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Baskwell, P.J.

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Chapter 1

The Early Years in Holland

Herman Hoeksema was founder and, for nearly forty years, the unflinching leader of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Over the course of his long and often tumultuous career he has been labeled a rationalist (Hoeksema 1969:230-231, Wielenga 2000, McWilliams 2000:6 also p. 54); he has been called unkind (Veldman 2000); and he is consistently remembered as someone who had to be right, irrespective of the consequences (Hoeks 2000, Hoeksema 2001). G. C. Berkouwer of the Free University of Amsterdam, one of Hoeksema's strongest critics and, as such, not intending to be complementary, wrote that 'I have seldom met a theologian who reasoned through so consistently from his original standpoint; he never wavered from his starting point' (Berkouwer 1977:98). Herman Hoeksema was a man who, throughout his life and in all his endeavors, embodied unusually bold distinctives.

In this first chapter my aim is to investigate certain lines of influence that contributed to the shaping of Hoeksema's distinctive thought. First of all, the details of his family history and his early years in the Netherlands, prior to his immigration to the United States, will be discussed in order to determine what influence this period had on his later thought. In conjunction with this history, brief mention will also be made of the events that shaped the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands at the time. Secondly, I will scrutinize those events and people that helped to mold Herman Hoeksema, both personally and theologically, prior to his arrival in the United States in 1904.

1.1 *The Provenance of Herman Hoeksema*

According to the population records of the Gemeente Hoogezand-Sappemeer, Herman Hoeksema, registered under the name ‘Harm,’ was born on 13 March 1886 in the *dorp* (town) of Hoogezand in the province of Groningen (Mulder 2001). However, according to his daughter-in-law Gertrude, he was actually born on 12 March, but ‘his father neglected to register Harm’s birth with the town clerk, and when, at his wife’s insistence, he finally got around to it, he registered the date as March 13, which date Harm always afterward celebrated as his birthday’ (Hoeksema 1969:17).

Herman’s mother, Johanna Bakema, daughter of Jan Lulofs Bakema and Aaltje Kempinga, was born in Kropswolde on 5 July 1856. His father, Tiele Hoeksema, son of Harm Hoeksema and Everdina Steenhuis, was born in Muntendam on 26 January 1856. Johanna Bakema and Tiele Hoeksema were married in Hoogezand on 27 May 1881. Herman’s sister, Everdina Aaltina, was the first to be born on the 27 November 1882; Johan followed on 21 July 1884, but passed away the following year on the 12 May 1885. The family relocated to the city of Groningen in 1888 when the young Herman was two years old. After Herman, two more sons, Albert and John, were to be born to Tiele and Johanna before the union ended in divorce on 22 June 1897 (Mulder 2001).

The divorce of Tiele and Johanna seems to have been the result of years of hardship and neglect. Daughter-in-law and biographer Gertrude Hoeksema questions whether ‘during their traditional Dutch courtship, had she [Johanna] forgotten to look beneath his dark, even features and his charming dashing manner? Or did he truly seem to be a serious, sincere young man, only to change later?’ (Hoeksema 1969:17). ‘Before

the youngest was born,' Gertrude informs us, 'the father had stopped supporting his wife and children and left the church, had drunk too much and become a full-fledged philanderer. Then he enlisted in the foreign military service of the Netherlands' (Hoeksema 1969:17). According to granddaughter Nell Phillips, Tiele Hoeksema 'deserted grandma time and time again, and he even had a mistress' (Phillips 2001). In the words of another granddaughter, Lois Kregel, daughter of Herman Hoeksema, 'everybody feared Tiele Hoeksema, grandma even sought court protection from him because he was a mean and nasty drunk' (Kregel 2000). Herman Hoeksema Jr. confirms the fact that Tiele Hoeksema had an affinity for the bottle, adding that he also liked to play the horses (Hoeksema 2001). Herman was four when his parents finally separated in 1890. This was, according to Herman Hoeksema Jr., to have a profound effect on Herman's life (Hoeksema 2001). It must also be kept in mind that divorce at this time, especially in church circles, was very rare. And that those involved in a divorce were ever after 'marked' people (see Schilling 1991:58-60).

Herman Hoeksema's mother was, by all accounts, a godly woman imbued with a deep personal piety. The only real remembrance of her, though, are the recollections of Nell Phillips, a daughter of Herman's sister Everdina, and Gertrude Hoeksema, Herman's daughter-in-law—she was married to Herman Hoeksema's youngest son Homer, until his death on 17 July 1989. In the wake of her separation from Tiele in 1890, Johanna took to sewing in order to make a living (Phillips 2001). Alone in the city of Groningen with four small children, writes Gertrude Hoeksema with obvious admiration, Johanna 'spread the word that she was an excellent seamstress. Every day she went out to sew for her wealthy clients, and each evening she came back with the day's wages, equivalent to one

American dollar' (Hoeksema 1969:17-18). Even for her ingenuity, money and food were scarce. Bread lines were common, but Johanna detested the experience all the while 'desperately needing the nourishment of the piece of bread that was thrown to them' (Hoeksema 1969:18). Gertrude Hoeksema relates the effect this had on Herman and the resulting lifelong social concern:

After the humiliation of being treated like animals they were compelled to eat the bread while still standing in line; but the belittling climax came when they were searched to see that they took no bread home in their pockets. Is it any wonder that young Harm's whole being rebelled at this inhumane treatment, and that in later life he spoke with an earnestness approaching vehemence on the evils of the rich oppressing the poor? (Hoeksema 1969:18-19.)

Because of these personal experiences, years later, even after having lived in the United States for some time, Herman would still 'hold up to contempt the idealistic loyalty of immigrants who could sing the praises of their fatherland and the House of Orange. His jovial "*Oranje boven, en niets te eten* (Orange above all, and nothing to eat)," said enough' (Hoeksema 1969:44).

Gertrude Hoeksema goes to some length to assure readers of her biography that Hoeksema's mother Johanna was devout but not legalistic in her religious outlook. She recounts a story illustrative of Johanna's ardent devotion. Apparently, one Sunday morning, after a particularly strenuous week, Hoeksema's mother

discovered that she had forgotten to sew the fresh white collar to her simple black dress. Quickly force of habit took over, and she threaded her needle and sewed it on. Then her conscience stung her. She had done unnecessary work on the Lord's Day. Reproaching herself, she carefully loosened the stitches she had just taken, removed the collar and wore the black dress, unadorned, to church that day. (Hoeksema 1969:21.)

Gertrude Hoeksema is quick to point out that while 'to a casual observer her [Johanna's] brand of piety might have been legalism... her family knew it welled from the depths of

her being' (Hoeksema 1969:21). Johanna's actions, according to Gertrude, could best be described as just piously Reformed. It is interesting to note, however, in conjunction with this disclaimer of legalism, that Herman Hoeksema was himself very sensitive to being tarred with this same brush. According to his granddaughter, Eunice, whenever the family was on vacation, Herman was not remiss to swimming on Sundays. If the charge of not properly observing the Sabbath ever surfaced, Herman would curtly reply '*Ik ben geen Jood*' (I am no Jew) (Kuiper 2000).

'She [Johanna] taught them the fear of the Lord,' Gertrude Hoeksema remembers, 'she took them to church, and sent them to the local Christian school. This loving care by his God-fearing mother was the other side of Harm's life' (Hoeksema 1969:22).

1.2 *Stories of Youth*

Most of what is known of Herman Hoeksema prior to his immigration to the United States is in the form of family stories. These are stories that Herman himself must have told at one time or another. I come to this conclusion because very little is said of other family members in all of Hoeksema's writings. In fact, Herman had two younger brothers who immigrated to the United States with their mother Johanna in 1906, yet there seems to be no distinct recollection of these two men anywhere in the current family. When Johanna died in 1929, one of these two younger brothers, Albert Hoeksema, was the one to provide the details on Johanna's background to the Cook County (Chicago, IL) Coroner. Based on the information given, Albert lacked any substantive details of his own mother's life. He knew her father's name, but that was the

extent of his knowledge. Most of the lines on the death certificate are filled with the word ‘unknown.’ Those that are not, contain incorrect information, such as the ones requesting the birthplace (city or town) of Johanna’s father and mother that simply say ‘Groningen.’ From this I think it reasonable to believe that Johanna, having left her former husband in the Netherlands along with her many hardships, simply chose not to remember her life before immigrating to Chicago any more, much less discuss it. The children, Everdina, Herman, Albert, and John, had their own memories and that was the extent of it. Hence, all information concerning Herman Hoeksema’s early years in the Netherlands are his own recollections, transmitted over the years to his children and to their children in the form of stories. In this regard, that portion of Gertrude Hoeksema’s biography of Herman Hoeksema, which deals with his early years before immigrating to America in 1904, is just a compilation of these family stories.

Taken together these family stories paint a rather dark picture of the young Hoeksema, depicting him as anything but a polished young man. The first chapter of Gertrude’s biography recounts many instances of a young Harm (Herman) swimming illegally in the canals of Groningen, fighting, playing unwanted practical jokes on innocent victims, and thumbing his nose at police (Hoeksema 1969:15-33). After attending grammar school, Hoeksema won a scholarship of sorts to the Ambacht School (a technical school) where he learned the blacksmith trade. Afterwards, he apprenticed in both a country setting and in his hometown of Groningen, both of which, while learning experiences, did not provide fond memories. Gertrude Hoeksema tells us that amidst all the hardship,

He [Herman] grew up to be a young man who could form opinions for himself. His thinking may have had a philosophic or imaginative bent; but it had objective

standards, those of the Scriptures and the Reformed Creeds, with their definitiveness of right and wrong, of sin and grace, of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. ... [Hence-PB] he was not satisfied with life in the Netherlands, the economic, the cultural, the religious. Convinced that the Reformed truth was the purest interpretation of the Scriptures, he was not wholly satisfied with the conditions of the Reformed church in his country. (Hoeksema 1969: 30-31.)

In Groningen, the Hoeksema family attended the *Afscheiding* or Secession church; more commonly known as the 'A' congregations in contradistinction from the churches of the *Doleantie* or 'B' congregations. In order to understand more fully Hoeksema's religious development, it will be of benefit if we look at the origins of the *Afscheiding* and *Doleantie* churches in some detail.

1.3 *The Origins of the Afscheiding*

The *Afscheiding*, also referred to as the Reformation of 1834, was a loosely organized secession from the *Hervormde Kerk*. The *Hervormde Kerk* was not, however, an official 'state church,' though the influence of the king was very strong after 1815. Eventually, in 1848, a constitution with provision for the separation of church and state was adopted. The *Afscheiding*, or Secession of 1834 was not something that occurred in response to a specific event, nor was it something that took place on the spur-of-the-moment. It was, instead, a considered response to a perceived series of abuses on the part of those with ecclesiastical power. Further, it was a response to what was perceived as an abandoning of the principles of the Reformed faith on the part of the leadership of the *Hervormde Kerk*. The *Afscheiding*, writes K. H. Miskotte of the *Hervormde Kerk*, 'as a struggle for the exclusive right of God's word was a movement of profound and holy

import' (quoted by Rasker 1981:55). He concludes by saying that this reformation was a warning from God concerning a 'ruined church' (quoted by Rasker 1981:55). Many things, however, contributed to the 'ruin' of this church. It did not happen in isolation. In many ways the problems were as much political as they were theological.

The Netherlands, since the days of the national Synod of Dort in 1618 -1619, had long been a stronghold of the Reformed faith (see Reitsma 1933, Knappert 1911). 'By 1650,' writes Walter Lagerwey, 'approximately one-half of the populace had membership in the Netherlands Reformed Church' (Lagerwey 1964:86). For almost a century these churches held tenaciously to the distinctly Reformed 'Three Forms of Unity' (The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, and the Cannons of Dort) as their theological foundation (Wintle 1987:5). Yet, by the end of the century, Walter Lagerwey informs us, 'there began a gradual decline in the fortunes of both church and state' (Lagerwey 1964:87). 'Among the factors which contributed to the decline of Dutch Calvinism' Lagerwey continues,

one of the most important was doubtless the close relationship of church and state. The church was subject to the control of the state at crucial points. No national synods could be called without state concurrence, and that was not forthcoming. The fact that the Hervormde Kerk was a national church made membership in it desirable and respectable, but the church could exercise little control over its members. Consequently, the church was plagued increasingly with the problem of nominal membership. (Lagerwey 1964:87.)

Both Lagerwey and Wintle also attribute this decline in confessional Calvinism to the rise and assimilation of humanistic ideas into the Dutch Reformed Church. Quoting J. A. Bornewasser with approval, Wintle opines further that: 'The churches engaged in a defensive struggle against rationalist criticism, anthropocentrism, human autonomy and individualism, without wanting to distance themselves entirely' (Wintle 1987:8). For

Lagerwey, this assimilation of ideas took an entirely different form. Instead of a battle with abstract ideas, as Wintle believes, Lagerwey writes that ‘the outbreak of the French Revolution was hailed by Dutch liberals as ushering in a new period of political enlightenment, tolerance, and democracy’ (Lagerwey 1964:89). The result for the Netherlands and the Dutch Reformed Church was, writes Lagerwey,

[that] a large segment of the Dutch populace became hostile to the House of Orange and welcomed the invasion of the Netherlands by French forces in 1795. As a result of this invasion the Dutch Stadtholder was compelled to go into exile. A new state, the Batavian republic, was established on the ideals of the French Revolution: fraternity, equality, liberty, and the sovereignty of the people. The establishment of the Batavian Republic at once rendered the position of the Netherlands Reformed Church problematic. The idea of an established Calvinistic church was in radical conflict with the equalitarian ideals of the revolution. (Lagerwey 1964:89.)

For a Calvinistic church so dependent upon state funding, as was the Netherlands Reformed Church, these developments were disastrous. ‘Theology was now under attack,’ Wintle writes, ‘from philosophers influenced by the new rationalism and humanism’ (Wintle 1987:9). New ideas, including ‘freedom of religion’ which was declared in 1795, only added to the woes of this financially troubled church (Wintle 1987:10).

French dominance of the Netherlands was mainly the result of Napoleon’s successes. Conversely, when his success was replaced with defeat in 1813, French dominance collapsed and the Netherlands, literally by default, regained political independence. ‘On 16 March 1815,’ writes E. H. Kossmann, ‘William, who until then had been provisionally called Sovereign Prince, took the title of King of the Netherlands’ (Kossmann 1978:111). This burgeoning ‘constitutional republic’ had previously agreed upon and drafted significant constitutional modifications in the form of eight articles.

Kossmann relates that these modifications were discussed at length in April of that year by a joint Dutch-Belgian commission (Kossmann 1978:111). Kossmann further argues that:

The draft agreed by the commission was intended to establish a moderate form of monarchy which would be a mean between the British system and that of the Central European restoration regimes. It was a synthesis of traditional but contradictory tendencies rather than a compromise between old and new. Neither the conservatives nor the liberals at first seemed dissatisfied with the result. (Kossmann 1978:112.)

One would have thought that the end of French rule also meant the end of French influence. This, however, was not to be. As Walter Lagerwey writes, ‘in the new government French reforms, penal codes, political ideology persisted’ (Lagerwey 1964:90). In the resulting state of affairs, the church was deemed to be, for all intents and purposes, a branch of the government—actually, even in the time of the Republic the local church had no autonomy. Extreme centralization had deprived her of her autonomy.

Walter Lagerwey summarizes the situation as such:

The status and organization of the Netherlands Reformed Church was now determined by the *state*, and a new church order was formulated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This order abolished the presbyterian pattern of church government (destroying the local autonomy of the congregation) and introduced a centralized, administrative, synodical system. The democratic character of the church was changed to one that was autocratic, control of the church from congregational level to synod being vested in administrative bodies which were responsible to the government (king). (Lagerwey 1964:90-91.)

The Reformed Church in its new, government imposed, context was seen by the majority of the orthodox Reformed populace as, in the words of the medievalist Steven Runciman’s description of the Orthodox Church in the hands of the Seljuk Turks, ‘The Great Church in Captivity’ (Runciman 1968).

State control over the church also led to an emphasis on tolerance, the meaning of which was inherited from the French and their concept of *liberté*. This, combined with a growing diversity of theological views in the state church, prompted the government to intervene even further to ensure ecclesiastical peace. As P. Y. de Jong says:

It sought to stem the disaffections by urging toleration in doctrinal formulations, hoping to promote peace in the churches. When occasionally classes or provincial synods imposed discipline on unfaithful ministers, the state refused to approve. Thus toleration, originally intended ... to provide some greater liberties for those who were not Reformed, opened the door to departures from the confessions within the church itself. (De Jong 1984a:10.)

This trend continued throughout the nineteenth-century; its express purpose being to purge the church of narrowness. D. H. Kromminga has described this trend as such:

Toleration could be understood and applied in quite diverse meanings and ways; its meaning and application widened gradually, and the government stood by to see to it that the churches learned to practice tolerance. The silencing of theological disputes involving university professors had occurred earlier and is intelligible since those institutions were not of an ecclesiastical but of a civil character, supported and controlled by the government. But the government came to apply the same policy with increasing frequency also to disputes not involving professors, and it showed a growing tendency to exercise control also over the calling of ministers in vacancies. This whole development of government control in ecclesiastical matters was the more possible, since part of the ecclesiastics supported it. In other words, this development went hand in hand with the growth of a party within the Church that stood for and preached tolerance, whether in their own interest or from love of peace or failure to appreciate the issues of the controversy. These ecclesiastics naturally approved of the governmental policy, and the combination in the course of time forced toleration on the Church. (Kromminga 1943:68.)

This ‘overemphasis’ on toleration and the ‘maintenance of the organization’, Kromminga continues, ‘forced the adherents of the Reformed tradition into conflict with the church Boards and led to the expulsion of their leaders’ (Kromminga 1943:79). The more aristocratic of the Reformed churches, however, were not amenable to secession (Kromminga 1943:81). While many of these were not happy with the growing doctrinal

laxity of the church, they viewed secession as a betrayal of their commitment to the Church of Christ. One member of this more aristocratic coterie was Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876); a lawyer, accomplished writer, historian, and the holder of two doctorates. ‘Groen did not approve of the separation from the National Church,’ writes James McGoldrick, ‘but he affirmed the rights of the *Afscheiding* and decried the persecution of its adherents’ (McGoldrick 2000: 27).

Next to tolerance, the influence of contemporary philosophy was also very strong. Leading persons, especially the professors who trained the students of theology, followed mainly philosophical trends. A good example of this was the influential professor J. H. Scholten (1811-1885) of the University of Leiden who exhibited a strong inclination towards Hegel (McGoldrick 2000:32). As a result, the church at this time was, in both organization and in thought, not so very much a resident alien in the world.

1.4 *Hendrik de Cock*

In the year 1834, all things seemed relatively sedate. No one was expecting a break within the church. In fact, no one was either preparing or agitating for such a break (De Jong 1984b:21). Neither, muses P. Y. De Jong, ‘could anyone have expected it to begin in the north far from influences such as the Swiss Reveil, the teaching of Bilderdijk and “the club of Scholte”’ (De Jong 1984b:21). But, begin in the north it did. The initial break from the *Hervormde Kerk* began in the small agricultural town of Ulrum in the province of Groningen, and the man who spearheaded the break was Hendrik de Cock. ‘Within a few years,’ De Jong relates with obvious pride, ‘what began in Ulrum flashed

across the land like an uncontrollable prairie fire' (De Jong 1984b:21). Is it any wonder that Hendrik Algra calls this event and the years of 'reform' that followed '*Het Wonder van de Negentiende Eeuw*' (The Miracle of the Nineteenth-Century) (Algra 1966)?

Hendrik de Cock, educated for the Gospel ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church at the University of Groningen, found his life turned upside down, soon after his installation in Ulrum, by a lowly day laborer and conscientious catechetical student named Klaas Pieters Kuypenga (De Jong 1984b:22). This catechetical instruction inadvertently led the newly installed minister to reflect upon his own life and work. Shortly thereafter, De Cock 'began to seek something richer and fuller for his own soul' (De Jong 1984b:22). To this end, he began to investigate seriously the confessions of his own church, apparently for the first time, as well as works by Baron Van Zuylen van Nyevelt and John Calvin. As a result of these investigations De Cock underwent a change. He also began to attract attention. As Kromminga says:

His changed preaching drew hearers from neighboring villages, and enlargement of the church building became necessary. ...While the renovation was going on de Cock filled neighboring pulpits, thus spreading his influence and arousing hostility among his colleagues. ...At a fraternal classical meeting it came to a clash between him and these opponents in which they challenged him to publish an attack on them. (Kromminga 1943:82.)

Things eventually came to a head for De Cock, as disciplinary measures were instituted against him by Rev. A. P. A. du Cloux; an orthodox minister who chose to remain in the Hervormde Kerk and not join the Secession (Grosheide & Itterzon (eds.) 1957:227-228; Rasker 1981:60). However, 'the first secession from the state church,' writes Walter Lagerwey, 'was the result of direct violations of the state-imposed church order' (Lagerwey 1964:95). In 1834 De Cock violated this church order by baptizing infants whose parents were not members of his congregation in Ulrum. For this he was censured

and deposed from the office of minister of the Gospel. Afterwards, ‘De Cock appealed with his consistory to the Synodical Board and the king;’ all of which, according to De Jong, was to no avail, as he was even forced to pay for the ecclesiastical procedures against him (De Jong 1984:25). After much time and wrangling, the secession from the Dutch Reformed Church became a fact; if not with great fanfare, then simply by default.

1.5 *Various Assessments*

While most writers who explore the history of the *Afscheiding* seem agreed that it was a reformation of sorts, not all are agreed as to its significance for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. The Faculty of Mid-America Seminary, who collaborated on a series of essays on the *Afscheiding* in commemoration of its one hundred and fifty-year anniversary, view the Secession of 1834 as a continuation of the Reformation of the Sixteenth-Century. They believe it to be utterly ‘Reformed’ in every way. Walter Lagerwey, while acknowledging the actions of De Cock and his supporters, does not seem as enthusiastic as the professors at Mid-America Seminary regarding the singularly Reformed character of this secession. Conversely, Gertrude Hoeksema, writing from the perspective of the *Doleantie* churches, is inclined rather to disparage the *Afscheiding* movement altogether. In her comparison of the *Afscheiding* with the later secession from the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Doleantie*, under Abraham Kuyper, Gertrude writes:

The first, the *Afscheiding*, or Secession of 1834, was a movement of the “*kleine lui* (little folk),” or common people. Among its weaknesses was a lack of strong leadership among a people with mystical tendencies, stemming from a pietistic background. Their conception of the doctrine of God’s counsel and of the doctrine of regeneration was weaker and not so well defined as that of the later reform movement, the *Doleantie*, the reformation of “the grieving ones.” Through the

influence of their capable leader, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, their doctrinal positions were better defined and followed the sound principles of the early Calvinistic reformers. (Hoeksema 1969:31.)

A. J. Rasker, in his widely read *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, is somewhat more pointed in his assessment of things. Concentrating specifically on the pietism associated with *Afscheiding* assemblies, he writes:

In these meetings, or conventicles, lived the spirit of the ‘Nadere Reformatie’ [the second reformation-PB] which always accompanied the orthodoxy of the 17th and 18th centuries, and which was fed from the springs of both Pietism and Methodism. ...After the Synod of Dort, sympathy for such assemblies can certainly be understood as an expression of the want of Pietistic practice and as a reaction against the scholasticization of theology and the intellectualization of the preaching in which the common man could find no spiritual nourishment. (Rasker 1981:55-56.)

Rasker sees the *Afscheiding* primarily as a pietistic backlash against a church that could provide neither the spiritual nourishment nor the spiritual experience demanded by the common people.

The church historian, W. van `t Spijker, agrees with Rasker that the origins of the *Afscheiding* lie in the *Nadere Reformatie* (Van `t Spijker 1984:147-148), but his position is significantly more nuanced. According to Van `t Spijker, De Cock did not see an inherent tension between doctrine and life (piety); for him, they simply belonged together. In fact, they could not be divorced, or separated, in any way; because life, or fruit, flowed inexorably from doctrine, be it good or bad (Van `t Spijker 1984:151). The fertile ground in which spirituality had to be rooted (*geworteld*) in order to produce good fruit was a combination of God’s Word, an encounter (*ontmoeting*) with God, and a commitment to His service (Van `t Spijker 1984:148). As I understand Van `t Spijker, his use of the term encounter (*ontmoeting*) designates a life lived before God’s face (*voor het aangezicht Gods*) and a continuous relationship and life with God by prayer, reading, and

meditation on the Scriptures that would permeate the whole of one's life. Hence, for Van 't Spijker, an encounter with God is not an event but a way of life. Additionally, as Van 't Spijker points out, for De Cock, these truths were nothing other than those expressed in God's Word and witnessed to in the time of the Reformation (Van 't Spijker 1984:148).

To summarize: I think it would be correct to say that, for De Cock specifically and for the *Afscheiding* in general, a proper relationship with God is the central tenet of the Christian Faith. And, it is from this relationship that a true spirituality, or piety, necessarily flows. While this relationship is grounded firmly in the truths of God's Word and the Confessions of the church, it nevertheless contains another element. This element is, for all intents and purposes, what makes *Afscheiding* theology more than just believing true sentences about God. It is what gives *Afscheiding* theology life. Van 't Spijker terms this element 'an encounter with God' (Van 't Spijker 1984:148). While I agree with Van 't Spijker's categorical architecture, I cannot help but think that it is here, especially, that we are confronted with that mystical element that both Rasker and Van 't Spijker see as an essential part of the *Afscheiding's* inheritance from the *Nadere Reformatie*. Although he never spoke of an encounter with God *per se*, this element of 'relationship' is not absent from Hoeksema's theology either. This is simply part of his *Afscheiding* heritage. This heritage is most evident in his writings on the covenant, which he defines as a bond of friendship between God and man (Hoeksema 1966: 321-322). More will be said of this *Afscheiding* influence later when we examine the influence of both Foppe ten Hoor and Herman Bavinck on Hoeksema's theology.

Despite its several and varied shortcomings, the *Afscheiding* was a spontaneous movement to correct perceived deficiencies in the Dutch Reformed Church by means of

disassociation, and it was not the only such movement. Fifty-two years later, in 1886, there was another secession from the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, which is commonly referred to as the *Doleantie*. This time, while the complaints were similar, the theological issues were thought out to a much greater degree and the leadership was much more organized. This was all due essentially to one man, Abraham Kuyper.

1.6 *Abraham Kuyper and the Doleantie*

Abraham Kuyper was one of the Netherlands' most influential theologians; as well as a newspaper editor, member of parliament, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, founder of the Anti-Revolutionary Party and Free University, and the author of many books. While the sheer scope of his activity was breathtaking, his output was equally astonishing. It is understandable, therefore, that his biographer James McGoldrick subtitles his biography 'God's Renaissance Man' (McGoldrick 2000).

Leading up to the second secession from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1886 was a further fragmentation of the Reformed faith. McGoldrick outlines three competing schools of thought, the 'Groningers,' the 'Ethicals,' and the 'Moderns' (McGoldrick 2000:29-34). The Groningers, according to the description afforded us by McGoldrick, were essentially Unitarian in their view of God (McGoldrick 2000:30). As the century passed the halfway point, they became increasingly anti-supernatural, eventually abandoning their previous 'reservations about radical criticism of the Bible and joined the Moderns (modernists) in opposition to a resurgent orthodoxy within the Dutch Reformed Church' (McGoldrick 2000:31).

By contrast, the Ethicals were genuinely interested in theology, especially in its everyday practical considerations. Since the name ‘ethical’ gives little insight into the beliefs of the group under consideration, it would be well to clarify what is meant. Professor J. Veenhof, in his massive study of Herman Bavinck, offers some significant insights in this regard. In speaking of ‘Ethicals’ founder Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye, Veenhof explains that,

The idea ‘ethical’ with its complex historical background has essentially the sense of the present ‘existential’. This is amplified by a further analysis of his idea of conscience, which is dependent on Vinet and the German theologians. In positing the ‘ethical’ character of truth, he wishes to break through the intellectualism of supernaturalism with its separation of doctrine and life and its primacy of the intellect, and the rationalism of modernism. The sources of life, in his opinion, lie in the heart, not in the intellect. The ‘ethical’ character of truth implies that the truth, supernatural in origin, is not superhuman but truly human. The ethical principle is at the same time Christological and anthropological. This vision of the truth is also decisive for his view of dogma and confession (aversion for confessionalism, emphasis upon significance of ‘the faith of the church’). (Veenhof 1968:670.)

While I would consider the Ethicals to be in a direct line of both ideological and spiritual development from the *Réveil* and the *Afscheiding*, McGoldrick seems to consider them proto-Barthians, of a sort, in their view of revelation, saying that ‘they argued that Scripture becomes the Word of God for an individual when it speaks to his or her conscience’ (McGoldrick 2000:31). Further, he claims that ‘the Ethicals tolerated a broad diversity of beliefs because they held dogma to be of little importance. ... [And] they became highly intolerant of Kuyper when he rose to defend the historic Christian faith’ (McGoldrick 2000:247). If McGoldrick bases his case for the Ethicals’ ‘aversion’ to doctrine on their intolerance of Kuyper’s strict confessionalism, as he seems to, then I do not find his view substantiated. Just because the Ethicals opposed Kuyper’s robust confessionalism is no reason to assume, out of hand, that ‘they held dogma to be of little

importance' (McGoldrick 2000:247). McGoldrick does, however, use the contrast with the Ethicals to point out the vigorous nature of Kuyper's confessionalism, which, as we will discuss later, is also seen in Hoeksema.

The final school of thought present in the Dutch Reformed Church at the time was the Moderns. According to McGoldrick, 'the Moderns comprised the third and most radical opposition to the Reformed faith in the Netherlands' (McGoldrick 2000:32). 'As their name suggests,' writes historian Louis Praamsma 'the moderns wanted to be men of the present, not of the past' (Praamsma 1985:35). McGoldrick adds that

The University of Leiden was the centre of this teaching, where Professor J. N. (sic) Scholten (1811-1885) was its most vigorous spokesman. Moderns regarded themselves as agents of enlightenment, as they espoused Darwin's hypothesis of evolution and critical theories about the Bible. They believed they were progressives leading church and society forward so as to make the Christian faith compatible with a naturalistic world-view. (McGoldrick 2000:32.)

It was another student of Leiden, Abraham Kuyper, which, as Praamsma points out, 'was to be most energetic in fighting against this spirit' (Praamsma 1985:35).

Abraham Kuyper fought the spirit of the Moderns in print, in government, and especially in the church. 'After rejecting it [Modernism-PB] in favor of orthodox Protestantism,' writes British historian Peter Heslam, 'he spent the rest of his career in fierce opposition to its effects and in open conflict with its representatives' (Heslam 1998:267). This fierce war of words continued unabated until 1886, at which time Abraham Kuyper 'led 100,000 orthodox Calvinists from the *Hervormde Kerk* in the *Doleantie* (from the Latin *dolere*-to mourn) to form the *Gereformeerde Doleerende Kerk*' (Campbell-Jack 1992:6). In 1892, after much official and unofficial discussion and after much hope and many setbacks (see Bouma 1995 for details), the major elements of both the *Afscheiding* (the 'A' Churches) and the *Doleerende Churches* (the 'B' Churches)

united to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, which Walter Campbell-Jack refers to as ‘the second largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands’ (Campbell-Jack 1992:7).

1.7 Dissent

Not all of the *Afscheiding* people, however, were happy with this union. Under the unofficial leadership of Reverends Henstra and Drayer, who were not themselves *Afgescheiden*, those who refused to become part of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* ‘continued their church life under the traditional name—the Christian Reformed Church’ (Plantinga 1995:213), only changing it to the plural ‘Churches’ in 1947 (Plantinga 1995:221). The objections of ‘the dissenters of 1892’ were essentially doctrinal. Aside from a dislike for the way Kuyper seemed to disparage the Secession of 1834 (Plantinga 1995:215), these dissenters firmly believed that the *Doleantie*, with Kuyper at the helm, had a basic misunderstanding as to the very nature of the church. This misunderstanding manifested itself, according to Rev. Henstra, in questions of justification, election, and faith, all of which are subsumed under the rubric of the covenant. More particularly, Plantinga writes:

In the churches dominated by the thinking of Kuyper, the doctrine of election is central and becomes the basis of a system of thinking which Rev. Henstra characterizes as the “covenant system.” The justification of the sinner takes place in eternity, for Kuyper, and it has nothing to do with man or his faith. ...Kuyper’s order was: justification, regeneration, calling, conversion, faith, sanctification. The dissenters of 1892 claim that the order, according to Scripture, is: calling regeneration, conversion, faith, justification, sanctification.... Kuyper subordinates the covenant of grace to the doctrine of election and therefore maintains that the covenant includes only the elect. ...Rev. Henstra writes that because Kuyper thinks of the covenant of grace as having been established with the elect, virtually all who are born within the covenant circle are elect. “This election takes place in Christ, which means that the elect stood before God eternally as recipients of grace and as justified. Therefore we may assume, when they come into the world, that regeneration has taken place at the time of their

birth or before it. This regeneration, according to Kuyper, does not as a rule take place by means of the Word, which is also why he speaks of an ‘immediate regeneration’”.... According to Rev. Henstra, the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands maintain that the covenant “...is established *in time*, and not in eternity; it is established with Abraham and his seed, and later, in the New Testament terms, with believers and their seed. Thus it does not include the elect alone but believers and their *natural* seed. Ishmael, Esau, and others were also included in the covenant”.... Such a covenant demands a human response, in the form of faith and conversion. The response that is needed represents a fulfillment of the covenant. That the covenant has indeed been fulfilled in the life of a particular believer is also a matter of experience (*believing*). Rev. Henstra writes: “The covenant thus asks for *experience*, and this is primarily the characteristic difference between the Reformed and Christian Reformed views of the covenant ... we on our side believe that God gives His promise as a *basis for our plea*; it is on this basis that we beseech Him for what He has promised, namely, salvation and blessing (*heil en zaligheid*).” The difficulty with the Reformed (as opposed to Christian Reformed) view of his matter is that “...we *have* and *possess* all of this; we already *are* justified before God, and therefore also regenerated. Faith is only a becoming aware that one is justified”.... Rev. Henstra writes that disagreements regarding this area of doctrine were also the cause (*oorzaak*) of the liberation of 1944...indeed the events of 1944 are to be regarded as “a justification of our ecclesiastical standpoint” (Plantinga 1995:218-219.)

Contrary to the objections voiced by the Christian Reformed Churches, I believe Kuyper takes a more logical approach to matters of the covenant and its outworking in the everyday life of the believer. For Kuyper, it is God who decides from eternity past about our status with Him. This status is set, clear, and not dependent on the ambiguities of life. For the Christian Reformed Churches, in line with the *Afscheiding* before them, God goes a way with His people through life so that ambiguities of life are part and parcel of our relation with Him, not so much from His side as from ours.

The reason for bringing these issues to the fore at this time is to underscore them, because we will be returning to these themes again and again, and to demonstrate, even amidst significant differences, Kuyper’s influence on Hoeksema’s thought. Although Hoeksema took issue with Kuyper’s concept of ‘presumptive regeneration,’ the idea of which is that regeneration could remain in a dormant state for an indefinite period of time

and hence one must assume the regeneration of a person once baptized until evidence proves otherwise, it appears that, while allowing for a different doctrinal perspective, the practical outworking of Hoeksema's view was still essentially the same as that of Kuyper. Furthermore, Hoeksema can be viewed as allied with Kuyper in all the other charges of the dissenters of 1892. In fact, many of these objections go right to the heart of Hoeksema's more mature theology. Like Kuyper, Hoeksema also held that the covenant was established with the elect alone, albeit in Christ. This was part and parcel of his stand on sovereign, particular grace (see Hoeksema 1939, ET 1939). He therefore could be said to subordinate 'the covenant of grace to the doctrine of election' (Plantinga 1995:218), as Rev. Henstra charges. Unlike Kuyper, however, who used the concept of 'presumptive regeneration' to broaden his definition of 'the elect,' Hoeksema maintained that election cut right through the covenant, citing the story of Jacob and Esau in Romans 9 as proof (see Hoeksema 1979:1-28). Jacob and Esau were both born into a covenant family, a patriarchal one; both, by Kuyper's definition, were members of the covenant by virtue of circumcision (the forerunner of baptism); yet, as God declared, 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.... As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Bible, AV 1983:1177). Referring specifically to this passage Hoeksema would later hold, contra Kuyper, that Jacob and Esau were in reality not members of the covenant, but, prior to any evidence of either election or reprobation, both were rather in the 'sphere of the covenant' (Hoeksema 1971:134-137, Hanko 2000:375). This same ambiguity in the covenant concept, as illustrated in the difference between Kuyper and Hoeksema, is shared by the Christian Reformed Churches in the

Netherlands. However, for them, entrance into the covenant with God is determined by the life of human beings in their relation to God and not some prior determinism.

Beginning with his concept of the covenant as a relationship and not a promise (Hoeksema 1971:139-140), Hoeksema underscored his view that this relationship was initiated and maintained by God alone (election) and not dependant upon humanity in any way. Still, by his use of various phrases to say the same thing, Hoeksema injects a measure of uncertainty into his argument, causing one to question exactly what he means. He alternately speaks of the ungodly seed being ‘in the covenant,’ ‘under the covenant,’ and ‘in the sphere of the covenant’ (Hoeksema 1971:136, 141). His use of these terms in an apparently synonymous way is evidenced by his definition which only encompasses those operations which can be observed in the institutional local church, such as: baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the instruction and preaching (Hoeksema 1971:141). Hence, according to Hoeksema, the ungodly in the church are only ‘in the covenant’ to the extent that they come into contact with the ministrations of the local church institute. Here Hoeksema differs substantially from Kuyper in his formulation of this matter, but, since the elect and the ungodly are clearly indistinguishable within the confines of the local church, one is not to define, or view, the local manifestation of the body of Christ as anything but the body of Christ, and not as a ‘mixed multitude’ (Hoeksema 1971:110)—on this point Hoeksema also differs significantly with the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. This mixed multitude, however, is eventually rendered into its constituent parts by the ministrations of the church, especially the preaching of the Word (Hoeksema 1971:143). So, for Hoeksema as well as Kuyper, those in the church are supposed regenerate until, under the visible ministry of the church, they prove themselves

otherwise. For Hoeksema, this happens sometime in one's youth, while for Kuyper no specific determination is mentioned. Hence, both presume regeneration, with the difference being that one seems to be willing to presume a little longer than the other is. Even with these differences of opinion, I believe that Kuyper's early influence is clearly distinguishable in Hoeksema's doctrinal formulation.

1.8 *The Influence of Abraham Kuyper*

The major doctrinal differences between the Secession churches (1834) and the churches of the *Doleantie* (1886) are outlined succinctly by Herman Hanko. He writes:

Although there were many minor issues, the main issues were four in number. The Churches of the Secession were chiefly infralapsarian, maintained strongly justification in time, mediate regeneration and the promise of the covenant as the basis for the baptism of infants. The Churches that were organized from the State Church under the leadership of Dr. Kuyper rather were committed to supralapsarianism, eternal justification, immediate regeneration, and presupposed regeneration as the basis for infant baptism. (Hanko 1976:61.)

Just listing these doctrinal differences does not seem do them justice; given their importance, further clarification is definitely in order. And, since there are a myriad of opinions as to the exact meaning of these doctrinal formulas, I think it helpful to enlist Herman Hanko, emeritus professor at the Protestant Reformed Seminary and former student of Herman Hoeksema, to explain just what these formulas would mean from Hoeksema's perspective. With typical Protestant Reformed verve, Hanko writes:

The question of supra and infra lapsarianism is basically a question of the order of the decrees of the counsel of God. Infralapsarian maintains that the decree of salvation in Christ follows upon the decree of the fall. Supralapsarianism maintains that the decree of the salvation of the elect in Christ precedes the decree of the fall. It is interesting to note that our confessions are infralapsarian. This is especially true of the Canons of Dort, although the supra position was argued on

the Synod and was not condemned. ...Our Protestant Reformed Churches have no definite stand on either supra or infralapsarianism other than the position of our Confessions. Nevertheless, Rev. Hoeksema has always maintained his preference for supralapsarianism in that it is more Scripturally correct. Cf. Col. 1:15-19 and Prov. 8: 22-31. With this I agree. ...The question of justification was also a question that involved the decrees of God. The emphasis of Kuyper and his followers was on the fact that God eternally justifies His people in Christ so that in His counsel the elect stand before God as an eternally righteous people. This question is closely connected with the question of supra and infralapsarianism. Undoubtedly, eternal justification is taught in Scripture. The question of mediate or immediate regeneration is a question of whether God affects the work of regeneration in the hearts of His elect people through the means of the preaching of the Word (mediate regeneration) or without the means of the preaching of the Word, e.g., directly through the operation of the Spirit (immediate regeneration). Although this is an interesting and important question, it is sufficient for us to point out that the very first seed of the new life takes place directly and without the mediacy of the preaching of the gospel. The ability to hear the gospel and appropriate its truth presupposes the life of Christ already present. The growth of the new man of regeneration, dependent upon the food of the gospel, presupposes that the new man is already created. The question of the basis for baptism of infants is something else. ...The view of Kuyper, that the baptism of infants rests upon the basis of presupposed regeneration is wrong. His idea was that we must presuppose that all children born of believing parents are regenerated, and that therefore, on this presupposition we must baptize them. But this rests the truth of infant baptism upon a figment of the imagination which is obviously contrary to Scripture. The Churches of the Secession rather maintained that the basis for the baptism of infants is the promise of the covenant, namely that God will establish His covenant in the lines of continued generations. This is surely correct. Our Churches maintained this in the fury and strife of the controversy of 1953 and preceding years. Yet we must remember that these same Churches of the Secession later on came to the position that this promise of the covenant was for all that were baptized and was therefore also conditional. (Hanko 1976:61-63.)

While Hoeksema, during his early years in Groningen, attended an ‘A’ congregation, he seemed to have more affinity with the *Doleerenden* churches, especially with their emphasis on sovereign, particular grace—a doctrine that was to become the hallmark of Hoeksema’s later theology. On this Gertrude Hoeksema writes:

In the years of Harm’s childhood there were several “A” and several “B” congregations in the city of Groningen. Harm’s mother belonged to the “A” church, and Harm went to catechism there. One of his best friends belonged to the “B” church, and Harm’s mother gave him permission to attend the “B” church with his friend occasionally. When the boys were old enough to go to a young

men's society, Harm joined the society in the "B" congregation of his friend. The ties of friendship were not the only reasons for Harm's leanings toward the "B" church. Possibly they were not his strongest reasons. For Harm was attracted towards Dr. Abraham Kuyper and his interpretation of Reformed theology, particularly Dr. Kuyper's emphasis that grace is always particular. (Hoeksema 1969:32.)

David Engelsma, current professor of dogmatics at the Protestant Reformed Seminary also speaks of Kuyper's influence on Hoeksema (Engelsma 1998:29). He says categorically that 'although Hoeksema corrected, developed, and put his own stamp on the theology of Kuyper, the theology of Hoeksema is essentially that of Kuyper' (Engelsma 1998:29). Elsewhere, Engelsma, in order to give some distance to Kuyper's influence on Hoeksema because of the former's common grace formulations, seeks to distinguish between Kuyper's theological and philosophical works. Engelsma believes that Kuyper's theology is contained in *Dat de genade particulier is* (his treatise on particular grace), *E voto dordraceno* (his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism), *De leer der verbonden* (the teaching of the covenants) and his famous theological lectures at the Free University: *Dictaten dogmatiek* (Engelsma 1998:29). By contrast, Kuyper's philosophical, and thus more 'speculative' work, is contained primarily in his *Lectures on Calvinism* and in his three volume work on common grace, entitled, *De gemeene gratie* (Engelsma 1998:28).

1.9 A Different Paradigm

In contrast to Engelsma's paradigm for understanding Kuyper's influence on Hoeksema, I would like to suggest an alternative. Rather than trying to distinguish Kuyper's theological works from his philosophical ones, an effort of dubious benefit for

our purposes, I think it better to concentrate on Kuyper's influence as a whole and seek to understand Hoeksema's reaction to Kuyper's different themes. Hence, I think it helpful to divide Kuyper's influence on Hoeksema into both a positive and a negative category. In what I would call the positive and constructive, or influential, category, I would classify works such as Kuyper's treatise on particular grace, or his work on the covenant. In a second category, which I would designate as negative, or reactionary, I would classify works such as Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* and *De gemeene gratie*. The positive category would contain those works that shaped Hoeksema's theology in a positive and constructive way. The negative category would contain works that Hoeksema developed his theology in opposition to. This is why I maintain that Kuyper had both a positive and a negative effect on Hoeksema's theology. Additionally, I think it is also true that Hoeksema's background in the 'A' churches helped dictate which of Kuyper's works influenced him in a positive way and which he wrote in reaction to. His 'A' background would have caused him to eschew the more philosophical or speculative of Kuyper's works altogether. Since the 'A' spirituality was of a less certain nature, more overtly spiritual, even mystical, and certainly less optimistic, its theology required a conscious, and visible, biblical grounding. The 'B' mindset, being of a more rational, optimistic, bent and more certain of its eternal standing (election), would undoubtedly explain to a large degree Hoeksema's attraction to those works of Kuyper in which the latter's Calvinism was more clearly reasoned and closely defined. Yet, I believe it is impossible to understand Hoeksema properly without taking both the positive and the negative into account, regardless of how these Kuyperian themes receive their final formulations in Hoeksema's thought.

1.10 *A Positive Influence*

In the positive category, Kuyper's exposition of particular grace, which had such a profound affect on Hoeksema, was published in the *Uit het Woord* series, second series, part one, and titled, *Dat de genade particulier is*. The book is divided into four sections, the first of which is designated: '*Geen Christus pro omnibus*' (no Christ for all). Kuyper grounds this statement on the historic Reformed concept that there is no election on the basis of a foreseen faith in the individual, but that faith follows from God's sovereign election (Kuyper [s.a.]:15). In the first forty pages of the book Kuyper deals with the three main biblical texts that he believes are used in support of the idea of 'Christ for all' i.e. I John 2:2, I Timothy 2:4, and II Peter 3:9 (Kuyper [s.a.]:17-38). His conclusion is that these verses do not teach what those who want a 'Christ for all' claim (Kamps 1998:39). 'The false doctrine of a Christ for all, general grace, or universalism for Kuyper was a God dishonoring doctrine which robbed the church of the essence of her calling, that is, to *worship*,' writes Marvin Kamps, a former Protestant Reformed minister. 'How can the believer worship, when the preaching presents a God who cannot accomplish His will, whose Son is made a beggar, and whose grace is made in most instances insufficient to save, or when sinners are made to believe that their salvation is dependent on their own efforts?' (Kamps 1998:39).

In the course of his analysis of particular grace, Kuyper made it a point to stress its individual application. 'The entire work of redemption is personal, and on the individual person applied,' wrote Kuyper. 'The tie, or bond, of this mystic union with Jesus must be personal, also on this ground, that by this tie [the mystic union with Jesus-

PB] enters into the [very] depths of our life, of our character, and our existence' (Kuyper [s.a.]:64). The grace of redemption that Kuyper elucidates here is entirely personal, entirely particular, and as such, entirely sovereign. This is the concept of grace expounded by Kuyper that so captivated Hoeksema. In his book, *God's Goodness Always Particular*, Hoeksema, following Kuyper's lead, goes on to say that

the doctrine of general grace is in deep conflict with what Scripture teaches us concerning the deep corruption of man and his total incapability to accept the proffered redemption; is contrary to what Holy Writ teaches us concerning the unity and veracity of our God; cannot be harmonized with the doctrine concerning the person of our Redeemer, who was ordained from eternity as head of his own, nor with his work of redemption which was a payment for the guilt of sin and, on the basis of it, liberation from the power of sin, and therefore necessarily particular, for if it is not particular it could be no atonement for sin. (Hoeksema 1939:67-68.)

1.11 *A Negative Influence*

From a negative, or reactionary, perspective, Kuyper's influence on Hoeksema was embodied in his doctrine of common grace. This theme was expounded by Kuyper in great detail first in a series of articles in a newspaper under his editorship, *De Heraut*, and later collected into three volumes under the title *De gemeene gratie*, published between 1902 and 1904. Reverend Bernard Woudenberg, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches, told me several times that Hoeksema's commentary on these volumes was not of a favorable nature. Hoeksema often said that the three volumes of *De gemeene gratie* could be reduced to sixteen typed pages; single spaced, and not lose anything (Woudenberg 2000). Cornelius Hanko, also minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and for many years an associate pastor under Hoeksema at First

Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, said categorically that Kuyper's articles on common grace were an attempt to justify his political associations (Hanko 2000, Terpstra 1998:41). Hanko was referring to the cooperation of Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party with Catholics (later the *Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij*) in the political sphere in the Netherlands. Hoeksema, however, was a bit more diplomatic in his assessment of Kuyper's motives in this regard. Hoeksema believed that while Kuyper

was undoubtedly a man of keen intellect and mighty vision.... [I]n his attempt to apply the principles of the Reformed faith to every sphere of life, he did not keep in view that the struggle of the people of God is a purely spiritual one. For the Reformed element in the Netherlands he desired and sought a place of power in the World, and in this pursuit of power the principles of the Word of God were not always maintained and applied. And it is in this light that we also must view the attempt to develop the theory of common grace alongside of the truth that the grace of God is particular. The theory served to create a synthesis between the church and the world. (Hoeksema 1947:309.)

Charles Terpstra, Protestant Reformed Minister in Holland, Michigan, elaborates on what he sees as additional aspects of Kuyper's motivation in developing his theory of common grace. He concludes that

Kuyper's motivation ... was not solely theological; it was also very practical. For one thing, he sought to answer the growing effects of modernism in the church-world. He noted that modernism had a broad vision of the world and for the world, but that this vision was grounded in humanistic rationalism. He wanted the Reformed faith to have the same broad vision, but to be grounded in the sovereign work of God. Common grace gave him the answer, he thought. ...Still more ...Kuyper had developed a growing aversion for what he believed was an "Anabaptist" spirit in the churches of the Netherlands. There were Reformed Christians who believed that being true to the Reformed faith meant living a godly life of separation from the world. That meant no cooperation with the world in any realm, whether it be labor, religion, or politics. Kuyper's common grace sought to reprove this narrow view of the Christian's life in the world and create a full-orbed world and life view. (Terpstra 1998:41.)

At this point it would be helpful to gain some idea as to just what Hoeksema understood by Kuyper's theory of common grace. I do not wish to enter into a prolonged discussion

of common grace at this point, as an extended discussion will be more appropriate later in our analysis. However, Hoeksema was able to distill Kuyper's theory down to three points, which I believe are both succinct and judicious. Under the heading of the 'chief elements of the Kuyperian conception of common grace,' Hoeksema summarized as follows:

1. That God, though with a view to eternity and the eternal blessedness of the Kingdom He is gracious only to the elect, with a view to things earthly and temporal He is gracious to all men.
2. That there is a restraining influence, ever since the fall of man, of the common grace of God upon the physical and ethical corruption of the world and of the heart of man, so that the principle of total depravity cannot work through.
3. That there is a positive influence of God's common grace upon the mind and will of man, whereby he is so improved that he can still live a positively good world-life. (Hoeksema 1947:313.)

Hoeksema was thoroughly convinced that Kuyper's doctrine of common grace led to a blatant denial of the Reformed truth of the 'antithesis.' This is the concept whereby God after the fall put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman as recorded in Genesis 3:15. The enmity, or antithesis, spoken of in this verse, popularly known as the '*moederbelofte*' or mother promise, details the beginnings of a division between the 'church' and the 'world' that would presumably continue until the return of Christ. This division is both spiritual and ethical. Furthermore, it is ethical and all pervasive in the life of the child of God precisely because it is spiritual. It is believed that God has put a profound separation between the 'elect,' those whom He has chosen for eternal life and the 'reprobate,' those whom He has not. This separation, or antithesis, becomes visible in individual morality. Unlike people in general, Christians are to be the salt of the earth. They are to be in the world but not of the world (Zwaanstra 1973:90-91). Hence, the Reformed concept of the antithesis precludes any cooperation between the

church and the world in any area of life (see Zwaanstra 1973:117 for a fuller discussion of this theme), a concept put in immanent danger expressly because of Kuyper's theory of common grace (Terpstra 1998:42-43).

1.12 *Kuyper's Further Influence*

Kuyper's three volume *De gemeene gratie* was enormously popular, and influential, in the Netherlands. The success of *De gemeene gratie* was followed with two more multi-volume works, *Pro rege* (3 volumes) and *Antirevolutionaire staatkunde* (2 volumes), in which Kuyper worked out the principles of common grace in a much broader scope. All three works, never having been translated into English, were to have a limited affect in America. However, in 1898 Kuyper was invited to deliver the Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. This he did with distinction. The result was a renewed interest in Calvinism (see Heslam 1998 on this history) in both Reformed and Presbyterian circles. The published version of these lectures, known simply as *Lectures on Calvinism*, was to become a classic, and it was by means of these lectures that Kuyper's influence preceded Hoeksema to America.

According to Gertrude Hoeksema, the ecclesiastical picture in the Netherlands continued to be fraught with controversy. Even after the Union of 1892, the 'A' churches and the 'B' churches, for all intents and purposes, continued their separate existence and only gradually merged. She writes that:

As the unrest between the two groups escalated, at times into theological battles, the leaders called representatives of both factions to Utrecht in 1905. At this session they drew up the Conclusions of Utrecht, an attempted compromise to bring peace to the GKN. The result was that the true peace they had anticipated

was not achieved. The best they could do was establish an uneasy truce between the two Reformed groups. For about three decades the GKN lived with this truce, until the period near the end of World War II, when problems again began to surface. After the war the A and B wings parted ways. (Hoeksema 1992:7.)

Hoeksema, however, was not around to witness the events following the Synod of Utrecht in 1905, as he already left for America in 1904.

1.13 *Conclusion*

During the course of this chapter I have outlined Herman Hoeksema's origins and early years in the Netherlands. In the course of this outline, I have sought to sketch, at times in some detail, those influences which helped to shape Herman Hoeksema both personally and theologically.

His personal life was a difficult one; one fraught with deprivation. In a sense, as a result of this state of affairs, his early years were wild and unsupervised. In many ways, he was anything but a polished young man.

In conjunction with this general lack of training went an interest in things theological. The most significant influences in this area were his mother, his upbringing in the *Afscheiding* churches, and Abraham Kuyper. Hoeksema's mother was a devout woman who cared very deeply for the spiritual welfare of her son. Her efforts, the results of which were not always visible, were eventually to bear abundant fruit. Hoeksema's upbringing in the 'A' churches gave him an appreciation of God's relationship to His people. This 'relationship' eventually would become the basis of his all-important doctrine of the covenant. The great catalyst, at least in Hoeksema's early years, was Abraham Kuyper. I have also sought to demonstrate that Kuyper's influence was in many

ways a double-edged sword, so to speak. Hoeksema's theology was influenced in a positive way by Kuyper's insistence that God's grace is both sovereign and particular. He reacted strongly, however, to Kuyper's formulations of a common grace of God. Much of Hoeksema's later theology was developed, albeit by default, in response to theory of common grace. While holding to God's sovereign particular grace, Hoeksema, thoroughly repudiated any notion of a common grace of God. These themes, already visible in Hoeksema's early years, were only to develop further after his arrival in the United States in 1904.