

Joseph T. Cochran

Jonathan Edwards and Hebrews

A Harmonic Interpretation of Scripture

V&R



The *Jonathan Edwards*
Center at Yale University



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Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema
and Adriaan C. Neele

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For my beloved wife, Kendall N. Cochran

“He that would know the workings of the New England mind in the middle of the [eighteenth] century, and the throbbings of its heart, must give his days and nights to the study of Jonathan Edwards.”

— George Bancroft

Quoted in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 298.

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Endorsements

Jonathan Edwards devoted more of his life to studying the Bible than many people realize, and while his notes on the Bible can seem haphazard, Cochran shows that his approach to the Bible was anything but that. Instead, Cochran underscores how Edwards interpreted the Bible through a harmonic lens, capturing its prophetic-fulfillment harmony, its typological harmony, and its doctrinal harmony in his engagement with Scripture. Cochran's study of Edwards's reading of the book of Hebrews offers an instructive foray into Edwards's harmonic interpretation of Scripture and really his entire theological program. In a world where life feels increasingly dissonant, the harmonic thinking of a theologian such as Edwards offers an integrated way of viewing reality.

David P. Barshinger, Ph.D.

Senior Editor and Director of Book Editorial, Crossway

Author of *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*

Polymath is a way of describing both Edwards and Cochran in this book, for both authors range widely to demonstrate how our experience of the Scriptures and of the world may be harmonized. The world may be less random than we think! Theological and pastoral topics are addressed using the book of Hebrews, and in Cochran's fine prose complicated debates find elegant exposition. I learnt something on every page!

Rev. Rhys Bezzant, Ph.D.

Principal

Ridley College, Melbourne

Author of *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* and *Jonathan Edwards the Mentor*

Cochran's work elucidates many of the facets of Edwards's mind in tandem with the Book of Hebrews. *Jonathan Edwards and Hebrews* offers a fine piece of original scholarship; a piece much needed in the world of Edwards studies.

John T. Lowe, Ph.D.

University of Louisville

Co-editor of *Jonathan Edwards within the Enlightenment*

Cochran's study of Jonathan Edwards's engagement with the book of Hebrews builds productively on the recent surge of interest in early modern Protestant exegesis and in Edwards as a biblical theologian. But it does more than that, for Cochran shows how Edwards's use of Hebrews reaches into nearly every aspect of his thought: ontology, prophecy, typology, aesthetics, practical theology as well as metaphysics, issues of faith and practice, the nature and destiny of the church—even mysticism. Those who would try to isolate one aspect of Edwards's thought can here learn the lesson that one cannot touch a strand without vibrating the entire web, such are the suggestive and sensitive connections.

Kenneth P. Minkema, Ph.D.

Editor, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*

Director, The Jonathan Edwards Center

Yale University

Jonathan Edwards's exegesis was neglected by most scholars before the twenty-first century. Thanks to the outstanding work of people like Cochran, though, this problem is now being rectified. We will never understand Edwards's intellectual life until we pay due attention to his work with the Bible. And we will not understand Edwards's work with the Bible until we see how he handled the New Testament book of Hebrews, which he thought showed Christians how to read the Bible whole. Cochran's work is a must read for those who think, teach, and write about colonial America's most important thinker.

Douglas A. Sweeney, Ph.D.

Dean of Beeson Divinity School

Samford University

Author of *Edwards the Exegete*

Cochran masterfully weaves together the theological richness of Jonathan Edwards's exegesis of Hebrews, offering profound insights into Edwards's harmonic interpretive method. As the first comprehensive exposition of Edwards's numerous writings and sermons on Hebrews, this book significantly advances our understanding of Edwards's theological depth, in areas such as Christological and natural typology, covenant theology, the doctrine of the Trinity, among others, while illuminating the profound connections between the Old and New Testaments. An indispensable resource for any serious student of Edwards.

Rev. Lisanne Winslow, Ph.D.

Fairfield University

Author of *A Great and Remarkable Analogy: The Onto-Typology of Jonathan Edwards*

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This work would not have been brought to publication had it not been for pivotal figures who invested time to shape me into a better man and scholar. Any shortcomings of this research are surely my own.

The leadership and staff of Calvary Memorial Church, especially Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, provided employment, space, and time to study during doctoral coursework. Two other colleagues at Calvary, Manfred Karoli and Eric Redmond, listened and cared for me when I needed it. Additional thanks are extended to the pastor theologians in my Center for Pastor Theologians ecclesial fellowship. You have patiently and thoughtfully engaged my essays on Edwards for years.

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Ken Minkema's willingness to serve on my doctoral committee and see this monograph to publication is a testimony of his steadfast service to Jonathan Edwards studies. This project benefited from his expertise and attention to detail. He published a series of Jonathan Edwards's sermons on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which have been an asset to this study. He also guided two of my journal articles into publication at *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, each of which clarified this study and its contribution to the field.

I am grateful to institutional support from Trinity Christian College (Palos Heights), Wheaton College, and Purdue University Northwest, and the teaching mentors from those institutions. Dean John Fry at Trinity Christian College provided lecturing opportunities from 2019–2021. Melissa Harkrider and Karen Johnson provided mentoring at Wheaton College from 2020–2024. Associate Dean and History Chair, Mike Lynn cheered me on and marshalled Purdue University financial and research support in ways unexpected to bring this work to publication and to develop me professionally.

A scholarship awarded the opportunity for my wife and I to join other students of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on a Jonathan Edwards tour of New England.

A few small scholarships from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School allowed me on two occasions to write and deliver papers through the Evangelical Theological Society, the Center for Pastor Theologians, and to publish my article with *Jonathan Edwards Studies*. The Center for Pastor Theologians provided honorariums for articles presented and published in their journal. Logos provided a digital collection of the Yale *Works of Jonathan Edwards* for my doctoral studies. Michael Butera entrusted me with a complete hardbound collection of the Yale *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, a priceless gift I shall cherish.

I have had the pleasure of serving the historical guild as an officer of the Conference on Faith and History and its Social Media Coordinator. Oversight, mentoring, and camaraderie provided by Jonathan Den Hartog, Beth Allison Barr, Rick Kennedy, Elesha Coffman, and Chris Gehrz have been a treasure for over five years. Numerous historians have sharpened my understanding of Edwards and have read part or all of this manuscript. I am grateful for the collegial spirit of David Barshinger, Rhys Bezzant, Robert Brown, Ava Chamberlain, Oliver Crisp, John Lowe, Michael McClymond, Stephen R. C. Nichols, John Saillant, Stephen J. Stein, Kyle Strobel, Obbie Todd, Peter Thuesen, Rachel Wheeler, and Lisanne Winslow. I am grateful to the expertise each contributed as I gleaned from their learning. Profuse thanks are offered to Zak Tharp, who indexed this monograph in record time. Another historian, Chris Allison, makes mention as not only an outstanding American historian but a first-rate neighbor.

Final thanks go to family. I am grateful for the constant support and accountability of my parents. They have been there in various ways when our family had need. Weekly conversations and updates from them have brought me joy each week. Dearest thanks go to my immediate family, the five most valued people in my life. Thank you Chloe, Asher, Adalie, and Clara for brightening my day and inspiring me to lead and model virtue, affection, and love with a charitability and patience that only children can draw from a father. Finally, thank you, beloved Kendall, for cheering me on and providing the space and time in the late nights, early mornings, and long weekends to complete this study. You are a strong, lovely, and beautiful woman, who deserves this monograph's dedication.

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>JES</i> | Jonathan Edwards Studies |
| <i>OHJE</i> | Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards |
| <i>WJE</i> | Works of Jonathan Edwards |
| <i>WJEO</i> | Works of Jonathan Edwards Online |
| <i>WJF</i> | Works of John Flavell |
| <i>WJO</i> | Works of John Owen |

Introduction

Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) lived in a period characterized by increased skepticism towards metaphysics and the enchanted world. His rapidly changing intellectual world emphasized rationalism, which utilized the five senses to empirically construct the natural world. Edwards lived geographically on the frontier edge of the Atlantic World. He dwelled at the margin of this intellectual movement, which put him at a disadvantage to influence it. However, this “age of reason” influenced him. His formal education and study was shaped by Cambridge Platonists and English natural and moral philosophers such as Newton, Locke, Berkeley, and Hutcheson. He leaned into the tension of capitalizing on the strengths of this “age of reason” while championing a historic, orthodox, and Reformed vision of God, revelation, and redemption. As one caught seemingly between two worlds, Edwards looked to the Holy Scriptures as a harmonic source for the natural world he sensed, and the metaphysical world revealed to him.¹

During his brief pastorate in New York, the *Personal Narrative* recalled an enthusiasm for studying Scripture: “I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy Scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart.” He continued, “Used oftentimes to dwell long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.” His first biographer, Samuel Hopkins, referred to Edwards as one who “studied the Bible more than all other books.” When Sereno E. Dwight published *Notes on Scripture*, he commended his great-grandfather’s “regular and diligent study of the Sacred Scriptures.”²

1 This “Age of Reason” experienced rapid shifts in biblical interpretation as critical interpretive methods developed. Gerald R. Cragg says: “The atmosphere of the age encouraged the critics of the churches to venture on more and more explicit assaults on traditional beliefs...At the outset the attacks were peripheral. Men did not directly criticize the Bible, but raised questions about chronology.” *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648–1789* (New York: Penguin, 1960), 47. Historians have since come around to critique the payout of the critical method. David Steinmetz advanced a famous thesis in favor of the “Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis.” *Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3. Also see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History*, 92–95, 118–127; Avihu Zakai, “The Age of Enlightenment” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, edited by Stephen J. Stein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80–99.

2 WJE, 16:797. Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New-Jersey* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1765), iii, 40. Sereno E. Dwight, ed., *The*

Until recently, his interpretation of Scripture had been neglected in Edwards studies. Robert E. Brown's contribution to *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* begins: "Jonathan Edwards' biblical interpretation is the subject most neglected in the study of his writings and intellectual pursuits, and the subject most deserving attention by scholars and admirers alike." Stephen R. C. Nichols echoes Brown's sentiment in his study on Edwards's view of the relationship between the Old and New Testament. Nichols says, "There remains at present a lack of scholarship of the Bible in the thought of colonial pastor-theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)." Nichols continues, observing that people study Edwards as a "philosopher, scientist, rhetorician and religious psychologist ... Less familiar, however, is Edwards the interpreter of Scripture." The testimony of Edwards, his family, and friends demonstrated that this had been a gross oversight in Edwards studies. Douglas Sweeney comments that for centuries there appeared to be a disinterest in Edwards's exegesis: "Three hundred years after his birth, half a century into what some have called the Edwards renaissance, few have bothered to study Edwards's massive exegetical corpus." Yet, the Bible was his daily staple. Brown, Nichols, and Sweeney have been among a handful of recent scholars that took this assertion seriously and attempted to fill this lacuna. These studies have been instrumental in constructing a more complete depiction of the Northampton Sage.³

While a rounded depiction of Edwards as a biblical exegete has emerged, there are still complexities to be explored. Simply put, there lacks consensus concerning Edwards's interpretive methodology. For instance, Brown's *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, presents an Edwards who engaged in textual critical and exegetical work with biblical languages. Stephen Stein argues that Edwards's engagement in the study of Scripture employed biblical language studies and typological interpretation in his *Notes on Scripture* and the *Blank Bible*. McClymond and McDermott's massive work on Edwards's theology argues that Edwards employed a spiritual exegesis of Scripture. On the other hand, Oliver Crisp counters that the doctrinal emphasis was the backbone of Edwards's exegesis. As a *via media* to Stein and Crisp, Adriaan

Works of President Edwards: With a Memoir of His Life, vol. 1 (New York: S. Converse, 1829–1830), 57.

³ Robert E. Brown in "The Bible", *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, edited by Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 87. Stephen R. C. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards's Bible* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 1. Douglas A. Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7. For an additional scholar, see Donald S. Whitney, *Finding God in Solitude* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014). He commented: "Care should be taken not to overlook the essential fact that prayerful study and prolonged meditation on the text of the Bible was the supreme means by which Edwards sought to know and experience God and to pursue conformity to the person and work of Jesus Christ." Whitney, *Finding God in Solitude*, 81.

Neele asserts in *Before Jonathan Edwards* that Edwards's study of Scripture resonates with the exegetical and theological work of the Reformed-Scholastics.⁴

These examples demonstrate the range of views on Edwards's approach to exegesis. Robert Jenson's passing observation about Edwards's exegesis reveals why there are multiple interpretations about his exegetical methods. Jenson observes: "Edwards' *biblical exegeses* are almost always faithful to the texts, within the limits of then available information, in stark contrast to those of his opponents." Jenson pluralized exegesis. This is telling and accounts for the proliferating theses on Edwards's exegetical methodology. There is no current consensus on Edwards's complex exegetical methodology because his exegesis cannot be reduced to a singular method. Since his interpretive methodology lacks consensus and multiple theses describe his hermeneutic, there is still much room for exploring his exegetical methods in order to build upon the positive strides taken recently to elucidate it.⁵

4 Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002). "Edwards's most explicit and sustained engagement with the Bible as a commentator, however, occurs in the entries contained in his two major commentaries, the *Notes on Scripture* and the "Blank Bible." ... Edwards studied the text of the Bible very closely, sometimes turning initially to the Hebrew and Greek for a firsthand examination of the ancient texts." Stephen J. Stein in "Edwards as Biblical Exegete," *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 184. McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 175–180. Stein has also argued for Edwards's emphasis on deriving the spiritual sense of Scripture. See "Quest for the Spiritual Sense: The Biblical Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (1977), 107–109. "Although he followed the Puritan model of elucidating text, doctrine, and application, Edwards's understanding of the role of the sermon in conversion, his religious psychology, and his insistence upon laying bare the idea (in the Lockean sense of that term) before the minds of his hearers, meant that getting clear the doctrinal content of his sermons was of particular importance to him." Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians*, 145, emphasis added. Adriaan Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

5 Robert Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 145, emphasis added. In addition to the works cited in this section on Edwards's exegesis, there are a number of scattered chapter contributions in compendiums and journal articles that explore Edwards's exegesis. See Stephen J. Stein, "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis" in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, edited by Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118–30; Douglas A. Sweeney, "Longing for More and More of It? The Strange Career of Jonathan Edwards's Exegetical Exertions"; Robert E. Brown, "The Sacred and the Profane Connected: Edwards, the Bible, and Intellectual Culture"; and Stephen J. Stein, "Jonathan Edwards and the Cultures of Biblical Violence" in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb J. D. Maskell (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 25–64; Douglas A. Sweeney, "Jonathan Edwards, the Harmony of Scripture, and Canonical Exegesis," *Trinity Journal* 34, No. 2 (Fall 2013): 171–207; Douglas A. Sweeney, "The Biblical World of Jonathan Edwards," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 3, No. 2 (2013): 221–268; Michal Choinski, "A Cognitive Approach to the Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards's Sermons," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 4, No. 2 (2014): 215–227; Douglas A. Sweeney, "Edwards on the Divinity, Necessity and Power of the Word of God in the World"; Stephen

The vast corpus of Edwards offers significant space to explore his exegesis, and there has been much renewed interest by scholars to engage in this task. Some scholars have reflected on Edwards's exegesis to correct a general exegetical oversight or radical aspects of his thought—such as his idealism, occasionalism, and what some might call hyper-typology. Others have examined his work with a particular text or genre of texts as a form of discovery. These scholars wished to see the exegetical practices and conclusions of Edwards emerge from his writings.⁶

R. C. Nichols, "Jonathan Edwards and the Bible: Christ, the Scope of Scripture" in *Jonathan Edwards for the Church: The Ministry and the Means of Grace*, ed. William M. Schweitzer (Watchmead, Welwyn Garden City: EP Books, 2015), 163–204; Ryan Hoselton, "Jonathan Edwards, the Inner Witness of the Spirit, and Experiential Exegesis," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 5, No. 2 (2015): 90–120; Darren M. Pollock, "The Exegetical Basis of Jonathan Edwards' Cessationism," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 5, No. 2 (2015): 121–137. Also see the entries on Allegorical Method, Allegory and Typology, Biblical Languages (Hebrew and Greek), Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Scripture (Exegetical Sources), Scripture (Word of God), in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, Adriaan C. Neele (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

- 6 See the following: Stephen J. Stein, "'Like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver': The Portrait of Wisdom in Jonathan Edwards's Commentary on the Book of Proverbs," *Church History* 54 (1985): 324–337; Glenn R. Kreider, *Jonathan Edwards's Interpretation of Revelation 4:1–8:1* (Dallas, TX: University Press of America, Inc., 2004); William A. Tooman, "Edwards's Ezekiel: The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the *Blank Bible* and *Notes on Scripture*," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 3, No. 1 (Spring 2009): 17–38; Stephen J. Stein, "Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards on the Epistle of James: A Comparative Study," in *Cotton Mather and Biblia Americana—America's First Bible Commentary: Essays in Reappraisal*, ed. Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievernann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 363–82; Jeongmo Yoo, "Jonathan Edwards's Interpretation of the Major Prophets: The Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, No. 2 (2011): 160–192; David P. Barshinger, "Making the Psalter One's 'Own Language': Jonathan Edwards Engages the Psalms," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 2, No. 1 (2012): 3–29; Mark A. Noll, "Jonathan Edwards' Use of the Bible A Case Study (Genesis 32:22–32) with Comparisons," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 2, No. 1 (2012): 30–46; Andrew T. Abernethy, "Jonathan Edwards as Multi-Dimension[al] Bible Interpreter: A Case Study from Isaiah 40–55," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, No. 4 (December 2013): 815–830; Catherine Sider Hamilton, "Jonathan Edwards, Paul, and the Priority of Holiness: a variant reading," *The Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, No. 1 (Spring 2013): 1–20; David S. Lovi and Benjamin Westerhoff, *The Power of God: A Jonathan Edwards Commentary on the Book of Romans* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013); John Serré, "'Buying and Selling: One of Those Improvements of Human Society'—Jonathan Edwards on Ezekiel 22:12," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 3, No. 1 (2013): 3–24; David P. Barshinger, "Spite or Spirit: Jonathan Edwards on the Imprecatory Language in the Psalms," *Westminster Theological Journal* 77, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 53–69; David P. Barshinger and Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture: Biblical Exegesis in British North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Philip Smith, "'A Shadow of Death' Jonathan Edwards and the Book of Job," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 8, No. 2 (2018): 96–114; Drew Hunter, "Hebrews and the Typology of Jonathan Edwards," *Themelios* 44, No. 2 (August 2019): 339–352; Ricky F. Njoto "The Lord's Supper in the Hands of a Sensitive Preacher: The Bible in Edwards' Sermons on 1 Corinthians 10," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 9, No. 2 (2019): 28–59; Joseph T. Cochran, "Jonathan Edwards's Harmonic Interpretation of Hebrews 12:22–24," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 10, No. 1 (2020): 20–47.

Another interpretive methodology Edwards employed included viewing redemptive history as a hermeneutical key to Scripture. Thirty sermons on *A History of the Work of Redemption* revealed how Edwards harnessed this interpretive framework for a biblical and historical theology. In reference to his historical, exegetical, and theological account of redemptive history, Douglas Sweeney says:

Edwards read most of Scripture in relation to its overarching story of redemption in and through the secular world. *Some contend that this was his most prevalent exegetical move*, one that shaped all other ways he handled holy writ (informing his instincts as to the “plain” sense, the contours of the canon, the importance of preaching Christ from nearly all its nook and crannies, and the purpose of its pedagogy).⁷

One exemplar of renewed engagement in Edwards’s exegetical practices and a proponent for this particular technique is David Barshinger. He defends Edwards’s redemptive-historical interpretation of Scripture with his study, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*. Barshinger convincingly demonstrates that Edwards employed a redemptive-historical interpretive strategy for the book of Psalms. Though this was one technique Edwards used to approach exegesis, it certainly was not his only technique.⁸

Douglas A. Sweeney presents four models or habits for Edwards’s exegesis in his seminal work, *Edwards the Exegete*. In his “stereoscopic study” of Edwards’s exegesis he presents these four models successively and pairs them with case studies. These four habits are (1) canonical, (2) typological, (3) redemptive-historical, and (4) pedagogical. Sweeney’s study proved to be so productive that an edited compendium by Barshinger and Sweeney followed in which fourteen experts of Edwards studies provided further case studies on his exegetical habits. Barshinger explains in the introduction to *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture* that such an approach “lets Edwards speak for himself. It also avoids the impulse of forcing contemporary categories on him, instead acknowledging one of the differences between his world and ours.” Delving into Edwards’s notebooks, sermons, and treatises does permit him to speak for himself. Yet, in order for such a project to be productive, clear objectives and constraints must be set.⁹

7 Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete*, 138, emphasis mine.

8 David Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms: A Redemptive-Historical Vision of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5, 26.

9 Regarding Sweeney’s stereoscopic approach, he says: “By viewing Edwards on the canon in this stereoscopic way—pairing his work on canonicity with an instance of his habit of reading individual Scripture texts in light of the whole canon—we enhance our estimation of the most basic, common form of his interpretation of Scripture, laying a theological groundwork for our study of some other forms of exegesis later.” Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete*, 55. *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture*, 7.

One opportunity for such an exercise exists with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Edwards preached thirty-eight sermons on Hebrews. He referenced this epistle at least 1,805 times across his 73 volume corpus. There are 110 cross references to Hebrews across the Old and New Testament of the “Blank Bible” and 105 Hebrews entries in the “Blank Bible.” There are 49 cross references to Hebrews in “Notes on Scripture” and 14 Hebrews entries in “Notes on Scripture.” There are 24 references to Hebrews in his “Typology Notebooks.” Suffice to say this epistle provides ample textual evidence to re-examine Edwards’s exegetical methodology. This signature New Testament epistle also welcomes more opportunity to induce a richer understanding of Edwards’s exegesis. Thus, this study presents an argument for Edwards’s exegesis of Hebrews.¹⁰

The Hebrews 12:22–24 Sermon Series

The Connecticut River Valley revival occurred from 1734–35. Northampton, a frontier town on the margin of the British colonial Atlantic World, emerged from anonymity because of Edwards’s account of the revival. He published *A Faithful Narrative* in 1737 from London. It had two London printings before its third printing and first publication in Boston in 1738. As revival enthusiasm declined, Edwards devoted his energy to studying patterns of revival. A number of “Miscellanies” entries written during the last half of the 1730s indicated his interest in revival patterns, or what he referred to as “effusions of the Holy Spirit” throughout his sermon series on *A History of the Work of Redemption*. Edwards envisioned turning this 1739 sermon series into a treatise that fused a philosophy of history and biblical theology into a singular presentation on the work of redemption.¹¹

10 This number is based on a “Quick Search” for “Heb” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwGl sby9zaG93cmVzdF8/a3dpYy42LjEuMTI3MjUuMC45OS53amVv, accessed February, 20, 2020).

11 See the following “Miscellanies” entries for Edwards’s interest in revival: “Miscellanies” No. 695 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:276–281; No. 703 “Sin Against the Holy Ghost,” *WJE*, 18:309–314; No. 705 “Free Grace. Justification,” *WJE*, 18:321; No. 706 “Sin Against the Holy Ghost: Why Unpardonable,” *WJE*, 18:321–330; No. 707 “Sin Against the Holy Ghost” *WJE*, 18:330–332; No. 711 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:340–41; No. 712 “Justification. Faith. Moral and Natural Suitableness,” *WJE*, 18:341–342; No. 713 “Infinite Evil of Sin. Worthlessness of Our Holiness. Free Grace. Justification,” *WJE*, 18:343–344; No. 714 “Free Grace. Justification by Faith Alone,” *WJE*, 18:344–346; No. 722 “Visible Church,” *WJE*, 18:351; No. 724 “Preparatory Work,” *WJE*, 18:352; No. 726 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:352–353; No. 729 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:353–357; No. 734 “Preparatory Work,” *WJE*, 18:359; No. 750 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:398; No. 755 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:403–404; No. 757 “Justification by Faith Alone,” *WJE*, 18:404–405; No. 758 “Dispensations. Testaments. Justification by Faith Alone,” *WJE*, 18:405; No. 763 “Absolute Decrees. Sincerity of God’s Invitations,” *WJE*, 18:409–410; No. 773 “Perse-

In April and May of 1740, Edwards preached eight sermons on Hebrews 12:22–24. He offered these sermons as his most extensive treatment of a passage from Hebrews. Ultimately, this series constituted eight of the thirty-eight sermons Edwards preached from this epistle, which comprised approximately 20 percent of his Hebrews exposition. Edwards put a premium value on the doctrinal capital that Hebrews 12:22–24 afforded his congregation, and he used this content to interact with doctrinal themes throughout Hebrews.¹²

He left inklings of his desire to preach this series in the conclusion of “Sermon Seven” in *A History of the Work of Redemption*. David had taken the city of Jerusalem and established it as his capital. Edwards believed that “this city of Jerusalem is ... the greatest type of the church of Christ in all the Old Testament.” He derived evidence from historical events for this claim to typological supremacy. Important aspects of God’s mission to redeem the church took place in Jerusalem, which was a historically sacred space for the church. The church first gathered and met there

verance,” *WJE*, 18:422–424; No. 774 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:424–425; No. 780 Justification,” *WJE*, 18:449–450; No. 783 “Justification,” *WJE*, 18:466; No. 790 “Signs of Godliness,” *WJE*, 18:474–488; No. 792. “Justification,” *WJE*, 18:495; No. 793. “Justification,” *WJE*, 18:495; No. 794 “Christ’s Righteousness. Justification,” *WJE*, 18:496; No. 795 “Condition of Salvation. Holy Life. Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:496–497; No. 799 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:498–500; No. 800 “Signs of Godliness,” *WJE*, 18:500–501; No. 807 “Work of Redemption the Greatest of God’s Work,” *WJE*, 18:510; No. 808 “Justification by Faith Alone. Perseverance of Faith,” *WJE*, 510–512; No. 814 “Progress of Redemption,” *WJE*, 18:523–525; No. 818 “Grace, How a Principle in the Heart,” *WJE*, 18:528–530; No. 819 “How Evangelical Obedience influences in the Affairs of Justification,” *WJE*, 18:530–531; No. 820 “Justification,” *WJE*, 18:531; No. 823 “Perseverance,” *WJE*, 18:534–355; No. 825 “Covenant of Grace and Redemption,” *WJE*, 18:536–537; No. 829 “Justification,” *WJE*, 18:539–540; No. 831 “Justification by Faith,” *WJE*, 18:543–546. Also see Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). In the same reply to the trustees of the College of New Jersey, Edwards discussed his intention to write *A History of the Work of Redemption*: “I have had on my mind and heart (which I long ago began, not with any view to publication) a great work, which I call *A History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an 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; which I suppose is to be the grand design of all God’s designs, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and degrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme in their historical order.” *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 16, Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 727–728. Later John Erskine convinced Jonathan Edwards Jr. to have *A History of the Work of Redemption* published in Scotland. The two collaborated to edit Edwards’s sermons and bring them to publication in 1774. For an account of the publication of this work see Jonathan Yeager’s study *Jonathan Edwards and Transatlantic Print Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 117–120.

- 12 Cf. *Sermons by Jonathan Edwards on the Church, Volume 1: How Christian Are Come to Mt. Sion*, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema, R. Craig Woods, and Thomas Koontz, with an introduction by Wilson H. Kimnach (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019).

after Christ's resurrection, and it was there that the Holy Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost. He concluded "Sermon Seven" with: "Thus God chose Mount Sion when the gospel was to be sounded forth as the law had been from Mount Sinai." This notable allusion to Hebrews 12:22 along with the marginal notation to "enlarge on this comparison more fully" in his sermon notebook for "Sermon Seven" indicated Edwards's future intent to preach this series. The Hebrews 12:22–24 series preached in the spring of 1740 was this enlargement. In fact, though this series was not truly part of *A History of the Work of Redemption*, it is very interesting that the first sermon included Edwards's notational marker for "Redemption." The presence of this symbol may indicate that Edwards intended to include at least some of this content in his "great work" on *A History of The Work of Redemption*.¹³

These eight sermons revealed how Edwards employed redemptive history to elucidate key doctrines of systematic theology. This series demonstrated that the history of redemption functioned as an optimal way to convey the doctrines of heaven and Angelology (Sermon 545), ecclesiology (Sermon 546), Trinitarianism (Sermon 547), anthropology (Sermon 548), covenant (Sermon 549), and atonement (Sermon 550). Edwards marshaled Hebrews 12:22–24 to stimulate his congregation's understanding of the relationship between redemption history and vital doctrines of the Christian faith, so that they might recognize who God is, the great end to which he works, and their role in redemptive history. Thus, his Northampton congregation functioned as a secular and militant ectype for the archetype of the heavenly and triumphant church. As a type, the church in Northampton shadowed forth the beautiful, true, and better reality of its antitype, the new Jerusalem.

Of course, this redemptive-historical and systematic study could not have been achieved had Edwards not first championed a harmonious understanding of the Old and New Testament. All his biblical-theological and systematic work was undergirded by his ability to negotiate continuities and discontinuities between the two testaments. Edwards had an uncanny knack for coherently harmonizing the Old and New Testament. This habit became the lynchpin that held his biblical and systematic theology together in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Hebrews 12:22–24 sermon series represented Edwards's program for interpreting the rest of Hebrews. For this reason, nearly all of the chapters in this study contain a discussion of one of the sermons from this series. The remainder of this study unpacks how Edwards practiced a harmonic interpretation of Hebrews through the course of his life.

13 These comments about Jerusalem should resonate with anyone familiar with the four-fold sense of Scripture interpretation: literal-historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. "Sermon Seven," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 9, A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989), 213, n. 1.

A Harmonic Interpretation of Hebrews

The sermon series on Hebrews 12:22–24 demonstrated his attention to redemption history. This series grounded the force of the text on a call to respond to God's great work of redemption. Yet, the rich theological commentary in this series revealed his acumen with doctrine. As he approached Hebrews, Edwards integrated exegetical study, biblical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology to orient the church into an encounter with God. He utilized Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as sources for understanding God *qua* Triune, the Bible *qua* Scripture, and himself *qua* image of God. He employed the canon, creed, and culture as guides for connecting to the Creator. He made these corollaries defensible amid his intellectual context, and he did so by reading Scripture and preaching sermons as an encounter with God, just as the precritical, Reformed tradition supposed.¹⁴

Edwards's harmonious view of Scripture facilitated the integration of exegetical and theological study with rational and empirical thought. His ability to harmonize the Old and New Testament enlivened the study of Hebrews. The argument and contribution of this study is that Edwards employed a harmonic interpretive methodology for the Epistle to the Hebrews. His notebooks, sermons, and treatises treated Hebrews as a theological tome, which presented a coherent story across both testaments. In order for Edwards to properly construe Hebrews, he approached this text as one who had mastered the interpretation of vast portions of Israel's story; he reoriented that story in light of his mastery of interpreting Jesus's story in the gospels; and, finally, he appropriated his harmonic strategy to reconcile these two testament's chief storylines—the one of Israel and the one of Jesus—in order to instruct the church in the biblical and systematic doctrines contained in Hebrews.

His harmonic strategy for interpreting Hebrews was built on three principles. First, Edwards presented how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ; Hebrews addressed many of these prophecies, which played a fundamental role in the argument of this epistle. Second, Edwards typologically interpreted the Old Testament; as he engaged in this practice, Hebrews invited him ample opportunity to typologically engage the text. Third, Edwards harmonized Christian living and doctrine found in both testaments; Hebrews again had choice passages demonstrating this harmony. Thus, Hebrews is a remarkable case-study for demonstrating Edwards's particular kind of canonical exegesis, which I have dubbed harmonic exegesis. This study proffers that the harmonic

14 Steinmetz, "Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis" in *Taking the Long View*, 1–14; Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 32; John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 72.