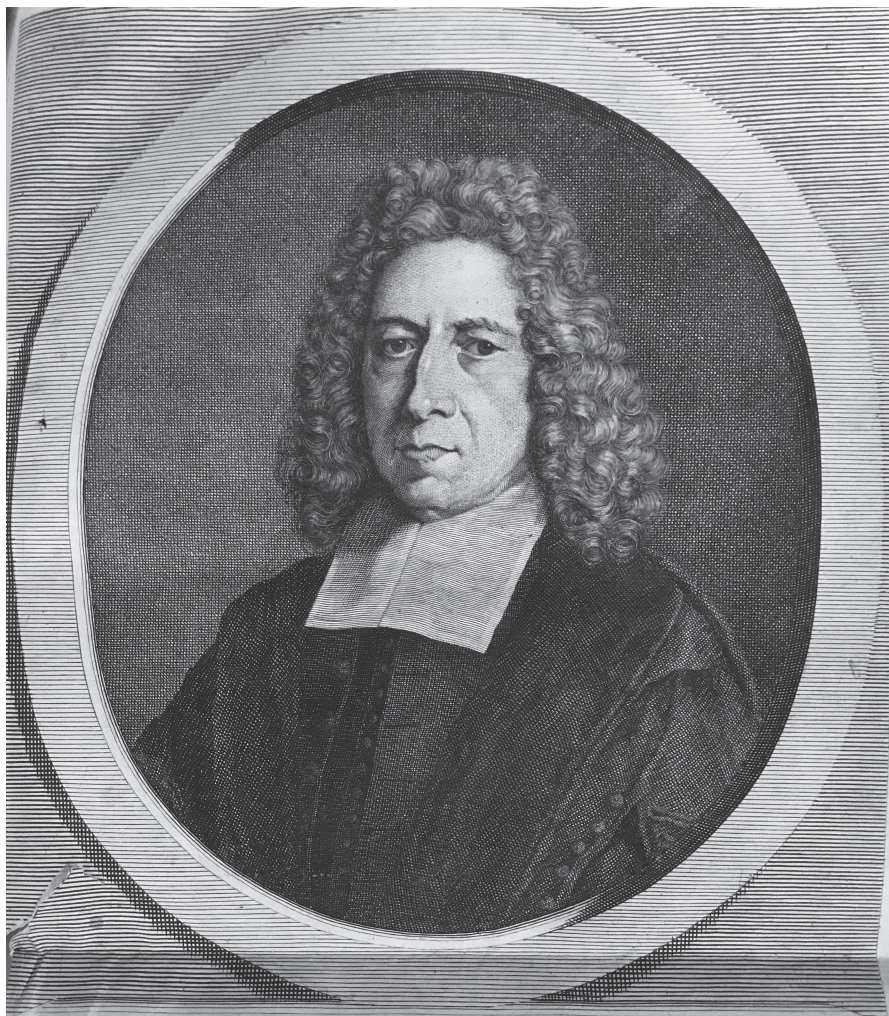


Theoretical-Practical Theology

Volume 3: The Works of God and the Fall of Man



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Theoretical-Practical Theology

Volume 3: The Works of God and the Fall of Man

by
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Preface

As editor and translator we are pleased to present to you the third of the seven volumes of Petrus van Mastricht's *Theoretical-Practical Theology* (TPT). In volume 1 Mastricht treated the prolegomena of theology: its nature, as the doctrine of living for God through Christ; its foundation, the Holy Scriptures; and its distribution, into faith (part 1) and love or observance (parts 2 and 3). In volume 2 he began his treatment of faith with a chapter on saving faith, then proceeded to faith's primary object, God, considered according to his existence, his essence revealed in names and attributes, and his subsistence in the three persons. In this volume he proceeds to consider God's works, which will continue through the end of volume 6.

In each chapter Mastricht follows his fourfold structure of exegesis, dogmatics, elenctics, and practice, as discussed in the preface of volume 2. A detailed outline of this volume can be found in its table of contents or in the briefer "Methodical Arrangement of the Whole Work" in volume 1, pages 49–50. Its theme is the operations or works of God, beginning with his internal operations—that is, his decrees—and moving to his external operations, first creation, and second providence generally, then specifically in regard to sin. Though the volume divisions are our own, within the volumes we have preserved Mastricht's own book divisions. This volume contains his Part 1, Book 3, *De operationibus Dei* (1.3.1–12) and Book 4, *De hominis apostasia a Deo* (1.4.1–4).

Four points of Mastricht's teaching in this volume are worthy of introductory comment: his mediating lapsarian position, his rejection of Copernicanism, his defense of the reality of demons and magic, and his doctrine of the third heaven. Let's briefly consider each of these points in turn.

A Mediating Lapsarian Position

By the time Mastricht wrote *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, the lapsarian issue had been debated for nearly one hundred years.¹ After Calvin, the thorny,

1. On the general topic, see Klaas Dijk, *De Strijd over Infra- en Supralapsarisme in de*

in-house Reformed question arose whether God, in his eternal decree, or rather, in the logic of that decree as we contemplate it, elected man considered as fallen (*lapsus*) in sin or as unfallen. Was the decree to permit the fall logically prior (“infralapsarian”) or posterior (“supralapsarian”) to the election of individuals to salvation? Theodore Beza (1519–1605) became well known for espousing the supralapsarian position (election of individuals as yet unfallen, or “before the fall”) while Zacharinus Ursinus (1534–1583) strongly supported infralapsarianism (election of those regarded as fallen, or “after or later than the fall”).

The Belgic Confession (1561), a doctrinal standard of Maastricht’s Reformed Church in the Netherlands, confesses in Article 16: “We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin... God then... delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom he... has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord... leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.”²

The Belgic Confession is not unique in this affirmation. Numerous Reformed confessions of the Post-Reformation period clearly affirm infralapsarianism.³ None explicitly affirm supralapsarianism, though the majority of the Reformed orthodox confessions and those that were most widely accepted do not reject or

Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1912); Joel R. Beeke, *Debated Issues in Sovereign Predestination: Early Lutheran Predestination, Calvinian Reprobation, and Variations in Genevan Lapsarianism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017); Campegius Vitringa, *Doctrinae Christianae Religionis... Pars II* (Leiden, 1762), 40–45; Bernard de Moor, *Commentarius Perpetuus... Pars Secunda...* (Leiden, 1763), 63–72; William Muenscher, *Elements of Dogmatic History*, trans. James Murdock from 2nd German ed. (New Haven, Conn.: A. H. Maltby, 1830), 180–81.

2. *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., vol. 2, 1552–1566 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 433–34.

3. B. B. Warfield lists the following:

the Genevan Consent (1552), the Hungarian Confession (1557), that of the English Exiles at Geneva (1558), the Gallican (1559) and Belgic (1561) Confessions, the Canons of Dort (1618) and the Swiss Form of Consent (1675), together with the Articles framed at the Leipzig Colloquy (1631).... By their side we may perhaps place some others, such as: the Genevan Confession of 1537 and the creeds prepared by Calvin for the Genevan Students (1559), the Church at Paris (1557) and the French Churches (1562), the Confession of Sigismund (1614) and the Declaration of Thorn (1645), and perhaps also, though with less confidence, the Second Helvetic Confession (1562) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), as confessions which, while not clearly implying Infralapsarianism, yet seem more or less to speak out of an underlying but not expressed Infralapsarian consciousness: this is, however, a matter of mere tone and manner, and is of course much too subtle to insist upon.

“Predestination in the Reformed Confessions,” *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 12, no. 46 (Jan. 1901): 126–27.

exclude supralapsarianism or otherwise attempt to decide the lapsarian question. The Westminster Standards have aspects of both positions.

In the Netherlands, by the time of the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), even in the midst of heated opposition to the Remonstrants (the theological followers of James Arminius), most of the Reformed delegates were infralapsarians. The Canons of the Synod bear an infralapsarian character, though that did not stop supralapsarians from arguing that the Canons were consistent with supralapsarianism.⁴ In the following decades, Dutch theologians lined up on both sides.⁵ It may be accurately said that supralapsarianism, not only in the Netherlands but throughout the Reformed churches, was represented by only a minority

4. See especially head 1, articles 6 and 7, which Turretin uses to prove that the Canons are infralapsarian. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 1:342. Supralapsarians could possibly, with a bit of splicing, interpret the language as speaking of the historical execution of redemption rather than explicitly of the order of the decrees in God's atemporal intention. William Cunningham writes, "The synod seems to... have abstained from giving a formal or explicit deliverance upon the point in dispute, though in the general scope and substance of its canons it certainly takes Sublapsarian [infralapsarian] ground. It has been contended, however, that the synod condemned Supralapsarian views; and this question gave rise to a very keen controversy, which was carried on for a long time by Gomar and Voet on the one side, and on the other by Maresius or Des Marets, who succeeded Gomar as professor of theology at Groningen." *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1862), 368. Geerhardus Vos says that the Canons of Dort "maintained an infralapsarian position but without the intention of wanting to condemn supralapsarianism." *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. Richard B. Gaffin (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2014), 148–55. See also J. V. Fesko, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 2001); J. V. Fesko, "Lapsarian Diversity at the Synod of Dort," *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 99–123.

5. Those commonly listed as infralapsarians before Maastricht who were Dutch or who spent a significant amount of time in the Netherlands include Junius (d. 1602), the writers of the Leiden Synopsis (1625), Lubbertus (d. 1625), Walaëus (d. 1639), Thysius (d. 1640), Polyander (d. 1646), Spanheim the elder (d. 1649), Rivet (d. 1651), and Cocceius (d. 1669). Infralapsarians after Maastricht include W. à Brakel (d. 1711), Vitringa (d. 1723), à Marck (d. 1731), Hellenbroek (d. 1731), de Moor (d. 1780), Rotterdam (d. 1781), and Venema (d. 1787). Those commonly listed as supralapsarians before Maastricht who were Dutch or who spent a significant amount of time in the Netherlands include Trelcatius Jr. (d. 1607), Ames (d. 1633), Bogerman (d. 1637), Gomarus (d. 1641), Hommius (d. 1642), Maccovius (d. 1644), Trigland (d. 1654), Hoornbeeck (d. 1666), Essenius (d. 1677), Heidanus (d. 1678), Burman (d. 1679), Voetius (d. 1676), and John Brown of Wamphray (d. 1679). Supralapsarians after Maastricht include Witsius (d. 1708), Guertler (d. 1711), Holtius (d. 1773), Comrie (d. 1774), Brahe (d. 1776), A. Kuyper (d. 1920), Kersten (d. 1948), and G. Vos (d. 1949).

of prominent individuals, though they were numerous and vigorous.⁶ Notably, Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), a teacher of Maastricht and the renowned professor whom Maastricht replaced on the theological faculty of Utrecht, was a supralapsarian.

While Reformed orthodoxy held that God's one eternal decree of all things is most simple and uncompounded (as is God), yet insofar as the decree is differentiated in terminating on the creation, so it appears to us to have relations within itself that may or may not be capable of being organized in a logical order.⁷ That logical order for the supralapsarians and Maastricht was determined by the canon: "Whatever is first in intention is last in execution"; and *vice versa*, "Whatever is last in execution was first in intention."⁸ Hence the classic supralapsarian order of the decrees respecting the salvation and damnation of human persons is, to put it simply,

1. The election and reprobation of individuals;
2. The creation of those individuals;
3. The fall of those individuals into sin and misery;
4. Redemption accomplished by the work of Christ on the cross;
5. The application of the benefits of Christ's redemption to the elect.

Francis Turretin (1623–1687) argued a trenchant infralapsarianism in Volume 1 of his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, first published in Latin in 1679 (the first edition of the *TPT* was published in 1682).⁹ Turretin held that subordinating the creation of persons to their election and reprobation "confounds the work of nature and grace."¹⁰ Rather, Turretin taught that the order of creation and the order of salvation must be coordinate since this seemed to be more in keeping with God's decree of election being free. Thus, the famed canon above

6. Cunningham, *Reformers*, 363; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (1950; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 162.

7. 1.3.1 §XXXVI. John Davenant is a prominent example of one who thought that the decrees could not be ordered with profit: "Whereas he troubles himself with distinguishing the supralapsarian and the sublapsarian doctrine...these pains might well have been spared. For priorities and posteriorities in the eternal immanent decrees of God are but imaginations of man's weak reason...and finally they have little or no use in this controversy. Aquinas thought it no such matter of moment, whether predestination be considered before man's fall and state of misery or after ([*Summa*] Part. 1, qu. 23, art. 1)." *Animadversions Written by the Right Reverend Father in God, John Lord Bishop of Salisbury, upon the Treatise intitled, Gods love to Mankind* (London: John Partridge, 1641), 160–61.

8. 1.3.2 §XXI.

9. Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:341–50; Nicholas A. Cumming, *Francis Turretin (1623–87) and the Reformed Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 133.

10. Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:342.

applies to subordinate decrees within the two orders of creation and redemption but does not apply between them. Though Mastricht does not interact with or show that he was aware of this position, neither does Turretin show awareness of Mastricht's view. The classic infralapsarian position held the following order of decrees respecting human persons:

1. The creation of individuals;
2. The fall of all created individuals;
3. The election and reprobation of individuals;
4. Redemption accomplished by the work of Christ on the cross;
5. The application of the benefits of Christ's redemption to the elect.

There was no shortage of persons who found inadequacies with both views. If out of a love for the truth one desires a further and more accurate description of God's ways with us in predestination, what should be done? Mastricht attempts to make further distinctions in order to plumb the depths of the mystery more profoundly and accurately. In doing this, he takes a mediating position on the ordering of the decrees.¹¹

On the one hand, Mastricht affirms that both election and reprobation logically presuppose mankind fallen into sin. In granting this, Mastricht would seem to give nearly the whole field to the infralapsarians, and in this way he adheres to an infralapsarian reading of most of the relevant Scripture passages. On the other hand, Mastricht's first two "acts of God" are supralapsarian in character. It is also significant that Mastricht firmly argues for reprobation being classed under predestination, something that infralapsarians were often unwilling to do.¹²

A main hinge that allows for and distinguishes Mastricht's mediating position is his overarching distinction between (1) predestination and (2) election and reprobation. The two were not always so clearly distinguished. For Mastricht, *predestination* refers to God's purpose for the eternal destiny of angels and men; election and reprobation are only a more particular part of that. Thus Mastricht's first two acts of God in his order relate to predestination generally, while it is only in the last two acts that election and reprobation come in. Mastricht's order of the decrees regarding human persons is, to summarize,

11. So Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 162.

12. 1.3.2 §XII. Infralapsarians fully affirm reprobation to be a part of God's foreordination of decreed things that must certainly come to pass, but they often emphasize, along with the language of Scripture, that the term *predestination* applies only to the positive, electing love and salvation of God, not to his passing over people unto judgment. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 148–55, quoting Trigland, Sr., *Den Recht-ghematichden christen. Ofte vande ware moderatie ende verdraechsaeemhey*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Broer Janz, 1615), 33; and Turretin, *Institutes*, 342.

1. To manifest God's glory of mercy on some indefinite persons capable of being created, and his punishing righteousness on others;
2. That individuals would be created and fall into sin;
3. The election and reprobation of these fallen individuals;
4. A preparing of and directing the means to fulfill or accomplish the destiny of elect and reprobate individuals.

Mastricht's first act of God, not of determining to manifest God's attributes and glory through the creation of men simply, nor of determining to manifest his glory of mercy and punishing righteousness on particular, creatable individuals, but only to manifest those things on two indefinite groups of creatable people, is his most distinctive act.¹³ The reader may ponder whether such an impersonal act accords with Romans 9:21–23. The later Dutch American Reformed theologian Geerhardus Vos said this:

69. What objection is to be made against the opinion of Mastricht?

That it lets predestination originally be impersonal and thus removes its practical and comforting element. Scripture always provides a personal representation. It says that the first act of election is already a personal love (that is, "foreknowledge").¹⁴

In the rest of Mastricht's account of God's acts it is to be noted that the writer uses and argues for the supralapsarian language of creation, permitting the fall, and viewing election and reprobation as "means" of God's predestinating purpose to glorify his mercy and righteous indignation.¹⁵ Infralapsarians often objected to God creating people as a means to their fall, reprobation, and punishment. But because Mastricht's first act does not include particular persons and their creation is logically prior to their election or reprobation, Mastricht is able, consistently it appears, to say, "The supreme goal of reprobation is to manifest God's avenging justice in the just punishment of the sinner; however, by no means is the goal the destruction of the creature."¹⁶

13. On the end of creation in infralapsarianism, see Turretin, *Institutes*, 1.346.

14. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:148–55.

15. 1.3.2 §§IX–X.

16. 1.3.2 §II. See Mastricht's further, excellent qualifications about how means with respect to reprobation are different than with respect to election in 1.3.4 §VI. Cf. Vos: "The older supralapsarianism at least maintained that in God's decree the permitting of the fall of man together with creation was subordinated to the highest end, the glorification of his justice and mercy. Thus, permitting the fall appears here as a means. Note carefully, not as a means for punishment itself but as a means for revealing God's justice and mercy." *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:148–55, section 65.

Mastricht saw himself as steering a course between the “rigid supralapsarians” and “rigid infralapsarians.” He was not alone in doing this, as he professedly lumps himself with “the theologians who are in the middle and most orthodox.”¹⁷ Another camp he mentions is, notably, the “Reformed universalists,” referring especially to the French Amyrauldians.¹⁸ He writes of those who hold the theological position of Arminianism as “Pelagianizers.”

The question remains, was Mastricht more a mediating infralapsarian or a mediating supralapsarian?¹⁹ On the one hand, in understanding election and reprobation to be from the corrupted mass of humanity, Mastricht adopted the foundation of infralapsarianism, giving the greatest material share of the field, it seems, to the infralapsarians. On the other hand, the majority of his mediating affirmations, which he is firmly persuaded of, come from the supralapsarian side. Did Mastricht initially come from the supralapsarian side, like his teacher Voetius, and concede toward infralapsarianism? Or did he start with the Dutch infralapsarian majority, seemingly more in line with the Belgic Confession, and concede toward supralapsarianism? More historical research needs to be done, specifically as to what other persons constituted that group of “theologians who are in the middle and most orthodox” (and whether Voetius was a part of this group) before this question can be decided with certainty.²⁰ What is clear is that

17. 1.3.2 §XIII.

18. In his history of the covenant of grace, 1.8.3 §XLIII, at *Schismata sub aetate sexta N.T.*, (6), he lists under “Reformed universalists” John Cameron as the founder and Moses Amyraut his student as a propagator, “as well as Testard, Daillé, and others in France, from whom it passed in England to John Goodwin, Richard Baxter, and others, and indeed also in Germany to Conrad and Johann Bergius, Ludwig Crocius, and in the March of Brandenburg to many others.” Cf. 1.2.17 §XXXIII; 1.3.11 §XI; 1.4.1 §VI; 1.4.4 §§XXX, XXXV, XXXVI; 1.5.18 §XXXIX.

19. Louis Berkhof classified Mastricht as an infralapsarian; Vos classified him as a supralapsarian. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pt. 1, Works of God, II, E, p. 118; Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:148–55, section 66.

20. Mastricht’s view is similar to but a bit different from that of Samuel Rutherford, whom all would acknowledge as a supralapsarian. Rutherford held to two eternal, distinguishable acts of reprobation, one up front in parallel with election, and one after creation and the fall, where infralapsarians place it. Both, as with Mastricht, have a passive nature. A main difference, though, is that Rutherford held that the first act of reprobation was of particular individuals, whereas Mastricht did not. “When we look more closely at Rutherford’s doctrines of election and reprobation, we see this same tendency toward a moderate supralapsarianism together with a use of terminology that is characteristically infralapsarian.” Guy Richard, “Samuel Rutherford’s Supralapsarianism Revealed: A Key to the Lapsarian Position of the Westminster Confession of Faith?,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 4 (2008): 163. Johannes Braun (1628–1708), a Dutch, Cartesian professor of theology contemporaneous with Mastricht, elucidated a mediating position very similar to his and yet is clearly supralapsarian in *Doctrina foederum sive Systema theologiae didacticae et elencticae* (Amsterdam: Abraham van Someren, 1691), I.ii.9.24. The later American Presbyterian and first professor of Princeton Seminary, Archibald Alexander (1772–1851), also took a mediating position very similar to Mastricht’s. God,

Mastricht did not consider himself original in his lapsarian viewpoint; rather, he was walking on what he regarded as a well-trodden path.

Mastricht concludes regarding his paradigm, “And thus you will most easily reconcile opinions that seem to differ, and you will most safely take away the difficulties by which the one side customarily incriminates the side opposed to it.”²¹ Further, “Scripture teaches this order, and experience clearly confirms it.”²² Mastricht’s discussion of predestination, and reprobation in particular, is profoundly in-depth and masterful, and will challenge the most knowledgeable and persuaded reader toward a much greater reverence for the mysteries and character of our holy, sovereign, and good God.

Rejection of Copernicanism

The preferred model of the solar system in late antiquity was the geo-centrism of Ptolemy (d. 170), in which all the celestial orbs, whether stars or planets, revolved around the earth.²³ In 1543, the second generation of the Reformation, Copernicus published a groundbreaking work setting forth heliocentrism, which places the sun at the center of our solar system. By 1588 Tycho Brahe combined some of the geometric and computational advantages of Copernicus’s insights with what he considered to be the philosophical advantages of the older Ptolemaic

Creation, and Human Rebellion: Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander from the Hand of Charles Hodge, ed. Travis Fentiman (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 75–76.

21. 1.3.2 §XII.

22. 1.3.2 §XXI.

23. On the general topic, see Hoon J. Lee, “Accommodation—Orthodox, Socinian and Contemporary,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 75, no. 2 (2013): 335–49; Hoon J. Lee, *The Biblical Accommodation Debate in Germany: Interpretation and the Enlightenment* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), especially ch. 2, “Accommodation in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic,” 23–60; R. H. Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2002); R. Hooykaas, “The Reception of Copernicanism in England and the Netherlands,” in *The Anglo-Dutch Contribution to the Civilization of Early Modern Society*, ed. Charles Wilson, Reyer Hooykaas, A. Rupert Hall, and Jan Waszink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 33–44; Aza Goudriaan, “Creation, Mosaic Physics, Copernicanism, and Divine Accommodation,” in *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625–1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 125–33; T. van Nieuhuys, *The Age of the Two-Faced Janus: The Comets of 1577 and 1618 and the Decline of the Aristotelian World View in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); E. Grant, *In Defense of the Earth’s Centrality and Immobility: Scholastic Reaction to Copernicanism in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984); H. J. Howell, *God’s Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); and Robert S. Westman, *The Copernican Question: Prognostication, Skepticism, and Celestial Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

system, setting forth a geocentric paradigm where the sun revolved around the earth but the planets revolved around the sun. Between 1615 and 1621, Johannes Kepler published works refining the heliocentric model more accurately. Around the same time, Galileo, “the father of modern physics,” made astronomical discoveries that further chipped away at the older Ptolemaic system. The price he paid for those discoveries was coming under suspicion, and later the condemnation of the Roman Inquisition. René Descartes moved to the Netherlands in 1628 and wrote all his major works there. At one point he proposed a heliocentric solar system; he also laid the groundwork for the development of calculus. Just between the first and second editions of Mastricht’s *TPT* (1682 and 1698), Isaac Newton published his *Principia* in 1687, which theoretically derived Kepler’s three heliocentric laws of planetary motion, previously derived from empirical evidence, with the newly invented calculus.

In the midst of this rising current, Mastricht argued strongly against heliocentrism, saying, “The Reformed deny it, in agreement with the Tychonian astronomers, because divine revelation evidently denies it, and determines that the earth stands immovable.”²⁴ In fact, the earth is “the center of this universe (Eccl. 1:4).”²⁵ Though Mastricht clearly found his *pou sto* (Greek: “a place where I may stand”) in what in his mind is the clear and frequent teaching of the Scriptures (he cites a surprisingly large number of verses for his positions), yet it will be here argued that the state of the question in his day was fundamentally different from in our day; hence much can yet be learned from Mastricht’s hermeneutics and harmonizing of philosophy, science, and revelation without those things necessitating a geocentric conclusion.

As the physical evidence in Mastricht’s time could largely be explained by both sides as a difference of perspective, Mastricht concluded, “Our opponents do not attempt to argue anything from the Scriptures in favor of their opinion, nor even anything from nature, which would solidly imply that the earth moves.” Rather, the followers of Copernicus and Descartes, “because they think that the phenomena of this world can be more easily explained by the benefit of this hypothesis, affirm that it does.” As this principal argument for heliocentrism left a bit to be desired, Mastricht could say, “The most dangerous method of acting

24. 1.3.6 §XLIX. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 2:483. Bavinck incorrectly characterized Mastricht and many other of his contemporaries as espousing “an Aristotelian-Ptolemaic worldview.” For the main relevant sections on Mastricht’s cosmology in the *TPT*, see 1.3.6 §XIX, XXVII–IXXX, XLIV, XLVI, XLIX–L, LXVII.

25. 1.3.6 §XIX. This is in contrast to the view of the Italian Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), who proposed on a heliocentric model that the universe is infinite and could have no center.

in theology is that one in which you oppose to the constant testimony of the Scriptures nothing but opinions, indeed, philosophical conjectures.”²⁶

In contrast to philosophical conjectures and far from being ignorant or skeptical of the principles of science, it is clear that Mastricht greatly valued—even had a zeal for—that which could be found out through observational, empirical, and investigative means, these things being sufficient for a natural proof of truth. Mastricht held that the earth, far from being flat, “is exactly round,” and that purely on “the testimony of sailors.” He states from a Reformed source from 1607 that the earth has a circumference of “5,400 German miles.”²⁷ A German mile is roughly 6.61 American miles. Mastricht’s measurement was only approximately 0.011 percent off the current estimate of the meridian circumference of the earth, which margin of error may be mostly due to local or temporal variants of the German mile unknown to us.²⁸

Mastricht had a surprisingly modern view of the earth in many regards: “With respect to its magnitude, compared with the universe, it is nothing but a little speck, although considered absolutely in itself, it is of the most vast magnitude.” Mastricht takes as an indisputable fact that the earth does “hover in the air (Job 26:7; 38:4–6).” Though this mystery has “tormented many,” rather than simply relegating it to a “divine miracle,” Mastricht offers three natural principles that may help to explain the phenomenon.²⁹ On another front, Mastricht recognized that meteors, storms, volcanoes, and geysers were naturally caused.³⁰ He also had some idea that the moon may produce the tides.³¹ Mastricht rejected astrology, and that not simply on the testimony of Scripture but also to a great

26. 1.3.6 §XLIX.

27. 1.3.6 §XLVI. The German mile was “a sea measurement used mainly by Dutch navigators in the 17th and early 18th centuries. It was equal in length to 4 nautical miles.” “German Mile,” Oxford Reference, accessed Feb. 18, 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095849560>. “A nautical mile was originally defined as the length on the Earth’s surface of one minute (1/60 of a degree) of arc along a meridian (north-south line of longitude).” “Mile,” Britannica, accessed Feb. 18, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/science/mile>. While even the nautical mile has been delimited differently in different regions and history and it is not easy to know the exact measurement Mastricht’s source was using, since 1929 the nautical mile has been defined internationally as 1,852 meters.

28. This is using data from NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, per Tim Sharp, “How Big Is Earth?,” accessed Feb. 18, 2021, <https://www.space.com/17638-how-big-is-earth.html>. Note that the circumference of the earth today is often given from the bulge at the equator, but in the seventeenth century it was commonly measured from the poles, which are flatter and hence measure a smaller circumference.

29. 1.3.6 §XLVI.

30. 1.3.6 §LVIII.

31. 1.3.6 §XLVII.

extent on natural reasons, experience, and common sense.³² In consistency with all these positions, a significant reason confirming geocentrism over heliocentrism for Mastricht was that “phenomena and experience...more truly and solidly affirm the system of Scripture, and with it the common sense of Christians has so far agreed.”³³

Mastricht’s method of interpreting Scripture was in many ways more advanced than is common today.³⁴ In 1.3.6 §XLIV he recognizes that the language in Psalm 104:5–6 about the Lord laying the foundations of the earth is poetic and figurative, “as if it rested upon bases.” In an earlier work in which Mastricht more particularly delineated his views of scriptural interpretation, he explained, “Figurative expressions are not false..., but in those matters words are transferred from the truth of the matter to indicate a matter that is likewise true.”³⁵ In addition, “Scripture can use the formulas of the common people.”³⁶ “The question,” Mastricht writes, “is not whether the Holy Spirit, to express some truth, sometimes uses coarser words of the common people, for the sake of indicating the matter less equally, provided that they truly express that which should be indicated.”³⁷ In these passages Mastricht clearly affirms that Scripture at times communicates truth through a principle of accommodation, but he is very careful to distinguish this from an accommodation that conveys a false meaning, which tenet Mastricht’s opponent explicitly defended.³⁸

Mastricht’s geocentric paradigm was subordinate to his larger concerns regarding the authority of Scripture and its coherence with reason and natural

32. 1.3.6 §LXVIII.

33. 1.3.6 §XIX.

34. See his *Vindiciæ Veritatis et autoritatis Sacrae Scripturæ in rebus philosophicis adversus dissertationes D. Christophori Wittichii* [A vindication of the truth and authority of sacred Scripture in philosophical things against the dissertations of Dr. Christoph Wittich] (Utrecht: Johannis a Waesberg, 1655). Chapters 1 and 5 have been translated into English in chapter 4 of J. A. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology: A Comparative Study of the Controversy” (master’s thesis, University of the Free State, South Africa, 2013).

35. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 75.

36. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 72.

37. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 76.

38. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 77. Mastricht’s opponent Christoph Wittich followed Faustus Socinus and Descartes on this principle. Lee, *Biblical Accommodation*, 23. Defining *accommodation* as understood in Reformed scholasticism, Richard Muller said, “Accommodation occurs specifically in the use of human words and concepts for the communication of the law and gospel, but it in no way implies the loss of truth or the lessening of Scriptural authority. The accommodation or condescension refers to the manner or mode of revelation, the gift of the wisdom of infinite God in finite form, not to the quality of the revelation or to the matter revealed.” *Dictionary of Greek and Latin Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 19.

philosophy.³⁹ Specifically, Mastricht worked within the long church history tradition of the “Mosaic physics,” which aimed to keep natural philosophy in harmony with biblical revelation.⁴⁰ As the Mosaic physics involved a range of issues connected with then-current philosophies, so natural philosophy was held to provisionally, insofar as it supported Scripture, and the Reformed were comfortable with incorporating philosophy (or not) to differing degrees and extents based on the clearness and merits of the specific case.⁴¹

As Mastricht gave great weight to empirical knowledge, had a solid general method of hermeneutics, and held particular philosophies with a loose grip insofar as they were subordinate to and subserved the Word of God, so the distinct issue of heliocentrism, considered in this context, was not, it seems, intrinsically tied to Mastricht’s system but ought to stand or fall on its own merits. The state of the question for Mastricht was how an astronomical hypothesis (Copernicanism) ought to be evaluated when it was not taught by Scripture, could not be proven from natural philosophy, and when the only significant argument for it was that it provided a certain degree of theoretical phenomenological expediency, seemingly contrary to the actual experience of all people.

The state of the question today is very different. Two apparent or empirical proofs for heliocentrism were discovered in 1727 and 1838 by astronomers. For the first time in 1851, regular people could see tangible evidence of the rotation of the earth through movement of Foucault’s pendulum. Today the issues can be directly and repeatedly investigated, tested, and confirmed through experience, similar to the testimony of the sailors in Mastricht’s time regarding the earth being round. As there is in Mastricht’s words “one and the same light of truth... in both Scripture and reason,”⁴² we should conclude that God sometimes speaks

39. Mastricht, *Vindiciae veritatis*.

40. Schlebusch writes, “It is evident that Van Mastricht regards theology as the queen of the sciences, maintaining its chief source, Scripture, should have principal authority over all other sources and conclusions of scientific investigation.” “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 144.

41. Goudriaan explains, “Three other issues will be discussed...the six days of creation, substantial forms, and Copernicanism. The first topic can reveal how theologians and philosophers worked with concrete textual data from the Bible. The second point can show how a philosophical conception that in itself had no biblical, but a philosophical origin, was used in the interpretation of Scripture and defended, modified or given up in the face of modern corpuscular theories. The third issue, Copernicanism, also reveals basic attitudes in an area where physics (or astronomy) and the Bible come together.” *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy*, 104–5.

42. Schlebusch, “Cartesianism and Reformed Scholastic Theology,” 70.

truth in Scripture according to the geographical perspective of the hearers for their benefit.⁴³

Mastricht will be of great help to us in developing and refining a true, consistent view of how Scripture qualifies our understanding of the light of nature and how the light of nature informs our understanding of Scripture. In striving toward this end may we “marvel and wonder in our heart. To this end God asks Job, ‘Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you know understanding. Who determined its measurements, if you know? Who stretched out the line upon it?’ (Job 38:4–6).”⁴⁴

Defense of the Reality of Demons and Magic

The last third of the seventeenth century, when the *TPT* was published, saw a decline of belief in demons and the reality of so-called “black” magic.⁴⁵ Such

43. Lee observes,

Not only did accommodation aid as an exegetical principle in interpreting certain passages, it also served to uphold the inspiration, authority and inerrancy of the Bible. For example, Genesis describes both the sun and the moon as the “two great lights.” Yet Calvin understood that the moon’s surface consisted of a reflective element and thus did not emit light itself. However, Calvin maintained that Moses did not err in his description of the moon. Rather, Moses wrote in accommodated fashion. Despite having a fuller understanding, Moses adapted scientific truth to the visual perception of man and the use of phenomenological language, which meant the Bible remained fully inerrant in all matters.

Biblical Accommodation, 4.

44. 1.3.6 §LI.

45. On the general topic, see K. R. Hagenbach, *A Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, ed. Henry B. Smith (New York: Sheldon, 1867), 2:341–43; Scott Taylor, “The Gadarene Demoniac in the English Enlightenment,” in *A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Studies in Religious and Cultural History in Honor of Carlos M. N. Eire*, ed. E. Michelson, S. Taylor, and M. Venables (London: Routledge, 2012), 49–66; the primary source bibliography at the end of the article is especially useful for the eighteenth-century context. Owen Davies, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Johannes Dillinger, *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge, 2020); *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999–2002); *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, ed. Richard Golden, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2006); William E. H. Lecky, “The Declining Sense of the Miraculous: On Magic and Witchcraft,” in *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton 1919); *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, ed. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and W. Frijhoff (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1991); Brian Levack, *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Brian Levack, *Witchcraft in Continental Europe*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2013), which has two chapters on the Dutch context; and Renilde Vervoort, *Bruegel’s Witches: Witchcraft Images in the Low*

doubt was not new: Maastricht notes, “Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes together with their followers do not acknowledge any demons, and they reduce their effects either to fables or to natural causes.”⁴⁶ Since at least the late sixteenth century, there had been significant (albeit minority) Protestant skepticism about these things, especially in relation to witchcraft; popular opinions about these black arts and the civil prosecutions that followed them, it was held, were largely due to superstition, Roman Catholicism, and its oppression of the poor.⁴⁷ This skepticism was justified to a large extent. Between 1450 and 1685, authorities in the southern half of the Netherlands, which had remained Roman Catholic, had executed between 1,150 and 1,250 alleged witches, while the Reformed northern provinces had executed only 160–200 persons, the last one in 1608.⁴⁸ The reason for this drop-off in prosecutions, which occurred in these provinces long before it did in other European countries, has been attributed to the Dutch civil magistrates, during a time of increasing prosperity, exhibiting an “Erasmian skepticism” and ceasing to accept accusations of witchcraft and sorcery.⁴⁹

On the intellectual side, René Descartes (1596–1650), as mentioned previously, moved to the northern Netherlands in 1628, writing all his major works there. Cartesianism, which emphasizes the duality of matter and spirit—holding that the latter does not work upon the former—began to press the Reformed orthodox by 1640.⁵⁰ In Descartes’s wake and with greater force, Spinoza argued against the supernatural and the existence of devils and spirits in a published work of 1660. The main antagonist whom Maastricht would later write against, however, would be Balthasar Bekker, a Cartesian, Dutch Reformed minister who raised the greatest storm in the controversy.⁵¹

Countries between 1450 and 1700 (Bruges: Van de Wiele, 2015), especially the chapter by Dries Vansacker, “Prosecutions for Sorcery and Witchcraft in Europe,” 11–17.

46. 1.3.8 §XVIII.

47. Philip C. Almond, *England’s First Demonologist: Reginald Scott and the Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

48. Vansacker, “Prosecutions for Sorcery,” 13–14.

49. Vansacker, “Prosecutions for Sorcery,” 14.

50. Daniel Ragusa, “Petrus van Maastricht’s *Ad Verum Clariss. D. Balthasaren Beckerum*: Beginning with Scripture, Ending with Worship,” in *Petrus van Maastricht (1630–1706): Text, Context, and Interpretation*, ed. Adriaan Neele (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 143–58.

51. On the issues, controversy, and Bekker’s influence, see Ragusa, “Beginning with Scripture”; Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 375–405. On the influence of Descartes on Bekker’s views, see W. van Bunge, “Balthasar Bekker’s Cartesian Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Spinozism,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2008): 55–79. For an eighteenth-century account of Bekker’s influence, see J. L. von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, 5:432–38, 17th cent. sect. 2, pt. 2, ch. 1, §§XXXV–XXXVIII. See the footnotes in this volume, 1.3.7 §XXVII, for citations of various editions of Bekker’s work and of other relevant literature.

In Bekker's major work, *The World Bewitched* (1691/1695), for which he would be deposed from the ministry, he denied that demons, though real, exerted any direct influence on the soul or body of man. To the extent that Bekker addressed Scripture, he argued that the biblical writers wrote their accounts according to the principle of accommodation. Bekker inferred this from heliocentrism: "The knowledge of stars, manifestly discovers several things, that undeniably shew the sacred writers accommodated themselves to the style and capacity of the vulgar, and speak of the heavens, earth, sun, moon and stars, not according to their own nature, and as they are in themselves; but according to the common notions of men."⁵²

While accommodation might naturally be used with respect to geographical or poetic perspective, for Jesus to have spoken of and to demons that did not exist or were not acting on the persons said to be demon-possessed, would have involved him in palpably irrational speech and/or falsehoods contrary to the very common sense, experience, and good faith of the people and his disciples. For Maastricht, however, "Scripture was not subordinated to philosophy, but philosophy to Scripture. This starting point alone accounted for the full-orbed nature of creation with its rich diversity, including spirits and bodies, heaven and earth, which Cartesian dualism could not account for or bring into any real, dynamic relation."⁵³

In seeking to preserve the full-orbed biblical teaching and "the common opinion," Maastricht was careful to guard against excesses: "The Reformed, although they attribute nothing to the nearly infinite number of old wives' tales told everywhere, especially among the papists, without any basis, nonetheless hold this: there do exist magicians who by the aid of malicious angels, bring forth their own prognostications and malicious works."⁵⁴

Maastricht, citing Perkins, held that many persons who were simply mentally ill made an imaginary pact with the devil.⁵⁵ Where true demon possession does take place, Maastricht found the solution not in papal exorcism but in the sufficiency of "prayers, battle, [and] the apostolic armor" of Ephesians 6.⁵⁶

52. Balthasar Bekker, *The world bewitch'd, or, An examination of the common opinions concerning spirits: their nature, power, administration and operations...* ([London]: Printed for R. Baldwin in Warwick-Lane, 1695), 257.

53. Daniel Ragusa, "Catching Up on Petrus van Maastricht," *Reformed Forum*, July 10, 2018, accessed Feb. 16, 2021, <https://reformedforum.org/catching-up-on-petrus-van-maastricht/>.

54. 1.3.8 §XXII.

55. 1.3.8 §XIV. William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft so farre forth as it is reuealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true experience...* ([Cambridge]: Cantrel Legge, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1610), 24, 96, 190.

56. 1.3.8 §XXIV.

The first edition of the *TPT* in 1682 and the second in 1698 straddled the notorious Salem witch trials (1692–1693) in New England. Those regrettable events were the first and last major cluster of witch trials in the American colonies; considered together with events in Europe, they were some of the dying breaths of an expiring era.⁵⁷ The last report of an execution for witchcraft in England dates from 1716.⁵⁸

This ideological sea change, however, was not merely a reaction to excesses or a historical inevitability but, as Maastricht warned, it was a disturbing evidence of the triumph of doubt over faith in the Word of God. The first persons in the premodern era to prominently publish their disbelief in ghosts and witches were mainly freethinkers.⁵⁹ “The truth is,” said one of the older historians, “that the existence of witchcraft was disbelieved before the Scriptural evidence of it was questioned.”⁶⁰ In fact, “that the disbelief in witchcraft...is the result, not of any series of definite arguments, or of new discoveries, but of a gradual, insensible, yet profound modification of the habits of thought prevailing in Europe...and of its influence upon opinions, must be evident to anyone who impartially investigates the question.”⁶¹

The Witchcraft Act of 1735 in England marked a new beginning in Europe: witchcraft came to be seen as an impossible crime. Persons who claimed to engage in sorcery would now be punished simply as deceivers with fines and

57. The editors of History.com describe the conclusion and legacy of the Salem Witch Trials:

Though the respected minister Cotton Mather had warned of the dubious value of spectral evidence (or testimony about dreams and visions), his concerns went largely unheeded during the Salem witch trials. Increase Mather, president of Harvard College (and Cotton’s father) later joined his son in urging that the standards of evidence for witchcraft must be equal to those for any other crime, concluding that “It would be better that ten suspected witches may escape than one innocent person be condemned.”... Trials continued with dwindling intensity until early 1693, and by that May Phips had pardoned and released all those in prison on witchcraft charges. In January 1697, the Massachusetts General Court declared a day of fasting for the tragedy of the Salem witch trials; the court later deemed the trials unlawful, and the leading justice Samuel Sewall publicly apologized for his role in the process.... Massachusetts Colony passed legislation restoring the good names of the condemned and provid[ed] financial restitution to their heirs in 1711.

“Salem Witch Trials,” *History*, Nov. 4, 2011, accessed Feb. 16, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/salem-witch-trials>. Sporadic trials would occur thereafter, but they were few and far between.

58. The validity of this report is in question. Wallace Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1582–1718* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1911), 419.

59. Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, 12.

60. Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, 12.

61. Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, 10.

imprisonment. Mastricht's Book 3, Chapter 8, "The Evil Angels," however, will remain timeless, as one of the most full, biblically insightful, and spiritually helpful works on the topic of these abiding spiritual realities now in English.

Doctrine of the Third Heaven

It is not uncommon to hear today that in the age to come Christians will find the fruition of all their earthly desires and joys in the thrilling delights of a renovated earth. In continuity with our physical estate now, after the resurrection we will be forever laboring away in fulfilling industry, taking dominion of the new earth presenting an array of endless, stimulating opportunities.⁶² While this view had precedents in the Post-Reformation era, the dominant Reformed view, which Mastricht argues persuasively, is that believers will eternally dwell not in the new earth but in heaven, finding their greatest and chief delights to be spiritual, in God himself.⁶³ After all, if saints after death are "received into the highest heav-

62. Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 201–7; Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2004); and Ian K. Smith, *Not Home Yet: How the Renewal of the Earth Fits into God's Plan for the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2019). On the rise of this notion in American history after the Civil War during the Gilded Age and in the Progressive Era from 1890–1920, especially in contrast to America's Puritan age, see "The Busiest Place in the Universe" and "Heaven: A Busy Hive, a Center of Industry," in Gary Scott Smith, *Heaven in the American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 119–21; 141–44. On the history of the doctrine of heaven and ideas about it in the popular mind, see Edward J. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), which is on ancient history up to the Middle Ages; Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), which covers the biblical era to the present; Alistair McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), thematic; and Philip C. Almond, *Heaven & Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), which covers 1650–1750.

63. Westminster Larger Catechism 90. John H. Duff writes, "Two main opinions existed about the use of a renewed world. The majority of scholars [in seventeenth-century England] believed the purged world would serve as a monument to God's glory, wisdom and power. God's people would be able to see this monument from their permanent abode in heaven. A few divines adopted the idea that the new heavens and earth would be home to Christ and his people for eternity." "'A Knot Worth Unloosing': The Interpretation of the New Heavens and Earth in Seventeenth-Century England" (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2014), viii.

For Mastricht's main sections regarding the third heaven, see 1.3.6 §§XXX–XXXII, XXXIV–XXXVI, XXXVIII–XLIII.

The Dutch *Synopsis of Purer Theology* (1625) teaches:

XXXVI. Nor in this matter should they be listened to who confess that though heaven will be the home of blessed souls until the final judgment, that nonetheless the earth, set free from bondage to corruption and glorified, will become the habitation of blessed men, with heaven left thereafter to the angels only. Because Holy Scripture places the entire reward of the saints, and that unfailing, in heaven, as can be seen in Matthew 5:12, Luke 12:33, and Hebrews 10:34. Then, because the very kingdom of the heavens

ens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory” (Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 86; Matt. 25:34, 46), any return to earthly living after such an experience could only be a disappointment.

The Holy Spirit calls the realm of departed saints in the presence of God “the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2). The first heaven, Mastricht explains from Scripture, is the terrestrial skies and atmosphere; the second, the starry or sidereal heaven; the third, the celestial empyrean, or the highest heaven of God’s sanctuary. All of these were created on the first day, when “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).⁶⁴

The third heaven, *contra* the Lutherans, is not everywhere but has a locality.⁶⁵ In fact, as believers will dwell there someday body and soul (Ps. 27:4; John 14:2–3; Heb. 11:16), as Enoch, Elijah, and Christ do now, it “seems to approach closer to the truth to say that it is not something spiritual, since it is destined for one day also receiving bodies.”⁶⁶ Heaven is “a place most spacious..., for which reason our Savior attributes to it many dwelling places (John 14:2).” It is “most splendid, ... ‘wholly radiant,’” and “incorruptible, not because it could not be corrupted or changed, but because it never will be corrupted, from which it is called the house not made by hands, and eternal (2 Cor. 5:1).”⁶⁷ Heaven, though it may appear to be immeasurable to us, yet must be finite, as “infinity of whatever sort is among the incommunicable attributes of God.”⁶⁸

The purpose of heaven is to be a home for God’s elect, “where he not so much dwells for himself as he makes his majesty and glory visible to us.” Therefore, far from saints laboring for all eternity, heaven will be “a place of rest from all our labor (Heb. 4:9–11)” and “we will see him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12).”⁶⁹

is promised to believers as their final reward (Matt. 5:10; 19:14). Third, because heaven as opposed to earth is called our eternal dwelling (2 Cor. 5:1), and our city (Phil. 3:20), and our fatherland (Heb. 11:16), and therefore we will not inhabit it only for a time, and like tenants, but in perpetuity. For otherwise believers who shall die near the end of the world would sojourn in it for only a little time, and those whom the last day shall discover alive would never enter it, all which things are absurd, and foreign to the truth of the divine promises.

Synopsis purioris theologiae, ed. Herman Bavinck (Leiden: Didericus Donner, 1881), *Disputatio* LII, 662.

64. 1.3.6 §§II.C.1.a, XIX, XXVI, XXX, XXXIV.

65. 1.3.6 §XXXV.

66. 1.3.6 §XXXI.

67. 1.3.6 §XXXII.

68. 1.3.6 §XVI.

69. 1.3.6 §§XXXII, XLII.

In Volume 6, Mastricht will discuss the renovation by fire of the “heavens and the earth” (2 Peter 3:7; see also v. 10).⁷⁰ The “heavens” in this phrase, for the Reformed of the seventeenth century, referred only to the lower first and possibly second heavens, for, as one scholar of seventeenth-century eschatology noted, “No one believed the empyreal heaven would undergo a cleansing fire since it was the abode of Christ, the saints and angels.”⁷¹ What then would be the purpose of the new heavens and new earth if not to dwell in them? While the Reformed were cautious not to speak beyond what Scripture reveals, they understood that God certainly will have a purpose for the new heavens and new earth and often conjectured that they may serve “as monuments of his former power, wisdom and goodness towards man. Also, the saints may be able to behold and peer into the new heavens and new earth or even intermittently travel there in a way similar to how angels, living in heaven now, sometimes converse between heaven and earth.”⁷² Lesser glories may yet contribute to a greater cumulative glory by their wonderful order and variety and especially by way of contrast in their comparison.

What may be learned in contemplating these unseen works of God? “Although...the earth was given to us by the Creator to be our inn (rather than our home, Heb. 13:14; 11:9), let us cautiously beware that we be not earthly, not those who set their minds on earthly things (Phil. 3:19).”⁷³ Also, “it stirs us up that we may strive with every effort of body and soul to acquire for ourselves the possession of heaven.”⁷⁴

Conclusion

We hope that these introductory considerations will help our readers use this volume with understanding and profit. Special thanks are due here to Travis

70. 1.8.4 §§VIII, XIX, XXI.

71. Duff, “A Knot Worth Unloosing,” 158n 90.

72. Edward Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian* (London: Richard Field for Robert Mylburne, 1623), 497, as quoted in Duff, “A Knot Worth Unloosing,” 183. Mastricht gives similar cautious speculations in 1.8.4 §VIII. For other Post-Reformation, Reformed treatments of believers’ eternal abode and the new heavens and new earth, see William Bucanus, *Institutions of Christian Religion* (London: George Snowdon, and Leonell Snowdon, 1606), 492; Andrew Willet, *Hexapla, that is, a six-fold commentarie vpon the most diuine Epistle of the holy apostle S. Paul to the Romanes* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1611), 366–73; Johannes Wolleb, *Abridgment of Christian Divinity* (London: T. Mabb for Joseph Nevill, 1660), 301–9; Thomas Adams, *A commentary or, exposition vpon the diuine second epistle generall, written by the blessed apostle St. Peter* (London, 1633), 1356–82; and Richard Baxter, *The glorious kingdom of Christ* (London, 1691), 71–73.

73. 1.3.6 §LIV.

74. 1.3.6 §XLII.

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As a final note, readers of the Latin original or the Dutch translations should be aware that so far in the three volumes we have had to correct a number of mistakes in the original numbering of the sections. We made Maastricht's cross-references and ours conform to the numbers as they stand in the present English volumes.

We commend to our readers Maastricht's teaching and application and sincerely pray that the Lord will bless this volume to the thankful proclamation of his wondrous works and the salvation of sinners from the penalty and power of sin.

—Joel R. Beeke
Todd M. Rester