



Anti-Revolutionary Epistemology: Philippus Jacobus Hoedemaker's Philosophy of Revelation

Schlebusch, J. A.

Research Associate: Department Systematic and Historical Theology
University of Pretoria, South Africa
E-mail: schlebusch.adrian@gmail.com

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Abstract

The prominent Anti-Revolutionary philosopher and theologian, Philippus Jacobus Hoedemaker (1839–1910) operated in the Dutch politico-ecclesiastical scene. He achieved renown primarily because of his dispute with Abraham Kuyper over the role of common grace and the political implications of Kuyper's doctrine. In contradistinction to Neo-Calvinists such as Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, Hoedemaker proposed a distinct philosophy of revelation, emphasising the inescapability and holistic nature thereof as foundational to all human knowledge. Hoedemaker's epistemology, consciously theorized and articulated in reaction to the empiricism and rationalism of the Enlightenment, emphasises that all realities and facts are inescapably revealed realities, which are mediated by divine revelation in Scripture as well as history which he understands to be essentially the manifestation of divine providence, given that he holds God to be the ultimate First Cause behind everything in existence. For Hoedemaker, every fact in the universe is therefore completely dependent upon God and his revelation for its very existence. Hoedemaker's distinct epistemology also has significant socio-political implications, most notably the utter impossibility of neutrality in the public domain. Since for Hoedemaker, there exists no natural, unmediated or unrevealed knowledge in all of the universe, it is only Christianity that can bring about true socio-cultural and socio-political progress, while all other worldviews only maintain themselves inasmuch as they borrow capital from the Christian worldview ultimately rooted in Christian epistemology.

Keywords: Anti-Revolutionary, epistemology, Hoedemaker, (Philippus Jacobus), Neo-Calvinism, ontology, revelation.

Introduction

Philippus Jacobus Hoedemaker (1839-1910) was a prominent Dutch Reformed theologian and philosopher in the Anti-Revolutionary tradition—a nineteenth-century movement which emerged in reaction to the prevalence of the Liberalism which flowed out of the Enlightenment. In contradistinction to the epistemic rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment, this Calvinist movement emphasized the absolute sovereignty of God and his revelation as ultimate source of all human knowledge (Alvarado, 2022: xi). The philosophy of the French Enlightenment which had a tremendous impact on the socio-political development of the Netherlands since the founding of the Batavian Republic in 1795, emphasized the sovereignty and independence of human thought and consequently distinctly aimed at secularizing Dutch national life (Taut, 2021: 92). In reaction to this, the Anti-Revolutionary movement opposed this epistemic revolution as a lamentable development which was essentially opposed to what it regarded as the all-encompassing cosmic-historic *telos* of creation, namely the glorification of the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Schlebusch, 2020a: 120).

It was within the context of this conservative movement that Hoedemaker was born in 1839 in the city of Utrecht. Furthermore, it was also this very Anti-Revolutionary cause which lay at



the heart of his parents' decision to move to the United States in 1852, when he was only 13 years old. At the time, the Hoedemaker family experienced increased hostility from the Dutch government towards conservative Calvinists such as themselves (Van Wyk, 1990:501). It was the 1848 constitutional revision, through which a new, liberal constitution was accepted, which particularly grieved the Anti-Revolutionaries, especially since this revision abolished Sabbath laws pertaining to the sanctification of the Sunday as Lord's Day and also transferred the primary responsibility for the care of the welfare of the poor from the Dutch Reformed Church to the state (Kirpestein, 1993:97).

The Hoedemaker family originally settled in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where Philippus Jacobus completed high school. He thereafter entered a course in theology at Rutgers College in New Jersey, but ended his studies shortly after he began because of personal doubts regarding his own calling. At that stage he considered a career in politics, especially in light of his experience being involved with the successful presidential campaign of James Buchanan in 1856 (Woldring, 2013:36). This endeavour did not work out for him, however, and two years later, in 1858, he decided to continue his theological studies at the Congregationalist College in Chicago, after which he returned to Europe to further his studies in 1861 (Harinck, 2009:15).

As a student he developed a particular love for philosophical theology. In 1867 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on the concept of liberty as understood within a theistic worldview at the University of Utrecht (Alvarado, 2019:ix).

In the following year, he married Johanna Horst, and the couple would have ten children together. Between 1868 and 1880 he also served as minister of Reformed churches in Veenendaal, Rotterdam and Amsterdam (Van Wyk, 1990:501). It would be during his stay in Veenendaal that Hoedemaker befriended the Neo-Calvinist theologian Abraham Kuyper. In 1880 he was also appointed as professor in Philosophy at the Free University Amsterdam, where Kuyper had been appointed as first rector. He would hold this position until 1887 (Alvarado, 2019:xi). On top of this, he was also appointed Dean of the Faculty of Theology in 1882 and it is noteworthy that in the American press' coverage regarding the founding of the Free University, it was Hoedemaker, rather than Kuyper himself, who featured as central figure of importance (Harinck, 2009:15).

After Hoedemaker resigned from the Free University in 1887, he returned to full-time ministry (Van Wyk, 1990:503). The theological dispute with Kuyper, which had led to his resignation, is of central importance with regard to the central aim of this article, namely to provide an historical-theoretical overview of the distinct epistemic framework of P.J. Hoedemaker and the decisive impact this had in terms of shaping in his distinct Anti-Revolutionary worldview, which eventually led to his historically significant split from the Neo-Calvinist movement—that for which Hoedemaker is also best remembered.

In order to investigate the epistemology of the Anti-Revolutionary movement in the Netherlands as this manifested in the works of Hoedemaker as the movement's most renowned chief philosophical theologian, Hoedemaker's dispute with Kuyper will be the first focus of this article because of its relevance for understanding the historical context which forms the backdrop of Hoedemaker's epistemological claims. Thereafter the three central aspects of Hoedemaker's epistemic theory will be discussed, namely Hoedemaker's underlying ontological convictions, his view of divine revelation as foundational to knowledge as such, as well as understanding of all human knowledge as inescapably mediated. Finally, the article will conclude with a few observations regarding the socio-religious and socio-political implications of Hoedemaker's distinct epistemology.

Hoedemaker's Dispute with Kuyper

When Kuyper split from the Dutch Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church in 1886 as a result of theological liberalism within that denomination and proceeded to form the Dutch Reformed



Churches (*Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken*), Hoedemaker opposed this move on the grounds of his conviction that the church should never be reduced to a party or a club in Dutch society, but should remain the spiritual home of the whole nation as covenantal community. For Hoedemaker, a split in the church meant a split in the covenantal community. Moreover, he regarded it as the calling of the church to serve not only those members who fully adhere to its confessional standards, but the national covenant community as a whole (Van Wyk, 1990:506).

In other words, for Hoedemaker adhered to a distinctly anti-modernist notion in which the church is a covenantal, rather than a contractual institution. Membership in the church is therefore also acquired by means of baptism rather than only through a confession of faith. The church must therefore remain a national institution par excellence in order to remain true to her calling and duty towards the national covenant community that is the Dutch people, namely to call the people to national repentance (Hoedemaker, 1897a:6, 10).

Hoedemaker regarded Kuyper's No-Calvinism as a deviation from true Anti-Revolutionary principles. Underlying Kuyper's split from the *Hervormde* Church was what Hoedemaker considered to a compromise with the Enlightenment by means of its acceptance and effectuation of a kind of pluralism in the public domain which entails a de facto rejection of Christ's Lordship over all of creation by virtue of setting aside the conviction regarding the Bible as unconditional precondition and foundation of true knowledge (Hoedemaker, 1897b:34). This epistemic conviction lay at the heart of Hoedemaker's opposition to Kuyper's ideas regarding religious freedom (Hoedemaker, 1901:157).

Kuyper favoured complete religious liberty and pluralism:

In this regard we unashamedly break with the insufficient political theory of our predecessors and we reject that which they in accordance with this erroneous theory and at odds with their own core principles, practiced in Geneva, England and partially also here in the Netherlands. We, to the contrary, accept a different principle: in terms of the civil realm we desire nothing more and nothing less than the free development of religion (Kuyper, 1879:79–80).¹

Kuyper's position eventually led to him advocating for a change to article 36 of the Belgic Confession in which the role and duty of the civil government is set out. According to the article, one of the duties of civil government is "to remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, to destroy the kingdom of the anti-Christ and promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ" (de Brès, 1850:art. 36).² Kuyper advocated the removal of this phrase because he was of the conviction that implementing the first commandment in public life was not the duty of the state and that even false religions have to be tolerated in the context of a multi-religious society (Kuyper, 1873:25). Hoedemaker, on the contrary advocated for a theocratic position, and as such favoured maintaining the original wording of Belgic Confession article 36. For him such a change to the article amounts to the destruction "of church, state, country, and nation" since it is directly opposed to the principle that civil government ought to rule in accordance with "the truth of ... divine ordinances" (Hoedemaker, 1897b:20, 26).³ For this reason Hoedemaker also maintained the idea that government ought to use its authority to punish violations of the first

¹ In the original Dutch: "Zonder verbloeming of poging om den aftocht te dekken, breken we dus in dit opzicht met de gebrekkige staatstheorie onzer politieke vaders; keuren af wat zij krachtens die verkeerde theorie, in strijd met hun eigen beginsel, te Genève, in Engeland, en ten deele ook hier te lande bedreven hebben; en aanvaarden, voor wat ons aangaat, met ernst en uit volle oortuiging in concreto dit andere beginsel: Van Staatswege niets minder maar ook niets meer dan vrijheid voor de ontwikkeling van geloof."

² In the original French: "pour ôter et ruiner toute idolâtrie et faux service de Dieu; pour détruire le royaume de l'antéchrist et avancer le royaume de Jésus-Christ."

³ In the original Dutch: "van Kerk, Staat, Land en Volk;" "de waarheid van ... de Goddelijke ordonnantiën."



table of God's Law (Ibid., 17). In this regard it was Hoedemaker, rather than Kuyper, who clung to the position of their predecessor, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), who maintained that the state, as God-given authority, remains true to its divine calling only when it "punishes blasphemy against God through legal means" (Groen van Prinsterer, 1852:73).⁴

In order to fully understand Hoedemaker's ecclesiastical position in his historical context, we need to take a step back in terms of understanding the nature of the Federal or Covenantal Reformed political tradition and in particular its opposition to liberalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Federal or Covenantal tradition, which had most excellently been embodied by the Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger, during the sixteenth century, the Christian nation is, in essence, to be considered a covenantal community in relation to Christ as covenantal head. Because of this, true national prosperity is also seen as dependent upon obedience to God's commandments (Bullinger, 1544: 7, 52). It was this conception regarding the covenantal origin and nature of nationhood in relation to God as Creator that played a decisive role in the historical-political development of Western nations such as Switzerland, Great Britain and America prior to the rise of the social contract theory with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment (McCoy & Baker, 1991: 27). The social contract theory, however, fundamentally did away with this conception of society, in turn advocating a strictly individualistic social ontology in which society is seen as constituted by virtue of the free association of naturally sovereign individuals who, in sacrificing their sovereignty, delegate it to the state for the sake of making human society possible (Locke, 1690: 93).

In contradistinction with Kuyper and the Neo-Calvinist movement, Hoedemaker maintained the traditional stance of Dutch Calvinism by simply refusing to compromise with the idea of religious equality in the public domain. Even though he held the principle of liberty of conscience in high regard, he believed that religious liberty would entail that Christ is only legally recognized as one of many gods—something he considered to be at odds with the confession regarding the Lordship of Christ extending to every sphere of life (Hoedemaker, 1897a: 34). After all, his main goal was to see Dutch national life cultivated in obedience to Christ (Van Wyk, 1991: 1070). Hoedemaker emphatically rejected the Neo-Calvinist idea that common grace, as opposed to particular grace, ought to be the guiding principle in public life as at odds with historic Reformed theology. Kuyper (1879: 188), on the other hand claimed that not "supernatural knowledge,"⁵ but natural knowledge of God and his creation ought to serve as ultimate moral standard in public life. For Kuyper natural knowledge formed the necessary interpretative framework for knowledge of the supernatural rather than vice versa: the "*revelatio specialis*" is unthinkable without the "*theologica naturalis*" (Kuyper, 1909: 327). Furthermore, for Kuyper natural knowledge is both clearer and more universally acquirable for both believers and unbelievers. While his Calvinist predecessors therefore only distinguished between the "sinful life of nature" and the "life of grace," Kuyper consciously adds a third category—and one which Hoedemaker emphatically rejected—namely "life in common grace" (Kuyper, 1903: 661).⁶

For Hoedemaker the idea that natural revelation mediated through common grace could serve as moral standard for public and civil life, as opposed to special revelation mediated through the Bible, amounted to a serious epistemological problem: it falsely dichotomized revealed and natural knowledge (Alvarado, 2019: xv). Over against this dichotomy he would maintain that all knowledge, whether pertaining to the ecclesiastical or the civil realm, is completely dependent upon the revelation thereof by God and therefore all facts in the universe are God-given realities which are, for their very existence, dependent upon God's creation and providential maintenance of these facts as such. In this regard his philosophy of revelation

⁴ In the original Dutch: "door wettige middelen, door bestraffen van hetgeen godslasterlijk is."

⁵ In the original Dutch: "bovennatuurlijke godskennis."

⁶ The phrases used by Kuyper in the original Dutch are "zondig natuurleven," "genadeleven," and "leven uit de Gemeene gratie."



reflected a distinctly Calvinist commitment to the absolute sovereignty of God—one of the pre-eminent doctrines distinguishing it from other Christian traditions such as Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and even Lutheranism. He writes:

If we misrepresent the intrinsic connection between faith and science, that is, between theology and all other spheres of knowledge, then we will have lost our faith in God, in his Word, in the origin, goal and coherence of all things—the blossoming of the other sciences, called to study and explain the life of nature, will be the necessary result only if they are restored to their true relation to God and his Word, to the second creation and future glory (Hoedemaker 1880: 26).⁷

This conceptualization of faith in God's Revelation as inescapably foundational to the very process of human knowledge acquisition not only undergirded Hoedemaker's disagreement with Kuyper on the issue of religious liberty, but lay at the very heart of his epistemic theory as such.

Hoedemaker's Epistemic Theory

Ontological Considerations

Already in 1867 Hoedemaker argued in his doctoral dissertation that, ontologically speaking, there are only two inescapable categories of being: independent and dependent being, with God alone belonging to the first category. Following the Aristotelian notion of ontological dependence, Hoedemaker maintains that all realities apart from God Himself are completely dependent upon Him for their very existence (Corkum, 2008:65). Logically, there can therefore be no higher reality than the one theistic reality, while all non-theistic or created realities are necessarily continually dependent upon the self-existing Divine Being. In light thereof, Hoedemaker argues that any legitimate concept of true liberty for dependent beings must necessarily be rooted in the Triune God as sole independent Reality (Hoedemaker, 1867:56). Hoedemaker consequently rejects all concepts of liberty rooted in human reason, emotion, or will since these are dependent realities and as such cannot logically be foundational to true liberty (Ibid., 58).

For Hoedemaker, this sharp distinction between independent, uncreated Being (God) and dependent, created being (everything that is not God), would prove to be decisive. Since all non-divine realities have been created and willed by God, God's revelation of His own nature and will must be the foundation of all knowledge of both God and his creation, and God's will—the source and reason for all things in existence—is infallibly revealed in the Bible (Hoedemaker, 1898: 28).

Divine Revelation as the Foundation of True Knowledge

When it comes to Hoedemaker's view of divine revelation as such, it is firstly important to note that, for him, revelation itself is a holistic, universal and inescapable reality. Revelation not only encompasses all knowledge and facts, but all created realities as such, since God is the primary Cause of all that exists (Hoedemaker, 1871a: 15; 1892:20). As such one of the core distinctives of Hoedemaker's philosophy of revelation is that he makes no hard distinction between Special Revelation and General Revelation or between abstract revelation and

⁷ In the original Dutch: "Ten ware wij het verband tusschen geloof en wetenschap, tusschen de theologie en alle andere kundigheden onjuist hadden voorgesteld—maar dan zouden wij ons geloof aan God, aan zijn woord, aan den oorsprong, het doel en den samenhang aller dingen moeten verliezen—zal ook de bloei van de wetenschappen, die geroepen zijn het leven der natuur te onderzoeken en verklaren, het noodwendig gevolg moeten zijn van hunne herstelling in de ware verhouding tot God en zijn Woord, tot de tweede schepping en de toekomstige heerlijkheid."



historical revelation. In fact, for Hoedemaker, there is not a single fact in the universe that is not dependent upon and mediated by Divine Revelation. All that is true about anything falls within the scope of revelation, not only on an epistemological level, but also on an ontological level, that is, reality is not only something we come to know and understand by revelation, but it is, for its very existence, dependent upon God as the Divine Energy or ultimate First Cause behind everything in existence and as such reality itself is both the revelation and manifestation of divine decrees (Hoedemaker, 1886a: 322—323).

In other words, since God is the only fully independent and self-causing Reality, all dependent realities in distinction to Him are necessarily his revelation (Hoedemaker, 1867: 167). This holistic view of revelation does not imply that Hoedemaker does not acknowledge the unique character of Special Revelation, however. He recognizes its infallibility, but even this infallibility finds its meaning within the context of its historical context. God's Written Word is not a set of abstract truths, but the text itself is historically mediated (Hoedemaker, 1892: 322-33).

Secondly, for Hoedemaker, revelation, as historically mediated, has a distinctly narrative character. The claim by Hoedemaker (1871a:14-15) that “faith in revelation is fundamentally historical,”⁸ needs to be understood within the context of his nineteenth-century struggle against epistemological rationalism. Hoedemaker was a true Counter-Enlightenment Anti-Revolutionary, and as such, ever eager to emphasize the pedagogic value of history over against rationalistic conceptions of natural law as purely abstract reality. While his epistemology was consciously theorized in reaction to the epistemologies of the Enlightenment, his emphasis on the historical nature of all revelation amounts to much more than a mere polemic against rationalist or empiricist abstractions. For Hoedemaker, revelation is narrational or “historical” because reality as such is narrational-historical. Hoedemaker adheres to a kind of narrative realism in which revelation, as historically mediated reality, allows us to understand and interpret the facts of revelation in the present, and these facts are not merely abstractions, but life-changing facts, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit with the purpose of engaging in the world for the glory of God and with an eschatological vision for the future.

In light of this narrative realism, facts itself, Hoedemaker insists, find their meaning and coherence within the inescapable narrative framework provided by God's sovereign providence over and plan for Creation as this manifests in world history (Hoedemaker, 1871a:22). Facts are therefore never brute theory as if this could be isolated from practical reality, but revealed facts always manifest through revelation as historical and providentially ordained realities in relation to their common genesisology, i.e. their origin in God as Creator and their common teleology, i.e. their fulfilment in the divine purpose of creation, the Lordship of Christ (Hoedemaker, 1871a:23). In other words, revealed facts are non-abstract or concrete historical realities because all of creation as such is a non-abstract historical reality. Because of this, all facts are inescapably God-given facts to be discovered by means of the reception of divine revelation and as such are to be understood within the framework of that revelation. Facts can never be invented by means of human ingenuity and never be rightly understood as mere abstractions.

Thirdly, while the facts of revelation are, in an objective sense, narrative or historical, the Object of revelation, God Himself, is not. God, as self-existing and eternal Being cannot be reduced to a historical fact. Thus, while all facts and truths are mediated to us through revelation as historical phenomenon, God Himself cannot be reduced to a historical phenomenon, because of his eternal and self-existent nature and because He is ultimately the uncaused first cause of all that exists independently of Himself (Hoedemaker 1898:75). Revelation and all of its truths therefore come to humankind as historically given realities, but God Himself, as the sovereign Giver thereof is a supra-historical, eternal Being, is the First cause and Source of all such realities (Hoedemaker, 1871a:30). In other words, all facts stand

⁸ In the original Dutch: “De openbaringsgeloof rust op een historischen grondslag.”



in an undeniable and inescapable relation to their eternal Source, their Creator-God. Hoedemaker's philosophy of revelation is fundamentally shaped by a clear and hard ontological distinction between Creator and creation as not only two mutually exclusive realities, but also two ontologically exhaustive realities, that is, the two realities which categorically encompass all existence.

Fourthly, revelation is a redemptive reality—one that holistically redeems all created realities. Revelation's historical progress is not only a theoretical progress, but a very practical and redemptive progress. Hoedemaker (1871a:31) writes:

The relationship of this Revelation to the purpose for which it has been given by God as it is known by means of his redemptive acts and promises, becomes a light which elucidates itself, nature, life and the future, and from this clarifying function of Scripture a holistic worldview can be derived. Divine Revelation is, objectively speaking, absolute and perfect, but the perspectives and opinions derived from it are man-made and therefore varies from one time to another and from one nation to the next. Therefore, the subjective reception thereof is gradual and consequently imperfect. Eve did not fully grasp all the Messianic implications of the paradise promise, which was not due to any imperfections in the promise itself, but due to her limited insight. Our Redeemer prophesied his own suffering, death and resurrection, but the disciples remained reluctant in their understanding and were blinded by prejudice. Truths, revealed to us from outside of ourselves, are not our own.⁹

It is therefore not only the knowledge of God itself that is progressively mediated by virtue of his sovereign direction of history, but in particular its redemptive impact upon humanity and creation which manifests in accordance with the teleological purposes of divine design. God redeems the world through Christ, the supreme Object of revelation, but revelation itself serves as a providential means by which God carries out the work of redemption and applies it to the subjects of that revelation. Its redemptive significance is also covenantal, since it is by virtue of the covenantal relationship with God that man, by virtue of God's historical works of creation and redemption, subjectively appropriates the truth of revelation through the power of the Holy Spirit (Hoedemaker, 1871b:851). In other words, as true knowledge of God and of his creation is progressively revealed, this knowledge changes the hearts and minds of humans—as secondary causes in world history—and consequently, through the changing of hearts and minds, humanity is brought in accordance with the divine purpose of expanding Christ's Kingdom through covenant, and consequently become, through the power of the Holy Spirit, themselves teleologically directed towards that very purpose. True knowledge of nature and history has redemptive significance under Christ's Lordship, and as such can only be truly understood in light of Scripture (Hoedemaker, 1886a: 402).

Finally, because revelation is historical and redemptive, it is also inherently eschatological. For Hoedemaker, revealed facts are not only inseparable from their origin in God, but also from their fulfilment in Christ. The future, like the past, needs to be understood in terms of God's redemptive purpose for all of creation in and through Christ. The purpose of history as mediator of Revelation is to sanctify all of creation under the Lordship of Christ, and because

⁹ In the original Dutch: "De betrekking zelve en het einddoel waartoe zij bestaat, gelijk dit gekend wordt uit de beloften des heils, worden als een licht, waarin hij zelve, de natuur, het leven en de toekomst, leet bezien, zoodat er eerst van lieverlede uit de oorspronkelijke Gods-openbaring eene volkomenen wereld en levensbeschouwing afgeleid wordt. Van Gods zijde is de openbaring absoluut, volkomen, maar de beschouwingen die er uit afgeleid worden zijn menselijk en dus door den tijd, de nationaliteit en de omstandigheden gekleurd, maar de subjectieve toeëigenings-toepassing der openbaring is gradueel en daarom gebrekkig. Eva heeft de Paradijs-belofte niet ten volle begrepen; het was niet de schuld der belofte, maar van haar beperkten gezichtskring. De Heiland had Zijn lijden, dood en opstanding voorspeld, maar de discipelen bleven traag om te gelooven en door vooroordeel verblind. De waarheid, die ons van buiten af wordt opgedrongen, is de onze niet."



the facts of revelation are not abstract but historical realities, they necessarily serve God's purpose and plan with all of history (Hoedemaker, 1871b: 855-856). In this regard, Hoedemaker's eschatology had a distinctly postmillennial¹⁰ character in that He foresaw a time in future when all the nations of the world would be brought in obedience to Christ through the redemptive power of the facts of revelation.

Knowledge as Inescapably Mediated

Herman Bavinck systematically laid out his philosophy of *revelation* in a series of Stone lectures held at Princeton University in 1908, two years prior to Hoedemaker's death. Despite being well-acquainted with Hoedemaker and his philosophy of revelation, Bavinck did not even mention him once. Bavinck had sided with Kuyper against Hoedemaker with regard to the issue of whether civil government has the right and duty to outlaw idolatry and blasphemy in the public domain. While Bavinck agreed with Hoedemaker that revelation is organic and historical in nature, he did not understand this to imply that it has a distinctly non-abstract nature, arguing that any wholesale rejection of rationalism when it comes to the reception and understanding of revelation disregards the importance of "personal independence" (Bavinck, 1908: 145-146).¹¹ In this, Bavinck's rejection of the rationalism underlying Schleiermacher's higher criticism was more eclectic and less wholesale than that of Hoedemaker. This is because, for Bavinck, there exists an unmediated knowledge of self-being or self-existence in the self-consciousness. For him, those universally shared axiomata underlying the belief in the reliability of observations made by the senses amounts to an "immediate form of knowledge" locked up in our "self-consciousness" (Bavinck, 1904: 37, 53).¹² Bavinck (1908: 64) therefore claims that when it comes to self-consciousness "Kant was right inasmuch as he articulated the autonomy of human knowing and acting."¹³

Of such concession to the epistemology of rationalism and empiricism, Hoedemaker would have nothing. For him, this amounts to ascribing to the human mind an independence and ability to acquire unmediated knowledge that man, as dependent being, could never achieve. Unlike Bavinck, Hoedemaker (1867: 210) rejects any notion of unmediated knowledge absolutely, since "consciousness does not produce anything"¹⁴ apart from the realities of which it becomes conscious. As such, he rejects any kind of distinction between faith and knowledge, since all knowledge is necessarily mediated through Divine Revelation, as the existence of any self-consciousness already presupposes a consciousness of that which is not the self, which negates the possibility of any unmediated or autonomous knowledge (Hoedemaker, 1867: 134-135). Hoedemaker argues that rationalism fails to account for "the chasm between subject and object, between knowledge and being, and between reality and representation" (Hoedemaker, 1867: 134).¹⁵ In other words, since man is a created being, any self-consciousness on the part of man can only come into existence within a created framework provided and revealed by God as Creator and ultimate First Cause of all that exists (Hoedemaker, 1886a: 401-402). He insists that the notion of self-consciousness existing autonomously already amounts to an epistemic denial of the very existence of realities

¹⁰ Postmillennialism is an eschatological vision in which the expectation is that the period preceding Christ's second coming will be a golden age in world history—a time in which Christendom prospers (Schlebusch 2020b: 147).

¹¹ Original Dutch: "persoonlijke zelfstandigheid."

¹² Original Dutch: "onmiddelijk weten," "zelfbewustzijn."

¹³ Original Dutch: "inzoover was Kant in zijn recht, als hij de autonomie van het kennen en handelen des menschen uitsprak."

¹⁴ Original Dutch: "het bewustzijn brengt niets te voorschijn."

¹⁵ Original Dutch: "De kloof tusschen subject en object, tusschen denken en zijn, werkelijkheid en voorstelling."



external to that consciousness (Hoedemaker, 1867: 139). As such, Hoedemaker (1867: 137-139) also rejects all Kantian notions of immediate and universally-shared axiomata as integral to the human consciousness' empirical reception of external representations, countering that the idea of immediate consciousness is a logical impossibility, and that all knowledge, including consciousness itself, is always and inescapably mediated by God.

Conclusion

The Anti-Revolutionary character of Hoedemaker's epistemology is evident in his distinct emphasis on the historical nature of revelation, at the heart of which lies his conviction that history, as the providential manifestation of divinely created ordinances, manifest the will of God. This is a distinctly traditionalist or conservative point of view, by which long-term durability and workability serves as a confirmation of the fact that something is in accordance with divine purposes, and therefore history itself is understood as a means by which God reveals Himself. It is also a distinctly covenantal or federal view, in which divinely-created reality necessitates the practical inescapability of this covenantal paradigm, as Hoedemaker holds to the conviction that rebellion against the inescapable divinely-created order will necessarily have negative consequences in the long run, while positive societal results would generally be achieved through obedience to God's creation ordinances. This view of revelation as historically mediated necessarily has significant socio-political implications, most notably the utter impossibility of neutrality in the public domain. The implications of this conviction, for Hoedemaker, meant that he had to reject Kuyper's split from the Dutch Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church, because he believed denominational pluralism itself reduces the church to a mere group or club in society, which is detrimental to its calling to serve and provide a spiritual home to the whole nation as covenantal community (Hoedemaker, 1897a: 6, 10).

Because Hoedemaker believed revelation to be holistic, he regarded any dichotomy between natural law and revealed law in the Bible to be a false dichotomy (Hoedemaker, 1886b:30). As such, Hoedemaker also believed that natural law in of itself, while helpful, is insufficient as a guide of public policy and legislation. Politics needs to be shaped by the Bible as ultimate standard for all of life. He therefore also maintained a distinctively theocratic or theonomic¹⁶ view of government as an Anti-Revolutionary or Anti-Enlightenment thinker, something which put him on a historical collision course with Neo-Calvinist view that natural law, mediated via common grace, provided the basic moral framework for the political domain.

Hoedemaker's view also had distinct eschatological implications which did not align with that of the Neo-Calvinists, but which Hoedemaker understood to be the inevitable consequence of the Christian calling to exercise dominion over every sphere of life. Whereas Hoedemaker (1889:33) maintained the idea that both the church and state have a divine calling to destroy the kingdom of the antichrist, expressing the conviction that all the nations of the earth would eventually be sanctified by the gospel of Jesus Christ, Bavinck (1901:460) held to a pessimistic vision of the future in which there will be large-scale apostasy.

Furthermore, the idea of common grace as equally maintaining the conditions for knowledge and the use of the empirical and rational faculties for both the regenerate as well as the unregenerate, led Kuyper to embrace a pluralistic or multicultural vision for society in which Christianity is but a sanctifying ingredient (Kuyper, 1905:27). Bavinck (1904:94) likewise maintained that the state has no authority in establishing the Christian religion as religious convictions are epistemically distinct from objective knowledge, even lacking the clarity of the latter. Hoedemaker, in disagreeing with Kuyper and Bavinck's epistemic premise, countered that since there exists no natural, unmediated or unrevealed knowledge in all of the universe, it is only Christianity that can bring about true socio-cultural and socio-political progress, while all other worldviews only maintain themselves inasmuch as they borrow capital from the

¹⁶ Theonomy is the idea that the moral principles of Divine Revelation, mediated through the Bible, constitutes the perpetual moral standard for all human societies. The word itself is derived from the Greek words "theos" (God) and "nomos" (law).



Christian worldview ultimately rooted in Christian epistemology (Hoedemaker, 1886a:203—204). In this regard Hoedemaker's anti-revolutionary idea of theonomy, that is, his conviction that the Bible provides the absolute moral standard for all spheres of society in all times and contexts, was more decisively and more consistently anti-revolutionary or anti-liberal than the religious pluralism famously advocated by the Neo-Calvinists Bavinck or Kuyper.

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