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EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

*Third Article.*¹

To make our discussion properly complete, it is still necessary to bring into view, more particularly than has yet been done, the practical bearings and issues of the whole subject.

¹ 1. *Ancient Christianity, and the Doctrines of the Oxford Tracts for the Times.* By the Author of "Spiritual Despotism." Fourth Edition. London, 1844. 2 vols. 8vo.

2. *Die Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche und ihre Verfassung.* Ein geschichtlicher Versuch von RICHARD ROTHE, Professor der Theol. &c. Erster Band. Wittenberg, 1837.

3. *The Principle of Protestantism as related to the Present State of the Church.* By PHILIP SCHAFF, Ph. D. Chambersburg, 1846.

4. *What is Church History? A Vindication of the idea of Historical Development.* By PHILIP SCHAFF. Philadelphia, 1846.

5. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine.* By JOHN HENRY NEWMAN. American Edition, 1846.

6. *Vorlesungen über Katholicismus und Protestantismus.* Von HEINRICH W. J. THIERSCH, Doctor der Philosophie und Theologie, ordentl. Prof. d. Theol. an der Universität Marburg. Erlangen, 1848.

FAIRBAIRN'S TYPOLOGY.

The Typology of Scripture, or the Doctrine of Types, investigated in its principles, and applied to the explanation of the earlier revelations of God, considered as preparatory exhibitions of the leading truths of the Gospel. By REV. PATRICK FAIRBAIRN, Salton. Two volumes in one. Pp. 325 and 321, 8vo. Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith. 1852.

FAVORABLE notice of this recent work in its European form, has already appeared in different parts of our country. We have it here in a substantial and comparatively cheap American reprint, by which it is made more generally accessible, and is likely to have no small circulation. As will be seen by the number of pages, in all 650 of well filled stout octavo size, it is a production of more than merely popular and general pretension. It aims at something of scientific thoroughness and completeness; for which also the author shows himself to be more than usually well qualified by wide reading and much study, as well as by proper original powers of a truly high and respectable order. At the same time, however, the science of the book is put into a perfectly popular and easily intelligible form. It is written in a clear perspicuous style, which is moreover always remarkably regular and correct. It would be better perhaps, if the regularity were less monotonously even, and if the discussion in some parts were less oppressively full.

The importance of the subject will be readily acknowledged on all hands. It will be generally felt too, that it is a subject which still greatly needs discussion and elucidation; though with some it may have grown into a sort of settled principle indeed, that the need is one for which it is vain to expect any satisfactory help, and that to bestow much care upon it accordingly is but a waste of thought and time. The typology of the bible has been so much abused, has been subjected to such conflicting and contradictory systems, has been the field of so many wild arbitrary and fanciful interpretations, that it is no wonder it has come to be regarded by many as an unprofitable and useless study. From the extreme of finding types everywhere and in every thing, there has been a strong reaction the other way, till in modern times the progress of opinion has come to be powerfully towards the denial of them altogether.

The difficulty is to fix on a scheme, by which the determination of types, and the interpretation of them, may not be left to hazard or caprice, but shall proceed according to some objective

rule or reason in the matter itself which is thus to be explained. Without this, it is plain there can be no certainty, and at best but small force, in any use that may be made of the bible in this way. The old Protestant method, as we have it exemplified in such writers as Glass, Cocceius, Witsius, and Vitringa, was very loose. "Like the fathers, they did not sufficiently distinguish between the allegorical and typical interpretations, but regarded the one as only a particular form of the other, and both as equally warranted by New Testament scripture. Consequently the rules and principles which they adopted were very much the same for both kinds of interpretation.—They held, that there was a twofold sort of types, the one *innate*, consisting of those types which are somewhere in scripture itself declared to have been such, and explained; the other *inferred*, consisting of such as, though not particularized in scripture, were yet on probable grounds inferred by interpreters, as conformable to the analogy of faith, and the practice of the inspired writers in regard to similar examples." The latter class were taken to be equally proper and valid with the other. From their very nature indeed they could only be employed for the support and confirmation of truths already received; but still they were not on that account to be less diligently searched for, or less confidently used, because thus only could Christ be found in all parts of the bible, which yet must be taken to testify of him everywhere.

This system proceeds on the wrong principle, that a resemblance of *any sort* is sufficient to constitute the relation of type and antitype. But, as our author well remarks, to deal with the word of God in this arbitrary manner, "is to caricature rather than to vindicate its great theme, and to throw it open to every frivolous or extravagant conceit." Its palpable errors and imperfections have led to its general rejection; while our later Protestantism, so far as it has claimed to be scientific, has very generally fallen upon the rule, that "just so much of the Old Testament is to be accounted typical, as the New Testament affirms to be so, and no more." So we have it explicitly laid down by Professor Stuart, in his edition of *Ernesti*. We have always felt this rule to be very unmeaning and false; and we are glad to find it set in its proper light by the present writer. With all its air of science, this theory is not a whit more rational than the other. It leaves the relation out of which types grow wholly unexplained, and turns all as before into a sort of arbitrary outward mechanism. "It is scarcely possible to conceive a mode of interpretation, which should deal more capriciously

with the word of God, and make so anomalous a use of its historical facts. Instead of clothing these with a uniform and consistent language, it singles out only a few examples, and without any reason shown or conceivable for the preference, sets them up by themselves in solitary grandeur, like mystic symbols in a temple, invested with an air of sacredness and importance peculiar only to themselves. The exploded principle, which sought a type in *every* notice of Old Testament history, had at least the merit of uniformity to recommend it, and could not be said to deal partially, however often it might deal unwarrantably with the facts of ancient scripture; but according to the method now under review, for which the authority of inspiration itself is claimed, we perceive nothing but arbitrary distinctions and groundless preferences."

This scheme is essentially rationalistic in its origin and connections. Latterly a much sounder way of thinking has begun to prevail in relation to the whole connection between the Old Testament and the New, which is leading to a much deeper and better apprehension of typology, the result of which will be in due time, it is to be hoped, the extrication of the whole subject from its past and present difficulties, and the placing of it on higher and far more satisfactory ground. We meet with this better view of things in much of the later German theology. Mr. Fairbairn moves in the same general sphere of thought, with some obligations no doubt to German theology, but with sufficient independence at the same time, and an air of originality that may be considered truly and fairly his own. The general view in question rests on the idea of an organic union, holding between the old and new dispensations, and binding them together as a single system. So regarded their relation to each other is not outward merely and mechanical, but inward rather and living. The entire Old Testament becomes in this way a great prophecy or type of him that was to come. "The Messiah himself is the beginning and the end, the heart and centre, of the whole scheme of God for the salvation of man; the glorious object for whose coming every true child of God waited and longed, to whose person, work, and kingdom all the prophets gave witness, and on the ground of whose prevailing mediation, foreseen and calculated on, all forgiveness of sin and gifts of grace had from the first proceeded. In Christ, therefore, and the things of his salvation, every principle and purpose of the divine mind respecting the people of God terminates and is made perfect; these may be said to be its highest, and indeed the *only* good for sinful men, because on them, from first to last, every

thing is made to depend; and as all that concerns a fallen world dates from the fatal transgression of Adam, so all that concerns a restored world has at once its rise and its consummation in the perfect work of Christ, the second Adam."—"The church of the Old Testament is constantly represented as in a state of comparative childhood; supplied with such measures of instruction and such means of discipline as were suited to its imperfect condition; its law a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, and its prophetic scriptures ever opening out in gradual and growing developments the testimony of Heaven concerning him. Up till the coming of Christ the church was in a state of minority, passing through successive stages of advancement, and in them all undergoing preparation for the glorious light and liberties which were to distinguish its condition when arrived at the season of manhood." Thus as the child is the type of man, or as the life of the plant in a lower stage foreshadows its full growth in a higher, the Old Testament revelation necessarily prefigured its own complete sense as finally brought out by the New, not in the way of arbitrary or fanciful resemblance only, but through the exhibition of the very same principles, proclaimed and acted out as it were on a narrower and inferior scale. "The Mosaic ritual, like every other form of religion, had a shell and a kernel,—its shell, the outward rites and observances which it enjoined, its kernel, the spiritual relations which these implied, and the spiritual truths which they embodied and expressed. Substantially, these truths and relations were, and must have been, the same for the Jew, that they are for the Christian; for the wants and necessities of the worshipper under both dispensations are the same, and so also is the character of the God with whom they have to do. *There*, therefore, in that fundamental, internal harmony and agreement, we are to seek for the resemblance, which constituted the relation between type and antitype. So that the symbolical institutions of Moses shall appear, when properly understood, as manifestations of Christ's truth in a lower and earlier stage of existence,—the curiously wrought bud, which contained within its sacred folds every essential principle and relation, that was afterwards to expand, in the work and kingdom of Christ, into full blossom and fruitfulness."

But with this broad view, it may be asked, how are we to guard against error and extravagance? "By what means shall we determine in any given instance, that what is alleged as a type was really designed for a type?" Must we not have the voice of revelation to direct our judgment? Certainly we must; but this does not imply the necessity of any such mechanical

rule as is contended for by Marsh, Stuart, and the school in general to which they belong. "It is possible surely," according to our author, "that in this, as well as in other things, Scripture may furnish us with certain views or principles, the special and particular application of which is left very much to ourselves." Why should we require a mechanical rule in the case of types, more than in the case of prophecies, or parables, or indeed of any portion besides of holy writ? There is a possibility of folly and extravagance in any department of interpretation. What wild use in particular has not been made of the Old Testament prophecies? In no case is the proper protection against error here, to be sought in an outward formula that may answer the same purpose in the hands of all persons, the wise and the unwise alike. The bible is for the use of the intelligent and the free. Its proper interpretation depends on the piety, the learning, the good sense and the right taste, of those who are called upon to explain its meaning. So in every other part of the revelation it contains; and why not so also, then, in that part of it which forms the region of types? The best preparation here for the exposition of the sacred text, and the best guaranty that it shall be conducted in a sound and safe way, is found in the right adjustment of the mind or soul itself to the glorious organism of the word of God, considered as a whole. At the same time however, certain great leading principles may be laid down, which shall serve as a directory and help in the work of carrying out such exposition in its necessary details.

Our author undertakes to furnish us, accordingly, with a number of general conclusions and principles of interpretation, which he supposes to grow forth with inward necessity from his universal theory or scheme, and to be sufficient for keeping a rightly ordered mind within proper bounds in the business of exposition. It does not fall within the design of the present notice, to follow him in this part of his subject; much less to go along with him in the subsequent application of his principles to the actual exposition of the typical matter of the Old Testament, which makes up the great body of his work. Our object is simply to call attention to the work, as one whose general spirit and plan we believe to be of a much better character than the style of thinking which has heretofore reigned in this branch of our English theological literature, and the fundamental view of which may be safely recommended, we think, as satisfactory and safe, in harmony at once with the requirements of reason and the inspirations of true faith.

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