

6-20-1979

Hoeksema, Homer C Oral History Interview: Former RCA and Protestant Reformed Church Executives

Derk M. Strauch

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/church_executives



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Strauch, Derk M., "Hoeksema, Homer C Oral History Interview: Former RCA and Protestant Reformed Church Executives" (1979). *Former RCA and Protestant Reformed Church Executives*. Paper 2.

http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/church_executives/2

Published in: 1979 - *Former RCA and Protestant Reformed Church Executives (H88-0234) Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project*, June 20, 1979. Copyright © 1979 Hope College, Holland, MI.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Interviews at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Former RCA and Protestant Reformed Church Executives by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.

HOPE COLLEGE LIVING HERITAGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
1979

REV. HOMER C. HOEKSEMA
INTERVIEW

THIS TRANSCRIPT IS CONSIDERED
"OPEN"
AND THE PROPERTY OF THE
HOPE COLLEGE ARCHIVES COUNCIL
HOPE COLLEGE
HOLLAND, MICHIGAN
49423

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....iii, iv
Preface.....vi
Biographical Sketch and Summary.....vii, viii
Interview I.....1
Interview II.....22
Index.....43
After Fifty Years (appendix).....44

INTRODUCTION

The HOPE COLLEGE LIVING HERITAGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT consists of a series of interviews conducted during the summer of 1977, with Nancy A. Swinyard and the summer of 1978 with Conrad J. Strauch, Jr. with past administrators and professors of Hope College. In the summer of 1979, the project dealt with the Reformed Churches and their development. Interviews were conducted by Derk Michael Strauch with past Reformed Church in America Executives and the Rev. Homer Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Upon completion of each session, the taped interview was transcribed and then edited by the interviewer and the interviewee to assure clarity in the interview. While the accuracy of the transcript is desirable, the viewpoint of the interviewee is maintained. Some alterations were suggested by the interviewer during the interview and in later correspondences, but the researcher will discover discrepancies between the interviews themselves and with published materials. Therefore, the researcher must be aware that these discrepancies exist, and seek to understand the perspective from which all statements were made. Tapes of all the interviews are stored in the Archives of Hope College.

No claim is made that the information contained within these transcripts is absolutely accurate. No two people share identical viewpoints, and the separation of time from the interviewee's experiences with the events mentioned, can sometimes intensify this divergence.

Without the support of Dr. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, Dean of the Humanities and the Fine Arts this project would not have become a reality. Special thanks go to Dr. Elton J. Bruins, professor of Religion at Hope College, who gave constant help and encouragement to the project even though he was busy with his own pursuits. The success of this project can be attributed to the efforts of the interviewees, each gracious, receptive and cooperative.

Interview with
REV. HOMER C. HOEKSEMA
of the
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
at his office in
Grandville, Michigan
on
June 20, 1979
and
June 27, 1979
with
Derk M. Strauch

The Rev. Homer C. Hoeksema was born in Grand Rapids, in 1923, while his father was minister at the Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church. He grew up in a Christian home and was very well acquainted with the beliefs of the Reformed Faith. He attended the Baxter Christian Elementary School and the Grand Rapids Christian High School. In 1944, he received an AB from Calvin College and later went on to the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches and graduated in 1947.

After doing some post-graduate work at the Seminary, he entered the Pastorate and served as Pastor at the Churches in Doon, Iowa, South Holland, Illinois, and then went to become a professor of Theology at the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1959. He has served as the professor of Theology since that time.

He is married to Gertrude (Jonker) Hoeksema and is the father of four children: Mark Homer, Eunice Ruth, Lois Elaine, and Candace Ann. His wife does some of the editing of the materials of the publications of the Reformed Free Publishing Association besides being a teacher. She is also the author of the biography on Herman Hoeksema, Therefore Have I Spoken.

Rev. Hoeksema serves as the Editor-in-chief of the Standard Bearer, (he served as the Associate Editor from 1950-65), and sits on various Synodical committees from time to time.

In the interview he discusses his father's early ministry at Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, and also some incidents while he was a seminary student...the issue of the Church Polity and of Common Grace. Although the discussion of Common Grace was interrupted, Rev. Hoeksema was gracious enough to attach a biography for the researcher. Other subjects that are covered include: the Sacraments, Seminary training of the ministers, the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches since 1936, and their present missions, and the ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands.

I was very much pleased with the information that I gained on the Church. I found Rev. Hoeksema to be very much aware of the Church issues that are facing the Reformed Churches in America and in the Netherlands. He is very interested in the church situation today. He was interested in my account of the ordination procedures of the Reformed Church in America as I was in the Protestant Reformed Churches as a whole.

INTERVIEW WITH REV. HOMER C. HOEKSEMA OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES,
ON JUNE 20, 1979 IN HIS OFFICE IN GRANDVILLE

STRAUCH: First let us start with some background on your father, Rev. Herman Hoeksema. When he was a Christian Reformed minister, were there any controversies before the Janssen Case?

HOEKSEMA: Well, he had his personal struggles in his first congregation, which was the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. Those controversies were not in the formal sense church controversies, and they didn't result in any ecclesiastical cases. But one of the struggles in Fourteenth Street was about the Christian Schools. Fourteenth Street was at that time, when he became minister in 1915, -- I believe he told me there were ten percent in favor of Christian instruction. At the time he left in 1919, it was ninety percent. So that was indicative of the struggle and of a change that went on in the congregation. At the time that he came, Fourteenth Street would have been classified as one of the more liberal in the Christian Reformed Church in several respects. For one thing -- I should say progressive rather than liberal -- for one thing it was an English speaking congregation; and at the time the English churches were few and far between. Everything was Dutch in the Christian Reformed Church at that time. All ecclesiastical assemblies were Dutch, that is, the Dutch language was used. The Acts of Synod were published in Dutch. And my father already, as a student, saw that English was the wave of the future. This had to come, and this was hastened, of course, by World War I. So as a student he had made it a point to learn English well, and he also made it a point to preach in English when he began to preach as a student. Even to the extent that he would trade English preaching assignments for Dutch preaching turns in the churches. Most of the students at that time did not want to preach English if they could avoid it. He was more than willing to preach English. So he would trade around with his fellow seminarians. Fourteenth Street was one of those English speaking congregations: they had no

Dutch there anymore in their services and in their meetings. They also had a choir, which was an innovation in the Christian Reformed Churches in those days; and the minister did not come into the church with his consistory, but was supposed to come in with the choir. That was an innovation in those days. Among the young people they had C.E., Christian Endeavor, which was characteristic of the Reformed Church in America, not of the Christian Reformed Church, in those days. And they followed the Bible lessons of the Christian Endeavor, too. There was present in the congregation quite an element that did not want Reformed doctrine and preaching, besides not wanting Christian schools.

When my father came to Fourteenth Street, he really did not want to go there. He had graduated, and I think he had four calls at the time. He had one call to Paterson, N.J. and he wanted to go there. All of this goes back to a controversy which he had as a student. Maple Avenue Christian Reformed Church was a daughter of Fourteenth Street in Holland. As a student he preached at Maple Avenue on a Sunday, and he was very well received, overwhelmingly received. His preaching was praised to the skies. But Maple Avenue, like its mother church, was anti-Christian schools; and my father knew that at the time. He thought to himself, "This isn't going right; that they praise me." So in the evening service, he made a reference to Christian instruction in his congregational prayer. The reference -- and I can't quote it exactly -- he prayed to the effect that parents might not send their children to the gates of hell. He could feel the contact snapping, as soon as he made that statement. In those days, when you were a student and went out preaching, you would go on Saturday -- you wouldn't travel on Sunday. You would take the old Interurban from Grand Rapids to Holland on Saturday, and stay over Sunday, leave on Monday morning. That night, after he came home from church, the people with whom he was staying for the weekend were nowhere to be seen. They were angry. In fact, he did not see them again. Monday morning there was some breakfast set out for him, but his hosts were not around. Maple Avenue

protested to the faculty of the Seminary about the statement which he had made; and the faculty of the Seminary at that time replied that it was a strong statement, but that it would stand. So as a result, Maple Avenue instituted a boycott, tried to institute a "Hoeksema boycott" among the churches in the Holland area. It so happened that my father was president of the student body, and that the president of the student body was in charge of handing out pulpit assignments to the seminarians. So pretty soon there came a postcard from the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church in that area, "we need a student for such and such a Sunday, but not Hoeksema." And the students -- my father was rather popular with the student body -- said that if they don't want Hoeksema, they don't get anybody. So that foiled the boycott. But this is all background of the controversy that took place at Fourteenth Street. Finally, after a long time, Maple Avenue wanted to settle their difference with my father. They invited him for the consistory meeting. The name of the clerk at Maple Avenue was at that time Notier. Well, the first question that came up was just exactly what my father had said in that statement in the congregational prayer. They had had the statement correctly in the letter which they had sent to the faculty, to which I referred earlier. But at the consistory meeting there was disagreement, and they attributed a statement to my father which he had not made. Finally my father said, "You had that statement correctly quoted in your letter to the faculty in which you protested. Why don't you get that letter out of the file?" So the clerk goes to the file and gets the letter, and he starts to read. But as he read, he deliberately changed the statement in the letter. My father said, "Notier, you don't read right." So he started over, and he read it again, and he still misquoted. "Notier, you don't read right," my father said. So he went under the light as if he were trying to see it better, and he still read it wrong, changed it a little. My father said, "Notier, you don't read right. Give me that letter, and I'll read it." The result was that the whole consistory started to damn the

Christian school. My father finally left the meeting. That was it; it never was settled.

Well, Fourteenth Street was the mother of Maple Avenue, as I said; and they had the same tendencies with regard to Christian Schools.

My father, as I said, did not want to go there. So he always said later on that he had made a little deal with the Lord. He decided to go there and meet with the whole congregation; and I really think he had in mind to get rid of that call, to have them say that they really did not want him to come. His "deal with the Lord" was that if that meeting went well, he would accept the call to Fourteenth Street. But he went there, and in effect "told them off." He told them how bad they were. He told them that they just about killed their former minister, a man by the name of Hoekstra, I believe. He told them that they hated the Christian school, and so on and so forth. He had a list of grievances about the congregation. And he said, "Don't ever come to me and tell me what to preach. If you do, you'll go out faster than you came in." At the end of that meeting, he said, "Now if you still want me to accept the call, you may shake hands with me as you leave." With few exceptions, the whole congregation shook hands with him. One said, "Dominie, we're not as bad as you think." So he came home to my mother that evening, and said, "We're going to Fourteenth Street." And for the first couple of years it was storm over there. The congregation had many of what at that time would have been called "modern" practices. I've mentioned some of them already. They also had "free elections" for consistory members instead of elections from a nomination proposed by the consistory. They simply had a free vote at the congregational meeting. There were many incidents that took place. Several of them are mentioned in the biography, Therefore Have I Spoken; so I won't go into detail on that. But after about two years, things had developed to the point that the congregation stood about fifty-fifty. It was time for a congregational meeting, and they had to elect an elder. And the voting was between

a man by the name of Mulder -- I think that was the father of Bernard Mulder, who was later a professor at Western Seminary -- and a man by the name of De Goede. And they were campaigning. "Vote for Mulder." "Vote for De Goede." My father wanted nothing of that. He did say to De Goede, because he knew that it was virtually a tie in the congregation, "When it comes down to it, you may not vote for Mulder." He didn't tell him that he should vote for himself. Lo, and behold, they got to the congregational meeting, and the vote turned out a tie. The call came from the congregation to pull straws. My father said, "That is not in the Church Order; you're going to vote until you break the tie, and you'll keep on voting until midnight if you have to." Well, that also proved to be the turning point in the consistory, because De Goede got in, which meant that there was a majority in the consistory that was in favor of my father. From then on things began to go a little better. But it also proved to be the turning point from the point of view of the anti-Hoeksema element in the congregation becoming consolidated in their feelings. There was finally an element in the congregation which actually negotiated with men from Westminster Presbyterian Church, here in Grand Rapids. They tried to make a Presbyterian Church out of Fourteenth Street. But when they found out that the Presbyterian Church allowed Lodge membership as well as the Reformed Church in America, they apparently turned their sympathies more towards the RCA. But they were actually plotting either to cause a split in the congregation or to turn that congregation over to another denomination and get rid of Hoeksema in the process, of course. My father got wind of that -- those things, of course, don't remain secret from the minister and from office bearers. And as things came to a head, it was almost time for the Lord's Supper. There were those of the sounder element of the congregation who thought that they should not celebrate the Lord's Supper because of the division in the church. My father took the stand that if they were not spiritually ready for the Lord's Supper, they had better get ready and become prepared.

And when it came time for this -- I'll give you a little anecdote -- there was a man in the congregation, a good man, a little bit timid, by the name of E. S. Holkeboer. Well, he was worried that things were going all wrong in the church; he was aware of these troublemakers. He met my father during the week on the streets of Holland, and he was complaining that things were going all wrong and that they were headed for trouble. And my father said to him, "Holkeboer, you remind me of a doctor who gives his patient a dose of castor oil; and when it starts to work, he gets afraid. You know what a good doctor does? He gives his patient one more dose." He said, "That's what they are going to get next Sunday at Preparatory." So in his preparatory sermon from Galatians 5:7-10 -- by the way, I still have the manuscript of that sermon in my file -- he exposed the whole plot and all of what they were doing in the congregation. And he applied the passage from Galatians to the troublemakers in the congregation. That was the end of the trouble; they left. In fact, at the end of the service, that same Mulder, whom I mentioned earlier, came to my father and said, "That's enough, Dominie!" And my father replied, "I intended it to be enough." From then on there was peace in the congregation for awhile; and at the time when my father left in 1919, to go to Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids, the congregation was ninety percent in favor of Christian schools, and it was a strong congregation doctrinally and spiritually, and they begged him not to leave. But as far as formal church controversies are concerned, no, there weren't any there. (I could insert that in the days of World War I there was an interesting controversy about having the American flag in the church. This was not a controversy in the congregation as such, nor was it a church controversy. It was rather a literary controversy which was carried on in the Holland Sentinel between my father and Rev. P.P. Cheff, Pastor of Hope Reformed Church, and president G.J. Diekema of Hope College. You can also find an account of that controversy and some interesting quotations from the articles in the Holland Sentinel in Therefore Have I Spoken.)

In the denomination, of course, in the period of 1915-1919, the early years of my father's ministry, there was what came to be known as the Bultema Case. This came to a head at the synod, of the Synod of 1918, and it was a case that involved premillennialism, and along with it a form of dispensationalism. The Rev. Bultema was a minister in one of the churches in Muskegon -- I forget which one -- but my father participated in that case. He was on the committee at Synod. In fact he was the one who aided greatly in finally pinning down the charge of heresy against Harry Bultema, a heresy that came down to a denial of the Kingship of Christ. Bultema took the position that Christ was King of the Jews and Head of the Church; and according to the Reformed Confessions that is a denial of the Kingship of Christ over His Church. That was the point on which the Bultema Case was finally decided. But in that period prior to the Janssen Case there was no other controversy that I know of.

STRAUCH: It appears that your father was already very strong in his convictions as to the Reformed doctrines.

HOEKSEMA: He was strong, and he had gained a reputation for this. And as I said, already as a student he was a very popular man, and he had a position of some leadership at a very early point in the Christian Reformed Church. While he was in Holland, Michigan, he was also instrumental in organizing, along with Richard Postma, the Young Calvinist Federation, which was first the Federation of Young Men's Societies in the Christian Reformed Church. He was at an early stage recognized as one of the leading ministers in the church, and he was very well received.

STRAUCH: So it would be natural for him to get involved with the Janssen Case?

HOEKSEMA: Yes, his involvement in that, however, came about because he was a member of the Curatorium, the Board of Control of the Seminary. It was the Curatorium that appointed him, along with seven others, I believe, to the committee which investigated the teachings of Dr. Janssen in 1921.

STRAUCH: Wasn't that all taken from students' notes?

HOEKSEMA: Yes, actually the Janssen Case began in 1920; and it was originated by Dr. Janssen's four colleagues at the Seminary -- Prof. Berkhof, Prof. Volbeda, Prof. Heyns, and Prof. Ten Hoor. They brought objections in 1920 to the Curatorium about the teachings of Dr. Janssen, who was very erudite and who was popular among the students. He was an interesting teacher; in fact, he was more interesting than the four men who protested against him. They were classified as dry. To an extent it is a question of just what part jealousy played in this case, because they were not beyond jealousy. When the four profs brought the protest against Dr. Janssen, the Curatorium rejected it and told them, "You were wrong in bringing the matter to the Curatorium without having talked to Dr. Janssen himself." They were told they were ethically wrong. So the profs brought their protest to the Synod of 1920, and they lost there. The Synod of 1920 took essentially a negative decision, namely, that it had not appeared that there were errors in Janssen's teachings. But the profs were not satisfied, and after the Synod of 1920 they began to write publicly about the decision of 1920, opposing the decision, and about Dr. Janssen's teachings. It was a regular brochure war that went on in the period between 1920 and 1922 (the Synod was still meeting biennially). My father also became involved at the time. He was editor of the department "Our Doctrine" in the Banner, and he took it upon himself to get hold of student notes and to criticize the teachings of Dr. Janssen in the Banner. Dr. Janssen replied in the Banner. But thereafter the Banner was officially closed to the issue, and no one might write on that subject. But at that time the Curatorium of Calvin's Seminary took up the case again. They appointed an investigating committee of seven to study the teachings of Dr. Janssen. The committee was to make an evaluation and a report to the Curatorium. Dr. Janssen would not cooperate with the committee. He said that the move of the Curatorium was church politically incorrect; and so he would give the committee no notes, no help of any kind. He refused to be interviewed by them. He simply stayed out of it. The result

was that the committee was compelled to go to student notes for their information. Now you understand that these student notes were not merely notes of individual students, but notes compiled and redacted by a group of students. There were also various individual notes, simply notes that were taken in class by individuals, which were made available to the committee in some instances. But what was called the "student notes" were edited and redacted, compiled from the notes which students had taken, so that they were rather reliable. And the committee had available piles and piles of these notes. The notes were both from before 1920, when the charges were originally brought against Dr. Janssen, and after 1920, when Janssen somewhat adjusted his instruction but did not fundamentally change. So this committee met for I don't know how long, in the Douglas Park Christian Reformed Church in Chicago. They first met as an entire committee. But they couldn't agree. Although they tried to present a united report, they finally ended up divided four and three. With the majority of the committee were my father, Rev. H. Danhof, who also played a part in the early history of our denomination, a Rev. J. Manni, and Rev. H. J. Kuiper, who later was a pro-common grace man and played a leading part in the controversy of 1924. The minority was Dr. J. Van Lonkhuyzen, and Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema, who later on played a part in the controversy of 1924 and who was the author of some of the protests against my father, that is, the real author, though not the signer. His brother was a member of my father's congregation at Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids and was one of the original protestants against my father.

STRAUCH: Was that W. Hoeksema?

HOEKSEMA: That was W. Hoeksema. Gerrit Hoeksema wrote some of the protests for his brother and his fellow protestants. The third member of the minority was Dietrich Kromminga, who was later on professor of Church History at Calvin Seminary, and the father of Dr. John Kromminga and Dr. Carl Kromminga, who are at present professors at Calvin Seminary.

STRAUCH: It appears that there is a Kromminga dynasty at Calvin.

HOEKSEMA: I don't know if there is any real connection. But you know that Dr. John Kromminga was involved in a controversy in the early 1960's about the infallibility of Scripture in connection with a case which originated in the Seminary magazine, Stromata, in which an article was written by one of the students, a certain Hoogland, who is at present a Christian Reformed minister. Anyway, Dr. John Kromminga got involved in that controversy and was accused by old Dr. Wyngarden, who was at that time still at the Seminary, of denying the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. Whether that was just coincidence, or whether that was a dynasty of pro-Janssen sentiment which has continued after the days of that case, from their father, it is pretty difficult to tell. It is rather a coincidence.

But at any rate, the majority of the committee came with a report that was opposed to Dr. Janssen. Their recommendation was in substance approved by the Synod of Orange City in 1922, and Dr. Janssen was deposed.

STRAUCH: Did Dr. Janssen ever return into the Christian Reformed Church?

HOEKSEMA: No, Dr. Janssen never did come back. What happened was that when he was deposed, the pro-Janssen faction remained in the church; and that played a part in the controversy of 1924 because the pro-Janssen faction, which was fairly large, swore to get vengeance for Dr. Janssen. And that vengeance fell upon the heads of the two main authors of the majority report, which were Danhof and Hoeksema. That's the background as far as the controversy is concerned. I mean from a personal point of view.

STRAUCH: The Janssen Case was against higher criticism.

HOEKSEMA: Yes, Dr. Janssen was really accused of higher criticism, denying the infallibility of the Scriptures, and so on. I could give you the brief majority recommendation if you want to hear. You can tell from the fact that these reports and decisions were published in sizable brochures that they were considered important. But the substance of the case was that Dr. Janssen

adopted the higher critical view of Scripture. He didn't agree with the Welhausen school in every way, but nevertheless he adopted the viewpoint of the higher critics.

STRAUCH: Has the view against higher criticism changed in the Protestant Reformed Churches?

HOEKSEMA: No, there has never been any case about it in any of our churches; and you must remember, too, that officially in 1922 the Christian Reformed Church took a stand against higher criticism and in condemnation of Dr. Janssen. Rather specifically, there were some six separate propositions on which Dr. Janssen was condemned. But as with many instances like that in controversy, while the chief culprit was condemned, his supporters remained. The case of Dr. Janssen did not lead to a split in the church because his supporters remained in the church and because -- there you have the connection between 1922 and 1924 -- because the underlying basis of Dr. Janssen's position was, after all, common grace. Added to that is the fact that Hoeksema and Danhof at that time were the only ones who denied common grace, while many of the anti-Janssen men held to common grace, and inconsistently condemned Dr. Janssen with respect to his doctrine of Scripture. Perhaps this is somewhat of an over-simplification, but for the purposes of this interview it will suffice. The alignment of sides in 1924, therefore, was a rather strange one; and you could say that when the forces united against Hoeksema and Danhof in the Christian Reformed Church, it was somewhat similar to Pilate and Herod becoming friends. The anti-Janssen and the pro-Janssen forces united to condemn Hoeksema and Danhof -- and, later on, Ophoff -- on the question of common grace.

STRAUCH: It seems odd that in the 1924 controversy your father said that Synod didn't have the right to rule on the case because it was just a broader, loose federation of the churches, and only the consistory has the right to judge.

HOEKSEMA: O no, you have that wrong. It is true that there were things which were prematurely at Synod. If I had to take a stand today on the way in which some of the things reached Synod in 1924, I would oppose it, because they were never adjudicated at the classical level, which is incorrect. But that did not really become an issue at the Synod, whether or not those protests were legally before the Synod. I think what you are referring to in your question is the fact that after Synod adjudicated the case, and after Synod refused to apply discipline or advise discipline to either Hoeksema or Danhof, the Classès -- Classis Grand Rapids East in my father's case and Classis Grand Rapids West in the case of Danhof and Ophoff -- the Classes did what the Synod explicitly refused to do. It was that to which my father and his colleagues at that time objected. They maintained that Classes had no right to discipline after Synod had refused to apply or advise discipline. And that eventually led to the ouster of my father in Eastern Avenue, and his consistory, and by far the larger part of the congregation, and to the ouster of Rev. Danhof, who was at that time the minister of the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, and to the ouster of Rev. George M. Ophoff, at that time a young minister in the Hope (Riverbend) Church at Grandville.

STRAUCH: According to the cases in the book, The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches, I got a different sense of polity than what I thought was Reformed polity. I sensed that the major power of the church lies in the consistory, and that the classis is mainly advisory.

HOEKSEMA: Well, to be sure that was an aspect of the controversy from the church political point of view. I don't know exactly how to state that in condensed form. You have, of course, the three assemblies: the consistory, the classis, and the synod. It is true that according to Reformed Church polity the power of your broader assemblies -- not higher judicatories, but broader, the classis is broader than the consistory and the synod is broader than the classis, the broadest -- their power is advisory. [It is not advisory.]

That is not the idea of the Church Order. The idea is that the advice has teeth. The Classis advises the consistory to do something. The consistory won't do it. Then it simply cannot say that we decline to take the advice, and we'll go our own way. The consistory accepts the advice, or it appeals to Synod. If Synod upholds the Classis, then the consistory is confronted by the question: are we going to take the advice, or are we going to leave the church federation, or be ousted from the church federation. No question about that! The advice of your broader ecclesiastical assemblies has force. But the church political question is also this, whether the broader assemblies have the power to discipline. You see, it is our position that only the consistory can exercise discipline. The Classis can advise the consistory to exercise discipline, and so can the Synod. But the consistory is the one which exercises the discipline. If the consistory doesn't exercise discipline, then there is no Classis or Synod which can step in and exercise that discipline instead of the consistory. The course open to the broader assemblies in case of conflict is that eventually they could decide to set that consistory outside the church federation. This is not a deposing from office and is not the exercise of discipline; it is simply the breaking of the denominational tie. In other words, they could have declared the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Church outside the church federation without penalty with regard to the office of the consistory members; and then they would have been an independent congregation. Their ministers and elders and deacons would still be in office. That is still our position today. The offices reside in the congregation, not in the Classis or the Synod. Classis cannot preach. Classis cannot administer the sacraments. Classis cannot discipline. This was one of the church political issues involved in the controversy in 1924. But I want to stress again that one of the chief questions was the question whether Classis could go beyond the decision of Synod of 1924 and could advise or exercise discipline when the Synod had explicitly

refused to advise any kind of discipline.

STRAUCH: Doesn't Classis have the right to ordain?

HOEKSEMA: No, Classis doesn't have the right to ordain.

STRAUCH: Coming from the Reformed Church in America, Classis has the power to ordain, no one else.

HOEKSEMA: The Classis ordains?

STRAUCH: Yes, the Classis is the only body with the power of ordination.

HOEKSEMA: Well, we don't follow that policy, and the Christian Reformed Church doesn't follow it either.

STRAUCH: That's where my misunderstanding of your polity arises.

HOEKSEMA: You mean that a candidate for the ministry is ordained by the Classis before he becomes minister of the congregation?

STRAUCH: After the classical examination, if you receive a call, your Classis ordains you and then you are installed into the church that you will serve.

HOEKSEMA: Well, that's where the difference comes in. We have the same process of examination. In fact, we have two examinations, the first a synodical examination. We had one just last week for four men at our Synod. Then they are declared candidates. If they receive a call, they have to undergo what is called the peremttoir examination in the Classis in which the congregation which called the candidate resides. Then the Classis will give approval to proceed with ordination and installation. But the actual ordination and installation is done by the congregation with the approval of Classis; and the office resides within the congregation, just as the office of elder does. It has its denominational ramifications; and that's why a congregation cannot install a minister without the approval of Classis. They could not install an unauthorized man. But the office as such resides in the local church. In other words, each local church is in itself a unit. That is the reason, by the way, why we speak of the Protestant Reformed Churches (plural) in America, rather than the Protestant Reformed Church (singular) in America. That

expresses the difference between the collegialistic view of church government, in which the church is really the denomination, while each congregation is a branch of that one big church, and the autonomous view of church government, Reformed Church government, in which the unit is the congregation, and the denomination is a federation of autonomous, self-governing units.

STRAUCH: Is that like the "Free" Churches in the Netherlands?

HOEKSEMA: I'm not sure what you mean by the "Free" Churches.

STRAUCH: They are a group of churches that left the State Church and freed themselves from any higher government, so to speak. They are united in the fact that they are free churches, but nothing past that.

HOEKSEMA: Of course, in the Netherlands you have the State Church (Hervormde Kerk), which is the sister denomination of the Reformed Church in America. You have the GKN (Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland), which is the sister church of the Christian Reformed Church, and out of which we all, of the Christian Reformed and of the Protestant Reformed Churches had our roots. That was established in 1892. Then there are the "Liberated Churches" of the Netherlands, started under Dr. Schilder in the 1940's, during the war. And there are also the Liberated Churches (unaffiliated), a group of churches which split off from the Schilder Churches in a later controversy. Maybe you are referring to the latter. They are -- the last I read, anyway -- they have no denominational organization, but are just a group of independent congregations, although they are in the process of forming some kind of organization and have also had a discussion of what name they are to take as a denomination. They have simply been calling themselves the "Vrijgemaakte Kerken Buiten Verband," the Liberated Church outside the church connection. That's their name. But otherwise all the Reformed denominations in the Netherlands have a form of denominational tie which is characterized by one of the two tendencies which I described a moment ago. There are several more churches, of course. There is the denomination known as the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. There

is the Reformed Congregations of the Netherlands and North America; there is a congregation of that denomination here in Grand Rapids whose pastor is the Reverend Lamain. And there are others. But they all have a form or a corruption of Reformed Church government. The Dutch churches, the Gereformeerde Kerken, the sister church of the Christian Reformed Church, until about 1926, when they had a case of a certain Dr. Geelkerken, took the same stand as we do in regard to church polity. That stand is that Classis and particular Synods and general Synods do not discipline; they can advise discipline, but they cannot discipline. In 1926, as far as I know, there was the first instance in which they changed in regard to that polity. Actually, Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr. and Dr. F. L. Rutgers of the Netherlands are probably best known for this stand against the collegialistic view of church government and in favor of the autonomous view. And the Christian Reformed Church always maintained that same position until 1924.

STRAUCH: Then was that a unifying force of the CRC?

HOEKSEMA: Well, a unifying force? It consolidated the hierarchical power.

STRAUCH: I can see your disapproval of such government coming through.

HOEKSEMA: O, yes!

STRAUCH: The whole controversy of 1924 was started by the common grace issue. What is the view of the Protestant Reformed Churches as opposed to the Christian Reformed Churches' view of that matter? Also, how do you apply it to society today?

HOEKSEMA: We don't believe in common grace.

STRAUCH: How do you get that from Scripture and the Reformed doctrines when two other Reformed denominations cannot do it?

HOEKSEMA: I don't think that the Reformed Church in America has any official stand on common grace, do they?

STRAUCH: Do they really have any official stands on anything?

HOEKSEMA: Well, the Christian Reformed Church does. In fact, the split of 1924

would not have taken place if common grace had not been elevated to official church doctrine. My father has said that more than once. If the question of common grace had been left as an extra-confessional matter, simply left to discussion in the church, so that you would have been free to believe common grace or not to believe in common grace, there would not have been any split. It was due to the fact that the Christian Reformed Synod in-1924 elevated common grace to official church doctrine, and did so rather precipitously and prematurely, that the whole thing developed into a split. And, in fact, even after they elevated it to church doctrine, if the proponents of common grace, especially the opponents of Hoeksema and Danhof had acted and adhered to the synodical decision not to apply discipline, there still would not have been a split. There would have been discussion, and probably another pamphlet and brochure war; but after all the Christian Reformed Synod itself in one of the items of its decision, decided that they wanted further study and discussion. They got such discussion from Hoeksema and Danhof in the form of opposition to the Three Points of Common Grace. Then things developed into discipline as far as the two classes were concerned.

STRAUCH: So according to the Protestant Reformed Churches, what appears to be grace to the reprobates is actually adding coals to the fire. I really don't understand.

HOEKSEMA: Well, I would fill a good many tapes if I were to explain the whole question. But briefly, over against the Three Points of Common Grace, the first of which teaches that God shows favor towards all men in the things of this present time, and not merely to the elect: That is the main thesis of the First Point. That is what you would call the Kuyperian view of common grace. Abraham Kuyper was the great proponent of that in his three volumes on common grace, which my father once said could be reduced or condensed to twenty pages. At any rate that is common grace per se. The Christian Reformed Church at the time, in its desperation to find some kind of confessional

support of the doctrine of common grace, which there is not -- the confessions make no reference to common grace, they don't touch on the question -- but in their desperation to find some kind of confessional support, they said that this common grace of God was manifested in the "well meant offer of the gospel" to all men. Again, they could not find support for that either, for the idea of a "well-meant offer," but they thought to find support in the Canons of Dordrecht. In the course of blundering, really, into the doctrine of the well meant offer, they really adopted the Arminian view of the offer of the gospel. That became known as, to use the Dutch expression, "het puntje van het eerste punt," the real point, the little point, of the First Point. And that became a whole question of controversy in itself. You see, Dr. Abraham Kuyper wanted nothing of Arminianism. He never spoke of common grace in connection with the gospel. He never spoke of the well meant offer of the gospel. Dr. Kuyper was a strong proponent in that regard of the doctrine that grace is particular. In fact, he wrote one of his books by that title, That Grace is Particular. Dr. Kuyper taught common grace. And that applies only to the things of this present time, rain and sunshine and bread and wine and the good gifts of God. In this present time they are considered common grace. The Christian Reformed Church went farther than that, and adopted in addition the doctrine of the general, well meant offer of the gospel. So that was the first point. The Second Point was that by virtue of common grace God restrains sin in the individual and in society, without changing the heart. There is an operation of the Holy Spirit, not saving, which without changing the heart restrains sin in the individual and in society. That we consider to be a denial of the doctrine of total depravity, that man by nature is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it. The Third Point was very closely related to the Second, namely, that the natural man by virtue of the operation of common grace is able to do civil good. That is good that is truly good in the sight of God, but which is nevertheless distinct from what they call saving good. That was common grace. We disagreed with all

three points. We maintain that God's grace is strictly particular, shown to the elect alone. We maintain that grace is not in things as such, which is one of the errors of the common grace position. We don't deny, of course, that God bestows good gifts on the reprobate also. God's sunshine is good sunshine, and His rain is good rain, and all His gifts are good gifts. It is another question, "What is God's attitude in bestowing those gifts?" And then you run into the question of grace or wrath, blessing or curse. We maintain that God bestows all things on the elect in His favor; He bestows all things on the reprobate in His consuming wrath.

STRAUCH: By that do you mean that He gives the rain also to the reprobate, so that they can see Him, and He then has just cause to condemn them?

HOEKSEMA: It's not a blessing, but a curse.

STRAUCH: He does that to show how wrong the reprobate is?

HOEKSEMA: That's an aspect of it, yes. But all things God bestows on the reprobate in His wrath. They are means, therefore, which serve to his hardening and which lead him eventually to everlasting destruction. All things God bestows on His elect in His favor, with His blessing; and they are means which serve to lead him ultimately to everlasting glory. That means that also so-called "evil things" are nevertheless bestowed by God on His people in His favor. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."

STRAUCH: There can be no problem with that; Calvin states that clearly in the Institutes.

HOEKSEMA: And the opposite is true with respect to the reprobate. God sets them in slippery places, and casts them down to destruction, as Psalm 73 puts it.

STRAUCH: It looks as though I really don't believe in common grace.

HOEKSEMA: You might be surprised to find that you don't believe in it if you study it a little further. See, common grace became the basis for cooperation

between light and darkness, between the church and the world. In fact, that was even the historical background of the common grace theory as Dr. Abraham Kuyper developed it. Dr. Kuyper had to find some ground for cooperation between light and darkness, with a view to his political position in the Netherlands, you see. You realize that the Reformed party, the Anti-revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, couldn't have any power; they were a minority party. And in order to justify coalition with the Roman Catholics, and to justify coalition in politics generally, partly at least, the common grace theory was developed. It was a foundation for cooperation between light and darkness.

STRAUCH: How does the Protestant Reformed Church view this cooperation now?

HOEKSEMA: We say there can be no cooperation.

STRAUCH: Then how do you carry out these beliefs? Do you only have business transactions with the Protestant Reformed?

HOEKSEMA: No, we have business transactions. You couldn't live in this world without business transactions. We maintain that the elect and the reprobate in this world share all things. They have all things in common, except grace. So it is the calling of the elect to use the things of this present time out of the principle of grace, out of the principle of regeneration, in the service of the light, even as the wicked world employs all things in the service of sin and darkness, out of the principle of enmity against God.

STRAUCH: It is beginning to sound so much like a battle between good and evil.

HOEKSEMA: Right, that's the antithesis. That's the battle of the ages, between light and darkness, church and world, the battle that will come to its climax with the final manifestation of the antichrist and the antichristian kingdom and the destruction of these in the day of Christ.

STRAUCH: You might not approve of this question, but how much of that is Greek thought and how much of that is Biblical?

HOEKSEMA: It's all biblical. None of it is Greek.

STRAUCH: It seems almost like Zoroastrianism.

HOEKSEMA: O, you're thinking of dualism!

(At this point the interview was interrupted by a power outage)

SECOND INTERVIEW, CONDUCTED IN THE OFFICE OF REV. HOEKSEMA, ON JUNE 27, 1979

As it would have been impossible to catch the thread of the first interview, we proceeded on with a new question. I trust that this is not a burden to the researcher. (Note by Rev. Hoeksema. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of the first interview we were only beginning to get into the questions of common grace and the antithesis and the Protestant Reformed view of the strict particularity of grace, when the interview was interrupted by the power outage mentioned. The researcher who is interested in further investigation into these areas is referred to the works mentioned in the brief bibliography attached to this transcript.)

STRAUCH: (We had talked some before the interview began.) Let's continue with what we have been discussing, the infallibility of Scripture. What is the view of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

HOEKSEMA: Our view of Scripture is simply that of the Confessions.

STRAUCH: That the Scripture is totally infallible?

HOEKSEMA: That the Scripture is infallible from beginning to end. Now you could spell that out dogmatically: plenary inspired, organically inspired, verbally inspired, infallible in every respect.

STRAUCH: How does the Protestant Reformed Church view the sacraments? Are they a means of grace?

HOEKSEMA: O, yes, of course. Our view of the sacraments is simply the view that you find in the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. The sacraments are a means of grace.

STRAUCH: There is no change, no transubstantiation or consubstantiation?

HOEKSEMA: No, we don't have the Lutheran, nor the Roman Catholic position, nor the Zwinglian position, that is, the view that is normally ascribed to Zwingli, that of a memorial. We have what has sometimes been called the dynamic view, of Calvin and of the Reformed Church generally, the sacraments are means of grace. They are secondary means of grace attached to the Word.

The preaching of the Word is always primary. As the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, the Holy Spirit works and strengthens faith through the preaching of the Word. Through the sacraments He doesn't work faith, but strengthens faith.

STRAUCH: What about baptism? As you know, we in the Reformed Church in America recently went through a synod in which they recommended that baptized infants are automatically in the covenant and therefore should receive communion.

HOEKSEMA: Well, fundamentally baptism, and in fact that is true of both the sacraments, operates the same way as does the preaching of the Word. Neither the preaching of the Word, nor the sacraments are in themselves grace. They are means of grace. That means that just as with the preaching of the Word, so with baptism and so with the Lord's Supper. The function and the effect of the sacrament is twofold. In the elect it is a savor of life unto life, and in the reprobate a savor of death unto death. That means, of course, that not all baptized infants are in the covenant. Other terminology has been used sometimes: sometimes we speak of being in the sphere of the covenant, sometimes of being under the covenant. To be in the covenant really means truly to be a child of God. It means to be an heir of the promise. And that only holds for the elect.

STRAUCH: Therefore to receive communion a child must make confession of faith, and that is a sign that the child is in the covenant?

HOEKSEMA: Not necessarily. The possibility is still open that the confession of faith is false and that he proves to be unfaithful to his confession in the future. God knows the hearts; we don't. So the mere fact that a baptized child eventually makes confession of faith is not a guarantee that he is truly a child of God. Baptists, of course, have no more guarantee on that than we do. Baptists believe in baptism upon profession of faith; but that doesn't guarantee for the Baptist, either, that the person who is baptized is truly a child of God.

STRAUCH: The book, The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches, was written in 1936 and revised in 1947. Could you give a brief sketch of what has happened since the revision of the book?

HOEKSEMA: As I said earlier, I think, that revision was really not much of a revision. It just added a few statistics and a few facts concerning congregations which had been organized since 1936. After 1936 we enjoyed a gradual growth and development. I believe it was 1940 when we completed the ecclesiastical organization of our denomination. Originally, we began with an association of consistories; we had no other ecclesiastical assemblies than the Combined Consistory gathering in the very earliest years. Then in 1927 (that would be after the Christian Reformed Synod of Englewood, at which the appeals of Hoeksema and Danhof were finally rejected.) we came to the point that we organized a General Classis. That was our broadest ecclesiastical assembly at that time and for several years thereafter. In 1939-40 we divided into two classes, Classis East and Classis West; and we organized a General Synod. Since that time we have had two classes and our General Synod, which meets annually. So much as far as our ecclesiastical organization is concerned. Then throughout the forties we enjoyed a measure of gradual growth in size and in number of congregations. I believe at the time of the split in 1953 there were 24 congregations. The 1952 Yearbook shows nine congregations in Michigan, two in Illinois, one in Wisconsin, two in California, seven in Iowa, one in Minnesota, one in Montana, and one in Washington. We had a total of 1,302 families and five thousand four hundred forty-nine souls. The 1940's were a period of what I would characterize as positive growth and development. The controversy with the Christian Reformed Church had slowed down, due to the fact that they did not respond at all to speak of; they gave us the silent treatment as churches. We began radio broadcasting at that time on the "Reformed Witness Hour," a

broadcast which we still maintain. My father began to engage in some writings which were of a more positive rather than a polemical character. All in all, it was a period of consolidation and growth and development. It was during the latter part of the 1940s also that we -- although this does not belong to the institutional life of the church, but the organic life -- we began to move towards the establishment of our own Christian schools. That began in those places where we had the larger congregations and where it was financially feasible for parents to band together and to establish Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

During this time we also had considerable contact with the Netherlands: not official ecclesiastical contact, but contact by way of exchange of magazines and journals. Considerable attention was paid to our writings also in the Netherlands during this period, particularly to our Standard Bearer. (The Standard Bearer is the magazine which we have published ever since 1924 on a semi-monthly basis. While it is not an official church paper, but published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, it has always been recognized as the journalistic voice of the Protestant Reformed Churches.) During this period also a certain friendship with Dr. Klaas Schilder was established. He had visited this country in 1939 for the first time. At that time, the Christian Reformed Church tried, although they didn't succeed fully, to make their churches boycott Dr. Schilder, although he was a minister and professor in good standing in their sister denomination in the Netherlands, the Gereformeerde Kerken. Part of the result of that was that he was thrown in our direction, and he became very well acquainted with our churches and with our men, particularly with my father, and with our doctrinal stand. And although they didn't agree doctrinally on everything, there was a goodly measure of sympathy on the part of Dr. Schilder with the stand of our Protestant Reformed Churches both as far as church polity was concerned and as far as the question of common grace was concerned. In fact, Dr. Schilder,

with the help of Mr. Bill Eerdmans Sr., in 1939, played a part in calling together an unofficial conference of Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed ministers in an attempt to heal the breach. The whole thing fizzled, due to the fact that the Christian Reformed brethren really did not want any discussion. But from that time on we had considerable contact with Dr. Schilder. I mention this as background in connection with the fact that during World War II there came a split in the Netherlands in the GKN which led to the formation of what came to be known as the "Liberated Churches of the Netherlands," but were officially, at least for a time, called the "Reformed Churches Maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order." Dr. Schilder was the leading figure in that group of churches. That was a rather large split in the Netherlands, which came about because of various doctrinal questions. Among them, in part, was common grace. But what especially led to the split was the question of the covenant and baptism. To make a long story short, the group of churches under Dr. Schilder adopted a doctrine -- unofficially maintained a doctrine, let me put it that way -- a doctrine of the covenant which was virtually the same as the doctrine of the covenant maintained and taught for years by Prof. William Heyns, of the Christian Reformed Church in this country. That view was that the promise of the covenant was a general, conditional promise: a promise for all children who are baptized, made on condition of faith and repentance, a condition that as they grow up they accept that promise. The Liberated in the Netherlands agreed with that view, with the single exception that Prof. Heyns also taught that every child receives sufficient grace either to accept or reject that promise. That was a sort of prevenient grace. The Liberated Churches did not agree with that particular aspect of Heyns' view, but for the rest they taught a general, conditional promise which was sealed in baptism. In baptism, one of their men put it -- and I am quoting almost literally -- "God says to every baptized child, 'I love you.'"

Now it stands to reason that this view was anathema to us of the Protestant

Reformed Churches. And it was anathema because, in effect, it was the very same error as that of the First Point of 1924 with its general, well meant offer of the gospel, only now applied specifically to the covenant. And this was not mere coincidence, because Prof. Heyns, who was the author of that covenant view, was also one of the authors of the Three Points of 1924. He was still Professor at that time, and very influential in the Christian Reformed Church. So the result was that we had great sympathy for the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands. This was for various reasons, particularly because we felt that from a church political point of view they had been treated with great injustice. This was another case of the same suspending and deposing of office bearers in a hierarchical manner by the Synod of the GKN, and that, too, at a time of crisis during the war when some of the men were not even able to appear at the Synod. Dr. Schilder was fleeing the Nazis at that time when they wanted him to appear at the Synod. So we had sympathy for them, we had sympathy for them from the church political point of view; and because of past contacts we had a general measure of sympathy and a great deal of respect for Dr. Schilder. When he visited this country after the war in order to plead the cause of the Liberated Churches over against the GKN (Synodicals), we opened our pulpits to him and gave him opportunity both to lecture and to preach. We held a couple of lengthy conferences with him on the questions involved, particularly the question of the covenant. Along about that time also, our synodical committee for Foreign Correspondence made overtures to have official contact with and to explore official contact with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands.

About the same time there was considerable emigration from the Netherlands, chiefly to Canada. Among these immigrants were members of the Liberated Churches. The immigrants from the Netherlands were mainly from the GKN, nicknamed the Synodicals. The Synodicals, of course, were organized into Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, and a large number of churches was added to the

Christian Reformed Church at that time. The Liberated immigrants were being advised from the Netherlands to seek contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches. At the same time, however, they were being urged not to sacrifice their peculiar doctrinal position, and especially not to sacrifice their view of the covenant and of the promise. On the contrary they were urged to propagate their views in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This, of course, would automatically lead to conflict in our churches when we began to do home mission work among the Dutch immigrants in Canada and began to organize churches there.

Out of this situation the conflict which came to a head in 1953 began to develop in our denomination. Undoubtedly there were those in our churches who were tired of being small and who saw in the influx of Liberated immigrants to Canada an opportunity for growth for our churches, and who were willing to sacrifice doctrinal principles, principles of truth, in order to grow. These men carried favor with the Liberated in Canada and carried favor with the Liberated in the Netherlands. Undoubtedly there was also a degree of personal jealousy on the part of some men who did not want to recognize the leadership of my father at that time. I think that to understand the situation fully it must also be kept in mind that in 1947 my father suffered a severe stroke, which put him on the sidelines, in part, for about a year and a half to two years. Some of our ministers saw an opportunity in his being sidelined to try to take over the leadership in the churches; they probably even speculated that he would never recover sufficiently to take the reins of leadership again. By the way, it was always a matter of great disappointment to my father that this disloyalty -- not to him, but to what he had taught them -- arose in the ranks of our ministers. He never suspected anything like this. And it must be remembered that all of these ministers in our churches had been trained by him, along with Rev. Ophoff, in our seminary. So it was very difficult for him personally and a great disappointment in his life, when some of the very men he had trained and to whom

he had practically given their entire education, repudiated his instruction. At any rate, this controversy developed in the churches, both in the east and in the west.

To understand the development of the controversy, it must also be kept in mind that in 1950 our Synod provisionally adopted the Declaration of Principles. This was a document in which our doctrinal position with respect especially to the matter of common grace and the matter of the covenant and the promise was summarized and set forth on the basis of our Reformed Confessions. It was a document that was to be used on the home mission field in connection with the organization of new congregations. The purpose was that those who wished to organize as Protestant Reformed congregations would sign this document and would thereby be bound to our peculiar Protestant Reformed position. And undoubtedly the specific purpose at the time was to insure that we would not have what amounted to Liberated congregations, with their peculiar doctrinal position, organized as Protestant Reformed Churches. I mentioned that this Declaration of Principles was provisionally adopted in 1950. The intention was that it should be submitted to the consistories and classes, and that it would be finally adopted at the Synod of 1951. The churches therefore were faced by the question of the ratification of this Declaration of Principles. The majority of the churches in Classis East (at that time the twelve churches east of the Mississippi) was in favor of the Declaration of Principles. The overwhelming majority in Classis West (the twelve churches west of the Mississippi River) in which I was a pastor at the time, at Doon, Iowa, was opposed to the Declaration of Principles. In fact, my consistory at Doon, Iowa was the only consistory in Classis West which was entirely committed to the Declaration of Principles. All of this led to protracted debate and even to a stalemate at our General Synod in the years 1951 - 1953.

At the same time, the controversy came to a head from another direction.

In our First Church in Grand Rapids at that time they had three pastors: my father, Rev. C. Hanko, and the Rev. Hubert De Wolf. In early 1951, Classis East was faced by the question of ratifying the Declaration of Principles. They held a special classical meeting in February of 1951, which was to be devoted only to the treatment of the Declaration of Principles. There were overtures from various consistories to make certain changes and amendments, and all this was to be treated there, and Classis would ultimately have to take a stand. Rev. De Wolf was the minister-delegate to that classical meeting from First Church. Everybody knew that Rev. De Wolf was not in favor of the Declaration of Principles. But for various reasons he did not debate the Declaration at that classical meeting, did not reveal much, if any, opposition to it. The peculiar thing was that when the time came for the final vote on the Declaration, De Wolf absented himself from the classical meeting; he didn't want to be forced to show his hand officially. He allowed his alternate, who would have been Rev. Hanko, to cast the vote. Well, about that time, about a month after Classis East had approved the Declaration, De Wolf preached a sermon in the evening service at First Church (this would have been March of 1951), a sermon which was on the text which deals with the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In the course of that sermon he made than one questionable statement. But one in particular was the statement: "God promises everyone of you that if you believe, you shall be saved." In other words, in his preaching he was trying to promote the general, conditional promise, which was, of course, in harmony with the Liberated view and which was directly in conflict with the position of the Declaration of Principles and with the historic position of our churches. Protests were registered against that sermon with the Consistory of First Church. The Consistory of First Church condemned the statement as heretical, and required of De Wolf that he retract and apologize, which he refused to do. They gave him time. This matter was before the monthly consistory meetings month after month after month. They would ask him whether he was ready to

retract and apologize, and he would say No, and they would wait until the next meeting. Instead of taking disciplinary action, they waited. This was one of the mistakes that was made by the consistory, which they realized later on. They waited far too long with discipline in the case, instead of suspending him and compelling him to retract, or ousting him from the ministry. They allowed him time. That time was used by him to work within the congregation and to gain favor and support. Remember, too, that this was the largest congregation in our denomination -- at that time some 535 families.

Then -- I believe it was in September of 1952 -- he preached another sermon (on Matthew 18:3) in which he again made several offensive statements and belittled the Protestant Reformed position. But the specific statement which became the focus of protest was the statement that "Man's act of conversion is a prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of God." Against that statement there were protests. The statement was at one time condemned by the consistory. But again they did not take any disciplinary action, and the case lingered on and lingered on. Meanwhile the first case was still not settled. All this developed until early 1953, when there was a change in the personnel of the consistory and a change in the balance in the consistory from anti-De Wolf to pro-De Wolf. Finally, the consistory was completely deadlocked. Then the case went to Classis East in April-May of 1953. Bear in mind, too, that all this time the question of the Declaration of Principles was still pending at a synodical level. But Classis East, upon appeal, condemned both the statements of De Wolf as being literally heretical. They furnished Scriptural and Confessional grounds for their position, and they advised First Church Consistory to demand of Rev. De Wolf and of the consistory members who supported him that they apologize publicly for these statements, under the penalty of suspension and deposition from office in case of refusal. In June of 1953, the consistory decided by a majority vote to follow that advice of Classis. But both De Wolf and the elders who supported him refused to make the required apology, and the consistory by a majority vote decided to suspend and

depose from office. De Wolf and his supporting consistory members, undoubtedly feeling that they had a good deal of support in the congregation, refused to recognize that suspension and deposition. They gave notice that they were going to carry on, supposedly as the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and that they would hold services in the church the following Sunday. Rather than have open physical conflict, the faithful consistory, which had adhered to the advice of Classis, decided to seek a different meeting place. They met in the auditorium of the Grand Rapids Christian High School, rather than have conflict, physical conflict, about the property. The property question could be settled later. That was the beginning of the split of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1953. De Wolf took along with him at that time about two-thirds of the congregation of First Church. One-third remained faithful to the denomination and to our historic position.

In the meantime, according to the Church Order, of course, the Consistory of First Church had to send out notices to the sister congregations of the denomination concerning the suspension from office of Rev. De Wolf. This is required in the Church Order, and the purpose is that no sister congregation would allow such a man to appear in the pulpit until the question of discipline would be finally settled. That's the only purpose. All that any congregation can do legally, whether it agrees with the suspension and deposition or not, -- all they can do is formally recognize, pending final disposition. At the same time, of course, De Wolf and his rebel consistory also sent out letters to all the churches in which they militated against the suspension, called it illegal, and claimed that they (De Wolf and his elders) were the legal continuation of First Church. What happened was that the churches of Classes West refused to recognize the suspension and discipline of De Wolf. They declared openly that they recognized De Wolf and his consistory as the legal continuation of First Church of Grand Rapids.

As things developed, Classis West had its semi-annual meeting before

Classis East had another meeting, before the De Wolf case came up before Classis East again. I was at that time in Doon, Iowa; and my consistory simply formally recognized the decision of First Church, as we were supposed to do, and we sent notice to the consistory that we did so. Personally, I had no inkling that the whole question of the De Wolf case would come up at the classical meeting of September of 1953. For one thing, it wasn't our business; it belonged to Classis East, and not to us. For another thing, the rules of Classis West required that everything which came up before the Classis was to be on a mimeographed Agenda, which was distributed around before the classical meeting. There was nothing on that Agenda concerning the De Wolf case; in fact it could not be on the Agenda because of lack of time. So while I was well aware that all the sympathy of Classis West, with the exception of my consistory, was with De Wolf and against the Declaration of Principles, I had no idea that the matter was coming up before the Classis. To illustrate how little I expected it, I'll tell you a story. In the August consistory meeting at Doon, my elders proposed a motion that if Classis West took a stand in favor of Rev. De Wolf and his rebel consistory, the delegates of Doon were to notify the Classis of their disagreement and to leave the classical meeting. My elders proposed this; I laughed at them. I said, "Well, you can make a decision like that if you please; but it is entirely unnecessary because this thing cannot possibly come up at the classical meeting. It makes no difference to me if you pass this motion, but it is entirely unnecessary." "O, yes," they said, "it will come up! Just watch!" So that's the way I went to the classical meeting. And lo, and behold, it did come up. There were overtures to recognize De Wolf, overtures to depose my father and Rev. Ophoff as professors at the Theological School and to appoint new professors. It was unbelievably chaotic: proposals which were all illegal. But the classis was bent on taking a stand in favor of De Wolf, and they did so. I and my elder did leave the Classis, and we told them that we would appeal against them.

That precipitated the split, prematurely, in the western branch of our denomination. It put people concretely before the question, "Were they going to adhere to consistories who adhered to De Wolf and who were rebellious to the denomination?" The result was that four of the congregations of Classis West were split. We ended up with five congregations in Classis West. My entire congregation, in Doon, Iowa, remained faithful to the denomination. In addition there were four congregations which were split about 50-50. The faithful segments of those four congregations were reorganized. And this was all that was left out of the total of twelve congregations in Classis West.

In October of 1953 there was a continued session of the April-May Classis East meeting at which the De Wolf case was to be adjudicated. The specific issue at that meeting of Classis in October of 1953 became the question whether De Wolf and his elder were to be seated as delegates to the Classis, or whether the delegates from the faithful, Hanco-Hoeksema segment of First Church were to be seated. The latter were seated, of course, in Classis East. Following that classical gathering there was a further split in Classis East. There was a split in what was at that time Fourth Church in Grand Rapids; there was a split in Second Church in Grand Rapids; a split in Creston Church in Grand Rapids; and a split in the Kalamazoo congregation and in the Holland, Michigan congregation. For the most part, however, we kept the majority in Classis East.

The result of all this was that our denomination was decimated in 1953. Over all, the number of families that remained faithful to the denomination was approximately one-third. I'm citing that figure off the top of my head now. But we consolidated, and we reestablished; and we went through several court trials about the church property, in some of which we won and in some of which we lost. The result is that we survived as a denomination and we revived as a denomination. We were no longer stymied by an element in the denomination which did not really want to be Protestant Reformed and to main-

tain our distinctive Reformed position. We have enjoyed a healthy growth since then. The De Wolf group, as we predicted already in 1953, because they were doctrinally agreed with the Christian Reformed Church, eventually found their way back into that denomination. Starting at the time of the Christian Reformed Centennial in 1957, overtures were made which eventually led all the De Wolf ministers and congregations back into the Christian Reformed Church, where they are today for the most part. Some of the people later on came back to us when they saw that, after all, the position of De Wolf was essentially that of the Christian Reformed in 1924.

STRAUCH: Are there any missions going on right now? I remember hearing about some work in Atlanta, Georgia, if I'm not mistaken.

HOEKSEMA: Not Atlanta. We have always had home missions. And we have always been in favor of foreign missions. We were not always able to be active because of priorities, and because we were but a small denomination. But for some sixteen years we've had a mission work in Jamaica. For a time we had a missionary there. We have a few small, indigenous churches there. We still have contact there and work there. At the moment we do not have a missionary on the scene. We are about to start working in missions in the area of Birmingham, Alabama. One of our ministers just recently accepted a call to work in that field. Our recent General Synod authorized the calling of missionaries for the state of Washington (where there is considerable interest in our cause); they also authorized a missionary for the East Lansing, Michigan area. We also authorized the calling of a foreign missionary for a sizable group of young people in Singapore. We established contact with these young people in Singapore some four years ago. Rev. C. Hanko and I went on a tour in behalf of our churches which was mainly to Australasia, New Zealand and Australia. We went to make contact in behalf of our churches with especially two groups, one in New Zealand and the other in Australia. We have had considerable contact by correspondence. Rev. Hanko and I were appointed to be representatives of our Protestant Reformed Churches in contacting these groups. In the course of that seven week tour we also made side visits to

Indonesia and to Singapore. We did not expect much by way of results from our contact in Singapore; but about two years after that brief contact, a stay of three days during which we lectured twice, -- two years after that we began hearing from a group of young people who were interested in the Reformed faith. Now they have requested our churches to send them a foreign missionary. These are mainly Chinese young people. The General Synod has also authorized the loaning of one of our ministers on a long term basis to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand. (No relation to the OP Church in this country, just a similarity of name.) This is one of the denominations with which we had contact in 1975. They have been seeking our fellowship and our help. It is a group of ministers and churches who have separated from the mainline Presbyterian Church in New Zealand because of liberalism and because of the merger of the large denominations in New Zealand. In Australia such a merger has been consummated also -- a merger involving Presbyterians and Congregationals and Methodists, and even, I believe, some Anglicans. In Australia we have contact with a small group of churches known as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. Strikingly enough they had a controversy with the Presbyterian Church of eastern Australia about the issue of the offer of the gospel. Unbeknownst to us, they became acquainted with us through some of our literature; and we discovered that with respect to the question of the general, well meant offer of the gospel, we as churches saw eye to eye to a great extent. They were a much younger denomination, and they were simply overjoyed when they found out that they were not the only ones in the world who were maintaining the position which they did maintain. They found out that we had been through a similar controversy many years before they had, and that we had a lot to offer them in terms of help, support, and instruction. So we had a rather glorious time down there in Australia on that tour. They opened their pulpits to us, and they were just delighted to hear our preaching; and they welcomed us with open arms into their fellowship. The same thing is true of the OP Church in

New Zealand, although their history is different. They are very eager to have our help and support. So the Lord has opened several doors for us. Rather unexpectedly, you might say, He opened them; from our point of view, it was almost accidental; but, of course, that is providential. Chiefly these contacts have been achieved through our literature (especially the Standard Bearer) which has gone to the ends of the earth.

STRAUCH: It sounds like your church is very much alive.

HOEKSEMA: Yes, I think we are. We have always operated the Theological School, of course, from the very beginning of our history. It has been enlarged. We never had a building of our own until 1974. The establishment of our building, along with enlargement of our faculty, has led to an increase in the size of our student body in recent years. Although we have a shortage of ministers, and we still have a shortage of theological students, we need laborers for the harvest.

STRAUCH: Are there any contacts between either the RCA, the CRC and the Protestant Reformed Churches?

HOEKSEMA: No, we have never had any contact with the RCA. We have had through the years, of course, unofficial and journalistic contacts with the CRC. Officially the CRC has refused to have contact with us. We have tried twice in our history, at the synodical level to persuade the Christian Reformed Church to review and discuss with us the events and procedures of 1924, hoping to get the differences out of the way. We did that at the time of our first General Synod in 1940, and the Christian Reformed Church refused and said that "The Synod has spoken." We did that again in 1957, the time of the Christian Reformed Centennial. They invited us to send fraternal representatives to help them celebrate the Centennial. We reminded them at that time that because of the history and because of the differences, this was morally impossible; we again invited them to discuss the issues; and again they refused. As a denomination, they have shunned our overtures. We have been very open on this, and

have offered free and open discussion of the issues.

Unofficially, of course, there have been some interesting contacts. In fact, at the time of the Dekker controversy in the 1960s, about the love of God and general atonement, Prof. Harold Dekker invited my father back to Calvin Seminary to address his class; and as it turned out he addressed most of the student body on the subject of the love of God. It was a very interesting session. And at the time of the Fiftieth Anniversary (1974) of our denomination, I was invited to one of the morning lectures at Calvin Seminary (one of the series of lectures which they conducted throughout the school year, to which they invited outside speakers). Dr. Henry Stob invited me at that time to deliver one of those lectures and to speak on the subject, "After Fifty Years." I spoke on the relative positions of the Protestant Reformed and the Christian Reformed Churches with respect, of course, to the history since 1924.

STRAUCH: Has there been any cooperation between the denomination with any other denominations?

HOEKSEMA: No. Nor has there been any cooperation or official contact between us and the Netherlands. It is rather striking that today all of our contacts as a denomination have been with churches outside of the immediate (Dutch) Reformed family. Our contacts have been with Presbyterians. We were invited at one time to send official visitors to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. While they can have all kinds of churches there, they did not allow us to take exception to one little statement in the constitution; otherwise we would have been present at the Reformed Ecumenical Synod at least as official visitors. There is a statement in the Constitution in the article on the Basis, to which we could not subscribe. We could subscribe to the rest of the confessional basis. But they continued to admit people to their Reformed Ecumenical Synod who belonged to the World Council, but cannot admit people as conservative and as orthodox as we are.

STRAUCH: I gather that you don't belong to the World Council of Churches.

HOEKSEMA: I should say not!

STRAUCH: Then I can also gather that you are not part of the National Council of Churches?

HOEKSEMA: No, sir! We are affiliated with no ecumenical organizations.

STRAUCH: I thought that you would at least be part of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Alliance in North America.

HOEKSEMA: Well, without going into the question of whether we would want to be, because of the entangling alliances that are involved, the truth of the matter is that these big organizations pay very little attention to our little organization. Most of them probably don't know that we exist. Then there would still be the question whether we could feel free to be yoked together with organizations of that kind. Usually we find that there is something that stands in the way.

STRAUCH: What was the statement that barred you from the RES? Was that about grace?

HOEKSEMA: It was a statement in Article II of the Constitution, the article concerning the Basis. It did not have to do with the confessional basis as such, to which we could subscribe. But it was the statement, "It has to be emphasized that only a whole-hearted and consistent return to this Scriptural truth, of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the core and the apex, can bring salvation to mankind and effectuate the so sorely needed renewal of the world." It was particularly that reference to effectuating the renewal of the world to which we took exception.

STRAUCH: How do you see the future of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

HOEKSEMA: It is always difficult to try to lift the veil of the future. God knows the future; I don't. If the Lord keeps us faithful as churches to our position, to our Reformed Confessions and Scripture, then I can see the Protestant Reformed denomination as the bastion of the Reformed Faith. In an age in

which more and more even those who are Reformed in name are departing from that heritage, I can see that our denomination may be a center, a refuge, for Reformed people who do not want to go along with the apostasy of the day. In fact, we are seeing some of that now. In our home mission work, it is generally people who want to be confessionally and theologically conservative who look to us for help. And our churches stand ready. We have always proclaimed that this was our stand. We stand ready to offer help, both in the home mission field and abroad, to any who send us a call for help.

STRAUCH: How about the Christian schools? What has been your philosophy of education?

HOEKSEMA: First of all, historically, as was the case in the Christian Reformed Church, we are in favor of parental Christian instruction. In the late forties we began to establish our own parental schools wherever that was possible. This has developed where there were the size and the financial resources. Wherever possible we have established our Christian schools. They are parentally operated; they are not church schools, nor are they private school operated by a corporation. We are operated by an association of parents. Here in Grand Rapids we have two grade schools since the late 1940s: the Adams Street Christian School on the east end of Grand Rapids and the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School on Wilson Avenue in Walker. We also have our own High School which has been in existence for several years. That is also in Walker, Wilson Avenue. That serves the entire Grand Rapids area. We have Christian grade schools in South Holland, Illinois, in Doon, Iowa, in Hull, Iowa, in Loveland, Colorado, in Redlands, California, in Lynden, Washington, and Edgerton, Minnesota. Wherever it is possible and feasible to establish our schools, we try to operate our schools on the principle that all of the education of our children should be controlled by Biblical Reformed principles. The purpose of education is to train our

children to live their lives in the midst of this world out of the principle of regeneration. We are not large enough to have our own college. We do have some methods to supplement the training of our teachers along Reformed lines, and we would like to have our own teacher training program. As far as any higher education is concerned, at present we are limited to a degree of pre-seminary training for our ministers and to our own full seminary program.

STRAUCH: What is required of your pre-sem student?

HOEKSEMA: Pre-sem students must have the equivalent of four years of college. Because of the fact that they take part of that pre-seminary training at our own school, they don't have all the credits needed for a college degree. Steps are being taken at present to cooperate with one or more of the local colleges and to try to work things out so that they may have an AB degree. We require certain subjects, preparatory subjects, which are taught in our own seminary. Following this pre-seminary training, we have an entire seminary program. In the seminary program we have a course of 110 hours at present, running over three years; and that is going to be extended soon to four years and with 15-16 hours per semester. We have a full seminary program of Dogmatics, Old Testament subjects (history and exegesis, etc.), and New Testament subjects, Church History, and a whole rank of subjects in the area of practical theology. We have a well-rounded seminary program.

STRAUCH: Are there any closing comments that you would like to make?

HOEKSEMA: Not that I know of now. Perhaps I'll have some revisions when you have the tapes of this interview transcribed.

Anyone interested in further research on the Protestant Reformed Churches will be helped by the following works. All of them are available from the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, Mich., with the exception of the first, which is out of print.

Herman Hoeksema, The Protestant Reformed Churches in America. This book gives a detailed account of the origin of the PRC. The second part is a catechism on the Three Points of Common Grace.

Gertrude Hoeksema, Therefore Have I Spoken (A Biography of Herman Hoeksema)

Gertrude Hoeksema, Ed., God's Covenant Faithfulness. Published at the 50th anniversary of the denomination. Helpful both on history and doctrinal stance.

Herman Hanko, Homer C. Hoeksema, Gise Van Baren, The Five Points of Calvinism.

Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics. A "must" for the understanding of our theological position.

Herman Hoeksema, The Triple Knowledge, An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, 3 Vols. In connection with the Catechism, it makes clear the theological position of the PRC.

INDEX

- After Fifty Years- 38
 (appendix)
 American Flag Controversy- 6
 Anti-revolutionary Party of
 the Netherlands- 20
 Bultema Case- 7
 Calvin, John- 19,22
 Calvin Theological Seminary- 3,4,8,9,10
 Christian Reformed Church
 Centennial- 37
 Overtures to- 37
 Classis Grand Rapids East- 12
 Classis Grand Rapids West- 12
 Synod of Orange City- 10
 Synod of 1924- 17
 Christian Schools
 Christian Reformed- 1,2,3,4
 Protestant Reformed- 40,41
 Church Polity- 12, 13, 14, 15,16,32
 ordination-
 Reformed Church in America- 14
 Protestant Reformed- 13,14
 Common Grace- 16,17,18,19,20
 Communion, Holy- see Lord's Supper
 Danhof, Rev. H.- 9,11,12,17,24, 33
 Declaration of Principles- 29,30,31
 Dekker Case- 38
 De Wolf- 30-35
 Douglas Park Christian Reformed
 Church- 9
 Eerdman, William Sr.- 26
 Geelkerken, Dr.- 16
 Gereformeerde Kerken Van Nederland- 15,
 16,25,27
 Hanko, Rev. C.- 30,35
 Hereformeerde Kerken-15
 (State Church)
 Higher Criticism- 10,11
 Hoeksema, Gerrit- 9
 Hoeksema, Herman- 2,3,4,9,11,12,17,24,28,
 33
 Immigration to Canada- 27
 Infallibility of Scripture- 10,22
 Janseen Case-1,7,8,9,10,11
 Kromminga, Dietrich-9,10
 Kromminga, John- 9,10
 Kuiper, Rev. H J- 9
 Kuyper, Abraham- 17,18,20
 Liberated Churches of the
 Netherlands-15,26,27
 Lord's Supper- 5,22
 Manni, Rev. J- 9
 Maple Ave Christian Reformed
 Church- 2,3,4
 Ophoff, Rev.- 11,12
 Orthodox Presbyterian
 Church of Christland- 36
 Portestant Reformed Churches
 Classis East- 29-33
 Classis West- 32,33
 General Synod- 24,29
 Missions- 35,36,37
 Organization of- 24,25
 since 1936- 24-25
 Preaching Assignments- 3
 Reformation of 1953- 30-34
 Reformed Church in America- 4,37
 Reformed Ecumenical Synod- 38
 Reformed Witness Hour- 24
 Roman Catholic Church- 20
 Sacraments; means of Grace- 22,23
 Schilder, Dr. - 15,25,26
 Seminary Training- 41
Standard Bearer- 25
Stob, He nry- 38
Stromata- 10
 Three Points- 17,18,26,27
 Van Lunkhuyzen, - 9
 Vrijgemaakte Kerken Buiten- 15
 Westminster Presbyterian- 5
 Western Theological Seminary- 5
 World Alliance of Reformed
 Churches- 39
 Young Calvinist Federation- 7

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

A REPRINT FROM OUR
ISSUE OF
January 15, 1975

EDITORIAL

After Fifty Years

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

(The text of an address delivered at Calvin Seminary, December 19, 1974)

Members of the Faculty, Students, and Guests:

First of all, I express my sincere thanks for the invitation to lecture to you today. I am thankful, too, for the subject which was suggested to me by Dr. Stob. "After Fifty Years." I believe it represents something of a milestone in itself that a Protestant Reformed minister is afforded an opportunity to speak on this subject at a Christian Reformed Seminary. Needless to say, I am quite willing and happy to speak to you on this subject.

That subject is and will be much in the hearts and minds of us who are Protestant Reformed. In the year 1975 we hope to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our denomination, which was provisionally organized on March 6, 1925. The reaching of such a milestone for our denomination, for which at one time many predicted an early death, gives reason to pause and to reflect on our origin and our history and to evaluate our present position in the ecclesiastical world at large, and especially in the Reformed community. And I believe that since our denomination had its painful birth from yours, it should also give reason for reflection and evaluation on your part. It is my sincere hope that this lecture will contribute to the achievement of that end.

Although I represent the second generation of the Protestant Reformed Churches and their ministry, I may nevertheless say that I stand before you as a son of the Christian Reformed Church. This is literally true: for I was born and baptized a member of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church one year before the crisis of 1924. I believe, too, that I am a

true son of the Christian Reformed Church – not, of course, as the Christian Reformed Church is today. In that regard I am a son of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But I believe that I am a true son of the Christian Reformed Church according to its true genius prior to 1924. This makes the occasion and the material of my lecture all the more momentous to me – and, I hope, to you.

Finally, by way of introduction, I must point out that my lecture this morning must needs be in the nature of a summary. If I were to review the history in detail, to analyze the doctrinal issues and implications in detail, and to document and prove from Scripture and the Confessions all that I say in summary form this morning, you would have to afford me the opportunity for several lectures of this length. And so I ask you to bear this in mind; and I believe that this was the intention of the invitation that was extended to me. Parenthetically, let me say that if you have questions, I suggest that you write them down. Then, if time does not permit me to answer them here this morning, I offer to answer them in writing in the *Standard Bearer*, in which a transcript of my lecture will also appear.

As I speak to you on the subject, "After Fifty Years," I will arrange my material under the following three questions:

- I. What Happened Fifty Years Ago?
- II. What Took Place During the Intervening Fifty Years?
- III. What Is the Situation Today?

I. What Took Place Fifty Years Ago?

Fifty years ago the Protestant Reformed Churches had their origin in the events connected with the common grace controversy, and specifically in the events connected with the adoption of the Three Points of Common Grace by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1924. At that time three pastors, the Rev. Henry Danhof (of Kalamazoo I), the Rev. George M. Ophoff (of Hope, Riverbend – now Walker, Michigan), and the Rev. Herman Hoeksema (of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids) along with their consistories, were deposed from office, following the Synod of 1924, by Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West of the Christian Reformed Churches. These consistories and their pastors, along with the greater portions of their respective congregations, felt both for reasons of doctrine and reasons of church government and ecclesiastical justice that they might not recognize this deposition, but considered themselves called of God to continue in the duties and functions of their offices, and therefore, were compelled to organize a self-contained church organization. Pending the disposition of their appeal by the synod of 1926, this organization was at first provisional; and they called themselves *Protesting Christian Reformed Churches*. After the final disposition of the case in 1926, they organized permanently under the name *Protestant Reformed Churches in America*. I call attention to this for three reasons. In the first place, because it is a matter of fact that the two Classes mentioned proceeded to do what the Synod of 1924 specifically refused to do, namely, to demand subscription to the Three Points and to discipline the ministers involved, and that, too, in the name of the Formula of Subscription. Besides, it must be kept in mind that the synod had declared Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema to be Reformed in the fundamentals. I mention it, in the second place, because it was in 1924 that the Christian Reformed Churches turned to the hierarchical, or collegialistic view of church government, according to which Classis and Synod are higher (rather than broader) assemblies, and according to which they can assume the power to discipline – something which resides only in the local consistory and the local offices. And I mention it, in the third place, because I must point out that it is a matter of fact that we did not secede, did not leave, did not separate. But we were expelled. Our mother church denied us a place, declared officially that there was no room for us in the denomination, and thus made it necessary for the Protestant Reformed Churches to come into existence. Moreover, these actions received the synodical stamp of approval in 1926 at the Synod of Englewood.

It is a matter of simple historical fact, therefore, that we are the continuation of the churches which we were before 1924. We are not fundamentally something new. We are not a departure. We are a continuation: in the true sense of the word, a continuing church. And we stand in the line of the church historically.

The second, and by far the most important answer to my first question is: the Three Points of Common Grace were adopted by the Synod of 1924. It is this, from a doctrinal point of view, which led to the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And let me add that although there are related matters which are important, it is this *doctrinal* matter which is by far the most important. If you ask what was the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches as far as principles were concerned, then the negative answer to that question is: the raising to the status of official church doctrine of the Three Points of Common Grace in 1924.

I cannot take the time this morning to enter into the history of the common grace controversy. Suffice it to say that the Three Points did not drop out of the sky in 1924, but that their adoption was the climax – in some respects, the premature climax – of several years of ferment and debate. And if “common grace” had been left a matter of theological opinion and a subject for free discussion, there would have been no 1924. But that was not to be.

Permit me briefly to summarize the doctrinal issues involved in the Three Points. In this connection, let me emphasize, however, that we do not live as churches by denials. This was and is sometimes alleged. But no church can exist by mere denials. And we certainly do not so exist. Moreover, the very fact that we have been in existence for fifty years should give the lie to that suggestion. And therefore, as I summarize, I will also set forth our positive position.

The First Point speaks of a favorable attitude of God towards all creatures, and not only to the elect. It is the teaching of the First Point that there is in God a gracious attitude toward all men, among whom also the reprobate ungodly are included. Apart from the saving grace of God shown only to the elect, there is also allegedly a non-saving grace of God in which also the reprobate share. This non-saving grace of God is supposedly manifest in the good gifts which God bestows also upon the wicked, such as rain and sunshine, food and gladness, gifts and talents, name and position and might, houses and goods. Over against this idea, we maintain that God's grace is always particular, directed to His elect people alone. Indeed, we do not deny that God bestows good gifts upon men, including the reprobate. But we cannot accept the idea that there is a gracious attitude of God and an operation of grace toward the reprobate

wicked. We maintain that the grace of God goes out to the whole creation, the organic whole of His creatures, with His elect in Christ at the center. And we hold that at the same time there is an operation of God's hatred and wrath proceeding toward the reprobate ungodly in and through all things which He bestows on them. "The curse of Jehovah is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." (Prov. 3:33)

But we hold that there is another serious departure from the Reformed truth involved in the First Point. For the preaching was included in this alleged gracious attitude of God and this operation of God's grace toward men in common. The First Point teaches that God is gracious in the preaching of the gospel not only toward the elect, but toward all men, toward all to whom the gospel is proclaimed. This is the error of the general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all men — essentially, the error of Arminianism. And that this is, indeed, one of the errors of the First Point is literally plain from a decision of a later Christian Reformed Synod, that of 1926, which spoke of a "goodness or grace of God in causing to go forth a well-meaning offer of salvation to all to whom the preaching of the gospel comes," as well as of a "certain grace or goodness or favorable inclination of God" which "is revealed toward a group of men broader than the group of the elect, and that is, among other things, also evident from the fact that God well-meaningly calls each one to whom the lovely invitation of the Gospel comes." The Protestant Reformed Churches believe that this presentation of the grace of God and of the preaching of the gospel is contrary to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. Over against this error of the general, well-meant offer we maintain that the preaching of the gospel is grace only for the elect, and at the same time a savor of death unto death for the reprobate. We maintain, indeed, — with our confessions — that the preaching of the gospel is general, or promiscuous, in that it is sent to all, both elect and reprobate, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel. But we believe — again, with our confessions — that the contents of the preaching is always particular. In the preaching salvation is promised (not offered) only to those who believe and repent, that is, to the elect. It can never be said that the preaching of the gospel is an evidence of grace to all who hear it, including the reprobate. Principally, the position of the well-meant offer of salvation is Arminian. And only too many Reformed churches and church members have, as a result of this view of the preaching been victimized by outright Arminianism and have become enthusiastic supporters of many a wild, God-dishonoring evangelistic movement. We consider it our calling to warn unequivocally against the rampant Arminianism

of the day, and to call God's people back to the Reformed truth of the gospel of Christ crucified. Who is "to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Cor. 1:24)

The Second Point of Common Grace teaches a restraint of sin. It speaks of a general operation of the Holy Spirit — not saving, and therefore apart from regeneration — whereby sin is restrained in the individual man and in the community. It implies that there is a spiritual, ethical operation of the Holy Spirit upon the natural man which, without renewing his heart, is for his good, with the result that he is not as sinful and corrupt in his actual life as he would be without this working of the Spirit. By this general operation of grace the natural man is improved, except for his heart; his mind and will and all his inclinations can be changed or inclined for good. Now we understand full well and believe, along with our Confession of Faith in Article 13, that God "so restrains the devil and all our enemies that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us." Actually the Confession here speaks of God's "bridling" of the devil and wicked men; that is, God controls and governs them. And He certainly does so unto the realization of His own counsel and the salvation of His own people in Christ. But we deny that there is any operation of grace toward the reprobate ungodly taught here or anywhere in our confessions. And we deny that there is an operation of grace by the Spirit, outside of regeneration, whereby the natural man is improved to any degree whatsoever.

We have many objections against this view. But our chief objection is that it constitutes a denial of the Reformed truth of the total depravity of man. It is Reformed according to our confessions to say that man is by nature so corrupt that he is incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. But in the light of the second point, this totally depraved man is a mere abstraction: due to common grace, there is nowhere in this world a man who actually is totally depraved. As the natural man appears, he is not wholly corrupt, but greatly improved and capable of good. However, Scripture and our Confessions teach the very opposite. Scripture teaches us (Rom. 1:18, ff.) that there is an operation of God's wrath revealed from heaven, whereby He so operates upon the wicked who forsakes His way that he is given over more and more to his own sinful lusts and desires, to do things that are unseemly, so that he proceeds from sin to more sin, goes from bad to worse. Hence, while we readily admit that the sinner is restrained and controlled by the all-controlling providence of God and according to His all-wise counsel, we maintain that the process of sin is bound to the development

of the human race, so that every man does not commit every possible sin, but each man, according to his own place and time, character and talents, gifts and means, develops the one root-sin of Adam until the completed fruit of sin is wholly revealed and the sinfulness of sin is exposed to the full. This, and not the idea of any improvement of the natural man, is also a realistic view of natural man and of the world in the midst of which we, as the people of God, live today.

The Third Point of Common Grace teaches that the natural man, by virtue of the influences of common grace, although incapable of performing any saving good, can perform what is called civil good. By this is meant the doing of good in civil life. In the sphere of the first table of the Law, man is unable to do any good. This, after all, is "spiritual" good. But in the sphere of the second table of the Law, the natural man can perform good. He is able to live a relatively good life in this world. We may point out in this connection that proof from the Confessions was sought for the Third Point in Canons III, IV, Art. 4, where we read: "There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment." This, however, is only the first part of Article 4. And if we read the rest of this article, we learn that our Canons here maintain the Reformed doctrine of man's total depravity: "But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." This quotation very succinctly expresses our Protestant Reformed position. In all his nature, the natural man is totally depraved; and in all his existence he always sins, and does so in every area of his life. Good works, according to our confessions, are those works which are in harmony with the Law of God, are performed to the glory of God, and proceed from a true faith. Good works, therefore, are performed only by the Christian. And the natural man, the man outside of Christ, being by nature totally depraved, always sins.

It will be readily seen, whether you agree with our Protestant Reformed position or not, that the matters touched on in the preceding go to the very heart of the Reformed position. They are not insignificant, but crucial. They are vital. And the differences of position which we have set forth above are fundamental. And let me add: they are issues which

must needs affect not only the doctrinal stance of a church, but the very heartbeat of the church's life — the preaching — as well as the actual walk of God's people in the midst of the world. And I believe that fifty years of history will bear this out.

There are two more items which I deem important to mention in this connection.

The first goes back more than fifty years, namely, the so-called Janssen Case. I mention this because that case, which concerned, if you will, what is today referred to as the nature and extent of the authority of Scripture, was connected with 1924. Not only was there a historical relationship, but there was an intrinsic relationship. I believe that Dr. Janssen's erroneous position with respect to Scripture was rooted in the principle of common grace. And I believe that in the light of recent developments in your denomination as well as in the Netherlands, the importance of that intrinsic relationship between common grace and the errors of Dr. Janssen looms ever larger, even as the importance of the relation between a correct view of Scripture and the maintenance of sovereign, particular grace looms ever larger.

The second item which I must mention is that of the doctrine of the covenant. In a way, that also goes back more than fifty years. For the view which was for many years taught and maintained in your denomination with respect to the covenant of grace was that of Prof. W. Heyns. Without going into detail, let me point out that his view was principally that of a general, conditional promise and common covenantal grace to all the children of believers head for head. Principally, that is the First Point of 1924 applied to the doctrine of the covenant. I mention this, because it was that view which became the occasion for the development of our position with respect to the covenant of grace. And I mention this because I believe that here is an area of rich positive development in our Protestant Reformed theology, preaching, and world and life view. Again, I cannot go into detail. But let me briefly characterize that view as the organic conception of God's covenant, understood as the relation of friendship between God and His elect people in Christ, which is realized organically with believers and their seed, in the line of generations, and which embraces the entire cosmos.

That brings us to the second main question.

II. What Has Taken Place In the Intervening Fifty Years?

Our Protestant Reformed Churches are about to reach a milestone. Fifty years of history have been made by us — full and busy and eventful years. No one, you see, stands still. Individuals and also churches develop. And they develop in the

fundamental direction which they have chosen. That is true for us of the Protestant Reformed Churches; it is also true for you of the Christian Reformed Church.

And let me insert one thing right here. We are not perfect, and have not claimed and do not claim perfection as a church. We have been characterized by many weaknesses, faults, sins, shortcomings — as is always the case with the church in the world. But of one fact we are convinced: we began on a fundamentally Reformed basis, and all our history and development has proceeded from that basis in a Reformed direction. We started out Reformed; we very definitely want to be recognizably Reformed; and we are Reformed today. I believe that no one can successfully deny that.

Let me very briefly recount something of our historical and ecclesiastical development.

1. From the outset we engaged in mission activity. That mission activity has been chiefly at home: we considered it our calling specifically to proclaim and to develop the Reformed truth in opposition to the evident departure in the direction of Arminianism and liberalism here in our home land. And we engaged and still engage in that home missions activity always in response to Macedonian calls to "come over and help us." We have also engaged in mission activity beyond our national borders — notably, in Jamaica and in Indonesia.

2. We have a radio broadcast, the Reformed Witness Hour, which is almost as old as your Back To God Hour.

3. From the outset we have maintained our own theological school, something without which no communion of churches can successfully exist. From that school all our ministers have graduated. In our school we have provided training for the ministry in harmony with the stand of our churches. And in that training we use as much as possible our own instructional materials, in the form of textbooks and syllabi.

4. Over the years we have developed a distinct Protestant Reformed literature: our periodicals, our *Standard Bearer*, our Beacon Lights (for young people), our Sunday School Guide, our catechism books. But also many books of a theological and expository nature have been published and have emanated from the circle of our churches.

5. As a matter of our Reformed principles, we have developed as far as possible, and wherever possible, our own educational system — parental schools in which we strive to apply Reformed principles to education.

6. By 1940 we had also attained a full-orbed ecclesiastical organization, with consistories, two

classes, and a synod; an organization under the Church Order of Dordrecht and in which we are averse to every form of ecclesiastical hierarchy.

And so we grew slowly numerically also; we have never enjoyed a rapid growth. This growth continued until at one point about 22 years ago we numbered 24 churches, had 28 active ministers, and numbered about 1400 families from Ontario, Canada to the West Coast.

And then came a crisis in our denomination, a crisis precipitated in part by our contact with the so-called Liberated Churches of the Netherlands and with immigrants in Canada from those churches. I cannot take the time to recount that history this morning. I only want to point out, first of all, that fundamentally the issue was principally the same as in 1924: only this time it involved the matter of the covenant of grace. The issue was whether the promise of the covenant is a general, conditional promise for all who are baptized. In other words, the issue was whether, in the sphere of the covenant, grace is general or particular. The De Wolf group held the former. And that the issue was indeed the same as in 1924 is, I believe, confirmed by history: the De Wolf group could not and did not maintain a separate existence, but readily found their way back into your denomination, without any essential change being made on your part as to the Three Points. That is a fact of record.

The second aspect of that crisis which I would mention is the fact that numerically we were decimated, of course. But the Lord preserved us as a denomination. He also strengthened us through this struggle. And also outwardly we have revived. Today we are 20 congregations, from New Jersey to the West Coast. We number some 800 families. We are active in home missions. We have some 20 active ministers. We have a vibrant theological school. We have a press which receives world-wide attention. Our original leaders, Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, have gone to glory. Most of our corps of ministers is of the second and third generation, though there are still among us several of our veterans, active since our early years. And from all our pulpits are sounded the same clear notes of the pure and lively preaching of the Word, Reformed according to the confessions.

But there is another question concerning those fifty years. How have our two denominations stood in relation to one another during that period? Was there any contact? Were there any efforts to heal the breach? In answer to this question, I call your attention to the following facts:

1. Officially, there were two approaches made by our synods to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. One was by our synod of 1940. The second

was by our synods of 1957-1959. Both times we called attention to the wrongs of 1924, and we urged that steps be taken to remove what separated us as churches, and declared ourselves ready for full discussion of our differences. Both times our overtures for reconciliation were rejected.

2. Unofficially, in 1939 there was an abortive conference at the Pantlind Hotel between our ministers and several ministers of the Christian Reformed Church, Dr. K. Schilder of the Netherlands being present. Conspicuous by their absence were the Christian Reformed leaders who had played a leading part in 1924. The Rev. Herman Hoeksema came prepared with a position paper at that conference. Thereafter, however, there was no progress because of a refusal on the part of the Christian Reformed participants to engage in discussion. Nothing further developed.

3. At various times throughout these years our *Standard Bearer* has called for steps to be taken to remove whatever obstacles exist by way of thorough and open discussion. None of these calls has ever been heeded.

That brings me to my final question, which I must needs answer very briefly.

III. What Is Our Stance Today?

Where do we stand as Protestant Reformed Churches?

In the first place, it should be evident from the preceding that we have not changed fundamentally since 1924. We have developed. Our theology has been refined and enriched. We have matured. But we stand *fundamentally* where we stood 50 years ago, and our development has been in that line. We stand unabashedly and unequivocally on the basis of the infallible Word of God and our Reformed Confessions.

In the second place, I call your attention to the fact that our denomination is unique in this respect, that we are not internally troubled by any of the numerous heresies and other departures and innovations which are troubling churches throughout the world and throughout the Reformed community today. Why? Not because we live in isolation; that is impossible. Not because we pay no attention to these developments: for we follow them closely, in your denomination and in others, at home and abroad. We are theologically aware. But because the Lord preserves His church in the way of faithfulness, love of, and adherence to the truth of His Word. I say that not in pride, but in utmost humility. As churches we have nothing to boast of in ourselves; what we are, we are by the grace of God only.

But there is a second aspect to this question. That is this: where do we stand as Protestant Reformed Churches with respect to the Christian Reformed Church today?

To answer that question, I must briefly call attention to the fact that the Christian Reformed Church has also passed through fifty years of history since 1924. *Fundamentally*, you have not changed. Your stance with respect to the crucial issues involved in the Three Points is basically the same. But you have developed. And you have developed, I am convinced, in the fundamental line of 1924.

For the most part, I believe, that development has taken place in the past 20 years, roughly since the time when the generation of 1924 passed from the scene. They did not develop much along the common grace line. Partly, I believe, this was due to the fact that they were too traditionally Reformed to accept all the consequences involved in '24. But as James Daane put it, the winds of change began to blow through your denomination. And although there were other influences at work also, chiefly those winds of change blew from the direction of 1924. In some cases, the changes were directly related to the Three Points; in other instances, the relationship is less direct.

Permit me to mention a few items.

First of all, with respect to world-and-life-view, I mention:

1. Your tolerance of membership in worldly labor unions.
2. Your change of stance with regard to the Film Arts, the decision on which appealed directly to the Second Point of 1924.
3. The increasing marriage of Jerusalem and Athens in the area of education.

Secondly, with respect to doctrine, I mention:

1. The general atonement theory put forth by Prof. Dekker in the 1960s. This was directly related to the First Point of 1924 – so much so, that no one on either side could discuss the matter without reference to 1924 and the well-meant offer.
2. In close connection therewith was also Dr. Stob's claim at that time that God hates no one.
3. There is the open denial of sovereign reprobation, and, in fact, of all "decretal theology" by Dr. James Daane in *The Freedom of God*.
4. There is the as yet uncondemned universalism put forth by Dr. J. Harold Ellens.
5. There are the various departures in the area of Scripture, including Report 36-44, the increasing incidence of some form of evolutionism, the denial of

the literal and historical character of the events recorded in Genesis 1-3, etc. These we see as the ultimate development of 1924 in connection with the views put forth by Dr. Janssen prior to 1922.

There are more items which can be mentioned. I have not mentioned such things as Key 73 and Evangelism Thrust, nor the effort to relax the Formula of Subscription and the admitted signing of that Formula with mental reservations, nor the movement for liturgical revisionism.

Now admittedly you are seeing your denomination through the eyes of another. And I want you to know that I mention these things not with pride and boasting and joy, but with sadness and pain of heart. But I will defend the proposition that your present

ills are all related – doctrinally, practically, church politically, and ethically – to 1924. I have stated this publicly many times.

And therefore, in conclusion, my answer to the question concerning our stance in relation to your denomination is: it is basically the same now as in 1924. We call you to return from those errors to the old paths of the Reformed faith and to stand where we stand. Only, today that call is more urgent than ever before. If you look back only about 20 years, you yourselves can observe that you no longer stand where you stood then as a denomination. You are fast losing your Reformed character. Return!

Thank-you for your attention.

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Mr. Donald Coezema, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Donald Coezema
1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P. O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Business Agent for Australasia: Mr. Wm. van Rij
59 Kent Lodge Ave.
Christchurch 4, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

There seems to be little reason why the majority of denominations, denominations which have the largest membership rolls, should not get together. Membership in many denominations is a social matter. Doctrinal differences and church political differences mean little if anything in a time of doctrinal indifference. Liturgical differences are no longer barriers when most denominations are engaging in some form of liturgical renewal, and when all the emphasis is on social work. It would seem that only a certain traditionalism still keeps most denominations apart.

Nevertheless, the pressures are so strong that the leaders will some day have their way. We may be sure that there will be no room, not only in the new ecclesiastical structures being erected, but in the world as a whole, for the Church of Christ. Ecclesiastical union, in most of its forms, is opposition to God. That is its deepest spiritual principle. And opposition to God always manifests itself in opposition to those who represent God's cause in the world.