

Introduction

As the passing of two and a half centuries has shown, the ministry and thought of the greatest American theologian, Jonathan Edwards, not only lives on today, but is still peerless in its depth of insight. That simple fact makes it almost shocking that until now, no one has endeavored to compile and collate his comments on individual books of the Bible.

In fact, the only thing close to a commentary that Edwards ever wrote was a private notebook on the book of Revelation. However, anyone who has delved into Edwards' oeuvre can very quickly deduce that he has commented extensively on the Bible in addition to Revelation. John H. Gerstner, who wrote extensively on the theology of Edwards, had once averred that Edwards probably commented on every verse of the Bible. While that was a slight exaggeration on Gerstner's part, it is not very far off base. The Edwards corpus is extraordinarily massive, and that at a time when paper was a scarce commodity. Edwards' comments on particular Bible verses however, are found in the diaspora of his voluminous writings, spanning sermons, books, miscellaneous comments, private notebooks, letters, a biography, treatises, his "Blank Bible", and various handbooks.

In 2010, the editors decided that it would be helpful to gather everything Jonathan Edwards ever wrote on the book of Romans and organize it into a commentary. So that is what we have done. Readers of this Romans commentary will be pleased to possess almost everything Edwards has ever written, gleaned from his massive corpus concerning the book of Romans, the exception being only a very small amount of un-transcribed material. In addition, we have included the sermon explication portions of all of Edwards' sermons on Romans. Edwards' explications were always given at the beginning of his sermons and they served to unfold the particular passage in which he was engaged. We have found them to be very helpful, both in understanding the progression of Edwards' preaching style (he used far more sermon notes in the first half of his ministry, and

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less after he encountered George Whitefield), and also his extraordinary depth of insight when it came to expounding a text.

Why Romans and why Edwards? Well, Romans contains core Christian soteriology and biblical theology. A number of theological themes found in Romans have emerged in recent years as points of contention. For example, N. T. Wright and John Piper have written several books in dialogue concerning the true nature of justification. Rob Bell's book *Love Wins* touches on God's wrath (or in his case, lack thereof), who it is directed towards, and how long it will last. We felt that since Romans is such a touch point of contention in our day, it would be good to have a voice from the past speak on it. Other themes such as Israel, predestination, the church, Christian living, faith, the Law, resurrection, sin and other biblical theological motifs are addressed in this epistle as well. So Romans was a logical choice for Edwards to weigh in on.

Why Jonathan Edwards? First of all, Edwards was incredibly prolific. Perry Miller has called him a genius and on par with Melville, Twain, and Emerson (*Jonathan Edwards* Miller, xvi). As one of the greatest minds in American history, and one of America's greatest pastors, we thought that his comments on the book of Romans would be an invaluable resource for pastors, theologians, New Testament scholars, Edwards scholars, church historians, and curious readers of the Bible. We hope that Edwards' commentary on Romans will lay open next to other respected commentaries, as pastors prepare sermons, or as church historians attempt to understand Edwards' view on God's Sovereignty (see his comments on Romans 9). We are certain that the material contained herein will fire up the hearts and minds of students of the Bible and of Jonathan Edwards.

We would like to extend our utmost thanks to the people who have made this book possible: Dr. Doug Sweeney and Dr. Kenneth Minkema, thank you so much for encouraging this project, and for your consistent willingness to lend advice and assistance. It is no exaggeration to say that this book would not have come to fruition without your help. A word of appreciation and thanks must also be given to the late Dr. John H. Gerstner who being dead yet speaketh! Gerstner's lectures on the Theology of Jonathan Edwards were the original impetus for this commentary, and we have been continually blessed by listening to them over and over throughout the years. Thank you so much to our lovely wives, Amy Lovi and Maria Westerhoff. You have put up with our spending long hours in front of the computer screen and on the phone, and you have done so with much grace! May the Lord reward your patience! We would like to also

thank Christian Amondson and Robin Parry from Pickwick Publications and Wipf & Stock for offering to publish this book.

A note on the text: We present Edwards to you as John Gerstner liked to say, “warts and all” just as the manuscripts are in the Yale archives. Sometimes Edwards uses words like “don’t” where we would use “doesn’t,” “ben’t” for “be not,” “mayn’t” for “may not” etc. Often modern editions of Edwards’ works omit these idiosyncratic spellings, but in order to preserve the language and in keeping with the integrity of the Yale edition of his works ([www.http://edwards.yale.edu/](http://edwards.yale.edu/)), we give you Edwards in his own words.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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