

Mystery and Fulfillment: The Historical- Allegorical Nature of Scripture's Storyline

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary academics continue to engage in an ancient and perennial, but misplaced debate over *literal* versus *figurative* as modes of interpreting the Bible, rather than as modes of communication which are integral to the text's *sensus literalis*.¹ The *sensus literalis* is the meaning assigned to a text by its author as signified by the words of the text within their grammatical-historical-literary context, including cases where the intention is expressed through figurative portrayal, whether by simile, metaphor, parable, foreshadowing, prefiguration, or allegory. Thus, a text's *sensus literalis* obligates us to allow the meaning of Scripture to control how we read the text. The contemporary retrieval of the medieval *Quadrige* for interpreting Scripture, as a more complete reading strategy than any modern method,

is a species of the ancient debate.² This retrieval sustains the medievalists' mistake of identifying the ostensive fourfold sense—literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical—as modes of interpretation.

As I have argued repeatedly in lectures, presentations, and published essays, I do so again. First, we fundamentally misplace this discussion when we classify *literal* and *figurative* as hermeneutical issues or modes of interpretation. *Literal* and *figurative* are not proper descriptions of how we interpret any text or speech. Rather, *literal* and *figurative* are modes of communication that speakers and writers use to refer to and describe the realities they portray. Second, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical are also not ways of interpreting; they are also modes of speech or writing. For example, an allegory calls for readers to read it for what it is—an allegory—not to engage in *allegorical interpretation*, which creatively assigns symbolic significance to the narrative's various aspects. The author of an allegory, not its readers, assigns its diverse representational implications.

Thus, this is my thesis: "God's scriptural revelation progresses along a historical storyline with prefigurations of the promised Messiah embedded in allegorical narratives, parabolic episodes, and typological events, persons, places, and institutions accompanied by moral and spiritual instruction."

1. MISTAKEN INTERPRETER-ORIENTED DEBATES OVER USES OF THE OT IN THE NT

Few assumptions in contemporary Christianity are more persistent, divisive, and misleading than the notion that we must interpret biblical texts either *literally* or *figuratively*.³ From the early days of the Christian church, around these two terms, rival hermeneutical camps have gathered: the *literal*, allegedly concerned with reality, facts, and history, and the *figurative*, with symbolism and theology. Throughout the 20th century, theological disagreements between dispensationalists and covenant theologians over how God's covenant promises disclosed in the Old Testament (OT) were fulfilled in the Messiah and witnessed to by the New Testament (NT) tended to fixate on the human exercise of hermeneutics, with debates over what "literal interpretation" means.⁴ Vern Poythress's *Understanding Dispensationalists* did much to narrow this gap. Yet to advocate for *typological* or *figural interpretation* while simultaneously rejecting *allegorical*

interpretation, as popularly understood and practiced, is less than persuasive, especially for Evangelicals who have been instructed to revere grammatical-historical interpretation.⁵

A. Claims that the NT Radically Reinterprets the OT

When George E. Ladd challenged dispensationalism's approach to the Scriptures, he guaranteed rejection by many because he confused the roles of the Bible's readers and writers, obscuring them, even bequeathing to readers an authority that does not belong to them by claiming "that the Old Testament prophets must be interpreted in light of their fulfillment in the person and mission of Jesus. We have seen that this involves *reinterpretation*. Sometimes the fulfillment is different from what we would expect from the Old Testament."⁶ Thus, he claimed,

Because of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Peter transfers the messianic Davidic throne from Jerusalem to God's right hand in heaven. Jesus has now been enthroned as the Davidic Messiah on the throne of David, and is awaiting the final consummation of his messianic reign ... [I]n his exaltation Jesus becomes the Messiah in a new sense: he has begun his messianic reign as the Davidic king... This involves a rather *radical reinterpretation* of the Old Testament prophecies, but no more so than the *entire reinterpretation* of God's redemptive plan by the early church. In fact, it is an essential part of the *reinterpretation* demanded by the events of redemptive history.⁷

Many grasped the kernel of truth Ladd expressed while failing to recognize the error that encased it, reproducing his error, even as they adjusted their understanding of Scripture citing Scripture. On the other hand, it is understandable that Ladd's talk of "radical reinterpretation" was off-putting to dispensationalists, deepening the theological and hermeneutical division.

More appealing to some dispensationalists were Richard Longenecker's explanations of a few difficult NT uses of the OT, such as the use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15—"This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son'"—or Paul's alleged "allegorical interpretation" of the Abraham narrative in Genesis (Gal 4:21–31).⁸ Longenecker explains that, occasionally, the NT writers interpreted the OT creatively from a "revelatory stance" of "privileged apostolic insight," a stance he claims we cannot reproduce.⁹

B. Claims that the Bible's Types Are Discernible Only Retrospectively

Concerning biblical types, retrospective interpretation of the OT found early advocacy from Francis Foulkes, who contended, "Typology reads into Scripture a meaning which is not there in that it reads in the light of the fulfillment of the history. This is not exegesis, drawing out from a passage what the human author understood and intended as he wrote. Nevertheless, it does not read a new principle into the context; it interprets the dealings of God with men from the literal context, and then points to the way in which God has so dealt with men in Christ."¹⁰ R. T. France and David L. Baker followed Foulkes' explanation of biblical types. France insisted, "A type is not a prediction; in itself it is simply a person, event, *etc.* recorded as historical fact, with no intrinsic reference to the future. Nor is an antitype the fulfillment of a prediction; it is rather the re-embodiment of a principle which has been previously exemplified in the type."¹¹ Baker agrees: "It is only in retrospect that an event, person or institution may be seen to be typical."¹² Nevertheless, definitions that view OT types as prophetic dominate recent literature.¹³

C. A Measure of Rapprochement between Contrary Views

Nevertheless, early in the final decade of the last millennium, some Dispensationalists found a modicum of common ground with covenant theologians, with Progressive Dispensationalists affirming that with Christ's advent, God's Kingdom has *already* come in some sense.¹⁴ Despite this progress, debates have continued to focus on *literal* and *figurative interpretation*, a dualism that rests on a classification error, mistakenly displacing a property of the text—how the biblical author has presented a thing—with a property of the act of interpretation—*how* the reader is to approach the text. The category mistake results in confusion: exegetes disagree over hermeneutical methods that Scripture's text does not authorize, pastors deliver sermons that rest on dubious claims, and congregants reproduce the confusion preachers and scholars incite.

D. Allegorical Interpretation Rejected in Favor of Typological Interpretation

Many evangelical scholars sustain confusion by rejecting *allegorical interpretation* but commending the ongoing practice of *typological*

interpretation. Thus, to the degree they feature a human activity, which they call *typological interpretation*, to the same degree, they generate confusion concerning God's providential, revelatory activity that establishes biblical *typology*. For example, Greg Beale explains, "Typological interpretation involves an extended reference to the original meaning of an Old Testament text which develops it but does not contradict it. Put another way, it does not *read into* the text a different or higher sense, but *draws out* from it a different or higher application of the same sense."¹⁵

In his recent book, *Typology*, James Hamilton agrees with G. K. Beale, characterizing his understanding of Scripture's use of Scripture as predominantly typological interpretation. So, "the Old Testament authors intended to create the typological points of historical correspondence and escalation for which the New Testament authors claim fulfillment."¹⁶ Consequently, the uses of earlier Scriptures by later writers are valid, correct, and established as normative. By this, Hamilton means that "through their interpretation of earlier Scripture, later biblical authors instruct their audiences regarding how to interpret the Bible."¹⁷ He opposes Longenecker's conclusion that some uses of the OT by the apostles cannot be reproduced.¹⁸ Against this, the "normative hermeneutic" requires "typological interpretation," readings that "align with the normative interpretations provided by the biblical authors themselves."¹⁹

Following the publication of his book, *Typology* (2022), Hamilton now hints that he is moving away from orienting his discussion hermeneutically, using the expression "typological interpretation," to one that features the proper domain: God's revelatory and providential acts in history. A careful reader will observe that, when he defines "typological interpretation," Hamilton subtly shifts his orientation from the reader's interpretation of divine revelation to God's giving of revelation. This adjustment, to feature typology as revelatory, is in the right direction and commendable.²⁰ Thus, he states, "Typology is not [sic] mere literary contrivance, nor is it a result of the imaginative creativity of either the biblical authors or those who interpret them. God ordained that the parallels would actually happen, and he also providentially ensured that the biblical authors would notice them."²¹ To support this, he cites Earle Ellis, who states in the foreword to Goppelt's *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, "Typological exegesis assumes a divine

sovereignty over history.”²² Goppelt contends that “typology is the method of interpreting Scripture that is predominant in the New Testament and characteristic of it.”²³ Yet, a few pages later, he contends that it “is not a hermeneutical method with specific rules of interpretation.”²⁴

Though not clearly expressed, it seems that Hamilton’s understanding of biblical typology now approaches what I have long been expressing. Two factors suggest this. First, he stands aloof from figural reading and figural interpretation. He senses an unduly strong association of the expression with Richard Hays, who claims that “figural reading” of Scripture does not require that either those who wrote the OT or the characters in the Bible’s storyline were consciously aware of predicting or prefiguring Christ.²⁵ Hamilton’s dismissal of figural reading sweeps aside several others who prefer figural over typological, in concert with Hays, but who also criticize Hays’s insistence that the NT writers engaged the OT by “reading backwards.” Second, in a more recent publication on biblical typology, Hamilton avoids any mention of typological interpretation by focusing his discussion on the OT writer’s intention, not generated by readers.²⁶ He rebuts the charge that recognizing typology throughout the Scriptures is dangerous by emphasizing that “the person, event, or institution was presented as a type by the author of the text recounting the archetypal instance.”²⁷

E. The Ascendancy of Interpretation-Focused “Figural Reading” among TIS Advocates

Both non-evangelical and evangelical scholars, including Christopher Seitz, Richard Hays, Don Collett, Kevin Vanhoozer, Daniel Treier, and others, have contributed significantly to the diverse contemporary movement known as the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS).²⁸ Each one shows a distinct emphasis, revealing both shared commitments and meaningful differences. Integral to their TIS approach is their embrace of “figural reading,” an expression they regard as broadly inclusive of all biblical figurations, types, and allegories.²⁹ Whether directly or incidentally, they all draw on Erich Auerbach’s explanation: “Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first.”³⁰

Hays's retrospective-reinterpretation approach is reminiscent of Ladd's, when he contends, "A Gospel-shaped hermeneutic necessarily entails *reading backward*, reinterpreting Israel's Scripture in light of the story of Jesus."³¹ As I have argued elsewhere, Hays, like many others, foregrounds Scripture's *reception*—its *hearing* and *interpretation*—over its *production*—God's *speaking*, *acting*, and *revealing*. Hays explains, "There is ... a significant difference between *prediction* and *prefiguration*. Figural reading need not presume that the OT authors—or the characters they narrate—were conscious of predicting or anticipating Christ. Rather, the discernment of a figural correspondence is necessarily retrospective rather than prospective."³² This is true if we lodge figuration in the realm of hermeneutics rather than in the biblical text, as Hays does. Hays restates and reinforces his claim: "Another way to put this point is that figural reading is a form of intertextual interpretation that focuses on an intertextuality of *reception* rather than of *production*."³³ Thus, Hays contends that we, like the NT writers, are locked into reading and interpreting the OT *retrospectively* and *figurally*. Hence his clever phrase: "reading backwards."

Hays's unambiguous differentiation of *prefiguration* from *prediction*, and of *reception* from *production*, is integral to his "reading backwards" proposal. Yet he also seems to subvert his own cause with statements that inherently acknowledge that the OT's figuration is *anticipatory*, *forward-looking*. For example, Hays states, "All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms mysteriously *prefigure* Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel puts the claim succinctly ... 'If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me' (John 5:46)."³⁴ He also affirms, "The Gospels teach us to read the OT for *figuration*."³⁵ He reinforces this anticipatory function by stating that the "literal historical sense of the OT ... *points forward typologically* to the gospel story."³⁶ Thus, though he may not realize it, Hays affirms the OT's *prefiguring* of the very thing his "reading backwards" attempts to guard against. If the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms "*prefigure*" Jesus, then he undercuts his strong distinctions of *prefiguration* from *prediction* and *reception* from *production*. Thankfully, his inconsistency renders his proposal closer to Scripture's self-representation than he understood.

Given the confusion traced above, Hays's critics legitimately wonder whether he ascribes the figural correspondences between the OT and

the NT to the interpretive and narrative ingenuity of the Evangelists rather than to God's revelation through the prophets, because he anchors his discussion within the domain of hermeneutics. That *interpretation* controls his discussion is evident from his dominating nomenclature—*hermeneutical strategy, retrospective reading, figural exegesis, figural readings, figural interpretation, and revisionary retrospective hermeneutical move*.³⁷

Don Collett and Kevin Vanhoozer share much in common with Christopher Seitz, who published *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (2001), well before Hays published his *Reading Backwards* strategy (2014). Seitz counters the notion that figuration is retrospective, given the significant inclusion of “providence” in his subtitle, a major feature of his thesis. He states, “The focus for our present purposes is on the explicitly *theological character of the rule [of faith] and its hermeneutical consequences, chief among them, that as the Son and the Father are one, so, too, is the witness to them from the Old and New Testaments, which witness is perceived by eyes of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit*.”³⁸ More recently, he reasserted God's providential authority over the OT's persons, places, and events, which prefigure their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Thus, Christ's apostles and their associates did not retrofit the OT to the new era brought about by the Messiah's advent, a theme evident in Hays's approach. Rather, “The first witness [i.e., the Old Testament] has been so formed by God in its literal sense in advance; it is pre-formed.”³⁹

Don Collett (2020) agrees with Seitz that “Scripture's literal sense is not merely an authorial or historical sense but fully embedded within a creational and providential ‘rule’ for reading Scripture's canonical, final, or ‘full’ form.”⁴⁰ Thus, Collett takes issue with Hays's contention that the NT writers read the OT “backwards.” He argues that the notion that “the Old Testament's figural sense” is “the function of a retrospective reading performed by New Testament authors” eliminates it from being “a native resident residing within its literal sense.”⁴¹ Thus, Collett rightly insists that the OT's reference to and mediation of Christ “depends upon the inspired words the Spirit gave to its authors *and* the providential linkage of those words with Christo-trinitarian realities.”⁴²

Kevin Vanhoozer echoes Seitz and joins Collett against Hays's contention that the NT writers read the OT “backwards,” because the figural correspondence “is necessarily retrospective rather than prospective.”⁴³

Like Seitz and Collett, Vanhoozer prefers the broader category, “figural interpretation,” which includes all figures of speech, but especially “allegory and typology, the two main species of figural interpretation.”⁴⁴ He claims that “no single term better describes the heart and soul of mere Christian biblical interpretation than *figural*.”⁴⁵ Thus, he poses the question that generated his book: “*Can a mere Christian hermeneutic be both literal and figural?*”⁴⁶ Then he proceeds to demonstrate “why figural reading is integral to seriously literal interpretation.”⁴⁷ His choice of “figural” accounts for the numerous figures of speech—similes, metaphors, etc.—that fill the Bible. Of particular concern to Vanhoozer are not those figures that relate to speech but those that focus on “persons, things, and events,” in other words, what Scripture calls “types,” “shadows,” etc.⁴⁸ As he uses the term, he has in view figures that result “from divine intention to establish a relationship between two or more things, such that the former represents or betokens the latter: ‘One event or utterance figures another when, while remaining unalterably what it is, it announces or communicates something other than itself.’”⁴⁹ He offers a rather simplistic contrast between humans, who “do things with words,” and God, who “communicates by doing things with *things*.”⁵⁰

Richard Hays’s discussion of a *figural reading* of Scripture foregrounds the reader and the reader’s *reception* more than the divine *production* of Scripture.⁵¹ Vanhoozer’s advocacy also focuses on the reader’s *reception* but gives a larger role to Scripture’s *production*: “*Figuration*—the making of figures—is a way of viewing and experiencing things as part of a unified pattern of divine activity in history. These figures are the glue that unify biblical narrative and give it coherence.”⁵² To illustrate his point, he could have selected an undisputed reference, but he appeals to the Apostle Paul’s argument in Romans 9 and 11, claiming, “Israel *figures* the church.”⁵³ He argues that God, “the primary figurative agent,” enlarges the meaning of “Israel” while remaining loyal to the nation.⁵⁴ Then, Vanhoozer offers this succinct statement of “the mere Christian principle of figural interpretation: *Human readers figure God’s figurations after him,*” which features God as the author of history.⁵⁵

2. FIGURATION — TYPOLOGY, ALLEGORY, AND PARABLE — IN SCRIPTURE'S HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

Scripture's speech, God's Word, corresponds to God's self-revelation in action, weaving together history and symbol, fact and figure, in an inseparable, coherent unity. To read Scripture faithfully requires attending to its own *sensus literalis*, its communicative mode, which includes its historical-allegorical-parabolic texture, whereby the mystery of Christ is disclosed within historical events. Against the contemporary retrieval of a Medieval reading and interpretive paradigm that construes Scripture's types and figurations as *reading* or *interpretive* strategies, this presentation contends that all types, prefigurations, foreshadowings, allegories, and parables mentioned or hinted at in the OT by the writers of the NT belong intrinsically to the revelatory fabric of Scripture's *sensus literalis*. Thus, we must reject taking any of these revelation-embedded characteristics and transpose the *descriptive phrase*, "figural revelation," for example, into a *prescriptive phrase*, "figural interpretation." This is not merely a quibble over terminology.

Why be concerned with these kinds of apparently unwitting transpositions? Biblical scholars induce others to follow their practice, whether for good or ill. If we unwittingly ascribe to *our interpretation of Scripture* an authority that properly belongs only to *God's giving of his revelation*, the invalid shift is consequential. It confuses and ignites fruitless and silly interpretive disputes that lead to theological standoffs, such as those that tended to dominate the 20th century between advocates of *literal reading* and those who defended *figurative reading*. Both sides prolonged the confusion because literal and figurative are not modes of interpretation but are modes of speaking or writing to convey concepts and portrayals of reality.⁵⁶

God's authorized revelatory figurations compel us to speak of *figural revelation*, not of *figural interpretation*. This properly focuses our attention on the text's authority and clears away bedeviling confusion. I have offered numerous presentations and published several essays to develop this case with exegetical detail, focusing attention on crucial NT uses of the OT, demonstrating that the apostles and their associates, who ground their beliefs concerning Messiah Jesus in the OT, do not engage in literal, figurative, figural, typological, parabolic, or allegorical interpretation of Scripture. I have maintained that interpretation itself cannot be literal

or figurative, any more than it can be figural, typological, or allegorical.⁵⁷ Add two more to these: tropological and anagogical, advocated by those retrieving the *Quadriga*. All these descriptors belong to written texts or spoken discourse, *not* to our interpretation of them. When interpreters label their reading of any portion of Scripture “literal,” “figurative,” “redemptive-historical,” “typological,” “allegorical,” “tropological,” or “anagogical,” they unwittingly pave the way to superimpose their own hermeneutical reading agenda onto the text, however much they protest to the contrary. Our responsibility is not to interpret a given text literally, figuratively, redemptive-historically, typologically, allegorically, tropologically, or anagogically, but to interpret the text faithfully in keeping with the kind of written revelatory discourse it is. This requires us to read Scripture on its own terms, tracking and portraying as accurately as possible the contours and features of the divine *progression of revelation*. Acknowledging that all the listed adverbs or adjectives are proper descriptors of *God’s written word*, not of *our interpretive strategy*, though regularly overlooked, is decisive for doing appropriate exegesis from which good theological formulations arise, for it honors the character of divine revelation as historically embodied and linguistically mediated.

In what follows, my objective is not to rehearse the breadth of my work on this subject, spanning three decades and scattered throughout numerous essays, whether published in books, journals, or online articles. Rather, my focus will be on three instructive NT passages concerning God’s imbuing of OT characters, events, places, and institutions with prophetic foreshadowing functions, whether typological, allegorical, or parabolic. These three passages demonstrate that the NT writers believed that God providentially ordered and imbued historical events, persons, places, and institutions with typological, allegorical, and parabolic significances for those individuals who were present then and preserved a prophetic record of these in Scripture for us in these last days.

A. “Now These Things Happened Typologically to Them” (1 Cor 10:11)

Of the fifteen uses of τύπος in the Greek NT, only three refer to OT portions that typologically prefigure aspects of the Messianic Age (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6; Heb 8:5).⁵⁸ This rarity does not imply that biblical types are few, as some mistakenly conclude.⁵⁹ Rather, these few uses of τύπος by the NT are

only suggestive of the full measure of how extensively figural representations are woven throughout the OT's fabric acknowledged by the NT writers. These three uses of τύπος contribute to a larger cluster of terms — τύπικως, ἀληθινός, ἀλληγορέω, ἀντίτυπος, σκιά, ὑπόδειγμα, παραβολή — that provide significant apertures through which one can discover and account for numerous other OT prefigurations of the Messiah and his coming Kingdom. Thus, the volume of OT prefigurations fulfilled in Christ Jesus is not small but extensive, whether the NT writers expressly point them out, subtly allude to them, or echo them instinctively as manifestly essential aspects of the OT backstory concerning the Messiah's prophesied and prefigured coming.

Contemporary Bibles translate the noun τύποι in 1 Corinthians 10:6 and the adverb τύπικως in 10:11 altogether too anemically, under the influence of the KJV. The ESV translates 10:6, "Now these things took place as *examples* for us," and 10:11, "Now these things happened to them as an *example*." These translations are inexcusably dull, shrouding, even concealing, the richness and depth of old-covenant prefigurations of new-covenant fulfillments conveyed by the passage.

After Paul reminds the Corinthians of God's providential redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt by making a way for them through the Red Sea, a baptism into Moses (Exod 13:21; 14:21–22, 29), by spiritual food from heaven and spiritual drink from the Rock, which is Christ, he pastorally warns them that God was displeased with most of them, so they perished in the wilderness. From this, he admonishes, "These things took place as *types* of us that we might not crave evil as those lusted" (10:6).⁶⁰ He expands this admonition by citing five additional occasions when Israelites angered the Lord: 1) Sending of Quail (Num 11:33); 2) Golden Calf (Exod 32:6); 3) Sexual Immorality (Num 25:1, 9); 4) Bronze Serpent (Num 21:4ff; Ps 78:18); 5) Korah's Rebellion (Num 16:41–49).⁶¹

It is then that Paul reiterates with intensity, "Now these things happened to them typologically and were written down for our instruction, to whom the ends of the ages have arrived" (10:11). How could the apostle have expressed more clearly that the adverb, "typologically" does not describe his *reading of the Scriptures* but *God's written accounts of his providential ordering* of Israel's trials and failings as they wandered in the wilderness due to unbelief? Thus, Paul was not engaged in "figural reading," "typological exegesis," or "allegorical interpretation." Typology is not the work of Bible readers,

other than to discern it. Typology is God's work, imbuing his acts in history concerning persons, places, events, and institutions with figural or typological significance. Thus, typology belongs to God's revelatory work, which the apostle reinforces by stating that God saw to it that "these things were written down" in Scripture by his prophets "for our instruction, to whom the ends of the ages have arrived" (10:11b).⁶² To reiterate, typology entails two divine activities: first, God's providential acts that he suffuses with earthly representational consequences of heavenly realities, and second, his authorizing holy men of old to write those events down in Scripture to preserve them as instruction for God's people through all time but especially for those in the latter days, when Christ who was present with Israel in shadow forms will come in body.⁶³

In 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 13, Paul recites several distinct episodes of Israel's reception of God's kindnesses, met with her unfaithfulness and disobedience, drawing upon them as warnings for us Christians to "take heed lest we fall" (1 Cor 10:12). Here, he speaks of these distinct individual occurrences as "types" (τυποί). He also underscores that each of these distinct *types* "happened to them typologically and are written down for our instruction, to whom the ends of the ages have arrived" (10:11). Though he uses the passive voice for both verbs—*happened* and *were written down*—two things are obvious: (1) God designed and planned each of these incidents and imbued them with significance for the Israelites of old, but also (2) God ordained prophets to preserve these episodes in his written Word as eschatological warnings for Christ's "ends-of-the-ages people."

The composition of Scripture's mystery, which attains resolution with Jesus the Messiah's coming, is analogous to a well-crafted mystery novel, with a climax that offers no simplistic resolution but obliges readers to return to earlier chapters to trace clues among the characters, events, settings, institutions, and the plotted conflict.⁶⁴ This analogy is inverted, of course, because God does not replicate mystery writers; rather, whether they realize it or not, writers of mystery novels, who are made in God's image, mimic the writing of God's grand mystery. God's authoring of Scripture's mystery embeds presaging clues throughout the OT, concealing the gospel in advance within his revelatory acts and words which emerge from Scripture's penumbras with the arrival of God's Messiah.⁶⁵

B. “Now These Things Are Written Allegorically” (Gal 4:24)

Paul’s statement in Galatians 4:24—ἀτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα—perpetually ignites diverse and competing interpretations. Many exegetes, influenced by the ancient Antiochenes versus the Alexandrians, have claimed that Paul really had in mind typology, or perhaps a restrained allegory that fades into typology.⁶⁶ Others have sided more with the Alexandrians.⁶⁷ Given their focus on hermeneutical disputes, no matter which position scholars adopt, because Paul states, ἀτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, they tend to fall in line by claiming the apostle employs either *typological* or *allegorical interpretation*. Thus, instead of locating the allegory’s origin in the Genesis narrative itself, with God providentially governing and imbuing the historical events, characters, and places with representational significance, they tend to locate it in Paul’s interpretive skill. Thus, for example, Longenecker contends that such an interpretation is not reproducible but was restricted to the apostles.⁶⁸

It is unreasonable to suppose that as the apostle reaches the capstone of his argument (Gal 4:21–5:1) that he would expect to persuade the Galatians against the Judaizers by founding his argument in nothing more than some alleged “privileged apostolic insight” or his clever adroitness in crafting an impressive allegory from the Genesis narrative, on the authority of the Christophany along the Damascus Road and his reception of “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:2ff). Against Longenecker’s proposal, in his efforts to convince his converts in Galatia that those Jewish teachers who are determined to get them to receive circumcision so they can become authentic children of Abraham, the Apostle Paul appeals to Scripture, not to some alleged private revelation. Paul does not ground the faith of his converts in his apostolic authority but in the authority of God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁹

Thus, entirely unsatisfying are approaches to Galatians 4:21–5:1 that assume the apostle devised an allegory by nimbly assigning symbolic representations to people, places, and events in the Abraham narrative of Genesis.⁷⁰ Instead, the apostle contends that the Abraham narrative embedded in Genesis is an allegory that the Prophet Isaiah recognized and used in his prophecy, alluding to Sarah (Isa 54:1), from which Paul quotes.⁷¹

Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband (Gal 4:27).

To underscore that God assigned allegorical significance to people, places, and events, Paul arranged his appeal to the Genesis narrative in an A-B-C-B-A chiasm. He asks, (A) “Do you not hear the Law” (4:21), (B) then states, “For it is written” (γέγραπται γάρ), (C) then announces with a paraphrastic phrase, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, “these things are written allegorically,” (B’) then restates, “For it is written” (γέγραπται γάρ), (A’) he asks, “But what does the Scripture say?” (4:30).⁷²

Verses	Chiasm	Scripture Citation Formulas
4:21	A	Do you not hear the Law?
4:22	B	For it is written
4:24	C	These things are wrtten allegorically
4:27	B’	For it is written
4:30	A’	But what does the Scripture say?

Given how Paul structures his argument, he makes it clear that he does not creatively conjure an allegory by agile manipulation of Genesis. Instead, the apostle expects his readers to follow his reasoning from the Scriptures, as the Bereans did, who diligently examined the Scriptures to confirm Paul’s teachings (Acts 17:10–11). Without expressly stating it, his argument acknowledges that God providentially ordered the unfolding drama of the accounts concerning Abraham. Thus, he believes that the writing of the Genesis narrative concerning Abraham, guided by the Holy Spirit, is a God-designed allegory, with persons, events, and places he suffused with representational significance for the instruction of the characters in the episodes and for all who would read the accounts from that day forward. Thus, “Sarah and Hagar, with their respective sons, born in vastly different ways, allegorically prefigure two distinctly different covenants and those who trace their spiritual descent from them. Either one’s lineage traces to Isaac through promise or to Ishmael from the law covenant.”⁷³ Paul’s appeal to what is written as allegorical emphatically excludes translating the

paraphrastic phrase, “Now, this may be *interpreted* allegorically” (ESV). The KJV, “Which things are an allegory,” is much better than contemporary English translations.⁷⁴ Better yet: “Now these things are written allegorically.”

Thus, we must reject talk of *allegorical interpretation*, which means something different from the *interpretation of an allegory*. John Bunyan drew on the allegorical storyline of the Bible to write *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as an allegory. Neither the allegory of the Abraham narrative in Genesis nor Bunyan’s allegory calls for *allegorical interpretation*. We do not interpret them allegorically; rather, we recognize their allegorical nature and interpret them accordingly. Craig Blomberg correctly affirms that all of Jesus’s parables are allegories.⁷⁵ And we reject submitting them to *allegorical interpretation*, the product of fanciful imaginations.

Thus far, we have seen that types and allegory are embedded in God’s redemptive-historical revelation. Thus, to terminate confusion, Christian scholars should abandon talk of *typological exegesis*, *allegorical interpretation*, or *figural reading*. Typology, allegory, and figuration all originate in God’s *production of revelation*, not in our *reception of revelation*. As readers, we discern and discover prefigurations, types, and allegories. All are organically prophetic concerning the good things to come with the Messiah, and all are written in Scripture by God’s appointed prophets of old.⁷⁶

C. “Abraham ... Received Isaac Back from the Dead in A Parable” (Heb 11:19)

Παραβολή occurs fifty times in the NT but only twice outside the Synoptic Gospels, once each in Hebrews 9:9 and 11:19. Our English versions tend to conceal both uses, which, if mindfully read, function similarly to Paul’s uses of ἀτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα in Galatians 4:24 or τύπος in Romans 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 10:6.⁷⁷ To translate ἐν παραβολῇ in Hebrews 11:19 “in a manner of speaking” (NIV) or “figuratively speaking” (ESV; NRSB; CSB) is woefully inadequate. “As a type” (NASB) is also misleading because Hebrews uses “type” and “antitype” in ways different from how Paul and Peter use these terms. Hebrews uses “type” to refer to the heavenly reality that casts an earthly shadow (τύπος, Heb 8:5) and “antitype” (ἀντίτυπος, Heb 9:24) to refer to the earthly copy of the heavenly original (Heb 9:24).⁷⁸

As the preacher uses παραβολή, it intersects with ὑπόδειγμα (copy, sketch, prototype, model) and σκία (shadow), both of which are used in Hebrews 8:5,

but παραβολή adds depth, dimension, and scope to these terms, referencing an episodic drama. As used in Hebrews 9:9, speaking of Israel's Temple, the Douay-Rheims version aptly translates παραβολή as "parable," the essential sense it bears in the Gospels, though the Preacher's use concerns OT narratives concerning real events, persons, institutions, and places that are earthly shadows of heavenly realities, while Jesus's use also portrays heavenly realities but with non-historical events, persons, and places.

The Preacher uses καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ ἐκομίσατο to capture the symbolic function of the episode from the Abraham narrative, in which God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac on the mountain where he would receive his son back from the dead, in keeping with his belief in God, who promises. Of course, the Preacher's use of παραβολή to designate its symbolic nature does not suggest that the episode reported in Genesis 22 is fictional. Rather, he already used *parable* to refer to the symbolic function of the wilderness tabernacle as the earthly shadow of the heavenly sanctuary with its priestly ministrations amid its special furnishings. Thus, when the Preacher uses "parable" again, he means that the entire narrative account involving a mountain, Abraham, his only son, wood, fire, an altar, a knife, and a ram caught in a thicket is an earthly drama divinely suffused with representations of a heavenly reality concerning God's design for his only Son, represented by the well-placed ram that became the substitutionary sacrifice for the boy.

Nevertheless, some exegetes are excessively reticent to concede that the Preacher's ἐν παραβολῇ refers to anything more than Isaac's deliverance from death, which they call a "type or figure of the resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ."⁷⁹ For example, William Lane rejects the idea that ἐν παραβολῇ includes the entire episode of Genesis 22, including the anticipated sacrifice of Isaac and the turn of events when he escaped death when the ram became his substitute, which Abraham's belief anticipated.⁸⁰

More confidently, Philip Hughes affirms, "It is not surprising that from the earliest times this event has been seen by the church as parabolic or typical of the death and resurrection of Christ."⁸¹ As the episode unfolds, it is punctuated by symbolic activity and conversation, all of which is an earthly parable of the heavenly reality God planned for his promised Seed of Abraham.⁸² Isaac's question—"Father ... but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"—with Abraham's believing reply—"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."—obligates readers to

acknowledge that the entire episode narrated in Genesis 22 is parabolic, an earthly shadow of the heavenly reality, with each element imbued with symbolism. Though the Preacher appeals only to Abraham's reception of Isaac as confirming his belief in the resurrection, it is evident that the whole episode is a parable infused with representations that go beyond its use in Hebrews 11:19 to highlight the enduring resilience of Abraham's faith. Isaac and his father, Abraham, are historical earthly shadows engaged in a parable that portrays realities far larger than either could fully grasp at the time. The parabolic drama was an earthly shadow of God's redemptive plan to provide the heavenly Lamb as a substitutionary sacrifice. Thus, the parable God arranged for Abraham to dramatize as an earthly shadow of the heavenly reality including giving life to the dead, reaffirmed God's covenant promise, "In Isaac your seed shall be named" (Heb 11:18). In this acted-out parable, Abraham did receive his only son, Isaac, back from the dead (Heb 11:19).⁸³

The NT writers convincingly demonstrate that the OT's types, allegories, and parables of heavenly realities are not products of their apostolic ingenuity or interpretive creativity but of God's providential and redeeming acts, preserved for us through the writings of his chosen prophets of old. God himself, as the primary speaker and actor in history, providentially imbued the events, persons, places, and institutions of Israel's antiquity to serve as copies, shadows, and parables of heavenly realities with representational significances that prophetically foreshadow corresponding realities that arrive in the latter-day revelation of his Son, the Messiah Jesus. To speak, therefore, of *typological*, *allegorical*, or *figural interpretation* is to mislocate what properly belongs to the divine act of revelation. These are not modes of reading or interpretation but modes of speaking and writing by which God reveals the mystery of Christ through historical discourse. To interpret Scripture faithfully is to honor its mode of speech as it portrays the realities of God's redemptive deeds and words in unfolding history.⁸⁴

Scripture's readers discern the historical figurations God has inscribed in his Word. Faithful exegesis attends to this revelatory texture—the historical-allegorical unity of God's speech in Scripture—wherein word and event correspond. Only by recognizing typology, allegory, and parable as intrinsic to the *sensus literalis* of Scripture can we honor the integrity of divine revelation and the coherence of its Christ-centered design.

CONCLUSION: FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION AND THE MYSTERY OF REVELATION

In sum, we need to engage in retrieval, not of the *Quadrige* or the “Great Tradition,” but of Scripture’s testimony concerning God’s redeeming acts in history. Recovering Scripture’s own account of God’s communicative mode concerning his appointments of earthly shadows of heavenly things foreshadowing all that was to be inaugurated with the Messiah’s coming requires that we relinquish the persistent but misguided habit of assigning to interpreters what belongs properly to God’s revelatory work through his appointed prophets. The Bible’s unity—textually, historically, and Christologically—rests not upon creative hermeneutical strategies, whether “figural,” “typological,” “allegorical,” “paraboliol,” or otherwise, but upon the sovereign providence by which God ordered, imbued, and recorded in Scripture his acts in history. Literal and figurative are not rival hermeneutical postures but complementary modes by which Scripture speaks. Typology, allegory, parable, and every other figural feature woven into the storyline of Israel are not reader-produced interpretations but God-produced revelations, in authorized historical events and authoritatively reported by the prophets and apostles in Scripture.

Thus, like the debates between dispensational and covenantal theological systems, or between advocates of retrospective figural reading and those who stress the plain sense, Scripture’s *sensus literalis*, the contemporary retrieval of the *Quadrige* falters because its advocates obfuscate the locus of figuration. By foregrounding the reader’s role in reading the text, they obscure Scripture’s own testimony that God has prefigured the Messiah within Israel’s history through modes of discourse intrinsic to its *sensus literalis*. Faithful reading of Scripture, therefore, neither retrofits the OT to the New nor invents symbolic correspondences; it attends to what God has done and said. When we allow Scripture’s historical-typological-parabolic-allegorical texture to regulate our reading, the mystery of Christ appears not as a hermeneutical construction but as the divinely embedded telos toward which the entire canon moves. Such recognition restores interpretive humility and honors Scripture’s integrity and authority as God’s unified, providentially ordered, and Christ-centered revelation.

- ¹ This statement does not at all deny the *sensus literalis*, which is the meaning assigned to a text by its author as signified by the words of the text within their grammatical-historical-literary context, including cases where that intention is expressed through figurative portrayal, whether metaphor, parable, foreshadowing, prefiguration, or allegory. A text's *sensus literalis* obligates us to allow the meaning of Scripture to control how we read the text.
- ² Three engaged in this retrieval are Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); and Patrick Schreiner, *The Four Senses of Scripture: Learning from Ancient Way of Reading the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2026), forthcoming.
- ³ For example, Charles C. Ryrie contends for "Literal hermeneutics. Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation. This means interpretation that gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking. It is sometimes called the principle of *grammatical-historical* interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called *normal* interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated *plain* interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech" (*Dispensationalism*. Revised and Expanded [Chicago: Moody Press, 1995], 80). Emphasis original.
- ⁴ Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 78–117.
- ⁵ Poythress states, "So types are a natural starting point for a discussion with dispensationalists. Since grammatical-historical interpretation will find the same symbolic, typological significance within prophecy, it shows how prophecy also has an organically unified relation to NT believers. Typological relations cannot merely be dismissed as a secondary application. The major weakness of classic dispensationalist interpretive theory, at this point, has been the neglecting of the integration of *typological interpretation* with grammatical-historical interpretation" (*Understanding Dispensationalists*, 115. Emphasis added).
- ⁶ George E. Ladd, *The Last Things*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 18. Emphasis added.
- ⁷ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, reprint 1991, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 336. Emphasis added.
- ⁸ Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). In courses with John C. Whitcomb, Jr., he advocated for Longenecker's hermeneutic.
- ⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?", *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970), 3–38. This approach appealed to Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament." In *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed Robert L. Thomas, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 241–70.
- ¹⁰ Francis Foulkes, *The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1958), 38–39.
- ¹¹ R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 39–40. Cf. David L. Baker offers a generic definition of a biblical type as an "event, person, or institution" within Scripture that functions analogically "as an example or pattern for other events, persons, or institutions" (*Two Testament, One Bible: The Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, Third edition [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010], 181).
- ¹² Baker, *Two Testament, One Bible*, (183). Observe that for Baker, τύπος means "typical" as in "characteristic" or "representative," a sense significantly reduced from the meaning the traditional view accepts. Hence, his insistence that types, characteristic patterns, can be recognized only retrospectively.
- ¹³ Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 24. Cf. Richard M. Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," *TheoRhema* 6.2 (2011), 12, 16. He defines typology as "a study of the Old Testament salvation historical realities or 'types' (persons, events, institutions) which God has specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their intensified antitypical fulfillment aspects (inaugurated, appropriated, consummated) in New Testament salvation history."
- ¹⁴ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).
- ¹⁵ Greg Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 395.

- 16 James M. Hamilton, Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 25.
- 17 Hamilton, *Typology*, 25.
- 18 Hamilton, *Typology*, 25–26.
- 19 Hamilton, *Typology*, 25.
- 20 “Typological interpretation establishes historical correspondence on the basis of linguistic points of contact . . . quotations, repeated sequences of events, and similarities in salvation historical significance and covenantal context. As these features are discerned in the text, interpreters detect author-intended parallels between people, events, and institutions, and they have textual warrant to perceive a growing significance in the repeated patterns. The Holy Spirit’s inspiration ensured that the biblical authors infallibly interpreted earlier Scripture and inerrantly presented it” (Hamilton, *Typology*, 27). Emphasis added.
- 21 Hamilton, *Typology*, 26.
- 22 Earle Ellis, “Foreword,” to Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), xv.
- 23 Goppelt, *Typos*, 198. Emphasis added.
- 24 Goppelt, *Typos*, 202. He identifies three essential features concerning types: (1) a recognizable correspondence between the OT type and the NT antitype must be present; (2) both the OT type and the NT antitype must be rooted in “historical facts — persons, actions, institutions,” not within obscurely concealed meanings of the text; and (3) escalation from the OT type to the superior NT antitype must be evident.
- Most scholars who follow Goppelt’s classic, *Typos*, tend to locate biblical types within the domain of hermeneutics, advocate for *typological interpretation* or *figural interpretation*, and regard this as a “reading strategy” or “exegetical method.” G. K. Beale describes biblical typology both as “typological interpretation” and as an “exegetical method” (“Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus’ and the Apostles’ Exegetical Method,” *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts: Essays on the use of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 395) and as an “exegetical method” (*Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 24).
- 25 Hamilton, Jr., *Typology*, 4. He cites Hays’s claim, which I will address shortly.
- 26 James M. Hamilton, Jr., “Author-Intended Typology in the Chiastic Structure of the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–21),” *JETS* 67.3 (2024): 463–74.
- 27 Hamilton, “Author-Intended Typology,” 464.
- 28 See the critique of TIS by D. A. Carson, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But . . .” in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspective*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 187–207. Carson lists six propositions to expose “that along every axis the good and the questionable are almost inextricably entangled” (p. 188): (1) TIS attempts “to transcend barren exegeses generated by historical-critical methods, and especially those readings of Scripture that are ‘historical’ in the sense that they are frankly anti-supernatural interpretations determined by post-Enlightenment assumptions about the nature of history.” (2) “TIS aims to bring biblical studies and theology closer together.” (3) “TIS accords greater credibility to pre-critical exegesis — patristic, medieval, reformational — than to contemporary exegesis, and especially to patristic readings.” (4) “TIS aims to be God-centered as opposed to human-centered (including human-hermeneutical-rules-centered).” (5) “TIS commonly insists we ought to read Scripture through Trinitarian lenses.” And (6) “TIS tends to see Scripture less as a set of propositions disclosing God than as the story of God and his saving plan of redemption.”
- 29 See Christopher Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 9–10; Richard Hays “Figural Exegesis and the Retrospective Recognition of Israel’s Story,” *BBR* 29.1 (2019): 32–48; Don C. Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 153–59; and Daniel J. Treier, “Theological Hermeneutics, Contemporary” and “Typology,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed., Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 787–93 and 823–27. Treier prefers “figural reading” over “typological interpretation” and calls it a “reading strategy” (825–26).
- 30 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 73.
- 31 Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 358.
- 32 Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 2.

- 33 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2.
- 34 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 3; *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 3. Emphasis added.
- 35 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 15. Emphasis original.
- 36 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 15. Emphasis added.
- 37 All these are Hays's own expressions (*Reading Backwards*).
- 38 Seitz, *Figured Out*, 6.
- 39 Christopher Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity*, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021), 46.
- 40 Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 3.
- 41 Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 145. It is curious that in his book, Collett neither cites nor engages Hays's later works that specifically present his "figural reading" arguments: (1) *Reading Backwards* (2014); and (2) *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (2016).
- 42 Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 131.
- 43 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2.
- 44 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 152.
- 45 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 153.
- 46 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 153.
- 47 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 153.
- 48 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 154.
- 49 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 153.
- 50 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 153.
- 51 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2.
- 52 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 154.
- 53 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 154. It is curious why Vanhoozer chose this when the reference of Israel in Romans 11:25 is so widely disputed. See, e.g., Jared Compton & Andrew David Naselli, *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Roman 9–11: Perspectives on Romans 9–11*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019).
- 54 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 154.
- 55 Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics*, 154.
- 56 Ardel B. Caneday, "Genesis, Interpretation of Chapters 1 and 2 (Factual View)," in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (eds. Paul, Copan, Tremper Longman III, Christopher L. Reese, and Michael G. Strauss, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017], 320–23).
- 57 This is contra Kevin Vanhoozer, who reasons, "Figural interpretation is as universal (catholic) a reading practice as literal interpretation. And therein lies the paradox: *Can a mere Christian hermeneutic be both literal and figural?* Before we can answer, we must define our terms, and this entails clarifying the distinction between allegory and typology, the two main species of figural interpretation" (*Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024], 153).
- 58 See Rom 5:15; 6:17; 1 Cor 10:6; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; Acts 7:43, 44; 23:25; John 20:25 (2X); Heb 8:5; 1 Pet 5:3. Concerning ἀντίτυπος, see Heb 9:24 and 1 Pet 3:21, used with different referents. Paul alone uses the adverb τυπικῶς in 1 Cor 10:11. The noun ὑποτύποις occurs only in 1 Tim 1:16 and 2 Tim 1:13.
- 59 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., follows Herbert Marsh, who acknowledged only those types specifically named in the NT. (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1985], 102–10).
- 60 For detailed exegesis of 1 Cor 10:1–13, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 250–80. Davidson convincingly demonstrates that we should translate "these things took place as types of us" (ταῦτα τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν, 10:6; pp. 252–56). David Garland disagrees: "But this meaning is unlikely here because that would entail that the Corinthians will also displease the Lord and perish, and Paul writes to *prevent* this from happening" (*1 Corinthians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 459).
- 61 Twice, within 1 Cor 10, Paul speaks of the Messiah as present among the Israelites, first as the Rock from which "spiritual water" flowed to quench their thirst, and then, he expressly instructs, "We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer" (10:9–10). See Ardel B. Caneday, "We Must Not Test Christ as the Israelites Tested Him and were Killed by Serpents: The Pastoral Significance," presented at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, Texas (November 14–16, 2023).

- 62 On Paul's use of εἰς οὐτὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήγγηκεν, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 458–59; also, Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 465. Cf. C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age Has Come: The Theology of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 105–108.
- 63 Concerning Christ's presence throughout the period of the OT, see Ardel B. Caneday, "We Must Not Test Christ as Israelites Tested Him and Were Killed by Serpents: The Pastoral Significance of Christ as the Object of Israel's Disobedience." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 14–16, 2023, San Antonio, Texas.
- 64 I do not borrow the idea from Peter Enns, though he argues similarly; but his analogy is from the reader's vantage point, not the author's, and this agrees with his conclusions concerning uses of the OT in the NT that I do not share. He illustrates his "Christotelic" reading of the OT: "To read the OT 'Christotelically' is to read it *already knowing* that Christ is somehow the *end* (*telos*) to which the OT story is heading; in other words, to read the OT in light of the exclamation point of the history of revelation, the death and resurrection of Christ... [I]t is like reading a story and finally grasping the significance of the climax, and then going back and reading the story in light of the end" (Peter Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 214).
- 65 On this theme, see G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: 2014). See also D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 393–426.
- 66 In favor of typology, see Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 139–40. See also Andrew Perriman, "Rhetorical Strategy of Galatians 4:21–5:1," *Evangelical Quarterly* 65 (1993): 27. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982), 217, where he states, "He is not thinking of allegory in the Philonic sense. ... [H]e has in mind that form of allegory which is commonly called typology." See Bruce, "Abraham Had Two Sons: A Study in Pauline Hermeneutics," in *New Testament Studies: Essays in Honor of Ray Summers in His Sixty-Fifth Year* (ed. by Huber L. Drumwright & Curtis Vaughan; Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1975), 83. See also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 116.
- 67 In favor of allegory, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 247–48. Cf. Richard Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), 209–10. See also R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origin's Interpretation of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1959; repr. 2002), 83, who states, "Paul ... used allegory as an aid to typology, a method of interpreting the Old Testament which, however fanciful some of its forms may be, does at least regard history as something meaningful."
- 68 Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 126–29 with 218–20.
- 69 See A. B. Caneday, "Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured: 'Which Things Are Written Allegorically (Galatians 4:21–4:31)," *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 50–77.
- 70 For example, Richard N. Longenecker posits, "But if we view Paul's use of the Hagar-Sarah story here in Galatians 4:21–31 as principally an *ad hominem* argument [appeal to emotion rather than to reason]—that is, responding in kind to some treatment of the same story by his Galatian opponents—then we need not see Paul saying that allegory was built into the biblical narrative itself, but rather, that the biblical narrative is now being treated by interpreters (whether the Judaizers, or Paul, or both) in an allegorical fashion" ("Galatians 4:21–31," 194). Cf. F. F. Bruce, who states, "Paul now endeavours to reinforce his argument by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah, with their respective sons Ishmael and Isaac. Paul himself calls his interpretation 'allegorical' (v 24)—that is to say, the entities in the story stand for something other than their *prima facies* sense, whether that 'something other' was intended by the original author (as, say, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) or is the contribution of the interpreter (and even when it is the contribution of the interpreter, the interpreter frequently thinks that he is bringing out the intention of the original author)" (*Galatians*, 214–15).
- 71 Caneday, "Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured," 55–56, 58–59.
- 72 Caneday, "Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured," 55–56.
- 73 Caneday, "Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured," 67.

⁷⁴ Peter J. Leithart correctly comprehends my argument and expresses agreement: “Caneday rightly draws the larger conclusion about Paul’s reading of the Abrahamic narrative and of Scripture as a whole: ‘Paul reads Scripture’s story of Abraham as historical narrative invested with symbolic representations embedded within the characters and the two contrasting births of two sons — one by natural order, the other by divine promise. Hence, the Genesis text itself, not Paul’s interpretation of the text, is allegorical while simultaneously upholding the historical authenticity of those characters and events’” (“Written Allegorically,” *First Things* [Sept. 26, 2014]); (“Written Allegorically,” *Theopolis* [Sept. 26, 2014]). David I. Starling engages “Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured,” but adopts the notion that Paul engaged in “allegorical interpretation” (“Justifying Allegory: Scripture, Rhetoric, and Reason in Galatians 4:1–5:1,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9.2 [2015]: 227–45).

⁷⁵ On the correlation of parable and allegory, see Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 29–69. He properly concludes that the parables of the Gospels are allegories (p. 69).

⁷⁶ Jonathan Edwards is highly instructive concerning revelatory figuration God embedded in both creation and his Word: “We find by the Old Testament, that it has ever been God’s manner from the beginning of the world, to exhibit and reveal future things by symbolical representations, which were no other than types of the future things revealed. Thus when future things were made known in visions, the things that were seen were not the future things themselves, but some other things that were made use of as shadows, symbols, or types of the things.” (“Types of the Messiah,” in *Typological Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993], 152).

What Edwards affirms concerning Scripture he also rightly affirms concerning God’s created order, because God designed both to shadow the Messiah: “I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words; and that the multitude of those things that I have mentioned are but a very small part of what is really intended to be signified and typified by these things: but that there is room for persons to be learning more and more of this language, and seeing more of that which is declared in it, to the end of the world, without discovering all.” Jonathan Edwards, “Images of Divine Things,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 3, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 404.

Together, these two works express Edwards’s conviction, I share, that reality is inherently figural, typological, analogical, or parabolical, reflecting the Christ:

- Christ is the archetype of all types.
- Creation and Scripture are the twin media of divine communication.
- Typology is ontology — the structure of being itself is figural and teleological, ordered toward revelation and participation in divine glory.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Paul Ellingworth, who observes, “Παραβολή here clearly does not mean a narrative parable, as in the synoptics. It has rather the older sense of a rhetorical figure of speech involving a comparison ... [T] he παραβολή is secondary to the reality to which it corresponds. The underlying way of thinking is typological” (*Hebrews* [NIGCNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 440, cf. 604). Cf. Moises Silva, ed., “παραβολή,” *NIDNTT*, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 609. Concerning Hebrews 9:9 and 11:19, he states, “In both of these passages the sense of the term seems to be ‘type.’” Ellingworth and Silva do not account for how Hebrews uses either τύπος or αντίτυπος. See the discussion in the text above.

⁷⁸ Cf. BDAG s.v. “παραβολή” (first definition, 759) “someth. That serves as a model or example pointing beyond itself for later realization, type, figure,”

⁷⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 358.

⁸⁰ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word, 1991), 363. Lane makes two crucial exegetical decisions: (1) He claims, “It is not necessary to believe that Abraham recognized the connection between the receiving of Isaac from the altar and resurrection from the dead,” which is the Preacher’s emphatic point. And (2) He reasons, “For the writer the sacrifice of Isaac is not a type of the sacrificial death of Christ (as it is already in the early second century, cf. *Barn.* 7.3). There is no evidence for this early period that the narrative of Gen 22 had been related to the cross and resurrection of Jesus.”

⁸¹ Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 321.

⁸² Ponder the progression of the episode, how it screams parabolic representations.

- God’s command. “Take your son, your only son, whom you love — Isaac — and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you” (22:2).

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- Abraham's belief. "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you" (22:5).
 - Abraham's preparations. "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in hand the fire and the knife" (22:6).
 - Isaac's question; Abraham's faith. "Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son'" (22:7–8).
 - Abraham constructs an altar. "When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son" (22:9–10).
 - The presence of the angel of the Lord. "But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' He said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me'" (22:11–12).
 - The Lord provided a substitute for Isaac. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son" (22:13). This echoes the earlier, "And on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar" (22:4).
 - Abraham named the place. "So, Abraham called the name of that place, 'The Lord will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided'" (22:14).
- ⁸³ Paul appeals to Isaac's uncommon conception, born of Abraham and Sarah, a woman who was not only barren but also long past the age of conceiving children, as biblical-historical evidence of resurrection. Paul contends that Isaac's conception and God's creation of all things from nothing are of the same order, for Abraham believed in him "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17).
- ⁸⁴ See Ardel B. Caneday, "Geerhardus Vos: The Recovery of Biblical Theology from Its Corruptors" (Part 1) (October 13, 2025), *Christ Over All*; and "Geerhardus Vos's Biblical Theology: Four Features, Four Insights, Four Errors" (Part 2) (October 14, 2025), *Christ Over All*.