In the life and writings of Jonathan Edwards, Perry Miller—according to the author “had identified a beautiful mind ... a figure who, by the grace of God, could imagine the breathtaking reality behind and beyond mundane perception” (1). The Harvard historian thus ignited a movement of academic interest in Edwards, and carried into effect the standard letterpress edition of The Works of Jonathan Edwards, eventually completed in 26 Volumes in 2008. If there have been any shortcomings in scholarly work on Edwards, Schweitzer observes, “it has perhaps been the failure to maintain an awareness of the immense unified vision Miller found so captivating” (2). Thus the “forest has often been missed for the trees” (2). Schweitzer is therefore attracted by the comprehensiveness of Edwards’ thought and vision, which obviously demands a holistic approach—“to take another look at the forest” (2). Schweitzer is therefore challenged by the question whether there is a particular distinctiveness, something of a “core intuition” underlying the theology of Edwards? The author finds it in Edwards’ central insight that God is a communicative being. Hence the sub-title of the book: Divine Communicativeness and Harmony in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards.

The intention of Schweitzer is to appraise this theological insight and value it within the range of a comprehensive coherency. Schweitzer does so in terms of the “teleology of divine communication and the methodology of interpreting harmony” (7) with reference to the context of the Enlightenment and revivals. He unfolds this unifying factor or central concept in the theology of Edwards as an apologetic strategy and response, encountering the popular critique which classical theology experienced in Edwards' times.

Well-established on both secondary literature and primary sources, the author presents his argument in six chapters. The first chapter, entitled The communicative God, deals with Edwards’ “doctrine of the Trinity and God’s great project to communicate himself ...” (50). The rest of Edwards’ theology “emanate[s] from this single powerful insight” (11) and leads immediately to the interrelated doctrine of revelation and creation. Chapter 2, Nature, explores the ways in which Edwards interpreted creation as a “medium of harmonious divine communication” (32). In his observations and reflection upon nature, creation is not considered in terms of a materialistic or mechanic appraisal, but a joyful appropriation of nature to the glory of God.
Schweitzer then proceeds to investigate the intersection of nature and Scripture, in particular Edwards’ arguments for the rationality and “absolute necessity of a supernatural Word of God” (54) or Special Revelation (Chapter 3). In this regard the Scripture (Chapter 4) is seen by Edwards as “God’s perfect means of carrying on a privileged conversation with his chosen people” (81). Edwards’ “doctrine of Scripture” is followed in chapter 5 by an exposition of his thoughts on God’s communication through History. Schweitzer shows that in Edwards’ thinking, history is always harmonious with the content of Scripture and that “the real protagonist in history is always God and the unified plot always the work of redemption” (116). The infinite self-communication of God happens over time, and an accurate record of this communication (history) becomes thus a record of this communication. The last chapter is devoted to Edwards’ Project, which is to “demonstrate the harmony to be found in and among the media of revelation” (144). Schweitzer’s concluding theory is that Edwards’ lifelong project was to interpret the harmony of God’s self-communication in order to help his fellow intelligent beings better fulfill their purpose for existence.

Schweitzer’s argument is well composed and his trajectory of thought convincingly worked out. It offers a respectable view of the forest. Occasionally he points to a ‘prominent’ tree in the forest—Calvin, for example (38, 55, 73, 82 and 148 ff.). The question, however, is whether the Calvin reception in Edwards allows for the Schweitzer profile as such. Does the use of the famous theologian of the 16th century confirm Edwards’ views?

In mapping out the forest, Schweitzer utilized both primary sources (restricted to the letterpress edition of Yale University) and the scholarly debate incepted by Perry Miller’s Jonathan Edwards (1949) in an integrated way in order to disclose and argue the “core intuition” that underpins the theology and ministry of Edwards. The software online platform of Edwards’ works, a project of the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University incepted in 2008, was not consulted. The author was aware of this ongoing project (2 fn. 3, 58, 83, 90, fn. 39), but apparently his research finished (in 2010) before significant use of the platform could be made. The existence of the platform (Volumes 27–73), which encloses among other things about 75% of Edwards’ sermons, indicates that, embedded in the additional information offered by the platform, there is a forest beyond the one Schweitzer demarcated, outlining a further field of research to be excavated. One should, however, be reminded that, in general, holistic approaches (portraying the forest) tend to lose track of chronology as well as the immediate context in which primary sources came into existence.

All told, there are more than enough good reasons to acquaint oneself with