PART II

THE PREMISES OF THE
THEORETICO-PRACTICA THEOLOGICA
CHAPTER THREE

PROLEGOMENA

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

An accurate construct of Mastricht’s theology, and in particular the
doctrine of God, requires an examination of the premises of his
theology. Furthermore, such assessment is necessitated by the differ-
ent results of scholarship on post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy.
These differences concern (1) the nature of post-Reformation Reformed
theology—including central dogmas such as predestination and cov-
enant and the influence of rationalism in particular on the doctrine of
God;¹ (2) the impact of Scholasticism and Aristotelianism—including
the negative, theologized appraisal of “scholasticism”; and (3) sources
of knowledge—a bifurcation of natural theology and Scripture; the
development of a positive locus of natural theology independent from
Scripture and soteriology and complementary to special revelation.² Of
course, some of the results of older scholarly literature have extensive
implications for our interpretative framework. However, here our con-
cern is to examine Mastricht’s own position on the nature of theology,
Scholasticism, Aristotelianism, Scripture, faith, and reason (ratio).

Therefore, we will examine Mastricht’s premises leading up to the
exposition of the divine existence and essence and Holy Trinity. Chapter
three focuses on Mastricht’s prolegomena, which includes the nature

¹ A. Tholuck, Vorgeschichte des Rationalismus (Berlin: E. Anton, 1861); idem, Geschichte
des Rationalismus: Erste Abteilung, Geschichte des Pietismus und des ersten Stadium der Aufklärung
(Berlin: E. Anton, 1865); P. Althaus, Die Prinzipien der deutschen reformierten Dogmatik
im Zeitalter der aristotelischen Scholastik (Leipzig: A. Deichertische Verlagsbuchhandlung
Werner Scholl, 1914); H. E. Weber, Reformation, Orthodoxie und Rationalismus, 3 vols.
(Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937–1951); E. Bizer, Frühorthodoxie und Rationalismus (Zürich:
EVZ-Verlag, 1963).

² See for an overview of different approaches of older and recent scholarship,
Richard A. Muller, After Calvin. Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2003), 63–80. On the relationship of Aristotelianism and
Scholasticism, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, Renaissance Thought and its Sources (New York: