

THE USE OF TYPOLOGY
IN POST-CANONICAL SALVATION HISTORY:
AN ORIENTATION TO JONATHAN EDWARDS'
A HISTORY OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

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THIS VOLUME OF the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* appears in the year when many are commemorating the birth of Jonathan Edwards three hundred years ago. As we honor his life and labor, this anniversary provides opportunity to investigate and appreciate his contribution to the church, to American Christianity, and to the theological enterprise. The field of Edwards studies continues to produce the cultivated fruits of devoted scholars, a field that includes the disciplines of literary, historical, philosophical, and theological reflection. For that reason, any contribution on this occasion runs one of two risks: either delivering too little by rehearsing the obvious or promising too much by pretending to break new ground.

This essay attempts to avoid both risks. It aims to provide an orientation to the exegetical-theological approach that Edwards developed and demonstrated in one of his most popular works, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, and to suggest some ways this approach may help to shed light on issues of continuing debate within Reformed exegesis, theology, and homiletics.

This thirty-sermon series was identified by Edwards himself with a variety of titles, such as “the Redemption Discourse,” “the scheme and progress of the Work of Redemption,” “The Nature and History of the Work of Redemption,” and “The Treatise of the Nature of Redemption.” This posthumously published series is

today available as *A History of the Work of Redemption* (volume 9 of the handsome Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*).¹

Its immense popularity, first in Scotland (1774) and later in New England (1794), has led one biographer to observe that “this work stands among the most influential and widely regarded of Edwards’ writings.”²

In order to limit the scope of primary material, we have chosen to work with Sermons Eighteen, Twenty, and Twenty-One. In his survey of the history of redemption, these sermons mark the transition from the death and resurrection of Christ to the post-canonical history of salvation. This limitation will enable us to focus crisply on two issues, namely, (1) Edwards’ understanding of the nature and interpretation of salvation history, particularly post-canonical salvation history, and (2) Edwards’ use of typology as a tool of biblical interpretation and application whereby he sought to retain the harmony and unity of exegesis, theology, and history. We conclude with comments on the relevance of Edwards’ approach to the continuing discussion, within exegesis, theology, and homiletics, of the relationship between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis* in exegesis, theology, and homiletics.

The Origin and Structure of *A History of the Work of Redemption*

In the later 1730s, following the Northampton and Connecticut Valley awakenings in 1734-35, Edwards preached three series of sermons, apparently designed to fortify the fruits of conversion in the lives of his parishioners. The first was a nineteen-sermon series preached in the winter of 1737-38, on Matthew 25:1-12, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Later in 1738, Edwards preached a series on 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, entitled *Charity and Its Fruits*. Strong in its Reformed orientation to the character of God and of his grace, these sermons emphasized how God’s love, an essentially

¹Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, vol. 9 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, transcribed and edited by John F. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

²Stephen J. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 2001), 143.

redemptive love demonstrated in Jesus Christ, produces fruits of holiness and obedience in those redeemed by it.

The unfolding of this divine purpose formed the theme of his third series of sermons, on Isaiah 51:8, preached between March and August 1739, published posthumously in 1774 as *A History of the Work of Redemption*.³ Nearly two-thirds of these sermons covered the signal events of the Old and New Testaments, a narrative whose uniting thread was the progress and centrality of Christ's saving work. The final ten sermons, beginning midway in Sermon Twenty, turned to explicating post-biblical church history, including the recent history of spiritual awakenings in Germany and among his own parishioners, in terms of fulfillment of biblical prophecies.

During the later years of his labor in Stockbridge, especially between 1755-57, Edwards began to revise "the Redemption Discourse" into what he would later describe to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey as "a great work," presenting "a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history, considering the affair of Christian theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ." Edwards saw this work of redemption "to be the grand design of all God's designs, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and decrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme in their historical order."⁴ What is remarkable is not so much the subject of these sermons—after all, the redeeming work of God in Jesus Christ was the staple of Puritan preaching—but the approach that Edwards adopted. For in "the Work of Redemption," he intended to offer "a theological analysis of the objective side of redemption, as it manifested itself through a providentially guided human history. In this sense his treatise represented a new method for theology."⁵

³Sources of information for this section include George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 193–96, 184-200; see also John F. Wilson, "Introduction," in *A History of the Work of Redemption*, vol. 9 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, transcribed and edited by John F. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1–109; and chapter 7 of Nichols, *Edwards: A Guided Tour*, 141–57.

⁴Jonathan Edwards to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, October 19, 1757, *Works*, 16, 727; see also Wilson, "Introduction," 13-17.

⁵Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 171.

The text for these sermons was Isaiah 51:8, “For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” Typical Puritan “Plain Style” sermonic form contained the elements of explication, observation, and application. The first sermonic element presented an exegesis of the biblical text, followed by a doctrinal or rational statement of the text’s principal idea, all of which was “improved” or applied to the hearers. In this series of sermons on Isaiah 51:8, Edwards developed his observations on the text in terms of the unfolding history of redemption, and applied this history in a way designed to draw his listeners into that history as their own history.⁶

The redemptive history treated in these sermons is arranged into three periods: (1) from man’s fall into sin to Christ’s incarnation; (2) from Christ’s incarnation to his resurrection; and (3) from Christ’s resurrection to his return. We may see Period One as Christ’s work in preparing redemption (Sermons 1-13), Period Two as Christ’s work in accomplishing redemption (Sermons 14-17), and Period Three as Christ’s work in applying redemption (Sermons 18-30).

Sermon Eighteen

Sermon Eighteen is the first to deal with the third, or last, period of redemptive history, beginning with Christ’s resurrection and ending with his return. This period entails “bringing about the great effect or success of Christ’s purchase.”⁷

Edwards made four general observations about this period. First, this period is what Scripture calls “the latter days” or “the last days,” so called “because this is the last period of the series of God’s providences on earth, the last period of that great work of providence, the Work of Redemption, which is as it were, the sum of all God’s works of providence, the time wherein the church is

⁶Wilson, “Introduction,” 28–37; this shift that was both homiletical and hermeneutical, is discussed by Samuel T. Logan, Jr., “The Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (Fall 1980): 79–96; some see here a development of the Puritan sermonic form, a shift rooted in the conviction that the meaning of human actions emerges when they are seen as grounded in divine sovereignty.

⁷Sermon Eighteen is found in Edwards, *Works*, 9, 344–56.

under the last dispensation of the covenant of grace that ever it will be under on earth.”⁸

A second general observation about this third period is that it features the finishing or ending of the world, an end that occurs by steps and degrees. This gradual completion is signaled by the apostle Paul’s use of the plural “the ends of the world” in 1 Corinthians 10:11. The apostle speaks not of “the end of the world,” but “the ends of the world,” whereby Edwards understood him to mean multiple endings,

as though the world has several endings one after another. The gospel dispensation is the last state of things in the world, and this state is a finishing state; it is all spent in finishing things off that had before been preparing, or abolishing temporal things that had before stood. It is all spent, as it were, in summing things up and bringing them to their issue and their proper fulfillment. Now all the old types are fulfilled, and all the prophecies of all the prophets from the beginning of the world shall have been fulfilled in this period.⁹

The gospel dispensation, including post-canonical history, consists of “summing things up,” “bringing them to their issue,” fulfilling all the biblical types and prophecies.

Third, this period of history is marked by the gradual emergence of the new heavens and the new earth. In fulfillment of Isaiah 51:16, 65:17-18, and 66:22, as the former state of things comes to an end, so the new world is established. Every significant turning point in this period leads to the full and final fulfillment described in Revelation 21:1. All of history is heading toward the kingdom of Jesus Christ. With rhapsodic prose, Edwards pictured this divine purpose:

The end of God’s creating this world was to provide a kingdom for his Son in it; for he is appointed the heir of the world, and that he might have the possession of it and kingdom in it to all eternity. So that so far forth of the kingdom of Christ is set up in the world, so far is the world brought to its end, and the eternal state of things set up.... So far are the waters of the long channel of divine providence, that has so many branches and so many windings and turnings,

⁸Edwards, *Works*, 9, 346.

⁹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 346–47.

emptied out and disgorged into their proper ocean that they have been seeking from the beginning and head of their course, and so are come to their rest. So far as Christ's kingdom is established, so far are things wound up and settled in their everlasting state, and a period put to the course of things in this changeable world. So far as the first heavens and the first earth come to an end and the new heavens and new earth, the everlasting heavens and earth, established in their room.¹⁰

All human history, then, envisions and culminates in the final coming of Christ's kingdom.

Edwards' fourth general observation explains how this final coming of Christ's kingdom is the driving force of all human history. The outcome of events belonging to this period is what the Bible calls "the kingdom of God." Both John the Baptist and Jesus himself employed this phrase, common to Jews in their day, on the basis of Daniel 2:44 and 7:13-14. This kingdom, prophesied in the Old Testament, "is that evangelical state of things in his church and in the world wherein consists the success of Christ's redemption in this period." This kingdom began soon after Christ's resurrection, and is accomplished in various steps from that time to the end of the world. In some passages "the kingdom of heaven" refers to the spiritual state of the church, in others to that glorious, blessed state at the day of judgment.¹¹

The establishment of Christ's kingdom is brought about by four historical events, each of which Scripture describes as "Christ coming in his kingdom." The first occurred in the apostles' days, marked by the destruction of Christ's enemies in the fall of Jerusalem, an event called "Christ coming in his kingdom" in Matthew 16:28 and 24:27-31. The second occurred under Constantine, when the Roman empire was destroyed, which Edwards saw as Christ's coming for judgment described in Revelation 6:12-17. The third will occur at the destruction of Antichrist, referred to as Christ coming in his kingdom in Daniel 7:9-27. And the fourth event establishing the kingdom of God will be Christ's return at the last judgment, "which is the event

¹⁰Edwards, *Works*, 9, 349-50.

¹¹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 350.

principally signified in Scripture by Christ's coming in his kingdom," in Matthew 25:31-46, for example.¹²

Edwards offered a most illuminating summary of his biblical, historical, and theological understanding, when he wrote:

I would observe that each of the three former of these [events] is a lively image and type of the fourth and last, viz. Christ coming to the final judgment, as the principal dispensations of providence before Christ's final coming were types of kingdoms first coming like it, as Christ's last coming to judgment is accompanied with a resurrection of the dead, and so is each of the three foregoing with a spiritual resurrection. That coming of Christ that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem was preceded with a glorious spiritual resurrection of souls in the calling of the Gentiles and bringing home such multitudes of souls to Christ by the preaching of the gospel. So Christ's coming in Constantine's time was accompanied with a glorious spiritual resurrection of the bigger part of the known world in a restoration of it to a visible church state from a state of heathenism. So Christ coming at the destruction of Antichrist [will be attended with a spiritual resurrection] of the church after it had been long, as it were, dead in the times of Antichrist. This is called the first resurrection in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. . . .¹³

Each event consists both of a glorious advancement of the state of the church and of a terrible destruction of the church's enemies. Each of these four dispensations of divine providence is but "steps and degrees of the accomplishment of one event. They aren't the setting up of so many distinct kingdoms of Christ; they are all of

¹²Edwards, *Works*, 9, 351.

¹³Edwards, *Works*, 9, 351–52. The importance Edwards placed on this interpretation is indicated when he repeats several pages later, "And because these four great events [the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Roman empire, of Antichrist, and of the world] are but images one of another and the three former but types of the last, and since they are all but only the several steps of the accomplishment of the same thing, hence we find 'em all from time to time prophesied of under one; as they are in the prophecies of Daniel, and as they are in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, where some things seem more applicable to one of them and others to another." (354).

them only several degrees of accomplishment of that one event prophesied” in Daniel 7:13-14.¹⁴

Sermon Twenty

Sermon Twenty formed a pair with Sermon Twenty-One, since Edwards preached the former in the forenoon, the latter in the afternoon of the same day.¹⁵

In this and subsequent sermons, Edwards divided church history after Christ’s resurrection into two states: the first, wherein the church lives in a state of suffering and affliction until the fall of Antichrist, and the second, a state of prosperity and peace after the fall of Antichrist.

Throughout the first three hundred years after Christ the church lived in a state of great affliction, reproach, and persecution. From the time of Constantine, the church had rest and prosperity for a little while—represented in Revelation 7. Then came the persecutions of the Arians, after which Antichrist arose. The church was driven into the wilderness, kept in suffering under Antichrist until the Reformation and Luther came on the scene. Rome has throughout history been the source of the church’s afflictions. Before Constantine, it was heathen Rome, and after Constantine persecutions arose from anti-Christian Rome. “And as of old the captivity of the Jews ceased on the destruction of Babylon, so the time of the trouble of the Christian church will cease with the destruction of [the] church of Rome, that spiritual Babylon.”¹⁶

The bulk of the Sermon Twenty treats the progress of the kingdom of Jesus Christ during the period of apostolic preaching, beginning in Jerusalem, extending to Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the world. This was a time in early church history marked both by the success of the gospel and by the opposition of the gospel’s enemies, the Jews, who were “rejected and cast off from being any longer God’s visible people” when the apostles turned their labors toward the Gentiles (Acts 13:45-46; Acts 18:6; Acts 28:28).

Near the end of Sermon Twenty, Edwards made a remarkable exegetical and homiletical shift: “Thus far,” he says, “we have had the Scripture history to guide us; henceforward we shall have the

¹⁴Edwards, *Works*, 9, 353.

¹⁵Sermon Twenty is found in Edwards, *Works*, 9, 371–86.

¹⁶Edwards, *Works*, 9, 374.

guidance only of two things, viz. of Scripture prophecy and God's providence as related in human histories. But I proceed."¹⁷ From this point forward in the sermon series, Edwards narrated the history of the church beyond that narrated in canonical Scripture, its heresies, opponents, victories, etc. For this, he used the book of Revelation, along with assorted prophecies relating to the end of history, drawn from both Old and New Testaments. In Sermon Twenty-One, we find Edwards alluding as well to histories written by non-biblical authors, such as Josephus, Pliny, Plutarch, Porphyry, and Eusebius. But it is worth pausing here to observe the *order* of his guiding sources: in his own words, "Scripture prophecy and God's providence."

The remaining part of Sermon Twenty begins to narrate this post-biblical history with a description of the church's preservation at the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

Sermon Twenty-One

We include attention to Sermon Twenty-One because it furnishes us with a sample of Edwards' discussion of post-biblical salvation history, begun briefly in the preceding sermon.¹⁸ Edwards began this sermon by narrating the circumstances leading to the destruction of the pagan Roman empire under Constantine the Great, an event Edwards calls "the second great event that is in Scripture compared to Christ's coming to judgment." Then follows an explanation of the opposition to the gospel throughout the Roman empire, the success of the gospel despite that opposition, the peculiar circumstances of suffering and persecution immediately preceding Constantine's deliverance, and the great revolution that occurred in Constantine's time.

In opposing the kingdom of Christ, Edwards noted, the Roman empire had used two weapons, philosophy and persecution. We see evidence of the former in Scripture already, when Paul visited Athens, and when he wrote to the Corinthians about worldly wisdom and divine foolishness. The second weapon consisted of a series of ten heathen persecutions before the time of Constantine, which Edwards understands to be in fulfillment of Revelation 12:1-8. Nevertheless, the church of Christ survived the hostile

¹⁷Edwards, *Works*, 9, 383.

¹⁸Sermon Twenty-One is found in Edwards, *Works*, 9, 387-402.

philosophy and power of the Roman empire. “But still in spite of all that they could do, the kingdom of Christ wonderfully prevailed, and Satan’s heathen kingdom moldered and consumed away before it, agreeable to the words of the text, ‘The moth shall eat them up like a garment and the worm [shall eat them like wool].’”¹⁹

Edwards compared the appearance of Constantine at this desperate time to Christ’s appearing in the clouds of heaven to save his people and judge the world, alluding to Daniel 7:13-14. With Constantine’s coming to power (driven by the appearance of Christ to him in a dream), the Christian church was wholly delivered and the enemies of God were destroyed, along with their religion, and the Christian religion established throughout the empire.²⁰

This revolution was the greatest revolution and change in the face of things on the face of the earth that ever came to pass in the world since the flood. Satan, the prince of darkness, that king and god of the heathen world, was cast out; the roaring lion was conquered by the Lamb of God in the strongest dominion that ever he had, even the Roman empire. This was a remarkable accomplishment of that [prophecy in] Jer. 10:11, “The gods that have not made these heavens [and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens].”²¹

The nations changed their gods, something unheard of in human history, mentioned in Jeremiah 2:10-11. Constantine’s victory was a remarkable fulfillment of Isaiah 2:17-18, as well as of Luke 10:18, Revelation 6:12 and 12:9. It was also a glorious fulfillment of the great Messianic promise God made in Isaiah 53:12. More than that,

This was a great fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the glorious times of the gospel, and particularly of the prophecies of Daniel. Now the kingdom of heaven is come in a glorious degree; it pleased the Lord God of heaven to set up a kingdom on the ruins of the kingdom of Satan. And such success is here of the purchase of Christ’s redemption, and such honor does the Father put upon him for the disgrace he suffered when on earth. And

¹⁹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 390–91.

²⁰Edwards, *Works*, 9, 394.

²¹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 396.

now we see to what a height that glorious building is erected that [had] been building ever since the fall.²²

Thus, post-biblical history consists of the progress and advance of the kingdom of God, accompanied by the destruction and demise of Christ's enemies.

Edwards concluded Sermon Twenty-One with an "improvement" of what he had explained to be the gospel's success during this period of history. We may, he declares, derive four benefits from this narrative.

By far the most attention is devoted to the first benefit, namely, that this narrative provides us with a strong argument of the truth of the Christian religion and the divine origin of the gospel. The gods of the heathen have been exposed as being nothing, and the one only true God has been exalted. Notice Edwards' careful formulation:

That they were no gods that the heathen worshipped, and that there is but only one God, is what we, now the gospel has so taught us, can see to be truth by our own reason; it is plainly agreeable to the light of nature, it can be easily shown by reason to be demonstrably true.

The very deists themselves acknowledge that it can be demonstrated that there is one God, and but one, that only he has made and governs the world. But now 'tis evident that 'tis the gospel, and that only, that has actually been the means to bring the knowledge of this truth. It was not the instruction of philosophers; they tried in vain, 'The world by their wisdom knew not God.' Till the gospel and the holy Scriptures came abroad in the world, all the world lay in ignorance of the true God, and in the greatest darkness with respect to things of religion, embracing the absurdest opinions and practices that all civilized nations now acknowledge to be crazy foolishness. And so they lay one age after another, and nothing proved effectual to enlighten 'em; the light of nature, and their own reason, and all the wisdom of learned men, signified nothing till the Scriptures came. But when they came abroad, they were successful to bring the world to an acknowledgment [sic] of the one only true God, and to worship and serve him.²³

²²Edwards, *Works*, 9, 398.

²³Edwards, *Works*, 9, 398–99.

Clearly Edwards was aware of his own historical cultural context as he preached this sermon, using the occasion to contend against troublesome claims reverberating among his own listeners, claims arising from new views of philosophy, science, and history.

And doubtless those that now despise the Scriptures, and boast of the strength of their own reason as being sufficient to (bring them to knowledge of the one true God), if the gospel had never have come abroad in the world to enlighten their forefathers, would have been as sottish and brutish idolaters, as the world in general was before the gospel came abroad. . . .

And this is evidential, that the Scriptures are that which God designed as the proper means to bring the world to the knowledge of himself, rather than human reason or anything else.²⁴

In his desire to arm his parishioners with an apologetic derived from faith-interpreted history, Edwards named his opponents and identified their weapons of argument.

The second benefit this narrative provides is that it plainly shows the powerful hand of God.

Third, all of this shows that God's power alone was the sufficient cause of the gospel's success under Constantine; this most remarkable change ever seen since the flood was an effect not without some cause. If it was the power of God—not the agreeableness of preachers or their preaching—that caused the gospel to prevail, then we have proof that the gospel is God's word, "for surely God don't use his almighty power to promote a mere imposture and delusion."²⁵

Fourth, since this event fulfills what Christ and the apostles foretold concerning the victory and perseverance of the church, and the punishment of God's enemies, Scripture is shown again to be the word of God. Christ had promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against the church (Matt. 16:18), and assured us that "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, [it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit]" (John 12:24). This event fulfilled John 12:31-32, "Now is the judgment of this world: [now shall the prince of this world be cast out]. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men [unto me]," as well as John

²⁴Edwards, *Works*, 9, 399.

²⁵Edwards, *Works*, 9, 401.

16:8, “When the comforter is come he will convince the world [of sin, and of righteousness, and] of judgment . . . because [the prince of this world is judged].”

Theology in the Form of History

We noted earlier that Edwards intended to revise “the Redemption Discourse” into a “body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history.” This attempt to structure a rational account of the Christian religion according to biblical history has been described as nothing less than “an original and creative contribution to American religious thought.”²⁶ Using a narrative method to teach Bible truths was not new for Edwards, since he had earlier employed a similar method for catechizing the children of Northampton. These sermons would serve as a basis for developing and applying the same method to the entire theological enterprise.

Because this structure of presenting biblical truth differs significantly from the deductive, systematic *loci* model employed in traditional Reformed theology, we may wonder why Edwards thought this approach was superior.

One reason was its apologetic value. Judging from marginal notes included with the sermons, his plan was to incorporate into the narrative of salvation history, perhaps by means of a critical apparatus, a broader discussion of theological issues. Revising and expanding these sermons into a “body of divinity” would provide a platform for addressing contemporary challenges to biblical interpretation. The late seventeenth century had witnessed the rise of scientific rationalism, with its fierce challenges to the authority of Scripture. Attacks against the Bible took the form of challenging the miracles and prophecies of Scripture, requiring Christian apologists to defend the necessity, sufficiency, and unity of divine revelation. Edwards himself devoted significant effort to defending the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the historical reliability of the Gospels. His sermons in *A History of the Work of Redemption* included lengthy explanations of the authorship and origin of the various books of the Bible, material traditionally assigned to special canons. For Edwards, the New Testament fulfillment of Old

²⁶Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, 173; see chapter 6, “Theology in the Historical Mode,” 165-196.

Testament prophecies was one of the strongest proofs of the authority and reliability of the Bible. Prophecy is the thread that ties the Scriptures together, the hermeneutical key to understanding the unity and harmony of the Bible and of salvation history.

Another reason for his new approach seems to be that the Bible itself communicates religious truth in narrative form. A body of divinity true to Scripture would, therefore, exhibit fidelity to the Bible's own form as well as to its content. Rather than bringing to the Bible categories framed by philosophy, whose questions and answers would be driven by the perplexities of the human mind, Edwards wished to emphasize the Scripture's self-authenticating history and integrative harmony as the source of insight and solution to the many problems posed by current thought.

For Edwards, history proceeds from, according to, and toward God's purpose to glorify himself through the creation. This purpose is comprehensive, singular, sovereign, covenantal, powerful, and personal. This purpose supplies the Bible's unity and harmony, finds its climactic embodiment in the person of Jesus Christ, and furnishes past salvation events with contemporary meaning. Because the canonical Scriptures disclose this "mystery," especially as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ, the Scriptures are essentially salvation history. Consequently, theological reflection on Scripture that is presented in terms of its own unfolding development displays most clearly that dogma is rooted in the biblical text.

History as Theological

"Beginning with God" was the motif and motive of Edwards' life and labor. All things are from him, all things cohere through him, and all things move unto him. God's purpose in creating the world was to provide his Son a kingdom, and the events of history are meaningful in relation to the progress of realizing this purpose. Edwards compared world history to "the waters of the long channel of divine providence," a river with numerous branches and streams, all emptying into their proper ocean, which "they have been seeking from the beginning and head of their course."

Because nature and its history are filled with divine purpose, they exhibit God's personality and publish his speech. For Edwards, creation is alive with God, replete with his being and love, with his glory and divinity, and the history of creation is pulsating with God's person and power. Creation points beyond itself for

meaning—a meaning accessible only by divine grace, visible only to Spirit-given eyes, interpretable only through the Scriptures. The starting point for discerning this meaning is not inquiring about the significance of creation *for man*, but *for God*. What do nature and history mean for God? What is his design and intention? The meaning of nature and of nature’s history consists of the divine work of redemption. Edwards saw the divine work of redemption “to be the grand design of all God’s designs, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and decrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme in their historical order.”²⁷ For Edwards, the term “redemption” included more than soteriology. It referred to the whole of God’s work *ad extra* and therefore to all those doctrines relating to this work.²⁸ To say it with another Edwardsean formulation, God created the world *in order to communicate his love*. As we shall see, this divine speech resounding throughout nature, history, and providence requires a language suitable both to heaven and earth, understandable in every age. That is the language of typology.

Undergirding Edwards’ program of casting these thirty sermons into a “body of divinity in an entire new method” was this profound and comprehensive perspective (some might say: world view) whose essential feature is the integration of creation and redemption, nature and grace. This world view rests upon two pillars.

First, Edwards believed that *salvation history encompasses world history*. There is no world history distinct from or alongside salvation history, and while post-canonical salvation history is distinct from canonical redemptive history, that distinction is marked by the completion of special revelation, not by the cessation of divine saving activity in human history. We ought to distinguish, then, between the history of special revelation, which is Scripture, and the history of salvation, whose arena is nature governed by providence.

This conviction that salvation history encompasses world history has two corollaries. First, canonical history is normative for post-canonical history. This is different than saying merely that the Bible is normative for interpreting history. If history refers to the sequence of events, and historiography to the narrative of that

²⁷Jonathan Edwards to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, October 19, 1757, *Works*, 16: 727; see also Wilson, “Introduction,” 13-17.

²⁸Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, 172.

sequence, then to say that the history narrated in canonical historiography is normative for post-canonical history is to affirm that *the sequence of events narrated in Scripture possesses an impulse, a telos, that governs all subsequent events*. That impulse is not natural determinism, but divine personalism, a teleology consisting, as Edwards observed in Sermon Eighteen, of God creating the world to provide a kingdom for his Son, whom he appointed the heir of the world.

Modern history belongs to the gospel dispensation, that last stage of divine providence, a period Edwards described as “a finishing state.” Like a builder putting the finishing touches to his long-belabored construction project, God is busy finishing what he had initiated already before creation. God is “summing things up and bringing them to their issue and their proper fulfillment.” Modern, post-biblical history is when “all the old types are fulfilled, and all the prophecies of all the prophets from the beginning of the world shall have been fulfilled in this period.”²⁹

A second corollary is that canonical historiography (the inspired narrative of salvation history) is normative for post-canonical historiography which seeks to understand events subsequent to Scripture’s narrated history in terms of the divine personalism and teleology made known in Scripture. In *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Edwards provided a theology of providence that identified a pattern of meaning not only for canonical history, but for all of human history. Therein lies part of the significance of Sermons Twenty and following. This “pattern of divine providence” (providing a kingdom for his Son) became a template that Edwards used for interpreting God’s saving activity beyond the pages of Scripture.³⁰ Although he clearly recognized the difference between canonical and post-canonical salvation history, he viewed them as essentially unified, cut from the same cloth, uninterrupted by the closing of the canon. Scripture sheds light on its own narrated history and on all subsequent narrated history. From this point of view, there is overarching continuity rather than discontinuity between canonical and post-canonical history. While

²⁹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 346–47.

³⁰Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, 194.

the historiography in Scripture is authoritative, its history is as mundane—and glorious!—as our own.³¹

There is a second pillar supporting the premise that the meaning of nature and of nature's history consists of the divine work of redemption. If, as Edwards believed, the telos and meaning of nature and of nature's history lay in the divine work of redemption, then *creation serves redemption*. That work of God's providence to which all other works of providence, including creation and history, are subservient is the work of redemption. In Miscellany no. 702 (written probably in 1736 or 1737), entitled "Work of Creation. Providence. Redemption," Edwards offered a précis of the argument of "the Redemption Discourse," whose premise is that the works of creation and providence are subservient to the work of redemption.³² Biblical miracles are one of twelve proofs—perhaps the clearest one—that Edwards offers in defense of this claim. Miracles, he argued, are the interruption of the laws and course of nature for the purpose of redemption—from which we may deduce that creation serves redemption.³³ This led Edwards to conclude that "creation was fundamentally structured to communicate the history of redemption," a conviction that shaped his understanding and use of typology, as we hope to show.³⁴ All history is salvation history, the adumbration of principles, patterns, and figures revealed in redemptive revelation known as Scripture, accessible only to the regenerate.³⁵

³¹Thomas A. Schafer, "Introduction," in *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. a-z, Aa-Zz, 1-500)*, vol. 13 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 167.

³²Wilson, "Introduction," 15.

³³Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. 501-832)*, vol. 18 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Ava Chamberlain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 290-91; this discussion is found in Miscellany no. 702, the bulk of which consists of twelve evidences and eleven corollaries pertaining to the claim that the divine work of redemption both comprehends and integrates cosmic reality.

³⁴Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, 151.

³⁵Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 280; in chapter 11, "From Edwards to Emerson and Thoreau: A Reevaluation" (277-295), Lowance shows clearly how Edwards' position differed from the later transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "For Edwards, there was still the necessity of viewing

Edwards identified such an adumbration, or patterned fulfillment, in the triumph of Constantine. What arrests the modern reader of Edwards is how he came to understand Constantine's victory as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Obviously, Scripture does not describe or narrate this event in a directly historical manner, but Edwards understood Scripture to have described it in a prophetic-historical way. It fits the pattern, revealed in Scripture, of a glorious spiritual resurrection of souls accompanied by a judgment upon the enemies of the gospel. In fact, at this point Edwards makes one of his very few explicit references to his sermon text, when he says: "But still in spite of all that they could do, the kingdom of Christ wonderfully prevailed, and Satan's heathen kingdom moldered and consumed away before it, agreeable to the words of the text, 'The moth shall eat them up like a garment and the worm [shall eat them like wool].'" The roaring lion (Satan) was again conquered by the Lamb of God, all in fulfillment of Daniel 7:13-14, Isaiah 51:8, Jeremiah 2:10-11, and a number of New Testament prophecies. Constantine's victory served to establish Christ's coming kingdom, indeed, is nothing less than a historical manifestation of that coming.

Once again, the apologetic usefulness of Edwards' approach becomes apparent immediately. Recall the challenges to Christian teaching being raised on every side from seventeenth century scientific rationalism. Some were using the findings of the natural sciences to discredit the supernatural; others employed philosophy and historical studies to discredit the possibility of biblical miracles and the meaning of biblical prophecy. In short, fierce hostilities had erupted between, on the one side, revelation, faith, and religion, and on the other side, reason, science, knowledge, and history. By showing how the supernatural designedly includes the natural, how faith harmoniously embraces reason, and how revelation

nature in the context of God's merciful revelation to fallen and sinful man, whose regenerate faculties were provided with new and supernatural powers through which he might apprehend the eternal being. In Emerson's typology, however, nature became more than the announced 'symbol of spirit'; nature herself becomes spirit, and this understanding was available to *anyone* of uncorrupted, sensitive perception, because all men, while not equally endowed with mystical insight, were emancipated from the Puritan distinction between the regenerate and unregenerate in Emerson's universe."

authoritatively interprets history, Edwards sought to reconcile—in Jesus Christ—the two sides.³⁶

Typology as the Language of Cosmic History

The meaning of all history, for Edwards, is found in, and unified by, the purpose of God in redemption, a purpose flowing from God's desire to communicate, to love everything he had created. All of creation and providence testifies to this purpose, communicating in a language God fashioned and rendered suitable for human understanding of cosmic divine expression. That language is typology.

Appreciating Edwards' view of salvation history is required for a proper understanding of his use of typology.³⁷ Edwards' use of typology arose from his convictions about the nature and unity of divine speech in both general and special revelation, the nature and unity of Scripture, and the nature and unity of history. Stated briefly, all of these realities were seen as trinitarian,³⁸ Christocentric, Spirit-energized, and therefore spiritual. For Edwards, salvation history consisted in the unfolding manifestation and gradual fulfillment of manifold types, patterns, and images of inter-trinitarian love, and of divine love toward the creation expressed in redemption through Jesus Christ—types and images that God himself implanted within creation and history.

With regard to the form and content of *A History of the Work of Redemption*, no clearer statement of Edwards' use of typology in exegesis and homiletics can be found than in Sermon Eighteen:

³⁶To say that Edwards reconciled these alleged enemies “in Christ” is crucial. He meant far more than that the creation, history, and the Bible are Christo-centric. Each of these—indeed, *everything*—is Christo-archic, Christo-centric, and Christo-telic. Without developing the point any further, we would simply observe that for Edwards, this necessarily means that creation, history, and Scripture—again: *everything*—is also ecclesial and eschatal.

³⁷Stephen M. Clark, “Jonathan Edwards: The History of the Work of Redemption,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 52; this mutual relationship between typology and salvation history is discussed also by Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 127–35.

³⁸See Miscellany no. 362 in Edwards, *Works*, 13, 434–35.

I would observe that each of the three former of these [events] is a lively image and type of the fourth and last, viz. Christ coming to the final judgment, as the principal dispensations of providence before Christ's final coming were types of kingdoms first coming like it, as Christ's last coming to judgment is accompanied with a resurrection of the dead, and so is each of the three foregoing with a spiritual resurrection.³⁹

The various destructions of Jerusalem, of the Roman empire, of Antichrist, and of the world are images of one another, the first three being but types of the fourth, all of them steps in the accomplishment of the same thing, all of them prophesied in Daniel and in Matthew.

This helps us understand why these sermons range beyond the historical narrative of Scripture, to include the "advances" of Christ's kingdom that occurred with Constantine, the Reformation, and the New England awakenings. Somehow, these post-biblical historical events were included in their original types communicated in Scripture. When Edwards describes the victory of Constantine with the analogies of the casting out of Satan and the roaring lion being conquered by the Lamb of God, this is far more than an exercise in comparison. Constantine's victory was "a remarkable accomplishment of that [prophecy in] Jer. 10:11, 'The gods that have not make these heavens [and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens].'"⁴⁰ This event in post-biblical history was a great fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the glorious time of the gospel. It is nothing less than the success of Christ's redemption, the Father's exaltation of his Son in reward for his humiliation suffered upon earth in the purchase of salvation.

As many observers have noted, like other Puritan preachers, Edwards identified numerous types within Scripture; but what distinguished Jonathan Edwards within the New England Puritan exegetical tradition was his identification of types in both nature and history.⁴¹ The scholarly analysis of the use of typology by the New

³⁹Edwards, *Works*, 9, 351–52.

⁴⁰Edwards, *Works*, 9, 396.

⁴¹See Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Jonathan Edwards, "Types of the Messiah," ed. Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David

England Puritans in general, and by Jonathan Edwards in particular, is significant in its breadth and depth.⁴² So, in order to evaluate Edwards' approach in *A History of the Work of Redemption*, particularly in the sermons under review, a minimum acquaintance with this analysis may be useful.

H. Watters, in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 187–328; Jonathan Edwards, “Images of Divine Things,” in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 49–142; Jonathan Edwards, *Notes on Scripture*, vol. 15 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁴²The following sources provide a substantial orientation and analysis: Wallace E. Anderson, “Introduction to ‘Images of Divine Things’ and ‘Types,’” in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3–33; Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*; Conrad Cherry, “Symbols of Spiritual Truth: Jonathan Edwards as Biblical Interpreter,” *Interpretation* 39, no. 3 (1985): 263–71; Thomas M. Davis, “The Traditions of Puritan Typology,” in *Typology and Early American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (N.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 11–45; Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan*; Mason I. Lowance, Jr., “‘Images or Shadows of Divine Things’ in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards,” in *Typology and Early American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (N.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 209–44; Mason I. Lowance, Jr., “Typology, Millennial Eschatology, and Jonathan Edwards,” in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards*, ed. William J. Scheick (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980 [reprinted from Part VI of “Typology and Millennial Eschatology of Early New England,” in *Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 262–273]), 189–98; Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David H. Watters, “Introduction to ‘Types of the Messiah,’” ed. Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David H. Watters, in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 157–86; Stephen Manning, “Scriptural Exegesis and the Literary Critic,” in *Typology and Early American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (N.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 47–66; Stephen J. Stein, “The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis,” in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118–30; Stephen J. Stein, “Introduction,” in *Notes on Scripture*, vol. 15 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1–46.

To appreciate Edwards' understanding and use of typology requires that we locate him properly within the Reformational tradition of biblical exegesis, a tradition that exhibited both continuities and discontinuities with the medieval period of exegesis. It is not wholly accurate to view the Reformers as having dismissed the logic and intentions of the fourfold sense championed in the Middle Ages (the *quadriga* of *Littera gesta docet, / quid credas allegoria, / Moralis quid agas, / quo tendas anagogia*—"The letter teaches what has happened, allegory what one believes, the moral meaning what one does, and anagoge where one is going").⁴³ Indeed, the Reformers followed Augustine in reducing the ancient and medieval fourfold sense of Scripture to a twofold sense, the literal and the spiritual. In contrast to medieval exegetes, however, Reformation interpreters sought to locate the text's spiritual meaning not *beyond* its literal meaning, but *within* the literal sense.⁴⁴ Accordingly, interpreters must move from the text's literal or historical sense to the textually recommended responses of faith, hope, and love. Calvin saw in the biblical type-antitype arrangement an adumbration not only between Old and New Testaments, but also between the New Testament and the spiritual kingdom yet to come in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ Richard Muller presses this point with forceful clarity when he observes that for Calvin, the "literal meaning" of Old Testament prophecies includes, *but goes beyond*, the reestablishment of post-exilic Israel, to include the kingdom-establishing work of Jesus Christ, and to include "the furtherance of the kingdom in the reform of the church in the sixteenth century, and the final victory of the kingdom in Christ's second coming. . . ." The text's "literal meaning" thus includes what Christians ought to believe, ought to do, and ought to hope for.⁴⁶

⁴³Richard A. Muller, "Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: The View from the Middle Ages," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 8.

⁴⁴Muller, "Biblical Interpretation," 14.

⁴⁵Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan*, 26–27.

⁴⁶Muller, "Biblical Interpretation," 11; for a useful summary of the relationship between precritical and critical exegesis, see the volume's concluding essay by Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, "The Significance of Precritical Exegesis: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, 335–45.

If Edwards ever sketched a theoretical foundation whose application is *A History of the Work of Redemption*, perhaps we may find that theory explained in his “Types of the Messiah,” together with “Images of Divine Things” and the “Types” notebook. Edwards was seeking “to show how there is a medium between those that cry down all types, and those that are for turning all into nothing but allegory and not having it to be true to history. . . .”⁴⁷ His was a middle way between a typology restricted to historical events narrated in Scripture and an allegorizing method whose meaning required no historical referent.

Typology is the language of divine self-disclosure, and Edwards’ use of typology offers us an outline of its grammar and syntax. Everything in nature illustrates and instantiates corresponding spiritual realities. Events are *figural*; they are not isolated, unrelated expressions of momentness, but integrated by a divine design that comprehends every cause and effect, and unites the “earlier” and the “later” of all history in Jesus Christ. Because typology is a form of divine speech, the Bible interpreter must use the plain meaning of a biblical text to discern its prefiguring of later historical meaning.⁴⁸ For Edwards, if types could be understood as eschatological and prophetic of Christ, then the events and language of history

could contain spiritual significance beyond any literal meaning inherent in the text, event, or natural object. The spiritual meanings of these signs were not wholly restricted to the New Testament record of Christ, but could be supplied from any part of the post-biblical history of the work of redemption. *The ultimate antitype, after all was Christ, who was not to be restricted to temporal boundaries, but is eternal and atemporal.* It was this bold assertion, coupled with Edwards’ awareness that God was actually speaking to his saints through the representative, symbolic, *typological* language of nature, that gave Jonathan Edwards’ writings on typology a transforming authority over the rigid practices that had characterized the composition of typological handbooks during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Jonathan Edwards, “Types,” ed. Wallace E. Anderson, in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 151.

⁴⁸Cherry, “Symbols of Spiritual Truth,” 264.

⁴⁹Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David H. Watters, “Introduction to ‘Types of the Messiah,’” 181; italics original.

All this was so because Edwards saw the Scripture as justifying the claim “that not only the ceremonies of the Law were typical, but that [Israel’s] history and constitution of the nation and their state and circumstances were typical. *It was, as it were, a typical world.*”⁵⁰ Typology is the language of nature and of history, possessing a prophetic-proclamatory function whereby God speaks to us in an idiom that must be learned by good acquaintance with the language.⁵¹

’Tis very fit and becoming of God, who is infinitely wise, so to order things that there should be a voice of his in his works instructing those that behold them, and pointing forth and showing divine mysteries and things more immediately appertaining to himself and his spiritual kingdom. The works of God are but a kind of voice or language of God, to instruct intelligent beings in things pertaining to himself.⁵²

This notion that God’s voice is audible in creation, providence, and history, and that these works of God are but a kind of divine language, is not at all novel. The Christian church had for centuries confessed the existence of natural or general revelation, that God “speaks” in and through creation, providence, and history. Especially in terms of its apologetic value, Edwards was seeking to demonstrate the harmony between Scripture and nature as sources of revelation, “and the connecting link was his understanding of typology.”⁵³ Edwards clearly respected numerous important qualifiers at this point, including (1) the necessity, priority, and normativity of biblical revelation for understanding general revelation, and (2) the inability of fallen humanity to hear clearly this divine speaking in creation apart from the grace of regeneration and faith.⁵⁴

As with his view of history, so with his understanding of typology. We live, as it were, in a typical world. If creation is the stage on which redemption is being accomplished, and history is the

⁵⁰Edwards, *Works*, 11, 146; italics added.

⁵¹Edwards, *Works*, 11, 150–51.

⁵²Edwards, *Works*, 11, 67.

⁵³Schafer, “Introduction,” 173.

⁵⁴Stein, “The Spirit and the Word,” 123; Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan*, 279–80.

scripted scenes of the performance, then types, images, and figures make up the verbal and non-verbal language by which the message of redemption is communicated.

Debates regarding the acceptable range of biblical typology continue to this day. One concern involves the matter of limiting the identification of types to that which the Bible, specifically the New Testament, explicitly identifies as a type. Clearly Edwards did not subscribe to this limitation.

To say that we must not say that such things are types of these and those things unless the Scripture has expressly taught us that they are so, is as unreasonable as to say that we are not to interpret any prophecies of Scripture or apply them to these and those events, except we find them interpreted to our hand, and must interpret no more of the prophecies of David, etc. For by the Scripture it is plain that innumerable other things are types that are not interpreted in Scripture (all the ordinances of the law are all shadows of good things to come), in like manner as it is plain by Scripture that these and those passages that are not actually interpreted are yet predictions of future events.⁵⁵

Although Edwards went beyond biblical typology to see figural revelation of spiritual things in nature and in history, it is important to observe that he avoided allegorizing nature and history, by appealing to those types in nature and history that corresponded with Scripture, types that were ontological and eschatological.⁵⁶ Typology goes beyond relating persons, events, and institutions in terms of type and antitype, shadow and fulfillment. Typology was the language of Edwards' world view, "a way of looking at persons and events in the light of a theology of history which postulates the presence and the relevance of an eternal God at every individual moment of time."⁵⁷

Employing such a typological method entailed a significant difficulty for a Puritan like Edwards, however. How could these types and figures, if they were indeed fulfilled with the first coming

⁵⁵Edwards, *Works*, 11, 152.

⁵⁶Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David H. Watters, "Introduction to 'Types of the Messiah,'" 164.

⁵⁷From Joseph A. Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth-Century Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975); cited in Mason I. Lowance, Jr. with David H. Watters, "Introduction to 'Types of the Messiah,'" 162, note 5.

of Christ, continue to symbolize and impart meaning to contemporary Christian experience and history? With the Reformation, typology had been distinguished from allegorizing by recovering the linear historical movement from type to antitype, and by reducing the fourfold sense to a twofold sense. But how could biblical typology come to include *post-biblical history*? The solution, formulated by Edwards and others, lay in understanding biblical prophecy to be capable of multiple, linearly spiraling fulfillments.⁵⁸ This theme of prophecy was a central motif in Edwards' biblical writings, usually equated by students of Edwards with predictive eschatology and millennialism, but better understood as proclamation-in-figure.⁵⁹

In this connection, Sacvan Bercovitch has noted the distinction between *correlative typology* and *developmental typology*. Correlative typology involves a more static biographical parallelism whose focus rests more upon certain Old Testament heroes than on Christ himself. Developmental typology, by contrast, relates Old Testament figures not only to the first coming of Jesus, but also to his return. Noah's ark, the flood, the Babylonian captivity, and Canaan are seen to prefigure end-time events as well as the life of Christ.⁶⁰ Mason Lowance, Jr. terms this notion of multiple, linearly spiraling fulfillments of prophecy *developmental typology* or *recapitulative typology*:

In millennial writing, the figures and types follow a pattern of developmental typology, recapitulating the experience of past historical episodes as prophetic synecdoches of future fulfillment. Recapitulative typology is thus not a new departure in exegetical reasons; rather, it is an extension of the principles of developmental typology so that human history from the incarnation to the judgment looks forward—through revealed and instituted figures—to the second coming of the eternal antitype.⁶¹

For Edwards, biblical typology establishes more than a mere parallelism between two figures or phenomena. It also emphasizes

⁵⁸Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan*, 36–39.

⁵⁹Stein, "The Spirit and the Word," 124.

⁶⁰Sacvan Bercovitch, "Annotated Bibliography: Typology and Early American Literature," in *Typology and Early American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (N.p.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 251.

⁶¹Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan*, 116.

analogy and heightening, repetition and consummation with respect to the two figures.⁶² Edwards correlated the living power of God's acts in salvation history to the living power of his speech, locating that correlation in typology. The result is that "[t]o be carried to the antitype by the type, to the spiritual by the concrete, was to participate experientially in the truth conveyed by the type."⁶³ As we study these patterned aspects of the biblical text, and in light of them the patterns of our own "real life" experiences, biblical typology can move beyond mere literary convention to become the eyes through which faith sees knowledge, the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

The Idea and Recognition of Post-canonical *historia salutis*

Precisely here, however, lies perhaps the most arresting feature of Jonathan Edwards' *A History of the Work of Redemption*. Salvation history extends beyond the events narrated by canonical revelation, to include subsequent human history whose meaning consists of the outworking of those decisive events.

Edwards honored the uniqueness of biblical events, but refused to isolate or enclose them within their own temporal horizon. This influenced his pastoral pedagogy, leading him to follow a practice commonly employed among heirs of the Protestant Reformation in catechetical training and in preaching, namely, concretizing the Scripture's teaching in terms of the church's history up to his own day. Consistent with this, Edwards extended the grammar of typology to include the fulfillment, in post-biblical history, of prophecies and patterns given in Scripture.

⁶²Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 132. Today we may be witnessing in biblical exegesis a recovery of the healthy aspects of the Reformational capacity for typological exegesis—though, to be sure, with different terminology and refined distinctions. Consider, for example, the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, III [Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998]), xiii-xxi, which introduces the reader to interpretive requirements entailed with the Bible's use of literary conventions such as image, symbol, type scene, motif, metaphor, and simile; and *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World*, by James B. Jordan (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers [reprint], 1999).

⁶³Cherry, "Symbols of Spiritual Truth," 266.

The significance of Edwards' approach, as we indicated earlier, cannot be appreciated apart from the challenges being posed to his generation by claims arising from philosophy and science, claims about God, history, revelation, and faith.

The usefulness of Edwards' approach today may become evident when one recognizes the pervasiveness of a modern form of "practical deism," a pious and respectable agnosticism which claims that God's ways in world history and personal experience are inscrutable and unintelligible.

On the macro level of universal history, this agnosticism amounts to an unwillingness to render any historical judgment at all; in fact, any certainty regarding historical judgments has come to be viewed as dogmatism, an expression of intellectual imperialism. On the micro level of personal life-history, this agnosticism about transcendent purposes in human experience (suffering and pain, prosperity and success) has affected every field of professional practice and professional ethics, from medicine to corporate accounting. In our day of secular multicultural pluralism, this refusal to evaluate history on both levels seems to lead to an inability, if not an unwillingness, to interpret history at all in order to understand history's meaning.

Jonathan Edwards shows us another path. If the church may confess merely *that* God in Jesus Christ governs all history for the sake of his glory through Christ's kingdom and our salvation, without being allowed to indicate *where* and *how* in our own generation God is governing, then the difference between this god and a cosmic puppeteer is difficult to explain. If we may confess that *the hand of God* rules history, then surely we may look with Scripture-guided faith to trace *the finger of his hand* in the providences of our world, yes, of our own lives. If not, what then is the benefit of confessing God's rule without permission to look for it? If not, then the deists and rationalists are finally right, for faith is little more than a blind leap, and faith can know precious little for sure.

The transcendent purposes of all history are intelligible—on this point, we must agree with Edwards—but only to believers—on this point, Edwards was a forerunner of presuppositional theology. To be sure, as always, there is a balance we must maintain, this time between respecting the boundaries of those divine mysteries hidden from us while grasping firmly the divine purposes revealed to us. The Bible delineates both. The former involves respecting the Creator-creature distinction; the latter entails "a sure knowledge,

whereby I hold for truth *all that God has revealed to us in His Word*, but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel” that I am forgiven and saved through Jesus Christ alone (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 7, QA 21; italics added). God has revealed to us in his Word his sovereign and saving purposes in history. To plead agnosticism about identifying the outworking of those purposes in nature and history is to mount a polite assault upon revelation.

Edwards erected clearly marked guard rails for interpreting God’s word and deed in nature and providence. Preeminent among them is the primacy of Scripture for teaching this divine language and identifying God’s hand. Another safeguard is that only spiritual persons—those regenerated by the Holy Spirit unto faith—can apprehend the typology of nature and history. A third protection is the conviction that God’s speech in Scripture, creation, and providence is univocal, Christocentric, and therefore harmonious. A fourth guard is the distinction he maintained between salvation events (including special revelation) that are constitutive and determinative, and those events that are derivative and applicatory. Recall that critical turning point in Sermon Twenty: “Thus far,” he says, “we have had the Scripture history to guide us; henceforward we shall have the guidance only of two things, viz. of Scripture prophecy and God’s providence as related in human histories.”⁶⁴

The pressing question remains, however, as to how we can identify what, in our history, belongs to “the work of redemption.” Where is the kingdom of Christ advancing? It is the question of certitude. Reading Jonathan Edwards’ sermons leaves one with the overwhelming impression of his own certitude in identifying and describing events as part of post-canonical salvation history. The rise of Constantine belongs to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom, as does the Protestant Reformation, along with the Northampton awakenings and the establishment of colonial America. Whence comes such certainty?

After all, throughout recent centuries, many have been persuaded that the industrial revolution belonged to the advancing kingdom of Christ, that the Third Reich was God’s gift to the

⁶⁴Edwards, *Works*, 9, 383.

German people, and that the Moral Majority deserved the loyalty of every Christian living in late twentieth-century America.⁶⁵

The alternatives of simply canonizing a particular historical event as God's will, or refusing to identify any particular event as part of salvation history, are unacceptable. The third way is to judge events according to the norm of Scripture. As G. C. Berkouwer correctly observed, "The fact is that no one can recognize God's finger without knowing Him, and that facts and events as such cannot become revelation, but can only be seen and understood in the light of Biblical revelation."⁶⁶ The importance of this observation cannot be exaggerated: even the events narrated in Scripture are explained by revelation to have been redemptive. Events cannot "speak" for themselves. The facts themselves apart from revelation "say" nothing. "Without faith, without constant listening to His explanatory Word, man is not able to distinguish basically between the exodus of Israel and the exoduses of Syria and Philistia."⁶⁷ In his sermons on the history of salvation, Edwards demonstrated precisely this presuppositional orientation by refusing to proceed from the facts of events isolated from biblical revelation. Whether interpreting events of world history or seeking to understand God's leading in one's personal life, the believer faces the same dilemma: How can we know?

This quest for certitude cannot be satisfied cheaply or easily. While Scripture provides a record of both salvation event and inspired interpretation, once the canon was completed and special revelation ceased, the church necessarily began interpreting its own post-canonical salvation history by applying Scripture's principles and employing its patterns *under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit*.

Here, it seems to me, lies an important yet underdeveloped theme in discussions about salvation history, namely, the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in completing redemption in history. The history of salvation is a *trinitarian* history of God's love relationship with his people, in which each Person of the Trinity functions redemptively in nature and in history. Throughout this relationship, the work of the Holy Spirit has been to communicate this divine

⁶⁵A useful discussion of this issue is provided by G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), especially chapter 6, "Providence and History," 161-187.

⁶⁶Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, 170.

⁶⁷Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, 177.

love, God's love-talk inscripturated in the Bible, instantiated in creation, incarnated in Jesus Christ, and consummated in history. The Holy Spirit effectuates, fructifies, fulfills, finishes, and perfects divine love in those who belong to Jesus Christ, and he does this in creation and in history.

What the Holy Spirit does, he does through the Word of God, including the prophetic word. "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). If Old Testament prophecy and New Testament proclamation came not from man, but from the Holy Spirit, we should expect the continuation of its message, the reverberation of its power, and the recapitulation of its content throughout history until the Word returns. This is the language of typology.

The vision of dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel 36:25-27 and 37:22-28) is one clear example of recapitulative typology, whose linearly spiraling fulfillment includes Israel's return from exile, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the deliverance of the church under Constantine, and every believer's experience of having been brought from death to life by grace through faith in the gospel.

What we seek to describe is the certitude arising from what is often called "the testimony of the Holy Spirit," the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. This is usually treated in connection with the doctrine of Scripture, especially its divine authority and canonicity. This testimony is connected closely to Scripture, and brings about the believer's personal assurance that the Bible is truly God's Word. Thus, Word and Spirit belong together, as object and as Instrument of faith-confidence; the Holy Spirit provides no truth or message apart from or alongside Scripture.

This testimony of the Holy Spirit about the Bible cannot be isolated, however, either from the rest of the Holy Spirit's work in creation, providence, and redemption, or from the rest of divine revelation. Interestingly, the Belgic Confession, Article V, formulates this matter in connection with both Scripture and history:

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from

God, and also because they carry the evidence thereof in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.

Three living witnesses to the Bible's authority are identified: the Church, the Bible itself (its own evidence), and the Holy Spirit. The Church's testimony should not be disregarded, but it is neither the source nor the standard of the Bible's authority. The preeminent witness is God himself, who authored and who preserves the Scriptures. It is illuminating that the Belgic Confession describes all of these witnesses in terms of *ongoing activities* associated with their station: the Church *receives* and *approves* these canonical books; the Scriptures *carry* their self-authentication; and the Holy Spirit *witnesses* to their divine origin. Each of these activities is present-continuous, which is to say: *the Scripture-authenticating work of the Holy Spirit within the Church constitutes the bond between the living record of past salvation history and the personal experience of present salvation history.*⁶⁸

The certitude of Jonathan Edwards that Constantine's triumph, the Reformation, and the Northampton awakenings were the triumph of Christ's kingdom arose from his certitude that the Scripture communicates the living Word of God. To be sure, these persuasions differ in primacy and authority; yet their author is the same Holy Spirit, their unity is the same divine purpose, and their goal is the same cosmic glory.

The Relation between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*

In light of the foregoing, we are now prepared to consider the relationship between salvation history—that series of events constituting divine redemption of fallen humanity to an eternal

⁶⁸Notice the last sentence of Belgic Confession, Article 5: "For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled." This formulation points clearly to the unity between Scripture and history, especially the *clarity* of historical fulfillments of biblical "things." The Westminster Confession emphasizes the believer's *inner confidence* in Scripture's authority, when it states that although we may be persuaded of the authority and truthfulness of God's Word by numerous evidences and qualities of the Scripture, "yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (Westminster Confession, I, v).

future of full fellowship and glory—and the realization of this salvation in the personal history of the believer. The phrase *ordo salutis* traditionally refers to the entirety of the Spirit’s application of Christ’s work to God’s children. It includes matters like calling, regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. Often these are viewed as discrete acts, arranged in terms of temporal, logical, or causal priority.

Unfortunately, some have placed *historia salutis* over against *ordo salutis*, as though the two are not merely different ways of looking at the same thing, but worse, as though they are opposing starting points. This misfortune occurred, for example, throughout the 1930s and 1940s in the discussion among Dutch theologians concerning redemptive-historical exegesis and preaching.⁶⁹ Simply stated, the redemptive-historical approach came to be stressed in opposition to a psychologizing and moralizing approach to historical narrative, which led to positing a contrast between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*. Dutch theologian C. Trimp has suggested that in this debate, too little attention was given to the Holy Spirit’s work in the Old Testament, focusing instead on the work of Christ, or of God in preparing for the coming of Christ. That was due “to the fact that the ‘not yet’ of the historical path to Christ received far more attention than the ‘already’ of the historically particular concourse between God and His people. The history of salvation as history of revelation completely dominated the history of salvation as history of faith. This explains why advocates of redemptive-historical preaching could not satisfactorily answer their critics who appealed to Hebrews 11 as an argument for including an ‘exemplaristic’ element in preaching.”⁷⁰

In other words, in addition to *historia salutis* and *historia revelationis*, there is *historia pietatis*, or the history of covenant response. This history emphasizes the *process* of divine redeeming work alongside the *progress* of that work. Truly redemptive-historical

⁶⁹For a survey of this discussion, see Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1970). In what follows, I am conveying the sympathetic-critical assessment and proposals of C. Trimp in *Preaching and the History of Salvation: Continuing an Unfinished Discussion*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (New York: Westminster Discount Book Service, Inc., 1996), especially 118-121.

⁷⁰Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation*, 137.

exegesis, theology, and preaching will seek to understand and proclaim the living God according to his *trinitarian-historical* self-revelation.⁷¹

The fight against subjectivism always faces the danger of falling into the opposite error of objectivism. Objectivism has always been a substitute for the confession of the Holy Spirit and attention to the details of his work of applying Christ's redemption. Concluding his review of this discussion, Trimp suggests that *ordo salutis* should be seen as an integral part of *historia salutis*, in order to avoid turning *historia salutis* into an abstraction and to avoid separating the work of Christ from the work of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, we may not transpose *historia salutis* into the categories of *ordo salutis*, or subsume the former under the latter, for then salvation history becomes a collection of types for *individualized* Christian experience. Each believer would then need to experience his or her own Gethsemane, his or her own Easter and Pentecost. Distinguishing, but never separating, *historia salutis* from *ordo salutis* will enable us to honor *past* salvation history as true *history*, while interpreting *present* salvation history as real *salvation*. To maintain the health of both, we really need a redemptive-historical treatment of the order of salvation—something that sounds very much like “a body of divinity in the form of history”!

Perhaps the relationship between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis* can be clarified further by reformulating the question this way: What is the relationship between *past* salvation history and *present* salvation history?

We have learned from Edwards that typology is the language of salvation history, authoritatively communicated in Scripture, which alone provides the principles and patterns embodied in subsequent events. Edwards has also taught us that all history is salvation history, unified by the purpose of God in Jesus Christ, a purpose continuously sounded forth in divine speech that is univocal and harmonious. To this language and to this history belong the testimony and work of the Holy Spirit.

The claim that proper interpretation of Scripture and of providence depends upon the continuing illumination of the Holy Spirit should need little defense. But how is this relevant to a right construal of the relationship between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*? There can be no genuine apprehension of salvation history without

⁷¹Trimp, *Preaching and This History of Salvation*, 138.

the experience of salvation, *and* there can be no genuine experience of salvation without the apprehension of the history of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The language of canonical salvation history is identical to the language of post-canonical salvation history, including *personal* salvation history. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were not merely *his* death and resurrection, but *mine* as well. *How* this is so is explained concisely by John Murray:

This sustained introduction of the once-for-all past historical in a context that clearly deals with what occurs actually and practically in the life history of individuals makes inevitable the interpretation that *the past historical conditions the continuously existential*, not simply as laying the basis for it and as providing the analogy in the realm of the past historical for what continues to occur in the realm of our experience, but conditions the latter for the reason that something occurred in the past historical which makes necessary what is realized and exemplified in the actual life history of these same persons.⁷²

Salvation history possesses a divine necessity, a structural bond, and an organic unity between past event and present experience—a *necessity, bond, and unity supplied and maintained by the Holy Spirit*. As Richard Gaffin has shown, this recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit enables us to avoid any mistaken construal of this unity with appeal to the idea of “corporate personality” that some have used to explain the solidarity between Christ and believers. For the Holy Spirit is the effective instrument by which the Father both raised Christ from the dead and works out this resurrection in the renewal of believers (Rom. 8:11).

Properly relating *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis* is illustrated for us in Jonathan Edwards’ sermons on *A History of the Work of*

⁷²John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 2 (April 1967), 19, italics added; cited in Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Soteriology*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987), 55. Gaffin cites also the comment of H. Ridderbos that “Whatever happened to Christ, happened to the Church, not only analogously or metaphorically, but in the historical sense of the word” (*When The Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* [Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1982 (reprint), 55]). Again we note that analogy, metaphor—typology—and history are correlative.

Redemption, particularly by his view of the Holy Spirit's use of typology in post-canonical salvation history. The Spirit who inspired the Bible is the same Spirit who sovereignly effects its message throughout history. Because Scripture is his living speech conveying the past event into present experience, the "what happened" can never be isolated from the "so what" of the text. There is a constant "presentness" of the types and their antitypes, in every age and generation. As Samuel Logan has observed, for Edwards, "the meaning of any event or of any passage of Scripture is *both* its objective content *and* its significance for the personal life of the interpreter." But by what principle do these two—the objective and the subjective—cohere? Logan answers: "The Holy Spirit is the necessary and sufficient"—and we would add: *personal*—"hermeneutical principle for both the analytic and the existential elements of true Christian knowledge."⁷³ The exegetical-hermeneutical circle includes—indeed, unites—author and interpreter through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is why biblical typology remains "open-ended" throughout history, for the Spirit-given Word of God is living and active (Heb. 4:12).

Other interpreters of Edwards have seen in "the Redemption Discourse" an outworking of the relationship between cosmic history and personal history. Though William Scheick seems to be holding the stick by the wrong end, he does properly alert us to the need to consider, in Edwards' thought, the relationship between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*. After reviewing scholarly responses to Edwards' "Redemption Discourse" by a number of biographers, Scheick opines that

Edwards thought of his study as innovative because in it he treats history as an allegory of the conversion experience. History, in his view, merely manifests in large the experiences of the individual soul undergoing the regenerative process. Like nature, history evinces a symbolic representation of the spiritual progress of the saint. It was the vision of merging the motions of nature, of history, and of the saint's private self into one theological tract, 'shewing the admirable contexture and harmony of the whole,' that Edwards considered the original facet of his proposed treatise.

⁷³Logan, "The Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards," 92.

Edwards saw all of history, according to Scheick, as “a coherent allegory of the soul’s experience of grace.”⁷⁴

Do the experiences of the regenerated soul serve as the blueprint for salvation history, or does salvation history furnish the blueprint for the personal application of Christ’s work by the Holy Spirit in the believer? Scheick insists that “Edwards ultimately grounds the architectonics of the history of redemption within the terrain of the regenerate self.”⁷⁵ However, as Wilson observes in response, a careful reading of these sermons certainly does not leave one with the impression that Edwards is focusing on the psychology of the regenerate soul or the morphology of individual conversion as the pattern for interpreting salvation history, but precisely the reverse.⁷⁶ Scheick is correct in seeing that Edwards’ sermons were governed by the connection between salvation history and personal spiritual experience. But the evidence in Edwards’ sermons clearly points to a *historia salutis* which then encompasses *ordo salutis*—or perhaps better stated: to a salvation history that is both cosmic and personal.

One surprising benefit of this 300th anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards has been the joy of discovering a new conversation partner. As others have also observed, the renaissance in Edwards studies is only beginning to produce fruitful analyses of his biblical writings, especially his sermons, for which we can be grateful.

To appreciate why, with regard to contemporary issues of hermeneutics, exegesis, and theology, Jonathan Edwards was in many respects ahead of his time, we need first to appreciate exactly how he was a man of his own time. Edwards drew on the best exegetical traditions and resources of the Reformation to furnish, both in the method and the substance of biblical studies, an exegetical and theological approach that would effectively nurture parishioners while evangelizing opponents. His approach was both comprehensive and integrative, refusing to divorce the part from

⁷⁴William J. Scheick, “The Grand Design: Jonathan Edwards’ *History of the Work of Redemption*,” in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards*, ed. William J. Scheick (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980 [reprinted from *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8 (Spring, 1975), 300–14]), 178, 181.

⁷⁵Scheick, “The Grand Design: Jonathan Edwards’ *History of the Work of Redemption*,” 184.

⁷⁶Wilson, “Introduction,” 99–100.

the whole while insisting on the unity of both. Among the better responses on this occasion would be the resolve to listen alertly to his voice as we follow carefully in his steps.