 is, Calvin warmly asserts, not the Antichrist, but Antiochus. What is said here of Antiochus, however, may legitimately be transferred to the Antichrist, on the principle that "whatever happened to the olden Church relates also to us, because we have come into the fullness of time."²⁶

It has been suggested that by using *anagoge*, Calvin may even be making use of the *sensus mysticus*, or "spiritual interpretation."²⁷ He uses the language of the "four senses," but makes use of transference and allegory in such a way as to protect the primacy of the historical sense.²⁸ He also manifests a similar concern to that which led Philo and Clement to allegorize, a concern for dealing with texts that seem incompatible with true religion. Calvin, however, deals with these by applying the principle of accommodation, rather than allegory.²⁹ Calvin was deeply concerned not to allow aberrant exegesis to be employed to support doctrinal error, especially behind the defense of a special tradition that presupposed the impenetrability of the text—but he by no means dispensed with the traditional Christian typology, nor abandoned the view that all of Scripture only can be read properly as fulfilled in Christ.³⁰

Still, Henri de Lubac vehemently criticizes Calvin's approach to the Old Testament as a runaway reaction to admitted abuses in the Church. Calvin, he charges, by insisting on adding nothing to the letter, ends by diminishing the significance of what Christ added to the Old Covenant.³¹ De Lubac hastens to add that he does not wish to exaggerate the difference between the traditional spiritual exegesis and that of Calvin; that it is frequently a matter of emphasis;³² and that the Reformers' criticisms of allegorism are often warranted.

My point is, that while De Lubac may be right in his criticism of Calvin's over-literalism, Calvin maintains a mentality that is far closer to that of the Fathers than to modern historical-critical interpreters, who are concerned to interpret the text only from a "scientific" standpoint. They often miss both the literary import of the typological structure of the Bible and the philosophical implications of accepting the Bible as authoritative interpretation of reality.

Finding the Voice of Christ

This christological mentality allows Calvin to see Christ throughout the Psalms and to apply the Psalms to New Testament realities. Calvin applies this principle to one of the Psalter's starkest imprecatory psalms in his preface to Psalm 109:

. . . although David here complains of injuries which he sustained, yet as he was a typical character, everything that is expressed in the Psalm must properly be applied to Christ, the Head of the Church, and to all the faithful inasmuch as they are his members; so that when unjustly treated and tormented by their enemies, they may apply to God for help, to whom vengeance belongs.³³

Similarly, not only are the grace, beauty and virtue of Solomon, and the riches of his kingdom are described in Psalm 45, but also

At the same time, there can be no doubt, that under this figure the majesty, wealth and extent of Christ's kingdom are described and illustrated by appropriate terms, to teach the faithful that there is no felicity greater or more desirable than to live under the reign of this king, and to be subject to his government.³⁴

Calvin's preface to Olivetan's New Testament is a striking example of his christocentric attitude to the Scripture. He views a number of characters as figures of Christ, who are not explicitly so interpreted in the New Testament—Isaac, Joseph, Jacob, Solomon, Samson. The whole of the Old Testament is viewed as finding its fulfillment, directly or indirectly, in Christ:

For, this is eternal life; to know one, only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, whom he has established as the beginning, the middle and the end of our salvation. He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob, the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrificer and bishop Melchizedek, who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses, writing his law on the tables of our hearts by his Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the victorious and noble king David, bringing by his hand all rebellious power to subjection. He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon, governing his kingdom in peace and prosperity. He is the strong and powerful Samson, who by his death has overwhelmed all his enemies. . . . This is what we should in short seek in the whole of Scripture: truly to know Jesus Christ, and the infinite riches that are comprised in him and are offered to us by him from God the Father. If one were to sift through the whole Law and the Prophets, he would not find a single word which would not draw and bring us to him.

Furthermore, Calvin is able to cite an allegory with approbation.

The allegory of Ambrose on this passage is not displeasing to me. Jacob, the younger brother, is blessed under the person of the elder; the garments which were borrowed from his brother breathe an odour grateful and pleasant to his father. In the same manner, we are blessed, as Ambrose teaches, when, in the name of Christ, we enter the presence of our Heavenly Father: we receive from Him the robe of righteousness, which, by its odour, procures his favour; in short, we are thus blessed when we are put in his place.³⁵

Calvin's typological reading of the Bible has been vindicated on literary grounds, as Frye demonstrates. But there is more here. The exhortation above is a manifestation of a religious attitude. The reader of the Scripture, while attending to the grammatical structure of the text, the literal meaning of the words, does not function simply as a human interpreter. As the spiritual man reads the Scripture, the Holy Spirit moves in his heart so as to render to him the pattern of his dealings with the world.³⁶ Calvin does not simply read the Bible as a text; he hears in it a Voice.³⁷ He is convinced that Christ is to be sought in the whole Bible, and that he who seeks, finds.

The Implications of Christ in All the Scriptures

These observations are not meant to demonstrate that there was a precritical hermeneutic that was wholly unified in its approach to christological interpretation. There are admittedly differences in emphasis between Calvin's approach and the approach that underlies the "proto-evangelium," for example. We can, however, see the gulf that divides even Calvin from the modern historical-critical approach. That gulf separates those who take a fundamentally christological approach to the Bible, seeing it as intended by its divine Author to speak to men in every age of Christ, and those who see christological interpretation as something tacked onto the text, perhaps with impressive creativity and skill, by the New Testament authors and by later exegetes.

The implications of a christological approach to the whole Bible are broad and deep. Its significance may be sketched out in at least three areas: spirituality, culture, and ecumenism, the last albeit only briefly.

The importance of a christocentric mentality for spirituality is especially striking in relation to the Psalms. Scholarly discussion of the Psalms over the last seventy-five years has centered on theories

concerning their *Sitz im Leben* (i.e., their original setting in the life and worship of the Hebrews). This is an important question insofar as it touches on the history of Israel and its cult and contributes to an intelligent reading of the Old Testament as history. Yet, the Psalms are prayers—that is their literary genre—and this must be taken into account in interpreting them. All historical hypotheses must be tentative, reflecting an awareness that the documents in question are not written as religious history, but as dialogues.³⁸ It follows from this that a christological reading restores to the Psalms their existential significance. For the purpose of prayer, the original *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm is well-nigh irrelevant; one must not so much enter the mind of the original psalmist, as learn to make the psalm one's own. Indeed, the value of the Psalms as prayers lies in their applicability to an almost infinite variety of human situations.

Furthermore, if a Christian is to sincerely pray the Psalms, he must do so as a Christian. A twentieth-century Norwegian Baptist cannot pray as a sixth-century–B.C. Israelite. Some kind of analogy is required. The land for a Christian has the same significance that it had for an Israelite: security, provision, and identity. Yet, the Christian prays Psalm 37, for example, with a clearer prospect of the reception of those gifts in the age to come, when “the meek shall inherit the earth.” This christocentric framework has enabled Christians throughout the centuries to sincerely pray even the imprecatory psalms, knowing that, while the Israelite who first prayed Psalm 137 may have applied it to the hated Babylonians, one may pray this same psalm, with full sincerity, in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, against the evil inclinations of his own flesh—an enemy just as real, and far more deadly than the might of Babylon.

A Reading of Scripture for All Christians

The mentality that undergirds this kind of prayer has been transmitted through Christian culture built upon a christological, narrative reading of the Bible.³⁹ This mentality, while perhaps not sufficient to allow for the full expression of the traditional “spiritual interpretation,” is necessary to it. The fundamental conviction of the Christian is that God has acted in history and has come to us in Christ. One must accept the biblical story in its fullness as the story of our world, of my world, in order for spiritual interpretation to be genuine, and not simply a literary game. George Lindbeck has noted the decline of narrative Bible reading and its coincidence with the erosion of a common mind in the Church.⁴⁰ The traditional narrative/typological/spiritual reading of Scripture is unitive. It is a myth, in the anthropological sense of the term: a story that explains the world and forms the worldview of a people, among whom it is passed on.

Now, the power of a myth is in proportion to its acceptance as a depiction of reality. Carl Amerding has pointed out that the story that the Bible tells gives its own indications that it is meant to depict actual events—to be taken seriously, accepted as a true depiction of reality, it must be seen to have some relation to actual historical events. In Amerding's view, that they took place, and are typically related, is the claim of the Bible itself.⁴¹ To carry the weight of conviction, the typological, and thus the christological, reading of the Bible must be rooted in faith that the central events the Bible narrates—Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, and the central events of the history of Israel in their general outlines—actually took place. The tools of historical-critical method cannot be ignored, but must, rather, be employed in an even-handed way that does not blithely dismiss the extraordinary, or indeed the miraculous, and remains aware of its own limitations.⁴²

Thus, a new synthesis is demanded, one which unites modern historical-critical tools, literary alertness to the Bible's self-interpretation, and systematic theology in a way that feeds spiritual life. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has put it:

The time seems to have arrived for a new and thorough reflection on exegetical method. Scientific exegesis must recognize the philosophic element present in a great number of its ground rules, and it must then reconsider the results which are based on these rules. . . . What we need now are not new hypotheses on the *Sitz im Leben*, on possible sources, or on the subsequent process of handing down the material. What we do need is a critical look at the exegetical landscape we now have, so that we may return to the text, and distinguish between

those hypotheses which are helpful and those which are not. Only under these conditions can a new and fruitful collaboration between exegesis and systematic theology begin. And only in this way will exegesis be of real help in understanding the Bible.⁴³

Such a new synthesis may yield both greater interest in the study of the Old Testament, (a field the critical issue for which, as Amerding has suggested, is, “Is anybody listening?”)⁴⁴ and greater conviction about what C. S. Lewis described as “a myth that really happened.”

Thus, a return to christocentric interpretation means a return to the text as it understands itself; to the Bible as the primary source of dogma (as both Reformers and their predecessors held); to an exegesis built on faith; and to a reading of the Bible aimed at nourishing spiritual life.⁴⁵

The current climate is a far different one than that in which the sixteenth-century polemic occurred, and far more conducive to perceiving the common assumptions and approaches that both Roman Catholics and Protestants brought to their debates.⁴⁶ The call for a postmodern hermeneutic of faith comes from quarters as diverse as the Tyndale Fellowship, the Evangelical Orthodox Church, and the Cardinal Prefect of the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In this enterprise, the dividing lines may no longer separate Roman Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox from one another, but separate those who approach the Bible with trust from those who follow “a radical hermeneutic of suspicion.”⁴⁷ That can only be a happy prospect for the rebuilding of Christian unity and culture.

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Notes:

1. G. W. H. Lampe, “The Reasonableness of Typology” in G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe, *Essays In Typology* (Studies In Biblical Theology, vol. 22) London: SCM Press, 1956, p. 9.
2. “Hermeneutic” here is used in its broad sense, of the whole process of understanding, or to use Schleiermacher’s term, “the art of understanding,” as applied not only to the linguistic matter of the text, but also to the import of it. Gerhard Ebeling, “Hermeneutics,” translated by Charles McCullough from *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1959, v. 3, 242–262. Raymond Brown, “Hermeneutics” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990, p. 1147.
3. Hans Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?” in *The Bible And Narrative Tradition*, Frank McConnell ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. See G. W. H. Lampe, “The Reasonableness of Typology” for a lucid description of the signal change that has come upon, not only the academic world, but the whole of Christian culture since the rise of biblical criticism.
4. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982, pp. xii–xiii.
5. Frye, p. 80. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 16 and passim. The observations of these two authors are especially interesting and important, because they are approaching the Bible as literary critics, not as theologians. They have no prior commitment to a particular “biblical theology”—nor are they seeking to establish one. They base their conclusions on what they see in the text itself as a literary work.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des alten Testaments im Neuen*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliches Buchgesellschaft, 1981, p. 237.
9. D. Moody Smith, “The Pauline Literature” in *Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 287.
10. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, p. 80. Cf. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 16.
11. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study In Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, ch. 2.
12. T. H. L. Parker sees three main streams among the various sixteenth-century views of the Old Testament. He groups the Reformers and Roman Catholics together, in opposition to both the freethinkers and Anabaptists. The second group were a small minority, but Calvin sees them as the main threat in some of his commentaries. (T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986, p. 44.) Yet, because of their emphasis on the investigation of the author’s intention, and the use of what we would now term “critical tools,” many see the Reformers as the forerunners of historical-, form-, and redaction-critics. (Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, London: Harper/Collins, 1992, p. 158.)
13. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1874, vol. 1, p. 170. (Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Calvin’s commentaries are taken from *Calvin’s Commentaries*, James Anderson, tr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949.)
14. *Ibid.*
15. Thiselton, p. 158.

16. Ibid. Manlio Simonetti claims that in order to understand the allegorical interpretative method among the Greeks, it is important to recognize the prestige of Homer's works, so great that divine origins were attributed to him. Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, John A. Hughes, tr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.
17. Simonetti, pp. 6–7. Robert Grant, David Tracey, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p.160.
18. Henri de Lubac, *The Sources Of Revelation, (L'Ecriture dans la tradition)* Luke O'Neill, tr., N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1968, p. 12.
19. Ibid., p. 16.
20. The reformers were also concerned to reestablish the Scripture itself as the immediate source for theology. As G. R. Evans concludes at the end of her two-volume study, *The Language and Logic of The Bible*: "Perhaps the essential difference between the sixteenth-century view and that of the late medieval centuries is the bringing together again of speculative theology and exegesis, which had become separated for the purposes of study into two parallel tracks in the late twelfth century. After some practice Luther could use the Bible as a source-book for theological discussion, without reference to sentences or summa. This new complexion of exegesis undoubtedly contributed to the polarization of Protestant and Roman Catholic views of the nature of the enterprise which took place in the sixteenth century. Polemical treatises from either side reflect upon the assumptions and principles of the other. . . . Yet this awareness of differences covers, as we have seen, a vast bulk of common endeavour and hides from view the preponderance of common assumptions about the nature and purpose of Scripture on which apologists for both sides were in fact proceeding." G. R. Evans, *The Language And Logic of the Bible: The Road To Reformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 158–59.
21. Not all, nor perhaps most, of the Roman opponents of the Reformers approached the debate from this angle. Peter Canisius is a notable example of one who also held that the Scripture is self-interpreting, that appeal to tradition is made only to deal with the most difficult and disputed passages, and that in that case it has primarily something of an adjudicating role. (James Broderick, *Life of St. Peter Canisius*, pp. 404–405.)
22. Calvin uses *perspicuitas* as a rhetorical term. The interpreter allows the text to become perspicuous by allowing the author's intentions to flow from it. He uses the term "effectiveness," much as Luther uses "perspicuity" (Thiselton, p. 185.)
23. Ibid., p. 156.
24. Ibid., p. 155.
25. Ibid., p. 179.
26. Parker, p. 73.
27. Though Evans, v.2, p. 48, states baldly that the Reformers put this behind them.
28. Parker, p. 74.
29. David F. Wright, "Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 21 (1986), p. 36.
30. Klaas Runia, "The Hermeneutics of the Reformers," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 19 (1984), p. 143.
31. de Lubac, pp. 75–77.
32. Ibid. p. 77.
33. *Commentaries*, Psalm 109.
34. *Commentaries*, Psalm 45, preface.
35. *Commentary on Genesis*. 27:27.
36. Ibid., p. 24.
37. Runia, p. 151.
38. "Dialogue" here is meant to reflect the prophetic element, by which God is the direct speaker in, for example, Psalm 89.
39. For a brilliant survey of patristic interpretation of Psalm 1, which brings this approach into high relief, cf. Chrysogonus Waddell, "A Christological Interpretation Of Psalm 1? The Psalter and Christian Prayer," *Communio*, 22.3, 3 (Autumn 1995), pp. 502–21.
40. Lindbeck, George, "Scripture, Consensus, and Community," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, Richard John Neuhaus, ed., Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 74–101.
41. Carl E. Amerding, "Faith and Method in Old Testament Study: Story Exegesis," in *A Pathway Into The Holy Scripture*, Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright, eds., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, pp. 31–49.
42. This raises grand issues that are well beyond the scope of this paper. Joseph Ratzinger brings out some dangers inherent in criticism that is unaware of its own prejudices, using Bultmann and Dibelius as examples. (Joseph Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, cited above.) In the field of Old Testament criticism, one might point to the likely demise of the Four-Source Hypothesis as a foundation for Old Testament study, to the increasing interest in the study of the text in its final form. One thinks also of the archaeological evidence uncovered in the last sixty years that points to a large-scale invasion of Palestine around the time the Conquest of the land would have begun: the idea of any kind of conquest had previously been dismissed as the imaginative product of later generations.
43. Ratzinger, pp. 22–23.
44. Amerding, p. 31.
45. Amerding points to the importance of two elements in exegesis: the working of the Holy Spirit in the interpreter and the use of the faculty of imagination, which, of course, is deeply affected by the attitude that the interpreter brings to the text. Amerding, pp. 37–38.
46. Evans, pp. 158–59.
47. Thiselton, p. 141.

The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Has Given Us Life from an Easter homily by Melito of Sardis (180 AD)

There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: that mystery is Christ, and to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself; he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow.

He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the hand of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own Spirit, and the members of our body with his own blood.

He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One that smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.

It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed him. In Abel he was slain, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, dishonored in the prophets.

It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of his was broken; in the earth his body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.

At the Garden Gate

by John Damascene, 8th century

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for training in righteousness." [2 Tim. 3:16] The soul therefore gains great advantage from the reading of the Bible.

"Like a tree planted by streams of water," [Psalm 1:3] the soul is irrigated by the Bible and acquires vigor, produces tasty fruit, namely, true faith, and is beautified with a thousand green leaves, namely, actions that please God. The Bible, in fact, leads us towards pure holiness and holy actions. In it we find encouragement to all the virtues and the warning to flee from evil.

The Bible is a scented garden, delightful, beautiful. It enchants our ears with birdsong in a sweet, divine and spiritual harmony, it touches our heart, comforts us in sorrow, soothes us in a moment of anger, and fills us with eternal joy. Let us knock at its gate with diligence and with perseverance. Let us not be discouraged from knocking. The latch will be opened. If we have read a page of the Bible two or three times and have not understood it, let us not be tired of re-reading it and meditating on it. Let us seek in the fountain of this garden 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' [John 4:14] We shall taste a joy that will never dry up, because the grace of the Bible garden is inexhaustible.

[Excerpt from *On the Orthodox Faith* by John Damascene]

Christ in All the Scriptures

by Alice M. Hodgkin

[whole book available online at: http://www.thebookwurm.com/amh_tc.htm]

Introduction: The Testimony of Christ to the Scriptures –

"Abraham rejoiced to see My day." "Moses wrote of Me." "David called [Me] Lord." ([John 8:56](#); [5:46](#); [Mat 22:45](#)) We have in these words of our Saviour abundant authority for seeking Him in the Old Testament, and also a confirmation of the truth of the Scriptures themselves. To those of us who believe in Christ as truly God, as well as truly Man, His word on these matters is authoritative. He would not have said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day," if Abraham had been a mythological character; He would not have said, "Moses wrote of Me," if the Books of Moses had been written hundreds of years later; nor would He have quoted from the 110th Psalm to prove that David called Him Lord, if that Psalm had not been written till the time of the Maccabees.

With regard to our Lord's reference to the Books of Moses, the testimony is peculiarly emphatic. It was no mere passing reference to them. The whole force of the argument again and again lies in the fact that He regarded Moses, not as a mere title by which certain books were known, but as personally the actor in the history which they record and the author of the legislation which they contain. "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law?" ([Joh 7:19](#)) "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" ([Joh 5:46,47](#)). He condemned the traditions with which the Pharisees overlaid the laws and teaching of Moses as "*making the word of God of none effect*" ([Mark 7:13](#)). To the leper He said, "Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded" ([Mat 8:4](#)). That command of Moses is found in the very heart of the priestly code which some would have us believe was framed centuries after the days of Moses.

From a careful study of the Gospels, we cannot fail to see that the Old Testament Scriptures were continually upon Christ's lips, because [they] were always hidden in His heart. In the temptation in the wilderness, He defeated the devil, not with any manifestation of His Divine glory, not by a power which we cannot wield, not even by His own words; but He fell back upon written words which had strengthened the saints of many ages, thus showing us how we also may meet and foil our great adversary. It is specially helpful to note that it is out of Deuteronomy that our Lord selects, "as pebbles from the clear brook" [cp. [1Sam 17:39,40](#)], His three conclusive answers to the tempter ([Deu 8:3](#); [6:13,14](#); [6:16](#); cp. [Mat 4:1-11](#)). For we have been told that this Book of Deuteronomy is a pious forgery of the time of Josiah, purporting to be written by Moses to give it greater weight in bringing about the much needed reforms. Would our Lord-- who is Himself the Truth-- have thus countenanced a book full of untruths, and have used it in the critical moment of His conflict with the devil? And would not "the father of lies" [the devil] have known perfectly well if the book had been a forgery?

When Christ commenced His public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth with the words of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor," He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" ([Luk 4:17-21](#)). In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled" ([Mat 5:17-19](#)).

In these days, we have many books *about* the Bible, but very little searching of the Scriptures themselves. A careful study of what Jesus says about the Old Testament Scriptures, asking for the light of the Holy Spirit upon the pages, would well repay the Bible student. Very few realise how abundant are our Lord's quotations from the Old Testament. He refers to twenty Old Testament characters. He quotes from nineteen different books. He refers to the creation of man, to the institution of marriage, to the history of Noah, of Abraham, of Lot, and to the overthrow of Sodom and

Gomorrah as described in Genesis; to the appearing of God to Moses in the bush, to the manna, to the ten commandments, to the tribute money mentioned in Exodus. He refers to the ceremonial law for the purification of lepers, and to the great moral law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," both contained in Leviticus. [He refers] to the brazen serpent, and the law regarding vows, in Numbers. We have already dwelt upon His threefold quotation from Deuteronomy. He refers to David's flight to the high priest at Nob, to the glory of Solomon and the visit of the Queen of the Sheba, to Elijah's sojourn with the widow of Sarepta, to the healing of Naaman, and to the killing of Zechariah-- from various historical books. And as regards the Psalms and the Prophetic writings, if possible the Divine authority of our Lord is yet more deeply stamped on them than on the rest of the Old Testament. "Have ye not read?" or "It is written," is the ground of Christ's constant appeal; "The Scripture cannot be broken," "The Scriptures testify of Me," "The Scripture must be fulfilled," [is] His constant assertion. Questioned concerning the resurrection, Jesus answered, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures. *Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God*, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Our Lord here attributes the scepticism of the Sadducees partly to their not understanding the Scriptures, He proves from the Bible the fact of the resurrection, and He asserts that the very words uttered by God are contained therein ([Mat 22:29-32](#)).

As He drew near to the Cross, our Saviour's testimony to the Scriptures has a still more sacred import. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished" ([Luk 18:31](#)). "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, --And He was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth Me hath fulfillment" ([Luk 22:37](#), RV). On the night of His betrayal, in the shade of Olivet, three times our Saviour points to the fulfillment of these Scriptures in Himself (see [Mat 26:31,53,54](#); [Mark 14:48,49](#)). Three of His seven utterances upon the Cross were in the words of Scripture, and He died with one of them on His lips.

But perhaps the strongest testimony of all, which Christ bore to the Old Testament, was after His resurrection. On the very day that He rose He said to the two disciples going to Emmanus, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" ([Luk 24:25-27](#)).

Not only did He sanction the Scriptures, but also that method of interpretation which finds, throughout the Old Testament, a witness to the Messiah of the New. Thus on the very first day of our Lord's return [from the dead] He resumed His former method of instruction, even more emphatically than before, proving His claims, not so much by His own personal victory over death, as by the testimony of the Scriptures. After this, Jesus appeared to the eleven [disciples] and said: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" ([Luk 24:44-46](#)). Even those who would seek to place limits upon Christ's wisdom and knowledge during His life on earth would surely not extend this to the period of His risen life. And it is during this period that He sets His seal upon the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the threefold division of the complete Old Testament Scriptures according to the Jews, the very same Scriptures that are in our possession today.

But, lest even this should not be enough to confirm our faith, we are given, in the Book of Revelation, a glimpse of our glorified Saviour, still "this same Jesus," still quoting from the Scriptures, and still applying them to Himself. He says: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" ([Rev 1:17,18](#)). And again: "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" ([Rev 3:7](#)). Here He quotes from the two parts of the one Book of Isaiah, from chapter [44:6](#), which says: "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God.... Fear ye not," and from chapter [22:22](#): "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall

open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open."

Truly the key-- not only of life and death, but the key to the Scriptures-- is laid upon His shoulder, and He still unlocks the meaning of the Book to those who are humble enough for Him to unlock the understanding of their hearts.

The Testimony of the Scriptures to Christ –

Looking forward into the future from the earliest ages, God's servants saw One who was to come, and as the time approached this vision grew so clear that it would be almost possible for us to describe Christ's life on earth from the Old Testament Scriptures, of which He Himself said, "They testify of Me."

There was one central figure in Israel's hope. The work of the world's redemption was to be accomplished by one Man, the promised Messiah. It is He who was to bruise the serpent's head ([Gen 3:15](#)); He was to be descended from Abraham ([Gen 22:18](#)), and from the tribe of Judah ([Gen 49:10](#)).

Isaiah looked forward and saw first a great Light shining upon the people that walked in darkness ([Isa 9:2](#)). And as he gazed, he saw that a child was to be born, a Son was to be given ([9:6](#)), and with growing amazement there dawned upon him these names, as describing the nature of the child.

- *Wonderful*- Wonderful, indeed, in His birth, for the advent of no other child had ever been heralded by the hosts of heaven. His birth of a virgin ([Isa 7:14](#)), and the appearance of the star ([Num 24:17](#)), were alike wonderful. Increasingly wonderful was He in His manhood, and most wonderful of all in His perfect sinlessness.
- *Counsellor*- "Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" ([Col 2:3](#)).
- *The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father*- There dawned upon Isaiah the consciousness that this promised One was none other than God manifest in the flesh, "Immanuel, God with us" ([Isa 7:14](#)). As Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are One" ([Joh 10:30](#)).
- *The Prince of Peace*- This name specially belongs to Jesus, for "He is our Peace." His birth brought Peace on earth, and leaving it He bequeathed Peace to His disciples, "having made Peace through the blood of His Cross."

Then the prophet sees the child that was to be born seated on the throne of His father David, and he sees the glorious spread of His kingdom. Though born of a royal house, it was to be in the time of its humiliation. "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock [stump] of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit" ([Isa 11:1](#) RV). We have, in this, a glimpse of His lowliness and poverty.

And now the prophets, one by one, fill in the picture, each adding a fresh, vivid touch. The prophet Micah sees the little town where Jesus was to be born, and tells us it is Bethlehem ([Mic 5:2](#); [Mat 2:6](#)); Isaiah sees the adoration of the Magi ([Isa 60:3](#); [Mat 2:1](#)); Jeremiah pictures the death of the innocents ([Jer 31:15](#); [Mat 2:17,18](#)); and Hosea foreshadows the flight into Egypt ([Hos 11:1](#); [Mat 2:15](#)); Isaiah portrays His meekness and gentleness ([Isa 42:2](#); [Mat 11:29](#)), and the wisdom and knowledge which Jesus manifested all through His life from the time of His talking with the doctors in the Temple.

Again, when He cleansed the Temple, the words of the Psalmist came at once to the memory of the disciples, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" ([Psa 69:9](#); [Joh 2:17](#)). Isaiah pictured Him preaching good tidings to the meek, binding up the broken-hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and giving the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ([Isa 61:1-3](#); [Luk 4:16-21](#)). Mourning was turned into joy when Jesus came into the presence of death. The poor woman "whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years," was loosed at His word. His gospel was indeed the message of good tidings. Isaiah pictured even that sweetest scene of all, the Good Shepherd blessing the little children, for "He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom" ([Isa 40:11](#); [Mark 10:16](#)). Then Zechariah sings, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion," for he sees her lowly King entering Jerusalem, riding on an ass's colt, another Psalm adds the Hosannahs of the children. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength

because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" ([Zech 9:9](#); [Psa 8:2](#); [Mat 21:4,5](#)).

The prophets foresaw something of the character and extent of the Saviour's work. The light that was to shine forth from Zion was to be for all the world; Jew and Gentile alike were to be blessed. The Spirit of God was to be poured out upon all flesh ([Joel 2:28](#)). "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" ([Isa 52:10](#)). The picture of a victorious, triumphant Messiah was a familiar one to the Jews of our Saviour's time. So engrossed were they with this side of the picture that they did not recognise Him when He came, and John the Baptist said, "There standeth One among you *whom ye know not*." "Had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But they ought to have known it, for the prophets who foretold His glory had spoken in no less certain tones of His lowliness, His rejection and His sufferings. "Behold," says Isaiah, "my Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high" ([Isa 52:13](#))-- when suddenly, what does he see in the next verse? "As many were astonished at Thee, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." And how shall we picture the astonishment of the prophet as the vision of the fifty-third chapter dawns upon him with all the majesty of the suffering Messiah? From the root of Jesse was to spring up a tender plant who was to be rejected by Israel. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" ([Isa 53:3](#)).

As the prophet's steadfast gaze is fixed upon the future, he sees this Holy One led "as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, so He openeth not His mouth" ([Isa 53:7](#); see [Mat 27:12-14](#)). He sees Him dying a death by violence, for "He was cut off out of the land of the living" ([Isa 53:8](#)). Daniel takes up the same thought and tells us, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" ([Dan 9:26](#)). And now once more a chorus of the prophets unite their voices to tell us the manner of His death. The Psalmist sees that He is to be betrayed by one of His own disciples-- "Yea, Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me" ([Psa 41:9](#)). Zechariah tells us of the thirty pieces of silver that were weighed for His price, and adds that the money was cast to the potter ([Zech 11:12,13](#); [Jer 19](#); [Mat 27:3-10](#)). He also sees the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten ([Zech 13:7](#); [Mat 26:31,56](#)). Isaiah sees Him taken from one tribunal to another ([Isa 53:8](#); [Joh 18:24,28](#)). The Psalmist foretells the false witnesses called in to bear witness against Him ([Psa 27:12](#); [Mat 26:59,60](#)). Isaiah sees Him scourged and spit upon ([Isa 50:6](#); [Mat 26:67](#); [27:26-30](#)). The Psalmist sees the actual manner of His death, that it was by crucifixion, "They pierced My hands and My feet" ([Psa 22:16](#)). His being reckoned with criminals and making intercession for His murderers were alike foretold ([Isa 53:12](#); [Mark 15:27](#); [Luk 23:34](#)). So clear did the vision of the Psalmist become that he sees Him mocked by the passers-by ([Psa 22:6-8](#)); [Mat 27:39-44](#)). He sees the soldiers parting His garments among them, and casting lots for His vesture ([Psa 22:18](#); [Joh 19:23,24](#)), and giving Him vinegar to drink in His thirst ([Psa 69:21](#); [Joh 19:28,29](#)). With quickened ear he hears His cry in the hour of His anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" ([Psa 22:1](#); [Mat 27:46](#)), and His dying words, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit" ([Psa 31:5](#); [Luk 23:46](#)). And, taught by the Holy Gost, the Psalmist writes the words, "Reproach hath broken My heart" ([Psa 69:20](#)). John tells us that though the soldiers brake the legs of the two thieves to hasten their death, "when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.... For these things were done, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again, They shall look on Him whom they pierced" ([Joh 19:32-37](#); [Ex 12:46](#); [Psa 34:20](#); [Zech 12:10](#)). Isaiah tells us that "though they had made His grave with the wicked"-- that is, intended to bury Him in the place where they buried malefactors [criminals]-- yet it was ordered otherwise, and He was actually buried "with the rich in His death." "For there came a rich man of Arimathaea named Joseph... and begged the body of Jesus... and laid it in his own new tomb" ([Isa 53:9](#); [Mat 27:57-60](#)).

But the vision of the prophets stretched beyond the Cross and the tomb, and embraced the resurrection and ascension and final triumph of the Saviour. David sings: "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" ([Psa 16:10,11](#)). And Isaiah, after he has prophesied the humiliation and death of the Messiah, closes the same prophecy with these remarkable words: "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His

seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" ([Isa 53:10,11](#)).

From the remotest past, the saints looked forward to events which still lie before us in the future. "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" ([Jude 1:14](#)). The patriarch Job said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth... whom I shall see for myself" ([Job 19:25-27](#)). Zechariah had a vision of the Mount of Olives with the Lord standing there, King over all the earth, and all the saints with Him ([Zech 14:4-9](#)).

And as the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, so certainly shall also the prophecies of the future. "Now we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour" ([Heb 2:8,9](#)). And He says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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