

Narrating Congregational Life: Narrative Homiletics As Typological Imagination

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ABSTRACT

Religious imagination, defined as the human capacity for “seeing as,” is suggested as the “field of action” for biblical preaching. The essay explores some implications of this understanding, with special focus on typology as a hermeneutical and rhetorical strategy consistent with this approach. Typological imagination takes a biblical narrative as anticipatory type and narrates contemporary experience as “fulfilling” antitype, such that the congregation is invited to imagine its life as part of God’s larger and ongoing story with God’s people. The essay concludes with an extended description of an actual instance of practice demonstrating this approach and offers concrete suggestions for homiletical practice.

Preaching as Faithful Imagination

In a proposal that merits careful attention from homileticians, Garrett Green has suggested that scripture shapes a congregation’s understanding of itself, God, and the world through an appeal to the imagination.¹ This essay summarizes Green’s understanding of theological imagination, briefly compares two broad homiletical approaches that appreciate the role of imagination in preaching, and then explores typological interpretation as one specific homiletical strategy that is sensitive to the imagination as the field of action for preaching.

For Green, imagination is not the domain of the fanciful or unreal, but a mode of cognition that

organizes experience into an intelligible whole. He elucidates the meaning of imagination through a clever grammatical exercise.² Whereas the copula (grammatical connection between subject and predicate) of fact is “is,” and the copula of fiction is “is not,” the copula of imagination is “as.” Green maintains that the fact vs. fiction (“is” vs. “is not”) distinction that dominates scientific discourse is tied to a “naively realistic view of scientific theories as direct descriptions of reality.”³ In other words, “is” and “is not” admit only one possible construal of the data. Developments in the philosophy of science, however, suggest that the ambition of scientific theory to label reality definitively in such categorical terms is overreaching. Even the most rigorous and compelling discourse appeals to the imagination and invites a construal of experience “as” a certain kind of intelligible whole.

Intimidated by the success of scientific discourse, religion has often resorted to recommending itself as a strategy for construing things “as if” they were other than they truly are. We might call “as if” the copula of “useful fiction.”⁴ “As if” concedes the status of accepted fact to some other construal of the data, but proposes that it may be beneficial to see things as other than they, in fact, are. Rather than posing a true alternative, “as if” participates so thoroughly in the rhetoric of the established worldview that its true function is to subtly reinforce the received construal. But why should religion yield the epistemological high ground to scientific discourse? By adopting the simple copula “as,” religion may expect the same epistemological humility it practices. “As” admits other possible ways of taking the world—ways of seeing the same data “as” something else—without conceding to any other construal the privileged copula “is.” Green writes,

The paradigmatic imagination—the “as” faculty—can bring conceptual precision to Ricoeur’s suggestive distinction between a “first” and a “second naïveté.” The first inhabits the world of “is,” blissfully unaware of other possibilities. The second lives in a world of “as,” construing reality according to a particular vision in full awareness of other options. Imagination is integral to both, for the only way to have a world is to imagine it.⁵

By an act of imagination we commit ourselves to experiencing reality according to some governing gestalt, some holistic pattern; we take the world “as” something.

As a Christian theologian, Green’s interest is faithful paradigmatic imagination. Green proposes paradigmatic imagination—the formal human capacity to apprehend reality according to a governing pattern—as the point of contact for revelation. In the identity of Jesus Christ, God has provided the accessible pattern for faithfully imagining God, God’s world, and our relation to both. That identity captured the imagination of the original witnesses who expressed it imaginatively in scripture. Finally, preaching mediates that identity imaginatively to the hearers:

Proclamation, formulated in terms of the present argument, can be described as an appeal to the imagination of the hearers through the images of Scripture. The preacher’s task is to mediate and facilitate that encounter by engaging his or her own imagination, which becomes the link between Scripture and congregation.⁶

The preacher, by an act of faithful imagination, facilitates the congregation’s imaginative approach

priation of experience according to the paradigm of scripture.

Homileticians increasingly recognize that imagination is the field of action for preaching. In a discussion of recent developments in hermeneutics and their implications for preaching, Thomas Long observes:

...it is precisely the breakup of the idea that any hermeneutical method is neutral or “scientific” that has freed good biblical preachers...to admit what they have intuitively known all along: The connection between the ancient text and the contemporary world is not procedural but poetic, not mechanical but metaphorical.⁷

Long does not necessarily work out of any elaborate theory of religious imagination like Green’s.⁸ His insight has the quality of recognition, of finally naming what has always been. No argument is given or required; preachers know that this is how it really works. The meaning of the text for a given circumstance is not a straightforward function of its historical reference,⁹ but its surprising capacity to interrogate and reshape our understanding of the present. Scripture’s meaning and authority for the church emerge in the imaginative juxtaposition of text and context:

The “meaning for today” of a biblical text is not lying there in the text itself, waiting to be uncovered; it is given only as the interpreter brings together the two poles, the ancient text and the present situation, and allows the spark of imagination to jump between them.¹⁰

Long grants hermeneutical priority to the world of the text, but the “sparks” fly because he takes the world of the hearer seriously as well. In the imaginative exchange between these worlds, the Word for a particular place and moment takes shape.

Walter Brueggemann has framed the relationship between text, context, sermon, and imagination with a different emphasis.¹¹ Brueggemann diagnoses the hearer as suffering from a stunted imagination—a victim of ideologies that seek to control human life within the constraints of prosaic formulations and refuse to permit alternative visions of reality. Under the power of such a tame and settled existence, the gospel is not so much contradicted as assimilated, accommodated to prevailing values, skillfully managed, and neutralized. In Brueggemann’s words, it is “a truth widely held, but a truth greatly reduced,...flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane.”¹² Brueggemann seeks dramatic juxtapositions between text and context; he assumes that the text wants to ignite the imagination while the powers at work in the context have conspired to dull it. In light of this diagnosis, the preacher’s task is to disturb the hearer’s imagination with an alternative vision of reality evoked by the biblical narrative. The preacher is a poet in a “prose-flattened world,”¹³ preaching under the Bible’s promise...

...that prophetic construals of another world are still possible, still worth doing, still longingly received by those who live at the edge of despair, resignation, and conformity.¹⁴

The preacher’s imaginative proclamation urges the hearer to a fresh consideration of a risky and exciting proposal: “that the real world in which God invites us to live is not the one made available by the rulers of this age.”¹⁵

David Kelsey's reflections on the ways scripture is imaginatively construed and deployed in the authorization of theological proposals can help clarify the distinction between Long and Brueggemann. In the context of outlining some controls on theological imagination, Kelsey notes that any imaginative proposal made by a theologian must contend with the constraints of what is "seriously imaginable."¹⁶ Consistent with Long's emphasis on imagination bridging the gap between text and context, Kelsey maintains that the contextual given comes into dialogue with the world imagined by the text. As the preacher imaginatively negotiates the exchange, surprising but credible new horizons of meaning emerge. This approach emphasizes that the hermeneutical encounter is a negotiation between text and context. But scripture is more than an equal partner in this exchange, both because the preacher consciously grants it hermeneutical priority and because of its ongoing formational role for the community of interpretation. In other words, for both Kelsey and Long, what is "seriously imaginable" at a given moment will certainly be what is seriously imaginable *for the church*, a community already in the process of having its imaginative capacities shaped by scripture.¹⁷

However, Kelsey admits another possibility:

Now it may be that the theologian's task is to explicate his theological proposals in terms that conform to such [a given] imagination. Or, it may be that part of his task is so to explicate his proposals that they capture men's [*sic*] imaginations with enough power to alter the very limits of the imaginable.¹⁸

Here is Brueggemann's working assumption for homiletics, stated rather prosaically by a theologian for theologians: namely, that homiletical imagination ought to transform and expand the imagination of the hearer with a winsome, subversive alternative made possible through a fresh reading of scripture. Long's version of homiletical imagination celebrates the way text and ecclesial context synergistically interact, while Brueggemann stresses how the text confronts the community with an alternative vision of the world. Both approaches help map the contours of the preaching imagination.

With Green I have proposed that we can helpfully understand preaching as an exercise in faithful imagination, a bid to capture the imagination of the congregation with a vision of the world organized and experienced according to the paradigm of scripture. In conversation with Long and Brueggemann, I have identified two broad strategies for negotiating the weekly interplay of text and context, both of which are sensitive to imagination as the locus of preaching. I will now develop one specific sermonic strategy consistent with an understanding of preaching as faithful imagination.

Preaching as Typological Imagination

What specific strategies are available to the preacher who understands the sermonic field of action as the imagination? As the single most pervasive strategy for interpreting experience found

in scripture, typology recommends itself for our consideration. Typological imagination, as displayed in “every book—not impossibly every passage—in the New Testament,”¹⁹ is the capacity to see an intricate web of connections between past events in the story of God’s people and present experience. Whereas metaphor can be understood as the imaginative juxtaposition of two things assumed to exist simultaneously, typology is a “figure of speech that moves in time”²⁰—an imaginative juxtaposition of events past and present. Borrowing Green’s copula, we may say that typology is a form of paradigmatic imagination that takes a past event *as* anticipatory type and takes a present experience *as* fulfilling antitype. With the language of anticipation and fulfillment, I do not mean to suggest a simplistic prophecy-fulfillment relationship. In the typological imagination, the web of intersignification woven between types and antitypes can be difficult to neatly and exhaustively categorize.

The New Testament’s typological use of the Old Testament is manifest across a broad spectrum from its pervasive, if subtle, allusiveness, through explicit quotations (e.g., the “formula quotations” in Matthew), to elaborate and extended comparisons (e.g., Paul’s typology of judgment in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11), to a relentless combination of all three (e.g., the entire book of Hebrews). This last example is interesting for our discussion since commentators have often remarked that this “word of exhortation”²¹ more nearly resembles a homily than an epistle.²²

Although I have cast a broad net in identifying various manifestations of the typological sensibility at work in the New Testament, it may prove helpful to focus specifically on one extended typological comparison as a model for typological imagination in preaching. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Paul expresses his confidence that the story of the wilderness wandering was “written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”²³ Paul seeks to admonish a wayward church on the very brink of the eschaton. His typological imagination will lead to a reading of Exodus that respects the integrity of the original narrative even as it forges poetic connections to the Corinthian context with surprising moral gravitas. When all is said and done we will still have to do very much with the real (storied) Israelites and the real Corinthians, but the latter are in danger of being changed for having met the former in Paul’s typology:

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.²⁴

Like the overconfident Corinthians, the Israelites had their sacraments too—baptized as they passed through the sea, partaking of spiritual food (manna) and drink (water from a rock): “Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.”²⁵ Sacraments, it turns out, are no magic ward against divine judgment on idolatry, defiant sexual misconduct, and grumbling—vices prevalent in the camps of Israelites and Corinthians alike:

Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat

and drink, and they rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.²⁶

Paul interweaves type and antitype skillfully, juxtaposing the details with daring precision and interpenetrating the two worlds convincingly in the telling. He leaves the reader with the inescapable impression that somehow the Israelites truly anticipated the Corinthians. Will they persist in their arrogance and meet the same end, or will they heed the warning and live?

Typology is not merely analogical reasoning. In our example, the situations of the Israelites and the Corinthians are undeniably analogous. But Paul does not want his readers to ponder the reasonableness of an analogical proposition. The weight of his rhetoric²⁷ rests less on systematic logical connections between the situations and more on *ad hoc* poetic connections.²⁸ Furthermore, in the typological imagination, the connections between these stories are more than an interesting and useful coincidence. Paul confronts his readers with a mystery.²⁹ If they see rightly, they will know that this old story in all its particulars exists “to instruct us on whom the end of the ages have come.” The peculiar persuasion at work here cannot be exhausted in a logical syllogism, but turns on the powerful evocation of a disturbing, almost ominous, sense that this has all happened before: God’s people passing through water to deliverance, partaking of God’s promise to sustain communicated in special food and drink, and yet arrogantly flirting with idols and smiling at sexual misconduct that would make a pagan blush.³⁰ Typological imagination is thicker, bolder, and more opportunistic than analogy. It is grounded unapologetically in the conviction that the story of God’s past dealings with God’s people is not mere fodder for enlightening comparisons, but is loaded with a hidden surplus of significance, always threatening to break into the present with a surprising, fresh, demanding Word.

Typological imagination in preaching extends this same hermeneutical process found throughout scripture into the present. The sermon dares to name contemporary experiences as antitypes in relation to anticipatory types in scripture. As Charles Campbell notes, the result is “not just a way of reading scripture, but a way of reading life. Through typological interpretation, the world of the contemporary people of God is seen and described in terms of the patterns and connections discerned in the biblical narrative.”³¹ Typological imagination in preaching allows the scriptural narrative to function paradigmatically to shape the interpretation and description of the church’s contemporary experience.

Following Hans Frei, Campbell stresses the way typological interpretation has tended to privilege Christological and ecclesial readings. In the typological imagination, the identity of Jesus plays the “pivotal role in defining the pattern of the entire biblical story.”³² Typological interpretation is ecclesial because it focuses less on forging connections between individuals in the biblical narratives and contemporary individuals and more on discerning the imaginative connection between the story and the church.³³ Our discussion of 1 Cor. 10:1-11 demonstrates both the Christological and ecclesial character of typological imagination: we traced a classic typological move-

ment from Israel corporate, to the church of Paul's contemporary experience, with Jesus situated as the mediator.

Narrating Congregational Life

Typological imagination in preaching is a tool for faithfully narrating congregational life according to the paradigm of scripture. A church's life can be narrated "as" many things. The raw data await some governing paradigm that will guide the community's imagination as it organizes that bewildering array of data into lived experience. Typological imagination makes the biblical story available as such a guiding pattern; it tells a church's contemporary story as an extension of the biblical story of God's dealings with God's people. It names, narrates, and appropriates experience in such a way that the church identifies itself with God's people. But what does typological imagination look like in actual practice?

To demonstrate typological imagination as the narration of congregational life according to the paradigm of scripture, we will examine part of an Advent sermon. The text is John 1:6-8, 19-28:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The sermon employs typological imagination to narrate an event in the life of Cahaba Valley Church in Birmingham, Alabama: an annual Christmas party thrown on behalf of incarcerated juveniles awaiting trial. The typological section of the sermon begins with a description of the event:

In they marched, single file in their blue tee-shirts, their flip-flops slapping on the tile floor. We were waiting for them in a room with no sharp corners—white plastic chairs

around white plastic tables. Every potential weapon was bolted to the floor, but it was still a dangerous room. The place is called Family Court—a nice way of saying “jail for teenagers.”

About a dozen of the church’s eighty members had attended the event. Most of the other hearers were well acquainted with the Family Court ministry. This section functions to recall the mood of despair that pervaded the party and to invite the entire church to own the event: “we” were waiting for them. The despair can now be rendered more concretely:

How does someone get pushed so near the edge so quickly? They had all come to the margin of the margin in just sixteen years or so. I recognized one of them. I had once been paid to spend hours with him explaining the arithmetic order of operations. All about how we must be sure to multiply before we subtract, how we must take care of first things first if we are to have any hope of it all turning out right in the end. He learned slowly. He had a hard time keeping his attention focused. Even back then he was ingesting more than his prescription Ritalin. Bad family life. History of abusive behavior. Without hope and without God in the world. My mind reeled as I did the math, multiplying what little I knew of his disillusionment by twenty-four, the number of faces that stared back at us from the plastic chairs.

The next move in the sermon shifts attention to the church and its experience of the party:

We had gathered there for a Christmas celebration. We gave them carbonated caffeine in rose-tinted plastic cups. They ate moon pies and smiled half-heartedly at our attempts to entertain them. We sang “Joy to the World.” We sang “We Wish you a Merry Christmas.” Sandy rapped “Twas the Night Before Christmas.” DeeDee tap danced on the resonant tile. Bob played a banjo and a concertina, and told stories. I made really bad attempts at small talk: “So...what did you do today?” Stupid question.

The despair of the detainees is reflected in the comic futility of efforts to spread good cheer. Time to introduce the typology:

I said to one of them, “Is there anything else I can get you?” Ha! What was he supposed to say? “Yeah, I think if you could just get me one more moon pie and another shot of Mountain Dew, I just might have a Merry Christmas after all.” Instead, he just looked at me and saw me for what I was and am—no help at all. No prophet, no Elijah, certainly no Messiah.

The church hosted this party to spread glad tidings as witnesses of the gospel, and in this telling it finds to its surprise that the Baptist has anticipated its testimony. Somehow his denials of personal power and significance feel strangely at home on the church’s lips. This gospel must surely be

about someone else because this little congregation and its prison ministry is clearly not the good news these kids need. The imaginative leap has been made; it is time to see what sparks will fly.

The sermon now moves on to explore other situations during the holiday season in which the church and its members must confront the specter of their inadequacy and irrelevance as witnesses. After exploring this trouble, the sermon returns to the typology to get home:

Friday night, one of the guys at Family Court finally took me up on my pathetic offers of assistance: he asked for more Mountain Dew. I quickly fetched the bottle, stretched and held it shakily over his cup. My eagerness and the carbonation proved too much: after fifteen years, his cup overflowed at last. It foamed up over the rim and spilled freely onto the plastic table in a shocking display of extravagance. We all stared for a moment, transfixed. Finally, I began to blot at the yellow puddle with a paper towel, working hard to absorb the meaning of this accidental sacrament. Someone else at the table asked me a good question. He said "Who are you guys, anyway?"

I said "We are from the Cahaba Valley Church in North Shelby County." I said, "We are here because we care about you guys and we wanted you to know that." But that is not the whole truth. That is not the half of it.

I should have stood up on one of those plastic tables and given my testimony at the top of my voice: "We are not it! It gets much better than this, I promise. We are not the light, we have merely come to testify concerning the light. We cannot save you. We can't even save ourselves—not even in the suburbs. We are just a voice in this barren place saying 'Make way for the Lord.' We baptize you with Mountain Dew, but there is another who will baptize with the Spirit and fire. He is the one coming after us. He is in your midst even now if you will only see him. He is the one whose flip-flops we are unworthy to remove."

As a strict analogy, the connection between John the Baptist and the congregation is not very promising. As a marginal in a barren place, John seems to have more convincing and thorough analogical connections with the detainees. But this is not an exercise in analogy. The typology depends on the connection between John's testimony and the church's. "It's not about me," John seems to be saying, and the church recognizes its own identity in that denial. The whole sermon rests on a meta-typology so pervasive in the Christian tradition that it usually goes unstated: the association of the first advent of Christ with his final advent at the consummation of history. This way of thinking is reflected in the church's tendency to read texts that point to the first advent as harbingers of the second. Within the context of the tradition, it is intuitive for the church to recognize John's testimony about Christ's first coming as an anticipation of the church's testimony concerning Christ's second coming.

Once the preacher has committed to the typological interpretation, the *ad hoc* poetic connec-

tions begin to surface and exercise their surprising capacity to capture the imagination. Logically, the spilling of the soda is an insignificant footnote to the events of the evening. But in the typological imagination it becomes key to narrating the event faithfully. The church clumsily offers itself to comfort these kids, but real hope for both them and us lies in what the church points toward: better baptisms of Spirit and fire. The jail's standard issue flip-flops are not logically germane, but in the typological imagination they do surprising work, reaching across centuries to connect typologically with the Messiah's sandals, urging the church to recognize that the risen Christ of our testimony is present already in the "least of these" we comfort in prison (Mt. 25:39-40).

A typological reading of text and context urges the sermon down some roads, while rendering other avenues of sermonic interpretation almost impossible. Outside the typological imagination this event in the congregation's life could be narrated, and thereby experienced, in very different ways. One possibility, though admittedly not one found in even the most misguided Christian preaching, is nihilism and despair: the pathetic Christmas party could be taken as an exercise in futility, signifying nothing. This interpretation is a total failure of imagination. A predictable non-typological scenario for sermonic interpretation would narrate the party as "a good try" and would function to authorize the hearers as individuals to let go of their suburban guilt. This interpretation is bad imagination—imagination unredeemed by the paradigm of scripture.

Typological imagination keeps the sermonic focus on Christ and his church, as the story of the Baptist and the story of the failed Christmas party at Family Court interpenetrate one another. Typological interpretation has made possible an alternative way to remember and tell this part of the church's story. The final speech, in which the Baptist's testimony is shouted from the top of the white plastic table, is a fiction, but it is a fiction that helps the church articulate the truth about its experience at Family Court.

Practicing Typological Imagination in Preaching

I conclude with three recommendations for the practice of typological imagination in preaching:

1. *We must nurture typological imagination.* The task of imaginatively discerning typological connections between the church's life and the biblical narrative does not begin on Monday morning. Nor is there any reliable system or technique for predictably discovering powerful typological interpretations of text and context. The preacher's imagination grows sensitive to typological connections when it has been properly seeded:

People learn to do figural "improvisation" not as a hermeneutical or homiletical technique, but through immersion in Scripture, participation in the liturgical practices of the church, and engagement in the alternative politics of the community of faith.³⁴

Typological imagination is not so much a way of preaching, as a way of life, a "...communal journey into the language and practices of the Christian community."³⁵ The best way to train the

typological imagination for preaching is to immerse oneself wholly and expectantly in scripture, worship, and the life of the community of faith.

2. *Typological imagination is a leap of faith.* One does not gradually build a typological interpretation of text and context by methodically compiling a list of small connections, which taken together add up to a convincing new understanding of the whole.³⁶ Rather, to imagine typologically is to trust a hunch, to pursue a vision of the whole without knowing in advance how all the details will work out. In fact, only after one has truly committed her imagination to this new “as” can she begin to see the details, the surprising little poetic connections that flesh out the typology and capture the imagination. The typological sermon will challenge the imagination of the hearers, stretching them, urging them to risk seeing the world in a new way. It should be no surprise that the preacher must endure even greater risks in the process of discovering the new vision.

3. *For the Christian preacher, typological imagination requires both the creativity to see “as,” and the boldness to say “is.”* Green’s copula of imagination is extremely helpful in second order discourse, but in the heat of a liturgical act, there is no place for talk of “as.”³⁷ Christian preaching is a bold invitation to embrace the world made available in scripture. Typology is a form of interpretation and rhetoric consistent with that task. The hearers will surely recognize that preaching that narrates congregational life through typological imagination is a different kind of talk, but it is not a kind of talk that needs to be explained or apologized for. Nor should the preacher timidly retreat to the safety of “as” and “like.” In Paul’s imaginative exhortation, Christ is not “like” the rock; rather, “the rock *was* Christ.” In the Advent sermon, it would not do to speak of the church being “like” John the Baptist, or urge the congregation to see the Christmas party “as” sharing some things in common with the situation described in the text. Rather, “we *are* just a voice in this barren place saying, ‘Make way for the Lord.’” If the typological “as” is going to have its intended impact, it must be asserted as an “is.” In other words, the preacher’s commission is to narrate boldly, confident in the audacious hope that this “as” has been authorized as God’s “is” for this people, place, and moment.

Notes

1 Garrett Green, *Imagining God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989; reprint 1998).

2 *Ibid.*, 137-141 (page references are to reprint edition).

3 *Ibid.*, 138.

4 Green prefers Vaihinger’s term: “expedient fiction.” *Ibid.*, 137.

5 *Ibid.*, 140.

6 *Ibid.*, 149.

7 Thomas G. Long, "The Use of Scripture in Contemporary Preaching," *Interpretation* 44 (October 1990): 347.

8 Note, however, that Long is aware of Green's proposal and its "profound implications for homiletics." Thomas G. Long, "And How Shall They Hear?" in *Listening to the Word*, edited by Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 180.

9 On the important question of the relationship between historical reference and truth, see Garrett Green, "'The Bible as...': Fictional Narrative and Scriptural Truth," in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 79-96.

10 Long, "The Use of Scripture in Contemporary Preaching," 347.

11 Brueggemann is explicit about his debt to Green's proposal concerning paradigmatic imagination. Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 13-16.

12 Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 1.

13 Ibid. Brueggemann's introduction is sub-titled: "Poetry in a Prose-Flattened World."

14 Ibid., 4.

15 Ibid., 3.

16 David Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 173.

17 See, for example, Long's comments on the ecclesial context of preaching. Long, "Listening for the Word," 186-188.

18 Kelsey, *ibid.*

19 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code* (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1983), 79. Frye goes on to explain that "[t]ypology in the Bible is by no means confined to the Christian version of the Bible: from the point of view of Judaism at least, the Old Testament is much more genuinely typological without the New Testament than with it." *Ibid.*, 83.

20 *Ibid.*, 80.

21 Heb. 13:22 *NRSV* (All scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.)

22 So, for example, Fred Craddock explains that "[t]here is no question that the writer is preaching" even while admitting that "to call Hebrews a homily seems not sufficiently to acknowledge its magnitude and complexity." Fred Craddock, *The Letter to the Hebrews* in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 15.

23 1 Cor. 10:11

24 1 Cor. 10:1-4

25 1 Cor. 10:5

26 1 Cor. 10:6-10

27 For typology as a form of rhetoric, see Frye, *The Great Code*, 81.

28 Note, for example, the choice of Ex. 32:6 (quoted verbatim from the LXX in 1 Cor. 10:7), which, by strict analogical reasoning, seems oddly incidental, but looms large typologically because it neatly ties the idolatry of the Israelites to the Corinthians who are experimenting recklessly with idols in the context of cultic meals (1 Cor. 8:1 ff.).

29 When we learn that “the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4), or that the Israelites “put Christ to the test” (1 Cor. 10:9) we must surely recognize that we are not dealing with anything so tame and reasonable as analogy.

30 A careful analysis of the typology in relation to the letter in general is outside the scope of this study. The typology is primarily addressed to the question of idolatry raised in 1 Cor. 8:1 ff. The issue of shameless toleration of sexual immorality “of a kind that is not found even among the pagans” is introduced in 1 Cor. 5:1.

31 Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1997), 251.

32 Ibid.

33 In Campbell’s terminology, the teasing out of connections between individuals in biblical stories and contemporary individuals is labeled “analogy” and distinguished from “typology” which is usually concerned with corporate connections (Ibid., 254). I have used the term analogy differently to signify a more or less systematic comparison of two situations grounded in the assumption that identifying and exploring the logical similarities between them may prove enlightening. I distinguish analogy from typology, which places greater emphasis on *ad hoc* poetic connections and is grounded in the interpreter’s prior commitment to lay hold imaginatively of the mysterious surplus of meaning intrinsic to the stories of God’s dealings with God’s people.

34 Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 257.

35 Ibid.

36 This claim about the leap to a new way of seeing text *as* type and context *as* antitype is consistent with Green’s demonstration that paradigm shifts involve a transformed gestalt that “suddenly appears,” and do not develop gradually as the construction of a new whole from careful analysis of the parts. See Green, *Imagining God*, 49-60.

37 This point is parallel to Green’s emphatic insistence that when the discussion leaves the wider field of religious studies and enters the domain of Christian theology, the copula must change from *as* to *is*: “What makes the Bible scripture for the believer is...the inescapable conviction that, in hearing the story *as* the Word of God, it truly *is* the word of God...Seen from within that imagined world...(in methodological terms, from the standpoint of theology) the ‘is’ governs: the Bible *is* the Word of God, because it speaks with the authority of the Holy Spirit, who is, of course, a central actor in that very story.” Ibid., 142-43.