

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758) AND THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This essay proposes that Jonathan Edwards' inquiry into the nature of theology stands in continuity with Protestant scholasticism, and appropriated former models of catholic and classical theology to the theological context of eighteenth-century New England.

KEYWORDS

Jonathan Edwards; Protestant scholasticism; Nature of theology.

Edwards drew the common distinction between the two kinds of theological knowledge, the first speculative... and the second practical... The aim of [Edwards'] theology was to nurture a "sense" of divine things that took one deeper into their nature than the speculative understanding alone could penetrate and to "guide and influence us in our practice."

Thus E. Brooks Holifield in *Theology in America*.¹ Although Holifield asserts that Edwards' aim and distinction of theology may have been indebted to the Reformed scholastic Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706), many in scholarship on the theology of Edwards, such as Ridderbos, Cherry, Morimoto, Gerstner,

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¹ HOLIFIELD, E. Brooks, *Theology in America. Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2003), 102.

Holmes, and Lee,² have overlooked such indebtedness, which may be an underlying or overarching theme in the interpretation of the nature of Edwards' theology. One reason for such oversight is that many of Edwards' sources remain in untranslated Latin, as Amy Plantinga Pauw points out, following Norman Fiering.³ Another reason may be, as Gerry McDermott recently remarked, that "more scholarly work needs to compare him [Edwards] with European thinkers and issues, and thereby include him in the ongoing discussions of international philosophy and theology."⁴

Therefore, this paper attempts to evaluate Edwards' theological inquiry by a more in-depth view of Protestant scholasticism and its trajectories. I focus on a single document wherein Edwards most distinctively lays out his understanding of the nature of theology – a sermon of November 1739, published as *The Importance and Advantage of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth*.

The period 1737-42 was a challenging and changing time for New England's history. War (French-Indian raids, War of Jenkins' Ear) and awakenings shaped America's early history and theology in unprecedented ways in particular following the Great Awakening, which event is fixed to that towering figure in intellectual history: Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), preacher, theologian, philosopher, missionary, pastor, and university president.⁵

Though steeped in seventeenth-century English Puritanism and continental Post-reformation reformed thought, New England's theological orthodoxy and practice were put to the test during these years. The rise of Arminianism, the dissemination of Deism, and the news about the "New Methodists"⁶ such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, all contributed to division and realigned

² RIDDERBOS, J., *De Theologie van Jonathan Edwards* ('s-Gravenhage: Johan A. Nederbragt, 1907); CHERRY, Conrad, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards. A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966); MORIMOTO, Anri, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); GERSTNER, John H., *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996, reprint); HOLMES, Stephen R., *God of Grace & God of Glory. An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); LEE, Sang H., *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³ PAUW, Amy Plantinga, *The Supreme Harmony of All. The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 27.

⁴ See <http://www.jesociety.org/2010/02/08/whither-edwards-studies/#ixzz10k4bQEUt>, accessed September 27, 2010.

⁵ MARSDEN, George, *Jonathan Edwards. A Life* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2003); MORRIS, William S., *The Young Jonathan Edwards. A Reconstruction* (Chicago: Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1955; The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005).

⁶ EDWARDS, Jonathan, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, Harry S. Stout (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* 22:108. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* hereafter cited as *WJE Online*, vol. no: page no.

allegiances in the British colony. The concern over Arminianism was expressed in the letter exchanges in March 1739 between Capt. Benjamin Wright and the Rev. Benjamin Doolittle of Northfield, Mass. Doolittle accused his parishioner Wright of having “Signified nothing of a desire of peace and love,” while Wright charged his pastor had “often advanced Arminian principles both in pulpit and private conversation.”⁷ The danger of Deism was not only generally known in New England but the congregation of Northampton in particular was, thanks to their pastor, well versed in it. In sermon twenty-four of the *History of the Work of Redemption* series of mid-1739, Edwards warned:

Again, another thing that has of late exceedingly prevailed among Protestants, and especially in England, is deism. The deists wholly cast off the Christian religion, and are professed infidels. They aren’t like the heretics, Arians and Socinians, and others... They deny any revealed religion... and say that God has given mankind no other light to walk by but his own reason.⁸

Edwards was not an insignificant participant in these transformative years of New England, though based at the rural town of Northampton. His *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, published at London (December, 1737) and Boston (December, 1738), had placed him in the emerging network of the transatlantic evangelical community,⁹ and his preaching of various discourses, such as on the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Jan.-Apr., 1738), the series on *I Corinthians 13* (Apr.-Oct., 1738) later published as *Charity and Its Fruits*, and the sermons that became known as *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Mar.-Aug., 1739), established him as an extraordinary preacher.

However, it is precisely in these taxing years for New England’s theology that Edwards evolved as a theologian *par excellence*: historically informed and contemporarily relevant. It is important to note that the pastor of Northampton did not publish a systematic theology like the Post-reformation reformed theologians François Turretini (1623-1687) and Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706),¹⁰ or like his eighteenth-century protégées Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790)

⁷ EDWARDS, Jonathan, *Correspondence by, to and about Edwards and His Family*, *WJE Online* 32: C 56. See also, vol. 32, C 55, and C 57.

⁸ EDWARDS, Jonathan, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, *WJE Online* 9:432.

⁹ O’BRIEN, Susan, “Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond 1700-1790*, eds. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 38-57; and LAMBERT, Frank, “Pedlar in Divinity”: *George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1994); Norman Fiering’s description of the transatlantic republic of letters, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1981), 13-28.

¹⁰ TURRETINI, François, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ in qua status controversiæ perspicue exponitur, præcipua orthodoxorum argumenta proponuntur & vindicantur, & fontes solutionum ape-*

and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803).¹¹ Edwards commented on his predecessors, whose works are leading examples of seventeenth-century Protestant scholasticism joined with piety:

They are both excellent. Turretin is on polemical divinity; on the Five Points, and all other controversial points; and is much larger in these than Mastricht; and is better for one that desires only to be thoroughly versed in controversies. But take Mastricht for divinity in general, doctrine, practice, and controversy; or as an universal system of divinity and it is much better than Turretin or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion.¹²

Edwards' generous praise was an echo of earlier praise, commencing with Cotton Mather's handbook for students studying for the ministry, the *Manuductio ad Ministerium*:

But after all there is nothing that I can with so much Plerophorie Recommend unto you, as a *Mastricht*, his *Theologia Theoretico-practica*. That a Minister of the Gospel may be *Thoroughly furnished unto every Good Work*, and in one or two *Quarto* Volumns enjoy a *well furnished Library*, I know not that the Sun has ever shone upon an Humane Composure that is equal to it.¹³

In fact, Mastricht's work was highly valued by such well-known New England theologians as Benjamin Colman,¹⁴ Joseph Seccombe,¹⁵ Mastricht's

riuntur (Geneve: Samuelem de Tournes, 1680-1686); VAN MASTRICHT, Petrus, *Theoretico-practica theologia. Qua, per singula capita theologica, pars exegetica, dogmatica, elenchtica & practica, perpetua successione conjugantur* (Utrecht: Thomas Appels, 1699).

¹¹ BELLAMY, Joseph, *True religion delineated or, Experimental religion, as distinguished from formality on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other, set in a scriptural and rational light. In two discourses. In which some of the principal errors both of the Arminian and Antinomians are confuted, the foundation and superstructure of their different schemes demolished, and the truth as it is in Jesus, explained and proved. The whole adapted to the weakest capacities, and designed for the establishment, comfort and quickening of the people of God, in these evil times. By Joseph Bellamy, A.M. Minister of the Gospel at Bethlem in Connecticut. With a preface by the Rev. Mr. Edwards* (Boston: S. Kneeland, in Queen-Street, 1750); HOPKINS, Samuel, *The system of doctrines, contained in Divine revelation, explained and defended. Showing their consistence and connection with each other. To which is added, A treatise on the millennium* (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, 1793).

¹² EDWARDS, *Letters and Personal Writings*, *WJE Online* 16:217.

¹³ MATHER, Cotton, *Manuductio ad Ministerium. Directions for a candidate of the ministry: Wherein, first, a right foundation is laid for his future improvement; and, then, rules are offered for such a management of his academical & preparatory studies; and thereupon, for such a conduct after his appearance in the world; as may render him a skilful and useful minister of the Gospel* (Boston, 1726).

¹⁴ COLMAN, Benjamin, *A Dissertation on the Image of God wherein Man was created* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1736), 27-28.

¹⁵ SECCOMBE, Joseph, *Some Occasional Thoughts on the Influence of the Spirit with Seasonable Cautions against Mistakes and Abuses* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1742, title page).

editor and translator of “On Regeneration”,¹⁶ Samuel Hopkins,¹⁷ and Joseph Bellamy.¹⁸ And Edwards Amasa Park reported that Jonathan Edwards, Jr. read Mastricht’s *TPT* seven times.

In spite of or thanks to Mastricht’s work, however, the absence of a published form of systematic theology or, following the eighteenth-century term, “body of divinity,” in the Edwards *corpus* does not imply that no consideration was given to such a project. On the contrary, as early as 1724 Edwards drafted an outline of a treatise, entitled *A Rational Account of the Principles and Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion*. Though it seems that he abandoned this project after 1740, the thought of composing a body of divinity never left him, as he attested in a letter of 1757 to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University):

I have had on my mind and heart (which I long ago began, not with any view to publication) a great work, which I call *A History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history, considering the affair of Christian theology.¹⁹

Mastricht, the favorite theologian of New England, and Edwards in particular, prefaced his *Theoretico-practica theologia* (1699) with similar words,

I had planned for long . . . a great work about the adventures of the church . . . [and] provide a particular sketch about the history of the church . . . dealing about the *dispensatione foederis gratia* though all the ages of the Church.²⁰

Moreover, in the tumultuous years 1737-42, Edwards drafted at the close of 1739 a “Preface to the Rational Account,” where he mentions “some things that may justly make us suspect that the present fashionable divinity

¹⁶ VAN MASTRICHT, Petrus, *A Treatise on Regeneration. Extracted from his System of Divinity, called Theologia theoretico-practica; and faithfully translated into English; With an Appendix containing Extracts from many celebrated Divines of the reformed Church, upon the same Subject* (New Haven, [1770?]).

¹⁷ HOPKINS, Samuel, *The system of doctrines: contained in divine revelation, explained and defended: showing their consistence and connection with each other: to which is added, A treatise on the millennium* (Boston, Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews 1793), 769.

¹⁸ BELLAMY, Joseph, *The Works of Joseph Bellamy, D.D.* Boston, Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1850-1853, xiv. Jonathan Edwards lent a copy of Mastricht’s work to Bellamy. Cf. Jonathan Edwards, *Catalogue of Books*, *WJE Online* 26:227, as was known also to Tyron Edwards (1809-94). See HAYKIN, Michael A.G., ed. *A Sweet Flame. Piety in the Letters of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 727.

²⁰ VAN MASTRICHT, Petrus, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, praefatio, 1-2.

is wrong.”²¹ Finally, and precisely at that time, Edwards not only included in one of his *Sermon Notebooks* a sketch of a homily on Hebrews 5:12, but also preached an extensive treatment of the text in November 1739 at Northampton, posthumously published as *The Importance and Advantage of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth*.²² What is suggested, here, is that in these times of New England’s contested theology and its practice, Edwards emerged as a prime example of effectively communicating the fundamentals of Christian theology – catholic in its trajectory and contemporary in its setting.

Therefore, a brief analysis with historical-theological commentary of this homily, both in structure and content, is required to discern Edwards’ position in a transitional moment of theology.

In regard to the structure, Edwards’ sermon on Hebrews 5:12 is a literary unit, most likely divided over two preaching occasions, comprising three main divisions, Text, Doctrine and Application,²³ of which the latter is presented as *Uses and Directions*. Wilson H. Kinnach convincingly argues that Edwards relied “upon the basic structure and general rationale of the seventeenth-century Puritan sermon.”²⁴ However, the form of the discourse may have been further strengthened by Edwards’ profound acquaintance with Mastricht’s *Theoretico-practica theologia* that presented each *loci* of Reformed theology in a fourfold and integral manner: exegesis, doctrine, elenctics and *praxis* – the latter also containing uses and directions.²⁵ In particular, Mastricht’s work was written not only for the study of theology but also intended for the preparation of a homily.²⁶ In addition to the threefold division of the discourse, Edwards offers in the doctrinal section, in sketch and published form, four propositions or questions: What divinity is, What kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine, Why knowledge in divinity is necessary, and Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in this knowledge.²⁷ The informed reader notices immediately Edwards’ sophisticated approach to the

²¹ EDWARDS, *The Miscellanies* (entry Nos. 501-832), *WJE Online* 18:546-47.

²² No manuscript has been located. The text was first published in *Practical Sermons never before published* (Edinburgh: M. Gray, 1788), 1-11 (sermon I), 12-25 (sermon II). See on the publication of the text, Edwards, *WJE Online* 22:82.

²³ An indispensable introduction to the sermons of Edwards can be found in Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723*, *WJE Online* 10: 3-258.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁵ See on the discussion on the nature of theology, VAN MASTRICHT, Petrus, *Theoretico-practica theologia. Qua, per singula capita theologica, pars exegetica, dogmatica, elenctica & practica, perpetua successione conjugantur* (Utrecht: Thomas Appels, 1699), 4, “Usus primus reprehensionis...Usus secundus adhortationis.”

²⁶ MASTRICHT, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, preafatio; *Ibid.*, 1226, “In usum Theologiae Theoretico-Practicae.”

²⁷ EDWARDS, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, *WJE Online* 22:85.

theological discourse by raising the (medieval) scholastic *quaestiones*: *Quid sit* (what is), *Qualis sit* (what sort) and *Quantus sit* (how great). These particular rhetorical distinctions, acknowledged by Edwards as an examination “according to the rules of art,”²⁸ unite Edwards’ sermon structure with the method of theological inquiry of Post-reformation reformed thinkers such as Mastricht, and other Protestant scholastics such as Beza, Zanchi, and Gerhard,²⁹ but also of medieval intellectuals such as Lombardus, Aquinas, and Scotus.³⁰ In summary, the structure of Edwards’ exposition on the knowledge of divinity or theology *proper*, then, can be characterized as the *methodus theologiae* and is thereby placed in a long-standing trajectory of the development of the *systema* of theology. This observation is further underscored by examining the content of the first question, the *Quid sit*, stated in Edwards’ *Sermon Notes*³¹ as “What we mean by divinity,” and in the published text, “What divinity is.”³²

Concerning the question, what divinity is, Edwards provides, first, a general statement. Divinity, he asserts, is “that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion.”³³ From a historical-theological perspective, one would recognize Edwards’ ambivalence at this point of the discourse: does he mean that divinity or *theologia* is *scientia* or *doctrina*? Does Edwards take a Thomistic position on the formulation of theology as primary over other sciences? Such seems the initial direction that the Northampton preacher takes, when he writes:

There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ MASTRICHT, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 3; BEZE, Theodore, *Confessio Christianae Fidei* (Geneva: Ioannis Crispini, 1570), 6, “Quantopere necessaria sit fides, & quid sit, Quod sit verae fidei obiectum, & quae eius efficacia;” ZANCHI, Girolamo, *De religione Christiana fides* (Neustadt an der Weinstrasse: Excudebat Matthaus Harnisch, 1585), 119, “Quid sit fide nos iustificari;” GERHARD, Johann, *Locorum Theologicorum Tomus Primus* (Jena: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1610), 43, “Dico (inquit) quòd ista tradit, quid sit finis hominis in particulari, qui visio & fruitio DEI est...Q. seq. Theologia non est, nisi de his, quae continentur in scriptura, & de his, quae possunt elici ex ipsis.”

³⁰ PETER LOMBARD, *Magistri Sententiarum libri IV* (Paris: Iohannis Roigny, 1537), Quaestiones in librum primum; THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologicae* (Rome: editiones Paulinae, 1962), Quaestiones quaestio septima: quid sit subiectum eius;” DUNS SCOTUS, Iohannis, *In Quartum Librum Sententiarum* (Venetia: J. de Colonia, ca. 1477), vol. 1, prologus, v, “trû theologia sit practica.”

³¹ EDWARDS, *Sermon Notebook 14*, *WJE Online* 36, entry [164].

³² EDWARDS, Jonathan, *Practical Sermons never before published* (Edinburgh: M. Gray, 1788), 3. A concise presentation of the development of the discourse content is offered in Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, *WJE Online* 22:80-82.

³³ Ibid., 85.

of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But there is one science, or one certain kind of knowledge and doctrine, which is above all the rest, as it is concerning God and the great business of religion: *this is divinity*.³⁴

Furthermore, this Thomistic thought seemed to be enforced by Edwards' third question about the necessity of the knowledge of divinity – corresponding with Aquinas' opening inquiry in the *Summa Theologica* on the necessity of the nature and extent of sacred doctrine.³⁵ The perceptible Thomistic quality in Edwards' view of theology, however, is modified in considering his observation that “there are two kinds of knowledge of the things of divinity, viz. *speculative* and *practical*, or in other terms, *natural* and *spiritual*.”³⁶ This observation is not only of great importance to the preacher at Northampton – given the attention in the doctrine and application section of the sermon to this inquiry – but also places Edwards both in a long-standing trajectory of scholastic inquiry whether theology is a science (*scientia*), or wisdom (*sapientia*), as well as a discussion of scholastic distinctions – both present in medieval and Protestant scholastic systems of theology.

With the rise of interest in the thirteenth-century in Aristotle's writings, the discussion of the nature and extent of theology was formed in part by the philosopher's classification of the forms of knowledge, science (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*).³⁷ Franciscans, such as Alexander of Hales (ca. 1183-1245) and Bonaventure (1221-1274) insisted on the affective, practical and experimental character of theology – excluding it from consideration as *scientia* in the Aristotelian sense of a rational or speculative discipline.³⁸ Aquinas, on the other hand not only argues in the *Summa Theologicae* – known to Edwards during his studies at Yale College³⁹ – that “sacred doctrine is a science,”⁴⁰ but also raises the question, whether sacred doctrine is a practical science – to

³⁴ Ibid., 86.

³⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologicae*, prima pars, quaestio 1 De sacra doctrina, quilibet sit, et ad quae se extendat in decem articulos divisa, articulus primo, De necessitate huius doctrinae.

³⁶ EDWARDS, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, WJE Online 22:87.

³⁷ In this paragraph I follow in part Muller's discussion on the development of theological prolegomena as found in MULLER, Richard A., *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics. The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003) 1:88-96.

³⁸ ALEXANDER OF HALES, *Summa universae theologiae* (Cologne: Agri., 1622), quaestio 1, cap. 1-2; quaestio 2, memb. 3, cap. 3; ST. BONAVENTURE, *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum* (Quaracchi edition, 1882), prologus, quaestio 1.

³⁹ *A Catalogue of the Library of Yale-College in New Haven* (London: T. Green, 1743), 39, xiii (“*The Schoolmen, Aquinatis Summa*”).

⁴⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologicae*, prima pars, quaestio 1, secundo, “Utrum sacra doctrina sit scientia... Respondeo dicendum sacram doctrinam esse scientiam.”

which Thomas, reflecting Dominican theology, replied, “it is not a practical but a speculative science.”⁴¹ These fairly broad lines of the character of theology find their culmination in Duns Scotus’ (d.1308) formulation of theology. Scotus not only resonated with Franciscan theology, though integrated more Aristotelian philosophy than previously was accepted, but considered theology as a discipline oriented toward the ultimate goal of humanity in God: in essence *praxis* – that is to say, a knowledge not known for itself but directed to God.⁴²

This medieval scholastic discussion on the character of theology – expository to matters of faith, whether theology is theoretical or practical – would resurface in the sixteenth and seventeenth century works of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. In respect to the former, Dominicans such as Domingo Báñez (1528-1604), Melchor Cano (1509?-1560), and Luis de Granada (1505-1588) reached back to the formulation of Aquinas on the essence of theology,⁴³ while Jesuits such as John Gibbons (1544-1589), Antonio Possevino (1533-1611), and Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), who was praised by Edwards as “the best of the Schoolmen,”⁴⁴ tended to present scholastic arguments from both the Scotistic and Thomistic tradition, whereby

⁴¹ Ibid., quarto, “Utrum sacra doctrina sit scientia practica... Non ergo est scientia practica, sed magis speculative.”

⁴² DUNS SCOTUS, Johannis, *Ordinatio* (Rome: Polygottis Vaticanis, n.d.), I, Prologus, pars prima, “Circa prologum primi libri quaeruntur quinque. Primum est de necessitate huius doctrinae... Quartum et quintum pertinet ad genus causae finalis, et est quartum: utrum theologia sit practica; quintum: utrum ex ordine ad praxim ut ad finem dicatur per se scientia practica.” (transl. About the prologue of the First Book five questions are asked. The first concerns the necessity of this doctrine... The fourth and fifth pertain to the genus of the final cause, and the fourth is: whether theology is practical; the fifth: whether from its order to praxis as to its end it is called a per se practical science.” Cf. <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/scotus/opera/dun01001.html> (accessed January 26, 2010).

⁴³ BÁÑEZ, Domingo, *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem angelici doctoris S. Thomae. Usque ad LXIII quaestionem. Tomus primus* (Douai: Petri Borremans, 1614), 27, “Utrum sacra doctrina sit scientia practica? Prima conclusio. Sacra doctrina comprehendit sub se practicum & speculativum, quae in aliis scientiis distinguntur per particulares rationes. Ratio huius sumitur ex simplicitate luminis divini, sub quo considerantur omnia ea, quae pertinent ad sacram doctrinam, & ex assimilatione ad scientiam Dei, qua se cognoscit, & ea quae facit. Secunda conclusio. Sacra doctrina magis est speculativa, quam practica. Ratio est, quia principalius agit de rebus divinis, quam de actibus humanis... Dubium unicum est in hoc articulo, Utrum prima conclusio divi Thomae sit vera. Arguitur primò pro parte negativâ, Theologia non potest esse eminenter practica, & speculativa, neque formaliter utrumque, ergo nullo modo... Theologia nullo modo est practica, ergo non est simul practica & speculativa.”; CANO, Melchor, *De locis theologicis libri duodecim* (Salamanca: Mathias Gastius, 1563), 283, “Est enim, ut scholae verbis utar, partim speculativa, partim practica, quemadmodum Divus Thomas, prima part. quaestione prima. articulo quarto. demonstrat. At iuris canonici disciplina Theologia quaedam practica est.”; GRANADA, Luis de, *Catechismus, sive introductionis ad symbolum fidei libri quatuor... In quibus de admirabili opere creationis, fidei ac religionis Christianae praestantiis, redemptionis humanae, & aliis mysteriis ac Articulis, tractatur: a Ioanne Paulo Gallucio Saloensi ex Italico sermone Latinitate donati* (Cologne:Arnoldum Quentelium, 1602), 805, Theologia speculativa & practica scientia.

⁴⁴ *WJE Online* 23:198.

the *practica* was not rejected altogether, yet opted for a modified Thomistic position,⁴⁵ while the Franciscan Francisco de Macedo (1596-1681) sided with Duns Scotus' position of the practical nature of *theologia viatorum*.⁴⁶ Concerning the Protestant theologians, Lutherans, such as Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), Balthasar Meisner (1587-1626), Georg Calixt (1586-1656), and Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688),⁴⁷ as well as Reformed thinkers such

⁴⁵ GIBBONS, John. *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia adversus Calvinopapistas et Puritanos sub Elizabetha Regina quorundam hominum doctrina & sanctitate illustrium renovata* (Trier: Excudebat Henricus Bock, 1588), na, *Contrà autem sanctuli nostri Calviniani, religionem mundam esse ducunt & immaculatam apud Deum & patrem, amicos odisse Catholicos, maledicere & malefacere his qui amant ipsos, eos punire & vinculis constringere, qui maledictis & convitiis nolunt perstringere vicarium Christi, eiusque sacerdotes execrari; furari praeterea latrocinari, ac bona pupillorum & viduarum abripere, Theologia est eorum practica...*"; Antonio Possevino *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum. Ad disciplinas, & ad salutem omnium gentium procurandum. Recognita novissime ab eodem, et aucta, & in duos tomos distributa* (Cologne: Ioannem Gymnicum, 1607), III, De Theologia Scholastica, & Practica, sive de studiis Casuum conscientiae; SUÁREZ, Francisco, *Commentarii ac distributiones in primam partem Summae Theologiae D. Thomae. De Deo uno et trino in tres praecipuos tractatus distributate. Accesserunt varii et locupletissimi indices* (Venice: Bernardum Iunctam, Ioan. Bapt. Ciottum, & Socios, 1608, 86, "Quarto interrogari solet, an illa visio sit scientia practica, vel speculativa, vel utrunque simul. Sunt enim opiniones variae. Prima affirmat tantum esse scientiam practicam, quia est regula voluntatis, quam movet ad operandum, & dictat, quid secundum rectam rationem agendum sit. Sic Scot. in prologo. q. 4. ubi non loquitur in particulari de visione, sed de Theologia, & de quacumque cognitione creata Dei, imò idem probabile censet de increata scientia, quam Deus habet de se, de qua infra libro tertio dicemus. Secunda opinio est, illam scientiam tantum esse speculativam, quia est de obiecto non operabili à nobis. Quae tribuitur D. Thomae 1. 2. q. 3. art. 5. & sumitur etiam ex eodem 2. 2. q. 181. art. 4. Citatur etiam Palud. in 4. d. 49. q. 3. artic. 2. Ille tamen in Beatis ponit scientiam speculativam, & practicam, ut necessariam ad integrandam Beatitudinem, & fatetur visionem ipsam esse scientiam speculativam; dubium tamen relinquit, an practica sit ab illa distincta nec ne. Est ergo tertia opinio, quod simul sit practica, & speculativa, sicuti D. Thomas docuit de Theologia 1. parte quaestione 1. artic. 4. Sic Caietan. 12. quaestione 3. artic. 5. Sot. 4. distinct. 49. quaestione 1. art. 4. ubi Richardus artic. 1. quaestione 8. idem sentit. Differt tamen ab aliis, quia existimat illam visionem principaliter esse practicam, quam speculativam, quia principaliter ordinatur ad amorem. Alii è contrario dicunt principaliter esse speculativam, quia primum in illa est, quod sit quidditativa cognitio naturae divinae, & ut sic est speculativa, hinc vero consequenter habet, quòd sit affectiva, seu directiva voluntatis, ex quo habet, quod practica sit."

⁴⁶ MACEDO, Francisco de, *Collationes doctrinae S. Thomae, et Scoti, cum differentiis inter utrumque: Textibus utriusque fideliter productis, sententiis subtiliter examinatis, commentariis interpretum Caietani in primis, & Lycheti diligenter excussis, et aliarum penè omnium scholarum, praecipuè Iesuiticae* (Padua: Petri Mariae Frambotti, 1671), 29, "Nunc ad quaestionem. Sit ne Theologia scientia speculativa, An Practica? ut distinctius procedam, in partes dividam materiem, quae, & multiplex, & implexa est, & involvit scientiam increatam, & creatam... Sectio II, Utrum Theologia viatorum sit practice... Affirmat Scotus loquendo de illa, quae versatur in necessariis... Talis est Theologia Viatorum; ergo est scientia practica. Maior probatur ex definitione Praxis, quae est operatio alterius Potentiae regulatae, & directae ab intellectu; ac per se patet, Quid enim est aliud esse practicum, nisi tendere ad praxim, cum per hoc ab speculativo distinguatur? Minor ostenditur, quia Theologia tradit."

⁴⁷ GERHARD, Johann, *Aphorismi succincti et selecti, in viginti tribus capitibus, totius theologiae nucleum continentes: ad usum disputationum scholasticarum accommodati & conscripti* (Jena: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1611), na, XIII. Aphorismi Theologici de Poenitentia, 2, "Neque enim sufficit scire, quod

as Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Sibrand Lubbert (1556-1625), Bartholomäus Keckermann (ca. 1571-1608/9), Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), and Pietro Martire Vermigli (1499-1562) of the sixteenth century,⁴⁸ with, moreover, the

sit Legis, quod Evangelii officium: sed requiritur utriusque praxis: Theologia est doctrina Practica”; MEISNER, Balthasar, *Philosophia sobria, hoc est: Pia consideratio quaestionum philosophicarum, in controversiis theologicis, quas Calviniani moverunt orthodoxis, subinde occurrentium* (Giessen: Nicolai Hampelii, 1611), 461, “An Theologia sit habitus merè Theoreticus. vel Practicus, vel mixtus? Theologia non est merè theoretica. Theologia non est merè practica”; CALIXT, Georg, *Georgii Calixti S. Th. D. et in Acad. Juliae Primarii Profess. Abbatis Regio-Lothar. epitome theologiae, qualis illa abhinc annis amplius XL ex ore dictantis excepta, postmodum etiam in usum eruditae juventutis, sacra theologica studia aggressae, excusa, toties prodire meruit* (Helmstedt: Henningus Mullerus), 1661), 2, “Primo autem constare oportet, ad utrum horum referenda sit Theologia, siquidem ipsa, ordine tradi debeat, cum id sit principium, unde ratio ordinandi desumitur, tantumque illa inter se dissideant, ut contrariis ordinibus tradantur, nempe Theoretica synthetico, Practica analytico ordine.”; QUENSTEDT, Johann Andreas, *Theologia didactico-polemica, sive, systema theologicum, in duas sectiones, didacticam et polemicam, divisum, in quarum prima: Omnes & singuli fidei Christianae articuli iuxta causarum seriem, perspicue traduntur... In secunda sectione: In quavis controversia I. Verus quaestionis status, remotis falsis statibus, ritè formatur; II. Orthodoxa sententia verbis simplicibus proponitur* (Wittenberg: Johannis Ludolphi Quenstedtii, 1691), 18-19, “Theologia non est partim Theoretica, partim Practica.”

⁴⁸ BUCER, Martin, *In sacra quatuor Evangelia, enarrationes perpetuae, secundum recognitae, in quibus praeterea habes syncerioris theologiae locos communes supra centum, ad scripturarum fidem simpliciter; & nullius cum insectatione tractatos, adiectis etiam aliquot locorum retractationibus* (Basel: Ioan. Hervagium, 1536), 753, “Vera Theologia, non theoretica vel speculativa, sed activa & practica est.”; LUBBERT, Sibrandi, *Ccommentarius in catechesin palatino-belgicam* (Francker: Ioannem Lamrinck, 1618), 5-6, “Quaestio haec rectè ponitur primo loco. Theologia enim est scientia practica & Theoretica. (ut docet Thomas. prima parte. q. 1. art. quarto.) & ob eam causam analyticâ & syntheticâ methodo tradipotest. Omnes enim scientiae practicae traduntur... methodo analyticâ: Theoreticae verò syntheticâ. Hinc fit, quod alii locos communes tradunt methodo analyticâ; ut Calvinus & auctor Catechismi; alii syntheticâ, ut Zanchius & Thomas. Inter has duas Methodi species haec est differentia, quod Synthetica orditur à primis principiis, & er illis totum opus extruit & format: Analytica verò proponit ultimum finem, & deinde docet, quomodo? per quas causas? & per quae media ad istum finem pervenire possimus? Cum igitur auctor noster statuisset Catechesin methodo analytiâ tradere, debuit primo loco proponere ultimum finem Theologiae. hoc est, summum illud bonum, ad quod nos sacrae litterae ducunt: deinde ostendere, quomodo? quâ via? per quae media? & per quas causas ad ultimum istum finem, sive ad fruitionem summi istius boni pervenire possimus?”; KECKERMANN, Bartholomäus, *Systema S.S Theologiae, tribus libris adornatum. Methodum ac dispositionem operis tabula praefixa adumbrat. Cum indice rerum & verborum locupletissimo* (Hanau: Guilielmum Antonium, 1602), 213, “Hinc videmus practicas omnes disciplinas, ut Medicinam, Iuris prudentiam, Ethicam, Logicâ, Rhetoricam, Grammaticam; omnes, inquam, ex fine & mediis distribui ab iis, qui tales disciplinas methodice tradiderunt. Cum ergo etiam Theologia sit disciplina practica, ut ab initio primi libri probavimus, sequitur eam etiam ex mediis ad finem ducentibus, partiendam esse. Id quod magnus aequè Philosophus ac Theologus Zacharias Ursinus probè intellexit; qui Systema suum theologicum, sive, Catechesin nō aliunde partitur.”; MUSCULUS, Wolfgang, *Loci communes theologiae sacrae, ut sunt postremo recogniti & emendati* (Basel: Sebastianum Henricpetri, 1599), 227, “An sunt ἄμαχοι Thomistae, Scotistae, Occanistae, Albertistae? Annon pugnant inter se, dum suam quique haeresim canonizare, caeteros vero damnare student? dum disputant, sit ne Theologia de Deo ut de subiecto, ratione infiniti, vel attributali: an Theologia sit scientia, subalternatane, vel in lumine medio, practica vel speculativa, vel affectiva?”; VERMIGLI, Pietro Martire, *In primum, secundum, et initium tertii libri ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum, clariss. & doctriiss. viri D. Petri Martyris Vermiglii, Florentini, sacrarum literarum in schola Tigurina professoris, commentarius doctis-*

Reformed theologians of the seventeenth-century such as Jacobus Trigland (1583-1654), Johannes Cloppenburg (1592-1652), Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669), Johannes Hoornbeek (1617-1666), Melchior Leydekker (1642-1721), and Johannes à Marck (1656-1731), recognized theology as a mixed discipline, both *theoretica* and *practica*, though leaning towards the *practica* – but rejecting its anthropological character, as proposed by the Remonstrants.⁴⁹ However, Edwards' inquiry, whether theology is speculative or *practica*, was raised, in particular, in the prolegomena of Protestant scholastic theology of Maastricht and Turretin – theologians with whom Edwards was deeply acquainted. Turretin raised the question explicitly, “Is theology theoretical or practical,” inquiring

simus (Zurich: Christophorus Froschoverus Iunior, 1563), 8, “Theologia contemplativa cur practicam precedat.”

⁴⁹ TRIGLAND, Jacobus, *Antapologia, sive examen atque refutatio totius apologiae remonstrantium. Ubique ipso apologiae textu inserto, ita ut cum & sine ipsa legi possit. Opus posthumum. Ex autographo auctoris nunc primum editum, diuque desideratum. Cum indicibus necessariis* (Harderwijk: Pauli van den Houte, 1664), 19, “Theologiam totam in actionem desinere, atque idcirco esse merè practicam, non aliter quam Ethica, Politica, Oeconomica, scientiae merè practicae sunt. Resp. Id nequaquam arguere, quod Theologia eo sensu practica sit, quo istae iam nominatae scientiae appellantur practicae. Nam, quae in Theologiâ speculative cognoscenda sunt, eo fine traduntur ut cognoscantur. Cognitio enim in intellectu intellectus est perfectio, & perfectio quaelibet appetitur sui ipsius causâ: scientiae verò istae traduntur & cognoscuntur eo tantum fine, ut in actum producantur, & praxi exerceantur.” *Ibid.*, 42, “Theologia partim est Theoretica, partim Practica;” CLOPPENBURG, Johannes, *theologica opera omnia Tomus prior* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1684), 600, “Theologia practica Remonstrantium proposita & confutata;” COCCEJUS, Johannes, *Summa theologiae ex scripturis repetita. Editio secunda, a mendis, quibus prior scatebat, diligenter repurgata, ac indice dictorum scripturae utilissimo aucta. Adiecta ad calcem eiusdem authoris Doctrina de foedere et testamento Dei; opus absolutissimum, ob materiae & tractationis excellentiam à multis hactenus desideratum* (Geneva: Sumptibus Samuelis Chouët, 1665), 65, “Theologia hominim imperfecta. Cognitio Dei imperfecta salutaris est cognitio & retentio Principii ac fundamenti. Theologia est practica. Principium aut medium cognoscendi Theologia;” HOORNBECK, Johannes, *Theologiae practicae partes duae* (Utrecht: Iohannem & Guilielmum van de Water, 1689), na, “Doctrinae rationem descripsit Apostolus, quando eam vocat veritatem secundum pietatem. I Tim. VI. 3. Tit. I. 1. Quo significat, duo hac in parte Ministro agenda esse, nimirum docendam veritatem, eamque ad pietatis praxim semper esse dirigendam. Est enim Theologia, & religio Christiana, non theoretica, sed practica;” LEYDEKKER, Melchior, *Medulla theologica concinnata ex scriptis celeberrimorum virorum, Gisberti Voetii, Joh. Hoornbeek, Andr. Essonii* (Utrecht: Rudolphi à Zyll, 1683), 6, “Adeoque Theologia est practica, & nostra (b) non est mere speculativa, uti Rem calumniantur (a) *Hoornb. summ. contriv. in praef. p 7. Lactant. Instit. lib 4. c. 28. Martin in lexic. Philologicô. lib. 4 28 (b) Voet. disp T. 11. p. 3. & seqq. ubi ostenditur solide omnes adversarios in praxi verâ deficere, nos eam recte urgere posse;*” À MARCK, Johannes, *Compendium theologiae Christianae didactico-elencticum. Immixtis problematibus plurimis, & quaestionibus etiam recentioribus adauctum* (Amsterdam: Adrian. Douci & Abr. A Paddenburg, 1749), 13, “Theologia Doctrina est Practica magis quam Theoretica.” See also, ALTING, Jacobi, *Opera omnia theologica, analytica, exegetica, practica, problematica & philological* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1687); BURMANNUS, Franciscus, *Synopsis Theologiae & speciatim Oeconomiae Foederum Dei* (Utrecht: Cornelius Jacobi Noenardus, 1671); COCCEIUS, Johannes, *Opera Omnia Theologica* (Amsterdam: P&J Blaev, 1701); HEIDANUS, Abraham, *Corpus theologiae christianae in quindecim locos* (Leiden: Johannes de Vivie & Jordanus Luchtman, 1686); HEIDEGGER, Johann Heinrich, *Corpus theologiae christianae* (Zürich: David Gessner, 1700); MACCOVIUS, Joannes, *Loci communes theologici* (Franeker: 1650).

not only about the understanding of the essence of theology but also on account of controversies “of this time,” such as the Remonstrants and Socinians⁵⁰ – a concern Maastricht shared.⁵¹ Turretin asserts, furthermore, that a theoretical or speculative system is occupied in contemplation alone with knowledge as its object; contrary to a practical theology, which has operation for its object.⁵² Therefore, the Genevan theologian concludes: theology is neither theoretical nor practical but a mixed discipline, and yet more practical than speculative, which appears, Turretin explains,

from its ultimate goal, which is praxis... indeed nothing in theology is theoretical to such a degree and so remote from praxis that it does not bring about the admiration and worship of God; nor is a theory salvific unless it is referred to praxis.⁵³

In addition to Turretin’s question, whether theology is speculative or practical, Edwards’ most favorite theologian, Maastricht, also discusses whether the discipline is *theoretico-practica*.⁵⁴ *Although he does not reject the Thomistic position altogether; Maastricht is inclined to follow a modified Scotist position on the issue, proposing that the praxis is defined as doctrina, known for the sake of the end toward which it directs the knower. In other words, Maastricht aims to maintain a balance between the speculative and practica, expressed in the conjunction theoretico-practica,⁵⁵ yet oriented to the practical.*

In summary, we note the reception and appropriation of older scholastic models by these Post-reformation reformed theologians. The continuity of

⁵⁰ TURRETTINI, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, 22, I.vii, “An Theologia sit theoretica, an practica?” Ibid., *Theologiae naturam; sed etiam propter Controversias huius temporis, maximè contra Socin. & Remonstrantes, qui Theologiam ita strictè practicam dicunt, ut nihil in ea praecisè ad salutem necessarium sit, nisi quod pertinet ad praecepta morum & promissione.*”

⁵¹ MAASTRICHT, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 6, I.1.xx, “nec Practica tantum, quae veritatis cognitionem, susque deque habeat (quam Sociniani vellent & Arminiani, quo commodius fidem in Christum, aliaque Religionis fundamentalia, negligant & eliminant.”

⁵² TURRETTINI, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, 23, I.xvii, “Disciplina theoretica dicitur, quae in sola contemplatione occupatur, & finem alium non habet à cognitione; Practica, quae non subsistit in solâ rei noritiâ, sed naturâ suâ & per se tendit ad praxim, & pro fine habet operationem.”

⁵³ Ibid., 26, I.xv, “Theologiam tamen magis esse practicam quàm speculativam patet ex fine ultimo qui est praxis; licet enim omnia mysteria non sint regulativa operationis, sunt tamen impulsiva ad operationem; Nullum enim est tam theoreton & à praxi remotum, quin incitet ad Dei admirationem & cultum; nec Theoria salutaris est nisi ad praxim revocetur, Ioan. 13:17, I Cor. 13:2, Tit. 1:1, I Ioan. 2:3-4, Tit. 2:12.” Cf. MULLER, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:353-54.

⁵⁴ MAASTRICHT, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 15, I.1.xlvii, *Tertio sitne habitus theoreticus? an practicus? an theoretico-practicus?*”

⁵⁵ MAASTRICHT, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 15, I.1.xlvii, “Quin & negamus, esse Theoretico-practicam, proprie & in se; quamvis, ex modo tractandi, ita eam insigniverimus: sed practicam dicimus, & exocws practicam.”

the inquiry and formulation of the understanding of the character of theology, in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant tradition, shows the catholicity of the theological enterprise. The appropriation of theological inquiry is specific for Post-reformation theologians such as Maastricht and Turretin, while the alternative model of theology, offered by the Remonstrants or Arminians, is fundamentally different: a rejection of the recognition of theology as a mixed discipline. Simon Episcopius (1583-1643), following Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609),⁵⁶ had argued “there is nothing in the whole of theology that is not directed toward action.”⁵⁷ In other words, theology is not speculative but a fundamental anthropocentric drive to *praxis*, which was a departure from the theocentric character of Reformed theology – a prevailing concern for Edwards as well.

Although Edwards’ inquiry into the nature of theology stands in continuity with the Protestant and medieval scholastic inquiry, along with attention to scholastic distinctions such as speculative and practical, the quest remains, as Edwards phrased it, for, “what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended.”⁵⁸ In the sermon on Christian knowledge he begins to point out to the hearers at Northampton that the difference between “having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the Word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart,” does not imply that neither of these is intended exclusive of the other. But, he declares, “it is intended that we should seek the former [speculative] in order to the latter [practical]. This is for Edwards of greatest importance for, as he reminds his hearers, “a speculative knowledge of [the Word of God], without a spiritual knowledge, is in vain and to no purpose... Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.”⁵⁹ We may infer from this that Edwards does not reject the speculative entirely, as he assigns significant importance to it (“seek,” he counsels, “a good rational knowledge of things of divinity”). Yet seeking the speculative comes not at the expense but in support of spiritual knowledge or practice.

In summary, we note the reception of older Protestant scholastic models by Edwards. Not only is a similar inquiry on the nature of theology employed by the preacher at Northampton and Post-reformation reformed theologians, but also

⁵⁶ ARMINIUS, Jacobus, *Opera theologica, Disputationes, magnam partem s. theologiae complectentes, publicae & privatae, quarum index epist. dedicatorem sequitur* (Leiden: Godefridum Basson, 1629), 339, “V. Qua de causa Theologia non theoretica scientia seu doctrina est, sed practica, actionem postulans totius hominis, secundum omnes & singulas partes eius, eamque praestantissimam, excellentiae obiecti respondentem quantum fert captus humanus.”

⁵⁷ EPISCOPII, Simonis, *Institutiones Theologicae, privatis lectionibus Amstelodami traditae* (Amsterdam: Ioannis Blaeu, 1650), I.ii, 4, “De theologia: eam non esse speculativam scientiam, sed practicam.”

⁵⁸ EDWARDS, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, *WJE Online* 22:86.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

a discerning on Edwards part, of the character of theology, following Maastricht more than Turretin, as *theoretico-practica* theology. With that, Edwards positioned himself, on the one hand, in continuity with classical theology – rooted in Post-reformation reformed and Franciscan-Scotist traditions, and, on the other hand, over against its challengers, the Arminians and Deists. His familiarity with Episcopius, identified by Edwards as one of “the greatest Arminians,”⁶⁰ and Deists such as Thomas Chubb (1679-1747), whose writings Edwards refutes later in particular,⁶¹ strengthens Edwards’ point in defining the essence of theology in these transformative years of New England’s history and theology.

However, the appropriation of former models of catholic and classic theology by Edwards provides a rather contemporized problem and prospect. In regard to the latter, Edwards assessed and equated the Deism of his time with the tendencies of Socinianism of previous centuries. Thus, he not only provided his vast knowledge of the Post-reformation *systema* as an approach for assessing contemporary challenges and proposed changes, but these *systema* also presented him with precise and nuanced definitions of the discipline – indispensable for the interpretation of events and formulation of his own views. Although Edwards carefully argued “the importance and advantage of a thorough knowledge of divinity” to his congregation in 1739, his argument continues to pose a challenge to the modern reader as well. The discourse is in a language other than Latin – the language of Post-reformation and medieval sources. The continuity of intellectual trajectory of theological language, definitions and distinctions, from the medieval period to Edwards’ study at Northampton, became instantly absent in translation to the great majority of his listeners. Not that his hearers in the pew would be aware of such, most probably, or that Edwards’ message was deficient by it. However, the significance of Edwards as theologian in these transformative years of New England may be lost as well – at least to most Edwards scholars.⁶² Therefore, the proposed understanding of this homily must be placed as fundamental to our understanding of Edwards’ theology and his much later published and major works against Arminianism and Deism, such

⁶⁰ EDWARDS, *Freedom of the Will*, *WJE Online* 1:289.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶² RIDDERBOS, J., *De Theologie van Jonathan Edwards* (‘s-Gravenhage: Johan A. Niderbragt, 1907); CHERRY, Conrad, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards. A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966); MORIMOTO, Anri, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); GERSTNER, John H., *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996 reprint); Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace & God of Glory. An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); LEE, Sang H., *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). A notable exception is HOLIFIELD, E. Brooks, *Theology in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 102-104.

as *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin* – as his “Controversies” notebook dating from the 1730’s attests.⁶³

In conclusion, in the midst of the challenging and changing years of 1737-42 in New England’s religious history. Edwards revisited fundamental questions of theological prolegomena. The formulation of his answers demonstrated not only continuity and discontinuity but also a demanding appropriation of intellectual thought, that of the catholicity and classicality of theology. The discourse was drafted and heard in Northampton, published in 1788, and soon afterwards forgotten, yet its message was timeless: “Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more.”

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe que a investigação de Jonathan Edwards sobre a natureza da teologia está em continuidade com o escolasticismo protestante e adaptou modelos anteriores de teologia católica e clássica ao contexto teológico da Nova Inglaterra do século 18.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Jonathan Edwards; Escolasticismo protestante; Natureza da teologia.

⁶³ EDWARDS, Jonathan, “*Controversies*” Notebook, *WJE Online* 27.