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## Chapter 5

### 1924 and Beyond

In a decision marked particularly by the speed in which it was taken, the Christian Reformed Church adopted a three-point statement on common grace at the synod of 1924 giving it full confessional status. Herman Hoeksema, along with George Ophoff and Henry Danhof, staunchly resisted these doctrinal amendments and refused to abide by them. For their efforts, all three men were deposed from the office of minister of the Gospel in a manner that, according to Hoeksema at least, was completely illegal and smacked of hierarchy.

As the events of 1924 faded into the background, Hoeksema and his followers gradually organized themselves into a coherent denominational structure called the Protestant Reformed Churches, replete with a rather distinct theological emphasis. Not everything, however, that followed on the heels of 1924 would be either easy or placid. The years of The Depression were especially hard on this small and struggling denomination, and growth was negligible. But, it was during these years, among other things, that Hoeksema would finally answer the charge of ‘rationalism’ employed so successfully by Professor Janssen a decade earlier.

It was also during the decade of the 1930s that Hoeksema would meet a kindred spirit, so to speak, in the person of the Klaas Schilder; a vigorous theologian and churchman in his own right. Hoeksema’s health, however, would preclude any true meeting of the minds.

### *5.1 The Synod of 1922 and its aftermath*

In the wake the Synod of 1922, in which Professor Ralph Janssen was deposed, the editor of *The Banner*, Henry Beets, announced rather matter-of-factly that ‘Rev. H. J. Kuiper was elected to edit the department Our Doctrine in the stead of Rev. Hoeksema’ (*The Banner* 1922:406). Although this turn of events has aroused suspicions of a possible conspiracy, my own included, I can find no reason to assume that Hoeksema’s departure from *The Banner* in 1922 was anything other than a routine changing of the guard. On this matter, biographer Gertrude Hoeksema is strangely silent (Hoeksema 1969:135). It is true that many hard feelings were directed towards Hoeksema for his role in Professor Janssen’s deposition, John Bolt of Calvin Seminary calls this rather bitter climate, ‘concerted ecclesiastical opposition’ (Bolt 2000a:32). Still, the *Acts of Synod* for 1922 give no indication of an organized ecclesiastical front in the matter of his being removed from the staff of *The Banner*. It is also true that Classis Hudson voiced reservations regarding the instruction given in Hoeksema’s column, but Synod, at that time, was not of a mind to deal at any length with Classis Hudson’s concerns (*Acta der Synode* 1922:45). In the several pages following Classis Hudson’s questions, nominees are submitted to head-up every departmental rubric covered in both *The Banner* and *De Wachter*, Hoeksema’s name was simply not among them (*Acta der Synode* 1922:47 also p. 48). One name does appear, however, that gives one pause, Reverend G. Hoeksema. This pastor, no relation to Herman Hoeksema, would later involve himself in writing a protest against Herman Hoeksema, to be delivered by others, under their names, to the Consistory of Eastern Avenue Reformed Church. In fact, it was Rev. G. Hoeksema’s

protest which effectively began the spiral of events of 1924. Still, I can find no evidence that any of this had anything to do with Herman Hoeksema being removed from the staff of *The Banner*. Knowing Hoeksema, if he had been subject to any disciplinary measures from the Synod and subsequently removed as the editor of 'Our Doctrine,' he most certainly would not have kept silent on the matter. From the time Synod concluded in June 1922, during which he was voted off *The Banner* staff, until his last installment as editor of 'Our Doctrine' on 31 August 1922, Hoeksema's columns dealt exclusively with the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor as detailed in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation.

In a recent article revisiting the events of 1924 and those leading up to it, John Bolt poses the question: If Hoeksema had savored his victory in the Janssen case and 'not insistently pushed for a wholesale repudiation of common grace...would the events of 1924 and the subsequent history of the CRC have turned out differently' (Bolt 2000a:14)? This query by Bolt presupposes that Hoeksema continued to agitate against common grace after Janssen's deposition in June 1922. This was simply not something that Hoeksema did. It is true that eventually he got drawn into a pamphlet war over common grace, but this was not at Hoeksema's instigation. If he had chosen to militate against common grace after Janssen's disposition, what would have been his outlet? The only forum Hoeksema had at his disposal for disseminating his views was his rubric in *The Banner*. And since he was voted off the staff of *The Banner* at the same Synod that deposed Janssen, his only forum quickly disappeared. In fact, from the time he was voted off the staff of *The Banner* in June 1922 until his last column in August of that year, he mentioned common grace only once and this in connection with the historic Anabaptist

movement of the sixteenth-century. Hence, with the possible exception of sermons which would have had a strictly limited influence, there is no evidence to support the contention that Hoeksema, in an unprovoked manner, continued to militate against common grace in the months following the conclusion of the Janssen affair.

While Herman Hoeksema did not seek to provoke a confrontation over the issue of common grace, this confrontation, however, eventually found him. Picking up where Professor Janssen left off, Reverend Jan Karel van Baalen, a Christian Reformed minister in Munster, Indiana (Bolt 2000a:15), was determined not to let the matter rest. Hoeksema followed the chronology of the events in his own inimitable way:

The friends of Doctor Janssen, realizing that their idol had been irrevocably cast down, and his foes, acting from a subconscious motive of fundamental agreement with the underlying principle of the instruction they had opposed, now combined their attacks upon the two ministers (Hoeksema and Danhof-PB) that had performed the lion's share of the work in the Janssen controversy and borne the brunt of the battle. The Reverend Jan Karel Van Baalen published a pamphlet entitled: *Loochening Der Gemeene Gratie, Gereformeerd of Doopersch?* (Denial of Common Grace, Reformed or Anabaptistic?), to which the two ministers replied with another pamphlet bearing the title: *Niet Doopersch Maar Gereformeerd* (Not Anabaptistic but Reformed). Professor Berkhof wrote an article in *The Witness* under the deceiving heading: "Genade Voor De Onbekeerden" (Grace for the Unconverted). The two ministers personally approached the professor with the direct question, whether he had thus written in ignorance or intentionally. And the professor promised to make amends, the attempt to do which made matters worse. Van Baalen followed up his first attack by the publication of *Nieuwigheid en Dwaling* (Innovation and Error), to which as well as to other attacks the accused pastors replied in the brochure: *Langs Zuivere Banen* (Along Straight Paths), which was very soon followed by still another pamphlet entitled *Om Recht en Waarheid* (For the Sake of Justice and Truth). They also published their chief work of that period: *Van Zonde en Genade* (Of Sin and Grace). And in the meantime formal protests had been filed against the two pastors and legal action had been started. The battle that had apparently been won at the synod of 1922, for the salvation of the Christian Reformed Churches, was fundamentally and hopelessly to be lost for those churches at the Synod of Kalamazoo. (Hoeksema 1947:25-26.)

*The Holland Sentinel* (November 22, 1923) called this new turn in the discussion of common grace the ‘Battle of the Books.’ Acknowledging that the present battle grew out of the Janssen Case, the editorial concluded that ‘the attack and counter attack are for the most part in regard to the doctrine of common grace, which doctrine is said to be rejected completely by the authors of *Sin and Grace*, and which is affirmed by the other parties in the controversy’ (Hoeksema 1992:19). Those who represented the opposition or ‘other parties,’ as the *Sentinel* referred to them, were, almost to a man, adherents of what was commonly known in Christian Reformed circles as Neo-Calvinism (see Harinck 1996, especially pages 124 and 136, for a partial listing).

James Bratt, in his history of the Christian Reformed Church as a distinct subculture, outlines what he believes were Hoeksema’s major doctrinal errors. He insists that Hoeksema denied that there is any grace of God for humanity other than the elect. In close association with this major thesis, Hoeksema also denied that, what many consider to be the good gifts of God, namely, good health, sunshine and peace, are in any way grace to the unbeliever. Moreover, these ‘good gifts’ only contributed to the unbeliever’s ultimate damnation. Additionally, Hoeksema, following from the first premise, denied that unbelieving humanity in general produces any neutral good such as might be seen in the political or social spheres of life (civic righteousness). In fact, writes Bratt, according to Hoeksema, all of humanity’s best attempts merely cloak ‘evil as good’ (Bratt 1984:111). What Bratt is proposing is that anyone who emphasized particular grace, as did Herman Hoeksema, to the total exclusion of common grace, could not help but exclude the ‘world’ from every facet of the life of the ‘elect’ (Bratt 1984:112).

My own feeling is that Hoeksema contemporary and rival, Reverend J. K. van Baalen, put Hoeksema's distinctives in bolder relief when he described Hoeksema's theology as "single-track" theology where the Bible laid out a "double-track" theology' (Bratt 1984:112). Actually, Van Baalen's criticism of Hoeksema was two-pronged in and of itself. He accused Hoeksema of holding a single tracked theology and of being a rationalist, all in his 1922 pamphlet *De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeerd of Doopersch* (The Denial of Common Grace: Reformed or Anabaptist). I mention the charge of rationalism at this point simply because it became a staple in almost all subsequent criticism of Hoeksema's position, and that Van Baalen simply mimicked Janssen in his use of it (see Chapter 6).

In building his case for a two tracked theology and by implication repudiating Hoeksema's single tracked theological position, Van Baalen, following Abraham Kuyper's lead, appealed to God's covenant with Noah (Van Baalen 1922:12-23). Echoing Kuyper, Van Baalen argued that God's covenant with Noah was a covenant of common grace with humanity and not a covenant of particular grace in Christ (Van Baalen 1922:12-13). Hoeksema recast Van Baalen's thesis in the course of responding to the question: To what does Kuyper point as the basis for his operation of common grace?

To the covenant God established with Noah after the flood. This covenant, according to Kuyper, is not to be regarded as the covenant of grace in Christ, but as a covenant of universal friendship with the entire and fallen human race as such. Its blessings are temporal, are only for this present life and are intended for the entire human race. In and through this covenant the natural and totally depraved man becomes God's friend and ally over against the devil and fights on God's side for the maintenance and development of a positively good world-life. (Hoeksema 1947:313.)

Responding from a distinctly Protestant Reformed perspective, Herman Hanko writes that 'by a "two-track" theology van Baalen meant that theology runs on two parallel

tracks which never meet. ...theology consists of two lines of truth which cannot be harmonized. Common grace is one of these lines; other doctrines in the Reformed faith which seem to contradict common grace are the other line' (Hanko 2000:200). I think what Hanko writes is true as far as it goes, but he fails to take into account the whole of the Neo-Calvinist program.

James Bratt writes that Kuyper's Neo-Calvinism can be explained 'as a logical whole, using the theological or philosophical categories of common grace and antithesis, sphere sovereignty and the Lordship of Christ, presuppositional epistemology and the Christian cultural mandate' (Bratt 1996:99). David Holwerda, in the course of analyzing Ralph Janssen's Neo-Calvinism, adds additional categories such as general revelation and special revelation and, especially, the unity of nature and grace, which he concludes is a 'hallmark' of 'common grace but lacking in the Anabaptist tradition' (Holwerda 1989:27). These categories, represented as they are by apparent polar opposites, constitute the substance of the two-tracked theology of Neo-Calvinism. Hoeksema, however, did not use the designation 'two-tracked,' but preferred to speak of categories such as 'two spheres' or 'dualistic' (Hoeksema 1947:310-311).

Hoeksema understood the basis of what he called 'Neo-Calvinist dualism' as originating in the activities of God after the fall. In speculating about Kuyper's purpose in developing the ideal of common grace, Hoeksema wrote, that 'he sought to show that there still is a positively good world-life and development of the human race in connection with all created things and by the theory of common grace he offered an explanation of the positively good in the world in connection with the fact of the fall and the curse of God in the world and the total depravity of the natural man' (Hoeksema



1947:309). After the fall of man, wrote Hoeksema summarizing Kuyper's position, if God had not intervened with common grace all things would have come to an ignominious end in the garden (Hoeksema 1947:309), and 'as a result there would have been no room for the establishment and development of God's covenant of grace in Christ' (Hoeksema 1947:309). Thus, concluded Hoeksema on the nature of Kuyper's two-track theology:

[God-PB] by His common grace...intervened, the universe did not suffer destruction, man did not immediately die and the original divine idea and ordinance of creation can be and is realized in the history of this world. At the same time a sphere is created for the realization and development of special grace in Christ Jesus. He, therefore, conceives of the work of God in a dualistic way. God has an original purpose with creation, the normal development of all things under man as their king. This purpose is apparently frustrated by the temptation of the devil and sin. But through the operation of common grace God carries out the original idea and brings about a positively good development of the human race in connection with the earthly creation. But, on the other hand, God also carries out His purpose of predestination in the redemption of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate. (Hoeksema 1947:310.)

According to Hoeksema, Kuyper's two-tracked theology had to do essentially with God's purpose in and for the world. God had two separate and distinct purposes in mind with regard to the world of humanity. One of which was with Adam and the creation mandate to go forth and subdue the creation for the benefit of mankind. Even though God's purpose with Adam was frustrated by the fall, God still had a purpose for this world that sprang from the creation mandate, namely, the creation and spread of culture. God still desired that the world develop culturally, and it was essentially a denial of God's goodness not to find good in it. Hence, it follows, that there were also two kinds of revelation, general revelation and special revelation, or the creation and Scripture, respectively. Two deposits of divine revelation, both of which must be taken into account since both are functions of God's grace, one from common grace and the other from

special grace. The result of all this, as Hoeksema saw it, was that these two ‘revelations’ would become equal, both open to man’s interpretation, i.e. rationalism. In repudiating the whole concept of common grace and by implication the whole of Neo-Calvinism’s two-tracked theology, Hoeksema wrote that ‘in so far as he [Kuyper-PB] ascribes the preservation and development of created things after the fall to God’s common grace, he certainly calls grace what is merely God’s providential care and government’ (Hoeksema 1947:310). Years later, reflecting back on the events of 1924, Hoeksema quipped ‘that the CRC Kalamazoo Synod of 1924 could not tell the difference between the Holy Spirit and a policeman’ (Engelsma 2001:294).

### *5.2 The Beginning of the End*

While the concluding months of 1922 and all of 1923 were taken up with the writing of pamphlets for and against common grace, it was at the very outset of 1924 that things began in earnest. The new year was to be a time of protests and legal wrangling, all of which began promptly on Saturday morning 19 January 1924. On this morning three members of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church appeared in Herman Hoeksema’s parlor to discuss certain objections that they had to the content of his preaching and writing (Hoeksema 1947:28). Hoeksema readily admitted that he saw all this merely as subterfuge on their part. The three men had committed their complaints to writing and said they wanted to present them to their pastor, which they did. Hoeksema, observing that the document containing the complaints was formally addressed to the consistory and not to him alone, refused to either receive or discuss the complaints,

suggesting rather that they be presented to the consistory. The men, realizing their mistake, quickly amended the protest. At that point, Hoeksema offered to discuss the matter with each man individually. Only one of the three complied; the other two refused to discuss anything unless they were permitted to do so together. Hoeksema recounted that the one who opted to speak with him in private seemed unfamiliar with the contents of his own protest (Hoeksema 1947:29). Since the other two would not discuss their concerns individually, Hoeksema also refused to entertain their objections, believing ‘that none of the three protestants was the final author of the written document they had delivered, and, if at all possible, the author ought to be lured from his hiding-place and called to account’ (Hoeksema 1947:29). In this instance Hoeksema’s suspicions proved to be correct. It was later discovered that ‘none of the three protestants had composed the protest. Much later, through a forced testimony in a worldly court, one of the protestants revealed that his brother, a neighboring pastor, the Reverend G. Hoeksema, was the writer of that first protest’ (Hoeksema 1947:29).

Seeing their way thwarted, the three men decided to change their course of action. Thus, shortly thereafter, they lodged a protest directly with the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, charging their pastor, Herman Hoeksema, with public sin in regard to the content of his preaching (Hoeksema 1969:143). The consistory strongly disagreed ‘and after trying to persuade the three men to retract their protest, without success, the consistory censured them as proper objects of church discipline’ (Hoeksema 1969:143).

Was it wise or indeed proper for the consistory, led by Hoeksema, to put these men under church discipline for protesting the preaching of their pastor? Hoeksema

vigorously defended the actions taken by the consistory in this matter in his history of the Protestant Reformed Churches (Hoeksema (1947: 30 also p. 32). However, in a rather protracted discussion on Article 31 of the Church Order of Dordrecht, which guarantees the believer the right of appeal to a broader church assembly if the decision of a consistory does not adjudicate a matter, Herman Hanko, an emeritus Protestant Reformed professor, believes the consistory of Eastern Avenue acted improperly (Hanko 2000: 59 also p. 102-103). Basing his argument on a lengthy series of articles written by the late George Ophoff, Hoeksema's colleague at the Protestant Reformed Seminary, and printed in the *Standard Bearer* in the 1920s, Hanko concludes that the three men

should not have been put under censure for challenging the Reformed character of the preaching and finally appealing their case to a broader assembly. If the broader assemblies had decided in favor of the consistory, then indeed the protestants would have been required to retract their accusations. And if they still refused, discipline would have been necessary. But the fact of the matter is that synod waffled, declaring their accusations to be essentially true, but also affirming the Reformed character of their pastor. The point is that the censure should not have been imposed prior to the adjudication of their protests. Eastern Ave.'s consistory was wrong in its censure of the protestants. (Hanko 2000:103.)

In addition to the outstanding protest of the three members of his own congregation, there were also protests against Hoeksema's teaching from Reverend van der Mey, a minister without a charge who was also a member of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Reverend J. K. van Baalen, and Reverend M. Schans. After the publication of Hoeksema and Danhof's *Van Zonde en Genade* (Of Sin and Grace), writes the former President of Calvin Seminary, John Kromminga:

Agitation on this point [i.e., Hoeksema's denial of common grace-PB] reached such a pitch that several classes found it necessary to send overtures on the matter to the Synod of 1924. Classes Hackensack, Sioux Center, Hudson, and Muskegon all asked for a thorough study of the problem, with a view to clearer formulation of the matter. One of these classes declared that the denial was contrary to the

Formulas of Unity (the three Confessional Standards), while another asked Synod to declare that such a denial was contrary to Scripture and Reformed Doctrine. (Kromminga 1949:83.)

Even though a committee of pre-advice appointed by Synod compiled a list of eleven disputed points gleaned from the many protests sent to Synod, attention seemed to focus on three matters to the exclusion of all others. These were, according to Kromminga, ‘the gracious disposition of God towards all men, and not alone towards the elect; the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in the life of society; and the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate’ (Kromminga 1949:83-84). There were many at the Synod of 1924 who urged caution, believing that the Synod was ill prepared to issue any definitive statement on these matters. Kromminga relates that there was even a proposition discussed ‘which advised that Synod be content with instructing the churches to make a basic study of this matter’ (Kromminga 1949:84). This proposition, however, along with all others urging caution, was summarily rejected. At this point, writes Kromminga, Synod proceeded to adopt, by official motion, those propositions which became forever after known as ‘The Three Points of Common Grace’ (Kromminga 1949:84). In addition to its adoption of the Three Points, Synod concurrently declared the writings and teachings of the Reverends Hoeksema and Danhof ‘to be out of harmony with the Bible and the Confessions on those points, although it recognized the fact that these men desired to be nothing but Reformed, and basically were Reformed, with a tendency to one-sidedness’ (Kromminga 1949:84). Synod also admonished the Reverends Hoeksema and Danhof to henceforth abide by the decisions of Synod in their teaching and writing.

Henry Danhof, who was himself a delegate to Synod, made it plain to all present that he had no intention to abide by the Three Points, and that he fully intended to militate publicly against what he saw as an erroneous decision by Synod. Hoeksema, while not a delegate to Synod but in attendance anyway, was tried and convicted along with Danhof almost in absentia. It began with the committee of pre-advice, which neither notified nor summoned the Reverends Hoeksema or Danhof to appear in their defense, and ended with the same committee condemning them, as Hoeksema later wrote, ‘without having heard them or given them an opportunity for self-defense’ (Hoeksema 1947:70). Synod did essentially the same thing. In retrospect, Hoeksema wrote that ‘common decency and justice would have prompted synod...to summon him, to invite him to its meetings, to examine him if necessary, to offer him an opportunity to defend his views. Synod, however, was utterly negligent in this respect’ (Hoeksema 1947:70).

As the first session of the Synod wore on, Hoeksema broke the rules of order and insisted he be given a chance to speak, this as the Synod deliberated on his case while he sat in the gallery. His request was summarily refused. As the Synod proceeded with a discussion of the proposed Three Points, Hoeksema again violated the rules of order, arose in the audience, and requested the evening session to present a defense of his own views. In order to induce Synod to respond favorably to his request, Hoeksema wrote later that ‘he foolishly promised that he would not ask to speak again’ (Hoeksema 1947:72). The request was granted and ‘at the evening session before a packed auditorium and deeply interested audience, the pastor expounded his views before synod’ (Hoeksema 1947:72). In a later session, when Synod was involved in debate over the First Point of Common Grace, Hoeksema, not being able to restrain himself, again

requested the floor. ‘Synod refused,’ Hoeksema later wrote, ‘giving as the ground of their refusal, that the Reverend Hoeksema had promised not to ask for the floor a second time’ (Hoeksema 1947:72). At this point Hoeksema promptly left the gallery and attended no more sessions of the Synod of 1924. Reflecting back on the events of 1924, John Bolt ponders ‘whether the whole business could not have been handled with less haste and with greater propriety and charity. The impression is overwhelming that the assault on Hoeksema was well-orchestrated and hurried, a kind of ecclesiastical blitzkrieg’ (Bolt 2000a:17-18).

While the Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924 may have adopted the Three Points of Common Grace, and while it may indeed have admonished the Reverends Hoeksema and Danhof to refrain from any dissent on the matter (Bolt 2000a:30), as Hoeksema maintained, ‘the conclusions of synod were too ambiguous to settle anything’ (Hoeksema 1947:99). Part of this ambiguity was its ‘failure’ to deal specifically with the protest from the members of the Eastern Avenue Church. Hence, the three protestants from the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church who sometime earlier had accused their pastor of ‘public sin,’ though partially vindicated by the decisions taken at Synod, were still under censure in their own church. Another facet of this ambiguity, writes John Bolt, was that it failed to stop ‘the concerted ecclesiastical opposition to Hoeksema’ (Bolt 2000a:32). As this ecclesiastical opposition continued its sustained attack in the denomination’s official publications (Bolt 2000a:32), Classis Grand Rapids East, meeting on 20 August 1924, decided that the censure against the original protestants ‘should be lifted as soon as possible, on the ground that synod had sustained the accusation of these protestants against the pastor’ (Hoeksema 1947:109). ‘Needless to say,’ Hoeksema

remembered with mixed emotions, ‘the advice of the Classis was of such a nature that it was strictly impossible as well as morally wrong for the consistory to heed it. And for this reason this decision was plainly the beginning of the end’ (Hoeksema 1947:110). Not wishing to face Hoeksema on any of the matters concerned, Classis requested that the consistory of Eastern Avenue Church write down their decisions and submit them to Classis and Classis would, in turn, respond accordingly (see Hoeksema 1947:168-263 for copies of this correspondence). Concerning these final days, John Bolt writes:

When Classis Grand Rapids East met again in a number of sessions from November 19, 1924 to December 12, 1924, the die was cast. Neither side would budge from its position. The classis insisted that Hoeksema submit to the three points, and he naturally refused. After much ecclesiastical wrangling, a civil court case ensued, primarily over the disposition of Eastern Avenue CRC’s property, and by early March 1925, Hoeksema and his supporters were ousted from the church. (Bolt 2000a:33.)

Although Hoeksema, Danhof, and their respective consistories, as well as George Ophoff and his consistory, appealed the decision of Classis to the next Synod, they had to wait almost two years for a decision. When the Synod of 1926 finally met, it decided that the protest was inadmissible since the protestors were already outside the denomination (Hoeksema 1992:92-93). Thus, the split was complete.

### *5.3 The Twenties and Thirties*

The decades of the Twenties and Thirties were not easy for Hoeksema’s small, fledgling denomination. Problems were large and friends were few. Gertrude Hoeksema relates many instances in which there was not enough money or fuel to visit prospective groups and, as a result, growth was slow. Henry Danhof, stalwart in his defense of



Hoeksema and equally staunch in his repudiation of common grace, became contentious and bitter after the split from the Christian Reformed Church. ‘The three Danhofs,’ writes Gertrude Hoeksema, ‘—the Reverends Henry, and his nephews Ralph and also student Ben—had become disillusioned, dissatisfied, and troublesome’ (Hoeksema 1992:95). In the end, The Danhofs went their separate ways. Herman Hoeksema, commenting on the Danhof matter, wrote: ‘Always there is bright sunshine and there are gloomy shadows’ (Hoeksema 1947:257). During the remaining years of the 1920s, churches struggled to find places to meet until proper accommodations could be built. Growth was slow but steady; much of which was of a spiritual nature. The 1930s saw more churches established in the Grand Rapids area, as well as further a field, such as Belflower, Redlands and Los Angeles, all of which were in California. The denomination called its first missionary in 1936 and ‘his first call for help was from Edgerton, Minnesota; and in 1938 the group was organized as a Protestant Reformed congregation’ (Hoeksema 1992:100). A similar story held true for all the congregations organized during the decade of the Thirties.

It was also in the decade of the Thirties that Herman Hoeksema met what he considered a kindred spirit in the person of Klaas Schilder. Hoeksema met Schilder for the first time in 1939 when the latter was invited by some within the Christian Reformed Church to tour North America speaking in her churches (Vander Kam 1996:52). This meeting would later prove to be one of the high points and, at the same time, one of the low points in Hoeksema’s theological career. The two men were very similar in many ways. Both were theologians of note and both endured much for their respective causes.

Still, Hoeksema thought he had found a kindred spirit, and because of this perception the eventual disappointment was most severe.

Klaas Schilder was born in Kampen, in the Netherlands, in 1890. Recognized early as one of uncommon ability (Knight 2000:27, De Klerk 1990:4), Schilder was assured a place in both the local gymnasium and at the Theological School through the early efforts of a primary school teacher (De Klerk 1990:4). After graduation on the eve of World War I, he was ordained into the ministry of Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), proceeding to serve six congregations between 1914 and 1930 (De Klerk 1990:5). During the course of his last pastorate in Rotterdam, a colleague, Rev. R. Zijlstra, offered to loan him the money needed to undertake doctoral studies. For Schilder, this was a dream come true (Vander Kam 1996:32-33). The Free University was the obvious and the logical choice, but Schilder had crossed swords with members of the faculty there both in person and in print before (Vander Kam 1996:33). And, as John Knight records, Dr. V. Hepp, 'Bavinck's successor at the Free University, insisted that Schilder take his introductory course in dogmatics as the condition for pursuing his studies at the Free University. Schilder felt insulted and instead enrolled at the University of Erlangen in Germany' (Knight 2000a: 25). For the next two years Schilder studied at the Friedrich-Alexander University at Erlangen; graduating in 1933 with highest honors for a thesis on 'paradox' entitled, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des "Paradoxon" mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Calvins und des nach-Kierkegaardschen "Paradoxon"* (De Klerk 1990:5)—a subject that was also of interest to Hoeksema at the time and to which he would return later in connection with the 'Clark Case' in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the early 1940s. Shortly after his graduation early in 1934, Schilder was

installed as professor of dogmatics and ethics to succeed Professor A. G. Honig at the Theological School of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Kampen (Vander Kam 1996:37).

Klaas Schilder was a prolific writer with a sharp pen (De Klerk 1990:11). With it he made many uncomfortable, even angry. So much so that, in 1938 when Schilder received the invitation to lecture in the United States, ‘Rev. H. J. Kuiper, the editor of *The Banner*,...wrote in his column that he thought it would be far better if K. S. would not come at this time. He feared that Schilder might bring the theological differences that were being debated in Holland to the United States—especially his position on common grace’ (Vander Kam 1996:52). Undeterred, Schilder issued a press release that his intent was to be in America for the months of January and February 1939 (Dee 1990:85).

Schilder arrived in the United States in the fall of 1938, where he received a warm welcome from fellow ministers in the Christian Reformed Church in New York and New Jersey (Vander Kam 1996:53). Henry vander Kam goes so far as to say: ‘It can honestly be said that he took the East by storm’ (Vander Kam 1996:53). Having spent the Christmas Holiday in the East, Schilder arrived in Grand Rapids, Michigan in January of 1939. He preached the following Sunday to a packed crowd at the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Hoeksema’s old church. John Piersma, minister emeritus in the Christian Reformed Churches, who was present on this occasion, said it was one of the most remarkable sermons he had ever heard, and that this was also the consensus of those present at the time (Piersma 2002).

Schilder was not one to mince words; neither was he given to avoiding difficult or controversial subjects (Vander Kam 1996:56). According to biographer Rudolf van Reest, Schilder wanted all debate out in the open (Van Reest 1990:168-169). Believing

that everything had to be clear and true (Vander Kam 1996:43), Schilder did not hide his openness, nor was he given to straddling the fence on important issues (Vander Kam 1996:37). I believe this is one of the reasons why Hoeksema believed he saw in Schilder a kindred spirit. Yet there are many more similarities between these two men. Both men were polemicists; fighters who would not yield an inch if either believed he was right (Vander Kam 1996:42-44). Both saw worldliness engulfing the Church of Christ and strove to combat it whatever the costs (Vander Kam 1996:19, also p.44). And later, ‘that Hoeksema and Schilder had a great deal in common in terms of what they had experienced at the hands of the churches that ordained them is clear,’ writes Rudolf van Reest, ‘and this was no doubt part of the reason for the kinship they felt’ (Van Reest 1990:421). Reverend Woudenberg adds yet a further dimension to this commonality. After his departure from the Christian Reformed Church, Hoeksema was not able to attract a following of seasoned, experienced ministers to fill the pulpits of his fledgling churches. Henry Danhof, who was deposed by the Christian Reformed Church along with Hoeksema, ultimately went his own way and established an independent Reformed church. Especially in the early years, the Protestant Reformed Churches greatly needed trained ministers, and it was incumbent upon both Hoeksema and George Ophoff to train them. By the time of Schilder’s visit to the United States in 1939, the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches was made up exclusively of young men trained by Hoeksema and Ophoff, many of whom had no previous college education. It would be easy to see how Hoeksema could become starved for theological fellowship in such an environment. Theologically speaking, both Hoeksema and Schilder were head and shoulders above many of their contemporaries. Thus, I believe Hoeksema saw in Schilder

one like himself, one with whom he could converse as an equal on any subject (Woudenberg 2001).

Against this backdrop, on the eighth of February 1939, Dr. K Schilder ‘entered the auditorium of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids to deliver his lecture on the subject of Common Grace’ (Hoeksema 1939b:243). While the actual text of the address has not survived the intervening years, Hoeksema’s summary of its contents along with a few remarks was printed in the next *Standard Bearer*.

The question concerning “common grace” deals with the problem of “nature and grace”, a problem that in our day attracts universal attention and is worthy of our earnest consideration and study. The antithesis is not one between “nature and grace”, but between “sin and grace”. Scripture abundantly testifies that God loves and preserves His creature. He loves the works of His hands, sun, moon and stars, the trees of the forest, and flowers, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea. And also what is His own work in man, even after the fall, the “remnants of His image”, the “natural light”, man as His own creation, He loves. This does not mean that He loves man as a sinner, outside of Christ. For, He is gracious to the sinner in Christ only. But His own work in man He loves. The fact that, after the fall, man still exists, is not yet in hell, receives many things, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter, gifts and talents, does not warrant the conclusion that there is a gracious disposition (gezindheid) in God towards him. Things are not grace. The speaker used the illustration of a man that is condemned to death, but the execution of whose sentence is delayed because things are not yet ready for the severe form of punishment that is intended for him. Such a man cannot justly conclude from that fact, that he still has a few days to live, to a gracious disposition towards him on the part of the judge. The same is true of the sinner, that receives many things, but who is prepared for eternal damnation. Common grace cannot mean that there is a gracious disposition in God towards the reprobate ungodly. This truth was emphasized more than once in the lecture. There is a reining (beteugeling), retardation, restraining of sin, even as there is a retardation (beteugeling) of grace. The end does not come at the beginning. Beginning and end are separated by an historic process, in which God preserves all things to serve as understructure for the realization of His purpose of election and reprobation, salvation and damnation, sin and grace. In this historic process man, even fallen man, is confronted by the “common mandate”, to multiply and fill the earth and develop the powers of creation and to do this in the love of God. (Hoeksema 1939b:244-245.)

Concerning the free offer of the Gospel, Schilder is reported to have said:

There is no objection to speak of an “offer” (aanbod) of grace, provided we understand by it that in a pedagogical sense the gospel, with its promise and demand, is presented to the rational, moral consciousness of all men promiscuously. However, this “aanbod” is no ground for the conclusion that in the preaching of the gospel there is a gracious disposition (gezindheid) in God. Through it God accomplishes His own purpose, both of election and reprobation, salvation and damnation, life and death. (Hoeksema 1939b:245.)

Hoeksema’s editorial on the lecture expressed his hearty agreement with many things Schilder said; concluding with approval that Schilder also differs substantially from the *Three Points* as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. Hoeksema, referring to the fact that Schilder denied any favor on the part of God for the ungodly, wrote: ‘to my mind, this is the very heart of the question’ (Hoeksema 1939b:244). Though there were questions that he would like to have asked Dr. Schilder, Hoeksema sincerely believed that they were in substantial agreement (Hoeksema 1939b:245).

In his address Schilder did not dwell on his conception of the ‘cultural mandate’ and its relation to common grace; had he done so, more areas of disagreement between him and Hoeksema would have inevitably surfaced. In his scheme, Schilder essentially replaced ‘common grace’ with the ‘cultural mandate. ‘By this,’ writes Walter Campbell-Jack, ‘he means that the continuance of fallen creation and sinful humanity and the cultural development which we witness within creation are not to be understood as being grounded in a general operation of God. Schilder’s understanding of creation and cultural activity are instead understood as being based upon the divine determination that man as a covenant creature fulfill his created cultural function as expounded in the cultural mandate of *Genesis 1:28* to fill the earth and subdue it’ (Campbell-Jack 1992:106). Contrariwise, for Hoeksema, any pursuit of the cultural mandate in a fallen world is merely part of the organic development of sin (Hanko 2000:254-255). ‘I do not have to

call special attention to the patent fact' Hoeksema insisted, 'that grace does not change this situation as long as we are in this world. The Christian lives in the same world as the ungodly, and he must work with the same material. Even as sin could not and did not fundamentally and essentially change the world, so grace does not renew and regenerate it' (Hoeksema 1977:13-14).

Another difference between Hoeksema and Schilder was on the nature of the covenant of grace. Writing on this aspect of Schilder's thought, Walter Campbell-Jack points out that, for Schilder, the presentation of the gospel is always 'within the context of the covenant' (Campbell-Jack 1992:108). Additionally, 'Hoeksema speaks of unconditional promises which are always particular whilst Schilder speaks of the covenant promise and the gospel promise as conditional inasmuch as he wishes to emphasise human responsibility in response' (Campbell-Jack 1992:108). Though these differences were not at issue during Schilder's visit in 1939, they would become more noteworthy on Schilder's second American visit in 1947.

#### *5.4 Reunion?*

Prior to the visit by Klaas Schilder to the United States in 1939, Hoeksema had sought several times unsuccessfully to initiate a conference between the Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Reformed Churches in order to discuss the issues that separated them (Woudenberg 2000:9). With the coming of Schilder, however, 'the Christian Reformed came; they could hardly deny the doctor' (Woudenberg 2000:9). As current Protestant Reformed Professor of Dogmatics, David Engelsma, records, it was an

‘all-day conference in the old Pantlind Hotel, now the Amway Grand Plaza, in Grand Rapids, Michigan on March 29, 1939’ (Engelsma 2000:4). Especially for this conference, Herman Hoeksema took a week off from his regular work in order to craft a speech worthy of the event (Engelsma 2000:6). Entitled *The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches*, Hoeksema’s speech runs some 46 pages in its English translation. Present at the conference were sixteen Christian Reformed men and fourteen Protestant Reformed (Engelsma 2000:4-5). Hoeksema was the first to address the gathering, Schilder followed emphasizing ‘the need for unity’ (Vander Kam 1996:56-57).

Intending to get to the heart of the matter without delay, Hoeksema stated unequivocally: ‘now I come to the question which faces this gathering, be it not in an official sense: Is it required that the breach be healed? Is it possible? And is it desirable?’ (Hoeksema [s.a.]:16). Citing Klaas Schilder’s emphasis on unity and its importance, Hoeksema declared himself willing to put aside any personal animosities and grievances in order to get at the issues (Hoeksema [s.a.]:16). Unity, however, in Hoeksema’s mind was ultimately dependent upon standing ‘together upon the basis of the reformed confessions.... The question of the truth must govern, dominate this discussion. And that implies that we must discuss thoroughly the issue of common grace, which also includes the three points adopted in 1924’ (Hoeksema [s.a.]:17). Without doctrinal unity, according to Hoeksema, there is simply no unity. Thus, any differences must first be discussed in detail, with either side yielding to the one found to be in possession of the truth (Hoeksema [s.a.]:17). As Hoeksema stipulated:

If they succeed in convincing us we will acknowledge that we erred and that we must unite with them upon the basis of the three points. If we succeed in



convincing them, they must acknowledge that they erred in 1924 then the three points will presently be recalled, and then they will stand with us upon the same confessional basis. Only in this manner may we proceed. Any other way is the way of compromise, which I continue to refuse. (Hoeksema [s.a.]:17-18.)

After laying the ground rules which he assumed would be acceptable to all the participants, Hoeksema entered into a long, detailed discussion of the issues and where the specific differences lay (Hoeksema [s.a.]:19-46). Even so ‘the meeting was a failure,’ writes David Engelsma (Engelsma 2000:5). According to Henry vander Kam, ‘the conference failed to produce agreement because the Christian Reformed ministers did not appear to be interested in settling differences’ (Vander Kam 1996:57). David Engelsma also attributes the failure of the conference to Christian Reformed representatives, who ‘refused to discuss the issues. ...Nothing availed. They all were determined to sit as “silent listeners.” Two of them were at pains to advertise their complete disinterest by ostentatiously reading the newspaper’ (Engelsma 2000:5). Hence, ‘the conference came to a sorry end,’ Engelsma writes, ‘the last three hours were a wrangling, whether the group should discuss the doctrine of common grace. Common grace was never discussed’ (Engelsma 2000:5). It should also be mentioned that none of the professors from Calvin Seminary were present at the conference.

One of Hoeksema’s distinctives, as seen so vividly in his *Banner* articles, was that he wanted to discuss even the most controversial issues openly. While he just assumed that everyone else wanted the same, the opposite was most often the case; Hoeksema was the only one who wanted to talk. His opponents often viewed him as the problem, and, rather than discuss difficult issues, it was just easier to get rid of him. In seeking parallels between Hoeksema’s deposition in 1924 and Schilder’s in 1944, Rudolf van Reest

reveals a sordid and sinister side of the events of 1924, where Herman Hoeksema was indeed seen as the problem. He writes:

Reluctantly the church let go of Dr. Janssen: in the face of the overwhelming abundance of evidence assembled by Rev. Hoeksema, it simply *had* to be done. But the doctrine of common grace was beautifully suited to get rid of Hoeksema as well. “He must be put out,” wrote a well-known minister in those days, “but how are we going to accomplish it?” Kuyper’s construction regarding common grace could be of service here. (Van Reest 1990:419.)

If Hoeksema was a problem in 1924, my own feeling is that he was still viewed by the Christian Reformed Church as a significant threat, even in 1939.

#### *5.5 Schilder and Hoeksema in the 1940s*

When Schilder returned to the Netherlands, Europe was on the verge of war. That very same year Germany would successfully invade and conquer Poland. Under the able command of Hitler’s foremost expeditionary general, Sepp Dietrich, soon the Netherlands was occupied territory as well. ‘Shortly after German forces occupied the Netherlands in May 1940,’ writes John Knight, ‘Schilder was arrested’ (Knight 2000:26). For four months he was held in relative isolation, separated from friends and family, although he was allowed to send and receive letters. His work, his editorials, however, just stopped (Vander Kam 1996:68). When he was finally released in December of 1940, writes John Knight, ‘he was placed under a gag order. He could no longer publish his opinions, at least not openly’ (Knight 2000:26).

After his release, Schilder remained in hiding; constantly moving to avoid further arrest, or something worse (Vander Kam 1996:70). When he left the United States, Hoeksema and Schilder ‘parted as close friends, determined to maintain contact with

each other and to support each other in their future battles' (Woudenberg 2000:5). 'All through the war,' recounts Reverend Woudenberg, 'Rev. Hoeksema tried to maintain contact; but little other than greetings and expressions of concern could get through. Eventually, however, the war was over, and as quickly as possible plans were in the making for another visit of Dr. Schilder to the United States, this time at the invitation of the Protestant Reformed' (Woudenberg 2000:9).

Meanwhile, in war-torn Holland, Schilder had pressing matters of his own to contend with. While still in hiding in 1944, Schilder found himself first suspended and then deposed both as a minister and professor, in absentia, from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland by its National Synod (Knight 2000:26). Even though this decision was the result of a long chain of events stretching back as far as 1936, its propriety was suspect by many. Viewed in this light, the support he received from the people in the churches during his ordeal was truly extraordinary. Primarily in response to this outpouring of support, Schilder proceeded to found his own churches, hereafter known as the Liberated. This series of events brought one more commonality to the bond between Schilder and Hoeksema. Van Reest sees this commonality in the way both men were treated by the respective churches from which they were deposed, for Hoeksema it was the Christian Reformed Church and for Schilder it was the Gereformeerde Kerken. He writes of the 'striking parallels between the battle waged by Rev. Hoeksema and his followers against the hierarchy of the Christian Reformed Church, on the one hand, and the battle of the "protesters" against the hierarchy of the Churches in the Netherlands, on the other' (Van Reest 1990:417-418). When the decision reached Schilder of what the National Synod of the GKN had done, he was dumbfounded. He apparently could not

fathom, as Vander Kam relates, ‘that this decision was made “from above” and without consulting local ecclesiastical bodies’ (Vander Kam 1996:72). In the events of 1924 Hoeksema was confronted with essentially the same situation; he steadfastly maintained that a ‘higher’ assembly had usurped the powers delegated specifically to the consistory, and thus, the presumed illegality of the whole affair. Herman Hanko, in his doctrinal history of the Protestant Reformed Churches, expounds a view to which I believe both Hoeksema and Schilder would have subscribed (see Vander Kam 1996:76 also p. 83-84 for changes in the church order in the GKN between 1938 and 1942). Hanko writes that:

It is Reformed to maintain firmly, as the PRC does, the autonomy of the local congregation, while at the same time giving the broader assemblies their right to exercise judicatory authority in the federation in order to preserve the unity of the denomination. But such exercise of authority must never usurp the right of the local church to preach God’s Word, administer the sacraments, and exercise discipline. (Hanko 2000:118.)

In August of 1947 Schilder made his second trip to the United States. A very different set of circumstances prevailed this time in contrast to his previous visit in 1939. In 1939 he was still attached to the GKN and, as a result of the sister church relations that existed between the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederlands and the Christian Reformed Church in America, the CRC pulpits were opened to him. This time, writes Calvin College Librarian, Peter de Klerk, ‘the Synodical Committee placed a notice in *The Banner* that the CRC had no sister relationship with the Liberated Churches. Schilder was therefore not allowed in the CRC pulpits’ (De Klerk 1990:16). This was not true of the Protestant Reformed Churches, whose pulpits were open, just as they had been on his previous visit. This, concludes Peter de Klerk, ‘prompted Schilder upon his return to the Netherlands to write, that the Protestant Reformed Churches were the only churches where the members

of the Liberated Churches immigrating to North America could feel at home' (De Klerk 1990:16 & 17); a statement which Schilder would later come to regret.

### 5.6 *The Stroke*

Two months before Dr. Schilder's expected visit, Herman Hoeksema, while vacationing with his wife Nellie, daughter Jeanette, and her husband Bill in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, suffered a massive stroke that left his right side paralyzed and his power of speech gone (Hoeksema 1969:257-258). Because of this unfortunate occurrence, even though the May 1<sup>st</sup> issue of *The Standard Bearer* gave Dr. Schilder a warm welcome, Hoeksema was physically unable to enter into any sustained discussion with his friend from the Netherlands on areas of doctrine where there were acknowledged differences (Hoeksema 1969:282). On the effects of Hoeksema's stroke and Schilder's 1947 visit little is actually said beyond what is chronicled by Herman Hanko (Hanko 2000) and Gertrude Hoeksema (Hoeksema 1969).

Concerning what significance Hoeksema's stroke and Schilder's 1947 visit had on each other is not discussed; moreover, any substantive connection between the two is seldom made. Hence, the following explanation regarding the significance of these events is a summary of many conversations with Reverends Bernard Woudenberg and John Piersma; the latter having left the Protestant Reformed Churches for the Christian Reformed Church in the late 1940s. When the Protestant Reformed Churches were formed in the mid-1920s it became incumbent upon both Herman Hoeksema and George

Ophoff to train the future Protestant Reformed ministers. By the time of Schilder's second visit in 1947, several of the first generation of Protestant Reformed ministers, such as Cornelius Hanko, would have been actively in the ministry for up to twenty years. Many of these, as I said before, were fresh out of high school when they first began their ministerial instruction under the tutelage of Herman Hoeksema. In many cases, all they knew was 'Protestant Reformed.' Additionally, they were, in most instances, country ministers not critical scholars. When Schilder toured the Protestant Reformed Churches in October and November of 1947, even holding a two-day conference from November 4-6, it was with these men that he conversed. With Hoeksema unable to present the Protestant Reformed position, the sheer force of Dr. Schilder's presence swayed many. This force was not just the persuasiveness of his theological argumentation, but primarily in the strength of his rhetoric. In addition to being an accomplished rhetorician, Schilder also had a commanding and inspiring personality. Many of the ministers and elders who met with him were flattered by the attention he gave to them. Besides preaching in the churches, Schilder met with many of the Protestant Reformed ministers in their homes on a very personal basis. Schilder talked with them, listened to them, and made them feel important and appreciated and an integral part of the theological scene. The days following Dr. Klaas Schilder's visit to the United States,' recalls Reverend Wouderberg with fondness, 'were exciting days.

A new sense of enthusiasm seemed to fill the churches. After all, being visited by Dr. Schilder, a man who so recently had been the most noted theologian in the Netherlands, gave to our churches a degree of recognition which we had long been denied. And even more, with the promise of a new flood of post-war immigration, it seemed altogether likely that those who came from the Liberated churches would be joining ours. Then at last we might have the kind of growth for which we had long hoped but never known. All of this was stimulating, and a resurgence of interest in church and theology began to take place. But not

everything was as positive as it might have seemed. Some of what was happening, at least to the more discerning, did not forebode good; and that for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most evident of these was the rise of voices within our churches in defense of conditional theology. (Woudenberg 2000:7.)

I would like to suggest, that it was a combination of Schilder's commanding personality together with his growing popularity in the eyes of many in the Protestant Reformed Churches that caused his ideas, especially his ideas on the covenant, to be adopted. Schilder returned to the Netherlands in December, just prior to Hoeksema's departure for California for much needed rest and recuperation (Hoeksema 1992:146). It is said that a stroke accentuates a person's worst characteristics. This was definitely true in Hoeksema's case, and it is, no doubt, one of the reasons why his popularity in his own churches declined so suddenly. Additionally, because of the incapacitation brought on by the stroke, Hoeksema's son, Homer, took over many of the duties once reserved for his father. Herman Hoeksema was forced to rely on his son in many areas, and his son took him in directions both theological and ecclesiastical that the elder Hoeksema probably would not have ventured on his own.

In the aftermath of Schilder's 1947 visit, amid the rather all-pervasive positive outlook for the future, voices of dissent began to assert themselves. Over the next five years this dissent became deafening. Finally, in 1953, the Protestant Reformed Churches suffered a severe rupture. Many who left at this time eventually found their way back to the Christian Reformed Church, while a smaller percentage dispersed into other Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Prior to this split in 1953 the Protestant Reformed Churches, never what one would consider a large denomination, had approximately six thousand members. After the split that number was reduced to approximately three

thousand and it was not until the mid 1960s that the Protestant Reformed Churches regained numerically the membership they had before the split of 1953. Hoeksema, however, did not live to see this development. After his stroke, from which he never fully recovered, his involvement in his own denomination began to diminish even as that of his son, Homer, increased. It was during this time that Hoeksema wrote his dogmatics, completing it in 1956, but for the most part his productive years were over. His wife of almost sixty years died in September 1963 leaving him a profoundly lonely man (Hoeksema 1969:353). During the next two years Hoeksema suffered a series of small strokes which had the effect of weakening him all the more. Finally, two years after the death of his wife, on 2 September 1965, Hoeksema passed away quietly as he slept (Hoeksema 1969:355).

### *5.7 Conclusion*

During the course of this chapter I have tried to show the dependency of the events of 1924, in which Hoeksema and his associates were deposed from the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, on earlier events leading up to and including the Synod of 1922. Professor Ralph Janssen's expulsion in 1922 from his teaching post at Calvin Seminary and the denomination at large was to a good measure brought about by *The Banner* articles which Hoeksema authored. And, while Hoeksema may not have initiated the furor over Janssen, he certainly seems to have advantage of it. I have tried to demonstrate that, for his troubles Hoeksema was himself dismissed from the Christian Reformed Church by Janssen's supporters and fellow Neo-Calvinists. Hoeksema went



after Janssen with a vigor that instilled a profound fear in many of his contemporaries. His debating prowess, his mental acuity, his logical rigor, and his constant need to be right at any cost were the reasons none wanted to face him in open debate over the issues. At the same time, a sizeable contingent of ministers in the Christian Reformed Church realized that if they did not rid themselves of Hoeksema, he would eventually get rid of them. Because of both his theological acumen and his faith in the correctness of his own opinions, his detractors, instead of doing battle face to face outflanked him politically. This is essentially what happened in 1924. Both Janssen's supporters and his own enemies united to rid themselves of a common and greater threat: Herman Hoeksema. Hoeksema, frustrated and a bit baffled, went down complaining of procedural anomalies and aberrations just as Janssen before him.

The Synod of 1924, however, did bring the concept of common grace to the fore, especially in its adoption of the Three Points. In a decision marked by its alacrity, the Christian Reformed Church gave confessional status to widely held opinions without due consideration of the ramifications. Hoeksema said just this. He also predicted that one of the results of this decision by the Christian Reformed Church was a bridging of the antithesis, which for him meant letting the world into the church.

Hoeksema's appeal of his deposition to the Synod of 1926 was really just a formality. For all intents and purposes, the Protestant Reformed Churches had already gotten under way. Hoeksema's new denomination, contra the Christian Reformed Church from which he came, was built upon a foundation that repudiated any notion of a common grace of God as outlined in the Three Points.

The next two decades were very difficult for Hoeksema and his followers and growth was, for all intents and purposes, negligible. Still, a high point in Hoeksema's career came in the 1930s in the person of Klaas Schilder. Schilder first came to the United States in 1939 and preached in both the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches. Hoeksema and Schilder became fast friends, primarily because both denied common grace as detailed in the Three Points adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. Hoeksema saw in Schilder a kindred spirit. But, by the time of Schilder's second visit in 1947, both men's lives had changed significantly. Schilder had been expelled from his former church and had started a new one and Hoeksema had suffered a debilitating stroke. As a result of Hoeksema's diminished capacity, Schilder's time was spent with other Protestant Reformed ministers. With his magnetic personality, his scintillating rhetoric, and his simple willingness to listen, Schilder won many Protestant Reformed ministers to his position. Hoeksema never fully recover from his debilitating stroke and, as a result, his son Homer took over more and more of the denomination's daily operations; tasks which Hoeksema had previously reserved for himself. Homer took Herman and the denomination in a decidedly different direction, but by this time the distinctives of Hoeksema's theology was already complete.