

The Lifting up of the Son of Man” (John 3:14-15): Highlighting the Relationship between the OT and NT – An Exegetical/Theological Reflection

Emmanuel U. Dim

Dept. of Religion & Human Relations
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam Campus – Nigeria

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol13n55867>

Published June 09, 2025

Citation: Dim EU (2025) The Lifting up of the Son of Man” (John 3:14-15): Highlighting the Relationship between the OT and NT – An Exegetical/Theological Reflection, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13 (5),58-67

Abstract: *The dynamic relationship existing between the two testaments of the Christian Bible, the OT and NT, has long been recognized by most Christians with regard to divine revelation. However, this relationship exhibits different characteristics when specific passages or texts come under consideration – and these have to be fully grasped for the deeper understanding of both the texts in question and, ultimately, the two testaments of the Bible. This paper, therefore, aims at a deep study of the text of John 3:14-15, “The lifting up of the Son of Man” – especially as John 3:14 is a clear “allusion” to Num 21:4-9. This would throw more light on that text and help to bring out, especially in this particular case, the relationship existing between the two testaments. Notable also is the fact that these two verses lead into John 3:16 which emphasizes God’s enduring will to save everyone who believes in Jesus, a verse widely reputed for its importance in the entire NT. This paper is written mainly through library research, enriched particularly by the use of the Historical Critical method of scriptural analysis, for the proper study of the text in question. Thus, the relationship between these two texts is mainly typological. Yet, even though Num 21:4-9 has been fulfilled in Jesus in the NT, that text still has its own specific relevance in that First Testament. The recommendation, therefore, is for everyone reading this text to endeavour to see its deep roots in the OT so as to fully understand and value it as well as the importance of the two testaments especially in the lives of Christians. Hence, this paper would be highly relevant to all Christians and lovers of the Bible as well as all teachers and students of religion in higher institutions of learning.*

Keywords: son of man, lifting up, typology, theological reflection

INTRODUCTION

The OT and the NT apparently stand in a living and dynamic relationship with regard to divine revelation, so that both, together, have all the years constituted the canonical Bible for Christians.

However, this relationship could assume diversified forms when tailored to specific passages in these two testaments. In this understanding, and given the fact that John 3:14 is an allusion¹ to the OT, one then asks: What is the relationship between these two distinct sections of the Bible with regard to John 3:14-15?

To be able to answer this question, this paper undertakes an analysis of this text beginning with the important grammatical, textual and philological explanations in it as well as its translation, this being followed by the text's contextual delineation in the two respective testaments. The proper exegesis of the text would then lead into the theological consideration that also aims to highlight the relationship between the OT and NT, with this text in view. Then comes the conclusion.²

Explanation of Key Words and Expressions

"Son of Man," *ben ʾādām* in Hebrew, is a Semitic expression that individualizes a noun used for humanity in general by prefixing it with "son of," thereby designating a specific human being. It was used in Dan 7:13-14 to describe a cloud-borne humanlike figure and it became traditional in some forms of Jewish and early Christian speculation anticipating a transcendent eschatological agent bringing divine judgment and deliverance. That agent is almost universally identified with the risen Jesus in the NT.³ Hence, Jesus identifies himself as the Son of Man in our text, beginning even from the previous verse, John 3:13-15.

"To lift up" could literally mean "removing to a higher position" or to elevate to a higher plan of thought, feeling or even status.⁴ Typology is derived from "type" meaning "a class of things or persons having common characteristics." Theologically, it is "a foreshadowing in the Old Testament of a person or event of the Christian dispensation."⁵ These key words are integral to the text under study. Therefore, they will still be referred to especially in the exegetical section of this paper.

The Text: Important Preliminary Considerations

As the text of John 3: 14-15 is thematically clear, this paper would begin with the necessary grammatical, syntactical and textual analyses of that text. These would naturally aid its proper understating.

Thus, the verb *hupsōō*, meaning "to lift up, raise high" someone or something,⁶ occurs twice in v.14. *Hupsōsen* (aor. ind. act. 3 sg.) is used of the "lifting up" of a snake in the desert by Moses while *hupsōthēnai* (aor. inf. passive) futuristically applies to that of the "Son of Man." But "to lift up," as

¹ Being just an allusive similitude to the OT, and hence devoid of an introductory formula, one could describe John 3:14 as an allusive citation from the OT. This is different from the explicit quotations in which the OT is cited, specifically indicating where the text is derived, with an introductory formula before or after the text, as in John 1:23; 2:17; 6:31.

² All biblical citations in this article shall be taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

³ G. W. E. NICKELSBURG, "Son of Man", in D. N. FREEDMAN – *al*, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 137.

⁴ D. THOMPSON, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 787.

⁵ D. THOMPSON, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 1510.

⁶ W. BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 850.

already hinted above, could have a literal or a figurative meaning, the former signifying the ordinary raising up of something or someone while the latter, “enhancement in honour, fame, position power, fortune, etc.”⁷ Whether or not these two nuances apply in this text under consideration, will still be seen later in this work. In the same verse *dei*, an impersonal 3 m.sg. verb, denotes the special necessity established by God in relation to the salvific mission of Christ, especially regarding what he is destined to undergo.⁸ *Kathōs ... houtōs* (as ... so) are adverbs of comparison, indicating similarity.⁹

V.15, a subordinate clause to v.14, is a purpose clause, introduced by *hina* and followed by the subjunctive *echē*,¹⁰ explaining the reason for the lifting up of the Son of Man. And finally, *en autō* as the object of *ho pisteuōn* has variants. But, on account of the limited scope of this work, it will only be briefly analysed, referring just to the major manuscripts,¹¹ as follows: *en autō* is attested to by *P*⁷⁵, B and *W*^{supp}; *ep’ autō* by *P*⁶⁶, L while *eis autō* by a, K D Q P Y. The fact is that it is only in this passage that John uses *en* with *pisteuein*; else, it is always *eis* with *pisteuein*, occurring 34 times in his Gospel. Therefore, although the commonness of the latter in John may suggest it as preferable, yet, apart from the manuscripts involved, the rarity and ambiguity of the former seem to indicate it as giving rise to the other readings.¹² Hence, *pas ho pisteuōn en autō* “must be taken in an absolute sense”¹³ in this passage,¹⁴ the object of *pisteuein* being understood without being expressed.¹⁵

The Translation

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes shall, in him, have eternal life (John 3:14-15).

⁷ W. BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 850-851.

⁸ J. H. THAYER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, ⁴1908) 126.

⁹ W. BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 391.

¹⁰ J. SWETNAM, *An Introduction to the Study of New Testament Greek* (SubBib 16/1; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1992) 33, explains that the use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause, after the introductory conjunction *hina*, is a way of expressing purpose in the NT.

¹¹ For the details of all the manuscripts in each case, cf. NESTLE-ALAND, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993) 253.

¹² B. M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, ²1994) 175.

¹³ J. H. BERNARD, *Gospel According to St. John* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), I, 116.

¹⁴ For other instances of *pisteuein* used absolutely in St. John’s Gospel, cf. John 1,50; 4,42,53; 5,44; 6,64; 11,15; 12,39; 14,29; 19,35 and 20,8,25.

¹⁵ B. M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek Testament*, 175 further explains *en autō* to mean “that everyone who believes shall in him □i.e. resting upon him as the cause□ have eternal life.” He further clarifies: “In support of such an interpretation is John’s manner of placing an adverbial phrase with *en* before its verb when the phrase is emphatic or metaphorical (cf. 5.39; 16.33; and 1 Jn passim).”

The Contexts of John 3:14-15:**The New Testament Context**

John 3:14-15 is a part of John 2:23-3:36, generally referred to as the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus, dealing with rebirth and eternal life.¹⁶ That text is delineated as follows: 2:23-25 serves as a link from the previous text of 2:13-22 (Jesus' cleansing of the Temple) which provides a context, a remote context, one may say, for the Nicodemus narrative as well as an important clue to its understanding.¹⁷ John 3:1-12 is Jesus' precise dialogue with Nicodemus regarding participation in the kingdom of God, followed by a meditation on the ascent of the Son of Man which entails his "exaltation" (vv. 13-21). Then comes the controversy concerning ritual washings and the final testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus (vv. 22-30) and, in conclusion, the summary of the witness of the One who comes from above (vv. 31-36).¹⁸

Thus, the immediate context of John 3:14-15 is that reflection (John 3:13-21) that follows Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus (John 2:23-3:12) – when the former was in Jerusalem for the Passover. This dialogue, as already hinted, centres on entry into the kingdom of God (*tēn basileian tou Theou* (vv. 3 & 5)) which requires, as a *conditio sine qua non*, being born again or from above (*anōthen* (vv. 3 & 7)), and hence being born of water and the Spirit (*ex hudatos kai pneumatos* (v. 5)). Vv. 22-30 again speak of the baptism of Jesus in the Judean country (v. 22) and that of John in Aenon (vv. 23-30) while vv. 31-36 form the concluding reflection that ends with the emphasis on the eschatological lots of the believer and non believer in the Son of Man (vv. 35-36). Therefore, John 3:14-15, in the immediate context of John 3:13-21 is found in the general context of John 2:23-3:36 (the Nicodemus Discourse), in between two sections dwelling on baptism and eternal life.¹⁹

John 3:14 (cf. also John 18:31,32) is related to the Synoptics' prediction of the death of Jesus,²⁰ although only in Matt 20:19 is death by crucifixion also specified (but cf. Luke 24:7) and this reference to the serpent is unique to John in the entire NT. Answering the incredulity of Nicodemus on the possibility of being born again (v. 5), Jesus now connects his being "lifted up" (v. 14) with the faith of

¹⁶ Cf. P. PERKINS, "The Gospel According to John," in R. E. BROWN – J. A. FITZMYER – R. E. MURPHY, ed., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1994) 954-955.

¹⁷ For example, on the response of Jesus to the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19), the Evangelist further clarifies: "But he was speaking of the temple of his body" (v. 21). G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary 36: Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999) 41, comments: "This is not a denial of the contextual interpretation of v 19, but a clarification of its nature as sign and pointer to its mode of fulfillment: the 'destruction' of the temple is completed in the destruction of the body of Jesus, and the building of the new temple takes place through the resurrection of Jesus" – a remote allusion to the reflection of this article.

¹⁸ G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 45-46.

¹⁹ It is often held that John does not emphasize the sacraments in his Gospel. Although this paper would not go into that debate on account of its limited scope, yet the fact needs to be stressed that the presence of a baptismal motif in this Nicodemus Discourse is certain. It is on account of this that R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966) 143 concludes that "the phrase "of water" in which the baptismal motif expresses itself most clearly may have been always part of the scene, although originally not having a specific reference to Christian Baptism; or the phrase may have been added to the tradition later in order to bring out the baptismal motif" – all in connection with being born again, for eternal life.'

²⁰ Cf. Mark 8:31; Matt 16:21 and Luke 9:22.

the believer and eternal life (v. 15).²¹ With this presentation of Jesus, the evangelist gives this pericope a very important place in his entire Gospel. No wonder then v. 16,²² which underlines the enduring readiness of God to give eternal life to all who believe in Jesus, as well as its further elucidation in vv. 17-21, immediately follow this pericope.

The Old Testament Context and its Import

The OT context of John 3:14-15 is Num 21:4-9: the story of the bronze serpent. As the Israelites continued their journey to the Promised Land in the desert, “to go around the land of Edom” (v. 4), they grumbled against God and Moses, being dissatisfied with their feeding (v. 5). The Lord sent fiery serpents (*hannəḥāšim haššārāpîm*) that bit them and many died (v. 6). Upon the people’s request of Moses and the latter’s prayer (v. 7) the Lord instructed him to make a fiery serpent and place it on a pole so that whoever is bitten by the snake and looked at it, would live (8). Hence, the text concludes in v. 9: “So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live” (*Wayya ‘aš Mōšeh nəḥaš nəḥōšet wayəšimēhū ‘al hannēs. Wəḥāyāh ‘im nāšāk ḥōšhannāḥāš ‘et ‘iš wəḥibbīt ‘el nəḥaš hannəḥōšet wāḥā*).²³

But what is the symbolism of all this, one may ask? Joines, who explains that the serpent was associated with the restoration of life in the Ancient Near East, believes it is “sympathetic magic.”²⁴ But one thinks that it is more convincing to trace this symbolism to the general principles underlying sacrifices and purificatory rites in the OT in which there is often an inversion, whereby normally polluting substances or actions may within ritual contexts have the opposite effect and serve to purify. Hence in this context, those bitten by living snakes were restored to life by a dead, man-moulded snake.²⁵ In these rituals, without physical contact, the sacrifice or purificatory ritual was not effective. On account of this, the worshipper had to lay his hand on the animal’s head in sacrifices (Lev 1-4), and had to be sprinkled with the purifying liquid (Lev 14; Num 19) in purificatory rituals. Similarly, then, in this case of the bronze serpent, the affected person has to appropriate the healing power of God through looking at the snake set up on the pole.²⁶ In other words, it is God who provides the

²¹ The connection between faith and eternal life runs through the Gospel of John; cf. 3:36 and 6:47. Of course, the purpose of the Gospel’s composition is “so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

²² G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 51 describes John 3:16 as the “confessional summary of the Gospel” of St. John.

²³ This same story appears in the LXX’s Num 21:4-9, and given the allusion to the LXX’s Isa 52:13 in John 3:14-15 also, it is highly probable that John may have used the LXX instead of the MT – the LXX being taken by early Christians as the Christians’ Bible.

²⁴ K. R. JOINES, “The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult”, *JBL* 87 (1968) 251. He explains “sympathetic magic” as “the belief that the fate of an object or person can be governed by the manipulation of its exact image. Thereby a representation of a noxious creature could best drive off that creature, and an adversary could most effectively be controlled by the manipulation of his exact image.”

²⁵ G. J. WENHAM, *Numbers* (TOTC; Leicester-Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981) 157-158. He further gives other instances of this: “Animals are killed, so that sinful men who deserve to die may live. Blood which pollutes when it is spilled can be used to sanctify and purify men and articles. The ashes of a dead heifer cleanse those who suffer from the impurity caused by death.”

²⁶ G. J. WENHAM, *Numbers*, 158.

means of healing, yet some level of personal believing and initiative is necessary for its efficacy.²⁷ Wisdom 16:6-7 also stresses this last point.²⁸

Apart from the foregoing OT text, there may also be, as already hinted, an allusion in John 3:14, to the LXX's Isa 52:13: Behold, my servant shall be wise and exalted and greatly glorified (*idou sunēsei ho pais mou kai hupsōthēsetai kai doxasthēsetai sphodra*). But this would still be referred to later in this work.

The Exegesis of John 3,14-15

By means of *kathōs ... houtōs* (v. 14), the evangelist likens the lifting up of the serpent by Moses (*hupsōsen*) to the exaltation of Jesus on the Cross (*hupsōthēnai*). Thus, "to the lifting up of the snake on a pole that all may live corresponds the lifting up of the Son of Man on a cross that all may have eternal life."²⁹ The latter, however, is a divine necessity (*dei*) for the salvation of the world (vv. 15). Hence, the evangelist brings together, from this, three connected points in the case of Jesus: the exaltation, its salvific power and the divine plan behind it all (*dei*). Thus, it is neither the stake nor the serpent that is the point of the comparison, but the "exaltation," linked with the thought that salvation for many comes from this "exaltation,"³⁰ Jesus himself having said: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). Hence, this divinely ordained work of salvation has a goal (*hina* [v. 15]): the giving of eternal life to all believers, Jesus becoming the mediator of this salvation (*en autō*).³¹ Then, "the real force of the analogy is in the necessity for faith."³²

Notable, though, is the fact that John consistently applies the verb *hupsoō* to the death of the Son of Man.³³ But he also strongly associates this verb with *doxasthēnai* which means "to be glorified."³⁴ One then asks: Does the "lifting up" of the Son of Man in our text also involve his glorification? Schnackenburg says "yes", because John considers it so in this typology of the text.³⁵ Kysar supports

²⁷ K. D. SAKENFELD, *Journeying with God, A Commentary on the Book of Numbers* (ITC; Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1995) 118.

²⁸ With regard to the serpent one reads in Wis 16:6: "For the one who turned toward it was saved, not by the thing that was beheld, but by you, the Saviour of all."

²⁹ G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 50.

³⁰ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St John* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) I, 394-395.

³¹ The emphasis is on union with Jesus, whereby the believer has fellowship in his life (cf. also John 15:4-7; 17:23; 1John 2:24; 3:24; 4:13).

³² D. GUTHRIE, "John", *New Bible Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992) 937.

³³ In John 8:28 (*hupsōsēte* being used) one reads: 'So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, ..."' And in John 12:32 (*hupsōthō* being used) it is: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

³⁴ Hence in John 12:23 (*doxasthē* being used) one reads: 'Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."' After Judas had gone out to betray Jesus, the evangelist writes in John 13:31: 'When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him"' – the verb *edoxasthē* is used here two times.

³⁵ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 396 explicates: "By considering the Crucifixion, in the light of this typology, as a salvific "exaltation", which also becomes the "glorification" of the Son of Man (cf. 8:28; 12:34 with 12:23; 13:31), the evangelist takes a most important step in Christology."

him, indicating that the evangelist uses the Crucifixion to also show Christ's enthronement as a King.³⁶ But Beasley-Murray disagrees, adding that the resurrection indissolubly comes into the scene as well.³⁷ Brown also expresses a similar view, seeing Jesus' being lifted up as a series of "ascents" beginning with the crucifixion and ending with the ascension.³⁸

This paper identifies with the above-noted position of Schnackenburg which seems more convincing because the crucifixion, in earlier Christian theology, was seen as the lowest point of humiliation for Jesus, being followed, only later, by his exaltation, bringing forth his installation as Lord at the right hand of God.³⁹ But this is actually not John's view, as the "exaltation" and glorification combine in the Crucifixion.⁴⁰ In this understanding, one sees that the opening sentence of the last Servant Song in Isa 52:13, already cited above, where both verbs are applied to the Servant of the Lord (*kai hupsōthēsetai kai doxasthēsetai*), is here recalled.

Theological Reflection:

The Relation between the OT and NT

What seems striking about John 3:14-15, in this relationship between the OT and the NT, is typology, already explained above. E. Achtemeier solidifies that explanation with a technical definition.⁴¹ Thus, with the comparison that centres on the "exaltation" in v. 14, as already indicated in the exegetical section, the lifting up of the serpent by Moses in Num 21:9 so that the Israelites when bitten by the snake looked at it and lived, now becomes a type of the Crucifixion of the Son of Man (John 3:14), so that whoever believes may, in him, have eternal life (John 3:15).

This typology featured much among the early Christian writers. The Epistle of Barnabas refers to that serpent in Num 21:4-9 as one made by Moses "to exhibit a type of Jesus,"⁴² and being hung as a sign,

³⁶ R. KYSAR, *John* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986) 54.

³⁷ G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John*, 50-51. After analyzing *hupsoun* in the light of its Aramaic and Hebrew equivalents, he concludes: "More significant than these linguistic phenomena is the simple fact that the Evangelist views the death and resurrection of Christ as indissolubly one. The redemptive event is the crucifixion-resurrection of the Son. Accordingly it is in the risen, crucified Lord that the believer has eternal life (v 15).

³⁸ R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 146.

³⁹ Cf. Acts 2:33-36; 5:30-42.; Phil 2:8-11.

⁴⁰ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 396-397. Insisting on this view, he indicates that the crucifixion, and hence "exaltation", is the beginning of the salvific Lordship of Christ, as the two-fold *nun* (12:31) and the *kekritai* (16:11) help to show. It is Christ's "glorification" by the Father manifested in the former's power to give life to all who belong to him (17:1f). He then reiterates: "John does not speak of a Son of Man who is going to a Passion and death which would be a "humiliation", as do the Synoptics; for John, the Pauline "scandal" of the Cross is not overcome only by the subsequent resurrection, but by the majesty and saving power of the Cross itself."

⁴¹ E. ACHTEMEIER, "Typology", *IDBSup*, 926, further explains typology thus: "That form of biblical interpretation which deals with the correspondences between traditions concerning divinely appointed persons, events, and institutions, within the framework of the salvation history".

⁴² BARNABAS, "The Epistle of Barnabas, 12,6" (Translated by J.A. KLEIST) (ACW 6; Westminster: The Newman Press, 1948) 55. This Epistle, after referring to Moses' raised arms with a shield which gave Israel victory (Exod 17:8-14) as "a type of the Cross and of Him who was to suffer" (12:2), also has it that the Lord made the serpents bite the Israelites to convince them that they would be delivered over to death because

Justin the Martyr calls it the “figure of the cross”⁴³ of Jesus. There are also other instances in the OT that are taken to be “types” of the cross of Jesus among other Church Fathers like Tertullian and Ambrose.⁴⁴ One thing becomes clear from this – that typology as understood by these Church Fathers was fluid, and could be attached to many aspects of the OT at the same time. This may not really be surprising; after all, most early Christian writers, even from the first century, saw the OT as testifying to Christ.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, this fluidity of typological interpretation increasingly precipitated some confusion between the typological method proper and the more fluid allegorical method⁴⁶ of interpretation respectively. This situation immediately brings into reminiscence the “struggle” for superiority between the Alexandrian School (whose members included Clement and Origen) that insisted on the allegorical method and the Antiochian School (which included Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom) that propagated the historical sense of the Scriptures, the latter giving a healthier basis for typology. In other words, the “fluid” application of typology by many of these early Christians sometimes went beyond what is suggested in the NT, with confusing consequences.⁴⁷ Therefore, this typology of John 3:14-15 has to be studied within the context of John’s understanding and use of the OT. To this end, one notes that although he is not concerned with detailed proof of the fulfilment of Scripture, like Matthew,⁴⁸ the evangelist sees revelation as continuing from the OT and coming to a final and “complete revelation” in Jesus, this final revelation being far superior to that of

of their transgressions (12:5). And commenting on their cure after looking at the hung snake, it concludes: “Again you see in this incident the glory of Jesus, inasmuch as all things are in Him and for Him.”

⁴³ JUSTIN, “The First Apology, 60”, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* (Compiler: T.B. FALLS) (FC 6; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977) 98. Cf. also JUSTIN, “Dialogue With Trypho, 94”, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, 297, for the same view. But this same Apologist also refers to the blessing of Joseph in Genesis as well as the victory of Israel over Amalek by the sign of Moses’ outstretched hands as referring also to “the sign of the cross.” (Cf. JUSTIN, “Dialogue with Trypho, 91”, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, 292-293.

⁴⁴ For the details of these, cf. J. DANIELLOU, *Sacramentum Futuri* (ETH; Paris: Beauchesne et ses Fils, MCML) 144-151.

⁴⁵ E. G. HINSON, “Interpretation, History of”, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990) 408.

⁴⁶ W. C. PIERCY (ed.), *Murray’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (London: John Murray, 1908) 909 defines “Allegory” in distinction from “Typology” as “a fictitious narrative designed deliberately to convey spiritual truth, or a figurative interpretation of some historical event suggested by pious imagination.”

⁴⁷ It is in the light of this that W. C. PIERCY (ed.), *Murray’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 909, warns: “The development of typology beyond what is actually suggested in N.T., while inevitable, is a difficult problem, demanding caution and a sense of proportion. For typology in mediaeval and even in patristic exegesis degenerated at times into mere fanciful allegorizing. Hence the Reformation produced a reaction in favour of literalism, and even tended to reject typology altogether.”

⁴⁸ John is often content with a general allusion to the OT (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 5:39, 46; 17:12; 20:19), and has only 19 explicit quotations, while R. BROWN, *John I-XII*, LIX, puts that of Matthew at 124.

the OT.⁴⁹ He presents Jesus as the Messiah promised in Scripture,⁵⁰ and refers to Scripture to show that God decrees even the difficult aspects of Jesus' life.⁵¹ Furthermore, as Schnackenburg observes,⁵² the evangelist names the Patriarchs with respect and brings them into relationship with Jesus as the Messiah,⁵³ highlighting, nevertheless, Jesus' superiority over them.⁵⁴ So also Moses is a witness to Jesus (John 5:45-47; cf. 1:45), and promised a Messianic prophet (Deut 18:15, 18)⁵⁵ and his works become typological allusions to the greater event which was to take place in Christ⁵⁶ – he being, however, subordinated to Jesus (1:17; cf. 7:19).

One can, therefore, conclude that the typological allusion of John in 3:14-15, is not in terms of shadow/figure relationship with regard to the OT and NT respectively, but in terms of the different moments of revelation, whereby the OT, even though pointing to a higher reality in Jesus, retains its validity as revelation in its own context.⁵⁷ Hence, it is within the ambience of this model that one also understands, in the context of this fourth Gospel, the allusion to Isa 52:13, which although promised in the OT and fulfilled in the NT, does not only remain on the plane of just prophecy and fulfilment, having, as it does, revelatory relevance also in both testaments.

CONCLUSION

In analysing John 3:14-15, this paper has considered its contexts in the two testaments, that of the OT being the episode of the bronze serpent while the NT, being born to new life. This new life is rooted in the divinely ordained exaltation of the Son of Man on the Cross, which the believer has also to appropriate to himself/herself by faith, as the exegetical section of this work demonstrates. Seen then from the point of view of the relationship between the OT and NT, this typology becomes, in the context of John's Gospel, a highlight of revelation that continues right from the OT to the NT – even if it be completely fulfilled only in the latter. Therefore, the typology of John 3:14-15 has nothing to

⁴⁹ R. M. GRANT – D. TRACY, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1996) 35. After reviewing revelation from the OT in John, they write: "Finally, however, there was a complete revelation in the tabernacle of the flesh (John 1:14), and this was far superior to the revelation which had been given before. "The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17). No one has ever seen God; the divine Son has revealed him (1:18). Isaiah said that he saw the Lord of hosts (Isa.6:5); actually he saw the glory of the preexistent Christ (John 12:41). The only meaning of the Old Testament is prophetic (5:46; cf. Rev. 19:10)".

⁵⁰ Cf. John 1:45; 5:39, 46 (also 7:42; 12:13, 15).

⁵¹ Cf. the betrayal of Judas and even our text.

⁵² R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 123-124.

⁵³ Hence, Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus (John 8:56); Abraham's sacrifice of an only son is alluded to in 3:16; the saying of John 1:51 is linked up with Jacob's ladder; Jesus is also mentioned in 4:5-6.

⁵⁴ Thus, Jesus is greater than the Patriarch Jacob (John 4:12), and existed already before Abraham (John 8:58).

⁵⁵ This is taken up in John 6:14; 7:40 and 1:21, 25.

⁵⁶ It is here that our text falls in as well as 6:32, the gift of the manna.

⁵⁷ One recalls here the opinion of B.S. CHILDS, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (London: SCM Press, 1996) 77, regarding the canonical guidelines on the two testaments, for structuring a Biblical Theology as follows: "The two testaments have been linked as Old and New, but this designation does not mean that the integrity of each individual testament has been destroyed. The Old Testament bears its true witness as the Old which remains distinct from the New. It is promise, not fulfillment. Yet its voice continues to sound and it has not been stilled by the fulfillment of the promise."

do with the old/substitution model, and certainly goes beyond prophecy/fulfilment model of the OT/NT relationship.⁵⁸ God revealed himself in the OT (and, in fact, right from creation), and this came to perfection in Jesus Christ. This is the evangelist's stand (John 1:1-18).

⁵⁸ For more on the prophecy/fulfilment model of the OT/NT relationship, cf. E. U. DIM, "The OT Messianic Expectations as fulfilled in the Incarnation of Jesus – Points for Reflection for Christians, in *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 7 (2022) 28-29.