

Chapter 2

The Seminarian and the Dutch Reformed Church

Herman Hoeksema immigrated to the United States in 1904. He was eighteen years old at the time and spoke no English. In the course of this chapter I propose to outline Hoeksema's exploits in his new country. More specifically, I will chronicle, in some detail, his theological odyssey from his arrival in Chicago to his beginnings in the pastorate, concluding with some more personal observations.

Before entering into a discussion of Hoeksema's early years in America, I think it proper to sketch the ecclesiastical terrain. America has had a long and rich Reformed history, and, as in the Netherlands, it has been fraught with controversy. In fact, many of the same controversial themes that characterized the church struggles in the Netherlands were also evident in their American counterparts. It is within this theological environment that Hoeksema's distinctive Reformed theological tenets would develop and come to fruition. It is to this history that I would now like to turn.

2.1 A New Home

In the nineteenth-century America became home to many from the Netherlands who espoused the Reformed faith. Because of persecution, a significant number that left the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Secession of 1834 came to America to start a new life. Many

others came because of severe economic conditions in their homeland. Herman Hoeksema fits into the latter category; he came primarily to find a better life.

As early as 1890 the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, had a mission to arriving immigrants, especially those from the Netherlands. In fact, 'restricting the evangelistic outreach of the church to Holland immigrants and other people of Holland ancestry was defended on the grounds that a church is most obligated to those who share with it a common origin, language and history' (Zwaanstra 1973:29). This mission was geared specifically to advance the cause, and increase the numbers, of the Christian Reformed Church. This is not to say that immigrants were looked upon solely as objects for proselytization, but it does appear that the Christian Reformed Church was of mixed motives. 'At Ellis Island,' Zwaanstra writes, 'new arrivals were introduced to the Christian Reformed Church, given spiritual counsel, and assisted with settlement problems. Later the church appointed a commission to prevent the scattering of Holland people in America' (Zwaanstra 1973:29).

Despite the services provided by Christian Reformed Church, Herman Hoeksema passed through New York City, his point of entry, alone. Gertrude Hoeksema captures well this sense of being totally alone. She writes:

Alone and bewildered in a strange land! With his meager baggage, Harm had passed through customs, docilely allowing himself to be pushed through the routine inspections, not understanding the reasons for all the formalities. Now he stood blinking at the New York of 1904, its streetcars, trains, and other conveyances, and wondered what was in store for him next. (Hoeksema 1969:35.)

Hoeksema's stay in New York, however, was a short one. Almost upon arrival, he boarded a train for far away Chicago, and his sister. Hoeksema's sister, Everdina, had immigrated two years earlier to Chicago's West Side, where she lived with her husband,

Jacobus Veldman (Hoeksema 1969:36). Hoeksema's fondest recollection of his arrival in America was not, however, of the Statue of Liberty, or of New York City, or even of the cross-country train ride to the 'Windy City.' What he remembered most was his first taste of apple pie, the beginning of a life-long love affair (Hoeksema 1969:36).

Hoeksema's arrival in Chicago was uneventful. Chicago was just emerging from the financial panic precipitated by the assassination of President McKinley some three years earlier. 'For one who could not communicate,' relates Gertrude Hoeksema, 'finding work presented a double difficulty' (Hoeksema 1969:36). Because of his training in the Netherlands, it was natural that Hoeksema would seek out work as a blacksmith. He had no trouble securing a job despite the language barrier—Everdina's husband was instrumental in this regard.

This first job, however, was also to be Hoeksema's first encounter with another aspect of the American workplace, the labor union. One evening he was brought to a meeting, the particulars of which were kept secret until the last minute. At this meeting, he was asked to swear an oath for reasons he did not fully comprehend. His stubborn Dutch nature, however, would not allow him to do such a thing. He did not run. Instead, he bellowed out 'no' to the questioner in the most adamant voice that he could muster (Hoeksema 1969:37). Herman Hoeksema Jr. related that the next firm he worked for was about to go on strike, and he was to be used as a strikebreaker. When two union 'enforcers' arrived to prevent him from working, Hoeksema responded with the whip that was usually reserved for the horses. He quit the job shortly thereafter for one that was non-union, but not before, as Herman Hoeksema Jr. says, 'cussing out the owners' (Hoeksema 2001). His next job was to haul the ashes 'from the basements of downtown

buildings and industrial plants' (Hoeksema 1969:39) and dump them on Chicago's lakeshore, the current home of Chicago's famous Museum of Science and Industry. It was grueling work, which caused Hoeksema to decide that there must be something better out there for him. The final, and probably the best job he had in Chicago, was at the Aermotors Corporation. It was here that Hoeksema's trade school background, including his ability to draw-up blueprints, was an asset. He finally left this job in order to study for the ministry.

From this diverse and rather sordid assortment of job experiences, two things emerged in Hoeksema's makeup that remained with him for the rest of his life. First, he came to the firm conclusion that labor unions were, plainly and simply, wrong. They were, he reasoned, rebellion against the lawful owners or managers of a business. To this day, one cannot be a union member and simultaneously a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Secondly, while he repudiated union membership as a hedge against a capricious boss, Hoeksema reserved his vehemence and vitriol for the employers, whom he viewed as perpetrators of the greater evil (Hoeksema 2001). Or, as Hoeksema himself says in a sermon on Lord's Day 2 of the Heidelberg Catechism, circa 1930: 'The man that has piled up money and then gives away a little of that money which he has first sucked out of the poor, may say, "I am a pretty good man." And the biggest thieves put the little thieves in jail. That is our corrupt nature' (Hoeksema 1930).

Jacobus Veldman's brother, Richard, was a minister in the Christian Reformed Churches in the Chicago area (Grotenhuis 2000). Maybe for this reason Herman Hoeksema's church affiliation since arriving in Chicago was the Christian Reformed Church 'known as Chicago I, on the corner of 14th and Loomis' (Hoeksema 1969:41).

His son tells me that during his stint as blacksmith in Chicago, Herman also taught Sunday school at a local Baptist Church (Hoeksema 2001). Still, it was in the Chicago I Christian Reformed Church that Herman Hoeksema would meet his future wife, Nellie Kuiper. Also at this time, around 1906, he obtained the money needed to pay for passage for his mother and his two younger brothers to come to America. Upon arrival, they also settled in with Everdina and Jacobus Veldman.

In order to understand the Christian Reformed Church as it existed in America at the time Herman Hoeksema began his ministry, it would be helpful to look at some of that church's history. The Christian Reformed Church had its beginnings as the Classis Holland of the Reformed Churches in America, the denomination from which it subsequently split in 1857. Hence, a bit of this earlier history is in order.

2.2 The Reformed Church in America

The Reformed Church has been in America for over three hundred years. The celebrated Collegiate School in Upper Manhattan can be dated from the arrival of the Reverend Jonas Michaelius, 'the first Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam from 1628-1632' (Frost 1985:2). That is only a decade after the famous Synod of Dort. Gerald de Jong writes that, 'although growth was slow during the Church's first quarter century in America, a solid foundation was laid for future development' (De Jong 1978:28).

The church that emerged out of the next two centuries of development on American soil was the Reformed Church in America (RCA). While over the course of

this time there were a steady stream of immigrants that attached themselves to the Reformed Church in America, in the wake of the Secession of 1834 immigration seemed a more important, and pressing, matter. Two of the most prominent names associated with the exodus from the *Hervormde Kerk*, and the Netherlands, after the Secession of 1834 were Reverends Albertus C. van Raalte and Hendrik P. Scholte. Van Raalte was initially not of a mind to emigrate, but many lay people, even members of his own congregation, began to view the Netherlands as a hindrance to the truths they held dear, especially after seeing the treatment Hendrik de Cock received at the hands of the state (De Jong 1984:25-28). Van Raalte viewed these events with concern both for the people who were leaving and their plight (Bruins 1996:20). ‘Perhaps,’ concludes Elton Bruins, ‘Van Raalte was also influenced (to emigrate-PB) by the visit to the Netherlands of Thomas De Witt, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in New York, who met with his Afscheiden colleague Hendrik P. Scholte in the spring of 1846’ (Bruins 1996:20).

Van Raalte arrived in America in November 1846 (Bruins 1996:22), and immediately set about looking for a suitable place for ‘his’ colony. ‘After the decision was made to establish the Holland colony in the western part of the State of Michigan,’ writes Elton Bruins, ‘Van Raalte and the first party arrived on February 9, 1847’ (Bruins 1996:23). To one viewing Van Raalte’s settlement in its early stages, its future was by no means certain. Harsh winters, lack of money, and scarcity of food all contributed to what Elton Bruins calls ‘the grim reality of life on the Michigan frontier’ (Bruins 1996:23).

Van Raalte’s colleague in the Netherlands, Hendrik Scholte, also immigrated to America. In 1847, he led a 700 to 800 member group west of the Mississippi to the town of Pella in Iowa (Vander Hart 1984:68). After arriving in Pella, Scholte chose to have

very little contact with Van Raalte, as, 'he felt more comfortable on his own' (Vander Hart 1984:68). Scholte's contribution is, no doubt, of great significance for the history of the Reformed faith in the United States, but he chose to remain independent and, subsequently, had little influence on either the Reformed Church in America or, after 1857, the Christian Reformed Church.

Over the course of the next decade, Van Raalte's settlement became a viable, even thriving, community, known today as Holland, Michigan. Although there were many issues to settle in the community, Elton Bruins argues that 'the most momentous decision was the decision to join the Dutch Reformed Church in the East then known officially as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of North America [known today as the Reformed Church in America-PB]' (Bruins 1996:25). The Dutch Reformed Church in the East was the only Dutch Reformed Church present in the United States at the time of Van Raalte's arrival. Hence, similarities in religious observance were coupled with feelings of commonality in both language and culture. Moreover, 'from the start,' relates Elton Bruins, 'Van Raalte had a positive feeling for the Dutch Reformed Church. Many Members of the Dutch Reformed Church in America surrounded him and his people with arms of love when they arrived in New York.... In this denomination, Van Raalte felt he had found a branch of the old church in which he had been raised in the Netherlands and of which his father had been a pastor' (Bruins 1996:26).

Because of Van Raalte's efforts motivated by his innate love for the Dutch Reformed Church in America, a daughter of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, the settlement founded by Van Raalte in Western Michigan became the Classis of Holland in the Dutch Reformed Church in America in 1850. There was, however, much hesitancy

among the rank and file in Van Raalte's community over the proposed union with the Dutch Reformed Church in America. There were questions whether Van Raalte himself was aware of the nature of the church he was proposing everyone to join (Kromminga 1943:106). The whole affair seemed to have a hidden, even sinister, side (Kromminga 1943:102-106). Herman Hanko questions 'whether the immigrants in fact authorized the union with the RCA. Van Raalte was present at the synod where the immigrants were accepted into the fellowship of the RCA, and Van Raalte himself expressed the willingness of the settlers to enter this union. But whether he was given official sanction by the colonists to commit them to union with the RCA is not at all clear from the records' (Hanko 2000:27).

The next seven years of union with the Dutch Reformed Church in America were not tranquil ones for the settlers in Michigan. Doubts among the settlers concerning the union, it seems, were never fully addressed. Additionally, writes Herman Hanko, there were 'reports from the East that all was not well in the RCA. Some churches there did not administer the sacraments in divine worship services. Lodge membership was not at all uncommon. Hymns were sung in place of the Psalms. A certain spirit of worldliness and willingness to conform to American ways was common' (Hanko 2000:22). Because of these things, many began to feel that 'they had made a serious mistake in joining the RCA' (Hanko 2000:22). In 1857 this dissatisfaction with the Dutch Reformed Church in America led directly to the founding of the Christian Reformed Church. While it is undoubtedly true that all the reasons mentioned had a hand in the eventual split of many of Van Raalte's followers from the Dutch Reformed Church in America, and the founding of the new denomination, the central reason had its origin in the Netherlands.

The Dutch Reformed Church in America was a daughter church of the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands, the church from which Van Raalte and his followers had just seceded and that had persecuted them so severely (Hanko 2000:22-27). Hence, by joining with the Dutch Reformed Church in America they were, in effect, repudiating the very reasons for which they immigrated in the first place. This fact was brought out clearly, writes Elton Bruins, ‘when the church of Graafschap (Graafschap is a suburb of Holland, Michigan-PB) sent a letter to the classis on 7 April 1857, notifying the classis of its separation from the Reformed Church. The congregation gave as the main reason for its action: “And it grieves our heart most in all this that there are members among you who regard our secession in the Netherlands as not strictly necessary, or [think that] it was untimely”’ (Bruins 1996:33).

Van Raalte himself remained a member of the Dutch Reformed Church in America until his death and was deeply grieved by the whole affair. RCA historian William van Eyck, recounting the Minutes of Classis for April 8, 1857, relates that Van Raalte said:

he is grieved to see such grossly inconsiderate accusations, as for example, that we reject the principles of the secession in the Netherlands. He was not conscious of any estrangement from these brethren, and that it was nonsense to call the emigration from Holland and union with Reformed Church a separation from the brethren there in an ecclesiastical sense, since they in Holland had never seceded from the Reformed church, but only from the illegal and heretical church government (kerkbestuur) which was imposed in 1816.... (Van Eyck 1950:111.)

The Classis of April 8th, however, set in motion the split. The Reformed Church in America, for all its protests, was not able to undo what was happening. Professor H. Bouwman of the Theological School in Kampen commented that:

it was a matter of duty before God and men to be ‘by themselves’ as they had begun to do, in the fear of the Lord. As an independent group, leaning on God’s

might, standing at the side of other Calvinistic manifestations of the body of Christ, they were to cooperate in the great work of the kingdom of God, and the development of a typical Reformed-American Church as the final result. (quoted by Beets 1946:63.)

The split of 1857 had many ramifications for the fledgling group as well as for the burgeoning frontier of Western Michigan; the most immediate of which was that of families divided in the split and the matter of affiliation. Although these problems pale in light of many contemporary concerns, Albert Hyma, in his biography of Van Raalte, puts the matter in perspective. He writes that:

As long as there had been no formal secession, the Separatists coming from the Netherlands were not confronted by the question as to which denomination they should join. They automatically were enrolled in a congregation belonging to the Classis of Michigan or the Classis of Holland. But the moment the Secession of 1857 became a well-known fact, people had to make a choice. Particularly after 1880 the newly founded denomination, having the same name as that to which the Separatists all belonged originally, grew by leaps and bounds. The great majority of the *Gereformeerden*, whose numbers in the Netherlands swelled to a million members, felt that their church must be that of the old Separatists. The latter represented the purified, the orthodox churches, while the Reformed Church in America was often looked upon as being nearly or entirely identified with the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands. In short, the Secession of 1857 has become one of the great developments in the history of Michigan.... (Hyma 1947:215.)

While immigration provided a steady stream of growth for the new denomination, the growing influence of the denominational publication, *De Wachter*, also contributed significantly (Beets 1946:74). Yet, for a time, Rev. K. Vanden Bosch was the only ordained man among the entire group (Beets 1946:75). In the years that followed, ministerial needs were provided either through the immigration process or local training, which at the time was still a product of the manse. Finally, the year 1876 marked the beginning of a denominational theological school, Calvin College and Preparatory School, formally charged with the training of future ministers for the denomination. With Rev G. E. Boer installed as regular *Docent* in February 1876, the school grew at a gradual

and steady pace (De Jong 1926:24). Between the installation of Rev. Boer in 1876 and Hoeksema's arrival in 1908 several prominent 'American Secession Theologians' (Faber 1996) had already become affiliated with Calvin College and Seminary. In addition to Rev Boer, there was L. J. Hulst (1825-1922), G. K. Hemkes (1838-1920), Gerhardus Vos (1865-1949), William Wijnand Heyns (1856-1933), Hendericus Beuker (1834-1900), and Foppe Martin ten Hoor (1855-1934) (Faber 1996:17).

2.3 *The Seminarian*

After residing for four years in Chicago, Herman Hoeksema decided to pursue a career in the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. It was 1908 and he had already met his future wife, Nellie Kuiper, at the Chicago I Christian Reformed Church. He was, however, not to marry her until 1914 (Hoeksema 1969:60), at the start of his senior year. A seminarian getting married prior to his graduation was a rather unusual thing in the Christian Reformed Church of 1914, but Hoeksema was able to do so because of the money he made tutoring, teaching and preaching. As Hoeksema himself would say: 'I was tired of having my feet under someone else's table' (Woudenberg 2001). By this time, he had also mastered the English language sufficiently enough for it to be his medium of instruction at school (Hoeksema 1969:44).

Herman Hoeksema entered the 'Theological School and Calvin College' (Stob 1955:175) in the fall of 1908 in order to begin his preparations for the ministry (Hoeksema 1969:45). From all accounts, Hoeksema was an exceptionally good student. According to Gertrude Hoeksema, 'to supplement his classical support money, Herman

began tutoring fellow students in Dutch and Latin, and teaching an English class under Professor J. Vanden Bosch' (Hoeksema 1969:54).

During the course of Hoeksema's ministerial training, it was Professors William Heyns and Foppe M. ten Hoor who left the deepest and most lasting impressions.

2.4 *William Wijnand Heyns*

William Heyns, having begun his theological training at Kampen in 1877 (Faber 1997:301), immigrated in the United States in 1881 and arrived in Paterson, New Jersey—he was 25. He went on to complete his theological education at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, subsequently becoming Professor of Diaconology there from 1902 until 1926 (Faber 1996:23-25). Unfortunately, although William Heyns played a significant role in the history of Calvin Theological Seminary, there is very little biographical information available on him.

The teaching of Professor Heyns during his tenure at Calvin Seminary hinged in large measure on the doctrine of the covenant. His first publication, following closely the lectures upon which it was based, was entitled *Verhandelingen over het genade-verbond* (Essays on the Covenant of Grace) (Faber1997:301). When compared with the teachings of Herman Bavinck, however, Heyns's writings demonstrate that there was a distinct lack of unanimity within the Secession churches on this cardinal doctrine. It is in the midst of this tension that Hoeksema's own doctrine of the covenant began to take shape.

In regard to the nature of God's covenant, Heyns taught that its essence is: 'the promise of salvation in the form of a covenant' (Heyns 1926:125) or elsewhere: 'every

Covenant of God with man is actually a promise given in the stronger, more binding form of a covenant' (Heyns 1926:126). Moreover, Heyns declared that the covenant of grace is 'unconditional.' So conscious was Heyns of being labeled an Arminian, writes Jelle Faber, that he eschewed the word 'condition' in his remarks on the covenant preferring instead to speak of 'obligations'(Faber 1997:303). He wrote:

When, therefore, we are accustomed to speak of conditions of the Covenant and mention as such faith and obedience, this must not be misunderstood. Faith and obedience must not be regarded as conditions for becoming participants in the Covenant, for we are participants in it from the time of our birth. Even in the Covenant of Works the condition of obedience was not a condition for being taken into the Covenant, but for keeping the Covenant and for gaining its reward. In the same way faith and obedience are conditions for keeping the Covenant of Grace and for inheriting the promise, Heb. 6:5, whereas unbelief and disobedience make the Covenant member a Covenant breaker, who shall not enter in: Heb. 3:18-19. Hence the earnest admonitions of the Lord Jesus to abide in Him, John 15:4-6. It might be preferable to call faith and obedience not conditions but obligations of the Covenant. (Heyns 1926:131.)

Furthermore, for Heyns, election had no bearing on the scope of the covenant. As Faber points out, since the concept of Christ as Head of the covenant of grace was abandoned, Heyns excluded 'any identification of covenant and eternal election or any confusion of God's covenant and His eternal counsel of peace' (Faber 1996:37).

The great Secession theologian Herman Bavinck viewed these matters in a decidedly different light. Bavinck began his treatment of the covenant of grace with humanity's need for redemption (Bavinck 1956:262); the whole of which 'begins and ends in Him' (Bavinck 1956:265). Additionally, Bavinck did not posit part of the responsibility for the covenant with God and part with man, as did Heyns. Instead, Bavinck saw the covenant as a function of God's eternal election, bestowed upon humanity as a sovereign gift of grace. He writes:

After all, when the covenant of grace is separated from election, it ceases to be a covenant of grace and becomes again a covenant of works. Election implies that God grants man freely and out of grace the salvation which man has forfeited and which he can never again achieve in his own strength. But if salvation is not the sheer gift of grace but in some way depends upon the conduct of men, then the covenant of grace is converted into a covenant of works. Man must then satisfy some condition in order to inherit eternal life. In this, grace and works stand at opposite poles from each other and are mutually exclusive. If salvation is by grace it is no longer by works, or otherwise grace is no longer grace. And if it is by works, it is not by grace, or otherwise works are not works (Rom. 11:6). (Bavinck 1956:272.)

Hoeksema's covenant view is not entirely coincident with Bavinck's, however. Elsewhere, writing in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Bavinck conceives of the covenant of grace as harboring both the elect and also those who are not to be considered sincere believers. He calls these insincere believers 'evil tendrils on the vine,' 'chaff among the grain,' and 'earthen vessels' in the covenant, which he further distinguishes from the elect or 'golden vessels' (Bavinck 1929:213). But, he says, 'they are to be treated as allies,' and that 'while they are here on earth, they are bound up with the elect in all sorts of ways' (Bavinck 1929:213). Hoeksema never denied that the chaff and the wheat grow together within the confines of the church institute, this idea is thoroughly Reformed. Hoeksema did, however, deny them a place in the covenant. For him, as with the children of believers which we discussed earlier, those whom Bavinck classifies as 'not sincere believers' (Bavinck 1929:213) would be consigned to the sphere of the covenant or the jurisdiction of the covenant, i.e. the local church, and not to the covenant itself. Hence, in the local church they could be said to be in the sphere of influence of the covenant, nothing more.

Grace also seems to have had a different meaning for Heyns than for Bavinck. From the above quote, Bavinck can be said to view grace as God's favor, objectively

considered. For Heyns, covenant grace is subjective, with the express purpose of rendering its object without excuse. As Faber writes: ‘It is not a grace which as such renders the covenant member capable of faith and repentance. It is a grace which takes from him or her all excuse for not bringing forth the desired fruit of the covenant’ (Faber 1997:309). Additionally, while Heyns may say that the covenant is bestowed unconditionally, its maintenance is most certainly conditional. In fact, maintaining the covenant seems to be solely the work of humanity, with God’s grace simply a vehicle for rendering any who fail inexcusable.

Hoeksema wanted nothing to do with the concept of God’s covenant that was espoused by Professor Heyns. Rather, following what he liked of Bavinck, Hoeksema chose to identify the covenant closely with election. That is to say, for Hoeksema, the number of the elect is the exact number of persons included in the covenant. Thus, the covenant is for the elect alone, i.e. those whom God has chosen to save and make partakers of the covenant in Christ. Moreover, the covenant is both established and maintained by God alone, without any help from fallen humanity (Hoeksema 1966:323-325). Since God establishes and maintains His covenant, there is no room for ‘conditions,’ or as in the case of Professor Heyns ‘obligations,’ within the covenant; either for the express purpose of gaining entrance into the covenant or, ultimately, for maintaining one’s position within it. Another prominent member of the Calvin faculty, F. M. ten Hoor, also saw the covenant as ‘the bond between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner. It is a bond, [a] communion of life,’ Ten Hoor insisted, ‘and not a mere offer’ and, as such, ‘the covenant is a deed of God only, and is in its origin monopleuristic’ (Ten Hoor [s.a.]:121-122). Following the lead of Bavinck and Ten Hoor,

Hoeksema began to see the covenant as more of a relationship (Hoeksema 1966:321-324), rather than simply a promise, as was taught by Professor Heyns. As Hoeksema himself puts the matter:

The essence of the covenant ... is not to be sought in a promise, and that, too a promise in the sense of a certain general offer to the children of believers, as Prof. Heyns would have it. ...But the essence of the covenant is to be sought in this living relationship of friendship whereby God the Lord is the sovereign friend of His people, and they are the Lord's friend-servants, partaking of His fellowship, by grace possessing and manifesting His life and fighting the battle of His cause in the midst of the world. (Hoeksema 1971:65.)

Professor Heyns did have his influence, however, as Hoeksema would later write:

Prof. Heyns's [covenant-PB] presentation has for years been imbibed by many who now serve as ministers in the Christian Reformed denomination. If we keep this in mind, it is no longer surprising that the general offer of grace on God's part in the preaching of the gospel to all who hear that gospel not only could find reception but also could be so readily officially adopted by the Synod of 1924 as the only pure Reformed presentation. (Hoeksema 1971:20.)

In addition to its being in some ways circumscribed by election, Bavinck, and Hoeksema after him, believed the essence of the covenant to be 'organic' in nature. In fact, an important characteristic that allied Hoeksema's covenant view with that of both Bavinck and Ten Hoor was, according to Reverend Woudenberg, its quality of 'organic development' (Woudenberg 2001). All of which tends to underscore the fact that, for this particular branch of Secession theology, as represented by Bavinck and Ten Hoor, and eventually Hoeksema as well, 'relationship' was considered a defining characteristic in the nature of the covenant. On this theme, Bavinck wrote:

The second peculiarity or remarkable characteristic of the covenant of grace is that in all of its dispensations it has an organic character. ...The elect, accordingly, do not stand loosely alongside each other, but are one in Christ. ...It is one communion or fellowship, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ...Thus election cannot have been an arbitrary or accidental deed. If it was governed by the purpose of constituting Christ as Head of the church His

body, then it has an organic character and already includes the idea of the covenant. (Bavinck 1956:276.)

Similarly, Ten Hoor contended that ‘in the covenant of grace the relationship, the organic comes to the foreground.... The covenant in its progress does not jump from individual to individual, but proceeds organically and historically, joins itself to the genealogical line, and takes up into itself parents with their children and all that is theirs’ (Ten Hoor [s.a.]:134).

Unlike Heyns who wanted to make the covenant something that God established with each and every believer, writes Reverend Woudenberg, Hoeksema, again following Ten Hoor, saw the covenant relationship as something that broadens out into the line of human generations, i.e., organically (Woudenberg 2000:99). It is not surprising that Herman Bavinck also subscribed to this view (Van Genderen 1995:58). Reverend Woudenberg concludes:

This perhaps more basically than anything separates his [Hoeksema’s-PB] views from that of Schilder, who, like Abraham Kuyper before him “had a preference for judicial categories and for terms like statute, obligation and legal status, defined by the *speaking God*, the God of the *Word*, both for those who will respond positively, and for those whose response will be negative.” Meanwhile, however, the Rev’s H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema had followed Bavinck’s suggestion and focused on the organic relationship of friendship as the heart of their covenantal thought. To them the idea of the covenant as a living relationship was far more Biblical and far richer in thought than that of a legal right to something that might not even be realized in the end. (Woudenberg 2000:99.)

While much of what Ten Hoor wrote regarding the covenant of grace mirrors that of his well-known contemporary and life-long friend, Herman Bavinck, there is equally much that does not. Ten Hoor begins his discussion of the covenant by first laying down its parameters. Ironically, even after stating unequivocally that ‘the leading thought is that only the elect are in the covenant, [and that] those who are not elect, are not in the

covenant, [and that] for them there is no promise, and even when they are baptized, their baptism is not real' (Ten Hoor [s.a.]:149), two pages later he vacillates almost to the point of agreeing with his colleague at the seminary, William Heyns. To add to the confusion, elsewhere Ten Hoor writes that: 'No matter how unbelieving a member of the covenant may be' and then concludes with a paragraph that is as unintelligible as it is long (Ten Hoor [s.a.]:153-154). Yet, there seems to be no mistake when later he writes:

Also those who have no saving faith stand in a spiritually organic relation to Christ ... and they enjoy spiritual gifts of grace.... They are not standing as detached individuals in the covenant, not with respect to God, nor with respect to the true believers. They do not form a separate circle either, but they are within the organism of the covenant as it exists as God's institution of salvation. They are even responsible for the promise of the covenant to its full extent. (Ten Hoor [s.a.]:155.)

Both students and professors alike were struggling with these weighty matters all during Hoeksema's time in seminary. Hoeksema lived through it. Still, he was going to bring about a solution one day, in *The Banner*.

2.5 The Origin of Professor Heyns's View of the Covenant

Where did Professor Heyns's view of the covenant, which Hoeksema later referred to as 'Arminianism injected into the covenant' (Hoeksema 1971:20), and which differed so much from that of his Secession colleague Herman Bavinck, come from? Klaas Schilder, whose theological roots go deep into the Secession of 1834, said that his church had not 'adopted any official conception of the covenant' (Schilder 1996:104). This statement by Schilder would seem to indicate that there was more than one view on the covenant in vogue in the Secessionist Churches at the time.

Herman Hanko and Herman Hoeksema's son, Homer, attempted to trace the provenance of these divergent covenant views in their *History of Dogma* (1982). In the course of evaluating the various views of the covenant held among the Secession Churches in the Netherlands, they write that 'it is not at all surprising that with these views of the covenant there were also those among the churches of the Secession who maintained a general offer of the gospel. Already very early in the history of the churches of the Secession the leaders were split over this question of the general offer. These doctrinal emphases continued' (Hoeksema & Hanko 1982:93).

Hendrik de Cock is acknowledged by all as the father of the Secession Churches, and Herman Hanko sees in De Cock's view of the covenant the beginnings of the well-meant gospel offer, or conditions within the covenant. 'DeCock,' argues Hanko, 'maintained that those born within the church and baptized by the church were a part of the church visible and were only externally part of the covenant community. They could be said to be outwardly in the covenant, but they were not actually in the covenant until they came to the assurance of faith' (Hanko 2000:12). The change, according to Hanko, began in earnest with Hendrik De Cock's son, Helenius. While professor of theology at the *Afscheiding* seminary at Kampen, Helenius de Cock would, over time, change his views markedly. And Professor Heyns did study in Kampen. On this change Hanko writes:

While first Helenius agreed with his father, he gradually changed his position and adopted a radically different view of the covenant. While he did not abandon his views on election, he pushed election aside and said that the truth of predestination was irrelevant to the administration of the covenant in time. And pushing election aside in the administration of the covenant, Helenius DeCock took the position that the promise of baptism was a promise to all the children baptized, so that all are in the covenant, though outwardly, and are participants of the covenant. Their unbelief cannot invalidate God's covenant, although it

deprives them of the blessing of the covenant. Thus, all the promises of the covenant (as outlined in the first part of the Baptism Form) are given to all the children, though only objectively. And the baptized children are “sanctified in Christ” only objectively, that is, they are only separated from other unbaptized children by the mark of baptism. Because Helenius DeCock took the position which he did on the question of baptism, it was not strange that he also adopted the view of the well-meant offer of the gospel, which teaches that the gospel is offered to all who hear it as an expression of God’s intention or desire to save all. ...If the promise made in baptism is to all the children baptized, that promise, because it is of God, expresses God’s desire to save all these children. Even though many go lost. So also the gospel offer expresses to all who hear the preaching God’s earnest desire to save them, even though they may go lost. (Hanko 2000:13-14.)

Thus, Hanko sees the free offer of the gospel developing logically and naturally from a certain Secessionist view of the covenant. And, primarily via immigration, this tenet of common grace became a staple in the Christian Reformed Church. Hanko illustrates the prolonged saturation of the Christian Reformed Church with these ideas by pointing to a series of sermons published around 1900 from Dr. C. Bouma entitled, *Genade Geneest*. In this series Bouma states categorically that ‘Christ does not want any one to go lost’ (quoted by Hanko 1989:174). Elsewhere, Hanko quotes Rev. J. Keizer, from around 1910, who concluded a sermon with the words: ‘Many walk no longer with us; they have turned their backs to God’s covenant and words, even their heel, their neck, “the cold shoulder.” Their end is the ways of death; as children of the kingdom they will perish. Return still, ye who are so averse; the Lord will still accept you; he still waits to be gracious to you’ (quoted by Hanko 1989:174).

More recently, however, with the impending publication of the first English translation of Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof’s 1923 monograph *Van Zonde En Genade* (Of Sin and Grace), Herman Hanko, by way of introduction to the views of the fathers of the Secession, writes:

In proving the fact that the Reformed churches since the time of the sixteenth century Reformation held firmly to sovereign and particular grace, the authors [Hoeksema and Danhof] give a ringing endorsement of the Secession of 1834. This is heart-warming, because even in Reformed circles the Secession is openly criticized. This endorsement is found, to cite but one example, in the following quote [from *Van Zonde En Genade*] in which the Secession is referred to. ...They refer to the strong emphasis on sovereign and particular grace found among most of the leaders of the Secession (Hanko 2002:104-105.)

This more recent offering from Herman Hanko seems to put a decidedly different twist on his earlier opinions of the Secession of 1834 and the views of its leaders.

While much of what Herman Hanko has to say regarding the origin of the differing covenant views in the Secessionist Churches in the Netherlands is interesting, especially for pinpointing the origin of professor Heyns's view of the covenant, Anthony Hoekema's 1953 doctoral thesis for Princeton Theological Seminary provides, at least to my mind, a more convincing scenario. Although, at the same time, it is altogether possible that different lines of influence are in evidence here. Nothing ever seems to come from one identifiable source, and this is undoubtedly the case with Professor Heyns's view of the covenant. Hoekema, however, contends that the fathers of the Secession, Hendrick de Cock, H. P. Scholte, A. Brummelkamp, and S. van Velzen, were all faithful to the Three Forms of Unity in their view of the covenant and baptism. Their successors, however, did not maintain the prevailing view, and 'a view of the covenant and baptism quite different ...uttered itself in a publication by K. J. Pieters and J. R. Kreulen published in 1861 under the title, *De Kinderdoop volgens de Beginselen der Gereformeerde Kerk* (Infant Baptism in the Light of the Principles of the Reformed Church)' (Hoekema 1953:50). 'These authors,' Hoekema maintains,

in setting forth their doctrine of the covenant, do not take their point of departure in God's decrees. They do not wish to identify election with the covenant of grace. They say that, when we consider baptism, we must let eternal election rest,

and leave it aside. These men stress the two-sidedness of the covenant, and make much of the demands of the covenant, and of the conditional form in which God's promises appear. The covenant promise, that God will take us to be His children and heirs, must not be interpreted as being equivalent to salvation, but must be understood in a covenantal way (*verbondsgewijze*): that is, objectively. The conclusion is inescapable ...that the covenant promise is here simply thought of as an offer of salvation.... Baptism, so say Pieters and Kreulen, is not a seal of internal grace, but only a sign and seal of the promise of the covenant. (Hoekema 1953:51-52.)

There was much opposition to these views (Hoekema 1953:53), and they appear to have generated a good deal of confusion as well. The result was that the Synods of Franeker (1863) and Amsterdam (1866) 'issued compromise formulations which, while they did not condemn Pieters and Kreulen, refused to hail their conceptions as the most exact expression of the convictions of the Reformed' (Hoekema 1953:53).

The origin of Professor Heyns's views on the covenant and baptism can be clearly discerned in the earlier writings of Pieters and Kreulen. It is difficult, however, to make the connection definite. In his manual of theology, *Gereformeerde geloofsleer* (1916), Heyns quotes primarily from Scripture with little other citations. In his *Handboek voor de catechetiek* (1907: 144-145), Heyns deals at length with subjective grace versus objective grace, but nowhere does he mention Pieters or Kreulen by name or cite any of their works. Neither in his earliest work specifically on the covenant, *Verhandelingen over het Genade-Verbond* (Essays Concerning the Covenant of Grace), does Heyns specifically refer to Pieters and Kreulen, but it is interesting that he classifies the differences in theological viewpoint within the Reformed camp on the covenant as differences between supra- and infralapsarianism (Heyns 1914:32). Commenting further, Heyns characterizes the difference between '*supra en infra*' as the difference between two poles (*twee polen*) following the principle of God's sovereignty (*Souvereiniteit Gods*) and man's

responsibility (*de verantwoordelijkheid des menschen*) (Heyns 1914:32). Again, those on the faculty of the Seminary, as well as the student body, were struggling with weighty and seemingly insoluble matters; matters for which Hoeksema would one day propose a decidedly different solution, in the pages of *The Banner*.

Professor Jelle Faber of the Canadian Reformed Church, in his work on the ‘American Secessionist Theologians,’ points out a possible connection between Heyns and Pieters and Kreulen when he mentions that several of the Secession theologians who eventually taught at Calvin Seminary sat at the feet of Reverends Pieters and Kreulen as part of their theological training (Faber 1996:26-29). Ultimately, however the transfer of ideas took place, the influence of Pieters and Kreulen on Heyns’s view of the covenant and baptism is unmistakable.

2.6 *A Chance Encounter*

A chance encounter on a train, as recorded by Gertrude Hoeksema, illustrates Hoeksema’s lasting impression of Professor Heyns.

One day during his pastorate in Holland, he [Hoeksema] met his former professor, William Heyns, in the inter-urban. Prof. Heyn’s (sic) book, *Gereformeerde Geloofsleer (Reformed Faith or Reformed Doctrine)* had just come out and the professor asked his former student what he thought of it. In his student days, Herman Hoeksema would not have expressed his opinions candidly, for this professor was vindictive against those who did not agree with him. But now he was free to discuss the contents and viewpoint of his former professor’s book, which he had already read. The discussion centered on Heyn’s (sic) belief in the conditional promise, the promise of salvation for all those in the sphere of the covenant, on the condition that they believe. Hoeksema stared out of the window of the inter-urban for a few moments and then told Prof. Heyns, “With your thought, professor, you do not save one reprobate, and you do not build up the elect. Under my preaching the elect are instructed and built up and the reprobate are not deceived that they have an imaginary heaven.” These were the words

which Rev. Hoeksema had been longing to voice, and Prof. Heyns was angry as they parted. (Hoeksema 1969:109-110.)

Long after leaving his professor's tutelage, the debate over a conditional covenant versus an unconditional covenant remained a subject of intense interest for Hoeksema. From a positive perspective, because it spurred him on to develop his own conception of the covenant beginning in 1918 in his rubric 'Our Doctrine' in *The Banner*. Negatively, because any view of the covenant that contained even a hint of conditionality made its author immediately suspect in Hoeksema's mind and worthy to be branded a 'Heynsian.' Years later Hoeksema would equate the covenant views of the famous Dutch theologian Klaas Schilder with those of his former professor. As Jelle Faber relates, within the Protestant Reformed Churches of the 1950s 'Schilderianism was being equated with Heynsianism and Heynsianism with Arminianism' (Faber 1996:47).

On a more personal level, Gertrude Hoeksema tells of Hoeksema's shock at hearing of Klaas Schilder's deposition by the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht in 1944. Later, Hoeksema's 'astonishment knew no bounds when he read in the first church papers after the war that Dr. Schilder and his followers adopted the Heynsian view of the covenant, the view that Hoeksema could not accept when he met it in his student days, the view that he had battled ever since' (Hoeksema 1969:275-276). Less than a decade later, Gertrude Hoeksema reminisces, Hoeksema would see these same views beginning to crop-up in his own Protestant Reformed Churches (Hoeksema 1969:313).

2.7 Foppe Martin ten Hoor

The man who eventually became Hoeksema's mentor at Calvin Seminary, F. M. ten Hoor, received his diploma from Kampen in 1880, the same day as his more famous friend and contemporary Herman Bavinck, but he did not arrive in the United States until 1896. Ten Hoor was later called, in 1900, to serve as Professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School, a position that he discharged faithfully until his emeritation in 1924 (Faber 1996:23-25).

Writing in direct response to Jelle Faber's essay on the 'American Secession Theologians' and their influence, Bernard Woudenberg scrutinizes the influence of both Heyns and Ten Hoor on Hoeksema. He argues that:

Faber deals with the last two of these men, William Heyns and Foppe M. Ten Hoor, as though they were of one theological cut, while I recall distinctly how Herman Hoeksema, who studied under both of them, took strong exception to the teachings of Heyns, while he was quite fond of Ten Hoor and in a certain way looked upon him as his own theological mentor. (Woudenberg 2000:97.)

Elsewhere, while trying to situate Ten Hoor within the larger Reformed continuum, Woudenberg compares and contrasts him to his more illustrious contemporary and friend, Herman Bavinck. Woudenberg writes:

Foppe Ten Hoor and Herman Bavinck...shared basically the same theological positions, but with a difference. Bavinck...in time became a close friend of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, working with him to bring together the *Afscheiding* (Secessionists) and the *Doleantie* (Aggrieved) into the new Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) denomination. Their theological backgrounds and outlooks were different, but Bavinck was convinced that they could work together for the good of the Reformed faith, and to the glory of God. This conviction, however, was not shared by Ten Hoor. Already in the Netherlands, and even more after he moved to the United States to teach and write as a professor at Calvin Seminary, he was deeply disturbed by what Kuyper was bringing into the churches. It was not so much what Kuyper taught as the way in which he approached it. Rather than extracting his views from the confessions and Scripture, Kuyper—by every measure an academician—sought to take the learning of worldly scholars, including their speculative philosophies, and using it to develop the Reformed

faith. This Ten Hoor rejected—as in principle did also Bavinck—and constantly spoke out against it, warning that this could only end in molding the church after the image of the sinful world.... It was under this influence that Herman Hoeksema received his theological education, and Ten Hoor's warning he believed to be true. It was only that, with his clear and analytic mind, he came to focus on what he considered to be the underlying fault in it all, Kuyper's theory of Common Grace by which he was excusing this bringing the thinking of the world into the church of God. (Woudenberg 2000:101.)

Reverend Woudenberg also recounts the story, often told by Hoeksema, of Ten Hoor's view of common grace as given on the floor of synod during the height of the controversy in 1924. 'Ten Hoor remarked, "I have studied Common Grace for forty years and, although I believe there is such a thing, I still do not know what it could be." Just what he meant with this it is hard to say, but it would seem to imply that he had a great deal more sympathy for Hoeksema's position than he dared say at the time' (Woudenberg 2000:101).

Ten Hoor was especially well-known for his strong opposition to what he saw as Abraham Kuyper's 'agenda,' something that he fought vociferously on both sides of the Atlantic. According to Cornelius Pronk of the Free Reformed Church:

Long before union took place (1892), questions had been raised in connection with some of the teachings of Dr. Kuyper. His views on science, theological education, common grace, culture, the church, the covenant and baptism, the order of salvation as well as many other subjects, left many of the Seceders wondering whether this great man was truly Reformed in every respect. But Kuyper was very popular and few dared to openly oppose him for fear of being ridiculed by him or by his supporters. Yet there were some who had the courage of their convictions to speak out against what they believed to be serious departures from the old Reformed truth. (Pronk 1987:3.)

Ten Hoor was one who had convictions as well as courage, and speak out he did. He began by scrutinizing what he saw as Kuyper's 'philosophical' presuppositions.

Ten Hoor began his investigation by looking into the historical origin of the ideas that motivated the Doleantie. After carefully weighing his options, Ten Hoor concluded:

these new ideas are the result of modern philosophy rather than the old Reformed theology. The leaders of the Doleantie ...have been influenced by the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, which has given birth to a whole new concept of science. According to Kant, science is concerned only with objects that can be known and scrutinized by reason. This implies that theology is not a true science, since its object, God, being outside of the cosmos, cannot be subjected to scientific investigation. (Pronk 1987:74-75.)

Ten Hoor firmly believed that this new understanding of science would eventually undermine theology. If theology could not find its object within the created order and study it by means of observation and experimentation, how could it claim to be a science? Kuyper's solution, as demonstrated in his monumental *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, was to show that 'God, in addition to being truly beyond the cosmos as the object of faith, is also in some way part of the cosmos' (Pronk 1987:75). For Ten Hoor, this view had serious implications for the training of ministers, as well as other concerns. If theology is just one branch of the larger tree of the 'sciences,' should not all the sciences be taught together in 'Christian university' so their interrelationships can be studied together (Pronk 1987:76)? Kuyper certainly believed this to be the case and it became one of his primary motivations in the founding of the Free University in 1880. It was also on this basis that Ten Hoor objected strenuously, although to no avail, to the appointment of Ralph Janssen as professor in the Theological School in 1904 (Stob 1955:276-277). Janssen was considered a 'university man;' one who 'subscribed to the Kuyperian idea of the sovereignty and freedom of theological science,' which according to Ten Hoor, 'constituted a wide-open door for the intrusion of a non-confessional teaching into the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church' (Stob 1955:283).

In contrast to Kuyper, Ten Hoor further distinguished between the 'concept' and the 'idea' of theology. While the concept of theological sciences may be taken from this

world, the idea of theology, which he equated with revelation, is derived from God alone. ‘Kuyper constructs his system not out of the divine idea,’ Pronk insists, ‘but out of the human concept of theology, not out of God, but out of man, not out of the object, but out of the subject’ (Pronk 1987:77). Theology is not just one of the many branches of science. Ten Hoor believed:

We put all the emphasis on the concept theology, not on the formal, human thought processes. We do not by our reflection make theology a science. Theology is science in God, and is revealed as science by God. We do not proceed from the subject, but from the object. We do not just derive the idea but also the concept of theology as science from God and not from man. We must indeed systematize our knowledge of God, but we do not create this knowledge. It is there. It is given. It lies in the revelation of God. (quoted by Pronk 1987:77.)

Kuyper, however, chose to maintain his distinction between ‘theology as a science and the knowledge of God as the church possesses it’ (Pronk 1987:80), simply ignoring Ten Hoor’s criticisms in the process. In his 1883 address in Kampen, Bavinck seems to agree more with Ten Hoor than with Kuyper. Paraphrased, Bavinck says:

Is everything that is invisible for that reason unknowable? No! Faith proves the scientific character of theology, for faith investigates things spiritual. Faith perceives the Object of theology. One cannot blame theology for the fact that unbelievers are not able to perceive what is clearly seen by believers and for that reason dispute its right to the name science. Because of its non-cosmic object, theology is Regina Scientiarum and transcends all other sciences. Theology is, however, related to the other sciences since all their objects have their origin in God. As universal science theology resembles philosophy, because both disciplines cover the entire spectrum of life. But the big difference is that philosophy is anthropocentric while theology is theocentric. (Bavinck1883:32-35.)

In the same address (Bavinck 1883:24), Bavinck argues convincingly that the attempt of modern universities to assign theology a place among other sciences implies that God will no longer be viewed as the object of theology but as religion, as a historical phenomenon. He writes: ‘When Christendom is put on the level with other religions,

theology becomes anthropology and loses its unique principle and object' (Bavinck 1883:25). This is exactly what Ten Hoor also feared was going to happen under Kuyper's idea of theology as one of the many cosmological sciences (Pronk 2005). Ten Hoor, as Bavinck, also regarded theology as the Regina Scientiarum.

As a true son of the Succession, Bavinck firmly believed, along with Ten Hoor, that God in Himself is the true object of theology, not just the Word of God as Kuyper preferred to have it. Bavinck concluded that 'God is the only object [of theology] and everything else is to be related to Him and arranged and subsumed under Him' (Bavinck 1883:30). In fact, according to Reverend Pronk, they each saw Kuyper as teaching that God is not accessible except through His word (Pronk 2005).

I am convinced that it is in these early quotes from Bavinck, as mediated through Ten Hoor, that we also begin to see the origins of Hoeksema's own thought on this particular subject. It was in a direct line from the positions of both Bavinck and Ten Hoor that Hoeksema would later launch his attack on Professor Janssen, which was to have such unforeseen consequences. Additionally, Hoeksema clearly shows Bavinck and Ten Hoor to be the origin of his own thoughts on theology, when, at the beginning of his *Reformed Dogmatics*, he carefully distinguishes between theology as the knowledge of God and theology as just one of many branches of science. He writes: '1) That the science designated is intended to be theology, knowledge of God, (and) 2) That the purpose was to set forth the loci, the principia ...of this knowledge of God' (Hoeksema 1966:3).

In addition to the above, Ten Hoor also took issue with Kuyper over what could be termed his 'cultural mandate,' which, according to Ten Hoor, exhibited a divided

concern on the part of God. John Bolt of Calvin Seminary sums up Kuyper's idea of the 'cultural mandate' as such:

Because Kuyper did not wish to see Christian socio-cultural activity, including political activity, under the protective arm of the church, and because he also valued the cultural activity of non-Christians, he insisted that cultural activity is a fruit of "common grace," a given of creation, rather than a product of special regenerating grace. (Bolt 1984:142.)

This perception of God having parallel concerns arises from Kuyper's idea of the 'dual role of mediator,' which he sees as inherent in the work of Christ. For Kuyper, 'Christ is not only the Mediator of redemption, but also, and that first of all, Mediator of creation' (Pronk 1987:125). Especially in his work on common grace, Kuyper puts a stronger emphasis on cultural activity than his Reformed predecessors, even 'assigning to each of Christ's mediatorial functions its own distinct terrain, namely common and particular grace' (Pronk 1987:128). Moreover, according to Pronk, what upset Ten Hoor so much was

Kuyper's statement to the effect that the soteriological element in divine revelation must be regarded as accidental, bearing an intervenient character and remaining dependent on the fundamental conception of revelation given in the creation itself. For Ten Hoor divine revelation is both theological and soteriological at the same time. It is theological with respect to God and soteriological with respect to man. All theology, therefore, is soteriological, because knowledge of God is eternal life. He saw in Kuyper's system a real danger, namely that preoccupation with natural revelation and culture would eventually result in a serious decline in vital, spiritual religion. (Pronk 1987:128.)

Kuyper used his concept of common grace to assist his theory of the dual role of Christ as mediator. This in order to show that Christ's redemptive work had benefits for the elect as well as the creation at large; particular, saving grace for the redemption of the elect, common grace in the bestowal of temporal blessings on the creation as a whole. By means of this common grace God's curse on humanity from the fall is mitigated and,

thus, human culture is possible. Common grace is therefore a necessity because ‘God has decreed not only that His elect will be saved, but also that the entire creation be redeemed. When God saves us, it is not as individuals that we are saved, in isolation from the rest of the cosmos. The Christian has a task in this world. He is to carry out his cultural mandate and fully develop the creation’s potential’ (Pronk 1987:132). According to Pronk, Ten Hoor would have none of Kuyper’s formulation. Rather, he would agree with J. Douma that ‘all grace is directed at salvation and the knowledge of God’ (quoted by Pronk 1987:138). It seems that in spite of Kuyper’s reputation as a potent supralapsarian, and perhaps his personal claim as well, the view, as stated above reflects more an infralapsarian way of thinking, namely, that election is not the first decree, but rather one of two decrees. Infralapsarianism, in distinction from supralapsarianism, would see the creation exclusively as the first decree of God. That is to say, that when expounding his concept of the ‘cultural mandate’ or developing his views on common grace and the creation, Kuyper very readily made use of infralapsarian constructs to explain and even bolster his position; he simply used whatever theory was suitable to the discussion at hand.

Infralapsarianism, however, was the view most widely held by Hoeksema’s teachers, but this is one area where Hoeksema did not follow his mentor F. M. ten Hoor. Most of the ‘American Secession Theologians’ were infralapsarian in their view on the order of God’s decrees (Faber1996:15-54). Faber also believes that ‘Herman Hoeksema as a supralapsarian theologian was influenced by Abraham Kuyper and his follower Geerhardus Vos,’ and that, ‘although he [Hoeksema] rejected Kuyper’s ideas of common grace, of baptismal grace, and of presupposed regeneration, he accepted his organism

idea, his concept of the antithesis, and his definition of the essence of the covenant' (Faber 1996:43).

2.8 The Lines of Influence

Earlier, I sought to demonstrate that there are lines of influence in Hoeksema's theology from Kuyper as well as a select group of Secession theologians. I have also shown, by references to Herman Bavinck and F. M. ten Hoor, the origin of Hoeksema's concept of 'organic.' It is true that Hoeksema's understanding of the essence of the covenant primarily as a 'relationship' has much in it attributable to both Bavinck and Ten Hoor, while his idea of the antithesis is rather a common theme among many of the Reformed fathers. It must also be acknowledged that Hoeksema found Kuyper's supralapsarian position attractive (Hoeksema 1969:96 also p. 105). But even here Hoeksema did not adopt Kuyper in a slavish manner and he would later propose an alternative. Hoeksema himself once voiced the criticism that a very wooden conception of the decrees of God from a supralapsarian perspective was in danger of injecting a 'temporal order in the decrees of God' (Hoeksema 1966:164). In other words, Hoeksema wished to be careful and not inject any element of temporality into that which is eternal. Hoeksema considered both infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism simply as paradigms for understanding, as both of these paradigms use a temporal construct for the decrees of God to aid in that understanding. It is true that Herman Hoeksema preferred the trappings of a supralapsarian paradigm, with its distinctive chronological temporal construct, to distinguish the priority of the eternal decrees of God. Yet, he was only too aware that the

act of distinguishing this priority in itself superimposed a temporal chronology on that which is eternal. Hence, he viewed infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism as aids to our human understanding, nothing more, and if these temporal constructs were pressed too far, their usefulness was negated. In this Hoeksema was following an old Reformed tradition, as laid out by Herman Bavinck:

with Calvin the supralapsarian and infralapsarian representation alternates. This is also true of most of the later theologians who embraced supralapsarianism. They regard the supralapsarian view to be admissible but they do not think of condemning infralapsarianism or of demanding that their view be embodied in the official confession of the church as the only standard of truth. They do not ask that their own be *substituted* for the infralapsarian representation but they plead for *actual recognition* of both views. (Bavinck 1977:363.)

All through seminary it would appear that, even while surrounded with views from every side: Heyns (conditional Arminianism), Janssen (the Neo-Calvinist) and Ten Hoor (the adamant anti-Kuyperian), Hoeksema was seeking to balance them off and come to his own conclusions. Furthermore, he firmly believed that historical Reformed theology could be demonstrated as having arisen directly from the Scriptures by way of the Reformed confessions.

2.9 *The Student and His Predilections*

From Herman Hoeksema's student days there are only two known, extant writings. The first is a senior college paper, written at the close of his senior year in the preparatory division of Calvin, prior to his entrance to the seminary division, entitled *Rousseau and Education*, and dated 1912. By modern standards, it is a rather poor specimen. The paper is poorly constructed; it is handwritten and contains no footnotes.

Yet, in another sense, it is a tour-de-force. *Rousseau and Education* is based almost exclusively on Hoeksema's reading, in the original French, of Rousseau's *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* (1762). Throughout his analysis of Rousseau and his educational concepts, Hoeksema searches desperately for something positive to say. And, although he struggles continuously with the positive, he ends up saying something negative every time. As he says in the introduction concerning his reading of *Émile*:

If we should begin by reading the *Emile*, the book in which Rousseau expounds his educational theories we would perhaps like Kant forget to take our usual afternoon's stroll and read it at one sitting, we would very likely be strangely impressed by it and exclaim after we had finished it: all of this is passionate, much of it is wonderful, a good deal of it is bad and some of it is good! But we would not grasp it in its full significance. (Hoeksema 1912:1.)

And, adds a youthful Hoeksema:

Although we must not be blind for the good characteristics of Rousseau's educational system and admit that in some respect his influence upon the world of his and of our own day has been salutary, yet when we consider his system in broad outlines and estimate its principles, its aim, its method and its character from a biblical point of view, we cannot but condemn it in its entirety. (Hoeksema 1912:3.)

At this point the struggle to find anything positive in Rousseau ends abruptly. Summing up, Hoeksema writes that, 'in its aim Rousseau's system of education is positively immoral' (Hoeksema 1912:5). Although this summary judgment occurs before the halfway point in his paper, what follows tells us as much, if not more, about Hoeksema as it does about Rousseau. Hoeksema brands Rousseau a 'fantastic theorizer' (Hoeksema 1912:6); one who, 'because he never saw the practical consequences of his theories in real education, ...came to tell us the most wonderfully impracticable and strangely impossible things' (Hoeksema 1912: 6). This sweeping assessment is based largely upon Hoeksema's incessant dislike for Rousseau's aristocratic bent. But, it is at this juncture

that Hoeksema pulls back the curtain a bit and reveals some of his own sentiments, sentiments which, as we shall see, go beyond just educational theory. Concerning the character of Rousseau's system, he writes:

In its character Rousseau's educational system is to be condemned because it is exclusive, aristocratic. Like Montaigne and Locke, Rousseau wrote for the higher class of people only. His pupil, Emil, is rich and his education is based upon the supposition that his wealth is sufficiently large to provide for him during his entire life. For the education of the masses and for the education of women Rousseau had no use. With all his pretended sympathy with the common people Rousseau did not understand that education fulfills but a small fraction of its task as long as the masses are neglected. (Hoeksema 1912:7-8.)

Hoeksema's criticisms here seem to be motivated more by his dislike of all things 'aristocratic;' a dislike no doubt nurtured by the breadlines of his childhood in Groningen. He always distrusted the aristocracy, or upper class, and Rousseau's playing up to the upper class and the intelligentsia of his day was simply a sham. Moreover, while Hoeksema believed that Rousseau did not know what he was talking about, because he pitched his ideas to high society, more specifically the intelligentsia, he still became very influential, more so than his ideas alone would warrant. By contrast, Hoeksema saw pandering to any group as all politics, anti-Scriptural and, hence, dead wrong. He believed the upper class, or political class was, plainly and simply, not worth it.

The only other early extant writing from Hoeksema's student years, again prior to his entrance into the seminary division, was a play entitled *Dominee Kouwenaar of Zedelijk Dualisme* (Reverend Kouwenaar or Ethical Dualism), which, according to its author, 'the drama has in view to present the idea of sin, hidden to the eyes of men behind a mask of sham holiness and never confessed before God, brings forth sin, and finally death' (quoted by Hoeksema 1969:53). A melodramatic work worthy of Thomas Hardy, it was purchased by Eerdmans Publishing Company for publication in 1910, but it was

not until 1919 that it was finally available for purchase. By 1919, however, Herman Hoeksema was in his first pastorate, and this youthful work became the occasion of no little embarrassment (Hoeksema 1969:54). The major theme of the play, though, remained an underlying theme for Hoeksema throughout his life. His sermons constantly warned against a reliance on works, and emphasized that it is the spiritual nature of the heart that is of concern before God. All else is simply not genuine. In this regard, many of the concepts he emphasized in his paper on Rousseau are developed further in his play. As Hoeksema himself said in an early sermon on Lord's Day 2 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

If we look at the outward precepts, we find a good many little deeds in ourselves. But, if we look at that law as the sphere, as the boundary of the love of God, and that His consuming wrath follows all that is not in harmony with the boundary of that love of God, do we find any good within us then? To be within the bounds of the love of God means that we never do anything, never will anything, never desire anything that is not within the bounds of that love of God, so that we love God with all our will, with our heart, with our mind, with our all. I say, if we look at the law of God in that light, and that His consuming wrath follows all that is outside of it, then let us speak again. (Hoeksema 1930.)

These sentiments may also account for Hoeksema's opposition to Common Grace, and his insistence that God cannot be pleased with those who do not love him regardless of how admirable their works might seem to others.

Sometime later, though, Hoeksema's own over-confidence seems to have gotten the best of him. Becoming a bit too sure of himself, he was censured by the faculty at the seminary for his 'extreme statements.' As former Calvin College professor Harry Boonstra writes:

In the period which the author knows best, such men as Herman Hoeksema and Henry Van Wesep delved into religion and philosophy to the extent of causing real faculty concern over their beliefs. This concern finally led to discipline and

...in the case of Hoeksema to apology and retraction of his extreme statements. (Boonstra 2000:40.)

Although it is not mentioned what these ‘extreme statements’ were, Hoeksema’s sister, Everdina, sternly rebuked both the statements, and the attitude that produced them. Hoeksema’s son Herman Jr. relates that in his days in seminary Hoeksema was called a ‘rebel,’ probably for becoming a ‘highbrow’ in both his attitude and behavior, something that would, nevertheless, have been detestable for the everyday *afscheiding* family. As a result, according to surviving family members, his sister Everdina ‘read him the riot act’ (Hoeksema 2001, Kuiper 2001) sometime before his formal entrance into the ministry. It appears that this experience had a profound effect on the young Hoeksema. He went from a ‘highbrow,’ of sorts, to a more serious and spiritually minded student. This encounter with his sister also goes a long way towards explaining Hoeksema’s distrust, even dislike, of the upper, or political, class within the church, as is evidenced both in his play and in his paper on Rousseau.

2.10 *The Young Minister*

Louis Berkhof, Professor of Theology and eventually President of Calvin Theological Seminary, married Herman Hoeksema to Nellie Kuiper on the 7th of June 1914. The following year, 1915, according to Gertrude Hoeksema, held two more ‘very important events in [Herman Hoeksema’s] life—his graduation and the birth of his first child. Both came in June. Johanna Dorothy arrived on June 15, a short while before he became eligible for his first call to serve a congregation’ (Hoeksema 1969:61).

Hoeksema's first ministerial call came from the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. According to Gertrude Hoeksema, Herman did not want the call, but rather than decline it outright, he decided to 'put out a fleece' (Hoeksema 1969:66-67). Consistent with his decision to 'put out a fleece,' he asked the consistory of the calling church if he might meet the congregation. Before the meeting a minister from a neighboring congregation sought to give the candidate some friendly advice on pastoring a large congregation. This friendly advice was rebuffed with the old Dutch expression: '*Ik kan mijn eigen varken wel wassen*' (I can wash my own hogs) (Hoeksema 1969:67). 'At the meeting,' writes Gertrude Hoeksema,

he found the whole congregation present to listen to him. He told them about his firm stand in the Reformed truth and his intention to preach forthright, exegetical, Scriptural sermons. And he told them about themselves. He scolded them about their wrong views of Christian education. He told them that they were not Reformed in doctrine and practice. He told them that they almost killed their former minister. He promised them that they would hear the Christian school issue from the pulpit; furthermore, the congregation might never dictate to him what he should preach. "Now," he concluded, "if you still want me to come, shake hands with me after the meeting." (Hoeksema 1969:67.)

Despite this diatribe, in September of 1915 Herman Hoeksema was ordained as minister of the Gospel at the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

2.11 *The Man and the Minister*

Thus far I have concentrated almost exclusively on Herman Hoeksema's intellectual and spiritual development, interspersed with some pertinent history both personal and ecclesiastical. Now I would like to delve into the man in a more intimate way. To this end, the portrait of Hoeksema that follows is a synthesis distilled from

questions I had and answers provided by surviving family members and colleagues, as well as a more personal literature.

While there is indeed truth to the contention that he loved what he considered the truth so much that he would go to any lengths to protect it, Herman Hoeksema could, at times, have an unusually brusque way about him. We might venture to say that Hoeksema loved his God and his Church so much that at times he seemed overzealous. His writings betray a love for theology and a mind that was concerned for its clear exposition and development. And while this is certainly to be commended, there was also a dark side that I would be remiss not to mention.

Most of those who currently attend the Protestant Reformed Churches would never say a word against their esteemed founder. This would be akin to defaming an icon. However, family members who are not currently members of the Protestant Reformed Churches felt a bit more at ease airing their views.

Ella Veldman, wife of the late Reverend Richard Veldman, Hoeksema's nephew and former Protestant Reformed minister—he rejoined the Christian Reformed Church in 1960—told me that 'Herman Hoeksema was a very unforgiving man; a man who had to be right, no matter what' (Veldman 2000). Ella's nephew, Henry Hoeks, emeritus professor at Calvin College, echoed Ella Veldman's sentiments, adding that Hoeksema could brook no opposition (Hoeks 2000).

Cornelius Hanks, emeritus minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches, who for years was co-pastor with Herman Hoeksema at First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was very helpful at this point. He admitted that, while he probably knew Herman Hoeksema better than anyone, he did not know him all that well.

‘Hoeksema was aloof,’ he said, ‘and while I was as intimate with him as any, he remained distant’ (Hanko 2000). Hoeksema’s son, Herman Hoeksema Jr., came close to agreeing with Ella Veldman in her assessment of his father. He said that his father had this overwhelming sense that he was always right. He just could not be wrong! This coupled with the feeling that ‘if you disagree with me, you don’t love me’ (Hoeksema 2001). One can easily see how this emotional mix could cause problems. Add to this Hoeksema’s insistence that that he was just ‘hating’ the enemies of the Lord, and you have a combustible mix to be sure. One wonders, though, whether Hoeksema was always just hating the enemies of the Lord. Still, it seems that Hoeksema’s motives had more than a little resemblance to the Genevan Reformer. As Jean-Daniel Benoît writes of Calvin:

On his death-bed he begged the pardon of the City Council for his “over-vehement expressions, which he regretted.” It is interesting however that Calvin should allow himself a defense for his vehemence and his violent words, and a justification for his attitude against much more bitter and relentless opponents. He felt constrained in spite of himself to use cutting words, “I feel I deserve some indulgence,” he claims, “if in defense of the true religion I am forced to attack (*tractus invehor*) such obstinate men as would, I am sure, have received no gentler treatment at the hands of apostles or prophets.” “You prefer gentleness,” he writes to Zurkinden, “and indeed I am no enemy to it. If I appear too severe, believe me, I am driven to it out of necessity. On the other hand, does it never strike you how much your ‘gentleness’ actually harms the Church, this ‘gentleness’ which allows the wicked to go on with impunity, which confuses good and evil, and which does not differentiate between black and white.... As for me, I would rather be transported with rage than never be angry at all.” (Benoît 1966:74.)

I asked Herman Hoeksema Jr. what single factor he believed influenced his father’s development the most. Expecting a profound theological answer, I was shocked when he told me that he thought it ‘was the complete lack of parental supervision growing up’ (Hoeksema 2001).

It should also be acknowledged, however, that Herman Hoeksema was not altogether oblivious to his own faults, as when he noted in a sermon, circa 1935, on Romans 2:17-21a, ‘Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God ... which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself,’ he added the comment:

Now I must be careful in speaking about these words of the apostle—and you in listening—lest we become filled with indignation at the self-righteous Jews. What if we do? We are more self-righteous than the Jew, for this self-righteous Jew is a picture of what we are by nature. You and I are just what the apostle says here of the Jew. I am the worst Jew, next are the elders, then the deacons, then the teachers and leaders, and then the common members; but I’m the worst Jew. I’m not joking. I mean it. It is the mystery of the ministry of the word that God chooses such a Jew as I am, one who preaches and does not do what he preaches. Don’t you see that we can read the text this way, “Behold thou art called a Christian, and thou retest in the Reformed Doctrine, and makest they boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed in Reformed doctrine, and trustest that thou hast the purest form of the truth, and that thou art an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, a guide of the blind, and a light to them that are in darkness. And thou hast not only the form of the truth but the truth itself. Thou therefore which teaches another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that teachest that we must glorify God above all, gloriest thou not God thyself? Thou that teachest that we must not seek the things below but the things above, seekest thou the things below? Your religion, your piety, your baptism, your doctrine, your faith, your hope, is taken away as a basis of your righteousness in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.” That is the text. (Hoeksema 1935.)

Like every true Christian Hoeksema was not oblivious to his own faults, but like so many of us it was not an easy thing for him to show what he knew to be true in his heart.

No doubt those who like Herman Hoeksema will ascribe his single-mindedness and his abrasiveness, as well as his charisma, to his singular love for the truth. Those who do not like Hoeksema will undoubtedly ascribe these personality traits to his overarching need to be right. To varying degrees, both are true, and I would not be inclined to disparage one in favor of the other. Equally, I would not be inclined to speculate on the

mix, I do not think anyone could, because for many Hoeksema simply loomed larger than life in the conflicts that befell him.

In a sense, Hoeksema's psyche can be exemplified in his retort: 'I can wash my own hogs.' That is to say, Herman Hoeksema, as he grew up, developed the attitude that it was for him to take care of himself; he could not and would not rely on anyone else. He had this mindset even as a child on the streets of Groningen. He was able and willing to work hard. He had a quick mind that could grasp a situation and take care of it. He also had a charismatic personality that drew people to him. What he resented were situations, like the bread lines of his childhood, in which he was dependent on other people (the rich, the upper class) who clearly looked down on him as someone who could not be trusted—as came out in the preceding paragraph of the Lord's Day 2 sermon from the Heidelberg Catechism quoted above:

As long as we say, I may not do this, and I may not do that, we may think that we are pretty good. The man that has piled up money and then gives away a little of that money which he has first sucked out of the poor, may say, "I am a pretty good man." And the biggest thieves put the little thieves in jail. That is our corrupt nature. (Hoeksema 1930.)

Additionally, he developed the determination to be straightforward and open with all, being thoroughly convinced that it would become evident in the end just how right he was (*The Banner* 1921:101-102).

All of this was reinforced in his school years. He worked hard at his studies, especially at mastering the English language which set him apart from nearly all of the other students who had grown up in thoroughly Dutch communities in which little but Dutch was spoken. In fact, he left them feeling very uncomfortable with both their own English and their heavy Dutch accents. Hoeksema fought diligently to learn English,

taking every difficult pronunciation and repeating it over and over again until it sounded the way it should, to the point that he was one of the few students that could handle comfortably the English church services that were just beginning to be introduced into the more progressive congregations of the Christian Reformed Church. The result of his diligence was that from the start there was a strong demand for his services, and he was sent several summers to serve a vacant church in New York State which had a large proportion of members who were unfamiliar with Dutch and which he welcomed because it gave him an opportunity to improve his English even more.

The demand for his services was accentuated by his pulpit abilities. He quickly developed an attractive pulpit style, writing out his sermons completely beforehand and memorizing them word for word to the point where he could preach very naturally without notes. This he did with the kind of authoritative confidence and conviction that people loved to hear, and particularly so because he did so in defense of the historical traditions of the Secessions churches, from which he and nearly all of them had come.

All of this came across with a charisma that never left him. When he entered a room, his very appearance and composure—to say nothing of his deep, piercing eyes and strong resonant voice—made him the center of attention without his ever saying a word. When he spoke, whether in private or from the pulpit, what he said came across with a natural simplicity that made people feel that this was exactly what they thought and believed as well, which in the end perhaps became one of his greatest faults. He and they for the moment took it for granted that they were agreed, only to have many of these followers leave him and take up positions quite contrary to what he had taught, often

leaving him and them with a sense that each had been betrayed. They had been drawn by his presentation, but never came to terms with what he taught.

In the end, perhaps it was his very strength and self-sufficiency that proved to be his Achilles heel. Had he listened to the kind offer of the elderly pastor to advise him on what he would encounter in the ministry, he might have gained a friend, while his curt retort—I can wash my own hogs—may well have alienated him completely in the end. And so, throughout, his sense of not needing anyone would seem to have left him separated from those he really needed to accomplish his desired end—this pattern is repeated over and over throughout his career.

Throughout, it appeared to be Hoeksema's conviction and desire that doctrinal differences should be talked about forthrightly and openly, possibly with the presumption that, if that were done, it would become evident to all that he was right, particularly because he had the advantages mentioned above. However, never having established that sense of mutual respect required for such a discussion, few would ever take him on under those terms; and, if they did, it was a battle in which each was committed beforehand to a conclusion from which he was not about to waver. The point was that, while Hoeksema had many admirers, by essentially his own refusal, as Reverend Cornelius Hanko's remarks bring out; he had few, if any, true friends. Maybe that is why he cried out for what he personally had missed. He simply would not, and possibly could not, let them in—and how ironic for one who made 'friendship' the cornerstone in his theological thought.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at a variety of subjects: Hoeksema's arrival in the United States, his ecclesiastical affiliation and some of the history of that church, and some insights into the man and what motivated him. I have tried to paint a picture of the man and his theological landscape. We will see this landscape take on further dimensions in the following chapter as the conflicts begin. But for now, I have tried to scope out the man; the parameters of what defined 'Herman Hoeksema.' He was a man of singular interest. He was focused in ways most are not. Maybe his focus was too inward. Many would say it was, and that this was the source of his inability to handle those with whom he disagreed. Maybe it was his unswerving love for what he saw as the 'truth.' I think that a combination of the two give us a more complete picture of the man. It is my contention that this is the picture of Herman Hoeksema that emerges in the course of his theological odyssey from the docks of New York City to the beginning of his life in the ministry. I would now like to turn to this man in his theological context, his beginnings in the ministry and, especially, his writings in *The Banner*.