

SHADOW AND REALITY: THOUGHTS ON THE PROBLEM OF TYPOLOGY

It is close to eleven years now since the appearance of Jean Daniélou's brilliant study of patristic exegesis, *Sacramentum futuri: Etudes sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950). In it he gathered together a number of concise monographs on which he had labored over the years pointing to a special interpretation of the problem of patristic exegesis. Now at last we have the pleasure of seeing the book in English, skilfully translated by Dom Wulstan Hibberd.¹ Translation, so often a thankless task, will surely in this case be deeply appreciated by many Scripture and theology students who may find, in so thorny an area, the French less congenial than their native tongue. Indeed, a classic like Daniélou's *Sacramentum futuri* should be on every theologian's bookshelf in whatever language it can be found.

On the occasion of the new version it might be well to reconsider some of the problems connected with allegorical exegesis. Speaking generally, we may say that the habit of allegorism is deeply ingrained in the fibres of early Christian history. Its germ perhaps was to be found in the kerygmatic announcement of prophecy fulfilment in the person of Jesus, that He had come as the Son of Man, had been offered as sacrifice in the spirit of the paschal lamb, atoning for sin in the spirit of Isaiah's Servant of Yahweh. The argument from prophecy fulfilment was one of the earliest techniques of the second-century apologists, coupled with the more intellectual arguments to be found in the *Epistle to Diognetus* and Minucius Felix, derived from Christian morality and monotheism. But prophecy fulfilment must not be confused with strict allegorism as it developed especially in the Alexandrian catechetical school under the influence of Origen, and later in Asia Minor encouraged by Methodius, the Cappadocians, and their immediate circle, coming to the West through the vast reading of Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. Christian allegorism had two main sources: the analytic techniques of the pagan Greek grammarians and philosophers, and the midrashic methods of the Hellenistic rabbis, as particularly channeled through the writings of Philo of Alexandria.

Though the greater burden of non-Christian influence may be laid on the

¹ *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*. Translated by Dom Wulstan Hibberd. Westminster, Md.: Newman; London: Burns and Oates, [1961]. Pp. viii + 296. \$5.50. Still valuable is an article on Daniélou's theory which appeared in the same year as *Sacramentum futuri*: Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., "On Early Christian Exegesis," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 11 (1950) 78-116.

shoulders of Philo, who died in A.D. 45, we may not pass over the pagan contribution to the study of allegory. Indeed, only from a consideration of the Gentile view of allegory and enigma can we arrive at a just estimate of Philo's contribution. Plutarch, in his essay *On Reading Poetry* (*Moralia* 19F), speaks of those who would "distort and twist" the meaning of Homer by seeing in him "hidden meanings or, as they are now called, allegories." He is referring here to the centuries-old debate between the skeptical Epicureans on the one hand and the Stoics, who, following a long tradition in Greek philosophy, interpreted Homer in a moral or allegorical way, with Achilles and Odysseus symbolizing two aspects of man as he moves through the world of moral temptation.

But if some authors were a prey to easy allegorism, the majority of the ancient critics stood out for clarity and intelligibility. Cicero, for example, seemed impatient with allegory and felt with Aristotle that it was little more than a variety of metaphor (*Orator* 27.94). The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian are more tolerant and their doctrines almost coincide. Quintilian in his *Institutes of Oratory* (8.6.44) mentions allegory as a distinct figure or trope and distinguishes three types: (1) a series of metaphors all applicable to the same object; (2) the use of a fictional cover-name to designate a historical person; and (3) the use of irony, riddles, and conundrums, in which the actual words convey two sets of meanings. What is interesting about the Greco-Roman view of allegory is that in general they demanded an objective clue to the meaning. In Quintilian's first type, for example, the implied comparison must somehow be stated or hinted. Horace, whom Quintilian quotes without hesitation, has an obscure poem in which the state is compared to a ship on a rough sea; Plautus—to cite another famous passage—has a long choral section in which man is compared to a house. In Quintilian's second type, the identity of the true person under the cover-name is discovered from the events of a poem, or else arrived at by solving a riddle. In the third type, irony or riddle, the true meaning of the text emerges from an analysis of the words and the fact that the second or intended meaning precisely fits the case. The enigma-type of allegory, so important for understanding Philo, can be seen in the famous riddle of the Sphinx, which ran: What creature walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon, and three at night? *Answer*: Man. Here the obscurity is due to the double meaning of the word "legs," and the equating of a day with man's lifetime. Once seen, however, the allegory is clear enough.

Now Philo's technique, which derived in part from the midrash of the old rabbinical schools with its division into haggada (doctrinal) and halakah

(moral), postulates a hidden, enigmatic meaning almost everywhere in the sacred text. This meaning is discovered only by the trained teacher, and we find it is regularly drawn from Hellenistic moral philosophy, Stoic cosmology, or from Pythagorean and Essenian mysticism. In the process, against all logical rules, he treats the text as an oracular riddle, to be solved by puns, metaphor, metonymy and association, Pythagorean number-symbolism, and other devices. In this, Philo was, as Wolfson and others have pointed out, not only suggesting that the Bible was the source of all truth, but also attempting to correct Greek philosophical ideas through the teaching of the Old Testament. Philo's method can be chiefly studied from his *Allegory of the Laws*, the *Questions on Exodus*, and the two books *On the Life of Moses*, from which Gregory of Nyssa so largely drew. Philo's reading was incredibly vast, his ingenuity in exegesis as interesting as it was excessive. And not the least of his achievements was his adaptation and extension of the traditional rabbinical techniques. His exegesis has to be read to be believed. Of the creation in Genesis he says: "First God made spirit, that is, Adam; then he gave him a companion, that is, allegorically: sensation and the passions are the companions of the soul." The creation of woman is thus interpreted as an allegory of the faculty of sensation in man. The four rivers of Paradise stand for the cardinal virtues. Again, it is said by Daniélou, Philo can allegorize his entire theology from the life of Moses. For Philo, Moses is the man who has been initiated into the life of the spirit, the ideal Adam, for whom the immaterial world alone has meaning. Thus, his life as we find it in Exodus and Deuteronomy becomes a kind of Hebrew *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which every event has a deeper significance. But unlike Bunyan's hero, Moses is perfect from the very beginning and represents the triumph of Hebrew revelation over the ignorance and sensuality of the world. It is clear that the Philonian leaven is at work in all Christian allegorism. Daniélou offers many more examples: Isaac's birth signifies the origin of virtue in the soul; for Philo, Moses and Abraham represent the human soul passing from appearances to the mystic realities of the divine revelation; Abraham, for example, unites himself first with worldly education in Agar, then with spiritual perfection in Sarah. Noah's ark stands for the human body (with its various cavities and dimensions), adrift on the flood of the passions; and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, represent the types of human action, that is, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. At times Philo touches on interpretations which struck deep root in later Fathers, as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Nyssa is, of course, deeply indebted to Philo wherever he interprets the Pentateuch; a good example is Gregory's *Life of Moses* and his use of Philonian exegesis for the

Red Sea, the burning bush, Mt. Sinai, the heavenly tabernacle, and much more. Philo is clearly, for all his genius and imagination, no secure guide to the meaning of the Old Testament. Yet it was precisely the Philonian technique which Origen and his school transformed—within the limits of the Christian *paradosis*—into the well-known fourfold sense: literal, messianic, moral, and eschatological. And it was precisely the Alexandrian technique which, despite the sharp reaction of the Antiochene school, captured the imagination of so many patristic writers and poets, with a profound and lasting effect on Scripture studies down to the Middle Ages and beyond.

The weakness of the Philonian exegesis is clear; for, apart from the truth or falsity of any specific doctrine of the human soul, the world, and God, Philo treats Scripture as a kind of riddle for which he alone possesses the clue. But nowhere are we favored with a discussion of the objective evidence which would suggest that a specific text has the hidden meaning which Philo assigns to it. Daniélou has pointed this out well in *Sacramentum futuri* and elsewhere. For if we are faced with a linguistic communication, there should be objective rules by which the meaning of the text, its precise denotation and connotation, can be derived. Contrariwise, these rules should be clear enough so that the critic can say (within reasonable limits) that x is the meaning and that y is to be definitely excluded. Now Philonian allegorism makes this impossible. Hence, Daniélou has long been at pains to distinguish a legitimate form of Christian allegorism, which he calls "typology," from the more subjective Philonian kind, for which he reserves the term "allegory." He clearly states: "Typology is a legitimate extension of the literal sense, while moral allegory is something entirely alien." Without definitely explaining how these senses are related to the literal sense, as, for instance, *sensus typicus* or *sensus plenior*, he selects from the vast area of patristic exegesis three forms of legitimate allegorism or typology: the messianic, the eschatological, and the sacramental. He blames Origen for setting side by side the two different techniques. But in the best sense of typology, what the Fathers did was merely extend the areas of the shadow-reality exegesis which they inherited from the Old and New Testament writers and from the apostolic kerygma. In a word, then, the essence of the apostolic and patristic typology, in Daniélou's view, is the legitimate application, extension, of Old Testament characters and events to Christ and the Church, for it is to this that they refer for their final fulfilment. Daniélou admits the opposition of the Antiochenes, as, for example, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom; but he convincingly shows that the opposition has been exaggerated and that on the

basic typology of the Scriptures they were in fundamental agreement with the Alexandrian school.

From Shadows to Reality, then, is a brilliant synthesis of all the various areas of legitimate typology—the Christological, the sacramental, and the eschatological—traced from Philo down through the Fathers of the fifth century. The presentation is superbly clear; the conclusion is not perhaps one that all exegetes would be prepared to accept: “Over and above all these diversities and deviations, we meet an agreement of all schools upon the fundamental types. This proves that we are face to face with something which is part and parcel of the deposit of Revelation” (p. 288). But surely, taken in the widest sense, the words “something which is part and parcel” should give no offense. The harmony of the two Testaments, however it is to be justified on the basis of individual texts, is an integral part of the primitive Christian kerygma.

Daniélou’s masterful book remains as much a challenge now as it was when it appeared eleven years ago. And still the basic problem remains unsolved, namely, what we intend by the word “meaning” when dealing with a passage of the Scriptures, especially with a text from the Old Testament which seems *prima facie* to refer to the New Law. Here we must distinguish between textual hermeneutics and kerygmatic theology. For, from the textual point of view, it would seem clear that we must reject the Philonian method and incline more towards that used by the ancient Greek philologists and, indeed, by the best representatives of the Antiochene school: this would insist that the human author, the writer who conceived and executed the text, must supply the clues for the ultimate understanding of his message. If these clues are not present or (as is often the case) have been removed by the accidents of time, then the text may have to be abandoned as provisionally unintelligible. But, in any case, we have not the right to act, in the manner of Philo, as though every scriptural text were some peculiar sort of riddle for which the answers must be sought outside of itself, or derived somehow by the constant use of metaphor and metonymy. In modern communication theory² the meaning of a text is the complex of information which can be decoded from the objective signs, and hence information that is publicly demonstrable. It is not what the author intended to say but did not, or what he would have said had he known certain facts, or what may be inferred about y -facts from his statement about x . Here precisely is the fallacy of Alexandrian allegory at its worst. Daniélou’s

² For a fuller discussion, see my “Symbolism and Kerygmatic Theology,” *Thought* 36 (1961) 61–80.

book, then, is a recall to a sound, sensible estimate of the contribution of patristic typology in the best sense, still invaluable for our understanding of the Scriptures and of the total history of salvation. The acuteness of his observations and the depth of his painstaking scholarship will be an example to scholars all over the world. For the task is still unfinished—the patristic scholar's work is never done—and Daniélou's book should serve as a guide to a fascinating and ever-growing field of research. The growth from shadow to reality must be a laborious and co-operative job.

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