

Book Review

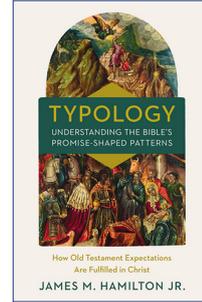
James M. Hamilton.

Typology: Understanding God's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations are Fulfilled in Christ

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In his book, *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns*, James M. Hamilton, Professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, provides a rigorous methodology for studying typology. Hamilton's central argument is that, as God spoke promises and the biblical authors recorded them, the authors recognized patterns emerging in the fulfillment of God's promises. The study of typology, therefore, is the study of these patterns and how they connect across Scripture. As an evangelical Baptist who affirms the divine inspiration of Scripture, Hamilton denies that the authors contrived these patterns alone. Instead, he argues that God ordained the historical events, promises, and records that gave rise to the literary patterns. Hamilton demonstrates throughout the book how these "promise-shaped patterns" ultimately link to and find fulfillment in Jesus Christ, thus providing unifying themes that tie the whole Bible together as a single coherent narrative (p. 4-5, 29-30).

The greatest challenge of Hamilton's book is also its greatest strength: the whole book is structured as a chiasm, which is a literary device where certain themes are addressed in order from the introduction to the central theme, and then the same themes are

developed in reverse order from the central theme to the conclusion. This organization strengthens the book by allowing Hamilton to deal with themes progressively and manageably, communicating connections without sacrificing clarity in a book dense with material. Because of this chiasmic structure, Hamilton suggests reading both chapters 1 and 11 first to understand the overall structure and methodology of the book before moving on to the other chapters (p. 29), a suggestion which this review will follow.

In Chapter 1, Hamilton outlines his methodology, looking particularly at "micro-level indicators," including historical correspondence and escalation, for discovering the authors' typological intentions (p. 19). He defines typology as "God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between people, events, and institutions across the Bible's redemptive-historical story (i.e., in covenantal context)" (p. 26). To establish historical correspondence, Hamilton looks for four elements in the biblical data: repeated key terms, repeated quotations, repeated sequences of events, and redemptive-historical/covenantal similarities. To establish escalation, Hamilton notes where these correspondences repeat and accumulate, thus creating anticipation for how God will fulfill the promises embedded in the patterns.

This method is a key contribution to the field of biblical theology and thus is another unique strength of the book: the use of a clear, reproducible method for investigating typology that can test various interpretations.

In chapter 11, Hamilton focuses on the superstructural “macro-level” and tracks the biblical use of chiasms to communicate typological links, particularly in Genesis. Hamilton suggests that the book of Genesis can be structured as a chiasm and that even the content within each unit follows chiastic patterns (p. 337-338). Based on this structure, Hamilton argues that Isaac receiving a bride is the central point in the Genesis chiasm, communicating that the line to the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3 will not be broken despite the deaths of Sarah and Abraham (p. 337, 342).

Hamilton also uses chiasms as organizing patterns for his own material, both within individual chapters and across the entire book. Each chapter in the book stands as a point in a chiasm, with the central chapter (Chapter 9) dealing with the “righteous sufferer” motif as ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. Hamilton employs this method so that typological persons in Part 1 (Adam in Chapter 2, Priests in Chapter 3, Prophets in Chapter 4, and Kings in Chapter 5) correspond respectively with typological events and institutions in Parts 2 and 3 (Marriage in Chapter 10, the “Levicult” in Chapter 9, Exodus in Chapter 8, and Creation in Chapter 7). In addition to the benefit of balance, this book can be read in at least two different ways: in a linear progression or according to chiastic pairs. Either reading would allow the reader to process the material in distinct ways and thus deepen their appreciation for typology in

Scripture. Hamilton proves his case effectively, organizing historical correspondence and escalation thematically to demonstrate that the authors intended to forge these connections that culminate in Christ.

One minor but notable weakness bears mention: some of the proposed literary correspondences contain narrative inconsistencies, which puts the methodology in danger of exaggerating correspondences and thus losing credibility. In Chapter 1, Hamilton links God’s commission of a guiding angel in Genesis 24 to a similar instance in Exodus 23. He argues that the repetition of the phrase links the servant’s mission to get a bride for Isaac in Genesis 24 on the one hand to Moses’ mission as a servant to procure a covenant partner for God in Exodus 23 on the other (p. 3). The problem with this literary link is the narrative inconsistency: the servant in Genesis 24 had not yet procured the bride, whereas Moses in Exodus 23 had already brought the people to God at Sinai. In the first case, the angel is sent before the bride is secured; in the second case, the angel is sent after Israel is rescued. There may be a literary correspondence, but the narrative inconsistency clouds the connection. Another example appears in Chapter 8. Hamilton argues that the account of Jacob deceiving Isaac parallels the account of the Fall in Genesis 3 and notes several points of correspondence. Some of the literary links, however, have strained narrative connections. For example, although Esau played no part in the deception of Isaac, Hamilton links God’s judgment of the serpent with Isaac’s judgment of Esau (p. 259). In the same section, Hamilton links the clothing of Adam and Eve after their transgression with the

clothing of Jacob before his transgression (p. 259). Despite the literary links, the narrative elements are inconsistent in both cases, making some of the correspondences appear exaggerated and weakening the credibility of Hamilton's method. Hamilton could allay some skepticism by addressing these slight narrative inconsistencies.

Hamilton's contribution fits within the literature on inner-biblical exegesis by maintaining similarities with other insights, advancing typological method, and avoiding some dangers of one approach to typology. Hamilton's approach resembles insights from Richard Longenecker's *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, where he outlines four types of Jewish exegesis employed to varying degrees by the apostles: literalist, midrashic, pesher, and allegorical (Longenecker, p. 84). Typology as outlined by Hamilton connects most closely to pesher exegesis, which is concerned with understanding the eschatological fulfillment of passages of Scripture (Longenecker, p. 95) and connects to how John's gospel emphasizes a typological understanding of the Old Testament as fulfilled in Christ (Longenecker, p. 280). Hamilton's argument runs in the vein of a kind of pesher exegesis by exploring how historical anticipation and fulfillment in the Scripture is communicated through types. An important clarifier that Longenecker offers based on his interaction with the literature is that, while allegorical interpretation looks for symbolic connections without historical correspondence, pesher exegesis aims to link symbolism with historical, eschatological fulfillment (Longenecker, p. 306). Hamilton also emphasizes historical correspondence as opposed to ahistorical interpretation.

Furthermore, Hamilton's method as

applied to typology is an improvement upon Richard Hays' seven criteria for "scriptural echoes" as outlined in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, which studies how Paul uses the Old Testament in his own writings (Hays p. 30). Hays' seven criteria for a scriptural echo, which is comparable to what Hamilton means by "type," are the "availability" of scriptural sources, the "volume" of an echo demonstrated by the rhetorical significance given by the biblical author, the "recurrence" of a particular scriptural citation, the "thematic coherence" of the echo with the author's argument, the "historical plausibility" of Paul communicating and his audience understanding that echo, the "history of interpretation" in relationship to the proposed echo, and the "satisfaction" of the echo in terms of making sense in context (Hays p. 30-32). Hamilton improves upon this approach by offering a more efficient method with two criteria instead of seven, although his two criteria generally accomplish the same goals as Hays' criteria with the exception of the "history of interpretation" criteria, which is not one of Hamilton's primary concerns in this book.

Finally, Hamilton demonstrates his commitment to a historical approach to typology by his refutation of the dangers of prosopological exegesis as defended by Matthew Bates. Prosopological exegesis argues that certain New Testament ascriptions of Old Testament passages to Jesus, such as Hebrews' citations of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8 (p. 145), indicate that the Old Testament authors were really speaking from the personal perspective or "prosopon" of Jesus, which explains how those Old Testament passages apply to Jesus. Hamilton argues that

this approach undermines the historical and literary context of Old Testament passages and that a typological understanding which looks to Christ as the fulfillment of the type preserves the historical and literary context of Old Testament passages cited in the New Testament (p. 145).

In sum, Hamilton demonstrates that studying typology properly does not involve imposing patterns onto the text but recognizing the patterns that the authors themselves intentionally included. This book is best suited for students, pastors, or scholars because of the use of Hebrew and complex content. Those who lack such exposure may experience difficulty yet can still benefit from the content.