

Revealed Forward: Figural Revelation of the Messiah's Suffering and Glory in Israel's Scripture according to Luke 24:13-35

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Widely reputed for his earlier focus on the use of Scripture in the Apostle Paul's letters, within the past fifteen years, Richard Hays has turned his attention to the four Gospels resulting in his influential magisterial volume, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.¹ This volume was prefigured by the publication of his much smaller *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, wherein he demonstrably reasons that all four of the Gospels, not only John's, present Christ as "fully divine," the one who completes Israel's story. Thus, it was fitting that the November 2018 Annual Lecture for the Institute for Biblical Research featured Richard Hays, who presented "Figural Exegesis and the Retrospective Re-cognition of Israel's Story" as a rejoinder to evangelical scholars who have reviewed and engaged

his two recent books on the Gospels which develops his continuing work on the use of the Old Testament (OT) in the New.²

With his IBR lecture, Hays responds to a persistent criticism raised by avowedly evangelical scholars both in reviews of *Echoes of Scripture* in the Gospels and in correspondence with him. He summarizes the gist of the complaint:

Are you saying that the OT prophets didn't make predictions about the coming of Jesus as Messiah? If you deny that, aren't you undermining the divine inspiration of Scripture? And aren't you diminishing the importance of authorial intention? If the Gospel writers were just 'reading backwards,' are you ascribing the figural correspondences between OT and NT to the narrative genius of the Evangelists, rather than to the divine inspiration of the prophets?³

Or, as one inquirer succinctly wonders, "Is figural exegesis just 'a literary trick'?"⁴ These reviewers implicitly include in their criticism a concern that Hays' "Reading Backwards" interpretative framework concerning the four Gospels subverts divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. So, Hays endeavors to assuage evangelical readers who may fear that his "Reading Backwards" project subverts belief in Scripture's divine inspiration, particularly the predictive elements of the OT.

This principal concern that some critics raise is warranted, understandable, and calls for clarification. Because Hays fixates on the Evangelists' post-resurrection retrospective reading of the OT, he muddles necessary distinctions between two interfacing and inseparable domains, namely God's revelation and human reception of that revelation. Of these two spheres, throughout the presentations in his two books and in his multiple essays on the four Gospels Hays gives human reception priority of place over God's giving of revelation. The function and place of the Evangelists' retrospective recognition of correspondences between Israel's Scripture and the ministry of Messiah Jesus dominates his project on the Gospels. This justifies the question: "If the Gospel writers were just 'reading backward,' are you ascribing the figural correspondences between OT and NT to the narrative genius of the Evangelists, rather than to the divine inspiration of the prophets?" Understandably, this question arises because of confusing statements such as this: "Figural reading need not presume that the OT authors—or the characters they

narrate—were conscious of predicting or anticipating Christ. Rather, the discernment of a figural correspondence is necessarily retrospective rather than prospective.”⁵ It is reasonable to infer that, according to Hays, the four Evangelists use something akin to a “Reader Response” approach as they merge their reception of Jesus’s teaching with the OT text to produce a fresh *reinterpretation* of the OT Scriptures.⁶

The theme of Hays’s *Echoes of Scripture* in the Gospels is that the Evangelists engaged in “figural interpretation” as he adopts Erich Auerbach’s terminology and representation of how the NT writers reinterpret the OT.⁷ Hays adopts Auerbach’s “figural interpretation” as “a form of intertextual interpretation,” descriptive of his career-long project concerning the NT’s use of the OT. Because he fixates on interpretation, Hays contends that there is “a significant difference between *prediction* and *prefiguration*.”⁸ He explains, “Figural reading need not presume that the OT authors—or the characters they narrate—were conscious of predicting or anticipating Christ. Rather, the discernment of a figural correspondence is necessarily retrospective rather than prospective.”⁹ So, as Hays defines *prefiguration* no one prior to Christ’s resurrection could discern any OT prefiguration because prefiguration is discernible only retrospectively. Hence, he designates both his “hermeneutical strategy” and the title of his book, *Reading Backwards*.

Hays fastens his attention to what he identifies as the “hermeneutical strategy” of the four Evangelists, which he classifies as “figural readings/exegesis” and artfully labels “reading backwards.” The first of three illustrations of “figural readings” in Hays’s IBR lecture features Jesus’s comments in Jerusalem’s Temple, reported in John 2. Hays joins several others who, throughout the past four decades, have focused on John’s Gospel to address how Jesus’s disciples failed to comprehend his fulfillment of the Scriptures prior to his crucifixion and resurrection, such as when “the disciples believed the Scriptures and the saying that Jesus spoke” when he said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:22, 19).¹⁰

Why does Hays differentiate *prefiguration* from *prediction*? This question’s import is magnified because he also seems to say the opposite when he claims, “All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms mysteriously *prefigure* Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel puts the claim succinctly ... ‘If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me’ (John 5:46).”¹¹ Again, he affirms, “The Gospels teach us

to read the OT for *figuration*.”¹² He reinforces this anticipatory function by stating that the “literal historical sense of the OT ... *points forward typologically* to the gospel story.”¹³ By definition, is not *prefiguration*, which is an act of *prefiguring*, also *predictive*, especially when Hays affirms that where there is a figural meaning within an OT text, however latent it may be, which figuration typologically points forward to its coming fulfillment? How, then, does prefiguration not entail prediction even if prefiguration is not explicitly but implicitly predictive? Consequently, Hays’s statements are confusing and in need of amendment.

More than a decade ago D. A. Carson lamented that no one had followed on his exploration concerning how John insists throughout his Gospel “that the crucial events in Jesus’ life and passion and resurrection fulfill Scripture” but also how “the disciples themselves did not read Scripture this way until after” Messiah’s resurrection.¹⁴ Whether aware or not of the challenge Carson suggested more than three decades ago, Hays explores “the relation between John’s treatment of misunderstandings and that found in the various synoptic gospels.”¹⁵ Concerning Jesus’s linking the Temple to himself, Hays states,

No one in ancient Israel or in late Second Temple Judaism thought, prior to Jesus, that the temple was a prefiguration of a coming Messiah who would himself be a new embodiment of God’s presence. This figural interpretation of the temple is a retrospective reading—as John himself tells us: the disciples remembered and understood only later, after Jesus was raised from the dead. As I have argued in *Echoes*, John is teaching his readers how to read. With the aid of the Spirit whom Jesus will send after his ascension, they are to read backwards to discover within Israel’s Scripture a rich web of prefigurations of Jesus.¹⁶

Hays’s critics legitimately wonder if he ascribes the figural correspondences between OT and NT to the interpretive and narrative ingenuity of the Evangelists rather than to God’s giving of revelation through the prophets because he anchors his discussion within the domain of hermeneutics. That interpretation controls his discussion is evident from his dominating nomenclature—“hermeneutical strategy,” “retrospective reading,” “figural exegesis,” “figural readings,” “figural interpretation,” and “revisionary retrospective hermeneutical move.”

When Alan Culpepper considers misunderstandings within John’s Gospel

he mentions but does not develop an intriguing comment by François Vouga that John's misunderstanding motif derives from "his concept of revelation: inevitably those who did not accept Jesus misunderstood him."¹⁷ Because these misunderstandings invariably are responses to Jesus' revelatory words and deeds, it is understandable but unfortunate that Richard Hays fixates on the realm of human interpretation rather than the domain of divine revelation. John's leitmotif of human misunderstandings, entailing *misinterpretation*, is principally dominated by the accumulation of divine revelation imparted by Jesus to his disciples with parabolically laden words and actions.

As I have argued elsewhere, D. A. Carson rightly affirms that the misunderstandings preserved in John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels are highly instructive because they are "analogous to the dominant notion of μυστήριον in the Pauline corpus: the gospel is simultaneously said to be hidden in times past but now disclosed, and prophesied in times past and now fulfilled."¹⁸ To clarify, I have demonstrated this elsewhere and reaffirm the claim here, that all four Evangelists literarily unfold how Jesus fulfills the OT Scriptures by his replicating scriptural revelation that entails mystery—publicity and revelation but also secrecy and concealment.¹⁹ Thus, with the advent of Jesus, the Word of God moves from inhabiting the prophetic speech of the OT Scriptures to becoming flesh and dwelling among humans. So, Jesus fulfills and replicates Scripture as deity veiled in human flesh who simultaneously reveals and conceals his glory with signs, riddles, parabolic teachings, prophetic acts, and most paradoxically with his suffering and crucifixion. Jesus's anguish and death, the end his persecutors expected, are integral to the climactic revelatory turning point in the plots of all four Gospels, leading to the true and proper denouement, the resurrection of Jesus.

The complaint that some evangelical critics have registered concerning Hays's "figural exegesis" project of "reading backward" has warrant even if his exegetical insights concerning the OT in the NT are often fruitful, brilliant, and commendable because his expositions of Scripture regularly exceed the constraints of his *figural interpretation* that is his default nomenclature for the domain of his orientation. Just as in his two books and many essays on the Gospels, throughout his IBR lecture and his BBR essay, Hays unwittingly privileges the act of human interpretation over the divine act of revelation. Imperceptibly he slips from *Scripture's intertextual revelatory production through the OT prophets and the NT apostles to the four Evangelists' reception*

of Scripture through *intertextual interpretation*.²⁰ Witness how he shifts from featuring **God's speaking** long ago through the prophets of old and, more recently, through the writers of the Gospels to the four Evangelists' *interpretive reading* of the OT.

Someone has testified somewhere: "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb 1:1-23). The "someone" who offered that testimony is, of course, the anonymous author of the Letter to the Hebrews. That testimony can serve as a stimulus to consider what is at stake in the distinction between the ways that God spoke long ago through the prophets and the way that God has spoken afresh in the Gospels.

My book *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* seeks to address precisely this distinction; it traces the many and various ways in which the writers of the four canonical Gospels received and reinterpreted Israel's Scripture in light of the astonishing new ways that God spoke in and through Jesus Christ. One key emphasis in my book, however, has provoked a certain amount of murmuring in the academic guild: the practice of *figural exegesis* in the interpretation of the Gospels. This essay will seek to clarify a few points as I shall suggest—to explore the possibilities of a renewed, Spirit-inspired freedom in biblical interpretation.²¹

Observe that when Richard Hays points to the *precise distinction* his book addresses, he seems not to realize that he swaps domains. The province of his entire first paragraph is the divine *production* and *giving* of revelation in two movements: first, God's speaking in the OT through the prophets, then, God's speaking through his Son by way of the NT writings of the apostles and evangelists. However, in the second paragraph Hays slips to the domain of human *reception* and *use* of Scripture, specifically how the writers of the four Gospels "received and reinterpreted Israel's Scripture in light of the astonishing new ways that God spoke in and through Jesus Christ."²² Thus, Hays claims that his book aims to address "the ways that God spoke long ago through the prophets and the way that God has spoken afresh in the Gospels."²³ His claim confuses because his two books on the four Gospels present only oblique commentary on how God reveals and speaks through Jesus Christ from the beginning of his ministry through his death and resurrection.

Instead, throughout his considerations of the Evangelists' echoes, allusions, and citations of the OT Scriptures as fulfilled in Jesus's mission, Hays regularly subsumes the province of God's revealing through the OT and through Jesus to the domain of the Gospel writers' *figural reading*. Thus, he regularly portrays the Evangelists as "*reinterpreting* Israel's Scripture in light of the story of Jesus."²⁴ He elaborates,

This means that for the Evangelists the "meaning" of the Old Testament texts was not confined to the human author's original historical setting or to the meaning that could have been grasped by the original readers. Rather, the Evangelists received Scripture as a complex body of texts given to the community but God, who had scripted the whole biblical drama in such a way that it had multiple senses. Some of these senses are hidden, so that they come into focus retrospectively.²⁵

What Hays affirms here seems judicious and right. Yet, when he identifies this as *reinterpretation*, he engenders and reinforces confusion by insisting: "If we follow the example of the Evangelists, we will recognize that Scripture must be *reinterpreted* in light of the cross and resurrection." However, to describe the Evangelists as engaged in *reinterpretation* conflicts with his next claim that is more judicious: "The Evangelists were convinced that the events of Jesus' life and death and resurrection were in fact **revelatory**: they held the key to understanding all that had gone before."²⁶ Indeed, everything about Jesus's mission is *revelatory*, entailing fresh acts of revelation and concealment that reaffirm, re-dramatize, disclose, and fulfill the OT Scriptures that simultaneously reveal and conceal the Messiah. Hays overstates and misdirects when he claims that the Evangelists engage in "reinterpretation" or "transformations of the Old Testament texts."²⁷ Simultaneously he understates Jesus's role of revealing and concealing in the tradition and patterns of the OT Scriptures that accounts for his disciples' numerous misunderstandings and subsequently their post-resurrection clarity while he overstates the role of the Evangelists as re-interpreters of Scripture.

Hays's fixation on what he calls the Evangelists' *re-interpretive reception* of Scripture rather than on their *writing* of Scripture as conveyors of divine revealing and concealing through Jesus Christ's words and deeds muddles needed clarity concerning the numerous scriptural echoes, allusions, and quotations that are fulfilled in and by Jesus. Consequently, what dominates Hays's writings on the Gospels is not the act of God's speaking but the human

act of hearing. His principal interest is how the writers of the four Gospels hear or receive God's fresh speaking through Jesus and how this correlates with their understanding of God's previous speaking throughout the OT. Consequently, he foregrounds the four Evangelists' post-resurrection hermeneutics so God's speaking through Jesus conveyed by the Gospels recedes toward the background. Hays's primary interest is not *how God speaks through Jesus* but *how the Gospel writers hear Jesus*. Thus, he designates the post-resurrection hermeneutics of the four Evangelists as a "figural reading" of the OT Scriptures, that the Gospel writers are "*reading backwards*, reinterpreting Israel's Scripture in light of the story of Jesus."²⁸

Hays's project concerning the Gospels' common use of the OT Scriptures is commendable and instructive though subject to some crucial correctives. Elusive though Hays's switching of categories may be, recognition of his unperceived slippage from the domain of revelation to the domain of interpretation is essential. Failure to recognize Hays's subtle shift from God's speaking through the prophets to the Evangelists' interpretation of God's speaking will sustain his confusion of categories even as he does in his IBR lecture and BBR essay.²⁹ His critical reviewers have registered some legitimate complaints. So, his responses are needed, but they remain inadequate because he persists in foregrounding the Evangelists' *post-resurrection interpretation* of God's speaking through his Son and calling it "figural reading" while the *revelatory activity* of God's speaking through his Son recedes to the background. That he foregrounds human hearing rather than God's speaking seems to escape Hays's realization.

We do more than misspeak when we use either Hays's nomenclature of "figural interpretation" or "typological interpretation," terminology that others prefer, to represent the NT writers' use of the OT Scriptures. We also disorder the location of Scripture's types, foreshadows, and prefigurements from the realm of revelation, where they belong, to the domain of hermeneutics, where they do not belong. As I have previously argued and do so again in this presentation, we should cease prefacing *interpretation* with adjectives, either *figural interpretation* or *typological interpretation*. Instead, we properly describe as *figural* or *typological* God's revelation throughout the OT that entails persons, places, events, and institutions. Jesus reveals himself and his mission in the same vein, through figurations, reenactments, prophetic signs, and parabolic miracles and teachings, which account for his

disciples' misunderstandings until his crucifixion and resurrection brought clarifying light to reveal that his suffering and glory were already made known throughout the OT Scriptures and throughout his own teachings whether in parabolic speech or action.

Hays's interpretation of three passages that correlate the use of the OT with resurrection—John 2:13-23; Mark 12:18-27; and Luke 24:13-35—has played a paradigmatic role throughout his work on the Gospels. Of these three, only the first and third refer specifically to Jesus' resurrection. Elsewhere I have addressed Jesus' use of Scripture in the Temple narrative of John 2:13-23 above. So, in the remainder of this essay, I will engage with Luke 24:13-35, which is one of the decisive passages on which Richard Hays builds his argument for "figural interpretation." Concerning Luke 24, it is understandable, that, given his dominating retrospective orientation from the domain of interpretation rather than from the realm of progressive revelation, Hays claims, "it would be a hermeneutical blunder to read the Law and the Prophets as deliberately *predicting* events in the life of Jesus. But in light of the unfolding story of Jesus, it is both right and illuminating to *read backwards* and to discover in the Law and the Prophets an unexpected *foreshadowing* of the later story."³⁰ Against this, it seems that according to the Evangelist in Luke 24:13-35, Jesus deliberately prevents his two disciples from reading the OT Scriptures backward from knowledge of the resurrected Messiah, as Hays contends. Jesus does this by constraining their recognition of him and instead demonstrates to them that the suffering and resurrected Messiah is revealed forward in figuration and explicit prophecy, beginning with Moses and spanning all the Scriptures.

CONCEALING AND REVEALING—LUKE 24:13-35

It would be so unlike any of the four Evangelists if Luke's Emmaus Road narrative included a transcript of Jesus' commentary on the OT when "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets he thoroughly explained what was said concerning him in all the Scriptures" (24:27). Instead, the account instructs readers regarding the mystery of God's revelatory speaking whether through the OT Scriptures or through Jesus Christ. Concerning this episode Richard Hays contends that for Luke's readers, Jesus's discourse with his two disciples on the road to Emmaus provides "a hermeneutical corrective

to the preresurrectional understanding of Jesus that the Emmaus pilgrims articulate.”³¹ This inadequately explains the greater function of the passage for Luke’s readers. While the narrative does entail a hermeneutical element—understanding, seeing, and believing—what dominates Luke’s account are Jesus’ acts of concealment and of revelation. As Jesus has revealed himself to his disciples and to Israel by way of miraculous signs, parabolic teachings, and dramatized acts, once more, with acts and speech, he dramatizes for two of his benighted disciples how both he and the Scriptures simultaneously reveal and conceal the promised Messiah.

This account is instructively rich because it replicates for Luke’s readers the experience of the two disciples as they walk with Jesus, unaware that the one who talks with them is the risen Lord. Readers who know that Jesus is risen from the dead need to inquire, “Why does Jesus not show himself plainly and suddenly to the two disciples as he later does to Saul on the Damascus Road? Why does he prevent these two from recognizing him until after he expounds the Scriptures that portend that Messiah had to suffer and die before being glorified?” Failure to pose this question runs the risk of becoming contented with incuriosity in two noteworthy ways. One is the notion that the sight of the resurrected Messiah adequately accounts for the Evangelists’ and the Apostles’ numerous appeals to the OT to ground their preaching that the Messiah is Jesus without the need to trace OT warrants that validate their uses. A second, that reinforces the first, is to overlook an essential detail Jesus dramatizes and Luke narrates by placing side by side two distinguishable but inseparable dimensions that function at two levels: (1) the concealing and revealing of Jesus’s identity; and (2) the concealing and revealing of the OT Scriptures.

The more apparent dimension of concealing and revealing is the one on which the entire account hangs. The episode hinges on the divine restraining of the disciples’ eyes from recognizing Jesus (ἐκρατοῦντο, 24:16) until the appointed moment when Jesus lifts the restraint to open their eyes to recognize him (διηνοιχθῆσαν, 24:31), at which time Jesus suddenly becomes invisible to his two disciples (ἄξαυτος ἐγένετο).³² For the benefit of these two disciples, Jesus dramatizes the blessing he announces to Thomas: “Because you saw me, you believed; *blessed are those who do not see but believe*” (John 20:29). For these two disciples on the Emmaus Road Jesus reverses the order that John experienced when he ran ahead of Peter to Jesus’s tomb. The Fourth

Gospel affirms, “He saw and believed,” and adds the editorial explanation that both disciples “still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead” (John 20:8-9). John believed that Jesus was raised from the dead because of what he saw; subsequently, his belief concerning the resurrected Messiah became grounded in the Scriptures.

For his two Emmaus Road disciples, Jesus conceals his identity from them even as he opens the Scriptures to establish their belief in the resurrected Messiah within the OT Scriptures. John, Peter, and Thomas each believe first and subsequently, come to understand from Scripture that Messiah had to die and then rise from the dead. For these other two disciples, Jesus rearranges the order of belief and sight. For them, he does not grant them the belief that is inherent in seeing him. Instead, he prevents them from recognizing him because he purposes to ground their belief concerning the resurrected Messiah in what the Scriptures say concerning him. Thus, Jesus first expounds the Scriptures to elicit belief that the Scripture’s promised Messiah had to die and rise from the dead. Only after expounding the Scriptures to them does he bestow belief to them by opening their eyes, causing them to recognize him as the risen Messiah. Without them realizing it, Jesus casts these two disciples as types of us, who, though we have not seen him, we love him, and though we do not see him now, we believe in him (cf. 1 Peter 1:8).

Jesus does not resolve his two disciples’ sorrow by revealing to them his resurrected glory.³³ By constraining their recognition of him, Jesus establishes their belief in Scripture’s testimony concerning the full dimension of Messiah’s mission that includes his sufferings and the glory that would follow (Luke 24:26, 46) by rehearsing the OT plotline concerning Messiah “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets he thoroughly explained what was said concerning him in all the Scriptures” (24:17). Only later, after his Scripture-expounding walk with them, at his breaking of bread, a reminiscent symbolic act, Jesus suddenly opens their eyes, signifying their belief (24:31, 35).³⁴ They instantly understand that they are in the presence of Jesus whom they had been mourning and that he is the promised Messiah raised from the dead. Now that they recognize Jesus, he abruptly becomes invisible as he conceals himself once again from their vision.³⁵

Now, just as Jesus’s identity was concealed and then revealed to the two disciples, a second dimension of concealing and revealing becomes recognizable within Luke’s narrative. When Jesus opens their eyes and reveals his

identity by way of his reminiscent act of breaking bread, Cleopas and his friend promptly speak of another *opening*: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road as he *opened* the Scriptures to us?” (24:32). This implies that to the degree the Scriptures required *opening* to that same degree they were *concealed*. Here, the subject of concealing and opening are not eyes but Scripture itself. Not to put too fine a point on this *opening of the Scriptures*, it features the OT as *revelatory* more than the OT *interpreted*. Though inseparable, these are distinguishable. The OT is like a fully furnished but dimly lit room which, when light is brought into it, nothing is added that was not already there, but the light dispels dark shadows, and things shrouded begin to emerge with clarity even as shadows linger.³⁶ Scriptures’ shadows yield discernible shapes that were always there but now are illuminated by the resurrected Messiah. What was there all along now becomes clear, for the OT coheres in Messiah the Scriptures promise.

Thus, Luke’s account first instructs readers that God’s speaking through the OT Scriptures and through Jesus entails concealment and revelation. As the Scriptures conceal and reveal by foreshadowing the Messiah, so Jesus conceals and reveals by foreshadowing the climax of his mission, his crucifixion and resurrection. For the two disciples on Emmaus Road Jesus unpacks in a forward manner, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets,” what the OT Scriptures say concerning himself. While it is true that Jesus is speaking retrospectively after his resurrection, he is instructing his two disciples that within the OT Scriptures, the Messiah is revealed forward. From the books of Moses through the books written by the Prophets, Scripture progressively advances as it discloses at many times and in various ways that Messiah is both to suffer and to be glorified.

Jesus does not project Messiah onto the OT by *reading backward*, nor does he *reinterpret* the OT text. Instead, Jesus expounds the Scriptures beginning with the Pentateuch and progressing to the Prophets to demonstrate that what the Scriptures say concerning the Messiah is *revealed forward*. All God’s speaking to Israel through the Scriptures foretells the Messiah’s suffering and glory, whether portrayed with figuration or directness, climaxes in the one called Jesus of Nazareth.

Like their old covenant forebears, Cleopas and his companion are characters in God’s unfolding drama of redemption that simultaneously reveals and conceals, eliciting their believing inquiry while eluding their grasp. They

understand the Scripture's revelation sufficiently to anticipate the promised Messiah, but because the promised one is also veiled in figurations, in types, in foreshadows, and embedded in prophecies that await greater illumination, their misunderstanding awaits the lifting of the veil. For his two disciples, by beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus casts light upon the Scriptures bringing clarity to the figures, the types, and the foreshadows that adorn the Scriptures, all prefiguring him, even as he prevents them from recognizing him.

While Jesus illumines Messiah's fulfillment of Scripture's portents, his two disciples occupy roles they do not comprehend during their encounter with him that bristles with divine mystery. Jesus dramatizes the mystery nature of divine revelation for the two men by veiling recognition of himself while in the act of unveiling his messianic identity from Scripture. Jesus' revelatory actions replicate Scripture's concealing and revealing of Messiah. The truth about Messiah concealed in plain sight both *objectively* within Scripture (24:25-27) and *subjectively* within the disciples' vision (24:16) is now revealed plainly to the two whose eyes become divinely opened (24:31) to recognize Jesus as the glorified Messiah announced in advance by Scripture (24:32). And just when he opens their eyes he suddenly vanishes from their sight.

Luke's account of Jesus's discourse with his two disciples on their way to Emmaus is a literary replication that calls for readers to anchor their belief concerning the resurrected Messiah within the biblical storyline's mystery, the tension of revealing that entails concealing. Jesus prevents them from seeing himself as the climactic resolution of redemption's mystery apart from recognizing the Messiah revealed within the countless divinely hidden disclosures throughout the OT. These foreshadows of Messiah's suffering and subsequent glory are consequential to the grand story's dramatic climax. By expounding Scripture's plotline concerning Messiah's suffering and death, Jesus obligates his two disciples to ponder the mystery's presaging clues embedded throughout the OT before revealing to them that he, the resurrected is the one who was crucified and that he has reversed the circumstances they failed to anticipate from these same Scriptures. Divine concealing and revealing resolve in Messiah's self-disclosure, for in him converge (1) two covenants—promise and fulfillment, (2) two ages—the old and the new, (3) two realms—the earthly and the heavenly, and (4) two forms of revelation—the objective unveiling of Messiah and subjective clearing of occluded vision.

CONCLUSION

Accumulating revelation brings clarity to the prior revelation that came in various forms—trope, type, foreshadow, parable, allegory, etc. Dimness recedes as the dramatic escalation of the biblical plotline unfolds but especially when the climactic finale emerges from the shadows and light breaks forth from death's tomb. As expressed earlier, the analogy is backward but instructive, *μυστήριον* biblically conceived, is akin to how writers craft mystery novels. Within characters, events, settings, and plotted conflicts throughout the storyline of mystery novels, authors embed hints, foreshadows, prefigurements, harbingers, and portents that incite anticipation of full and final resolution to be revealed with surprises, invoking belief that seeks understanding. It is this way with Scripture's unfolding storyline, not for readers only but first for characters who inhabit the story, including, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Moses, Ruth, David, Mary, and Jesus with Cleopas and his fellow disciple on the Emmaus Road. As they perform their redemptive-historical roles, for each of them, the unfolding story engenders hope that anticipates the promised Seed who brings salvation (cf. Hebrews 11).

For the Bible's characters and readers alike, integral to the plotted conflict of escalating hope are other cast members, events, places, and institutions laden with symbolism, sometimes layered, and posing as puzzling shadows, enigmas, riddles, conundrums that tantalize, and prefiguring types of things to come, yet veiled from full comprehension as they await further disclosures. All build toward the plotline's climactic resolution. When the time is fulfilled and the mystery is at last revealed with its variegated culmination converging in Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, readers of Scripture, like the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, palm their foreheads and exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us? There he was all along on the pages of the OT. He was right there before our eyes from the beginning. How could we have missed him? How could we not have seen him until he made himself obvious to us?"

What is now revealed is what was always hidden in plain sight, seen by both Scripture's characters and readers though dimly. This is how the OT reveals Messiah. This is how Scripture bears witness to him. This is how Jesus reveals himself. Throughout his ministry, even to the end, Jesus, veiled in flesh, replicates Scripture, concealing even while revealing with his incarnation, with symbolic acts (miraculous or not), with teachings (parabolic

or not), and with his passion and resurrection. How could it be otherwise, the Creator making himself known to his creatures?

If we persist in viewing the function of biblical types principally as a species of interpretation, we perpetuate confusion. To attach *typological*, *figural*, *figurative*, or *literal* as modifiers of *interpretation* improperly fixates the clash of ideas on hermeneutics rather than on the typological or prefiguring nature of divinely given revelation that the discussion should feature. The NT writers do not interpret the symbol-laden OT allegorically, figurally, figuratively, or typologically. None of these modifiers properly represents the interpretive activity of the NT writers nor should we use them to describe how NT writers read the OT. Rather, they are terms that properly describe *how God conveys his revelatory acts in history to foreshadow his consummating acts in Messiah*, revelatory acts that he authorized holy men of old to inscribe in Scripture for us on whom the ends of the ages have come.

The OT's types are divinely imbued revelatory foreshadows concealed within plain sight, some disclosed more fully than others, designed to tutor the first recipients concerning heavenly things but also written down in Scripture, pointing forward to greater disclosures in the fullness of time with the coming of Messiah as expounded in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel for the instruction of God's people in the last days. So, the same Scriptures that conceal while simultaneously revealing foreshadowing types now make them known to us at the ends of the ages, a divine wonder the apostle Paul identifies as "mystery" (μυστήριον; Rom 16:25-27). Instructive concerning the nature and function of biblical types is the Apostle Paul's double admonition derived from Israel's divinely arranged experiences under the old covenant: "Now these things *took place as types* for us lest we desire evil as they did. . . . Now these things *occurred typologically* to them and they were written down for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:6, 11; emphasis added).

Ironically, those who read Richard Hays's *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* would benefit by reading his book backward by beginning to read pages 358-360 and then find their way to the beginning. Here, Hays decries both "skeptical modern critics and staunch evangelical apologists" for painting themselves into the "same hermeneutical corner" where the former debunk the Evangelists' "interpretations of the Old Testament," and the latter insist "desperately that the authors of the Old Testament's narratives and poems

actually did intentionally forecast the details of Jesus' life." Then, he offers a flicker of clarity, albeit muddled, by saying,

But the canonical Evangelists, through their artful narration, offer us a different way to understand the New Testament's transformational reception of the Old as a paradigm-shattering but truthful disclosure of things 'hidden from the foundation of the world' (Matt 13:35; freely quoting Ps 78:2). This hermeneutical sensibility locates the deep logic of the intertextual linkage between Israel's Scripture and the Gospels not in human intentionality but in the mysterious providence of God, who is ultimately the author of the correspondences woven into these texts and events.³⁷

Unfortunately, the flickering ember fades when he overstates that these "correspondences . . . could be perceived only in retrospect."³⁸

Discerning readers will realize that Hays's "reading the Gospels backward" project features the human act of retrospectively interpreting Scripture from the vantage point of the glory of Jesus' resurrection following his sufferings instead of highlighting God's act of revealing forward the Scripture's simultaneous unveiling and veiling of the coming Messiah's sufferings and subsequent glory by way of both direct and prefiguring portrayals discernible within the OT's text for Israelites with perceiving eyes. Instead of highlighting God's forward figural revelation of Messiah's suffering and glory to follow, Hays fixates on the post-resurrection hermeneutical imagination of the four Evangelists as the domain for explaining Scripture's figural disclosures of the Messiah.

Hays is to be commended for properly criticizing "skeptical modern critics" and for appealing to "staunch evangelical apologists" who overstate the authorial intention of OT prophets and poets. Yet, even as he offers his corrective, his "reading backward" project unwittingly privileges the narrative and interpretive skills of the Evangelists over the divine act of revealing and concealing the Messiah throughout the OT Scriptures.

- ¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); idem, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016). A precursor to this larger volume is Hays' published Hulsean Lectures in the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University. See R. B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Four Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014). For responses to several critical reviews of *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* see Richard B. Hays, "Continuing to Read Scripture with the Evangelists: A Response," *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 11.1 (2017): 85-99.
- ² The lecture is now published: Richard B. Hays, "Figural Exegesis and the Retrospective Re-cognition of Israel's Story," *BBR* 29.1 (2019): 32-48.
- ³ Hays, "Figural Exegesis," 34.
- ⁴ Perhaps the most insightful reviews of Hays's *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* is by Tony Reinke, "Reading Richard Hays Backwards," (<https://tonyreinke.com/2017/11/02/reading-richard-hays-backwards/>). Reinke's critique is similar to the one I raise this and in an earlier essay, "Biblical Types: Revelation Concealed in Plain Sight to be Disclosed—"These Things Occurred Typologically to Them and Were Written Down for Our Admonition," in *God's Glory Revealed in Christ* (eds., Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton, Jr. and Brian Vickers; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 135-155. That essay addresses Hays's concerns over misguided definitions of *typology* but also his own. Hays rarely uses the word "typology" because he prefers "figural interpretation." He claims, "The terms *typology* and *figural interpretation* are essentially synonymous, though the latter more clearly emphasizes the act of reception by the reader. In my work, I have tended to prefer the terms *figural interpretation* or *figural reading* to *typology* for two reasons." One is the Roman Catholic use of *typology* with a fixation on patristic interpretive practices. Another is and apologetic use of *typology* among Evangelicals "to defend the historical factuality of the Bible and ... the predictive intention of the OT writers" (Hays, "Figural Exegesis," 35). As with burgeoning numbers of evangelical scholars, Hays mistakenly identifies *typology* as a hermeneutical term, which he replaces with *figural interpretation*, thus locating the types as a species of interpretation of Scripture rather than of the writing of Scripture.
- ⁵ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2. Cf. idem, *Echoes*, 2-3.
- ⁶ Cf. Dean Deppe, "Interpreting Figural Interpretation: A Review of Richard Hays—*Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*," *CTJ* 52.2 (2017): 279.
- ⁷ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2; idem, *Echoes*, 2. Auerbach defines, "Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first. The two poles of a figure are separated in time, but both, being real events or persons, are within temporality. They are both contained in the flowing stream which is historical life, and only the comprehension, the *intellectus spiritualis*, of their interdependence is a spiritual act" (Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1968], 73). Earlier in his volume Auerbach observes, "If the text of the Biblical narrative, then, is so greatly in need of interpretation on the basis of its own content, its claim to absolute authority forces it still further in the same direction. Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history... The Old Testament, on the other hand, presents universal history: it begins with the beginning of time, with the creation of the world, and will end with the Last Days, the fulfilling of the Covenant, with which the world will come to an end. Everything else that happens in the world can only [sic] be conceived as an element in this sequence; into it everything that is known about the world, or at least everything that touched upon the history of the Jews, must be fitted as an ingredient of the divine plan... The most striking piece of interpretation of this sort occurred in the first century of the Christian era, in consequence of Paul's mission to the Gentiles: Paul and the Church Fathers reinterpreted the entire Jewish tradition as a succession of figures prognosticating the appearance of Christ, and assigned the Roman Empire its proper place in the divine plan of salvation" (pp. 15-16). This is illustrative of how Auerbach conceives of and defines "figural interpretation." Hays is captivated with Auerbach's idea of "figural interpretation" as well as his implementation of it.
- ⁸ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 2. See also, idem, *Echoes*, 2.
- ⁹ Ibid. See also, idem, *Echoes*, 2-3.

- ¹⁰ Here are several who focused on John's Gospel. See D. A. Carson, "Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *TynBul* 33 (1982): 59-89. Carson responds to and critiques Herbert Leroy's full-length monograph, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1966). Leroy identifies and defines eleven misunderstandings, all within John 2-8, by way of form-critical analysis. He traces the riddles to material that the Johannine Christian community used in its preaching and catechesis. Thus, while Jesus is an "insider" who speaks these riddles, according to Leroy, the Jesus of John's Gospel represents John's community. So, Leroy attempts to reconstruct this community and identifies it as a gnosticizing group. His work suffers from imposing too rigid a textual form upon John's Gospel. Cf. Raymond Brown's review in *Bib* 51 (1970): 152-54; and R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 153-54. Worthy of note, however, on the following page Culpepper concedes, "Whether the misunderstandings are described as a 'motif,' 'technique,' or 'device' is probably of little consequences as long as their frequency, variability, and effects are recognized" (p. 155). Cf. David W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970), 69-70. See also John Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian* (3rd ed.; Victoria, Australia: Beacon Hill, 1986), 12-13. Also, see the more recent essay by Edwin E. Reynolds, "Misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9 (1998): 158.
- ¹¹ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 3 and *Echoes*, 3. Emphasis added.
- ¹² Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 15.
- ¹³ Ibid. Emphasis added.
- ¹⁴ D. A. Carson, "Reflections upon a Johannine Pilgrimage," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 91. For a response to Carson's lament, see Ardel Caneday, "The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate: Revealing and Concealing Dramatized by Jesus as Portrayed in John's Gospel," *JETS* 60.4 (2017): 751-65.
- ¹⁵ Carson, "Understanding Misunderstandings," 89. Carson observes, "When such studies are taken into account, I believe that even though each canonical gospel preserves distinctive emphases on the theme of misunderstanding, all of them agree on such major points as that none of the disciples really understood the passion predictions until after the events to which they pointed, that the disciples experienced a radical improvement of their understanding of a broad sweep of messianic and eschatological issues after the resurrection - and that all of the evangelists recognized this change and avoided anachronism in regard to the degree of the disciples' understanding" (p. 89, n. 47).
- ¹⁶ Hays, "Figural Exegesis," 37. See also idem, *Echoes*, 281-345, esp. 311-14.
- ¹⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 154. See François Vouga, *Le cadre historique et l'intention théologique de Jean* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 32-33.
- ¹⁸ Carson, "Reflections upon a Johannine Pilgrimage," 91. Andreas Köstenberger correctly observes that the misunderstandings within John's Gospel function as a substitute for the effects Jesus' parables have in the Synoptic Gospels (*A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* [BTNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 142).
- ¹⁹ See earlier essays: Caneday, "The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate," 751-65; idem, "Glory Veiled in the Tabernacle of Flesh: Exodus 33-34 in the Gospel of John," *SBJT* 20.1 (2016): 55-72; idem, "He Wrote in Parables and Riddles: Mark's Gospel as a Literary Reproduction of Jesus' Teaching Method," *Didaskalia* 10.2 (Spring 1999): 35-67; idem, "When Reading Is Better Than Being There: Following Jesus By Hearing His Voice in the Gospels," *Miqra* 2.4 (Fall 2003): 7-11.
- ²⁰ Ironically, Hays uses these helpful terms when he states, "Another way to put this point is that figural reading is a form of intertextual interpretation that focuses on an intertextuality of reception rather than of production" (*Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Four Gospel Witnesses* [Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014], 2. See also idem, *Echoes*, 367, n. 3.
- ²¹ Hays, "Figural Exegesis," 32-33.
- ²² Ibid., 33.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Hays, *Echoes*, 358. Emphasis added.
- ²⁵ Hays, *Echoes*, 358.

26 Hays, *Echoes*, 358. Emphasis added.

27 Hays, *Echoes*, 360.

28 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 359. Cf. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 3

29 Witness the slippage between the domains of revelation and of hermeneutics in this paragraph. “But the canonical Evangelists, through their artful narration, offer us a different way to understand the NT’s transformational reception of the OT as a paradigm-shattering but truthful disclosure of things ‘hidden from the foundation of the world’ (Matt 13:35, freely quoting Ps 78:2). This hermeneutical sensibility locates the deep logic of the intertextual linkage between Israel’s Scripture and the Gospels not in human intentionality but in the mysterious providence of God, who is ultimately the author of the correspondences woven into these texts and events, correspondences that could be perceived only in retrospect. In short, *figural interpretation discerns a divinely crafted pattern of coherence within the events and characters of the biblical narratives*” (“Figural Exegesis,” 44; cf. *Echoes*, 358-359).

30 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 94.

31 Hays, *Echoes*, 222.

32 I. Howard Marshall correctly observes that the passive verb, “their eyes were prevented” (οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο) “so that they could not recognize him” (τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγινῶναι αὐτόν) refers to an “action by God ... rather than Satan” (*Commentary on Luke*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 893). This divine concealing anticipates God’s act of revealing by opening their eyes to recognize Jesus (αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοιχθῆσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν, Luke 24:31).

33 Richard Hays expresses it this way: “It is essential to teach them about Scripture because Scripture forms the hermeneutical matrix within which the recent events in Jerusalem become intelligible. Understanding can dawn only when these shattering events are brought into an interpretive dialectic with Israel’s story: ‘[A]s Jesus cannot be understood apart from Jewish scripture, Jewish scripture cannot be understood apart from Jesus; what is needed is an interpretation which relates the two—and it is this that Jesus provides (v. 27)” (“Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 230).

34 Marshall observes that the language “points irresistibly” both to Jesus’s actions at the last supper and to his feeding the multitude—λαβὼν δὲ τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους . . . εὐλόγησεν αὐτοὺς καὶ κατέκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς, 9:16; καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, 22:19 and λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας ἐπέδιδου αὐτοῖς, 24:30” (*Luke*, 898). Though Darrell Bock acknowledges language similarities, he downplays connections contrary to others who call this a reenactment of the Lord’s Supper (*Luke*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 2.1919). Against this, Robert Stein affirms that “Jesus was recognized in the ‘breaking of bread’ (24:35), which for Luke meant the breaking of bread in the Lord’s Supper” (*Luke*, NAC [Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992], 613).

35 In Luke 24 faculties of perception are *eyes* that are opened (αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοιχθῆσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, 24:31) and *minds* that are opened, “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς, 24:45).

36 The illustration of how divine revelation within the two testaments relates is from B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1929; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 141.

37 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 359. “Rationalistic criticism either precludes such coherence from the outset or else sees the Gospel stories as prophecy historicized, a fictional mutation that disingenuously manufactures mythical tales by extrapolation from earlier biblical texts. The Evangelists, by contrast, patiently that lived in the community’s memory and subsequently catalyzed a retrospective recognition of unforeseen, divinely scripted, figural linkages with Israel’s Scripture” (pp. 359-60).

38 Ibid.