

The Incarnation of the Abstract: New Covenant Theology and the Enfleshment of the Law

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Introduction – The Current Debate within NCT

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And from his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:1,14, 16-18)

The Incarnation changed everything. The Incarnation is a game changer. The enfleshment of the second person of the Godhead altered the course of human history. The Son of God putting on the clothes of flesh and blood was an intrusion of heaven into earth, the infinite taking the form of the finite. In defiance of logic, the incommunicable took on the communicable, the immortal mortality. If this isn't mind-blowing enough, consider that the Incarnation recalibrated eternity itself, because the eternal has become robed in space and time. The God who cannot be contained, in a stroke of glory and humiliation, limited himself to flesh and blood, and in doing so, altered reality. What portion of reality has been left untouched by the descent of the divine into human existence?

In the Incarnation, that mysterious Old Testament mediator between God and man – the Second Person of the eternal Godhead, many times identified as The Angel of the Lord -- took on human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. In the Incarnation we affirm that the very Creator of the universe was born at a specific time and in a specific place in the time-continuum we call history. What was anticipated in story, event, and theology, became an identifiable brute fact of history. This fact had as its aim the glory of God and the salvation of a people. Christ embodied God and in doing so, forever embodied all that God is for us. It is that thought that, God robing himself in flesh, that gives the Incarnation both its cosmic magnitude and personal reality. After Bethlehem it is safe to say that God has a body. In the manger, the unending Ancient of Days is reduced to infancy. Jesus is fully God and fully man. And indeed Christ still has a physical body, reigning from his throne in that place we cannot see called “heaven”. In the Incarnation, God in human flesh, has forever united heaven and earth.

The point of this project

It is not the point of this presentation to unwrap each of those pregnant thoughts. But it is the point of this project to begin to unpack the Incarnation's impact on what we call New Covenant Theology. This is intended not simply as an explanation of why it's OK to understand Christ as

the Incarnate Law, but why such an understanding is necessary for rightly understanding what the New Testament has to say about ethics in the New Covenant. This presentation is different from those I have done in the past in that I do not plan to unpack one specific passage, and in fact, the exposition of a text would be my preferred task. This is the address of a specific topic and the task is a bit broader. This does not mean that I will not be interacting with any texts, but it does mean that this will not be my primary purpose in this presentation. Please also keep in mind that this presentation is incomplete and is a work in progress. The point of this Think Tank is to bounce ideas off of each other and try to improve the clarity and coherence and accuracy of the arguments being made.

That said, at the center of what we hold to be true about the glory of the New Covenant as it is found in and revealed by Jesus Christ is the Incarnation. Without the Incarnation, Christ's death and resurrection and exaltation have no discernible and lasting impact on humanity. It is the Incarnation that makes Christ's death effective for His People. And it is inseparable from those great questions for which New Covenant Theology has been providing answers. The New Testament's interpretation of the Old, the Obsolescence of the Mosaic Covenant and its Law, the priority of Jesus in our orthodoxy and orthopraxy, the rhythm of promise and fulfillment in redemptive history, the temporality and eternality of the great covenants of the Scriptures -- all those things that distinguish New Covenant theology -- are grounded in what we believe to be true about the Second Person of the Godhead robing himself in human flesh. The fountainhead of New Covenant Theology springs from an eschatological Christology which asserts the priority of the Promised Messiah who is God become Man. The question that arises from this seminal thought of NCT's is this: what does the Priority of Jesus have to do with New Covenant ethics?

Various views within NCT regarding New Covenant ethics

Among those questions we've identified as central to New Covenant Theology today is the Obsolescence of the Law, the inadequacy and illegitimacy of the Sinaitic Code as the standard for moral conduct in the New Covenant. While New Covenant Theology as a movement is agreed on the Mosaic Law's obsolescence, inadequacy, and illegitimacy, and while NCT as a movement is agreed that inherent to the New Covenant are obligations of covenant members living as kingdom citizens, the movement is less than agreed on the nature of New Covenant ethics. **For some** who place themselves under the New Covenant banner, the imperatives found in the New Testament Scriptures simply replace the Mosaic regulations. **For others**, the two greatest commandments have become the summary form of the obligations for New Covenant members. **For yet others**, the teaching of Jesus and the apostles as well as the New Testament imperatives form the basis for a New Covenant ethic that functions in the same manner as the Torah did for Old Testament Israel. For them, Christ's teaching and/or Paul's teaching has become a new Torah. And for others, the law of Christ sums up the obligations of the New Covenant's kingdom citizens.

There is also **another group** that insists the nature of the ethic has changed from Old to New. There are several reasons for this, all of which are derived from careful study of the way Christ and his apostles spoke of the law and the descent of the Spirit in the New Covenant age.

1. Because **Christ has become a Covenant for His people** and the **Spirit** has descended to indwell Christ's people as **the law written on the heart**, there is an altogether new dynamic inherent to the question of New Covenant ethics. No longer do imperatives find their impetus from without as was true of the Mosaic Code (exemplified in the Tablets of Stone), but from

within. **The nature of the command itself is no longer external, but internal.** Obedience isn't acquiescence to an external demand, but the manifestation of an inward reality.

2. New Testament imperatives **do not share a one-to-one equivalence** in terms of function or identity with the imperatives of the Old Covenant's Torah. Such equivalence is understood by the fourth group to be New Covenant Theology's version of the third use of the law, where New Testament imperatives have simply replaced the Old Testament's law and its demands. Because the external code of the Mosaic law has not been exchanged for external imperatives from the New Testament, but instead the Mosaic code has been exchanged for a Person, simple replacement does not adequately explain the new paradigm. "Replacement" doesn't account for the way the New Testament speaks of the New Covenant ethic's relationship to the Old Covenant code. The New Testament casts the relationship between the OC and NC ethic as typological fulfillment, a fulfillment grounded in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ didn't simply replace the law, but, having a typological relationship to the Mosaic law, filled up the meaning and intent of that law in His obedience to the law and His death.

3. While there are New Covenant imperatives detailing the obligations of kingdom citizens living in the New Covenant, **the starting point** for understanding both the imperatives and the New Covenant ethics paradigm doesn't begin with the Old Covenant law category and its principles, but begins with Christ as the New Covenant, Christ as the New Torah-Law, and the Holy Spirit as the Incarnate Law applied to the New Covenant member. All of the Old Covenants, the Torah, and the Law are shadows and types finding their anti-typical end goal and fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Over the past four years, this last group has posited its views on New Testament ethics in various forms and venues. While this last group has nowhere denied the necessity of obedience in the Christian experience of the New Covenant member, the existence of obligation between kingdom citizen and The King, or the command and demand nature of the New Testament imperatives, there has been a persistent drumbeat of criticism from others in the New Covenant Theology movement that the Incarnational and objective approach to New Covenant ethics is both inherently antinomian and extra-canonical, having no grounds in the New Testament. As awareness of the views expressed by this last group have increased over the past four years, so too has the volume of rhetoric aimed at cementing New Covenant Theology's affirmation of command, demand, and obedience.

The fourth stream's place within the Reformed debate over law and gospel

It must be pointed out that the internal debate within NCT reflects debate about the nature of sanctification and New Testament ethics in the larger Reformed world. The "fourth stream" of New Covenant Theology is by no means unique in its Redemptive-historical hermeneutics and its understanding of Pauline ethics. Since the Reformation there has been ongoing debate between the Luther's and Calvin's posterity regarding how sharply to distinguish between the law and the gospel, Paul's view of the law (is it positive or negative?) and subsequently, the role of the law in Sanctification. An example of this debate has manifested itself in recent years in the VanDrunen vs. Garcia series of essays published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, or even more generally informal internet discussion that tends to distill itself as Westminster West vs.

Westminster East (yes, there are notable exceptions, as in any theological debate). In a more extreme example of this debate, the Lee Irons trial highlighted these distinctions.¹

Even within broader conservative Reformed circles, barbs aimed at Michael Horton, the White Horse Inn, Tullian Tchividjian, Paul Tripp, Sinclair Ferguson, John Piper, Jerry Bridges, and others who posit the Indicative as the source of the imperative and emphasize the role of the gospel in the Christian experience, suggest at root is the historical Reformed discussion over law, gospel, antithesis, and sanctification. The differences and nuances in the intramural law-gospel-antithesis debate is very diverse and will not be tackled here in depth. It is enough at this point to say that we must recognize that there is much similarity in the historical debate between those who would emphasize the law as the primary catalyst in sanctification, and those who would qualify, minimize or deny altogether the law's use as a "rule of life informing them of the will of God" (The Westminster Confession, XIX.VI).

It must also be pointed out that the internal debate within NCT also is closely related to the Reformed debate over the nature of sanctification. Indeed what one believes to be true about the relationship between the law and gospel and the law and sanctification has much impact on what one believes to be true regarding the nature of sanctification itself. Debate around questions such as "Is sanctification positional/definitive or progressive?", "Is sanctification monergistic or synergistic?", "What is the relationship between the indicative and imperative in the Pauline ethic and what bearing does that relationship have on sanctification?", and "Does Paul have a negative view or positive view of the law and its role in the life of the Christian?" lie at the heart of the Reformed discussion.

It is no accident that those Reformed camps who have traditionally held a stronger antithesis between law and gospel and give less emphasis to the role of the law in sanctification have also given greater emphasis to 1) the grounds of the imperative being in the Indicative, 2) positional or definitive sanctification, and have had more of 3) a monergistic approach to the work of the Spirit in the transformation of the believer. And those who have traditionally emphasized the law as a catalyst in sanctification have also tended to emphasize 1) progressive sanctification, 2) so-called "balance" in preaching indicative and imperative, and 3) the synergistic cooperation between the Spirit and the believer in sanctification. Again, there are exceptions. And again, it is not the purpose of this presentation to dissect the pros and the cons of each position, but to simply note the Reformed context in which this NCT discussion is occurring. The intramural debate within the New Covenant Theology movement over the nature of sanctification and the role of imperatives is a microcosm of the larger intramural debate between children of the Reformation over the law and gospel in New Testament (especially Pauline) ethics.

This broader Reformed context for the current NCT debate regarding the nature of New Testament ethics cannot be understated. Nor should it be ignored. Within the New Covenant Theology movement, there are those who, although denying the law's abiding relevance for the believer, nevertheless are careful to maintain a high profile for demands, commands, imperatives, and obedience derived from the New Testament scriptures of the New Covenant. Those who have a prominent emphasis on the imperatives and obedience agree with the rest of NCT that the Paul has a negative disposition toward the law and its role in the Christian experience, but those in this group also seemingly affirm Paul as having a positive view of

¹ For a thorough examination of the ongoing discussion in American Presbyterianism, I recommend "The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant", ed. Estelle, Fesko, and VanDrunen, P&R, 2009

a "law principle" in the Christian experience. As a result, for some in NCT, the law "category" functions in the New Covenant much the same way it did in the Old Covenant, albeit via New Testament imperatives. So, while the Sinaitic Law does not function as the catalyst for holiness in the New Covenant, obedience to New Covenant imperatives occupies a similar place in their sanctification theology.

With their Reformed brethren of like mind, it would seem that these tend to see less of a law-gospel contrast (and in some instances, one wonders if this group holds loosely to a fundamental NCT tenet: the Mosaic Covenant as a covenant of works?). These also seem more willing to speak of synergism in progressive sanctification, and some tending to speak of obedience in the same orbit of gospel terminology. (Thus, Paul's phrase in Romans, "the obedience of faith" is prominent in the articulation of the gospel).

Conversely, there are those within the New Covenant Theology movement more apt to share a common spirit with the law-gospel antithesis typically found in the Lutheran stream of the Reformation. This group is more likely to speak affirmatively of Walter Marshall's monergistically inclined view of sanctification and David Peterson's emphasis on positional/definitive sanctification. While the necessity of obedience to New Testament imperatives in the New Covenant is not denied, this group emphasizes the source of the obedience in the Indicative: the believer's union to Christ's obedience on their behalf via the Spirit.

While more could be said for both sides in the discussion within New Covenant Theology, it must be maintained that both sides find affinity with similar schools of thought in the broader Reformed community, with some in the NCT movement tending toward a more Calvinistic flavor of New Testament ethics and others tilting more toward Lutheran thought in New Testament ethics. In spite of these tendencies, there is broad agreement within the New Covenant Theology movement regarding Reformed dogmatics and a consensus regarding the abrogation of the entire Mosaic economy. It is the hope of this author that if one understands the discussion within the framework of the larger discussion in the Reformation posterity, both sides of the issue will be more inclined to hear with a sympathetic and empathetic ear those who aren't always on the same page.

Is the accusation fair, and what does the Incarnation have to do with the accusation?

However, it is precisely the seeming lack of empathy the broader discussion has been raised here as a backdrop for what follows in this presentation. It's important to note the broader debate within Reformed Theology over the law-gospel contrast and the role of obedience in sanctification because there has been a tendency on the part of some within New Covenant Theology to caricature those of us who believe the Incarnation and its typology are the source and beginning point for New Testament ethics. Some within the New Covenant Theology movement have tried to dismiss the idea of Incarnate Covenant and Incarnate Law as novel. The fourth stream has done a lot of writing, talking, and publishing in emphasizing Christ as the Incarnate Covenant and the Incarnate Law. This group has maintained the necessity of preaching the imperatives of the text, while affirming the Indicative as the source of the text. Gospel-driven sanctification has been defended as the Bible's explanation of ethics and the most accurate way of understanding Paul on the issue. But there have been persistent critiques and

objections not simply to the theological viewpoint, but also the legitimacy of a place within the NCT movement for such a viewpoint.

To such a claim we must maintain that the discourse over ethics within the New Covenant Theology movement cannot be understood apart from the broader debate within Reformed Theology over the law-gospel contrast, the relationship of the indicative and imperatives in the New Testament, the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification and transformation, and the role of obedience in sanctification. In the context of broader evangelicalism, those of us in the fourth stream at the very least find solidarity with those against whom have been leveled similar charges (usually involving the term “antinomian”) for hundreds of years. Noted theologians such as Luther and Horton, and pastors such as Tchividjian have heard no less.

Not only has the label "novel" been attached to the Incarnational view (ignoring the larger evangelical discussion), this viewpoint has been charged with undermining the need for obedience, minimizing the role of commands and demands in the New Covenant life, ignoring the imperatives of the New Testament, and in some instances, encouraging licentiousness at the expense of personal holiness. Questions such as whether or not the New Covenant Scriptures contain commands, and whether or not there is a role for imperatives in New Covenant Theology implicitly suggest that the idea of an Incarnate Law, the emphasis on definitive or positional sanctification, or the insistence that the imperatives flow from the indicative is a denial of the importance of personal obedience and holiness. None of those who have advocated for understanding Christ as the Incarnate Covenant and as the Incarnate Law have ever denied and have affirmed time and again the importance of preaching the imperatives, encouraging obedience to Christ, and exhorting the necessity of personal holiness. One must ask: are such charges fair?

It will come as no surprise that this author and others who consider themselves part of this unofficial “fourth stream” answer that question with a resounding “no”. Numerous reasons can be given for this answer, beginning with a lack of evidence. At the end of the day, there’s simply no evidence that the so-called fourth stream, exemplified in the writing of the Earth Stove Society, minimizes the preaching and teaching of imperatives in the New Testament. The accusation, then, contributes to an unwarranted caricature of some within the New Covenant Theology movement.

The question must be asked: what is it about preaching and teaching the Incarnation of Covenant and Law, as it arises from the text, that in turn gives rise to the notion that there is an inherent and unstated antinomianism at work? It would seem that a caricature of the fourth stream has been painted; a straw man has been constructed. There are reasons, other than an overwhelming lack of evidence, for rejecting the caricature as unfair, only two of which will be addressed in this presentation. Admittedly, these reasons lie in the realm of theological differences within the New Covenant Theology movement. Nevertheless, it would seem to this author that contributing factors to the unwarranted caricature include 1) a failure to appreciate the historical precedent in reformed and Lutheran exegesis and theology (already noted above), 2) a failure to appreciate the universality of the law principle and legalism that gives rise to a continuity of law principle between covenants, regardless of form, 3) a failure to understand the relationship of indicative and imperative, 4) a failure to understand the implications of the Incarnation, 5) a failure to understand or outright rejection of biblical typology as a major consideration of hermeneutics. It will be enough to note these reasons. Only the last two provide the subject matter for this presentation.

What is the Incarnation?

It is a presupposition of this paper that the Incarnation and its implications lie at the heart of this discussion over how to understand “covenant” and “law” in the New Covenant. In fact, the Incarnation lies at the heart of the debate over the continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant, and the continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament scriptures and the New Testament scriptures.

However, it’s not simply the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Godhead alone which has an impact on the way we think about “covenant” and “law” in the New Covenant, but the Incarnation’s relationship to typology and biblical theology in hermeneutics. It is in a typological biblical theology that the Incarnation is in and of itself an interpretation of God’s revelation of himself to his people. While increasing attention has been paid to the role of typology in hermeneutics through the writing of Gregory Beale and Graeme Goldsworthy, not enough attention has been paid to the role of the incarnation (Goldsworthy comes closest, in “Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics”).

Before considering the relationship between the Incarnation and hermeneutics, we must ask: what do we mean by the incarnation? In the English language, to incarnate something is to embody something in flesh, to invest with a bodily form. It literally means to make into flesh. A derivative of this definition is this: to put into concrete form, such as an idea. In Christian thought, down through the millennia, the incarnation describes an indescribable reality, the thought that God has taken on human flesh. God became man. “Incarnation” is a word we have chosen to describe an idea that arises from the text of Scripture that the immortal robed himself in mortality. John 1:14 says, the Word, preexistent with the Godhead, became “flesh” (note the Apostle John doesn’t use “man”, but “flesh”). In the incarnation, it became possible to cut God’s skin and watch him bleed.

This idea that the eternally infinite Triune God who dwells in inaccessible light would take departure of his heavenly abode and submit himself to the humiliation of humanity’s flesh and bone has its roots in the Old Testament scriptures. There is an increasing expectation, as revelation unfolds through the events and words of scripture, that the promised “seed of the woman”, the Messiah, would be divine. A super-Moses and a super-David is expected, having inherent qualities that are not of this world. Certainly this is true by the time we get to the prophets. The prophet Isaiah personified the seed of the woman as “Immanuel”, God dwelling with humanity as a Suffering Servant. Both Ezekiel and Daniel saw a super-Warrior having divine characteristics, but also described as one who was “like a son of man” (Daniel 7:13), having a “likeness with a human appearance” (Ezekiel 1:26). In summary, there are many indications throughout the Old Testament that the grand human dilemma introduced in the fall, the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, would be resolved in the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), and this seed of the woman would not be simply human, but also divine. In the promise of Genesis 3:15, we have the Creator not only promising that someday there will be reconciliation between God and man through the seed of the woman, but He Himself will be the catalyst, the instigator, the personally involved means of reconciliation.

“Incarnation” is the English word that has been chosen to articulate this Old Testament idea come to fruition in the New Testament that God has been embodied. In real time and space, the eternal God, who does not dwell in a temple made with hands because he cannot be contained, has taken finite bodily form (Colossians 2:9) in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Incarnation, the

heavenly has taken up earthly residence in flesh and bone. It is the enfleshment of the divine. The Incarnation of the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity united God to man, bringing humanity and deity in indivisible oneness forever. Jesus was and is God taking on flesh and bone.

How this came to be, in spite of all that Jesus has revealed to us in his Person and in his Word, remains a profound mystery, a glorious mystery that may never be fully understood by finite creatures. What we do know, is that this God-man Christ Jesus resolved the dilemma of the fall as The Seed of the Woman, the divine-yet-human reconciler between God and man. In dying the death that should have been Adam's and his posterity, Christ accomplished for man what man could not do for himself. The Great Exchange, his life for our life, our sin and guilt for his righteousness and forgiveness, presupposes the Incarnation. In the divine arrangement between Creator and creature, it could be no other way. The Incarnation, the goal of which was Christ's glory in the redemption of a people for himself, was of necessity, not convenience or example.

Typology and Scripture

While the Incarnation is the fulfillment of the Old Testament's anticipation of the embodiment of God, it is also much more. Not only is the Incarnation the embodied of the Old Testament's Jehovah, God taking on flesh, but the Incarnation is the fulfillment and embodiment of all manners and kinds of Old Testament persons, events, images and even ideas. All of these things, obviously, are inseparable from the idea of the embodiment of the Divine, but it is possible to articulate the persons, events, images, and even ideas in the Old Testament in terms of the Incarnation. These persons, events, and images, and even ideas that occur in God's progressive self-disclosure in the Old Testament are known as types. While it is not the purpose here to unpack the occurrences and nature of these types, we must at least note that these types find their meaning and are given interpretation in the God-man. The types of the Old Testament are part and parcel to the unfolding revelation of the messianic figure who would be divine (this should be easy to see in the Ezekiel and Daniel examples already mentioned). New Covenant Theology would do well to affirm with Goldsworthy, "we cannot overestimate the importance of the question of typology to hermeneutics."² If it is true, as James Hamilton suggests, that the task of typology is similar to the task of biblical theology³ – because typology and biblical theology are bound up with one another – then it would seem that a full-orbed understanding of the Incarnation as it unfolds in the progress of revelation must include typology.

Before addressing the relationship between the incarnation and typology, a working definition of type is in order. Typology, as Hamilton rightly asserts, is exegesis.⁴ It rises from the text itself. Borrowing loosely from Leonard Goppelt, Richard Davidson, and Kenneth Woollcombe, a type (generally speaking) is an event, person, thing, or idea in the progressive, historical revelation of the Old Testament with a resembling correspondence in the Person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. To this definition we would do well to add Reventlow's proposition that typology is a correspondence of "facts".⁵ These facts are not only set forth in the biblical record, but belong to real time and space, specifically redemptive history.

² (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 246

³ (Hamilton, 2008)

⁴ (Hamilton, 2008)

⁵ (Reventlow, 1986)

Because these types have revelatory correspondence with the antitype in the New Testament, I concur with Goppelt who says “typology is the central and distinctive New Testament way of understanding Scripture⁶”, and as such, typology is “the decisive interpretation of Jesus, the Gospel, and the Church.”⁷ The types of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the antitype of the New Testament, Jesus Christ. These types are facts of history, real events and real people in time and space, divinely ordained and orchestrated to prophetically anticipate and resemble the Antitype. In the Incarnation, the Antitype also necessarily fills up the meaning of the type in real time and space as The Fact of history, meaning there is real and tangible correspondence between the Antitype and type in the revelation of redemptive history.

Even as the type and Antitype are bound to time and space, the significance of the type as it occurs in revelation goes beyond history. Lampe is important in this regard: “The (events recorded in the historical books) were significant, not primarily for themselves, but for what they foreshadowed. They were not fundamentally important for their value as literal history (as important as that is; crb), but as types and images in and through which the Holy Spirit had indicated what was to come when God would bring in the New Covenant to fulfil and supersede the Old. They (those events as types; crb) denoted was what to be enacted in the Gospel events, and the Christian reader, looking back on the events recorded in the Old Testament in the light of the fulfillment, found himself in the position of the spectator of a drama who already knows how the play will end.”⁸

Thus, type-to-antitype follows the rhythm and flow of redemptive history, intertwined with promise to fulfillment and shadow to reality. There is, as Lampe says, a “coherent pattern running through every part of Scripture.”⁹ As McCartney and Clayton have stated, “Typology is the interpretation of earlier events, persons, and institutions in biblical history as anticipating later events, persons, and institutions.”¹⁰ The types occur as shadows of what is to come, functioning as “promise in imagery”. Because the types are so bound up with promise, they are inherently prophetic in nature, forward looking to the coming Messiah in their essence.

It should be noted that whatever is the nature of special revelation, we must also suggest regarding the types. Special revelation is eschatological; therefore the types that occur move that revelation forward are also eschatological. There is an eschatological and organic connection between the type and antitype, with the type growing as it were into the Antitype as its fullest expression and manifestation. The Antitype brings the type to its prophetic and revelational conclusion. There is a decisive finality to the Old Testament types and shadows in the arrival of the Antitype in the Christ event. Types by their very nature carry the quality of obsolescence. There is an inherent obsolescence to the types that have found their final and ultimate meaning in the Antitype. The type is not an end in and of itself. Once the Antitype has filled up the type with its fullest and crowning interpretation, there is no longer any need for the type.

Even as the types anticipate something greater to come as they occur throughout the Old Testament, the types intensify and escalate¹¹ in the unfolding progression of the Old Testament. Joseph, to some, may seem like a vague typical reference to Christ. As revelation and redemptive

⁶ (Goppelt, *tupos*, 1964-76), p. 255

⁷ (Goppelt, *tupos*, 1964-76), p. 256

⁸ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p.10

⁹ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p.11

¹⁰ (McCartney & Clayton, 2002), p. 163

¹¹ (Davidson, 1981), p. 53

history unfold, that messianic type becomes more intense and explicit in the person of David. The types follow revelation's tendency to grow into greater expectation as the promise of the Messiah in Genesis 3:15 takes fuller shape. So Goldsworthy: Type and antitype express (the) organic relationship between the events of the Old that pattern and foreshadow their fulfillment in the New. The heart of the antitype in the New Testament is the person and work of Jesus Christ, and especially the resurrection."¹²

Not only do types occur in pattern-like form in the Old Testament as they portray the antitype in real time and space, but they are also part and parcel to the Old Testament's history of salvation. This isn't just any history. This is redemptive history, history that is ordained and orchestrated in such a way so as to bring about the salvation of a people through the work of the Messiah. Types belong to the rhythm of redemptive history: God speaks, God acts, God interprets his actions. His people respond to his speech and his actions. When God speaks, God also acts in real time and space to provide types in correspondence with that speaking. The types belong to the divine activity in history and are thus part of that rhythm. This means that the types, because they are bound up with God's activity in redemptive history, must be interpreted. Types find their interpretation in the goal of their anticipation, the antitype.

After all, just as the things recorded in the Old Testament's history of salvation are "to be interpreted teleologically – that is, as purposeful and directed to the final goal"¹³, so too are its types. As God's self-revelation unfolds, from the earliest stages of divine utterance to the patriarchs to the Pentateuch delivered by Moses to the oracles of judgment of the latter prophets, redemptive history as it is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures is moving toward its goal in Jesus Christ. Included in that eschatological trajectory are the prophetic types that belong to that redemptive history. Christ, as the goal of redemptive history, is the unifying and central theme of Scripture. In moving toward Christ in the messianically-driven Old Testament scriptures, types find their Christological orientation. So Goldsworthy: "Typology rests on the recognition that the way God spoke and acted in the Old Testament was preparatory and anticipatory of the definitive word and act of God in Christ."¹⁴

Because these types occur as focal points in the unfolding self-revelation of God in history, these types represent the "coherent"¹⁵ and intentional "hermeneutical approach of the biblical writers."¹⁶ The Christ event, as it occurs in real time and space, is interpreted by the New Testament authors through the lens of the Old Testament and its typology. The biblical theology being employed by the New Testament authors, in the wake of the Christ event, is inherently typological. Because a proper biblical theological exegesis necessitates that the New Testament interpret the Old Testament (a fundamental tenet of New Covenant Theology), it is also necessary then that typology implies that the types found in earlier revelation are interpreted in light of later revelation. This also means that the Antitype found in later revelation cannot be rightly understood apart from his relationship to the earlier types.

The New Testament authors' interpretation of the Old Testament, as it is manifested in their use of the Old Testament in the New, is Christ-centered. The age of eschatological fulfillment has arrived in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the center-point of history. Because Christ is the

¹² (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 243

¹³ (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 243

¹⁴ (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 243

¹⁵ (Davidson, 1981), p. 10

¹⁶ (Davidson, 1981), p. 9-10

focus of both history and revelation, fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament, Christ himself becomes the hermeneutical “key to interpreting the earlier portions of the Old Testament and its promises.”¹⁷ Again, Lampe is helpful: “...the New Testament writers, as well as Christian commentators from the earliest times, treated the Old Testament as a book about Christ in which every part contributed harmoniously to the pattern of typology and prophecy.”¹⁸ For the New Testament authors, the expectation of the Christ-event to be found in the Old Testament is typologically grounded. So Lampe says that the New Testament writers were seeking to “exhibit the correspondence of types and prophecies with their fulfillment.”¹⁹ Thus, to paraphrase Reventlow, there is a correspondence between the testaments of “facts, persons, and events” showing up in both testaments and revolving around the Person of Jesus Christ.²⁰

Events, people, images, and ideas are interpreted through the lens of the Christ event. These types that occur in the messianic trajectory of the Old Testament culminate and are fulfilled in the antitype Jesus. These types become manifest in and find their fullest expression in the Person and work of Jesus, the antitype. The New Testament writers portray Christ, the antitype, as not only the fullest expression of the Old Testament types, but as the interpretation of those Old Testament types. So much so, that “typological study is necessary if we are to appreciate the meaning of the New Testament.”²¹ This leads Beale to conclude, “Typology therefore indicates fulfillment of the indirect prophetic adumbration of events, people and institutions from the Old Testament in Christ who now is the final, climactic expression of all God ideally intended through these things in the Old Testament (e.g. *the Law*, the temple cultus, the commissions of the prophets, judges, priests, and kings; emphasis mine). Everything which these things lacked by way of imperfections was prophetically ‘filled up’ by Christ, so that even what was imperfect in the Old Testament pointed beyond itself to Jesus.”²²

Lampe himself notes what this means for the church in the New Covenant: “The first Christians came to see that the theme of God’s Covenant with his people was really the theme of Christ, since Christ was the central and culminating point of that long historical process of the unfolding process of the unfolding of God’s purpose for Israel. The saving work of Christ, inaugurating the New Covenant between God and man, was thus seen as the moment which gave significance to the whole course of covenant-history that had preceded it. In the light of this decisive event, the pattern of God’s dealings with his people could for the first time be clearly discerned. Only now could the full meaning of the history of Israel be properly understood. The Old Testament had therefore to be read anew, with fresh presuppositions, in order to be understood as Christians believed that God meant it to be understood, namely as a book which pointed forward to the climax of Christ’s life and work.”²³ McCartney and Clayton concur: “The typology of promise and fulfillment is the ultimate validation for Jesus’ and the early church’s extensive use of the Old Testament to depict and characterize their own situation.”²⁴

¹⁷ (Beale, 1994), p. 392

¹⁸ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p. 18

¹⁹ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p. 11

²⁰ (Reventlow, 1986), p. 18-31

²¹ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p. 19

²² (Beale, 1994), p. 396

²³ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p. 25-26

²⁴ (McCartney & Clayton, 2002), p. 163ff

For Lampe, there is no reading of the Old Testament and its types, without the fulfillment of those types in the Antitype and the New Testament in mind: “The Christian...will naturally look back on the Old Covenant with its fulfillment in Christ continually in mind, and he will be able to discern in the light of the fulfillment how the earlier stages in the working out of the divine purpose, each of which was significant for its own time, fall into place in an harmonious pattern and foreshadow the character of the final culmination.”²⁵ It is the type-to-antitype, shadow-to-reality, and promise-to-fulfillment that is the essence of this harmonious pattern, a pattern which culminates in Christ. Goldsworthy is helpful when he says, “it is the comprehensive use of the Old Testament (by the New Testament authors) as referring ultimately to Jesus that constitutes typology.”²⁶

One other point about typology must be made before proceeding. The connections and correspondence between the types of the Old Testament and the Antitype of the New Testament are not arbitrary, nor do they constitute eisegesis (reading into a text something which is not there). The Scriptures itself provide the hermeneutical control. Goldsworthy is aware of this potential problem when he points out that the canonical approach to typology allows the canon to “establish the primary context from within which every text is interpreted.”²⁷ Beale also is helpful: “typology by nature does not necessitate a non-contextual approach (although like any method it can be misused in that way), but it is an attempted identification of Old Testament contextual features with similar escalated New Testament correspondences.”²⁸ Citing a tenet fundamental to New Covenant Theology (though he himself is not NCT), Beale states, “typology can be called contextual exegesis within the framework of the canon, since it primarily involves the interpretation and elucidation of the meaning of earlier parts of Scripture by later parts...the canonical extension of the context of a passage being exegeted does not by itself transform the exegetical procedure into a non-exegetical one.

This means typology is not only not arbitrary, but it is not allegory. Again Beale is helpful: “typology is not allegory because it is based on the actual historical events of the Old Testament passage being dealt with and because it essentially consists of a real, historical correspondence between the Old Testament and New Testament event...”²⁹ Grounded in the text, we must insist that there be notable historical, theological, and literary resemblance between the types of the Old Testament and the Antitype in the New Testament. Making the typological connections between the types and the antitype will never violate the original context in which the types are found. However, that original context, as part of the canon of redemptive history, has a messianic orientation, and so too its types.

It must also be noted that the nature of the type in its shadow form of the Old Testament necessarily means there will not be a one to one correlation in the New Testament antitype. Earle Ellis is helpful: “typology views the relationship of the OT events to those in the new dispensation not as a one-to-one equation or correspondence, in which the old is repeated or continued, but rather in terms of two principles, historical correspondence and escalation...in typology...the OT type not only corresponds to the NT antitype but also is complemented and

²⁵ (Lampe & Woollcombe, 1957), p. 27

²⁶ (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 246

²⁷ (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 246

²⁸ (Beale, 1994), p. 400

²⁹ (Beale, 1994), p. 395

transcended by it.”³⁰ Types may function in similarity with the antitype or they may function in contrast. Adam is a type of Christ, but in some of the major points of the type-antitype parallels Adam is a contrast to the eventual fulfillment in Christ. Disobedient Israel is a type of the New Israel, Christ, who was perfectly obedient. Much of the misunderstanding and misuse of types is precisely along these lines. One-to-one correspondence is forced or worse, if one-to-one correspondence can't be found, the entire link between type and Antitype is denied. This is why it is necessary to insist that typology does not rest on one-to-one correspondence, but a correspondence dependent on resemblance and similarity in a pattern that is intelligible³¹.

As Beale as stated above, latent in the hermeneutics of the New Testament writers is an understanding that the Christ event brings an ultimate interpretation of the Old Testament. Schreiner insists rightly that typology is necessary to exegesis, saying typology “is fundamental to biblical theology” because it is a “category employed by the biblical writers themselves.”³² Adds Schreiner: “The NT represents the culmination of the history of redemption begun in the OT... what is promised in the OT is fulfilled in the NT...we must acknowledge the progress of revelation from the OT to the NT. Such progress recognizes the preliminary nature of the Old Testament and the definitive word that comes in the NT...we can only understand the NT when we have also grasped the meaning of the OT, and vice-versa.”³³

The Incarnation and Typology

However, much of the discussion of typology and its fulfillment in Christ has revolved around the work of Christ, rather than the Person of Christ. Events such as the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover, and the Exodus are repeatedly cited by authors such as Lampe who see typological interpretation as essential to proper biblical hermeneutics. Certainly these events function as types of Christ and his work. Lampe notes the pattern of Old Testament events fulfilled in Christ: “The fulfillment makes it possible for (the Christian) to understand the past events, and the past events help him to grasp the meaning of Christ’s redemptive *work* (my emphasis)... The great acts of God in Israelite history acquired significance because of their character as foretastes of what was later accomplished in Christ...the Gospel history had been prefigured in the Old Testament events.”³⁴

It is not that difficult for Lampe and others to see the divinely ordained and orchestrated events of the Old recapitulated in the New and fulfilled in Christ. Focusing only on the events, though, results in speaking of the relationship and rhythmic pattern between the types and the antitype in redemptive history primarily in relation to what Christ does, rather than who he is. While it is true that the types of the Old Testament are telling us something about what the eventual seed of the woman will do, it is also just as true that the types of the Old Testament are telling us something about who and what the eventual Messiah will be. Both the work AND Person of Christ are in view in the Old Testament, which makes it inevitable that the Incarnation will be inseparably bound to the typology as it unfolds in redemptive history. The God-man is anticipated in the types of the Old Testament.

³⁰ (Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 1982), p. x

³¹ (Lampe & Woolcombe, 1957)

³² (Schreiner, Summer 2006)

³³ (Schreiner, Summer 2006)

³⁴ (Lampe & Woolcombe, 1957), p. 28

In the Incarnation, then, the types of the Old Testament become visibly expressed in their fulfillment, taking on bodily form in their Final Revelation. Not only have Old Testament personalities been given their full and final meaning in the One whom they prefigured, inanimate types have become “animate” in the Person of Jesus. Not only does the Old Testament load up the Messiah concept with expectations of direct divine involvement, also included in the anticipation are images, objects, institutions, and ideas that give shape to those expectations. In the course of tracing the messianic storyline from Genesis 3:15 onward through the Old Testament, it is not all that difficult to find prefigurements of the Messiah in personalities such as Moses and David.

Moses, Israel’s prophet and lawgiver, points forward to a greater prophet and lawgiver to come Who will leader His people in a New Exodus. David, the anointed one, anticipates a greater Warrior and King whose throne will be established forever. David functions as a messianic type in the Old Testament, anticipating that somewhere down the road will come One who is much like David in who he is and what he does for his people... only much greater. When the Old Testament puts forward the idea that one greater than Moses is coming, the Old Testament reader can expect Israel’s history to eventually arrive at Someone who is a lot like Moses in his function and his activity on behalf of his people... only much greater. In fact, as the Old Testament progressively unpacks this idea in Israel’s history, this “Super Moses” will be so great so as to have divine-like qualities. The messianic storyline anticipates the enfleshment of God in those who prefigure the messiah.

This is especially true of David. The promises of the Davidic Covenant and its corresponding revelation anticipate that David will be enfleshed again. Yet there is also the sense in which this “Super David” will be more than an enfleshment of David, but an enfleshment of the divine. Psalm 2 probably is the greatest example of this. Christ himself recognizes the promise and fulfillment implications between himself and David when he asks, “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

However it is not simply persons and events that prefigure Christ in the Old Testament, but also objects, institutions, and ideas. There has been much debate, in the wake of the resurgence of typology’s role in hermeneutics, about whether a type must be explicitly explained by the New Testament writers or can be implicit as an allusion in order to function as a type in the Old Testament. This presentation will not tackle that question³⁵, but it should be noted that it is a presupposition of this author that allusion by the New Testament writers has as much of a role in understanding the typology of the Old Testament as explicit mention. For example, Joseph is nowhere explicitly mentioned as a type of Christ, yet that is how Stephen interprets Joseph in the Acts 7 speech to the Sanhedrin. As Goldsworthy notes, if we discount the allusions of the Old Testament by the New Testament authors, there simply wouldn’t be much left of the New Testament.³⁶ Because allusion is inherent in the fabric of the canon, the types and their fulfillment in the antitype make use of allusion, especially in the events and imagery that prophetically point forward to realities greater than the originals.

³⁵For a more thorough investigation of the classification of New Testament allusions into “clear allusion”, “probable allusion”, and “possible allusion” (or echo), see G.K. Beale’s commentary on “The Book of Revelation” in the NIGTC series (p. 78ff).

³⁶ (Goldsworthy, 2006), p. 245

It would also be good at this point to dispense with the notion of “metaphor” as a way of understanding the types of the Old Testament, especially those types which are not persons or events, though even the latter has been subjected to the metaphor slant. While the types and shadows, in some sense, function as metaphor in that human manners and figures of speaking are used to describe an infinitely eternal God become man who literally cannot be described, the types and shadows are not mere figures of speech. Types are divinely ordained and orchestrated pictures that help carry along God’s self-revelation, and are inherently and intentionally prophetic and forward looking. Ellis picks up on this in his forward to Goppelt’s book, *Typos*: “the typology of the NT writers represents the OT not as a book of metaphors hiding a deeper meaning, but as an account of biblical events and teachings from which the meaning of the text arises.”³⁷ Types are bound up with the kerygma, the proclamation of Christ and his gospel, in Scripture. Further, metaphors, as described by those limit types to this category, tend to have an inherent disposition of natural revelation interpreting special revelation (that there are two kinds of revelation with the priority given to special revelation will be presumed by this author), and certainly do not allow the antitype to define and interpret the types.

Ancient near east shepherds become the prototype for understanding the so-called “shepherd” metaphor, rather than Christ as Shepherd becoming the definitive definition and interpretation of the entire “shepherd” linguistic enterprise. Christ, as Shepherd is the reality. The ancient near east shepherd is simply a copy of the reality. Use of “metaphor” to describe “shepherd” in the Scriptures shortchanges the significance of that reality. These types and shadows are not simply in the realm of “metaphor”. They are speaking to a reality beyond themselves, a reality that, in turn, gives the types and shadows their true definition. There is a divine intention in the administration of the types in Old Testament revelation in providing images meant to fuel and heighten the anticipation of the coming Messiah. Even as the types proclaim the hope of Israel they engender faith in those who constitute the true Israel.

Having said this, the types of the Old Testament that are institutional or inanimate share with the Old Testament human types the anticipation of an embodiment of the type. Moving from type to antitype, when it is explicitly mentioned or when it involves persons or animals doesn’t seem all that difficult to many evangelical readers. They *know* Jesus is the Lamb of God, and that the Passover Lamb was a type of Christ. A little more difficult for some, mostly due to their views on the future of Israel, is seeing Israel as a type of Christ. This is an example of an institution, a nation, that is a type of Christ, the Son who is the true Israel.

It is more difficult, in the minds of some, to wrap their minds around the idea that the Old Testament is also portraying Christ in inanimate objects and abstract ideas. Again, it is possible to read the New Testament authors to understand this. A good example of this is the tabernacle and its permanent edition, the temple. The tabernacle and its successor the temple represented the presence of Yahweh, the covenanting God of Israel, dwelling with his people.³⁸ The grand edifice built by Solomon was a symbol to the nations of God’s personal habitation with his people. To see the shekinah glory cloud hovering over the temple was to see and know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was near, ever present, ever watching, ever protecting his people. That temple, both building and institution (along with its service, sacrifice, personnel, and

³⁷ (Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 1982), p. x

³⁸ For a great overview of the meaning and theology of the tabernacle and temple throughout the Scriptures, I highly recommend G.K. Beale’s “The Temple and the Church’s Mission”.

worship), was also a forward-looking promise to the future, when God would take up permanent residence among his people as one of them... Emmanuel, God with us.

The fulfillment of that promise appears in the New Testament not as another building, but as a Person. Christ stands in the physical temple and declares himself to be the temple (John 2:19). If there is any question about Christ's understanding of himself as the Temple of Israel, one need look no further than Revelation 21:22, where the same author who chronicles Christ's declaration now witnesses the full and final consummation of that declaration in the New Heavens and New Earth. In fact, John sets the context of the pre-existent Word's incarnation among men in terms of the Old Testament picture of God's dwelling with his people: the Word "tabernacled" among us... and we beheld his shekinah glory, the kind of glory that only belongs to One who is the divine Second Person of the Godhead.

What we have in John 1 and John 2 and Revelation 21 is John's interpretation of Israel's Old Covenant tabernacle and temple as Old Testament types of Christ. In the imagery of the tabernacle and temple and the shekinah glory is proclaimed the coming of a Messiah who would personally be those things for his people. Christ embodies the tabernacle and temple in his person. To be with Christ, to have Christ is to have everything that the Old Testament tabernacle and temple proclaimed to the nations. Stephen picks up on this. Stephen is charged with denigrating the temple. Stephen took Christ so seriously in John 2:19, that once Christ had ascended to his throne in the heavenlies at Pentecost, Stephen understood there was no need for the temple. After all, Christ himself had predicted that, having rejected the cornerstone of the temple, and in doing so, the New Temple, the Jews would soon lose even the physical building in which they had placed all of their hopes and dreams, especially with the occupation of Rome. Stephen reminds the Sanhedrin that it was Solomon who had proclaimed the gospel of the temple when he said "God doesn't dwell in a temple made with hands." That's because Christ was the New Temple, a temple crucified and risen, just as he had promised in John 2:19.

What we have in the tabernacle and temple as types of Christ are inanimate objects and abstract ideas (in this instance, the theology of the tabernacle and temple) as types of Christ. Temple doesn't simply function as a metaphor for thinking about ways Jesus resides with his people. Christ, as the definitive antitype, invests the Old Testament temple with a definition all his own. This is the danger of deriving ideas and notions about the Old Testament temple from the ancient near east Ba-al and Molech temples, Mesopotamian ziggurats, and Egyptian temples and pyramids. While Israel's temple in Jerusalem had some similarities, it was a prophetic, forward-looking proclamation of the living and breathing gospel in its architecture, its furniture, its priesthood, its sacrificial system, its service, and its worship. More than this, the theology of the temple, the idea of God dwelling with his people in visible form, the holy of holies as God's footstool of his throne in heaven, the recapitulation of the garden, the union of heaven and earth, the atonement's forgiveness and wrath satisfaction, the mediation between God and his people by the priesthood, and many other ideas flowing out of Israel's dogmatic theology regarding the one true God of the covenant all spoke beyond what was resident in the temple to a bigger, better, and more glorious reality. The writer of Hebrews says the tabernacle (which had all of these same elements) was a copy of the heavenly reality. Everything in the tabernacle and temple was pointing forward and upward to a greater reality that would someday come as a permanent manifestation of all the tabernacle and temple represented.

All of these components of the temple's institutional system were types and shadows of what is coming in Christ. The temple and its institution had meaning beyond itself. In fact, it was not an

end in and of itself (a fact forgotten by the Sanhedrin in Christ's and Stephen's trials). If we want to know what the Old Testament temple was for, we look to Jesus for the answer because it is in the Final Temple the earlier temple and tabernacle find their definition and meaning. Christ fills up the type, in this instance, the temple, to its highest and fullest meaning.

There are many other examples we could provide from the Old Testament in which Christ is the Antitype of an inanimate and abstract type. In the antitype, the inanimate and abstract take on human flesh. The temple isn't the only instance. We could point to the menorah, which typifies Christ who is the light of the world and the Tree of Life. Christ has put flesh and bones not only on the menorah, an inanimate object, but also "light", an abstract. Just as Christ has filled up the meaning and symbol of "temple" to its highest measure as its definitive definition and expression, so too Christ has filled up the meaning and purposes of the lampstand and its light to its highest measure as its definitive definition and expression. Lampstand isn't simply a symbol. Light isn't simply a metaphor. These were given by God as prophetic portraits of who and what the Messiah would be and accomplish. The inanimate has taken on flesh in the Antitype. Christ is the true light of the world, the true tree of life of which these things in the Old Testament were prophetic types.

Other examples could be brought forth. Objects such as bread and water were types. Christ is the Incarnate Living Water from whom we drink life. Christ the Bread of Life, the Manna from heaven of whom we eat for life and sustenance. Abstract ideas could be brought forward as well. Christ has put flesh and bones on God's Wisdom. Christ is our Incarnate Righteousness (having obeyed the Law on our behalf). Christ is the Incarnate Truth (which, it should be noted, also has connotations of Torah in John, but I digress). Christ is the Incarnate Life. All of these abstract ideas can be found as types in the Old Testament, and an intelligible correspondence can be established. Christ, the Antitype, has put flesh and bones on the Truth. When Christ says, "I am the Truth", he isn't simply making a metaphorical analogy to help his disciples understand a little more about Christ's relationship to things that are Truth or even the Truth that comes from God. Nor is Christ, as is a popular way of saying it today, telling his disciples that they can believe every word he says because he will always speak the truth. No, this is the I AM who appeared to Moses in the burning bush standing in front of his disciples, in oneness with his Father, declaring himself to be the living and breathing enfleshment of the eternal reality, Truth, that has spoken all things into existence. Christ is making a sociological, philosophical, epistemological, soteriological, and yes, eschatological proposition about himself. Christ is the embodiment of an abstract idea, so that he in and of himself is everything one could say about the idea of Truth. Pilate felt the full impact of Christ as the embodiment of an abstract idea when Christ's life was on the line. Christ's statement, "I am the Truth" brought the grand cosmic reality from eternity into time and space in the fullness of time as the Incarnate Truth's mere presence was an indictment on the entire situation. The abstract type fulfilled in the Antitype represented a dilemma for Pilate, a test he ultimately failed.

It's not the place here to unpack all of these types and show their type-Antitype correspondence to Christ. We simply note the significance of the fact that there are inanimate and abstract types in the Old Testament that point to Christ. This is important in consideration of the covenant and law as types. This is how we can speak of Truth as a Person. This is how we can speak of "principles" as a Person. Christ gives flesh and bones to many things we tend to think of as transcendent and immaterial. Wisdom. Life. Torah. Law. Covenant. Grace. Light. Salvation.

Even a concept so simple as a “door” (John 10:9). Christ embodies all of these things, and in doing so, becomes their highest and ultimate definition and standard.

The Law as a type of Christ

Does the law belong in the category of “type”? If it can be shown that some abstract concepts and ideas in the Old Testament are prophetically imaging Christ in the narrative and song and prophecy of the Old Testament, then it is not surprising that some would include in that list of types: the Law. Gregory Beale makes an intriguing statement in “The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?”: “Typology indicates fulfillment of the indirect prophetic adumbration of events, people and institutions from the Old Testament in Christ who is now the final, climactic expression of all God ideally intended through these things in the Old Testament (e.g., the law, the temple cultus, the commission of prophets, judges, priests, and kings).”³⁹ Among the Old Testament types to which Beales points as example is “the law”. Beale understands Christ to be the final, climactic expression of all God ideally intended through “the law” in the Old Testament. What’s also interesting about Beale’s list (which is by no means exhaustive) is that it centers on the temple institution of which the law was a part. If the temple was a type, along with its priests and sacrifices, etc, so too the law which gave rise to everything about the temple. The law is inseparable from the rest of the types that occur in God’s self-revelation of his dwelling presence with his people in the temple (not to mention the glory-cloud itself portended what was to come in the Messiah).

The language of the New Testament supports this idea of the law as a type. When Christ says he has come to fulfill the law, what gets little notice is that Christ the Antitype is filling up the meaning and intentions of the type, the Law. Use of the word “fulfill” in Matthew and elsewhere must include typology in its exegesis. The Antitype fills up the type so as to be its fullest expression in bringing about the type’s conclusion. Again, Beale is helpful: “Everything which these things...” or better, “Everything which ‘the law’ (my insertion) lacked by way of imperfections was prophetically filled up by Christ, so that even what was imperfect in the Old Testament pointed beyond itself to Jesus.”⁴⁰ The imperfect Law as a type of the Old Testament shadows gives way to the fullest and highest expression of the reality in the New Testament’s perfection of the type, Jesus Christ. The Law was an imperfect and incomplete expression of God’s moral will that by definition faded into oblivion when the perfect and complete expression of God’s moral will filled up all that the Law was ever intended to be.

What is more surprising is that the Law given at Sinai doesn’t get more attention in the typology discussion. Just about everything else has been considered in typological treatises and essays: the tabernacle, temple, the furniture in the temple, the ark of the covenant, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, the temple service, the worship, and the theology of the temple have provided plenty of subject matter for typological discourse. What has received little attention is the role of the law as a type, and even less attention is the relationship between the Antitype and the law (Almost as ignored is the subject of “covenant” as a type, but that will be saved for another day).

It would be easy to engage in conjecture why the Law has been virtually ignored in the discussion over typology, even as the question of the law’s fulfillment in the New Testament (and New Covenant) has been a front burner issue in Christian ethics for centuries. Conjecture

³⁹ (Beale, 1994), p. 396

⁴⁰ (Beale, 1994), p. 396

would be really tempting, but there are two questions that can be asked in placing the question on the table. The first is this: are there any New Testament references that explicitly mention that law as a type of Christ? A corollary question is this: are there any New Testament references that explicitly mention Christ as the New Law antitype? The absence of an affirmative answer to the latter question probably best explains why the Law as a type has been virtually ignored and tends to be among the more controversial propositions of those who believe typology has a fundamental place in biblical hermeneutics (one of the reasons why it is controversial is because of some of the ethical implications of understanding the law as a type of Christ).

However, as it has been noted above, not all types are explicit. In fact, many types are to be found in the allusions of the canon. Further, there is at least one passage that may satisfy the criterion of the first question listed above, speaking of the law as a type. Even though there may be no explicit passage citing the Antitype as a New Law, that idea must be entertained if there is a passage speaking of the law as a type because a type's existence presupposes the Antitype.

Two passages are helpful here. John 1:14 and 17, and Hebrews 10:1. My purpose here at this stage of the apologetic isn't to provide a full-blown consideration of these texts in their contexts. Such would be the subject matter for a subsequent presentation. It will be enough at this point simply to highlight a couple of related ideas to our purposes for this presentation.

Turn to John 1:14. Again, I'm not going to unpack all there is to unpack in this verse or its context. However, this passage provides a couple of provocative thoughts for our consideration. Begin with verse 1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (verse 14) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And from his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:1,14, 16-18).*

Much has been made of the nature of what is meant by Logos. In fact, that subject alone embroiled most of the 20th century's Johannine scholarship. Few subjects have prompted more ink. Obviously, that debate will not be resolved here, but this author, for various reasons finds himself most in alignment with those who understand John's use of Logos as being grounded in the Old Testament in a fundamentally Jewish context (in fact, this author understands the Johannine corpus in this light as well). Some comments from David Johnson are helpful: "The logos "has replaced the Law given to Moses"⁴¹. Johnson notes one school of thought, one with which I have much affinity: "A third suggested Jewish/Hebrew background to John's logos is the Torah. In Psalm 119:105 (LXX 118:105) the Torah is called the Word of God (LXX ho logos sou). This is only one of many passages of this Torah Psalm which identifies the Law with God's Word. (In fact some manuscripts of the LXX substitute nomos [law] for logos in v. 105.) Later Jewish theology identified the Torah as one of the few things which existed before the creation."⁴²

Because its backdrop and foundation is Jewish, John's use of Logos does not simply ground John's argument in the Eternal, pre-existent Word of God which spoke all things into being, but also in the revelation that flowed from that Eternal, pre-existent Word that gave birth to a nation, the Torah. Word, Torah, and Truth in the Gospel of John are inseparably bound to each other,

⁴¹ (Johnson)

⁴² (Johnson)

sharing the same eschatological and biblical theological universe and born of the same pedigree. The early church reading John would have heard “Torah” embedded in the Logos (see Dan Liroy, W.D. Davies, Severino Pancaro, Raymond Brown, and others who’ve unpacked this idea. Dan Liroy says, “in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the perfection of the gift of the Torah...while many rejected Jesus as the divine, incarnate Tanakh, others turned to Him in faith and became members of God’s spiritual family (1:1-14).”⁴³ It is the Logos, the Torah, the Law that has come to tabernacle among his people.

Implications for New Covenant Theology and New Covenant ethics

What are the implications of an Incarnate Law for New Covenant Theology and New Covenant ethics? At the outset of this presentation, competing perspectives of New Covenant ethics within New Covenant theology were identified. For some, the Mosaic Code (exemplified in the Decalogue) has been exchanged for another “code” (either NT imperatives or principles, such as love or the law of Christ, external to the believer). Believers are not under the law, but are yet compelled by love to obey various sets of principles that function as a new kind of law in the New Covenant. Some go as far to say that the imperatives of the New Testament, especially those given by the Apostle Paul and the other apostolic witnesses, function as a new Torah for the New Covenant.

Others, however, are convinced that the Mosaic Code has been fulfilled by a Person who has Himself en fleshed the Law. It is no longer a code we obey, but a Person, who, in union with His Spirit placed within us, is internally working out a new kind of righteousness. If we rightly understand that the Incarnation is a game changer not simply with regard to reality, but also to the ethics of the New Covenant era, we will begin to see the implications for our preaching, our counseling, our discipleship ministry, and indeed every area of the life of the New Covenant community. Some of the implications are no-brainers for some of us who have been discussing these things for some time, but must be stated again in the context of this presentation.

1. That the Law is a Person means the Law of the New Covenant is not encoded in external imperatives or principles.
2. The Law Incarnate has placed a Person, the Holy Spirit, within the believer as the law written on the heart. That’s the upshot of 2 Corinthians 3’s understanding of Jeremiah 31. The law written on the heart should not be identified in its typical form, but its Antitypical... a Person, living and breathing life into and through the New Covenant member. The entire law “category”, as it moves from Old Testament to New, lands on a person. The trajectory of the fulfillment of the law does not land on a new set of rules or principles, or even a summarized list of the law of Christ. The Law as a type has its end in Christ. The law as a type fades away into oblivion because all types do... it has become a person
3. Abrogation of the law and a denial of third use is a given. The law, like any other type of the Old Testament, has fulfilled its prophetic and revelatory role and is gone and done now that the AntiType has filled up its intended meaning to the fullest.
4. Imperatives have a role to play in the New Covenant, but they cannot eclipse the Indicative, a Person, from whence they come. It’s not a matter of balance, as some have suggested. The New Testament doesn’t not speak of, explicitly or implicitly, a so-called

⁴³ (Liroy, 2007), p. 49

balance between the Indicative and imperative. In fact, seeing the New Testament as having a heavy emphasis on the imperatives says more about the presuppositions of the interpreter than it does about proper hermeneutics.

5. An Incarnate Law does not mean that commands in the New Covenant are not important. It does not mean that obedience is not important. It simply means the grounds for the discussion have changed. Obedience to commands is the manifestation of the inward obedience-causing law written on the heart.
6. An Incarnate Law does not mean that the Word of God is not the sufficient source for life and godliness. It simply means that the Word serves the purposes of THE WORD and that THE WORD is always above, behind, and in His Word. The “product” He created (The Word) cannot and should not supersede the Person.
7. The measure and standard of a person’s holiness is not measured by the Law nor is it measured by adherence to New Testament imperatives. The Incarnate Christ is the measure and standard of holiness by which we are measured.
8. Imperatives, whether old or new, are not the catalyst for holiness or righteousness. The indwelling law written on the heart is the catalyst for holiness and righteousness.
9. We begin with a person and an internal reality not a twelve verse process. We do not begin with the question: what is it I must obey?
10. It does mean that enablement theology is totally inadequate to explain the differences between proper obedience of the covenant community in the Old Covenant and faithfulness of the covenant community in the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit doesn’t simply enable obedience in the New Covenant, but he causes Christ’s people to obey, in producing His imputed righteousness in the lives of His own.
11. The Incarnate Law more accurately reflects New Covenant Theology *applied*. A proper biblical theology of the Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel New Covenant passages shows the “law written on the heart” is one and the same as “the Spirit placed within”. This is Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament’s New Covenant passages in 2 Corinthians 3.
12. An Incarnate Law means the wrong questions are being asked in contemporary New Covenant Theology’s community. The question isn’t what is it I must obey, but who obeyed and died in my place and how does my union with him work itself out in my life? The question is not whether imperatives have a role in the New Covenant, but the question is what role do they occupy? The question isn’t what are the five points of the law of Christ, but what is nature of the law of Christ and how is it manifest in the life of the church? The question isn’t whether personal holiness is important, but what is the nature and motivation of personal holiness?
13. An Incarnate Law means the paradigm for biblical counseling must be Christ-centered and originate with the Indicative: what Christ has already done for the counselee in obeying the Law on the counselee’s behalf, that the counselee has been united to Christ in his death and resurrection, and that the counselee is to live out the imperatives in light of the Indicative... i.e. “be who you already are in Christ”. Christ has already done and is doing through His Spirit what the New Covenant member cannot do for themselves.
14. The Incarnate Law means what Christ did for the New Covenant member includes filling up the Law’s meaning to its fullest and highest intended meaning and removing its condemnation of the New Covenant member in His death. For the New Covenant

member to revert to living by the type instead of the Antitype is to return to what had enslaved them (Galatians 3ff).

15. Life change must always be consciously tied to the Indicative, even as the imperatives provide the direction of the life change. Behavior change begins with a change in belief: we must see Christ as having imputed his obedience to our account, and ourselves as being in Christ.
16. Imperatives cannot create motivation. Such motivation comes from the internal law written on the Heart, the Spirit. Rather than simply giving those looking for life change “something to do”, they are pointed to the One who is already at work producing change in them.
17. The Law as the Incarnate Christ means life change that is imperative-focused or imperative-driven is simply Christianized behaviorialism. Stripping the imperatives from the Indicative (or simply always presuming the Indicative) results in an inherent moralism in our preaching and teaching. Allowing the Word to eclipse THE WORD results in an inherent bibliolatry.
18. Just as the imperatives flow from the Indicative, progressive sanctification flows from positional or definitive sanctification.
19. The Incarnate Law means in some sense, Christ is an absolute monarch. He doesn't simply speak imperatives to be obeyed. He *is* the law. Christ is to be obeyed simply for who He is, what he has done, and who he has been declared to be.

There are many, many more implications which could be listed. These are the ones I felt were appropriate for this workshop. I'm sure some of them could have been better stated. These will provide plenty of dialogue for us as we continue to work through the implications.

Conclusion

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And from his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:1,14, 16-18)

God's Word enscripturated is important because Christ, THE WORD, has invested himself in it. When we proclaim the Word, we are feeding the hearers of the Word Christ himself. In God becoming man, the One who had delivered Torah to His people, became Torah for them. Having removed its condemnation, the personal Law has been placed on the heart of His people, generating obedience in His people as they are conformed to His image.

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