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Typology, How the Old Testament Prefigures the New

Talk #2

Typology Explained in the New Testament



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2. Typology Explained in the New Testament

Christ Uncovers the Typological Sense of the Old Testament

The Christian way of reading the Bible was obviously deeply shaped by Israel's way of interpreting her Scriptures. Above all, the Church inherited Israel's faith in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Old Testament, the conviction that God's great works in salvation history provide the decisive light for understanding the present and future of the People of God, and the expectation of a messianic new exodus.

However, the Church differs from the synagogue in two decisive ways. First of all, it recognizes the books of the New Testament as equally inspired by the same Spirit of Truth. Secondly, the Church reads the Old Testament Scriptures in the light of explicit faith in Jesus Christ. This faith in Christ is the key to the deepest understanding of the history of Israel, in which it is possible to see a prefiguring of the Christ, the Paschal mystery, and the Church, prepared by God from the beginning.

Jesus revealed Himself as the key to understanding the Old Testament while accompanying two disciples on the road to Emmaus. These disciples were walking sadly on Easter Sunday from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus and discussing the events of the Passion. They were approached by Jesus Himself, who kept Himself from being recognized by them, appearing as a stranger:

And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. . . . And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And *beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*¹

These two disciples had lost their faith in Jesus as the Messiah because He had died a miserable death and thus failed to "redeem Israel" in the earthly sense they were expecting. Jesus explains to them that Scripture foretells that the Messiah had to "suffer these things" and die to redeem mankind, and so enter into His glory. Part of this explanation must have consisted in an interpretation of

the messianic prophecies, as in Isaiah. However, Luke says that Jesus began with Moses and interpreted to them things concerning Himself in "all the Scriptures." This makes it extremely likely that Jesus explained not only prophetic *words*, but also how the central *events* of the Old Testament prefigured His paschal mystery, which is Biblical typology. The importance of the revelation of the typological meaning of the Scriptures is brought out by the comment of the disciples on their return to Jerusalem: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he *opened to us the scriptures?*" (Lk 24:32).

The same lesson on the inner hidden meaning of the Old Testament was given some hours later when the disciples had returned from Emmaus to Jerusalem and gathered with the eleven Apostles in the upper room. At that moment Jesus walked through the locked doors and said: "*Shalom aleichem.*" After showing them the wounds in His hands and feet, and eating in front of them, 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. You are witnesses of these things."²

This text tells us that Jesus spoke not only of how the prophets spoke of His Passion, but that He began with the books of Moses, showing how they also spoke of His sufferings, death, and glory. The books of Moses contain very little direct prophecy about Christ's Passion, but they contain a great deal of symbolic prefiguring of it—in the sacrifice of Isaac, in the story of Joseph and his brothers, in the Exodus, and in various events during the wandering in the desert. Jesus must have explained not only the messianic prophecies, but also the spiritual sense of the Old Testament in general, regarding all that concerned His Passion, death, and Resurrection.³

² Lk 24:44-48

³ See Paul Quay, *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God*, 193: "After His resurrection, He declared, 'All things written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me, must be fulfilled' (Lk 24:44). This has sometimes been taken simply as asserting that the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms made predictions concerning Jesus, fulfilled only by His death, resurrection, enthronement, and sending of the Holy Spirit. Yet, if 'fulfill' be taken in the same sense as in His Sermon on the Mount, 'I have come not to abolish them [the Law and the prophets] but to fulfill them' (Mt 5:17), then any element of prediction must be, at most, secondary. Abolition is not an alternative to fulfillment for predictions."

¹ Lk 24:17-27.

How we wish we had been there with the disciples on the way to Emmaus or in the upper room to hear Jesus open the Scriptures and show how it all spoke of Him! However, though these particular discourses have not been recorded, they have certainly passed into the Tradition of the Church, molding the way that the Apostles and their successors—the early Fathers of the Church—read the Old Testament. The Christian interpretation of the Old Testament has its origin in this teaching of the Risen Christ to His disciples and Apostles.

The Sign of Jonah

On several occasions Jesus explicitly explains that persons and events in the Old Testament are types of Him. He uses this kind of typology to reveal His identity and to announce that He is greater than the types of old. One of the clearest examples is Jonah.

Some of the Pharisees were saying that He was casting out demons in the name of Beelzebul and they asked for a sign from Him to prove His divine origin. Of course, He had given very many signs already, as recorded in the Gospel. Thus He reproved them for asking for some sign above what had already been given, but promised that they would indeed be given the “sign of Jonah” (Mt 12:40–42), consisting in His death, resurrection, and the conversion of the Gentiles:

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.⁴

The story of Jonah is indeed very rich in the spiritual or typological sense. The prophet Jonah represents Jesus and also Israel as a whole with regard to their roles in the salvation of the Gentiles. The prophet is told by God to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, who were enemies and persecutors of the Jews, and to warn them of their impending destruction if they remain obstinate. However, Jonah flees from God, taking a boat to Tarshish, in the extreme opposite direction from Nineveh. A great storm arises and he confesses his guilt and at his request is thrown overboard. He is swallowed by a whale, from the belly of which he prays to the Lord, who hears him and allows him to be spit up on the shore.

Christ tells us that the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the whale represents the three days the Body of Christ spent in the tomb before rising in glory. Jonah’s being spit out of the whale on the third day represents the Resurrection of Christ. However, the parallel does not end there. For Jonah goes on to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, who are not Jews, but gentiles and fierce enemies, and surprisingly they convert and repent, and the city is not destroyed. This also is part of the figure. The Apostles, as an antitype of Jonah, preach Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the people of Nineveh, and, very surprisingly, like the Ninevites, the Gentiles are converted and do penance.

Jonah is also a figure of Israel. As Jonah converted the Ninevites, so Israel has played a great part in the conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity. Indeed, Christ tells us that “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22). The Messiah was from the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, and “born under the Law” (Gal 4:4). The Old Testament was given to the Jewish people and preserved, passed on, and revered by them. The Apostles, finally, were all faithful Jews commissioned to preach the Jewish Messiah to the ends of the earth.

However, there is one final aspect to the figure. Jonah is distressed by the conversion of the Ninevites because they were enemies of the Jewish people. (In fact, they later took the ten northern tribes into a captivity from which they never returned.) It is not unreasonable to see this negative attitude of Jonah as also a figure of the attitude of a large part of Israel to the conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity. And like the Ninevites, Christians have been the instrument of suffering and persecution for the Jewish people.

In short, Christ used the story of Jonah to make a prophecy about His own death, entombment, resurrection, the subsequent conversion of the nations, and the rancor between Jews and Christians that would occur afterwards. What happens in the story of Jonah is recapitulated in a higher way in the death and Resurrection of Christ and the formation of His Church from all peoples. The story of Jonah is fascinating even without seeing this spiritual sense, but it becomes far more marvelous when we read it in the light of Christ’s explanation.

King Solomon

This same text (Mt 12:39–42) also alludes to Solomon as a figure of Christ, and the Queen of Sheba as a figure of the conversion of the Gentiles. Solomon is a figure of Christ through his wisdom, the building of the Temple, the territorial extent of his reign, which was the largest in the history of Israel, and the peace that it enjoyed. The fact that the Queen of Sheba came from “the ends of the earth” to hear the wisdom of Solomon prefigures how the Gentile

⁴ See also the parallel passage in Lk 11:30, in which the aspect of the conversion of the Gentiles is especially emphasized: “For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation.”

nations will gradually flock to the true Temple—Christ and His Church—to hear the divine wisdom of salvation.

The Serpent of Bronze

Another example of an Old Testament narrative referred to by Jesus as a figure of Himself is Numbers 21:4–9. This text recounts an episode during the wandering of the Chosen People in the desert in which they murmured against God and Moses, complaining about the lack of the fleshpots of Egypt and expressing their loathing for the manna sent them by God. God sent fiery serpents in punishment, and the people cried out to Moses in repentance.

From 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. And 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.” Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And 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. And 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.” So 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.

It is a mysterious text. All those guilty of this ingratitude and afflicted by serpent bites could be healed by looking at a bronze serpent set on a pole and erected as a kind of standard. What was the significance of the bronze serpent set up on a pole? Read simply in the context of the five books of Moses, the detail of the bronze serpent makes little sense.

Jesus explained this detail in his nocturnal discussion with Nicodemus, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, as recorded in John 3:14–15. He said: “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.”

The bronze serpent raised up as a sign to the penitent, and capable of giving life to him, is a figure of Christ who would be raised up on the Cross. Like the serpent, Christ on the Cross appears as a sign of suffering due to sin, but when seen through the eyes of faith, becomes the means of salvation. The difference is that the bronze serpent was a lifeless statue, working a physical cure in one instance and one place alone, whereas Christ on the Cross works the spiritual salvation of all men of all times and places, if we cooperate with His grace through faith, hope, and charity.

In addition, the serpent is a symbol of sin, and of the Tempter who drew Adam and Eve to perform the first sin. Thus the serpent bound to a pole is also a symbol of vic-

tory over sin through Christ, who Himself bore all human sin and hung on a Cross in order to redeem men from its slavery. As St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The Bread of Life

In the Bread of Life discourse in John 6, Jesus presents Himself as the true bread from heaven. His listeners give Him a suitable occasion for this teaching by asking Him whether He would give them a sign similar to the manna in the desert.

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”⁵

Jesus thus indicates that the manna that fed the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years was a figure of the spiritual nourishment He would give the world through the sacrament of His Body and Blood. Furthermore, He clearly states that the type falls immeasurably short of the Antitype, which is the Eucharist. Only the Eucharist is the “*true* bread from heaven.” The type was a great sign, for it was literally bread that came physically down from heaven like dew to nourish the Israelites physically in their pilgrimage in the desert. Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist is a spiritual bread—being Christ, true God and true man—that nourishes the faithful not physically, but in sanctifying grace and charity, by which we gain access to eternal life. Christ’s Body continues to come to us “from heaven” through transubstantiation, by which He who sits now in heaven at the right hand of the Father is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine.

Typology in the Letters of St. Paul and the Catholic Epistles

The Spiritual Sense of the Old Testament According to St. Paul

St. Paul refers to the spiritual sense of the Old Testament in an interesting text from 1 Corinthians 10:1–11, in which he speaks about the moral sense of the wandering of the Chosen People in the desert for forty years:

For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud, and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food, and drank the same spiritual drink (for they drank from the spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ). Yet with most of

5 Jn 6:32–35.

them God was not well pleased, for “they were laid low in the desert.” Now these things *came to pass as examples to us*, that we should not lust after evil things even as they lusted. And do not become idolaters, even as some of them were. . . . Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur, as some of them murmured, and perished at the hands of the destroyer. Now *all these things happened to them as a type, and they are written for our correction*, upon whom the final age of the world has come.⁶

St. Paul affirms that the Israelites in the Exodus in some sense mysteriously received a prefiguration of the mysteries of Christ revealed and sacramentally given in the New Testament. The figures of the crossing of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud, the manna, the water from the rock, “embodied a hidden presence of the future mystery, they implied a mysterious participation in its reality.”⁷

St. Paul also explains the typological moral sense of the repeated rebellions of the Chosen People during their forty-year sojourn in the desert. Because of the infidelity of the Israelites, God punished them by prolonging their stay in the desert for two generations, so that all but two of the original Israelites who left Egypt died without entering the Promised Land. St. Paul says this happened to them to serve as a lesson to Christians of the necessity of vigilance and of resistance to temptation. The Israelites were allowed to fall into a series of archetypical sins of rebellion, followed by exemplary punishments, to provide a graphic example of spiritual sins. Just as the first generation of Israelites perished in the desert for lack of docility to God, so it may happen that Christians fail to reach the spiritual Promised Land through the same cause.

The last sentence of this text of St. Paul—“*all these things happened to them as a type, and they are written for our correction*”—is the most explicit Biblical statement affirming the principle of typological interpretation. Both Patristic exegesis and the liturgical usage of the Old Testament are founded on this principle.⁸ Its significance extends far beyond the particular use that St. Paul made of it in the preceding verses, for it is the general or universal principle behind the typological interpretation of the Old Testament.

6 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation (New York: Benziger Bros., 1958). As always in scriptural quotes, italics are mine.

7 Bertrand De Margerie, S.J., *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, 1:8.

8 See De Margerie, S.J., *History of Exegesis*, 1:7: “Such a principle, set forth so broadly and without limitation, constitutes the inspired basis of patristic exegesis, even if the latter occasionally abused it.” See also Pierre Grelot, *Sens chrétien de l’Ancien Testament: esquisse d’un traité dogmatique* (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1962), 25–26.

Typology of the Passover According to 1 Corinthians 5:6–8

In 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, St. Paul interprets the unleavened bread in the Jewish Passover as a type of the Christian life:

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Joseph Ratzinger comments:

Here the two essential elements of the Old Testament Pasch appear: the sacrificial lamb and the unleavened bread; thus appears the Christological basis and the anthropological, behavioral implications of the sacrifice of Christ. If the lamb anticipates Christ, so the bread becomes the symbol of Christian existence. The unleavened bread becomes the sign of a new beginning: to be a Christian is described as a permanent feast whose source is this new life. One could speak of an interpretation of the Old Testament Pasch that is at the same time Christological and existential.⁹

The Allegory of the Two Covenants in Galatians 4

According to St. Paul in the Letter to the Galatians, the Law of Moses is essentially a kind of pedagogy leading towards faith in Christ. The newly evangelized Gentile Christians of Galatia had been persuaded by certain Jewish Christians that they needed to observe the ceremonial rites of the Law of Moses in addition to the precepts of Christ in order to be saved. St. Paul wrote his letter to them, explaining that these ceremonial rites were not obligatory for them, since they are but a figure of the realities they had received through faith in Christ, in which the Old Testament was completely fulfilled. To observe the ceremonial law of the Old Testament after the coming of the Messiah would be to continue to use the figures when the reality represented by the figures—Christ and His Redemption of mankind—had been revealed and accomplished, giving rise to a new and everlasting covenant.

He says in Galatians 3:23–25: “Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our tutor until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Later, in Galatians 4:21–31, he applies Biblical typology in service of his argument that they were not to observe the Law of Moses:

Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are

9 Joseph Ratzinger, “Eucharist and Mission,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65 (2000): 250–51.

two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are many more than the children of her that is married.” Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now. But what does the scripture say? “Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

St. Paul teaches that Isaac, physically the forefather of the Jewish people, nevertheless allegorically represents the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem; whereas Ishmael, physically the forefather of Arab nations, allegorically represents the synagogue, the physical Jerusalem that is here below. The Church is here said to be free in that she possesses the spiritual realities—the channels of grace to attain to heaven—that were only prefigured in the Old Covenant.

This is not to denigrate the dignity of the Chosen People. Their dignity consists in being specially prepared to receive the Messiah and Redeemer, and for this reason they were under the tutorship of the Law, which was an *immense privilege*. Nevertheless, the Old Covenant was never meant to be an end in itself, but was always conceived by God as a preparation for the Church that was to issue from it.

St. Paul speaks of the Old Covenant as a servant, the child of a bondwoman, in the sense that, although it prepared for the Church and symbolically represented it, it did not yet attain to “the glorious freedom of the sons of God.” It did not have the seven glorious sacraments of the New Law, which not only represent grace, but actually confer grace to all those who pose no obstacle to its action. The Old Covenant is allegorically a “bondwoman” because it attained only to the figure and not to the reality signified by the figure, which is sanctifying grace, the treasure of the Church.

Adam as a Figure of Christ

Another crucial Pauline text that serves as a foundation for typology is the understanding of Christ as the “new Adam” in Romans 5:14: “Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a *type* of the one who was to come.” Here St. Paul shows that Adam is the type of Christ in two contrary ways. Adam’s headship over humanity as the first man is a figure of Christ’s headship as the Head of redeemed humanity. But whereas Adam’s headship brought death to all men, Christ’s headship brings eternal life to all who are incorporated into Him.

As will be seen below, this Pauline typology of Christ as the new Adam will become the exemplar of the early Christian typology of Mary as the New Eve. The Marian typology follows the same pattern of likeness to Eve in being a universal mother, but opposition to her in the fruit of that maternity.

Another Pauline text, Ephesians 5:31–32, refers to the marriage of Adam and Eve as a figure of the union of Christ and His Church: “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

The Incarnation as the Archetype of the Christian Life According to St. Paul

St. Paul not only views events of the Old Testament as types of Christ and the Christian life, but he also sees the Incarnation and the mysteries of Christ’s life as types (or better: archetypes) or exemplars of the entire Christian life. In two principal texts St. Paul presents the event of the Incarnation as the archetype of the Christian life.

The famous Christological hymn in Philippians 2:2–9 presents the self-emptying of Christ in the Incarnation as the archetype of all Christian humility. Thus the Christian moral life is fundamentally Christological, and consists in participating in the great Exemplar:

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

In a similar way, when St. Paul wishes to exhort the Corinthians to generosity in aiding the Christians in Judea, he grounds his exhortation in the exemplar of the Incarnation: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

Christ Recapitulates All Things: Summary of Typology in Ephesians 1:9-10

In Ephesians 1:9–12, St. Paul gives not merely an example of typology, as in the texts above, but rather summarizes the theory behind all typology, when he speaks of Christ as *recapitulating* all things:

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he

set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to *unite all things in him*, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

The Greek word in Ephesians 1:10 that the RSV translates as “unite” is literally “recapitulate.” This means “to bring things back to their head.” Christ recapitulates all things in Himself by being the Antitype for all of salvation history. Everything before the Incarnation was a preparation for and prefigurement of Christ, and everything after Him is to be conformed to His image in the Church, which shall finally be brought into the splendor of His glory. Christ is the Antitype both of what came before (allegorical sense) and what comes afterward (moral and anagogical senses). Christ can be the recapitulation of everything because in His Person He unites two natures: human and divine. Through His humanity He recapitulates human history, especially the history of Israel. Through His divine nature He recapitulates and is the exemplar of the glory of which He makes us partakers, in the Church and in heaven.

St. Irenaeus put great emphasis on this notion of “recapitulation” in *Against the Heresies*, and it becomes perhaps the key element of his theological synthesis. He stresses that Christ recapitulates salvation history, for it was all modeled on Him as the Exemplar:

But when He became flesh and was made man, He recapitulated the long history of men in Himself, granting us salvation in brief compass, so that what we had lost in Adam, i.e., to be, according to the image and likeness of God, this we might recover in Christ Jesus.¹⁰

And again:

There is, then, one God, the Father, . . . and there is one Christ Jesus our Lord, who came throughout the entire dispensation and who recapitulated in Himself all things. Among these “all things” is also man, the moulded figure of God. So, He has recapitulated man also in Himself, the Invisible become visible, the Incomprehensible, comprehensible, the Impassible, capable of suffering, the Word, man, recapitulating all things in Himself so that, just as the Word of God has the primacy among supercelestial and spiritual and invisible beings, so also He should be first among visible and corporeal beings and, taking into Himself this primacy and also giving Himself as head to the Church, He might draw all things to Himself at a suitable season.¹¹

Christ’s Passion and Resurrection Is the Type of Christian Baptism

In Romans 6:3–11, St. Paul presents Christ’s paschal mystery as the type or exemplar of Christian Baptism,

10 St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.18.1, translation in Paul Quay, *Mystery Hidden for Ages in God*, 193.

11 St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.16.16–17, in Quay, *Mystery Hidden for Ages in God*, 191–192.

which is a participation in Christ’s death and Resurrection. Through Baptism the Christian dies, crucified with Christ, to the old man, and rises to a supernatural life animated by sanctifying grace, on the pattern of Christ’s Resurrection:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. . . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The implication is that the entire sacramental life of the Christian is typological. The mysteries of Christ’s life are the exemplar or archetype of the spiritual life of the Christian, in which the Christian mystically or spiritually shares. Christ accomplished these mysteries for us so that we could be incorporated into them.

Christ’s Resurrection Is the Type of Our Future Resurrection (Anagogical Sense)

In a similar way, Christ’s Resurrection is the archetype of our future Resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, St. Paul develops this anagogic typology at length and with great power. His concern here is to correct a heretical view present among some of the faithful in Corinth— influenced by a Platonic conception— that the promised Resurrection is a purely spiritual affair. They apparently did not dare directly question the physical Resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, St. Paul saw that a doubt about the future physical general Resurrection of the faithful implied a corresponding unexpressed doubt about the historical physical Resurrection of Christ, who is the “first fruit of the dead,” the victor over sin and death. To counter this doubt, St. Paul develops the intrinsic connection between the Resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead:

Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.¹²

Christ’s Resurrection and the general resurrection of the just are so intimately connected that denial of one implies a denial of the other. For everything worked by Christ is for the sake of His Mystical Body, the Church. Christ’s

12 1 Cor 15:12–23.

Resurrection makes no sense if His Church is not to share in His bodily glory. Christ's Resurrection is the exemplar, figure, and cause of our future resurrection. Precisely for this reason Christ's Resurrection had to precede the general resurrection. His Resurrection is the first fruit, harbinger, pledge, and seed of the future general resurrection. It is the foundation on which the entire faith and hope of the Church is built.

Typology in Hebrews 8–10

Hebrews 8–10 develops a typology of the worship of Israel, of the Church, and of the heavenly liturgy. The religious rites of Israel (including its priesthood, sacrifices, Temple, and the Holy of Holies) are described as a kind of replica or copy (8:5; 9:23–24; 10:1) of Christ's true sacrifice, of which the Church possesses the "true form" (10:1). The Greek word translated by the RSV as "true form" is *eikōn*, which literally means icon, likeness, image, or form.

The worship of Israel is designated as a kind of *shadow*: having "but a shadow of the good things to come" (10:1). The worship of the present Church is said to be an *icon* or image, whereas the heavenly liturgy is the *reality* to which both shadow and icon refer, but in two different ways: remote and proximate. Thus salvation history is a progression from *shadow* to sacramental *icon* to unveiled *truth*. The shadow—the events and worship of the Old Covenant—is a type both of the icon and of the heavenly reality, whereas the icon—the Incarnation and the sacraments of the Church—are types of the Church triumphant and of the heavenly liturgy.

Referring to the priests of the Old Covenant, Hebrews 8:5 states: "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.'" The Letter to the Hebrews interprets this "pattern" to be not just a visual image or blueprint shown to Moses (which would be the literal sense), but Christ's paschal mystery itself, unveiled in the heavenly liturgy. The paschal mystery is the true model and exemplar of Israel's religious rites, and thus those rites prefigure it.

The Church's sacramental worship is a higher kind of representation of the Paschal mystery, so that it qualifies as a "true form" or "likeness" rather than a "shadow." It is a "likeness" rather than a mere shadow because it truly contains what it represents: the Lamb sacramentally immolated for our salvation.¹³

13 See St. Ambrose, *On Belief in the Resurrection* 2.109, trans. H. de Romestin, in NPNF, second series, 10:192–193: "The carnal Jews had the shadow, the likeness is ours, the reality theirs who shall rise again. . . . But all is Christ's, and all is in Christ, whom now we cannot see according to the reality, but we see him, as it were, in a kind of likeness of future things. Of which we have seen the shadow in the Law."