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# THE 17<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY JOHANNES HOORNBECK'S VIEWS ON MISSION, ECUMENISM AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY AND ITS CURRENT RELEVANCE

## ABSTRACT

In this second article (cf. Hofmeyr 2016), like the previous one, I would like to introduce Johannes Hoornbeeck and the Further Reformation, besides other goals, to the Anglo-Saxon world. This article focuses primarily on the 17<sup>th</sup>-century theologian Johannes Hoornbeeck and some of his views within the context of the Further Reformation. I address the issue related to an analysis of Hoornbeeck's contributions as a missiologist, a theologian with a clear ecumenical and irenical orientation, and a historical theologian. In my opinion, he can be regarded as the second most prominent theologian, besides Gisbertus Voetius. In some respects, Hoornbeeck even surpasses him. This critical overview also focuses on the Further Reformation as an ecclesiastical and theological development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on, and addresses the issue of the Further Reformation and its links to, *inter alia*, scholasticism, but more importantly the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Johannes Hoornbeeck, one of the most prominent representatives of the Further Reformation. I will specifically focus on his views on mission, ecumenism and historical theology.

Johannes Hoornbeeck is, besides Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), probably the most central figure in the so-called Further Reformation. In my previous article, I discussed in greater detail the life and work of Hoornbeeck, as well as some aspects of the Dutch culture and history of his time. In this article, a brief resume will suffice. Hoornbeeck was born on 4 November 1617 in the Dutch city of Haarlem. He studied at both Leiden and Utrecht and was, for a brief period of time, a minister of a Reformed congregation near Cologne in Germany. By 1644, he was appointed professor in Theology at Utrecht and, in 1654, professor in Leiden. He was a prolific writer and highly regarded in many circles. He and his wife Anna Bernard had two sons, Isaak and Hendrik Emilius. Hoornbeeck died at the early age of 48 years on 23 August 1666 in Leiden, but his legacy lives on in many different ways.

It is crucial to realise that the Further Reformation, as a 17<sup>th</sup>-century movement,

strove for a contemporary application of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation and pleaded for both an inner vitalization of Reformed doctrine and a radical sanctification of life (De Reuver 2007:16).

This can be regarded as the Dutch version of an international and inter-confessional movement that, along with Anglo-Saxon Puritanism and German Pietism, is designated by the umbrella term "pietism". It is clear that the intention of the Further Reformation was not to exaggerate the Reformation, but to give it a more precise expression. "Representatives of the Further Reformation ... were also strongly supportive of the agenda 'Ecclesia semper reformanda, quia reformata est.'" (De Reuver 2007:16) An interesting reference in this respect is Jodocus van Lodensteijn from within Further Reformation circles who states that there is in the church always much to reform ("Zekerlijk de Gereformeerde Waarheyd leert dat in de Kerke ook altijd veel te herstellen is") (Dreyer 2017:61-62).

## 2. REFORMED SCHOLASTICISM AND ITS LINKS TO REFORMED ORTHODOXY

It is likely that scholasticism was one of the important keys in understanding the opinions of both the Middle Ages, and the centuries to come, and the Post-Reformation. Until fairly recently, scholasticism was approached and understood in Protestant circles in a somewhat less positive way. However, I believe that Post-Reformation theology does not imply a negative appreciation of medieval scholasticism. I am also convinced that high orthodoxy and reformed scholasticism are most probably the keys to understanding Hoornbeeck's views, in general, but also as applied to his opinions on mission,

ecumenism and historical theology. I can, therefore, associate myself with the opinion of a prominent theologian who stated already in 1972:

Reformation is good, but it is only a moment in the entirety of the tradition. You may not, therefore, only be reform-minded, but must also think in terms of church and catholicity. Then theology unavoidably branches out to scholasticism. In my mind, scholastic method is not a matter of fruitless ingenuity, but the real blossoming of thought. It is a meadow flourishing in springtime, where even the smallest leaf is beautiful (Van Ruler 1972:26, 28).

In the Middle Ages and thereafter, the phenomenon of scholasticism was strongly tied to the schools of the time. It is, for instance, worth reflecting on how the well-known specialist on Reformed Scholasticism, Willem van Asselt, together with Antonie Vos, viewed the role of scholasticism during and after the Middle Ages. Scholasticism was understood not as a method, but rather as a specific content, and scholastic theology as theology taught at medieval schools (Van Asselt 2011:67). In some circles, it was at times mentioned that scholasticism is purely Roman Catholic, rigid and cold. In my opinion, this is not true.

In this brief discussion of our understanding of scholasticism, it is important to briefly focus on reformed orthodoxy (orthodox or confessional, as it systematized the correct teaching) (Brienen 1993:12, 29, 209, 227). We further need to focus on the differences between early orthodoxy and high orthodoxy. Hoornbeeck himself is, in many ways, a transitional figure between the former and the latter, although he more clearly represents high orthodoxy. Van Asselt (2011:133) explains this very aptly and clearly:

The differences between these two periods are, for the most part, formal rather than substantial ... during the period of early orthodoxy (ca 1560-1620), theology was developed and worked out primarily from the basis of the Reformed confessions. The period of high orthodoxy (ca 1620-1700), however, saw comprehensive dogmatic works in which the results of exegesis, dogmatic formulations, polemical elements, and expositions of the practical implications of doctrine were combined into an imposing whole. The scholasticism of high orthodoxy was characterized by increasing precision in its theological apparatus. This allowed dogmatic material to be worked out further and caused the number of polemical topics to increase.

A second and more formal difference between early and high orthodoxy is the great increase in polemics that took up form, especially in disputes with Socinians, Remonstrants, Roman Catholics, and various representatives of federal theology such as, for instance, Cocceius (Van Asselt 2011:134).

During the period of high orthodoxy, however, reformed theology did not represent a monolithic whole. Different currents and streams can be distinguished, all of which remained within the bounds of orthodoxy, even if there was considerable debate between them (Van Asselt 2011:141). Although I will not go into any great detail,

one can distinguish a number of currents within Reformed Scholastic theology. Foremost is the *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, a dogmatic manual written by four theology professors from Leiden. A second and third current is the 'theologia traditiva',<sup>1</sup> and the school of Voetius at Utrecht, of which Hoornbeeck was a part (Van Asselt 2011:142, 146).

Muller (1995) argues that both scholasticism and orthodoxy occur in the Reformed tradition. He states that this is not only an established point of history, but he is even putting it stronger that the outcome of this historic reality was a theology not only grounded in the different confessions of the church, but also one that defended at length the Reformed faith against enemies. He also states that Reformed scholasticism

indicates the method characteristic of the classroom and of the more detailed systems of theology during the era of orthodoxy. This method ... differed from that of the medieval scholastics by reason of the incorporation of many of the changes in logic and rhetoric brought about by the Renaissance and the Reformation. Nor are orthodoxy and scholastic methods radically distinct from the intention and the methods of the Reformers: the Reformers themselves stood adamantly for right teaching over against the errors and abuses that they believed had crept into the church (Muller 1995:26-27).

In the final analysis, the confessional stance of Reformed orthodox theology "rests on the tradition of Augustinian exegesis of the New Testament ... (and) not on scholastic method and not on Aristotle. The doctrinal stance is prior to the method: the method elaborates on and defends the doctrinal stance" (Muller 1995:27). Furthermore,

the Reformation without orthodoxy is not the Reformation. The severing of piety from scholasticism is also untrue to the historical case (Muller 1995:28).

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1 Reformed theology rooted in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Calvinism, as it developed in the time of Beza.

### 3. HOORNBEECK: THE MISSIOLOGIST

To understand Johannes Hoornbeeck's views on missiology and in the correct perspective as a representative of the Further Reformation, it is important to briefly focus on the general view of this theological and ecclesiastical movement. While 19<sup>th</sup>-century's mission endeavours mainly developed from the European Revival and the Anglo-Saxon Revival Movement, those 18<sup>th</sup>-century activities in The Netherlands and in other parts of Europe largely developed as a result of the German pietistic revivals. The mission endeavours of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries had its origins mainly in the Further Reformation and in English Puritanism. It was especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the Dutch, with their seafaring ventures, became involved in some of the Portuguese and Spanish colonies. The exposure to unbelievers in these contexts forced the Christian and Reformed authorities in The Netherlands to rethink their approach. Though the goals of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the West India Company (WIC) were definitely not primarily evangelistic, the broader intention, however, still included the spreading of the Reformed faith. Indeed, new perspectives and possibilities opened up for mission both by the possibilities of travel and with the responsibility of the Dutch Government, in the religious sense of the word, for its colonies.

Some of the first mission pioneers in this phase of history and from within the early Further Reformation context included Godefridus Udemans and Willem Teellinck. In his commentary on the Song of Solomon, Udemans refers in Chapter 6 to the younger sister of Shulam as her representing the unbelieving, while the older sister represents the (Dutch) Reformed Church. The latter longs for the former. Serving as a minister in Middelburg, Teellinck had regular contact with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) that used Middelburg as one of its bases. In his *Ecce Homo* (1622), he expressed strong opinions about the great need that the message of the crucified Christ must be spread worldwide. He also added that the Dutch East India and the West India Companies, as commercial entities, ought not sacrifice the (Dutch) religion to commerce.

In 1967, Simon van der Linde, the well-known early specialist on the Further Reformation, indicated that this movement was a so-called band for Inner Mission. The intention was not to establish a new church. On the contrary, the church has been there all along, but it has to be re-formed.

Wel was dringend nodig die Kerk te re-formeren en het bedoelen van die eerste tijd was dit: hoe word die zwakke, geremde Kerk weer een Kerk van Christus (Van der Linde 1967:7).

Simultaneously to this Inner Mission, the idea of an Outer Mission developed.

A figure who specifically had a very soft spot for the church and its mission to the unbelievers was Johannes Hoornbeeck. He also contributed in a major way to the study of the beginnings of a Protestant theology of mission, together with the history of religions. In addition, Hoornbeeck paid attention quite extensively to another issue, namely his strong feeling for providing some training to those who embark on mission fields. Besides the role that the different theological faculties could play in this respect, he felt strongly about the revival of the Seminarium Indicum, initially established by Walaëus. At various synods of the church, it was pleaded with both the VOC (East India Company) and the WIC (West India Company) to reopen this Seminary, but without any success (Brienen 2008:52ff.).

According to the prominent Willem van Asselt, Hoornbeeck indicated, already in his missionary treatise *De conversione Indorum et Gentilium* (1669), the great perspectives opened up for Christian mission. In building a foundation for mission, Hoornbeeck is very clear that the missionary command points not only to the apostles, but also to all of us as believers. Furthermore, the privilege and the immensity of this task is of great importance to Hoornbeeck. The so-called annoyance about the reality of unbelievers is further reason for being involved in the *Missio Dei*. Coupled with a feeling of gratitude for the salvation in Christ, this provides Hoornbeeck sufficient ground to be a true messenger of the Gospel. Besides, as a 17<sup>th</sup>-century theologian, Hoornbeeck also emphasizes the migration apostolate, which means that those who have colonized different contexts, also need to take some responsibility for spreading the Gospel in these contexts. Those who are going into the mission fields of the church truly become true "*imitatores et successores*" (imitators and successors). He also taught his students that there must be a dimension of gratitude in our commitment to mission, in the sense of our having been reached by the gospel previously. He finally uses the example of Roman Catholics such as the Jesuits and the Dominicans who spread the Gospel fearlessly, constantly and endlessly. All in all, it is obvious that Hoornbeeck had a strong biblical basis for his views on mission.

Basic to the reaching of the unbelieving, according to Hoornbeeck, is the great commission of the apostles. Essential to this outreach is the focus on the divine trinity of God, the creation, the falling into sin, the justification and sanctification, and the resurrection of the body. All of this is viewed according to Hoornbeeck's Reformed position.

In order to scrutinise Hoornbeeck's opinion in more detail, it is important to indicate that, in the first part of his *De Conversione Indorum*

*et Gentilium* (1669), Hoornbeeck discusses various heathen religions and refers to the older religions of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Germanics. Thereafter, he focuses on some of the newer religions such as those in Africa, America, India, Ceylon, China and Japan (Brienen 2008:51).

Hoornbeeck finds it crucial to encourage his students to be involved in the mission of the church. Through their involvement in missionary activities, they will also get to understand the salvation through Jesus Christ (soteriology) more comprehensively.

In a second part of *De Conversione*, Hoornbeeck focuses somewhat more apologetically on nature and structure. He focuses on the different proofs for the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, and the ethical rules for life. In the third part of this publication, the emphasis is somewhat more practical (Brienen 2008:51).

Being knowledgeable about the Jews through different sources such as Menasseh ben Israel, in particular, Hoornbeeck has a very special place and role for them, though he still views them as an object of the church's missionary task. They ought to be considered on a similar level to the unbelieving and the muslims (called mohammedans in his time), although the emphasis should strongly be on a dialogue. Though he can often be sharp in his views on the Jews, he is always open to discussions with them. He feels strongly about their need for true salvation and for their future (Brienen 2008:91, 93).

Hoornbeeck's view on reaching out to the Jews is especially incorporated in his three publications on this topic. The most extensive discussion on this subject is in his *Tesjubat Jehudah*, sometimes also known as *De Convicendis et Convertendis Judaeis et Gentilibus Libri VIII* (1655). This publication has largely been written during his so-called Utrecht period, but it was only published in 1655 during the Leiden period of his career. This can be regarded as a very extensive and excellent reference book about most of the issues related to the Jews in this period (Ypma 1958:58).

In the second section or book, *De Judaismo*, of Hoornbeeck's *magnum opus*, *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* (1653b), he discusses the Jews. According to the historical theologian, G.P. van Itterzon, the approach in this publication is historic rather than polemic, serious in content, but tolerant and irenic in tone. Hoornbeeck also discusses various controversies with the Jews, with the main focus on their conversion to Christianity (Hoornbeeck 1653b:72ff). The issues discussed in this book on the Jews are, however, similar to those in his third work on the Jews.

Hoornbeeck's third book on the Jews is entitled *Disputationes XIV Anti-Judaicae* (1645). This is a collection of fourteen disputations that were defended under Hoornbeeck's chairmanship. His focus is, among other issues, also on the authority of the Bible and that of the Jewish Kabbala. The two most important themes being discussed in these disputations are the points of conflict between the Christians and the Jews, as well as the role of the Jewish people in God's salvation history.

Of special importance are some of Hoornbeeck's prayers for the Jews (Brienen 2008:124). He prays that the Jews will see the truth in Christ, once their error, disbelief and stubbornness are banned. He prays that they will remember God's covenant with, and promises to them, so that they can return to the Messiah and to the church. He challenges Christian co-believers not only to pray for the Jews, but also to work hard for their conversion. At the end of his *prolegomena* (introduction) to his *De Convicendis et Convertendis Judaeis et Gentilibus Libri VIII* (1655), he also reveals his very specific care for the Jews since his study years, when he developed a great knowledge of the Hebrew language and of their social history. In this same publication, he also reflects further on the essence of his views on Israel (Van Campen 2006:82).

In his view on mission, Hoornbeeck makes regular use of the Church Fathers. It was typical of 17<sup>th</sup>-century theologians to be well tuned to Patristic literature and, in this respect, Hoornbeeck was no exception. On the contrary, with his strong philological background, he was well versed in these pioneers of the Christian church, especially to Tertullian and Cyprian. It is interesting to note that a large portion of his knowledge of the Jews comes from the works of Galatine (Galatinus). He also makes regular use of Roman Catholic authors.

In terms of Hoornbeeck's opinion of other groups involved in the mission of the church such as the Muslims and the Unbelievers, it is important and valuable to refer to the *Summa* which contains an extensive discussion on this. He essentially presents a theological and historical interpretation on, and evaluation of these issues. He regards the mission of the church as an important and high calling.

#### 4. HOORNBEECK: THE ECUMENIST

In terms of Hoornbeeck's views on ecumenism, it is important not to understand ecumenism in an anachronistic way. It is a well-known term in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and its understanding in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

would definitely be different. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, ecumenism was far more understood in the sense of a form of community and unity of the true church.

Two of Hoorbeeck's publications specifically focus on his ecumenical and irenic attitude. In his farewell address at Utrecht in 1654, published as *Oratio de Ecclesiarum inter se Communionem*, he focuses especially on the community of churches and how it can be encouraged and preserved. In his opinion, the Triune God ought always to be the foundation stone of all sound communities. He discusses various processes to find greater community and unity among the churches, and highlights especially the Lutherans and the Greek Orthodox in this respect (Hofmeyr 1975:202ff.).

In a second publication, *Irenicum sive de Studio Pacis*, published in 1666 as an addendum to his *Theologia Practica*, Hoorbeeck is once again very clear about the need for an irenic and peace-loving approach (Hofmeyr 1975:203). For him, the split between the Reformed and Lutheran traditions was unnecessary. In many of his writings, he pleads for greater understanding and better relations. He also warns the reformed church not to allow its unity to be negatively affected by the cocceian and cartesian differences and conflicts. In his opinion, there are three ways of resolving conflicts: reconsidering the common faith and confession; commitment to piety and common practice, and reaching compromises.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of his irenic mindedness, some of his views are very revealing, as is evident from the following:

Not every peace is positive or to be regarded as recommendable; our (Reformed) people should generally not be blamed that there is no peace, not even with everybody; one should try your best for the sake of peace, and work for it with all power and might<sup>3</sup> (Hofmeyr 1975:203).

Hoorbeeck continues by stating that the discomfiting division among churches and believers is indeed worrisome to him. Sometimes, those who try to bring groups together are guilty of further division elsewhere. In his opinion, there are three solutions to resolving points of conflict:

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- 2 Free translation and summary of the original text: *Conciliatio autem controversiarum hebere mihi posse videtur triplici via: per communis doctrinae themata; per praecepta pietatis et communis praxis inviolabilia, et denique per cocessa disputationis a parte utraque.*
  - 3 Free translation of the original text: *Non quamcumque, cum quibuscumque, pacem, veram esse, aut commendabilem; interim per nos stare numquam debere, net sit pax, vel, cum omnibus omnino hominibus; et huc esse annitendum atque allaborandum omni studio viribusque.*

by considering the common beliefs, by clear precepts of piety and by common concessions in a dispute<sup>4</sup> (Hofmeyr 1975:203).

It is clear that Hoornbeeck had a well-balanced, but critical ecumenical approach to those ecclesiastical groups who did not break substantially from the essence of the gospel. His inclination was, therefore, not only apostolic, but also ecumenical.

His approach to a theology of controversies was tolerant and irenic. The polemics of the Further Reformation was mild in its judgements of others. Those who feel strongly about a more holy and well-balanced life of faith can be somewhat more pastoral in approach over against those who feel stronger about the orthodox doctrine.

His views on the Papists or Catholics were, to some extent, negative. One of his strongest criticisms against the Catholics was their position as if they were the universal church itself and their doctrine was the only true and correct one. When the Roman Catholics had this opinion of themselves, Hoornbeeck would ask for proof of these viewpoints. Hoornbeeck published various books on his views on Roman Catholics. In his opinion, it was of great importance to him to properly study the doctrine, life and polity of Roman Catholic Church, in order to understand some of its errors and irregularities. In Hoornbeeck's opinion, a proper knowledge of the decisions of the Council of Trent was of the utmost importance. Although a strong unity was present in the Roman Catholic Church after Trent, there was in the meantime hardly any dialogue with the Reformed tradition. In his writings, Hoornbeeck provides a good overview of the most important dialogues in this period of time, especially the dialogue of Poissy in 1561. Hoornbeeck also lists 35 points of difference with the Roman Catholics, upon which he only expected a brief "yes" or "no". His overview of the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church clearly indicates that he was not only a very wise theologian, but also a very well-read author who states his positions on different issues very clearly.

Hoornbeeck's polemics with the Lutherans in Book IX of the *Summa* can, in many ways, be regarded as one of the most important contributions in the entire *Summa*. Besides taking a clear position in terms of the aspects in which Lutherans differed from the Reformed, Hoornbeeck also provides positive guidelines for the continuation of the dialogue. In his continuous pleas for greater unity between the Reformed and the Lutheran traditions,

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4 Free translation of the original text: *Conciliatio autem controversiarum hebere mihi posse videtur triplici via: per communis doctrinae themata; per praecepta pietatis et communis praxis inviolabilia, et denique per concessa disputationis a parte utraque.*

he even published another book entitled *Dissertatio de consociatione euangelica Reformatorum et Augustanae Confessionis* (1661) on this potential cooperation. In this publication, he even pleads for the institution of an ecclesiastical body to work towards closer cooperation.

It must be said that the Further Reformation was definitely not intolerant. It was interesting, especially Johannes Hoornbeeck as the polemicist of the Further Reformation who played a major role in this tolerant stance. Though the truth in Christ and in the Scriptures was central in his thinking, he reflected a specific irenic and ecumenical disposition (Brienen 2008:77-78). This is especially obvious when he is involved in the polemics with the so-called schismatics such as the Remonstrants, the Lutherans, the Congregationalists, and the Eastern Orthodox traditions. It is of great sadness to him that the body of Christ is so deeply divided. He thus suggests three solutions to this division. First, the consideration and study of the communal faith needs attention. Secondly, he feels that a measure of piety and humbleness can be beneficial and, finally, possible concessions from both sides can be helpful (Hofmeyr 1975:201).

In his approach to polemics, Hoornbeeck is extremely well informed about different doctrinal backgrounds. He further also reflects, in this matter, a sharp historical consciousness. He also knows many of the undercurrents that played a role in different contexts and developments. It can further be stated that, as far as the structure of his polemics is concerned, there are clear indications of a formal implementation of a scholastic framework.

All along Hoornbeeck's polemics bear witness to a kind of mild approach. He was not overly rigid or intolerant or not understanding in his polemics. Besides his polemical publications, as the "official" polemicist of the Further Reformation, he also published books on the unity of the church and on irenics.

As indicated earlier, polemics was part and parcel of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century ecclesiastical and theological scene. Scholasticism was in itself polemical in nature and played an important role in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Reformed theology. It must, however, be added that the rise of Protestant orthodoxy also prompted the need for polemics, in order to identify the catholicity of the Reformed church.

To fully understand Hoornbeeck's thinking on mission and ecumenics, it is important to briefly describe his view on ecclesiology. It essentially amounts to a stronger appreciation for ecclesiastical structures than with the Reformation, combined with a strong emphasis on the building of congregations. He also has a special interest in the dynamic character of

the reformed church being responsible for *semper reformanda*. A more comprehensive overview of his views on ecclesiology can be found in his *Dissertatio*, a prologue to his *Summa Controversiarum Religionis*.

It is, in conclusion, interesting to state that Hoornbeeck had a very specific and strong Reformed background and inclination in his theology. He was indeed also an ecumenically minded theologian. It may not be too far-fetched to remember, in this instance, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch theologian such as A.A. van Ruler who had a somewhat similar approach in his theology.

## 5. HOORNBEECK: THE HISTORIC THEOLOGIAN

People often wonder whether the history of Christian theology is worthy of our time and energy. Facts, dates and stories about dead people do not often inspire much excitement, or it can become the refuge for those who struggle to cope with the present. Many people also doubt the practical value of spending time on something that cannot be changed.

According to Muller, historical theology, though a somewhat narrower term than church history, is a general term for a rather broad area of study. It can be understood in various different ways: to some, it may indicate the study of the history of Christian doctrine “primarily for the sake of theological formulation in the present” (Bradley & Muller 1995:6). To others, it may mean an analysis of the great dogmas of the church in some kind of isolation from the events of church history. It is, therefore, important to qualify and define the term. Muller continues:

In the first place, the documents of historical theology are, with few exceptions, the same as those of church history, particularly in the patristic period. The difference between the disciplines lies in the approach the historian takes to the documents and the kinds of information that are elicited from them ... the great burden of writing historical theology is to do justice to the sources – to the intention of their authors – while eliciting from them the materials that belong to one, somewhat artificially defined, part of this history. Historical theology or history of doctrine must be done in such a way as not to lose sight of the original location of the ideas and the original purpose behind the documents in which the ideas are found (Bradley & Muller 1995:7).

Historical theology can be viewed as a branch of theology that investigates the socio-historical and cultural mechanisms that give rise to theological ideas, statements and systems. This field focuses on the relationship

between theology and its contexts, as well as on the major theological and/or philosophical influences on the figures and topics studied.

Elissa, a pseudonym for a postdoctoral fellow in theological studies at Loyola Marymount University, refers to another sharp description of historical theology by Patrick Carey in the journal *US Catholic Historian*:

Historical theologians ... seek to understand (with the tools of history) the faith communicated to the saints through the theological traditions that have arisen in the course of history (Elissa 2014:9). The prime focus is to investigate and understand the theological tradition, not as a representative of a dead past, but as a living reality (Elissa 2014:10).

Past theological ideas are not merely past, but are part of the tradition that lives on in liturgies, prayers, conciliar decisions, current theological discussions, and official ecclesial pronouncements. There is no doubt that there is much in the theological systems and conceptualizations of the past and present that is conditioned by social, intellectual, philosophical, political, ecclesiastical, economic, and psychological forces (Elissa 2014:10).

It is interesting, in this instance, to refer to Van Asselt's perspectives on historical theology as it relates to scholasticism. He is clear about the fact that doctrines cannot be studied at the cost of reducing them to social, economic or political epiphenomena. Exponents of the new approach to reformed scholasticism, therefore, call for an essential dialogue between historical theology and social history

one that avoids both a purely theological approach that leads to the neglect of history, as well as a purely historical approach that leads to the neglect of theological content (Van Asselt 2011:204).

Bearing all of this in mind, at the end of my career, I feel more inclined to opt for historical theology as a better term and demarcation of our subject's field, while simultaneously fully agreeing that it also covers and includes church history. Historical theology not only lays bare the connection between theology and context, but also helps us understand the past. It is also a resource for theology in the present and puts us in a position to identify landmarks in the development of Christian thinking. This remains currently relevant and important. Such landmarks include different writers such as Athanasius, Augustine, and Aquinas; different debates such as the Donatist and Arian controversies, and different documents such as the Nicene Creed.

In focusing on Hoornbeeck, it is amazing to work through Hoornbeeck's different publications and writings, and to realize how deep his knowledge was of especially the Bible as a philologist, and of historical theology as a historian. In an earlier publication, his historical works and approaches were discussed extensively (Hofmeyr 1975:46-48, 50-51, 186-218).

It is especially in the field of polemics that Hoornbeeck actively reveals his historical knowledge and insights. Early in his career, he first published a document in relation to the Jews called *Disputationes XIV Anti-Judaica* (1645). In a second work, *De Paradoxis et Heterodoxis Weigelianis Commentarius ubi et de Swencfeldo aliisque similis indolis* (1646), he focuses on various aspects related to mysticism and then in specific discussions of the thinking of Weigel and Schwenckfeld. His next publication, *Korte en naardere verdediginge van de ware Kerk* (1649), focuses on Roman Catholicism. This is followed by another publication on the Catholics, *Overtuigde vermetenheid van Christophorus van Ouwerkerk* (1650a). Another publication by Hoornbeeck is the three-volume *Socinianismus Confutatus* (1650b). This is possibly Hoornbeeck's major work besides his *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* (1653b). During his time in Leiden, he expanded on his dialogue with the Socinians by publishing various works on Socinianism.

The question is often raised as to what the differences were between the Utrecht and the Leiden period in Hoornbeeck's life and more especially his work. It is obvious that he had a strong historical emphasis in all of his work and involvements in both contexts. In essence, the difference between Utrecht and Leiden amounts to the fact that, in Utrecht, which was known as the academic hub of the Further Reformation, he was mainly involved in the further building of a reformed ethos in doctrine and life, and then in an academic framework. During this period, he published various textbooks on polemics, systematic theology, and homiletics. The period in Leiden was far more overshadowed by conflict and tension. He had some strong views on the celebration of the Sunday and the Sabbath over against the opinions of Cocceius and Heidanus; on the Coccejan federal and covenant theology; on some aspects of Cartesian thinking, and on Arminianism, Brownism and, for instance, Socinianism and its rationalist tendencies. In conclusion, it can be stated that the Utrecht period should be regarded as one of positive creativity, and the Leiden period as one of defence and sharp polemics with different parties.

Naturally, Hoornbeeck, who was a biblical scholar and primarily a historical theologian or church historian, wrote various historical works or at least reflected in many of his writings on the historical dimensions

of thoughts, ideas, developments or personalities. Though the ideal would have been to cover all his historical input and inclinations in a very comprehensive overview, the limited space only allows me to primarily focus on his *magnum opus*, the *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* (Hoorndeeck 1653b). This publication saw a number of different editions and roused wide interest and comment.

According to Van Asselt, Hoorndeeck was an outstanding philologist and published most of his works in the fields of church history, together with Old Testament exegesis. Van Asselt is also of the opinion that Hoorndeeck's *Summa controversiarum religionis* is strongly reminiscent of Voetius's *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum* (1648). For Voetius, this was a foundational exposition of the premises of his theology. According to Van Asselt (2011:142-146), it is not only

(t)he authority of Scripture and the use of the church fathers [that] come up, but Voetius here also points to the importance of scholastic method for the exposition and defense of the articles of faith. Not only does it provide a representative image of the position of Reformed orthodoxy on the relationship between faith and reason, it also illuminates the context in which the theology of Voetius and of his orthodox contemporaries must be placed.

Similar perspectives on Voetius can also be applied to Hoorndeeck.

The sources Hoorndeeck used in his writings reveal how extremely well-read he was. He first linked up very closely with patristic literature and frequently followed the Augustinian line of thought. He further revealed many links with scholastic, pre-Reformation and Reformation literature. As far as the structure of his polemics is concerned, there are clear indications of a formal implementation of a scholastic framework. Even elements of scholastic content are fairly obvious and clear.

The centrality of Scripture was also crucial to Hoorndeeck in his writings. In line with other reformed scholars, Hoorndeeck argued for a uniform authority of the text over against the attempts of the Arminians, Episcopius, Grotius and Socinus to argue levels of truth and authority in the text of Scripture. Episcopius held the revelation of the Old Testament to be inferior to that of the New Testament, while Socinus argued that, on minor issues and points of insignificant importance, the biblical authors could and did err. The orthodox response to these arguments was directed to the preservation of the entire canon. That, according to Hoorndeeck, was the faith of the Reformed churches, as taught in the Belgic Confession. Muller (2003:306-307) indicates that Hoorndeeck

goes on, in a highly polemical vein that approaches closer to the stereotype of orthodoxy than either its positive doctrinal statements or its exegetical works, to list eight arguments leading to the conclusion that Scripture contains no 'disagreements or contradictions'.

Muller (2003:308) concludes these eight arguments by stating that Hoornbeeck

is able to cite passages from Socinus and his followers that speak of the authority and integrity of Scripture: such self-contradiction is a final argument against their teaching!

Although it is difficult, in this short overview and analysis, to cover all the different sources used by Hoornbeeck in his opinions on the above topics, it is important to indicate and analyse at least some of the major ones and what all of this reflects about Hoornbeeck's scholarship.

In studying Hoornbeeck's theology, it is valuable to refer to Voetius' theology which is possibly a departure from Thomas Aquinas' opinions, who defined theology as a speculative discipline. However, an interesting finding in the theological views of Voetius is the fact that there is a clearer link between the Scottish medieval philosopher Duns Scotus and Voetius himself. In his study of Voetius, Beck (2007) aligns himself, in various places, with the so-called positive school arguing for a continuity between some of the major Reformation thinkers and the reformed orthodox theologians, on the one hand, and between some of the major theologians of the medieval period such as Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and with the theologians of the Reformation and those of reformed orthodoxy, on the other. Of course, there are some major differences in their methodology and content, but there remains a long and common tradition between them of *fides quaerens intellectum*. Beck, however, cautions the reader against the possibility of calling Voetius a full Scotian, but he does indicate that the structure of Voetius' doctrine of God, for instance, is prepared by the AA line described by Vos, namely Augustine and Anselm (with his well-known position on *fides quaerens intellectum*) as well as a continuous line of thought from, for instance, Bonaventura, Heinrich von Gent, and Duns Scotus (Beck 2007; Vos 2006).

What proves to be very interesting is the fact that Hoornbeeck was, in his thinking, similar to Voetius, possibly strongly attracted to, and influenced by Philip Melancton. When it comes to Hoornbeeck's polemical discussion with the Lutherans, he compares Martin Luther with Philip Melancton. Over against Luther's strictness, there was a softer and more tolerant spirit with Melancton. In the discussions relating to the sacraments, Melancton pleaded for unity to the very end with the Lutherans. While Luther often initiated issues, Melancton was the one who carried an issue through.

Hoornbeeck further regarded Melancthon as the “praeceptor Germaniae”, the ultimate teacher of the Germany of that time.

From an initial overview, it is evident that the Reformed, Lutheran and Roman Catholic polemics can be clearly distinguished in terms of attitude and style. The most important Reformed polemicists in this period were Chamier, Alting, and Hoornbeeck. Leading Lutheran polemicists were Chemnitz, Gerhard, and Calov. Of the Roman Catholics, Bellarminus contributed the most. He was one of their most important polemical figures in the period of the Counter Reformation. Besides lecturing in polemical theology in the new Roman College, later known as the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, he was a prolific writer. His fields of interest were especially the Church Fathers and scholastic theologians.

Ypma, who wrote a comprehensive study on Hoornbeeck as a missiologist, is of the opinion that the Reformed theologians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Hoornbeeck, in particular, strongly leaned on Roman Catholic authors. “Besonders Hoornbeeck kannte sich sehr gut in der katholischer Missionsliteratur aus ... keiner von den Protestanten übernimmt hierin soviel von den Katoliken und urteilt so positiv über sie wie er” (Ypma 1958:217).

As regards Hoornbeeck’s historical contributions in his writings and the different sources he regularly used, one is indeed amazed about the breadth and depth of his historical insights. In his dialogue, for instance, with the Unbelieving in *De Conversione*, his knowledge of the Church Fathers is, in fact, very impressive. Some of the Patristic authors to whom he refers include Justin the Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, and Augustine.

All in all, it is thus obvious that Hoornbeeck fitted well into the description of being a historic theologian rather than merely a church historian.

## 6. WAS HOORNBEECK IN LINE AND IN CONTINUITY WITH VOETIUS?

In this brief section of the article, I will focus on some concluding remarks related to the theological dimensions and emphases of Hoornbeeck’s specific brand of Further Reformation theology alongside his mentor and colleague Voetius.

As is known, Voetius taught some very promising young theologians such as Hoornbeeck, Essenius, and Nethenus at Utrecht. Together with them and various others, he established the Utrecht School to become the

academic hub of the Further Reformation and especially of the early or first and classical phase of this theological movement (Op 't Hof 2005:14-36).

The Voetians were generally regarded as a (Calvinist) orthodox group who rejected liberal tendencies in theology, as well as Cartesianism in science and philosophy, and who led society to be somewhat more godly in care and lifestyle.

In addition to the underlying eclectic philosophy which they shared, the question remains as to whether Hoornbeeck's theology resembles that of Voetius, not a means to an end, but rather a practical science, or even like practical theology, as Andreas Beck has so clearly shown in his major study on Voetius. For Voetius, his practical theology consisted of moral theology, ascetics, discipline, and missiology. Voetius felt rather strongly about combining piety with science, but he never published a systematic theology.

It is somewhat different in the case of Hoornbeeck, in the sense that, shortly before he left Utrecht for Leiden, he published a collection of theological perspectives on doctrine by the most prominent authors of his time, *Institutiones theologicae ex optimis auctoribus concinnatae* (1653a). Although its content was not original, it ultimately replaced *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625).

It is of great importance to state, on the one hand, that the Reformation and Further Reformation should not be played off against one another, with major exponents such as Voetius and Hoornbeeck, and neither by imagining a discontinuity between the above two and the Roman Catholic Middle Ages, on the other. De Reuver (2007: 17-18) adds:

One is less likely to misunderstand the continuity, particularly on the matter of spirituality ... (which)(JWH) depended on the common orientation of both the Reformation and medieval theology to the sources of the early church. The Reformation certainly functioned as a point of reference, but not as the final goal. In short, in the history of spirituality the Further Reformation was the lively experimentation of a movement that sought its spiritual identity in a synthesis of a reformational and a broadly catholic faith-experience.

All in all, it appears throughout that, over against Voetius' more historical and practical mindedness, Hoornbeeck's theological thinking was more principled, dogmatic and historical.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Similar to my previous article on Johannes Hoornbeeck, I now wish to pose the exact same questions about him, on the basis of his views on mission, ecumenism and historical theology. I believe that he can be regarded as a very able missiologist, a strong ecumenically minded person, and a high-standing historical theologian (Brienen 2008:114-120; Hofmeyr 1989:16-32).

### 7.1 Was he monumental?

In my opinion, Hoornbeeck was indeed a monumental figure also in terms of his views on mission, ecumenism and historical theology. I also believe that he was in the above respects, with regards to his structures of thinking, a typical reformed scholastic in continuity both with aspects of medieval scholasticism, and with his peers mostly in Utrecht. I further concur with Beck about not only Voetius' view on Scriptures, but I also wish to combine that with what I believe Hoornbeeck's view on Scriptures happened to be, and that is not being a Biblicist, but neither a rationalist. In opposition to the Socinians, Scriptures remained for Hoornbeeck the primary source for Christian theology. Furthermore, being in some ways ahead of his times, it was a painful reality to him that the churches in Europe were so divided with so many schisms, heresies and growing ungodliness and libertinian tendencies.<sup>5</sup>

### 7.2 Was he original?

Besides Voetius, I believe that Hoornbeeck was probably the most original theologian of the early or classical phase of the Further Reformation. They were, in my opinion, the top theologians of the entire Further Reformation. In his views on mission, ecumenism and historical theology, Hoornbeeck was not only in some ways a mirror image of Voetius, but also independent. This is clearly reflected if one compares Hoornbeeck's oeuvre and its contents with that of Voetius.

### 7.3 Was he influential?

Hoornbeeck's views on mission, ecumenism and historical theology were also influential. In many ways, he most probably united systematics, history and practice into a whole, making him not only unique, but also influential. In respect of various prominent figures besides Voetius whose lives crossed that of Hoornbeeck, one can also consider people such as Essenius, Nethenius, Herman Witsius, and Amesius in Utrecht, as well as Heidanus, Cocceius, and others in Leiden. Without going into too much

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5 Free translation and summary of the original text: *Ecclesia nempe afflictum per Europeam statum, deformatam faciem, dissipatos coetus et fidelium lanienam summo, ut par est, videbat cum dolore, quemadmodum haereses, apostasias et impietatem infeliciter succrescentem, atque volitantia libertinorum.*

detail at this stage, it would, for instance, be very valuable to address especially the relationship between Hoornbeeck and Herman Witsius in Utrecht, and that of Hoornbeeck and Heidanus and Cocceius in Leiden.

From 1650, Cocceius spent his first four years at Leiden University in relative harmony; this changed with the arrival of Hoornbeeck in 1654 (Van Asselt 2001:30). Hoornbeeck was, in his Leiden phase, according to Van Asselt, involved in a serious conflict with Abraham Heidanus concerning the Sabbath and the celebration of the Sunday. According to Heidanus and his associates, the Sabbath was a ceremonial rather than a moral commandment. This commandment is a temporary and not an eternal precept and it has no binding effect on Christians. Heidanus and, ultimately, Cocceius found the Voetian observation of the Sunday to be too puritanical, too Jewish and too legalistic. A great deal of research will still have to be done in terms of an extensive reception history of Hoornbeeck and his works as a representative of the Further Reformation.

## 8. THE RELEVANCE OF HOORNBEECK'S VIEWS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The issue of drawing some meaning and relevance from some distant period and a strongly different context can be a dangerous undertaking. However, I believe that it is important, even though human beings seldom learn the lessons of history, that we should sometimes once again be told that history does have some lessons for us. Therefore, having focused on the 17<sup>th</sup>-century figure of Johannes Hoornbeeck in two separate articles, and in this specific article on mission, ecumenism and historical theology, I wish to conclude as follows.

First, I believe that, after five centuries of the Reformation and three and a half centuries of the Further Reformation and High Orthodoxy, we need not only to celebrate these as major milestones in the history of religion, but also, in our celebrations, to appreciate the roots of the late medieval period and the Reformation, as well as learn the lessons of this period for church and theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Together with Vos, I believe that the Reformation in no way reflected a break with the *catholica*. It is rather, in many ways, the re-awakening of the *catholica*. The Reformation definitely linked up with the medieval canon in the realm of cultural, philosophical and theological forces.

Secondly, I believe that we can learn how important in all scientific work it would be to go back to the sources or *ad fontes*. I believe that, with the study of Hoornbeeck, there is a great need for new and more detailed and original studies of some of his writings in terms of especially how he was

influenced by scholastic theology and high orthodoxy. In my short survey in this article, there was no space to really delve deep into this.

Thirdly, I believe that the Further Reformation, being very clearly linked to German Pietism and English Puritanism and some of their roots, has some important lessons for us to learn, also in South Africa. On the one hand, the Further Reformation and some of its theological trends have also influenced the South African churches and theology, and especially some of those in the reformed tradition. This, *inter alia*, forms the background to the more recent Reformed evangelicalism in the reformed tradition in South Africa. On the other hand, good theology always needs to strike a balance by focusing on both doctrine and life, and never lose sight of the basics or essentials. The Further Reformation also teaches us to avoid the path of isolation from others or of excessive introspection. Far too often do we end up in a one-sided version of theology and, ultimately, also the Gospel, by over-emphasising either rationalism or emotionalism. It is, for instance, interesting to realize that both Voetius and Hoornbeeck acknowledged the rationality of faith. Although they indicated that theology is not rationalistic, they also stated that it is neither irrational.

Finally, I believe that the exercise to try and understand classical 17<sup>th</sup>-century theology with its roots and fruits, in conjunction with that of other ages, provides many new vistas for our study, research and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the field of Historical Theology.

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