Edwards was not only concerned with the beginning of creation,¹ but in particular the end of it, writing, “The creation of the universe in six days was a very wonderful work²…The highest end of the creation was the communication of happiness…³ In fact, a review of Edwards’s life-long “theological journal,”⁴ the “Miscellanies” project, reveals a major occupation and attention given to the “end of creation.”⁵ For Edwards, this is a communication of God’s goodness, the emanation of God’s glory, for humanities’ happiness. This thought was most comprehensively articulated in the posthumously published “dissertation,” “Concerning the End for which God Created the World.”⁶ His reflections on the beginning and end of creation, however, marks a degree of continuity and discontinuity with Edwards’s theological predecessors.

“Bodies of Divinity,” as found in the A Catalogue of the Library of Yale-College,⁷ for example, list works of James Ussher, A body of divinity, or, The sum and substance of Christian religion (1645), Samuel Maresius, Collegium theologicum sive Systema breve

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¹ See for example, WJE 5: 129, “The first 6000 years are 6 days of labor, and the seventh is a sabbath of rest. As the world was six days in making, so I believe that the kingdom of God, that it will be six days in making before 'tis finished;” WJE 9:512, “The particular wonderful events by which the work of creation was carried on filled up six days; but the great dispensations by which the Work of Redemption is carried [on] are so many that they fill up six or seven thousand years.” See also, Willem van Vlastuin, “Creation,” in Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, Adriaan C. Neele, The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017), 122-123.


³ WJE 13:256, “How then can it be said that God has made all things for himself, if it is certain that the highest end of the creation was the communication of happiness?”

⁴ WJE 13:9.


⁶ WJE 8:405-463.

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*universae theologicæ* (1649), Frans Burman, *Synopsis theologicæ* (1671), Johannes Braun, *Doctrina foederum, sive systema theologica didacticae et elencticae* (1691). In these early modern *systema* of Reformed theology, the doctrine of creation was treated as part of theology proper or the locus, the doctrine of God. The early modern thought on creation was echoed in the work of John Edwards, *Theologia Reformata* (1713), and Samuel Willard, *A compleat body of divinity in two hundred and fifty expository lectures on the assembly's shorter catechism* (1726), as found in the library and reading list of Edwards’s father, Timothy Edwards (1669-1758). Last but not least, the doctrine of creation was expounded in Edwards’s own favorite handbooks of theology by Francis Turretin (1623–87) and Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706). Although both works of systematic theology arose from *disputations*—a pedagogical tool for teaching theology, the works differ in genre: Turretin was written as elenctical theology, while Mastricht wrote the *Theoretico-practica theologia* to be used for the preparation of a homily. In theological content, however, both works are representative for the thought of the Reformed orthodoxy era, ca. 1625 – ca. 1700.

Turretin of the Geneva Academy, like Mastricht of University of Utrecht, open their *systema* with a prolegomenon dealing with the nature and extent of theology, the role of philosophy, and the *locus* of Scripture, as the chief source of revealed knowledge. Both theologians proceed subsequently with a treatment of the theology proper, addressing the

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8 *WJE* 26:383 (Willard), 405 (John Edwards)
9 *WJE* 26:152 (Mastricht), 349 (Turretin)
10 Francis Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae in qua status controversiae perspicue exponitur, præcipua orthodoxorum argumenta proponuntur & vindicantur, & fontes solutionum aperiuntur* (Geneve: Samuelem de Tournes, 1679), I:1-56; Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia. Qua, per singula capita theologica, pars exegetica, dogmatica, elenchtica & practica, perpetua successione conjugantur* (Utrecht: Gerardum Muntendam, 1698), I:1-16, and 47-49. For Turretin this is locus one (*De Theologia*), and for Mastricht this is book one (*De praeognitis theologia*).
11 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, I:57-174; Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, I:17-46. This is for Turrentin locus two (*Scriptura Sacra*), and for Mastricht this chapter belongs to book one.
divine essence and existence, as well as the divine works—the latter divided in the works *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Noteworthy is that Mastricht treats the entire theology proper, as “*De fide in Deum trium*” (Concerning faith in a triune God). In fact, this section opens with a discussion of the doctrine of faith—uncommon for the era, articulating the view that true theology only can be done by those who have faith in God through Christ.\(^\text{13}\)

Both Turretin and Mastricht, however, treat the doctrine of creation in dedicated chapter(s). Where the theologian of Geneva discussed the doctrine in fourteen questions and answers, according to the format of a protestant scholastic disputation, Mastricht expounds the teaching in a fourfold approach to theology: exegesis, doctrine, elenctic, and practical.\(^\text{14}\) Turretin opens with the inquiry, *Quid sit Creatio?* (What is creation?), answering, “[God] formed out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)…communicating and manifesting himself *ad extra* to humanity."\(^\text{15}\) Mastricht lays an exegetical foundation for this question by an grammatical-

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\(^\text{13}\) Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 50, II.2.i.

\(^\text{14}\) Questions Turretin raises, such as, “In what season pf the year the worlds was created?; Was the world created in a moment or in six days?; In what order were the works of creation produced?; Was there a created humanity before Adam?; Was humanity created *in puris naturalibus*?” are also found in Mastricht, and other works of early Reformed theology. Cf. Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, 461-525, De Creatione; Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 315-317, III.5.xix-xxiii, and 322-325, III.6.xiv-xxix; Heidanus, *Corpus theologiae christianae*,259-270; Burman, *Synopsis theologica*, 274, I.41.xii; Ibid., 276, I.41.xx; Ibid, 278, I.41.xxv; Brakel, *De Redelijke Godsdiensst*,I.220, 8.iii; Ibid., I.223, 8.vii; Marck *Compendium theologiae*, 155, 8.xiii; Ibid., 160, 8.xxxii; Essenius, *Compendium theologiae dogmaticum*, 191, 7.vi; Ibid, 214, 7.xli.

\(^\text{15}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, 461, V.1.iii, “…*ad extra* communicare & hominibus conspiciendum praebere voluit.”
analytical exposition of Gen. 1:1, supported by Patristic and medieval rabbinic commentary,\textsuperscript{16} asserting a creation \textit{ex nihilo} in time and not from eternity. The latter, “not from eternity,” is explicitly discussed by both theologians.\textsuperscript{17} In a scholastic manner, the question is divided into two parts, and concerns the actual \textit{(actualiter, something that exist in actu)} and possible \textit{(possibile, that what is not but can be)} eternity of the world. In regard to the former, both Turretin and Mastricht, disagree with the “ancient philosophers,” but assert that the “orthodox” follow the medieval scholastics such as, Bonaventure, Albert Magnus, and Henry of Ghent who negated the question contrary to a positive appraisal by Aquinas, Durandus, Occam, and Biel.\textsuperscript{18} Such a detailed treatment of the question may have served as background to Edwards’ own reflection that “the world is not from eternity.”\textsuperscript{19} The practical dimension of this doctrine, according to Mastricht and absent in Turretin’s work, is to invite humanity to acknowledge that God is \textit{(quod sit)}, what kind he is \textit{(qualis sit)}, and who he is \textit{(quid sit)}—a triune God. Therefore, one should glorify, honor, trust, and worship him, and bids one to be comforted by such God in all adversity.\textsuperscript{20} One notes Mastricht scholastic approach raising basic \textit{questio} \textit{(quid sit, quod sit, and qualis sit)}, and more practical implication of the biblical exegesis and formulation of doctrine of creation. Turretin’s attention to the reason for creation, \textit{“ad extra communicare & hominibus conspiciendum præbere voluit,”} is missing in Mastricht’s exposition in the chapter “the creation in general,” but is ambiguously suggested in the subsequent chapter \textit{De Mundo & opera sex dierum} (Concerning the \[Creation of the]\textsuperscript{[Creation of the]})

\textsuperscript{16} Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologia}, 311, III.5. ii.

\textsuperscript{17} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, 467, V.3, “An Mundo suerit ab æternon, vel esse faltem potuerit? Neg;” Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologia}, 316, III.5.xxii, “Num creation potuerit esse ab æterno?”

\textsuperscript{18} Mastricht writes more in general terms than Turretin who mentions specific names of the medieval scholastics. Cf. Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, 467, V.3.ii; Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologia}, 316, III.5.xxii.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{WJE} 20: 380-382, “1041. The world is not from eternity and will come to an end.”

\textsuperscript{20} Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologia}, 317-319, III.5.xxiv-xxix.
World & the work in six days). Here, the theologian of Utrecht, asserts that the world is created for humanity, who ought to “honor and glorify him,” and one should be in “gratitude” for such creation.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, God as communicative being, so prominent in Edwards \textit{corpus}, resonates more with Turretin before him, than with Mastricht,\textsuperscript{22} while both theologians of the Reformed orthodoxy in turn resonate, in structure and inquiry of the doctrine of creation, with both the medieval Thomistic and Franciscan tradition. In the \textit{Summa Theologica}, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) deals with the doctrine of creation (Q44-102) but distinctly, namely, a treatise on the creation in general (Q44-49), on the angels (Q50-64), on the work of the six days (Q65-74), and a treatise on the creation of humanity (Q75-102). In fact, the doctrine of creation, for Aquinas and St. Bovaventure (1221-1274), follows the discussion of the divine persons—a structural feature that resurfaces in early modern Reformed theology. As Aquinas raises the question, what is creation (\textit{quid sit}), and whether to create is to make something from nothing (\textit{ex nihilo}), so Bonaventure’s inquiry about the eternity of the world.\textsuperscript{23} These medieval theological questions resonated and were mediated by the \textit{systema} of the Reformed orthodoxy for the pastor of Northampton—his concern was different, however. If Edwards \textit{A Rational


\textsuperscript{22} See for example, \textit{WJE} 13:272, “We have proved that the end of the creation must needs be happiness and the communication of the goodness of God…the Father’s begetting of the Son is a complete communication of all his happiness, and so an eternal, adequate and infinite exercise of perfect goodness, that is completely equal to such an inclination in perfection;” \textit{WJE} 13:282, 373, and 502. Furthermore, see William A. Schweitzer, \textit{God is a Communicative Being. Divine Communicativess and Harmony in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards} (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2012).

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*Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted* outlines a systematic theology,\(^{24}\) than the heading or the locus of “Creation,” states, “the ends of it.”

\(^{24}\) *WJE* 6:396.