CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

This study has addressed the post-Reformation Reformed concern for right doctrine and piety. In particular, this study has concentrated on the method and piety in the Theoretico-practica theologia (TPT) of Petrus van Mastricht. At the close of this study, it seems appropriate to draw several finalizing thoughts. The order of our conclusion follows the order of the four parts of our study.

Part I presents a more detailed account of the life and work of Mastricht than has previously been identified. The previous characterizations of the man and his work by Heppe, Goeters, Reuter and Roessingh\(^1\) do not resemble our findings, namely that the three main and consistent threads throughout his life and work were that of theologian, Hebraist, and anti-Cartesian. Mastricht, the theologian, worked on a lifelong project: the TPT. Placed in the context of his time and in dialogue with other seventeenth-century theological works of the same genre, we have demonstrated that this work is a consolidation and mediating codification of post-Reformation Reformed theology: exegesis, doctrine, eclectic, and praxis. Throughout his life as a Reformed pastor and professor of theology, all of his theological writings, in the form of disputations or books, have contributed to the immense work of the TPT. His other writings, therefore, show Mastricht, the Hebraist, not immediately as a scholar in the field of Hebrew literature, but as one whose Hebrew and Oriental language expertise served him as an able Old Testament exegete. Moreover, this expertise was in the service of his lifelong passion of Reformed theology, as far is exemplified in his Old Testament texts analysis in the TPT. In the opinion of the present author, the finding of Mastricht as Hebraist should be maintained, primarily for the following reason. Old Testament exegesis was for Mastricht not only a philological and etymological quest but also a careful listening to and standing in a rabbinic exegetical trajectory before arriving at the results of biblical exegesis as foundation for doctrine and practice. The third part of the portrait of Mastricht, the anti-Cartesian, emerges from his (philosophical) publications and in the context of the TPT, as

\(^1\) See the discussion in this study pages 15–17.
shown in his critique of this philosophy and primarily in connection to soteriological concerns. It is therefore, that Mastricht understood early on, as none other of his time, the significance of Cartesianism and its detrimental impact on Reformed theology.

Part II demonstrates that for Mastricht theology is a matter of faith. This make the assessment of Tholuck, Althaus, and Weber on the nature of post-Reformation Reformed theology, at least in the case of Mastricht, no longer tenable. Moreover, the prolegomena, in which Mastricht lays out the premises of his theological enterprise, parallels the work of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Reformed theologians. This is seen in his division of theology into faith and obedience, which was already identified by the patristics and Calvin, his definition of theology, which resembles descriptions of Ames (doctrina est Deo vivendi) and Cocceius (doctrina est pietas), and his description of theological topics, which echoes at times the Leiden Synopsis purioris theologiae. This observation leads us to conclude that Mastricht’s theology, at the close of the seventeenth-century, resembles more the earlier Reformed theology than of his own time. This conclusion is further underscored by the location and content of the locus of faith. It also repudiates the critique of Bavinck, Brienen, Exalto and Graafland of the discontinuity of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theologians on the nature of faith.

The centrality of faith for Mastricht cannot be overlooked when the location of the chapter of faith is considered. First, he differs in this with most of his contemporaries, who located the discussion of faith in the context of the ordo salutis. Second, his view of reason and the covenant of grace may have contributed to the unique location of De fide salvifica, which preceeds another 1,200 pages of his theological system. The centrality of faith for Mastricht is moreover confirmed by its precise and long-standing definition. In respect to the latter, he had provided the same definition twenty years before his publication of the TPT. The same definition is worked out in an extensive treatise, De fide salvifica syntagma theorectico-practicum (1671), of which the chapter on faith in the TPT is a synopsis. In respect to the preciseness of his description of faith, this is reflected in several ways. First, the definition of faith arises from a careful exegesis of Scripture. The direct correlation

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2 Ibid., 83.
3 Ibid., 99, 100.