

Reviving Biblical Typology in the Indonesian Pentecostal Context: Canonical Reading, Liturgical Engagement, and the Rediscovery of Tabernacle Theology

Isak Suria

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0996-076X>

- Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Excelsius, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia
 - Gereja Tabernakel Indonesia, Malang, East Java, Indonesia
-

Abstract

Once sidelined in modern biblical scholarship, typological interpretation is now gaining renewed attention through canonical and theological readings of scripture. In addition to the Western academic revival, typology has long thrived in the lived theology of Indonesian Pentecostal churches—particularly through teachings centered on the Tabernacle. This article examines how canonical approaches to typology intersect with local theological practices within the Tabernacle tradition of Indonesian Pentecostalism. Using historical, theological, and contextual analysis, it argues that Tabernacle teaching functions as an embodied theology expressed through curricula, worship, and community life. Symbols like the altar, laver, and Ark of the Covenant are interpreted typologically—pointing both to Christ’s redemptive work and to the believer’s spiritual journey. By examining the intersection of global theological frameworks and local ecclesial practices, this study argues that contextual typology represents a vital contribution to the future of theological hermeneutics.

Keywords: Typology; Canonical Interpretation; Liturgical Spirituality; Tabernacle Teaching; Indonesian Pentecostalism

Introduction

Typological interpretation has been an integral part of the history of Bible reading since the time of the Church Fathers. Figures such as Origen and Augustine used typology to interpret the relationship between the Old and New Testaments spiritually and theologically. Origen understood the Bible as having a spiritual meaning that transcended the literal, and typology was one means of uncovering the Christological meaning of Old Testament texts (Young, 1997:7–9). Similarly, Augustine developed a typological approach by interpreting figures and events in the Old Testament as foreshadowings of Christ and His work of salvation in the New Testament (Cameron 2005:151–153).

In this approach, figures, events, and institutions in the Old Testament are understood as shadows or preliminary patterns that point to their fulfilment in Christ and the Church (Goppelt and Madvig 1982). Although the Enlightenment and the rise of historical criticism led to the decline of this approach—deemed too speculative and lacking historical objectivity—recent developments have witnessed a renewed interest in

theological and spiritual readings, including typological interpretation (Childs 1979:82-83; Goppelt and Madvig 1982:17-21).

One approach contributing to this revival is canonical criticism, developed by Brevard S. Childs, who views the canon as the final form of Scripture, embodying both theological unity and liturgical function. In this view, Old Testament texts are read in light of the New Testament, not simply in light of their historical chronology (Childs 1979). This approach opens up space for the restoration of the typological method within a more theological and ecclesial framework.

Furthermore, Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) also encourages the integration of ecclesiastical spirituality and academic biblical reading, including through the practice of typology as a way of understanding the relationship between prophecy and its fulfilment in biblical narrative (Treier 2008:154-159; Vanhoozer 2005:259-268)

Amidst these developments, a gap remains in the academic literature regarding the application of typology in non-Western contexts, particularly within churches in Indonesia. One significant case to explore is the teaching of the Tabernacle, which continues to flourish within Indonesian Pentecostal traditions, tracing its roots to the teachings of F.G. Van Gessel in the 1930s (Lidya n.d.). Through a typological lens, the Tabernacle is understood not merely as an ancient worship structure but as a spiritual blueprint pointing to Christ, the Church, and eschatological fulfilment. This teaching not only endures but also thrives in various forms of teaching, Bible school curricula, and the spiritual formation of congregations, particularly in churches such as the Bethel Tabernacle Church, the Pentecostal Tabernacle Church, and the Indonesian Tabernacle Church.

This article begins with the premise that the typological approach to the Tabernacle, as it continues within local contexts, can be re-examined academically through a canonical and theological hermeneutic framework. Accordingly, this study seeks to rehabilitate typology as a legitimate and contextual method of interpretation, while simultaneously elevating Indonesia's local theological heritage into global discourse. This effort not only bridges faith and knowledge but also connects local traditions with international academic dialogue. Typology is not an arbitrary allegory but a method rooted in the theological unity of the biblical canon. As Baker observes, "typology presupposes both continuity and progression between the Testaments" (Baker 2018:123), providing a foundation for spiritual interpretation that remains anchored in historical reality.

The Significance of Revitalising Tabernacle Typology

Amidst the dominant historical-critical approach in modern biblical studies, typological interpretation is often considered outdated or non-academic. However, within local churches—especially Pentecostal circles—typology remains vibrant as a way of spiritually understanding and living out the biblical narrative. The revitalisation of Tabernacle typology is crucial because it bridges the gap between the canonical biblical heritage and the spiritual formation of today's congregation. In a constantly changing global context, this approach provides a theological model capable of integrating text, tradition, and life transformation.

Literature Review

The typological interpretation of Scripture has undergone significant development throughout church history. In the patristic tradition, Church Fathers such as Origen and Augustine interpreted the Old Testament as a shadow or prefiguration of the fulfilment in Christ and the Church (Goppelt and Madvig 1982; Young 1997). Typology was more than a rhetorical method; it represented theological conviction in God's unified plan of salvation—namely, that the Old and New Testaments form a continuous narrative of divine redemption (Greer 2013).

However, the rise of historical-critical methods in the modern era shifted emphasis toward the original meaning of texts in their historical context. This approach tended to marginalise typology, viewing it as speculative or unscientific, and rejecting the idea of multiple theological layers in Scripture (Fish 1980; Schmidt 1996).

A renewed interest in typology emerged with canonical criticism, particularly through the work of Brevard S. Childs (1979), who argued that the final form of the biblical canon carries theological authority. While Childs did not promote all forms of typological reading, he opened space for recognising intertextual patterns of fulfilment within Scripture. Building on this foundation, the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) movement—represented by figures like Vanhoozer (2005), Fowl (1998), and Treier (2008)—further restored typology's legitimacy. TIS asserts that Scripture should be read not only historically but also theologically, with attention to its function within the worshipping community and its role in spiritual formation (Human 2010).

This renewed attention to canonical and theological readings has also sparked interest in typological interpretation among modern scholars. Hans Boersma (2011) describes typology as participation in divine realities, connecting temporal symbols with their fulfilment in Christ (Boersma 2011), while Peter Leithart (2019) emphasises recurring patterns of divine action rather than allegorical speculation. (Leithart 2019) These perspectives show that typology functions not merely as a literary device but as a theological means of perceiving divine continuity across Scripture.

Within Pentecostal hermeneutics, typological reading resonates with its experiential and pneumatic approach to Scripture. Kenneth Archer (2009), Amos Yong (2010), and Simon Chan (2000) highlight the integration of text, Spirit, and community as the foundation of Pentecostal interpretation (Archer 2009; Yong 2010; Chan 2000). This participatory approach offers a theological bridge between global typological theory and the lived spirituality of Indonesian Pentecostalism.

Despite this international resurgence, academic studies remain limited on specific typological systems such as the Tabernacle symbolism in Exodus 25–40, especially within non-Western church traditions. In Indonesia, for example, the rich symbolic and Christological interpretations of the Tabernacle presented by Jusuf B.S. in his three-volume work *Kemah Suci* (1978–2002), comprising nearly 1,500 pages, have not yet been examined through a global hermeneutical lens. Likewise, the foundational contribution of F.G. Van Gessel—who developed and taught the Tabernacle doctrine between 1935 and 1954, profoundly shaping several Indonesian Pentecostal denominations—has received little sustained academic attention. “This indicates a significant gap in the literature, particularly regarding how typological interpretation is practised and transmitted within embodied, local traditions.” These local expressions—though rich in theological insight and spiritual practice—are often excluded from

mainstream academic discourse. The present study addresses this gap by proposing a dialogue between global theological developments (canonical and theological interpretation) and Indonesian Pentecostal practices.

The typological interpretation of the Tabernacle finds deep historical grounding in the patristic era, where early Church Fathers such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine read its elements as symbols fulfilled in Christ and the Church. Origen, in his *Homilies on Exodus*, viewed the veil as representing the barrier between the earthly and the divine (Origen 1956); Gregory of Nyssa, in *The Life of Moses*, regarded the Holy of Holies as a model for spiritual ascent (Gregory of Nyssa 1954:112–113); Ambrose, in *De Mysteriis* (§§8–9), associated the lampstand with the sevenfold grace of the Spirit and the showbread with the Body of Christ, interpreting them as prefigurations of the sacraments (Ambrose 1955); and Augustine referred to the furnishings as mysteries pointing to Christ in *City of God* (Augustine 1955:XVII.5). Although these interpretations were never systematised into a formal theological curriculum, they nonetheless provide deep historical roots for typological interpretation—affirming both its theological legitimacy and its continued relevance for contemporary biblical hermeneutics.

Methodology

This study employs a theological hermeneutic approach grounded in canonical criticism and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS). These frameworks are applied qualitatively to evaluate the legitimacy and contextual practice of typological interpretation within selected Indonesian Pentecostal traditions.

Canonical criticism, as developed by Brevard S. Childs, emphasises the final form of the biblical text and its theological meaning within the life of the faith community. Childs argued that biblical interpretation should be rooted not only in the text's historical origins but in its function as canonical witness (Childs 1979:15–18). This has been extended by the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement, represented by scholars like Kevin Vanhoozer, who proposed reading Scripture as a divine drama enacted by the church (Vanhoozer 2005:88–91), Stephen Fowl, who highlighted the interpretive role of the ecclesial community (Fowl 1998:12–14), ...and Daniel Treier, who integrated classical interpretive principles with contemporary spiritual concerns (Treier 2008:11–13)."

Vanhoozer's theodramatic model, in particular, offers a conceptual framework for reading the Bible as a script into which believers are invited to participate. In this view, typology is not mere symbolism from the past but a living narrative enacted by the faithful. For instance, the altar of burnt offering prefigures Christ's sacrifice but also calls the church into a sacrificial lifestyle, aligning with the divine drama's ongoing performance (Vanhoozer 2005:45–52).

Typology here is not subjective allegory but a theological bridge grounded in the canon, connecting Old Testament persons, institutions, and events to their Christocentric fulfillment in the New Testament.

This study applies that framework to a case study of Tabernacle teaching in Indonesian Pentecostal churches. The analysis focuses on the symbolic structure found in Exodus 25–40 and Hebrews 8–10, and how this structure informs the spirituality, theology, and worship practices of local communities.

The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive method, integrating narrative and thematic analysis. The research includes three stages: (1) Textual analysis of Tabernacle-related biblical passages. (2) Historical-conceptual exploration of Tabernacle teaching's development within Indonesian Pentecostalism, especially through the ministry of Rev. F.G. Van Gessel and the volumes of Jusuf B.S. (3) Theological-pastoral reflection on the relevance of typology for spiritual formation and theological education.

“Secondary sources such as teaching manuals, biographies, and oral traditions—gathered through field observations and informal interviews—were coded thematically and then organised under four theological categories: Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, which served as analytical lenses for interpreting the findings.”

Among the textual sources, the three-volume *Kemah Suci* by Jusuf B.S. (1978–2002) was examined as a primary theological corpus representing the most systematic expression of Tabernacle typology in Indonesian Pentecostalism. Triangulation was performed by comparing textual sources (e.g., Jusuf B.S.'s *Kemah Suci* volumes), theological school curricula, and church websites. This triangulation was not statistical but theological, aimed at verifying consistency and continuity across the oral, institutional, and written dimensions of local faith practice. In this study, *theological triangulation* refers to validating findings through multiple sources—textual, institutional, and experiential—to ensure coherence of meaning within the local faith context.

Rather than replacing historical-critical analysis, this strategy enriches it by foregrounding the integration of text, tradition, and lived spirituality—an approach aligned with *embodied theology* (Bartholomew, 2015). The convergence of canonical criticism and TIS provides fresh impetus for the revitalisation of typological interpretation, as observed in the symbolic Tabernacle theology practiced in Indonesian Pentecostal contexts.

Theological Basis for Typological Interpretation of Scripture

Typological interpretation is grounded in the theological conviction that God's salvific work unfolds progressively yet coherently throughout the biblical canon. Thus, the events, institutions, and figures in the Old Testament are viewed not only as historical realities but as anticipatory patterns—*types*—fulfilled in Christ. G.K. Beale defines typology as “a concrete historical correspondence between persons, events, or institutions in the Old Testament and those in the New” (Beale 2012:14).

Paul, for instance, calls Adam “a type of the one who was to come” (Rm 5:14). Jesus himself interprets the Scriptures “concerning himself,” beginning from Moses and the Prophets (Lk 24:27). Richard B. Hays affirms that this Christocentric reading lies at the core of apostolic hermeneutics, not as a later development but as central to early Christian theology (Hays 2005).

Origen regarded the spiritual sense of scripture as its highest level of meaning for Christian readers (De Principiis IV.1), while Augustine famously declared, “The New Testament is hidden in the Old; and the Old is explained in the New” (Questiones in Heptateuchum).

Thus, typology is not arbitrary allegory but a theological necessity rooted in scripture's unity and the progressive unfolding of God's revelation. D.A. Carson likewise

affirms that typology is historical, intentional, and grounded in the covenantal structure of scripture (Carson 2017).

Typological Structure in Ancient and Modern Interpretation

Typology follows a recognisable theological pattern across Christian interpretive traditions. From the early Church to contemporary scholarship, it connects text, spirituality, and ecclesial identity.

In the Patristic era, typology operated alongside figural reading, viewing past events in light of Christ. Hans Frei distinguishes typology from allegory by its emphasis on real historical correspondences, allowing readers to trace salvation history from Genesis to Revelation (Frei 1974).

Modern approaches—especially canonical criticism (Childs) and theological interpretation (Vanhoozer, Treier, Fowl)—seek to reintegrate spiritual readings with fidelity to the final form of the biblical text. Vanhoozer introduces the idea of “theodramatic interpretation,” in which Scripture serves as the divine script for the church’s participation in God’s redemptive drama (Vanhoozer 2005:224–225). Graham Cole adds that typology enables believers to “map God’s pattern in history,” fostering holistic awareness of God’s work (Cole 2009).

In the Indonesian Pentecostal context, typological structures—especially the Tabernacle—serve not only symbolic functions but also shape worship, discipleship, and eschatological imagination. These patterns are liturgical and formative, offering a theological framework for spiritual growth.

Canonical Criticism and TIS: Hermeneutical Foundations

This article builds on two key hermeneutical foundations: *canonical criticism* and *theological interpretation of Scripture* (TIS). Canonical criticism, as formulated by Brevard Childs, stresses that theological meaning resides in the final form of the canon, not merely in its prehistory (Childs 1979). TIS, meanwhile, brings a communal and performative dimension: the Bible is read as divine communication enacted in the life of the Church (Vanhoozer 2005).

Applied to Tabernacle typology, these perspectives allow a dual reading: canonically, the Tabernacle prefigures Christ’s work; theologically, it guides the Church’s spiritual formation within the continuing drama of redemption. Thus, typology is not only a bridge between the Testaments but a lens through which the Spirit continues to reveal God’s purposes in and through the contemporary Church.

Results and Discussion

Typology as Canonical-Theological Method

Typological interpretation has been an integral part of church tradition since the time of the Church Fathers. This approach emphasises the continuity and fulfilment between the Old and New Testaments. Origen interpreted the Mosaic law as a “shadow of the Gospel.” While Augustine later articulated the famous principle: “Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet” (“The New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is explained in the New”). This view not only provides a spiritual foundation but also forms an interpretive method that unites all of Scripture narratively and theologically (Dawson, 2002; Greer, 2013). This principle parallels Paul’s view in 2

Corinthians 3:14–16, which states that the veil of the Old Testament was only removed through Christ. This provides a strong foundation for understanding that the truth of the Old Testament is not erased but is rather revealed and fulfilled in the light of the Gospel. In Paul's view, the Old Testament remains veiled to those outside Christ, but when read through Him, it reveals the New Testament's truth (cf. 2 Cor 3:14–16; Lk 24:27).

Old Testament (with spiritual veil) = hidden New Testament
Old Testament (unveiled in Christ) = revealed New Testament truth
(cf. 2 Cor 3:14–16; Lk 24:27)

Since the Enlightenment, the typological approach has experienced a notable decline due to the dominance of rationalistic historical-critical methodologies that rejected the spiritual or supernatural dimensions of Scripture. These methods required interpretations that are verifiable strictly within the early historical context (Frei 1974; Gallagher 2004). Typology has been dismissed by some as an unscientific interpretive method, akin to allegory, and therefore incompatible with academic objectivity. According to Hays (2014), however, typology is not merely retrospective but a theological claim about divine providence and fulfilment.

In modern theology, this approach has begun to experience a rehabilitation, particularly through the influence of canonical criticism and theological hermeneutics. As outlined in the methodology, Childs and Vanhoozer's approach provides a relevant foundation for assessing typology in church practice.

A key example of the canonical and theological application of typology is the reading of the symbolism of the Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus and its fulfilment in Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews. The Book of Exodus (25–40) details the structure of the Tabernacle, its instruments, and the pattern of worship. In Hebrews 8–10, the author states that these are “a pattern and shadow of the things in heaven” (Heb 8:5), and that Christ has entered into “a greater and more perfect tabernacle” (Heb 9:11), as the true High Priest.

A typological approach helps readers perceive the symbolic relationship between the Old Testament and its fulfilment in Christ. Moreover, it reconnects the biblical text with the spiritual life and interpretive traditions of the faith community, rather than reducing scripture to a mere object of historical criticism.

Case Study: Tabernacle Typology in Indonesian Pentecostalism

The Rehabilitation of Typology in Modern Hermeneutics

Typological interpretation has been an integral part of the history of biblical reading since the time of the Church Fathers. Origen, for example, interpreted the Mosaic law as a shadow of the Gospel. At the same time, Augustine famously declared: “Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet” (The New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is explained in the New). This interpretation demonstrates the narrative and theological continuity between the two testaments. As stated in 2 Corinthians 3:14–16, understanding the deepest meaning of the Old Testament is only revealed when one turns to Christ: “the veil was taken from him.” When the Old Testament is read through Christ, the veil is removed, and its deeper meaning is revealed in the New Testament (cf. 2 Cor 3:14–16).

However, since the Enlightenment, this approach has been considered unscientific because it ignores the original historical and grammatical context of the text. Typology was rejected by the historical-critical approach as speculative and subjective. In modern theology, this approach has undergone a rehabilitation, particularly through canonical criticism and theological hermeneutics. Brevard S. Childs (1979) has emphasised the importance of understanding the final form of the biblical text and its theological meaning in light of the canon. He proposed that reading should not stop at the historical context but rather move toward the text's status as a testimony to the Church's faith.

This approach was expanded within the framework of Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) by figures such as Kevin Vanhoozer (2005), Stephen Fowl (1998), and Daniel Treier (2008). They emphasised the relationship between the text, the reader, the community, and the Holy Spirit as a means of spiritual formation and understanding of faith. This paved the way for the rehabilitation of typology, not as mere allegorical imagination but as a valid means of theological exposition within the context of the Church.

The rehabilitation of typological interpretation in contemporary theology is not merely nostalgia for the patristic method, but rather a serious effort to unite theology and exegesis. As Hays (2005) argues, typology functions as a theological bridge between the Testaments when interpreted through the lens of the Church's faith and practice (Hays 2025).

Tabernacle Typology in Scripture

In the Bible, the symbolism of the Tabernacle provides fertile ground for typological interpretation. In Exodus 25–40, the Tabernacle is described in extraordinary detail, and in Hebrews 8–10, the author explicitly identifies the Tabernacle as “a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb 8:5). Elements such as the altar, the ark of the covenant, and the veil are interpreted as pointing to the work of Christ and the people's access to God in the New Covenant.

Thus, typological interpretation is not only inherited from tradition but also based on the Bible's own internal witness. This type-antitype concept allows the Old Testament text to be read in light of the New Testament without ignoring its original context. In practice, this approach becomes a spiritual tool for deepening the experience of salvation in Christ. Meanwhile, Labuda highlights how “the canonical trajectory of Exodus invites a Christological reading of the tabernacle narrative” (Labuda 2020:354).

Tabernacle Typology in Indonesian Pentecostal Churches

Pentecostal churches in Indonesia, in particular, have maintained the tradition of teaching Tabernacle typology as part of their spiritual discipline and theological formation. This teaching was first introduced by Rev. F.G. Van Gessel around the 1940s and passed down through various church institutions and theological schools.

Several large churches that consistently teach Tabernacle typology include the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia (GPdI), Bethel Tabernacle Church (GBT), Tabernacle Pentecostal Church (GPT), Indonesian Tabernacle Church (GTI), Bethel Church of Indonesia (GBI), and the Surabaya Central Pentecostal Church (GPPS¹).

¹ Abbreviations reflect Indonesian titles.

The Tabernacle teaching remains prominent in contemporary theological education curricula in Indonesia, particularly within Pentecostal institutions. Based on a search of official websites, interviews, and the author's direct observations, this theological model is actively taught in several Indonesian Pentecostal theological colleges, including the Tabernacle Theological College (STTIA) and the Surabaya Bible College (STAS). According to interviews conducted with the head of STTIA in Surabaya (May 2025), along with personal observations made while lecturing at STAS and visiting theological institutions in Batu, Malang, the Tabernacle curriculum ranges between 2 to 16 credits depending on the institution.

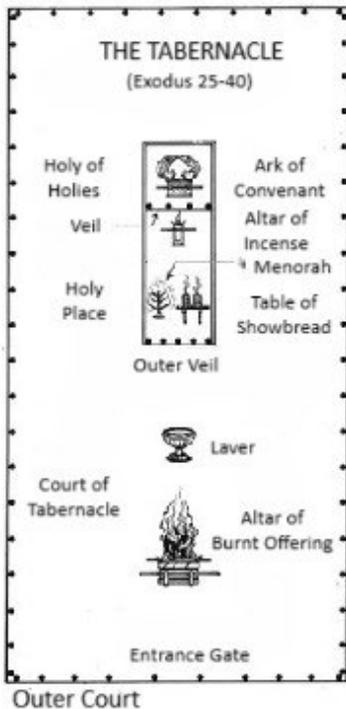
The main teaching materials used are derived from the development of F.G. Van Gessel's teachings, later compiled into books by church founders and lecturers of that era. One monumental work is a three-volume series by Rev. Jusuf B.S., founder of the Indonesian Tabernacle Church, containing symbolic and Christological interpretations of the Tabernacle: Volume I (gate to tent door), Volume II (tent door to the Holy of Holies), and Volume III (frame, pillars, coverings, and other structural elements). A fourth volume on the High Priest and sacred garments is currently in progress. These volumes have limited circulation but continue to serve as teaching references in several theological institutions and Tabernacle church communities across Indonesia (author's personal observation, 2025).

Tabernacle Typology Model: Liturgical Scheme and Equipment as Theological Types

In the tradition of Pentecostal churches in Indonesia, particularly those rooted in the teaching of the Tabernacle, a typological approach is developed comprehensively through the architectural structure and symbolic function of the furnishings of the Tabernacle as described in Exodus 25–40. Each part is understood as a type (typology) of the spiritual reality fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the life of the Church today.

The following diagram is adapted from *Kemah Suci* by Jusuf B.S. (Bijak Saleh 1978–2002), which presents the Tabernacle as a model of spiritual growth.

Explanation of the Tabernacle Scheme



This diagram shows three main parts: the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holiest. Within the larger typological framework, these three parts are understood as depictions of the spiritual growth of each believer.

The Courtyard symbolises the initial stage of spiritual life, when a person receives salvation and begins their journey of faith.

The Holy Place depicts growth toward holiness, as a believer becomes increasingly set apart for God through the Word, prayer, and worship.

The Holy of Holiest symbolises the level of spiritual perfection, namely, intimate fellowship with God, where His presence is fully revealed.

Thus, this diagram of the Tabernacle serves not only as a physical map of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25–40) but also as a larger typology illustrating the process of spiritual growth toward perfection in Christ. (Figure 1: The Tabernacle scheme as a typological model of spiritual growth (author’s own illustration).

The following are the main models used in the typological teaching of the Tabernacle:

- Entrance Gate (Ex 27:16): Symbolises Christ as the only way to salvation. “I am the door; whoever enters through Me will be saved” (Jn 10:9).
- Altar of Burnt Offering (Ex 27:1–8): Typology of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. “Christ gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2; Heb 9:26). The altar is made of wood covered with copper inside and out. Wood represents humans, while copper represents judgment.
- Laver (Ex. 30:17–21): Refers to water baptism as a process of cleansing, as Jesus was baptised in the Jordan (Matt. 3:13–17). The Laver is made from the copper mirror of an Israeli woman.
- Table of Showbread (Ex 25:23–30): Symbolises the Word of God. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35); “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word...” (Matt. 4:4). The table was made of wood overlaid with gold.
- Lampstand (Ex 25:31–40): Jesus is The Light of The World (Jn 8:12). The lamps were made of gold or talent, hammered into the shape of a lampstand.
- Altar of Incense (Ex 30:1–10): A typology of prayer as a form of deep relationship with God. (Rv 5:8; Lk 1:10). The altar was made of wood overlaid with gold, and the censer was never extinguished.
- Veil (Ex. 26:31–33): Christ’s total surrender on the cross. “The curtain of the temple was torn in two” (Mt 27:51); “By his body he opened a new and living way” (Heb 10:20).

Among Pentecostal churches and theological colleges in Indonesia, the interpretation of the Tabernacle functions not merely as a theological concept but as a living hermeneutic transmitted through generations. Rooted in the teachings of F.G. Van Gessel and further systematised by Rev. Jusuf B.S., this interpretive tradition continues to shape the worship, spirituality, and theological formation of many Indonesian Pentecostal communities today. Within this framework, each element of the Tabernacle carries profound symbolic meaning that expresses the dynamic relationship between God and His redeemed people.

The Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:10–22). Within Indonesian Pentecostal churches and theological colleges, the Ark of the Covenant is often interpreted through a deeply symbolic framework. The mercy seat is understood as representing Christ, the two cherubim as symbols of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the Ark itself as the Church—the Bride of Christ. When the mercy seat is united with the Ark, it forms a typological image of the communion between the Triune God and His Church. While not a universally held view, this local reading reflects a distinctive Pentecostal theology that emphasises relational unity between God and His redeemed people. The Ark, made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold, and the solid-gold mercy seat together symbolise the union of humanity and divinity in Christ.

This teaching is not merely symbolic but also serves as a systematic theological framework unique to Pentecostals in explaining the work of salvation, spiritual growth, worship, and eschatological hope. This interpretation is based on a typological model reaffirmed in canonical approaches such as those proposed by Brevard S. Childs, who argues that the final form of the Old Testament text has a theological function in light of Christ (Childs 1979). Similarly, Vanhoozer (2005) emphasises the importance of reading Scripture within a faith community with an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides spiritual understanding of the text.

So it can be said that the typological approach to the Tabernacle, in the context of Indonesian Pentecostal churches, is a practical form of spiritual hermeneutics that enriches the experience of faith.

Table of Typologies of the Tabernacle of Moses in the Teaching of the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia.

Tabernacle Element	Scriptural Reference	Typological Meaning	Supporting NT Verses
Entrance of Gate	Ex 27:16	Jesus is the door	Jn 10:9
Altar of Burnt Offering	Ex 27:1–8	The sacrifice of Christ as the Lamb of God	Eph 5:2; Heb 9:26; Jn 1:29
Laver	Ex 30:17–21	Water Baptism	Mt 3:13–17
Golden Lampstand	Ex 25:31–40	Jesus is The Light of The World	Jn 8:12; Rv 4:5
Table of Showbread	Ex 25:23–30	God’s Word	Jn 6:35; Mt 4:4
Altar of Incense	Ex 30:1–10	Prayer and worship	Rv 5:8; Lk 1:10
Veil/ Curtain	Ex 26:31–33	Total Surrender	Mt 27:51; Heb 10:20
Ark of the Covenant	Ex 25:10–22	Christ and His Bride	Heb 9:4–5

A Contextual Comparison: Tabernacle Typology in Indonesia and the Global South

Although the typological approach to Bible-reading is undergoing rehabilitation in Western academic discourse, the practice of typology has long remained alive within many Pentecostal churches in the Global South, particularly in Indonesia. In this context, typology is not merely an interpretive method but a liturgical and pedagogical element embedded in worship, spiritual formation, and theological education. Similarly, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Latin America demonstrate a creative and spiritual use of symbols and rites from Scripture. Although these churches may not explicitly refer to their interpretive strategies as “typology,” their use of scriptural symbols and narrative patterns often reflects a *de facto* typological approach—particularly in relation to the Holy Spirit, healing and mission (Villafañe 1993). The Tabernacle teaching remains prominent in contemporary theological education curricula in Indonesia, particularly in institutions affiliated with the Pentecostal tradition.

In the Indonesian context, the Tabernacle typology approach was first introduced by Rev. F.G. Van Gessel in the 1940s within the early Pentecostal movement. His oral teachings and ministerial training became foundational to a distinctive theological identity among Pentecostal churches in Indonesia. Over time, this doctrine of the Tabernacle was preserved and further developed as part of formal theological curricula and congregational formation. Later, Rev. Jusuf B.S.—who did not have a direct connection with Van Gessel but inherited the same theological tradition—systematised this approach comprehensively in his multi-volume work *Kemah Suci* (Bijak Saleh 1978–2002). This teaching not only spiritually enlivens Old Testament symbols but also continues to shape worship structures, theological education, and the spiritual life of Pentecostal congregations. In this regard, Indonesian Pentecostal churches display an organised and inherited form of embodied typology rarely documented in other regions (based on the author’s long-term engagement in Pentecostal theological education in Indonesia).

This comparison confirms that the typological practice alive in Indonesia has the potential to contribute to global theology, particularly in the effort to construct a hermeneutic that is pneumatological, canonical, and inclusive of local contexts. This contextual typological approach serves as a theological bridge, connecting the historical witness of Scripture with contemporary Spirit-empowered expressions of faith and spiritual formation.

Typology and Contextualisation: From the West to Indonesia

While in the West, theologians such as Brevard S. Childs, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Daniel J. Treier have sought to rehabilitate typological interpretation through canonical and theological hermeneutics, in Indonesia this approach has long been embodied in the worship and spiritual life of Pentecostal churches.

Typology in Indonesian churches is not simply an interpretive method, but rather a pattern of spiritual formation integrated with liturgy, theological education, and the formation of the congregation's character. For example, the teaching of the Tabernacle is understood not merely as theological symbols, but as a map of spiritual growth and a path of holiness leading to intimacy with God. This is clearly evident in the service

structure and curriculum of Pentecostal Bible schools, which treat the symbols of the Tabernacle as practical and prophetic guides for spiritual life.

In dialogue with classical accounts of typology (Baker 1976; Labuda 2011), community-rooted interpretation opens space to integrate tradition with innovation and to connect local spirituality with global reflection in biblical exegesis. In this light, Indonesian typological practice functions as an “embodied theology” — not only cognitively apprehended but communally and spiritually lived.

Furthermore, this phenomenon marks a complementary shift that recognises worship and fellowship as equally valid loci of theological reflection alongside academic settings. As Kevin Vanhoozer argues, biblical texts are not merely historical objects but communicative acts within a Trinitarian economy (Vanhoozer 2008). Therefore, the acceptance of typology in the Indonesian Church demonstrates that theological interpretation of Scripture can flourish in contexts that are not overtly academic yet remain spiritually and liturgically rich.

This model of reading does not merely repeat patristic or scholastic patterns of interpretation but forms a contextual hermeneutic rooted in local faith experiences. Typology serves as a bridge between the faith heritage of the global Church and the spiritual dynamics of local communities. This affirms the possibility of a mutually enriching dialogue between Western academic theology and the lived experience of the Church in the Majority World—one that values reciprocity rather than hierarchy (Greer 2013; Hays 2014).

Discussion: Toward a Contextualised Typological Hermeneutic

The rehabilitation of typology in contemporary theology through a canonical approach and Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) opens space for integrating spiritual reading within a responsible exegetical framework. In contemporary theological discourse, typology is increasingly reconsidered not as speculative allegory—as often criticised during the Enlightenment—but as a legitimate hermeneutical approach that reveals the theological and spiritual coherence of Scripture. This perspective provides a foundation for uniting biblical interpretation with spiritual formation and community life.

Brevard S. Childs emphasised that the final form of the canon holds theological authority in biblical reading and that an understanding of the text is incomplete without considering its function in the faith life of the church community. He rejected historical reductionism and proposed a canonical approach as a middle ground between historical criticism and the Church's witness to faith (Childs 1979: 82–83). This approach was later expanded upon in the TIS movement, where Kevin Vanhoozer, Stephen Fowl, and Daniel Treier emphasised the dynamic relationship between text, reader, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the interpretive process (Treier 2008; Vanhoozer 2005).

In this light, the experience of Indonesian Pentecostal churches that continue to teach typological Tabernacle symbolism can be understood as an expression of contextual hermeneutics. This practice is not merely a traditional legacy but embodies the integration of Scripture, spiritual life, and communal formation. The emphasis on the Tabernacle as a pattern of spiritual growth, worship, and eschatological hope reflects a lived theological hermeneutic—demonstrating that these communities enact principles

of TIS through their practices, even without formal reference to academic frameworks (Seitz 2001).

While in the West the typological approach is used to bridge the fragmentation of historical criticism by affirming the narrative and theological unity of Scripture, in the Indonesian context, typology serves as a medium for spiritual formation. For example, the interpretation of the altar of burnt offering as repentance, the laver as baptism, and the ark of the covenant as the presence of God demonstrates the integration of biblical symbolism and ecclesiastical practice.

Thus, contextually applied typology has the potential to be a form of embodied theology, where biblical interpretation goes beyond rational understanding and is embodied in the liturgical and spiritual life of the congregation (Bartholomew 2015). The Indonesian Pentecostal integration of typology, spiritual discipline and experiential theological interpretation offers a distinctive and valuable contribution to global theological hermeneutics—particularly in advancing an embodied, Spirit-led approach to Scripture.

Tabernacle Typology and the Transformation of Community Spirituality

In practice, the typological interpretation of the Tabernacle functions both as an academic framework for theology and as a catalyst for spiritual transformation within Pentecostal churches. The symbols of the Tabernacle revitalise a deep spiritual reading of Scripture, uniting spiritual discipline with the holistic biblical narrative. This view resonates with Graham Cole's observation that redemptive theology explains salvation while also leading believers into the promised fellowship of peace (shalom) (Cole 2009:143). Likewise, Beale emphasises that typology is grounded in the historical correspondence between the Old and the New Testaments (Beale 2012).

Several churches and theological schools in Indonesia utilise the study of the Tabernacle as a foundation for spiritual discipline and worship organisation, not merely as doctrinal teaching material. This reflects an “embodied theology approach,”² where faith and ritual are fused within a living and meaningful symbolic framework (Treier 2008). Thus, a typological reading in the Indonesian context is not only relevant but also contextual and spiritually grounded.

Critical Analysis and Theological Implications

The typological approach alive in Pentecostal churches in Indonesia is not merely a doctrinal inheritance, but a manifestation of participatory, contextual theology. The symbols of the Tabernacle—such as the altar of burnt offering, the table of showbread, and the ark of the covenant—serve as a meeting point between the canonical narrative of Scripture and the spiritual experiences of local communities. Here, typology functions not as a technique of academic interpretation, but as a language of worship and formation.

For example, the teaching that the pillars of the Tabernacle symbolise the new human being who has been “processed” and is no longer “rooted in the ground”—understood as

² The term “embodied theology” refers to a theological approach that understands faith as expressed not only in abstract doctrine but in the concrete practices, symbols, and communal life of believers. It emphasises the unity between belief and action, word and ritual, thought and worship.

a life detached from worldly attachments—contains profound spiritual and moral significance. This interpretation invites believers to view the Christian life as a call to transformation of character, not just a symbolic religious existence, but more than an exegetical exposition. Thus, typology functions as a spiritual ethos that shapes both faith and conduct.

Furthermore, this legacy demonstrates that typology can function as a vehicle for the transposition of faith, connecting the Bible's salvation history with the dynamics of contemporary community life. While previously contextual theology in Indonesia tended to rely on sociological interpretations or cultural narratives, the practice of Tabernacle typology presents an alternative: a spiritual theology that remains grounded in the canon of Scripture but embodied in local liturgy.

From this perspective, it can be said that Tabernacle churches have developed a form of embodied typology—that is, a typological interpretation that is not merely contained in discourse but is lived out in the structure of teaching, worship, and theological discipline of the congregation.

Conclusion and Implications

The revitalisation of typological interpretation, especially through Tabernacle symbolism, reveals rich potential for bridging local Pentecostal spirituality with global theological frameworks such as canonical criticism and theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS). In the Indonesian Pentecostal context, the Tabernacle is not just doctrinal heritage—it is an *embodied typology* expressed through worship, formation, and theological education.

This study shows that a canonically and theologically integrated typology can shape spiritual identity and character formation while connecting biblical narrative with lived faith. It offers a framework for dialogue between local practices and global discourse without losing spiritual vitality.

Therefore, the Tabernacle's legacy speaks not only to Pentecostal communities but also to wider theological inquiry into how Scripture is read, lived, and applied globally.

Tabernacle typology informs not only theology but also spiritual practice. In worship, elements like the altar can deepen liturgical reflection—e.g., symbolising repentance or the Eucharist. The menorah becomes a reminder of the Holy Spirit's illuminating work.

In education, the structure of the Tabernacle—from courtyard to holy of holies—offers a curriculum for explaining the believer's spiritual journey: from repentance to intimacy with God. Several theological schools use these symbols to design transformative, not just cognitive, formation programs.

In spiritual formation, believers are invited to locate themselves within the Tabernacle metaphor. One in the "courtyard" may be called to enter the "holy place"—a life of prayer and devotion—progressing toward the "most holy place," representing union with God's presence and will.

Thus, Tabernacle typology is not merely studied—it is lived. It functions integrally across worship, theological education, and personal growth within the Pentecostal faith community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ambrose. 1955. *De Mysteriis*. In Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, Vol. 10. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (reprint of 1896 edition).
- Augustine. 1990. *Questions on the Heptateuch (Quaestiones in Heptateuchum)*. In J. E. Rotelle (ed.), *Ancient Christian writers*, Vol. 70. New York: Newman Press.
- Augustine. 1955. *City of God*. In Schaff, P. (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (reprint of 1887 edition).
- Baker, D.L. 1976. Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament Scottish Journal of Theology, 29(2):137-157
- Bartholomew, C.G. 2015. *Introducing biblical hermeneutics: A comprehensive framework for hearing God in scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Beale, G.K. 2012. *A New Testament biblical theology: The unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Bijak Saleh, J. 1978–2002 *Kemah Suci*, Vols. 1–3. Surabaya: Bukit Zaitun.
- Boersma, H. 2011. *Heavenly participation: The weaving of a sacramental tapestry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Cameron, M. 2005. *Christ meets me everywhere: Augustine's early figurative exegesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carson, D.A. 2017. Biblical-theological exegesis: The nature of typology, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21(1). Available at: <https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/sbjt-211-spring-2017/biblical-theological-exegesis-nature-typology/> (Accessed: 28 August 2025).
- Chan, S. 2000. *Pentecostal theology and the Christian spiritual tradition*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Childs, B.S. 1979. *Introduction to the Old Testament as scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Cole, G.A. 2009. *God the peacemaker: How atonement brings shalom*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- Dawson, R. 2002. *Scripture, metaphysics, and poetry: Austin Farrer's theological interpretation of scripture*. London: T&T Clark.
- Fish, S. 1980. *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fowl, S.E. 1998. *Engaging scripture: A model for theological interpretation*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frei, H. 1974. *The eclipse of biblical narrative: A study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gallagher, S. 2004. Hermeneutics and the cognitive sciences, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11. Available at: <http://www.neurohumanitiestudies.eu/archivio/Gall04jcs.pdf> (Accessed: 28 August 2025).
- Goppelt, L. and Madvig, D.H. 1982. *Typos: The typological interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Greer, R.A. 2013. *The captain of our salvation: A study in the patristic exegesis of Hebrews*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Gregory of Nyssa. 1954. *The life of Moses*. Trans. A. J. Malherbe & E. Ferguson. New York: Paulist Press.
- Hays, R.B. 2005. *The conversion of the imagination: Paul as interpreter of Israel's scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Hays, R.B. 2014. *Reading backwards: Figural Christology and the fourfold Gospel witness*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Human, D. 2010. Theological interpretation of scripture: Introducing the issue, *Acta Theologica* 30(1).
- Labuda, B. 2020. Canonical shape and typological trajectories: A theological reading of Exodus, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 30(3).
- Labuda, P. 2011. "Typological usage of the Old Testament in the New Testament." *The Person and the Challenges* 1(2): 167–182. <https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.859>.
- Leithart, P.J. 2019. *Delivered from the elements of the world: Atonement, justification, mission*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Lidya Juliani and Team. n.d. *Biografi F.G. Van Gessel*. Surabaya: Gereja Pantekosta Tabernakel.
- Origen. 1956. *Homilies on Exodus*. In Schaff, P. (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (reprint of 1897 edition).
- Schmidt, B. 1996. The Use of the Old Testament in the New, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58(2).
- Seitz, C.R. 2001. *Figured out: Typology and providence in Christian scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Treier, D.J. 2008. *Introducing theological interpretation of scripture: Recovering a Christian practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Vanhoozer, K.J. 2005. *The drama of doctrine: A canonical-linguistic approach to Christian theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Vanhoozer, K.J. 2008. What is theological interpretation of the Bible? In Vanhoozer, K.J. (ed.), *Theological interpretation of the New Testament: A book-by-book survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Villafañe, E. 1993. *The liberating spirit: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal social ethic*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Yong, A. 2010. *Spirit of love: A Trinitarian theology of grace*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Young, F.M. 1997. *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.