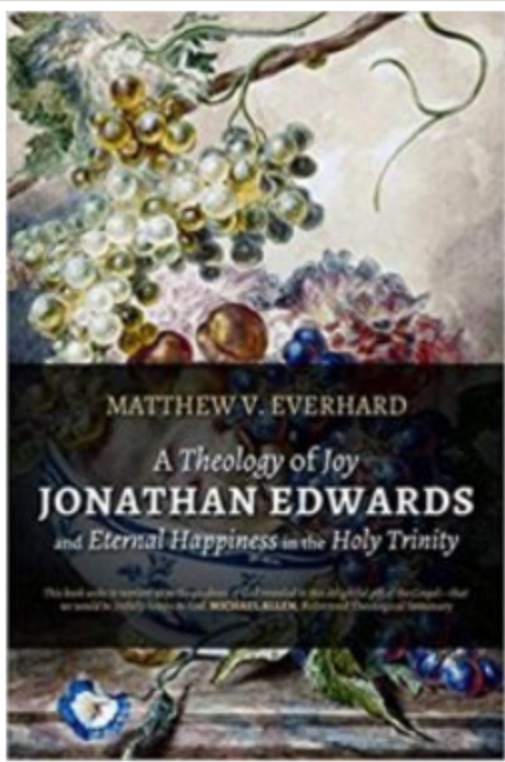


Sweeney’s Booknotes: A Theology of Joy

by Doug Sweeney | June 22nd, 2018

Matthew V. Everhard, *A Theology of Joy: Jonathan Edwards and Eternal Happiness in the Holy Trinity* (n.p.: JESociety Press, 2018).



This new release from Dr. Robert Boss’s JESociety (<http://www.jesociety.org/>) is a revised version of Everhard’s Doctor of Ministry project at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando.

The Senior Pastor of Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brooksville, Florida, the author is no stranger to the study of Jonathan Edwards. Less than two years ago, he and Boss produced a volume of helpful [essays on Edwards](#) with the JESociety Press. Everhard also shepherds edwardsstudies.com. He likes to emphasize the usefulness of Edwards to Christians.

The current volume tells the story of its author’s quest for joy in everyday life and pastoral ministry, which was completed with a little bit of help from John Piper and the writings of Edwards and others (especially Augustine and Calvin). It also sets forth an Edwardsean theology of joy. In Everhard’s words, “this book does not attempt to mine new territory or to discover new theological motifs that have never been discussed more competently in other places. As limited as the topic of joy is, this short book does not attempt to be theologically novel or particularly original. On the contrary, this book will merely attempt to summarize a few of the major themes related to joy that can be found in the writings of the Puritan, Jonathan Edwards” (p. 9).

A Theology of Joy includes ten main chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. After doing some of his own Edwards-style exegesis, the author gathers fruit from some of Edwards’ best-known writings, most importantly—though certainly only—*Religious Affections* and his series on the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (based on Matthew 25), published as *True and False Christians* by [Ken Minkema](#), [Adriaan Neele](#), and [Bryan McCarthy](#) in a series of Edwards’ sermons on the Matthean parables. Then Everhard applies Edwards on joy to pastoral ministry.

“Perhaps the most important things that Edwards has taught me in my research on his theology of joy,” Rev. Everhard concludes, “can be reduced to two simple truths. First, I must guard jealously the joy that I have as a pastor and as a redeemed sinner in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although there are many threats and counterfeits, there truly is no joy that can replace that which I have in God’s Trinitarian work of redemption. Secondly, as a pastor, I must prepare my people for death by relentlessly showing them the temporality of this world (as beautiful as it is) and causing them to set their gaze forward, on the eternal joys that are to come in eternity in the ‘joy of thy lord’ (Matthew 25:21)” (p. 203).

More power to Boss, Everhard and several other pastors reviewed here in the past few years making Edwards more accessible and useful in the churches.

Tags: JESociety, [Matthew Everhard](#), [Robert Boss](#)

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