

Douglas A. Sweeney
*Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word:
A Model of Faith and Thought*
(Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 208 pages.

The content of this new book on the premier theologian of the eighteenth century by a leading Edwards scholar is broader than the title would suggest. While Edwards' exposition of and meditation on the Holy Scriptures provides the overarching framework of the book, Sweeney meshes with this leitmotiv a superb biographical reflection on Edwards' life. This reflection contains details of Edwards' life that Sweeney has obviously mined from the rich veins of Edwards scholarship of the past fifty years—quite evident in the footnotes. For example, rarely do you find in studies of Edwards the enumeration of all of Edwards' sisters—he had ten of them!—with their birth-and death-dates and who they married—if they did tie the knot (see pages 13-14). Sweeney even gives the names and biographical detail about the slaves owned by Edwards (page 15), one clear area of failure on Edwards' part.

Sweeney's use of such fascinating detail never overwhelms his major narrative, in which he deftly outlines the theological contours of Edwards' faith, its literary expression and its impact on his times. At the same time, Sweeney is able to retain a popular tone in the book, even providing in the final chapter seven theses for discussion, so as to “spark reflection about what we can learn from Edwards” today (page 197; see pages 197-200). In fine, this book is without a doubt one of the best studies to appear on Edwards in recent years.

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