

The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards by John Carrick

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Reviewed by George C. Scipione

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You should be interested in good preaching. You should care deeply about the preaching in your church and churches around the globe. You and others need the milk and meat of the Word not spiritual junk food that produces weak, flabby, two-masters hearts or poisoned brews that will kill those who consume them. You also need the milk and meat prepared and presented properly not just thrown at you in a slovenly manner. Indeed, you should be very interested. No, let me state it more forcefully; you must be interested since God's glory and the eternal destinies of hearers are at stake. If you are a preacher you should be concerned even more since you will give an account to the Chief Shepherd Jesus for those who sit under your ministry.

But what is good preaching? One way to determine this is to study great preachers. Today we have audio/video access to preachers and preaching. In the past there are written manuscripts of the great preachers. One such preacher is Jonathan Edwards. Dr. John Carrick, professor of Homiletics at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Taylors South Carolina, has done us a great service in writing *The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards*. This book will help you to understand Edwards and thus something of his greatness as a preacher. This in turn will help you evaluate the preaching that you hear and /or give.

The opening and closing chapters alone are worth the price of the book. Carrick helps you to grasp the greatness of the man and his ministry to the church and to Western Civilization. Chapter one, *The Edwards Legacy* deals with his immense influence and impact. The last chapter, *Jonathan Edwards Today*, deals with the weaknesses and flaws of this great man as well as his strengths and helps to place his preaching in the context of his overall pastoral work. Carrick's excellent and balanced work leads us to praise Edwards' God for the gift of this man. These bookends hold up chapters that deal with particular aspects of his preaching: 2. God-Centeredness; 3. The Preaching of Judgment; 4. Sovereignty and Responsibility; 5. The Concept of Seeking; 6. Christ-Centeredness; 7. The Preaching of Heaven; 8. Introductions; 9. Doctrinal Exposition; 10. Illustrations; 11. Conclusions; 12. Imagery; 13. Repetition; 14. Exclamation; 15. The Use of Scripture; 16. Different Categories of Hearers; 17. The Use of Instruction; 18. Confutation; 19. The Use of Self-Examination; 20. The Use of Exhortation; 21. The Use of the Indicative; 22. Objection and Answers; 23. The Use of Example; 24. Motives; 25. Style; 26. Delivery; 27. The Spirit of God. The chapter on the Spirit of God is of great importance and is on the level with chapters 1 and 28 for power and significance. Secularists who laud Edwards should read this chapter and start to worship Edwards' God and not his abilities! Carrick makes sure the worship goes where Edwards would want it: the Triune God of the Scriptures.

Carrick's style is clean, clear and crisp. His analysis is very insightful, helpful and does not overwhelm the reader. Carrick allows Edwards to speak/preach for himself. Carrick reminds one of the best sports

commentators: they help you to see the game, understand it better and thus enjoy it more without pushing their personality into the lime light. The quoted sermons are long enough to be helpful but not long enough to slow down the rhythm of your reading. You go away thinking of Edwards and his God not Carrick. I commend and recommend this book. You would do well to get it, to read and then to keep it as a reference for further reading and reflection.

Dr. Carrick is not an armchair preacher. He not only teaches homiletics he practices the art of preaching as well. More importantly, he does it well. To use an old elementary school phrase in reverse: it take one to know one. One can only hope that Dr. Carrick will subject other great preachers to the same helpful analysis. May Christ the King give us great preachers and sheep who long to hear the Good Shepherd through them.