

Hermeneutics – Typology

What is Typology?

“the study of spiritual correspondences between persons, events and things within the historical framework of revelation.”

— S. Lewis Johnson, Lectures on Leviticus 3.

“Types are pictures, object-lessons, by which God taught His people concerning His grace and saving power. The Mosaic system was a sort of kindergarten in which God's people were trained in divine things, by which also they were led to look for better things to come.”

— William G. Moorehead, is reproduced from The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago: Howard-Severance Co., 1930), vol. 5, 3029-3030.

“A figure or ensample of something future and more or less prophetic, called the ‘Antitype.’”

— Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, 768.

“The preordained representative relation which certain persons, events and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events and institutions in the New.”

— Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, 246.

“A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment or antitype is found in the New Testament revelation.”

— Baker's Dictionary of Theology, 533.

“the study of types and the historical and theological correspondence between them.”

— David L. Baker, Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament, Scottish Journal of Theology 29 [1976]: 153.

“The biblical text has only one meaning, its literal meaning, and this is to be found by means of grammatical-historical study. If the author intended a typical significance it will be clear in the text. And if we see a typical significance not perceived by the original author it must be consistent with the literal meaning. Typology is not an exegesis or interpretation of a text but a study of relationships between events, persons and institutions recorded in biblical texts.”

— David L. Baker, Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament, SJT 29 (April 1976): 146-148.

“Typological interpretation is specifically the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments whereby something in the Old shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New. Hence what is interpreted in the Old is not foreign or peculiar or hidden, but rises naturally out of the text due to the relationship of the two Testaments.”

— Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 3rd rev. ed. e-book, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), 175.

“A definition of typology that includes both analogy and a prophetic element is the following: the study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God's special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning.” According to this definition, the essential characteristics of a type are (1) analogical correspondence, (2) historicity, (3) a pointing-forwardness (ie, an aspect of foreshadowing or presignification), (4) escalation, and (5) retrospection.”

— G K. Beale, Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament : Exegesis and Interpretation, (Grand Rapids, Mi, Baker Academic, 2012), 14.

Process for Identifying Types:

"By analyzing these definitions the following elements of a type are manifest: (i) In a type there must be a genuine resemblance in form or idea between the Old Testament reference and the New Testament counterpart. The connection between type and antitype must not be accidental nor superficial but real and substantial. (ii) This resemblance must be designated. The problem of designation is the crux of the Marshian principle. In fanciful systems of typology designation springs from the imagination of the interpreter either on arbitrary or superficial grounds. Previously in this work we have defended the principle of Fairbairn that types are innate and inferred. A type is properly designated when either it is so stated to be one in the New Testament, or wherein the New Testament states a whole as typical (e.g., the Tabernacle, and the Wilderness Wanderings) and it is up to the exegetical ability of the interpreter to determine additional types in the parts of these wholes. (iii) Dissimilarity is to be expected. There is no one-to-one correspondence between type and antitype. Great care must be taken to lift out of the Old Testament item precisely that which is typical and no more. There are points of pronounced similarity and equally so, points of pronounced dissimilarity between Christ and Aaron or Christ and Moses. The typical truth is at the point of similarity. One of the cardinal errors in typology is to make typical the elements of dissimilarity in a type."

— Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 3rd rev. ed. e-book, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), 178-179.

Examples of Types:

1 Corinthians 15:22 NASB

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

- Type [For as in Adam all die] ~ Historical
- Antitype [so also in Christ all will be made alive.] ~ Prophetic

Matthew 24:37 NASB

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

- Type [Just like the days of Noah] ~ Historical
- Antitype [For the coming of the Son of Man will be] ~ Prophetic

John 3:14 NASB

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

- Type [As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness] ~ Historical
- Antitype [even so must the Son of Man be lifted up] ~ Prophetic

Matthew 12:40 NASB

for just as Jonah WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Type [for just as Jonah WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER] ~ Historical
- Antitype [so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.] ~ Prophetic

"We may note six kinds of types in Scripture:

(1). Persons may be typical. Adam is a type of Christ as the head of a race (Romans 5:14, "who is the figure of him that was to come"). Abraham is the father and type of all who believe by faith. Elijah is the prefiguration of John the Baptist. Joseph is the rejected kinsman, yet future Savior. David is the type of the Great King. Solomon is the type of the Chosen Son. Zerubbabel is the type of the Head of a new society.

(2). Institutions: The sacrifices are types of the cross. Creation and the Promised Land are types of salvation rest. The passover prefigures our redemption in Christ. The Old Testament theocracy looks forward to the coming kingdom.

(3). Offices: Moses, the prophet, was a type of Christ, as was Aaron the high priest and Melchisedec the priest of the most high God.

(4). Events: Paul writes that the things which happened in the Wilderness Wanderings were types for our benefit (1 Cor. 10:6, 11).

(5). Actions: The lifting up of the brazen serpent is a type of the crucifixion (John 3:14–16). The ministries of the high priest were typical of the ministries of our Lord.

(6). Things: The Tabernacle was a type of the Incarnation—the presence of God with his people. Incense is a type of prayer. The curtains of the Tabernacle express principles of access to God.”

— Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 3rd rev. ed. e-book, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), 181.