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### Edwards and Biblical Typology

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*Jonathan Edwards developed a highly original form of biblical typology (or figuralism). Fabiny first defines what biblical typology means, then he shows how Edwards's famous sermon "The Excellency of Christ" is surprisingly similar to what Fabiny wrote about typology in his 1992 book—before he became aware of Edwards's sermon. The author then discusses Edwards's view of beauty, which underlies his typology. In order to show how Edwards's typology was unique, the author outlines the history of typology. Then, after highlighting Edwards's innovations in typology, Fabiny shows how Edwards echoes Luther, Shakespeare, and the metaphysical poets. Finally, Fabiny speaks to the relevance of Edwards's typology for the contemporary reader.*

#### What Is Biblical Typology?

Biblical typology, or “figuralism,” is both a principle inherent in the Bible and an interpretation of biblical texts. It is frequently used as a term for the way the Old Testament contains foreshadowings (types) of New Testament events and themes. Typology, or “figural interpretation,” as Eric Auerbach called it,

establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the

first. . . . Both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present or future . . . since promise and fulfilment are real historical events, which either have happened . . . or will happen.<sup>1</sup>

### The "Lion" and the "Lamb"

In 1992, in *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature*, I suggested that typology may refer to at least nine things: (1) a way of reading the Bible; (2) a principle that unifies the "Old" and the "New" Testaments in the Christian Bible; (3) a principle of exegesis (understanding the meaning of a text from the original language and context); (4) a figure of speech; (5) a mode of thought; (6) a form of rhetoric; (7) a vision of history; (8) a principle of artistic composition; and (9) a manifestation of "intertextuality" (one part referring to another part of a text).<sup>2</sup>

In the conclusion of the book I state, "Reading is testimony." In other words, the choice of the texts we read reveals our commitments. The metaphorical title, *The Lion and the Lamb*, hints in the same direction. The argument is that in the language of the apocalypse, "there is no ego, no argument, nor 'Old' nor 'New' Testament, in which life is not opaque but becomes transparent. It is the appropriation of the surprising final vision of the Seer of Patmos: namely, that the strong, victorious Lion of the tribe of Judah and the weak Lamb pitifully slain, are one."<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the chapter titled "Reading Scripture," a close reading of Revelation 5:2-7 offers the paradoxical vision of the Lion and the Lamb. "In this condensed, poetic language there is no logic or argument. It is intensive, paradoxical. . . . The divine reality of the Apocalypse subverts all human sense of reality."<sup>4</sup>

When writing *The Lion and the Lamb*, I was not familiar with Jonathan Edwards's famous sermon "The Excellency of Christ" (1738). In this great sermon, I learned that Edwards also speaks of Jesus Christ as both the lion and the lamb. His text is also Revelation 5:5-6.<sup>5</sup> Edwards notices that "there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ." The word *excellency* means beauty, a union of highest ethical and aesthetic values.<sup>6</sup> The lion excels in strength, the lamb excels in meekness: in Christ there is infinite highness and infinite condescension. Christ, as the highest of highest being,

becomes man to expose himself to shame and spitting. "Such a conjunction of infinite highness and low condescension, in the same person, is admirable."<sup>7</sup> The sermon dramatizes the paradoxical nature of the divine mystery: justice and grace, glory and humility, majesty and meekness, reverence and equality, worthiness and patience, authority and obedience, sovereignty and resignation. "Thus is Christ lion in majesty, and a lamb in meekness."<sup>8</sup>

In the first part of his sermon Edwards illustrates "the admirable conjunction of excellencies" in the person of Jesus Christ; in the second part he shows how this "admirable conjunction of excellencies" appears in Christ's works. He discusses Christ's birth, his infancy, and his first miracle in Cana in Galilee. "And though Christ ordinarily appeared without outward glory, and in great obscurity, yet at a certain time he threw off the veil, and appeared in his divine majesty."<sup>9</sup>

Christ's greatest act was his sacrifice, as suggested by Isaiah 53:7 ("He came like a lamb to the slaughter") and 1 Corinthians 5:7 ("Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"): "The greatness of Christ's love . . . appears in nothing so much as its being dying love."<sup>10</sup>

Edwards was aware that in Scripture the lion *in bonam partem* (in the positive sense) is Christ, but *in malam partem* (in the negative sense) is the devil, "the roaring lion." See how he recapitulates the power of the lion/lamb symbolism:

Thus Christ appeared at the same time, and in the same act, as both a lion and a lamb. He appeared as a lamb in the hands of his cruel enemies, as a lamb in the paws and between the devouring jaws of a roaring lion. Yea, he was a lamb actually slain by this lion: and yet at the same time, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he conquers and triumphs over Satan, destroying his own devourer, as Samson did the lion that roared upon him, when he rent him as he would a kid. And in nothing has Christ appeared so much as a lion, in glorious strength destroying his enemies, as when he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. In his greatest weakness he was most strong; and when he suffered most from his enemies, he brought the greatest confusion on his enemies.—Thus this admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies was manifest in Christ, in his offering up himself to God in his last sufferings.<sup>11</sup>

When, several years after writing my book, I read this magisterial sermon, I had mixed feelings: I blushed when I saw how poorly I had written on such a great text, but I also rejoiced that my pale 1992 book had become a shadow—a type!—of Jonathan Edwards's substantial and excellent sermon.

It is appropriate therefore to look for the significance and relevance of Jonathan Edwards's typology. I would suggest that the key can be found in his idea of beauty.

### Edwards's Idea of Beauty

Jonathan Edwards, America's theologian, the eighteenth-century descendant of the American Puritans, both the child and the critic of the Enlightenment, was one of those rare Protestant thinkers who resonated to the sense of beauty and even elaborated what we may call today religious aesthetics.<sup>12</sup>

He begins his *Personal Narrative* (1740) by recalling his first impression of the glory of God:

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17: "Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen." As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. . . .

God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, and moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind.<sup>13</sup>

He describes his experience of the holiness of God:

Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature. It seemed to me, it brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and ravishment to the soul: and that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers, that is all pleasant, delightful and undisturbed; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gently vivifying beams of the sun.<sup>14</sup>

In the short essay, *The Beauty of the World* (1725), Edwards is preoccupied with beauty, excellence and the goodness of creation. This short piece begins with these great lines:

The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either within itself, or with the Supreme Being. As to the corporeal

world, though there are many other sorts of consents, yet the sweetest and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance of spiritual beauties. The reason is that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadows of beings, they must be so much the more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties.<sup>15</sup>

Edwards speaks about the suitability of colors and smells, proportion, harmony, and resemblances of an inferior to a superior cause. The more complex a beauty is, the more hidden it is.

Edwards's theory of beauty, however, is best elaborated in his *The Nature of True Virtue*, written in 1757 and published posthumously in 1765. Edwards starts by suggesting that "True virtue consists in benevolence to Being in general. . . . It is consent, propensity and union of the heart to Being in general." Edwards calls the "highest," "first" or "primary" beauty "that consent, agreement, or, union of being to being." "Secondary beauty," that can be found in inanimate things, "consists in a mutual consent and agreement of different things in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design, called by the various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc."<sup>16</sup> Secondary beauty is the image of, or God-placed symbol which points to, primary beauty.

Edwards adds that it pleases God to observe "analogy" in his works:

It has pleased him to establish a law of nature, by virtue of which the uniformity and mutual correspondence of a beautiful plant, and the respect which the various parts of a regular building seem to have one to another, and their agreement and union, and the consent or concord of the various notes of a melodious tune, should appear beautiful; because therein is some image of the consent of the mind, of the different members of a society or system of intelligent beings, sweetly united in a benevolent agreement of the heart.<sup>17</sup>

Edwards perceives two sorts of agreement or consent of one thing to another: the first is cordial agreement (union of mind and heart), and the other is union or agreement where no minds are involved. The first has to do with spiritual or primary beauty, and the other with natural beauty.

Edwards's theory of beauty and holiness is ultimately Trinitarian. Amy Plantinga Pauw has shown that "the Trinity was at the heart of Edwards' perception of beauty and excellency." She quotes the *Miscellanies* 117: "One alone cannot be excellent, inasmuch as, in such case, there can be no consent. Therefore, if God is excellent, there must be a pluralism in God; otherwise, there can be no consent in him."<sup>18</sup>

True consent, Edwards argued, always requires reciprocal love and delight. His personal experience of holiness as utmost beauty, his idea of beauty as consent of being to being, and his perception of the paradoxical nature of divine beauty in the conjunction of Christ's diverse excellencies can help us understand the roots of Edwards's typological view of reality.

To understand Edwards's use of typology it will be useful to look at some twentieth-century interpretations of typology by biblical scholars and see the historical traditions of this biblical mode of symbolism.

### Theories and Traditions of Typology

The word *typology* in biblical studies is of nineteenth-century coinage. It was not used in patristic literature (works written by the Fathers of the church), where we read instead of *tropologia*, *allegoria*, or *anagogia* (the use of pictures in writing; speaking of one thing under the guise of another; and the mystical sense).

The standard theological work on typology is still Leonard Goppelt's *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (1939).<sup>19</sup> Goppelt examined the significant New Testament passages against the background of contemporary Jewish interpretation of Scripture (Paul's contemporary Philo, the great Jewish philosopher) in Hellenistic Judaism. His conclusion was that typology was the dominant form of interpretation for the New Testament use of the Old. One of the most important terms that Goppelt introduced was *Steigerung*. This was translated into English by various authors as "heightening," "escalation," or "enhancement," which means that some persons, events, or things in the New Testament are seen as both analogous to and greater than the persons, events, or things in the Old Testament. It implies that the ministry of Jesus corresponds to that of the prophets of the Old Testament, but that there is "something more" involved in it. Jesus points to his activity as something "greater than Jonah" (Matt 12:6), "greater than Solomon" (Matt 12:42), and "greater than the temple" (Matt 12:6). This implies that his work was neither simply a repetition nor a mere continuation of the prophets, but the "fulfillment," or "re-creation," of their mission.

In 1952, the Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad published his programmatic essay, "Typological Interpretation in the Old Testament."<sup>20</sup> In von Rad's view, typology is not a theological device but "an elementary function of all human thought and interpretation."<sup>21</sup> Without this analogical way of thinking, he argued, there would be no poetry, for poetry is also concerned with linking images.

The first great boom in the use of typology to interpret the Bible was in the Patristic period (from the second through the fifth centuries AD). The Fathers, however, did not clearly distinguish their typological method from the allegorism commonly used by the Greeks and their Hellenistic civilization (from Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC until the third century AD). For example, they used the term *allegory* for the Passover, which, for later exegetes, is definitely typology, since typology is concerned with connecting two historical realities. Allegory, on the other hand, suggests hidden and spiritual meanings that are usually unrelated to real events in history.

The Reformation, however, was more aware of the "Hebraic" origins of Christianity. Luther and Calvin endorsed typology, but a more self-conscious and methodologically systematic approach was elaborated by the seventeenth-century Protestant Fathers. If we said that the first "golden age" of typology was in the second century of Catholic Christianity, then it may be added that the new or the "second" golden age of typology is to be found in the second century of Protestant Christianity. Typological thinking became almost a pious vogue among Protestant divines on both sides of the Atlantic. In England it inspired religious poetry, while in New England (the notion of the "new" is itself typological!) it undoubtedly played a decisive role in the formation of American identity.

Typology began to flourish among the seventeenth-century Protestant divines, mainly in conservative and popular circles. This was the century of typological manuals composed in English, meant mainly for practical rather than theoretical purposes.

The author of the first known typological handbook is William Guild (1586-1657), an English divine from Aberdeen. His famous work, *Moses Unveiled: or Figures which Served unto the Pattern and Shadow of Heavenly Things. Pointing out the Messiah Christ Jesus Briefly Explained*, was published in 1620.<sup>22</sup> This booklet discusses fifty-five types of Christ in the Old Testament, beginning with the Tree of Life and ending with Zerubbabel. Another, somewhat more elaborated manual is by Thomas Taylor (1576-1633), *Christ Revealed or the Old Testament Explained, a Treatise of the Types and Shadows of Our Saviour Contained throughout the Whole Scripture. All Opened and Made Useful for the Benefit of the Church*. This book was posthumously published in 1635 by William Jenmat. Taylor was a Puritan divine, formerly a reader of Hebrew in Cambridge, and the first author to treat typology in a "system."

The most significant typological manual was written by Samuel Mather (1626-1671), a distinguished member of a famous dynasty of Puritan divines in New England. He was a son of Richard Mather (1596-1663), the brother of Increase Mather (1639-1723), and the uncle of Cotton Mather (1663-1728). His

most famous work, a series of sermons preached for his Dublin congregation, was published posthumously by his brother Nathanael Mather in 1683, *The Figure or Types of the Old Testaments by which Christ and the Heavenly Things of the Gospel Were Preached and Shadowed to the People of God of Old*. In Mather's definition the type is "some outward or sensible thing ordained of God under the Old Testament to represent and hold forth something of Christ in the New," to which he later adds that "there is in a type some outward or sensible thing, that represents an higher spiritual thing, which may be called a sign or a resemblance, a pattern or figure or the like."<sup>23</sup> These sermons forcefully argue that the Gospel is preached already in the Old Testament: the title of each section begins with the word "Gospel," for example, "The Gospel of Circumcision" and "The Gospel of Sacrifices."

The last and almost equally significant treatment of typology was the unique and undeservedly forgotten work of Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) on biblical metaphors, *Tropologia, a Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*, first published in 1682. This book was partly a translation of Solomon Glassius's *Philologia sacra* (1620). Keach was a prolific Baptist minister with some Calvinistic leanings. In his preface he contrasts types to allegories. He says allegories are in the same category as metaphors and parables. "Although metaphors and allegories are useful for mystical purposes," he says, they should not be "taken beyond the analogy of faith."<sup>24</sup> In other words, they must remain within the confines of what Scripture reveals explicitly elsewhere.

Now that we have reviewed the historical background, we can understand how Edwards's use of typology was unique.

### Edwards's Innovative Ideas of Typology

Thanks to the recent research of Janice Knight (1991) and Gerald R. McDermott (2000), we have some current assessments of the typological writings of Edwards.<sup>25</sup> Knight's essay was included in Sang Hyun Lee's impressive *Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (2005).<sup>26</sup> However useful as a critical summary, her essay is limited by the fact that it was written before the appearance of the volume on Edwards's typological writings in the Yale edition of his works.<sup>27</sup> McDermott's comprehensive summary is, therefore, based on more reliable sources.

Jonathan Edwards was obsessed with typology throughout his career. Typology runs as a leitmotif through his sermons, especially in the 1739 sermon series later published as *A History of Redemption*, the series that became the rightly celebrated *Religious Affections* (1746), and even in his endless private

notebooks (the *Miscellanies*). In the rest of this chapter I concentrate on the typological works (volume 11) in the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. This contains his fragmented and discontinuous notes, *Images and Shadows of Divine Things*, which he began at the age of twenty-five in 1728; his short and substantial pamphlet "Types"; and the long treatise "Types of the Messiah" composed between 1744 and 1749.

In the short pamphlet "Types" Edwards uses the term as a synonym for "parable," "mystery," "figure," "picture," "allegory," "dark saying," "sign," "pledge," and "veil." We are warned to be "exceeding careful" in interpreting types, for "by mysteries is especially meant divine truths wrapped up in shadows and mysterious representations."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, he is confident that types are literally all over the world:

I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and 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.<sup>29</sup>

However, Edwards departed from his contemporaries by expanding the traditional historical understanding of typology into the natural world. For Edwards, God revealed himself "by his word and works."<sup>30</sup>

Types are a certain sort of language, as it were, in which God is wont to speak to us. And there is, as it were, a certain idiom in that language which is to be learnt the same that the idiom of any language is.<sup>31</sup>

Edwards unconsciously echoed Alan of Lille's famous twelfth-century poem:

Omnis mundi creatura  
quasi liber et pictura  
nobis est et speculum:  
nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis,  
nostri status, nostrae sortis  
fidele signaculum.<sup>32</sup>

This short poem illustrates well the figurative view of reality characteristic of the medieval period and shared by Jonathan Edwards in the eighteenth century. For Edwards, the end of creation was God's communication of himself—

his glory with his creatures.<sup>33</sup> In one of his *Miscellanies* Edwards also notes that "the whole outward creation, which is but the shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things."<sup>34</sup>

However, McDermott is right in suggesting that "the types do not have power in and for themselves to portray the spiritual world. The typological system is not transparent to all, but only to 'a mind so prepared and exercised.' There is no salvation by the imagination. Salvation is only by Christ and the power of his Spirit, who alone can provide the sense of the heart, which alone can read the types."<sup>35</sup>

Edwards's typology represented a middle-of-the road position between extreme views of typology. He said his aim was "to show how there is a medium between those that cry down all types, and those that are for turning all into nothing but allegory and not having it to be true history; and also the way of the rabbis that find so many mysteries in letters, etc."<sup>36</sup>

Wallace Anderson points out that there were three groups that dismissed the Edwardsian use of typology: first, the rationalists, Lockean, and deists, for whom typology was illogical; second, the Catholics and high-church Anglicans who wanted to perpetuate old fashions of allegorization; third, Reformed evangelicals of Puritan dissent, who affirmed typology based on the literal sense but would have objected to Edward's expansion of types beyond Scripture into the natural world. "Edwards attempted to free typology from the narrow correspondences of the two testaments without reverting to exaggerated medieval allegory."<sup>37</sup> For example, Moses' lifting up his hands when the Israelites fought with the Amalekites (Exod 17:11) was seen as a type of Jesus' crucifixion. Against a conservative or merely historical idea of typology, Edwards represented a more liberal, ontological view of typology—which means that for Edwards, typology was not limited to two historical events but could link divine events to aspects of the existing world such as things in nature.

Jonathan Edwards's ontological or liberal typology is a logical and organic extension of biblical figurative language. For example, both Jesus' words in John's Gospel and Paul's language are highly figurative. Edwards quotes Jesus' words from John 12:24 about the corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, and by dying brings forth much fruit.<sup>38</sup> Edwards's favorite Pauline quote is Ephesians 5:30–32 on "the great mystery" of marriage, which is a type of the union between Christ and the church. Edwards concludes from passages like these that the world is full of types: "It is evident that God hath ordered the state and constitution of the world of mankind . . . that spiritual things might be represented by them."<sup>39</sup>

But who can understand this language of types? Edwards was convinced that it is only by the spiritual perception of the spiritual man, as St. Paul calls it

in 1 Corinthians 2:15. In the *Religious Affections* he describes this gift as the first sign of "truly gracious and holy affections." Spiritual persons are the true saints who are sanctified by the spirit of God: "Christians are called spiritual persons because they are born of the Spirit, and because of the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in them." They then become "creature-partaker[s] of the divine nature." Edwards learned from St. Paul that "natural men have no communion or fellowship with Christ, or participation with him."<sup>40</sup> This is the divine way of knowing that enables the young Jonathan Edwards to see divine mysteries in the phenomena of the natural world. It enables him to see how God created the world with analogy: every inferior being is an imitation or shadow of its superior—as beasts are imitations of human beings, plants are the imitations of animals (*Images*, Numbers 8 and 19), and all this is the "method of God's working" (*Images*, Number 59).

With Gerhard von Rad we have seen that typology is characteristic of poetic imagination. Poets and theologians of highly poetic imagination have also used typology. In what follows we shall see remarkable parallels to Edwards's typology in Shakespeare, Luther, and the metaphysical poets.

#### Resonances in Edwards's Typology to Shakespeare, Luther, and the Metaphysical Poets

I have written elsewhere on how Shakespeare's language and imagery were indebted to the emblem tradition, which is a special Renaissance genre of combining a motto, a picture, and a text.<sup>41</sup> Edwards himself uses the term *emblem* as a synonym for types, but to this point students of typology have not noticed this connection.

Nor have the other parallels between Edwards and Shakespeare been noticed. When thinking of Edwards's spiritual perception of nature, for example, consider the Duke Senior's words in *As You Like It*:

And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. (Act 2, scene 1,  
lines 15–17)<sup>42</sup>

Shakespeare's "sermons in stones" is his own signal that he too thought about nature as pointing to the divine. Another Shakespearean image is unconsciously echoed by Edwards when he writes:

When men stand on very high things, they are ready to grow giddy  
and are in great danger of falling, and the higher they are the more

dreadful is their fall. Which represents the danger men are in, when lifted up on high on the pinnacle of honor and prosperity, of having their eyes dazzle, of being very discomposed and erroneous in their notion of things, especially themselves and their own standing, and the great danger they are in of falling; and how that those that are most highly exalted in pride have the most dreadful fall.<sup>43</sup>

In *Julius Caesar* Brutus says to Cassius:

We, at the height, are ready to decline  
There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries. (Act 4,  
scene 3, lines 216–18)<sup>44</sup>

According to Edwards, the spiritual person perceives the world christologically, and therefore sees within “the rising and setting of the sun a type of the death and resurrection of Christ” (*Images*, Number 50). Moreover, for him or her “the silkworm is a remarkable type of Christ, which, when it dies, yields us that of which make such glorious clothing. Christ became a worm for our sakes . . . and by his death finished that righteousness with which believers are clothed, and thereby procured that we should be clothed with robes of glory” (*Images*, Number 35; see also Numbers 46 and 142).

This image has antecedents in Luther’s commentaries. Luther also associated Christ dying on the cross with the worm (see Psalm 22:6) when he said, “He was not regarded as a godly person but as a venomous worm . . . menace to the entire world. Such was the low esteem in which the world held Him, and His Christians today share this with Him.”<sup>45</sup> Commenting on the Genesis story of Sarah’s death, Luther remarks, “It has pleased God to raise up from worms, from corruption, from the earth, which is totally putrid and full of stench, a body more beautiful than any flower, than balsam, than the sun itself and the stars.”<sup>46</sup>

Another striking similarity in imagery used by both Luther and Edwards concerns spiritual food, or the eucharist. Edwards says:

As wheat is prepared to be our food to refresh and nourish and strengthen us, by being threshed, and ground to powder, and then baked in the oven, whereby it becomes a type of our spiritual food, even Christ, the bread which comes down from heaven, which becomes our food by his sufferings; so the juice of the grape is a type of the blood of Christ, as it is prepared to be our refreshing drink to

exhilarate our spirits and make us glad, by being pressed out in a wine press. (*Images*, Number 68)

Two hundred years earlier, in his 1518 sermon on “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body and the Brotherhoods,” Luther proposed a surprisingly similar cluster of images:

For just as the bread is made out of many grains ground and mixed together, and out of the bodies of many grains there comes the body of one bread, in which each grain loses its form and body and takes upon itself the common body of the bread; and just as the drops of wine, in losing their own form, become the body of one common wine and drink—so it is and should be with us. . . . And through the interchange of his blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common.

Christ appointed these two forms of bread and wine, rather than any other, as a further indication of the very union and fellowship which is in this sacrament. For there is no more intimate, deep, and indivisible union than the union of the food with him who is fed. For the food enters into and is assimilated by his very nature, and becomes one substance with the person who is fed. . . . Thus in the sacrament we too become united with Christ, and are made one body with all the saints, so that Christ cares for us and acts in our behalf.<sup>47</sup>

While evoking parallels between Edwards and Shakespeare on the one hand, and Edwards and Luther on the other, we have linked Edwards to earlier typological traditions. But Edwards was also fascinated by the created world and its new discoveries opened by Locke’s philosophy and Newton’s science. Not unlike the metaphysical poets (John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, etc.) of a century earlier, Edwards appropriated the physical laws and analytical sciences for typological purposes. Two examples should suffice, that of gravity and the telescope:

The whole material universe is preserved by gravity, or attraction, or the mutual tendency of all bodies to each other. One part of the universe is hereby beneficial to another. The beauty, the harmony, and order, regular progress, life and motion, and in short, all the well being of the whole frame, depends on it. This is a type of love or charity in the spiritual world. (*Images*, Number 79)

Typology is a future-oriented view of history, presupposing a linear view of history. Edwards shared this view of the progress of history and therefore

knowledge—a progress that drives humanity toward the approaching millennium. He placed the telescope in this context.

The late invention of telescopes, whereby heavenly objects are brought so much nearer, and made so much plainer to sight, and such wonderful discoveries have been made in heavens, is a type and forerunner of the great increase in the knowledge of heavenly things that shall be in the approaching glorious times of the Christian church. (*Images*, Number 58)

Edwards's frequently used images of trees (*Images*, Numbers 26, 78, 99, 135) and rivers (Numbers 15, 22, 77) reflect both the successive ages of the world and the dynamism of God's working in history. "The church in different ages is lively represented by the growth and progress of a tree" (Number 99). Other images show the same sense of progress in the history of redemption: "The gradual vanishing of stars when the sun approaches is a type [of] the gradual vanishing of Jewish ordinances as the Gospel dispensation was introduced" (Number 40).

Other graphic images portray the grisly reality of sin. "Death temporal is a shadow of eternal death" (*Images*, Number 1). "The serpent's charming of birds . . . the spider's taking of the fly . . . are lively representations of the devil's catching our souls" (Number 11). "Ravens that with delight feed on carrion seem to be remarkable types of the devils who with delight prey upon the souls of the dead. A dead, filthy, rotten carcass is a lively image of the soul of a wicked man that is spiritually and exceeding filthy and abominable" (Number 61).

### Conclusion

Jonathan Edwards was fascinated by the beauty of the created world. In his 1948 edition of *Images and Shadows of Divine Things*, Perry Miller suggested that Edwards's extension of traditional historical typology to nature constituted an "exaltation of nature to a level of authority coequal with [biblical] revelation."<sup>48</sup> However, in a perceptive article on Edwards's spiritual exegesis, Stephen Stein argues that Miller was mistaken not only to place nature on a par with Scripture but also in his attempt to link Edwards with Emerson's naturalism: "Edwards never waffled on the primacy of Scripture as the principal source of divine revelation, nor on the usefulness of biblical typology as an interpretive device."<sup>49</sup> Instead, Edwards was simply trying to gain a "fuller understanding" of the "spirit-given" sense of the text.

Shortly before his untimely and tragic death, Edwards wrote a letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey in which he revealed his plan to write a "great work" of divinity entitled *History of the Work of Redemption*. In this letter he mentioned his design for "another great work": the *Harmony of the Old and New Testament*. In this latter work he envisaged three parts: the first on prophecies of the Messiah and their fulfillment; the second on the types of the Old Testament and their antitypes in the gospels; the third to highlight the doctrinal and theological harmony of the two Testaments. Apparently Edwards wanted to link traditional ideas about biblical prophecy and doctrine to his new way of doing typology.

Stein illustrates Edwards's view of the doctrinal unity of the testaments by using the Abraham and Isaac story, where the sentence "God will provide himself a lamb" (Gen 22:8), according to Edwards, refers to the sacrifice of Christ, whereby "God would provide the sacrifice by which sins against himself were atoned." Edwards acknowledges that Abraham had not thought of Christ but "the mind of the Holy Ghost had respect to Christ as the sacrifice."<sup>50</sup> Types can be understood only in retrospect after their fulfillment in the cross of Christ.

As Hans Frei has pointed out, the eighteenth century was a time in which "the relationship between the literal meaning of the biblical stories and the historical reality of the events was destroyed."<sup>51</sup> In other words, early critics of the Bible were casting doubt on the historical accuracy of the biblical stories. Pretty soon, the story, historical reality, and theological meaning became three separate things, as the "depicted biblical world" and the "real historical world" were consciously separated in commentaries. Stein concludes that although Edwards was fully aware of this early critical scholarship, his concern was a for a higher and fuller understanding of the spiritual meaning of the whole text—and this he found in his "liberal" typology. Thus "Edwards was not ready to separate word and spirit in the interpretation."<sup>52</sup> He remained within the "precritical" paradigm of biblical interpretation along with Luther and the Reformers of the sixteenth century, for whom the spiritual meaning of the text was to be perceived within the literal meanings, since the spirit was not "above" but "within" the letter. Because of this concern to link the historical with the spiritual—the reading of the whole Bible with each of its parts—one could perhaps use Edwards's sermons, commentaries, and doctrinal works to illustrate what David Steinmetz meant when he spoke of the "superiority of precritical exegesis."<sup>53</sup>

What, then, can we say about the relevance of Edwards's typology for contemporary faith and culture? In an age of modern technology, Edwards helps us open our imaginations in order to apply biblical associations to the world surrounding us. Christian imagination, deeply rooted in the concrete images



of the Bible, should be both preserved and renewed. Biblical language should never be permitted to remain a dead fossil as "the language of Canaan" in the midst of contemporary culture. Old words and images wait to be fulfilled and re-created by new substances.

From biblical times onward, typology has been used to understand the "new" in terms of the "old." Thus the dynamism inherent in typology can help the Christian faith remain alive in an always changing world. Jonathan Edwards, with his liberal and highly original adaptation of typology, has a unique and peculiar place in this old tradition.

## NOTES

1. Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Meridian, 1959), 11-74, quotation on 16.
2. Tibor Fabiny, *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 1-2.
3. *Ibid.*, 44.
4. *Ibid.*, 75.
5. "And one of the elders saith unto me, 'Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (KJV).
6. See Roland A. Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 58-68.
7. Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Christ," in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas Sweeney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 165.
8. *Ibid.*, 168.
9. *Ibid.*, 175.
10. *Ibid.*, 177.
11. *Ibid.*, 181.
12. Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See Gesa Elisabeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 167-76.
13. Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," in the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [hereafter WJE], 16: 792, 794.
14. *Ibid.*, 796.
15. Jonathan Edwards, "The Beauty of the World," in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 14.
16. "The Nature of True Virtue," in WJE 8: 540, 561.
17. *Ibid.*, 565.
18. Amy Plantinga Pauw, "The Trinity," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 51, 52.

See also Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

19. Leonard Goppelt, *Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments in Neuen* (Gütersloh, Germany: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1939). The second, enlarged edition was published in 1969. The English translation was published in 1982 as *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. D. Madvig (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).
20. Gerhard von Rad, "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments," in *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952), 17-33. In English: "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," in *Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), 17-39.
21. Von Rad, "Typological Interpretation," 17.
22. William Guild, *Moses Unveiled* (London, 1620).
23. Quoted by M. I. Lowance in his introduction to Samuel Mather, *The Figures of Types of the Old Testament*, ed. M. I. Lowance Jr. (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1969), xi-xii.
24. See the recent reprint edition of *Tropologia: Benjamin Keach, Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1972), xii. See Lowance, 1969, *The Figures of Types of the Old Testament*, 86.
25. Janice Knight, "Learning the Language of God: Jonathan Edwards and the Typology of Nature," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 48 (1991): 531-51; Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 110-29.
26. Janice Knight, "Typology," in Lee, *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, 190-209.
27. Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, WJE 11.
28. *Ibid.*, 151.
29. *Ibid.*, 152.
30. Quoted by Knight in Lee, *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, 190.
31. WJE 11: 150.
32. Every created thing of the world  
is like a book or a picture,  
acting to us as a mirror,  
a faithful figure,  
of our life, our death,  
our condition, our lot. (cf. *Patrologia Latina* 210,579a).
33. WJE 11: 9; *Miscellanies*, in WJE 13: 358-59.
34. *Miscellanies*, in WJE 13: 434.
35. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 116.
36. "Types," in WJE 11: 151.
37. WJE 11: 33.
38. Jonathan Edwards, *Images of Divine Things*, Number 23, in WJE 11. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

39. WJE 11: 67.
40. Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, in WJE 2: 197, 198, 203, 204.
41. Tibor Fabiny, ed., *Shakespeare and the Emblem* (Szeged, Hungary: Attila József University, 1984).
42. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Methuen, 1984).
43. WJE 11: 91.
44. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. T. S. Dorsch (London: Methuen, 1983).
45. *Luther's Works: American Edition* [hereafter LW], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 22, 340. Cf. Kenneth Hagen, "The Testament of a Worm: Luther on Testament and Covenant," *Consensus* 8 (1982): 12-20.
46. LW 4: 190.
47. LW 35: 49-73.
48. Perry Miller, introduction to *Images and Shadows of Divine Things by Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 28.
49. Stephen J. Stein, "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Exegesis," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 125.
50. *Ibid.*, 126.
51. *Ibid.*, 118. See Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
52. Stein, "The Spirit and the Word," 128.
53. David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis," *Theology Today*, Apr. 1980, 27-38. Robert E. Brown argues that the dichotomy between precritical and critical is too facile and ultimately breaks down, and that Edwards has a foot in both worlds: *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 76-87.

## 8

## Alternative Viewpoint: Edwards and Biblical Typology

Gerald R. McDermott

### Principal Insights

Let me first highlight what I take to be Dr. Fabiny's principal insights. He observes initially that in the long history of the tradition, typology has meant at least nine things, and for Edwards at least four: a way of reading the Bible generally, a particular way of linking the Old Testament to the New Testament, a principle of exegesis (taking out of the text what is there, using knowledge of language, history, and culture), and a vision of history.

Then Dr. Fabiny provides for us his own vision of the heart of biblical typology, which we first saw twenty years ago in his book *The Lion and the Lamb*, and which had its own antitype in Edwards's sermon "The Excellency of Christ": Christ is both lion and lamb, and this paradox is illustrated most poignantly in Christ's dying love. The lion becomes a lamb that is led to the slaughter. I would add that for Edwards this is the meaning not only of biblical typology but also the meaning of history and the human person, as the person is joined to Christ.

Dr. Fabiny gives us next his own take on a recurring theme of this book: the distinctively Edwardsian perspective on beauty. As we have seen in previous chapters, Edwards said that primary beauty is the union of being to Being (Edwards's word for God), to which "it pleases God to observe analogy in his works." This means that God places analogies to this beauty throughout his creation. Secondary