

Hamilton, James M. Jr. *Typology—Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. 360pp. + 72pp. (back matter).

Many have attempted to define or explain typology, and countless debates have centered on whether or not some interpreter’s typological interpretation is valid. Other writers ask if the only legitimate “type” is one that the Bible specifically identifies as such. In *Typology*, Hamilton presents an excellent guide for how the Bible itself exemplifies typological interpretation.

Foundational for Hamilton’s discussion of typology is his discussion of micro-level indicators for determining authorial intent (chapter 1). Hamilton begins by giving several examples in which biblical authors demonstrate awareness of earlier texts of Scripture by using the same words, concepts, and events. In doing this, they indicate that their intent is to repeat the same pattern that had been established in the earlier text. The promises of God, therefore, “shaped the way the biblical authors perceived, understood, and wrote” so that when the biblical authors see events occur in line with earlier promises, they intentionally “communicate the types” in these promise-shaped patterns (4). Moses sets the example for subsequent biblical authors to follow, since “their worldview has been shaped by his words” (5). For Hamilton, typological interpretation consists of reading an account in light of similar earlier (or later) accounts. Thus, “the study of typology amounts to active reflection on one passage in light of others” (8).

The Book of Genesis plays a foundational role in Hamilton’s methodology. Genesis is “profoundly self-referential” (6) and exemplifies Moses’ methodology. Hamilton helpfully identifies Genesis 3:15 as a “pattern-shaping promise” (6), which serves as “the plot conflict that informs the whole of the biblical narrative” (9). In relation to “typology,” Hamilton stresses the importance of understanding the intention of the human author of the text and using grammatical-historical interpretation. Two critical elements in typology are “historical correspondence between events, persons, and institutions” and “the consequent escalation in significance that accrues to recurring patterns” (19). The reader detects historical correspondence in the repetition of significant terms, quotations of phrases or lines, sequences of events, and salvation-historical import. When authors repeat such key elements, the readers’ “sense of the importance of those patterns increases” (25). Rather than a creative human way of adding a foreign, spiritualized meaning to the text, typological interpretation recognizes God-ordained patterns set forth by the human authors (26). Additionally, typological interpretation is normative, and modern-day believers, though not infallible, should seek to interpret typologically following the pattern used by the biblical writers (25–28).

The rest of the book seeks to demonstrate how the biblical authors’ use of earlier Scripture highlights the importance of these promise-shaped patterns. Hamilton does not merely show how certain key themes, such as prophet, priest, and king, are developed in Scripture. Numerous other authors have done that. Rather, he shows how Scripture uses key terms and phrases from earlier scriptural authors to demonstrate the ongoing and increasing significance of such themes. Additionally, he shows how the original writers of Scripture (primarily Moses) expected future typological fulfillments by exemplifying the usage of such patterns in their own material.

Chapter 2 addresses Adam's role as a type for whom Noah, the patriarchs, Israel, David, and ultimately Christ serve as the fulfilment (as "new Adams"). As such, Moses sets the example for understanding Adam as a type, and later biblical writers follow the example. Moses presents clear links between the flood/new creation/Noah's "fall" (Gen 9) and the original creation and Adam's fall (Gen 1–3). The Davidic promises are linked to the Abrahamic promises, which provide the direct answer to the curses of Genesis 3:14–19.

Chapter 3 discusses the typological function of priests, beginning with Adam's priestly role in the garden and assuming that creation should be understood as a cosmic temple. Melchizedek and, subsequently, the nation of Israel serve in a priest-king role to administer the knowledge of God to the nations.

In chapter 4, Hamilton seeks to demonstrate that certain OT figures are prophets and that "Moses intended his audience to connect them to one another." Hamilton identifies nine key prophets in this chapter: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah, as well as Jesus. The discussions of Moses' prophetic role, as well as that of Elijah and Elisha, are sound and helpful. Some concerns arise in Hamilton's discussion of Adam, Noah, and Isaac in this chapter. These will be addressed below.

Chapter 5 discusses the typological role of kings, focusing on the kingship of Adam, Abraham, and David. The key elements each of these kings perpetuate are Adamic dominion, sonship, and keeping and naming. Hamilton points to Abraham's conquest of the kings as key support for his role as a king. Hamilton draws numerous connections between the accounts of Abraham in Genesis 14, Gideon in Judges 6–8, and David in 1 Samuel 30, all of which also connect to Psalm 110. The frequent repetition of key terms and the similarity in sequence of events in these chapters seem to demonstrate an intentional pattern.

Chapter 6 points out the pattern of rejection followed by exaltation as it emphasizes the type of the righteous sufferer, a theme that originates in the seed promise of Genesis 3:15. This theme is prominent throughout Genesis, as well as in Moses, David, and Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Hamilton argues that David "understood his own suffering as an installation in the pattern of those who had preceded him, chiefly Joseph and Moses" (180), and David presents his own experiences in this way in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 2, 6, 16, 22, 31, 35, 69). Finally, numerous terms and phrases in Isaiah 52–53 reflect their previous use in the accounts of the patriarchs, Joseph, and David. These patterns are fulfilled in Jesus, who expects his followers to see such patterns as well (Luke 24:25).

Part 2 of the book discusses two key typological events: creation and exodus. In chapter 7 Hamilton discusses God's creation of Eden as a temple and demonstrates how it becomes the pattern for the OT tabernacle and temple, ultimately fulfilled in Christ, the church, and the New Creation.

Chapter 8 demonstrates that Moses noticed key exodus motifs in the narratives of Abraham and Jacob, records the exodus event, and then indicates that this pattern will recur in the future. Later biblical authors demonstrate that "they have learned from Moses that the exodus is both an interpretive schema and a predictive paradigm" (256). The exodus pattern is also prominent in Joshua, the Gospels, Paul, and Revelation.

Part 3 of the book addresses two institutions that portray typological patterns in Scripture: Leviticult and Marriage.¹ This chapter, therefore, discusses the institutions established for tabernacle and temple worship. These chapters succeed in demonstrating the importance of typology in relation to these themes in Scripture; they do not, however, seem to fit in the category of promise-shaped patterns as the earlier chapters do. Though these chapters provide interesting content, they do not appear to be directly pertinent to the argument of the book.

Hamilton's concluding chapter discusses "macro-level indicators for determining authorial intent." This chapter addresses the use of chiasm in the Book of Genesis. Hamilton's demonstration of the chiastic structure of Genesis is impressive and convincing. The chapter successfully argues Hamilton's point that Moses intended to use key patterns, and he incorporated these patterns intentionally with his chiastic structure.

One of the concerns that arises in a book on typology is the danger of seeing too many connections where they were not originally intended, a kind of parallelomania. Hamilton provides mostly strong support for his typological connections. However, his argument in chapter 4—that Moses intends his audience to understand Adam, Noah, and Isaac, in particular, in his trajectory of OT prophets—rests on questionable ground.

First, Hamilton identifies Adam as a prototypical prophet. Adam receives the message from God about the trees in the Garden (Gen 2:16–17), and Adam communicates that message to Eve (3:2–3). In support of this identification of Adam as prophet, Hamilton references Genesis 20:7, in which God is speaking to Abimelech and identifies Abraham as a prophet, and God tells Abimelech, "You shall surely die," a phrase which occurs only two places in Genesis (2:17 and 20:7). Therefore, this "naturally prompts readers to think of its first instance when they encounter the second." This point of contact indicates that both Adam and Abraham should be "understood in prophetic terms" (96). However, Adam's merely receiving a message from Yahweh and communicating it to Eve are not enough of a basis to firmly establish Adam as a prophet. If this simple definition were sufficient, Abimelech could also be identified as a prophet, since he receives a similar direct warning from God and communicates it.

Second, Hamilton identifies Noah as a prophet. Hamilton demonstrates numerous legitimate and fascinating intertextual connections between Noah and Moses (111–15). Though these examples may show typological development between Noah and Moses, they do not relate to their roles as prophets.

Third, Hamilton includes Isaac in the Adam-Abraham-Isaac prophetic trajectory. In Isaac's sister-fib account, Abimelech says, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death" (Gen 26:11), which reminds the reader of the earlier warnings in 2:17 and 20:7. In this case, "Isaac is presented as an installment in the pattern of Abraham, his father" (96). Hamilton argues that Psalm 105:12–15 supports this claim because it refers to God warning foreign kings during the sojournings of the patriarchs: "Do my prophets no harm." Hamilton shows numerous connections between the Abraham and Isaac accounts (97–105) and points to parallels in the birth accounts of Isaac and Samuel, who is also a prophet. Though many of these connections are helpful and accurate, they do

¹ Hamilton explains that "a happy typo produced the form 'Leviticult,'" which refers to the "Levitical cult" (29).

not prove that Moses intends for us to see Isaac as a prophet. Later revelation, however, does seem to identify Isaac as a prophet (Ps 105). Hamilton cannot necessarily be proven wrong on this point; however, the evidence is lacking for his argument to be proven correct.

A final (and minor) complaint is that Hamilton seems a bit too attached to chiasm, exhibiting a kind of chiasmomania. He attempts to arrange each chapter in a chiastic structure, but he does not do this in some chapters, opting for a mere “outline” in chapters 3 and 8. (Those who care about parallelism will observe with disappointment that chapters 3 and 8 are not on corresponding levels with Hamilton’s overall chiasm of the book on page 30.) The big-picture chiasm of the book makes good sense, but the chiasm within the chapters seems a bit forced at times. For example, the arrangement of chapter 4 is in a chiasm surrounding nine different prophets, beginning at Adam and ending with Jesus. Another example is the suggested chiastic structure for Abraham’s victory over the Canaanite kings (166).

Overall, Hamilton has provided Bible students with an outstanding resource demonstrating the key role of typology in biblical interpretation. I find three primary benefits for the reader:

1. *Typology* provides numerous biblical insights. In a book so full of biblical examples and dealing with so many biblical texts, the reader should not expect to agree with every single example Hamilton gives. The overall approach of the book is excellent, though, and Hamilton presented many helpful connections I had not noticed before. This will be a book I continue to reference in future study.
2. It strengthens faith and confidence in the unity of Scripture. Hamilton’s constant focus on the words of Scripture and the way that later Scripture uses those same words and phrases strongly demonstrates the unity of Scripture.
3. It clarifies typology. Instead of being a dangerous path where the accusation of eisegesis is looming around every corner, typological interpretation is exemplified by Scripture and, as Hamilton argues, should be normative for interpreters today as we actively “reflect on one passage in light of the others.”

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