

SOLA GRATIA?

**The affirmation by Calvinism and denial by Hypercalvinism of
God's non-saving common graciousness toward His creatures**



by

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Dedicated to the loving memory of my esteemed doctoral promotor Rev. Prof. Dr. F.J.M. Potgieter. Even when I first met him around 1958 before I first became his student in 1960, I well remember how delighted he was I had even then already begun to read Dr. Kuyper's trilogy on *Common Grace*.

God is gracious. He condescended to create His universe - with its angels and its plants and its animals. None of them merited being given even their very existence.

Then He graciously condescended even further. From the very dust, He created His image man - and commanded him to be fruitful and to multiply and to cultivate the Earth and to subjugate even the sky and the sea and all that moves,

That mandate required mankind to undertake the extensive voyage of **history**. Man sinned. But God's purposes throughout history shall yet be executed - in exhaustive detail!

All mankind is on a centuries-long voyage. All people that on Earth do dwell are, as it were, sailing and working on God's ship. The voyage started from the Garden of Eden. It entails sailing over a deep sea - toward the Harbour City of the New Jerusalem.

Despite their sins, through His non-saving or **common graciousness** or **general kindness**, God favours and gifts and enables both elect and reprobate humans and His other non-human creatures to work for Him on His ship. He graciously feeds them all, for the whole of their life. And He faithfully pays each his mariner's wages, on the dates when due.

While on board, both groups produce goods - with their God-given talents - and from God's Own raw materials which He has loaned them. In spite of the reprobates' constant complaints and unsuccessful attempts at repeated mutinies against God as the Owner of the ship, during the voyage He restrains them (and even His elect) from doing more damage than they do.

In addition, He bestows upon His elect **alone** His saving or **special grace** - and joy in their work. Not just for the voyage - but also for eternity. By God's enabling, they lovingly help and patiently endure the reprobate crew-members - during the milleniums of that lengthy voyage.

Toward the end, realizing where the ship is heading, the reprobate more and more jump ship into the sea - leaving their products behind on board. The number of the elect on the ship, with their products, keeps on increasing - and the number of the reprobate keeps on diminishing.

At the conclusion of the voyage, the ship's Owner throws the rest of the remaining reprobate off of His vessel and into the sea - which then becomes a lake of fire. Reaching the port of New Jerusalem City at the end of World History, the Owner cleanses all of the products on His ship. Thus cleansed, He then unloads them at the Heavenly Harbour - together with His elect crew who then ever-increasingly for Christ's sake enjoy those cleansed products in New Jerusalem City on the Renewed Earth unto all eternity.

- Francis Nigel Lee

In his *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley N.J., p. 207), the great Calvinistic Theology Professor Rev. Dr. Cornelius van Til says of the unfallen Adam that he, like his wife Eve, "**first** lives under the **general favor** of God - and reacts favorably. Then he reacts unfavorably, and comes under the curse of God.... This is, in principle, entirely hostile to God. **Then** grace comes on the scene - **both** saving and non-saving grace."

Also in his important book *Common Grace* (Philadelphia, 1947, pp. 82-94), Rev. Professor Dr. van Til declares: "All **common grace** is **earlier grace**. Its commonness lies in its earliness. It pertains not merely to the lower dimensions of life. It pertains to all dimensions....

"At the **first** stage of history, there is much common grace.... This **creation grace** requires response.... **Common grace continues**" - but "**will diminish**...in the...**course of history**....

"There is a certain attitude of **favor** on the part of God toward a **generality of mankind**, and a certain good before God - in the life of the historically-undeveloped unbeliever." **After** history, that "certain attitude of **favor** on the part of God toward...the historically-undeveloped unbeliever" **totally disappears**. Human existence [of unbelievers] yet remains - but **then, without grace**.

For there is **not even any common grace at all** - in **Hell**. Nor with and **beyond Hell**, after the Final Judgment, in the **Lake of Fire**. Revelation 20:12-15 *cf.* 21:8 & 22:11-15.

Van Til thus grounded **common grace in creation** - and in all creatures' **common Creator**. For God our Creator is Himself **essentially gracious**.

Yet not just Van Til asserted common grace. So too does Holy Scripture, the Early Church, Augustine, and the Calvinistic Reformation. *Seriatim*, we shall show this below.

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But first, here is our own overview. **God is gracious**. He cannot but be so. Indeed, He has always been so - from all eternity past. He shall always so remain - unto all eternity future. Exodus 22:27 & 34:6; Second Chronicles 30:9; Nehemiah 9:17-31; Psalm 86:15 & 103:8 & 111:4 & 112:4 & 116:5 & 136:1-26 & 145:8-10; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; and First Peter 2:3.

Even **before Adam**, by His **creative common grace** the Triune God **graciously** condescended to create a universe (containing angels and stars and planets). He needed none of them. Not one of them **merited** being created.

His **unfallen** created **angels** needed no **saving** grace. For they never fell. His **fallen** angels once had His **common** grace together with the unfallen - but then forfeited it.

By His **maintaining common grace**, God still preserves pre-human earthly materials and plants and animals. They never sinned; can never be justified; and therefore need no **special** grace.

By His **prelapsarian common grace to humans**, God condescendingly created Adam and Eve. Regarding those unfallen people, He made the one from the dust of the ground, and the other from an untainted human rib.

After the prior fall of some of the angels and later the fall of man, by His **restraining common grace** God prevented Satan's adopted human children from destroying our planet. Indeed, God still does so - even today. Thus, for His Own sake and to the advantage of His elect, God **restrains** the progress of sin and **keeps on developing His gifts within even reprobate humans** - who can never be saved. When He reaches His goal in history, He "**de-gifts**" them and casts them into Hell.

After Adam and Eve fell into sin, by His **special or justifying grace** God saved them and saves their elect descendants (**with** the reprobates' **gifts**) for Heaven. Such is **history's main goal**.

First, we shall consider **the Holy Bible on common grace**. Second, we shall briefly trace common grace **from the Apostles down to Luther**. Third, we shall view **the nature of grace from Luther to Calvin**. Fourth, we shall note **Calvin's comments on Bible texts implying common grace**. Fifth, we shall weigh **Calvin's Institutes on common grace**. Sixth, we shall note **Classic Calvinists on common grace** (up to and including the time of Bavinck). Seventh, omitting Kuyper, we shall discuss Post-Kuyperian **Modern Hypercalvinism against common grace**. And last, we shall present **our own conclusions about common grace**.

1. The Holy Bible on common grace

In Genesis 1:1-5 *cf.* John 1:1-5, **God the Son** is the **central** Person of **the Triune God**. He was always **gracious**. He was, is, and always shall be **graciously** transcendent above creation.

Throughout and within time, He is also always condescendingly immanent and omnipresent. This too has implications for **common grace** even toward angels, stars, plants and animals.

For the eternal Word of **God the Father**, **God the Son** through **God the Spirit** is the One Who manufactured **the World and all its fullness**. He is the One Who after man's fall would become the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

As such, God the Son is also **the Root of all common grace**. Had it not been for His condescending and gracious transcendence above and His gracious immanence in the universe right from its very creation onward - and had it not also been for His direct intervention (and His promise to heal the universe in Genesis 3:15*f cf.* Romans 8:19*f*) **right after the fall** - man and his cosmos would right then have disintegrated. Indeed, then, even Cain and the God-gifted and common-graced Cainites - would never even have been conceived, and still less have been born or lived.

In Genesis 1:1-28, the most-gracious and most-High God **condescended** - when He **graciously** or unmeritedly made sinless Adam from the dust of the ground. That sinless Adam was made by **grace**, and **expected to increase in grace**. For later, thus did Jesus the sinless **Second Adam**.

"The **grace** of God was upon Him"; He "increased in wisdom and stature and in **favour** with God and man"; He "Who was...the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Luke 2:40 & 2:52 & 3:23-38. Such "grace" upon that Second Adam was obviously not saving but **common grace**!

In Genesis 3:15 & 3:22 *cf.* 4:1*f* & 4:25-26, it was by God's non-saving and **common grace** that the **fallen** Adam and Eve did not partake of the tree of life in their sinful state. For if they had, it seems they would then have kept on existing forever in that **fallen** condition.

In this way, God's non-saving and common grace becomes the vehicle for the operation of His saving grace. So too, the promise of His saving grace to Eve becomes the vehicle of continuing **history** therebeyond. That, in turn, permits the birth and the growth even of the reprobate Cain and his descendants Jabal and Jubal and Tubal-cain - whom the Bible says became equipped with their God-given gifts of non-saving grace endowed by God's Spirit Himself (Genesis 4:20*f* & 6:3).

In Genesis 8:21-22, "the Lord said in His heart, 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake! For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his childhood. Neither will I again, as I have done, any more smite every living thing. While the Earth remains - seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease!'"

Seasons (*cf.* Genesis 1:14) were **graciously** (re-)instituted not just for the godly, but also for the **ungodly postdiluvians**. God promised He will faithfully maintain the recurrence of those seasons as long as the Earth keeps on remaining. This surely implies God's non-saving grace also toward the ungodly as regards His seasonal faithfulness.

In Genesis 9:1-21, God re-enjoins the same nature-covenant which He had formerly made with the Adamites (Genesis 1:14 & 1:28) - which Adam had gone and transgressed (Hosea 6:7). This was **not a covenant of salvation** with Noah (as was the pre-flood covenant of Genesis 6:18).

Genesis 9:1-21 is a **post-flood re-commanding of the pre-fall Adamic covenant**. Postdiluvianly, it was now re-enjoined: to every living creature with the Noachides, whether bird or cattle or any other animal that had been on the ark (9:10); to the very Earth itself (9:13-17); and to all mankind, including even the rascal Ham and all of his descendants (9:22-26).

Here, (re-)permission was granted to the Noachides to eat meat. And to institute the death penalty for murder (regardless of the religion of either the murderer or the murderee).

God's **Common Grace** Prefall Covenant was here re-affirmed (Genesis 1:28 *cf.* 9:1-21) - for all people of all religions and for all animals for all time. For God's pre-fall **common grace** here continues also after the Noachic flood - on this re-new-ed Earth.

"Here in Genesis 9:6," says Luther, "rests the source from which all civil law and the entire **law of nations** flows further. For where God here grants man the power of life and death over his fellow man - it naturally also includes that which is less, and thus the power of deciding also in **matters of possession** and **other matters**."

In Genesis 11:1, **before** the confusion of tongues, God maintained a **common** language among mankind. In Genesis 11:8, **after** the confusion of tongues, God's **common grace** maintains each community speaking its own new language.

In Genesis 18:23f, God indicates He would have spared the wicked Sodom - if only ten righteous men could have been found there. This indicates that He had hitherto extended His **common grace** toward Sodom, and would have continued to do so if it still had just one *Minyan* or godly Congregation of but ten godly mature males. Sadly, it did not; so He destroyed it.

In Genesis 27:11 to 33:11 also the reprobate Esau, who despised the blessing of the Lord, found "grace" in the eyes of Jacob and received a "**blessing**" from him. Indeed, Genesis 33:5 & 33:11 ascribe children and riches (which are not peculiar only to the elect) to God's **grace**.

Too, in Genesis 39:5 - for the sake of the godly Joseph - the Lord Himself "**blessed**" the unbelieving Egyptian Potiphar's house in common. This uncommonly common but non-saving "**blessing**" then came upon "all that he had in the house and in the field."

In Exodus 22:27, we are urged to lend to the poor and to have compassion on them - regardless of their faith or lack thereof. Why? Humans are to be gracious, says God their Creator, "because **I am gracious**." Indeed, humans are to be gracious even toward such poor as lack faith! Cf. Matthew 5:44-45.

In Exodus 34:6, God Himself remarked: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth." Of all the divine attributes mentioned here, it is significant that only one - mercy alias grace - is mentioned first; and mentioned twice!

For "grace" is mentioned first, and twice, among all of God's other attributes listed here. And because God cannot but be gracious - yet nevertheless damns the reprobate - it must follow that His grace is not limited solely to saving grace toward His elect. Indeed, His mercy also includes His **non-saving grace** - toward unbelievers; and, until their deaths, even **toward the reprobate**.

In Judges 1:23-26, Josephitic spies conditionally promised a man from the then-heathen city of Luz - "**mercy**" (*chesed*). The stipulation of that promise of "mercy" - was on the condition that he would first show them how to get into that city.

Yet that "mercy" no way implied the donation of **saving** grace! For, unlike Rahab, after the man had showed the spies how to get into Luz - and then received their "mercy" - he himself did not join the people of God. Instead, he rather went off to live among the pagan Hittites.

The *chesed* or mercy alias grace shown here, was therefore "common graciousness." It was not special mercy or grace which the Josephites, as images of God Himself, showed that man.

In First Chronicles 21:12*f*, the saved David was not threatened with the loss of his salvation. But he was indeed threatened with the diminution of his earthly kingdom - by either three years' famine [at the hands of man]; or three months' destruction at the hands of his enemies; or three days' pestilence (from the Lord). David chose the latter, saying: "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies [plural]! But let me not fall into the hand of man!"

This surely implies David regarded food produced by man - and even peace from his enemies - as common grace favours or "mercies" from God. For such are the opposites of the first two punishments proposed to him.

In Second Chronicles 30:9, King Hezekiah told his people who had escaped from the Assyrians: "The Lord is gracious and merciful." Again, this relates to a common political peace here on Earth - and not to a special-grace justificatory salvation by and in the eyes of the Lord.

Also in Nehemiah 9:17-31, God's mercies focus once more on common-grace political peace among the Israelites - rather than on special-grace salvation. There, in a prayer to the Lord, the Latter was very clearly told:

"You are a God...gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.... You in your manifold mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.... According to Your manifold mercies, You gave them deliverers....

"Many times You delivered them, according to Your mercies.... For the sake of Your great mercies, You did not utterly consume them.... You are a gracious and merciful God!"

In Job 26:13, we are told that God "by His Spirit...garnished [or adorned] the Heavens." Surely this is a work of His common grace - and not of His redemption! For those Heavens never needed saving, and indeed never can or could be saved.

In Job 32:8, we are told "there is a Spirit in man, and the Spirit of the Almighty gives them understanding." Again, the reference is not to the redemption of the elect, but to the Spirit's giving understanding to men in general ("them").

Too, in Job 33:4, the reference is to the Spirit's manufacture of and enlivening of man - regarding the latter's earthly life. It is not at all describing the redemption of fallen humanity. *Cf.* too with Genesis 2:7, where the Spirit does not save unfallen man but nevertheless graciously and unmeritedly enlivened the sinless Adam.

Also in Job chapters 38 to 42, God claims to care, despite the fall of man, not just for His elect such as Job. There, God says He cares also for the whole World and all it contains.

For such contents were and are **God's** Earth, stars, seas, rain, deserts, herbs, lightnings, clouds, lions, ravens, and all of the other wild animals. Indeed, it seems that God **graciously** - that is, unmeritedly - maintains them all.

In Psalm 33:5-9, we are told God's "goodness" fills the Earth and that His "lovingkindness" toward "the children of men" is connected with His illumination of them as regards their earthly life. Nothing is said here about the forgiveness of sins. So it seems God's "lovingkindness" here relates to His common-grace work in mankind.

In Psalm 76:10, the inspired Bible says: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You! The remainder of wrath, You shall restrain."

This implies that God Himself both enables and permits even the wrath of God-gifted man to praise Him. For He, by His common grace, restrains the full outbreak of that wrath - at least during history, on this side of Hell.

In Psalm 117, "**all nations**" are commanded to praise the Lord **because** His **merciful kindness** (*chesed*) is great toward us." Clearly, God has not elected all nations as such. So the reference here must be to His **non-electing** and **non-justifying** *chesed* - alias His **common grace**.

In Psalm 136:1-26, we are told no less than fully twenty-six times that God's "**mercy keeps on enduring for ever**." On many of those occasions, God was to be thanked not for His justificatory work for the elect - but rather for His general works of mercy or **grace** in nature, even for the present benefit also of the reprobate.

Thus we are told here that God in His mercy "made the Heavens" and "stretched out the Earth above the waters" and "made...the sun" and "the moon and stars" - **all** of which He did **before the fall of man**. Indeed, we are further told here that God "gives food to **all flesh**" - be it that of animals or humans - and not just to His elect. So His **mercy** in these instances cannot mean His saving grace to believers alone - but means His **common grace** to **all His sentient earthly creatures** *etc.*

Psalm 145:8*f* says: "Gracious and **merciful** (*rachuum*) is the Lord, patient and of great goodness.... His tender **mercies** (*rach^amaav*) are over **all** His works." They are not just over His elect humans after the fall of man and after their regeneration.

God's mercies or **graces** are thus common to all His works - **common grace** to all creatures in common, without exception. Although the forgiveness of sins is not for the reprobate, their wickedness does not prevent Him from still showering them and all His other creatures with His **common graces**.

In Proverbs 8 & 9, it is taught that Christ the Wisdom of God **wisely maintains** the entire creation. That He did before the fall of man. That He also did, and still does, thereafter. Cf. Luke 7:35 and First Corinthians 1:23-30 & 2:1-16 and Colossians 1:13-20 & 2:2-3.

In Isaiah 26:10 - God says: "**Favour** is shown (*yuchan*) to the **wicked**, but he will not learn righteousness!" 'Favour' means '**grace**.' Here, *yuchan* is the Hebrew hophal future for *yuwchan* - which means "to be favoured" or "to find mercy."

It is derived from the verb *chaanan*, which means to be **gracious** or **merciful**. Significantly, even some deniers of common grace concede that at least this Bible text might seem to assert the doctrine.

In this text, also Luther translates: "*Aber wenn den Gottlosen gleich **Gnade** angeboten wird, so lernen sie doch nicht Gerechtigkeit*" etc. This means: "But even though **grace** be offered to the godless, they still do not learn righteousness" etc.).

Newer German and Dutch and Afrikaans translations render it: "Wird **begnadigd** der Böse, so lernt er nie Gerechtigkeit" etc. (= "the godless being graced, he never learns righteousness" etc.); "Wordt den goddelooze **genade** bewezen, hij leert evenwel geen gerechtigheid" etc. (= "the godless being granted grace, he still does not learn any righteousness" etc.); and "Word aan die goddelose **genade** bewys, dan leer hy geen geregtigheid nie" etc. (= "the godless being shown grace, he does not learn any righteousness" etc.). Thus Rev. Professor Dr. Valentine Hepp. Also the New International Version translates it similarly: "Though **grace** is **shown** to the **wicked**, they do not learn righteousness" etc.

Rev. Dr. Ridderbos too here renders the verse: "*Wordt de goddelooze **genadig** behandeld, dan leert hij geen gerechtigheid; in een land van recht handelt hij krom, en hij ziet niet de hoogheid des Heeren*" [= "Even when the wicked is treated **mercifully**, he learns no righteousness; in a land of righteousness he acts crookedly, and he does not see the highness of the Lord"]. And Dr. Ridderbos then comments that, unlike many who are led to conversion, "that does not happen [here - even] when **the wicked keeps on being spared** [*de goddeloze **steeds gespaard** wordt*]."

Dr. Valentine Hepp states on this text in his writing *General Grace*: "Isaiah 26:10 can thus be paraphrased: 'too great a measure of **common grace** is not conducive for righteousness [*een al te groote mate van **algemeene genade** is niet bevorderlijk voor de gerechtigheid*].'" That is indeed true. Yet Hepp's paraphrase of the verse nevertheless establishes his belief there are even various degrees of common grace. And his writing clarifies that he himself upheld that doctrine.

This then means that although and even when the wicked are given excellent common grace gifts so as to be able to become good Soldiers and Judges and Senators and Artists and Orators (as at Isaiah 3:2) - they do not produce also the different and special grace of imputed righteousness. It is indisputable that also the wicked are at least sometimes still given such gifts. Yet the wicked then still do not produce the special grace of imputed righteousness.

In Isaiah 28:24-29, the abilities of the plowman are attributed to God Who so gifts him. "God instructs him to discretion, and teaches him.... This too comes forth from the Lord of hosts Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Also regarding such **common grace** gifts!

Jonah 2:8 states: "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies." This may well mean that the pagan sailors, after in the previous chapter mercifully being delivered from the shipwreck by the true God of Jonah, now sadly returned to serve their own idols.

In Jonah 4:2 - after Nineveh "repented" (whether permanently and savingly or not), and after the whole city was then spared - Jonah spoke to God. Jonah said: "I knew that You are a gracious God [and therefore good and righteous to all], and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" or favour. 'El channuun w^erachuun 'erek 'appayim w^erab-chesed.

In Jonah 4:6-11, God prepared a gourd to grow overnight in order to provide the ungrateful Jonah with common grace protection from the scorching sun which then smote it. When Jonah then complained, God said: "You had pity on the gourd " - so "should I not have pity on that great city Nineveh?!"

Deniers of common grace can hardly argue here that both cases involve the excusing and forgiveness of sin. For that would imply that everyone in Nineveh with its 120 000 persons who could not discern between their right and their left hand - and also the many cattle there - then all had their sins forgiven!

Ridiculously, that would then also have to imply that God forgave even the cattle in Nineveh their "sins"; and that even Jonah forgave the gourd its "sins" against him! Surely, even deniers of common grace should realize that gourds and cattle, being incapable of sinning, are also incapable of having "their" sins forgiven.

So the passage clearly means that Jonah was commonly gracious toward the gourd. And God exercised common grace toward Nineveh's cattle - thus once again teaching the existence of common grace also after and despite the fall of man!

As Rev. Professor Dr. Geerhardus Vos says in his 1902 *Scriptural Doctrine of the Love of God* (p. 18f): "The Old Testament has a great deal to teach on the benevolent side of God's Self-revelation to the World at large. The strongest of terms are used...to the whole of creation in the days of Noah - His abundant ever-flowing kindness in the sphere of natural life; His long-suffering in the [Divine] view of universal sin; His common grace working for the restraint of sin.... He keeps this covenant and preserves man and beast. As Jonah (4:6f) took pity on his gourd, so He [viz. God] pities and spares the Ninevites and their cattle. His mercy is wider and deeper than the ocean of human misery."

Coming next to the New Testament, Vos continues: "New Testament truth opened the way for employing the term [lovingkindness] in a wider sense By thus emphasizing the universality of common grace and making it flow from the love of God, our Lord sought a point of contact for the approaching universalism of the Gospel. That God loved the World in its natural existence even outside the sphere of the covenant, contains a pledge of the bestowal upon the same World of an infinitely higher redemptive love." Cf. John 3:16.

This was developed especially by Rev. Professor Dr. B.B. Warfield in his great sermon on John 3:16, titled *God's Immeasurable Love*. On this, see at John 3:16, later here below. But also in his essay *The Outpouring of the Spirit*, Dr. Warfield declares:

"The Lord never indeed wholly turns away from any work of His hands. Did He do so, it would fall at once - on the removal of His upholding hand...."

"In His providence, and in what we call His **common grace**, He continues to work among even His sinful creatures who have lost all claim upon His love.... His sovereignty shows itself not only in passing by one individual and granting His [**saving**] **grace** to another, but also in passing by one nation or one age, and granting His [**saving**] **grace** to another."

Indeed, He is sovereign in the operation not only of His common grace but also of His saving grace. God does what He wishes, whensoever and to whomsoever He wills.

In Matthew 5:44-48, Jesus Himself declares: "Love your enemies, **ble**ss them that curse you..., so that you may be the children of your Heavenly Father Who is in Heaven.... For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.... You must be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect!" Thus, God does not limit His benefits of rain and sunshine only to believers - but currently continues to give them to both good and evil.

In Luke 6:35, Jesus adds: "The Highest...is **kind** to the unthankful and to the evil. Therefore you must be merciful, as your Father is **merciful**" (to the unthankful and to the evil). God is good (*chreestos*) - toward the ungrateful and the wicked. God **bles**ses His enemies whenever He causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine over those who are unthankful and evil.

In Luke 16:23-25, it was said to the wicked rich man in Hell: "Remember that you in your lifetime received your good things!" This seems to show he enjoyed common grace before - but not after - his death. For there is no water, not even to quench the thirst, in Hell.

John 1:4-5 & 1:9 say that God the Son is yet "the Light of men" and that He still "keeps on shining in darkness" - so that "the darkness does not put it out." Indeed, He was [and is] the true Light Who keeps on illuminating every man that comes into the World." Is that not an example of common grace?

Indeed, in John 1:14-16, we are told that the sinless Christ was "**full** of **grace**" - and that "from His fullness **all** have received, **grace** upon **grace**." If grace were to mean only saving grace - it is unclear how and why our unfallen Christ became full of it - and how "from His fullness **all** receive **grace** upon **grace**." For the latter phrase certainly seems to distinguish between at least one inferior kind of grace - and another superior kind of grace - yet both such, "**common** graces" for **all**!

Which brings us to John 3:16f. Be it noted the text does not say that God so loved the elect that He gave His Son so that the elect should not perish (while nobody else thereby gets any benefit whatsoever). No!

Instead, it says that "God so loved the **World** that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that whosoever trusts in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the World to condemn the World, but so that the World might be saved through Him."

Regardless as to whether the word "saved" here means 'justified' or merely 'preserved' (or both), it is clear that the "World" God sent His Son into is not the same as the elect in that World. And regardless as to whether the word "World" here means 'the entire mundane created cosmos' on the one hand or 'this wicked sin-stained World' on the other (or both) - it is clear that God "**loved**" the "World" and still loves it.

Therefore, the passage teaches that in addition to God's **special grace** alias His particular love toward the elect alone (whom He shall not allow to perish and to whom He shall indeed give everlasting life) - God also has a general alias a non-justifying **common grace** "love" toward the "World." And that is a general love distinct from His justifying plan toward the elect alone.

Here, the "World" is **different** to "whomsoever trusts" God's Son. And God's general or **common love** toward the former - is **different** to His **uncommon plan** surely to donate **special** and particular **everlasting life** to the latter **alone**.

The text also has important eschatological implications. In addition to both loving the World in a general sense and saving His elect within it in a special sense, God lovingly preserves and finally heals the fullness of the World as such.

As B.B. Warfield states in his great sermon on John 3:16 titled *God's Immeasurable Love*: "Conceive the World as vastly as you may, it remains ever incommeasurable with the immeasurable love of God.... It is not in...merely opening of a way of salvation before each and every man that the love of God for the World is declared by it to issue - but in the actual saving of the World.... He so loved the World, that He saved the World...."

"In identifying 'the World' with believers - do they [who so misidentify] not neglect...at least the **distinction** between the two notions which the text seems to institute?... Certainly here, 'the World' and 'believers' do not seem to be quite equipollent terms...."

"The wicked World deserved at His hands only total destruction. But He saves out of it a multitude which no man can number - out of every nation.... How much must, then, God love the World!...."

"The 'World'...is just the synonym of all that is evil and noisome and disgusting. There is nothing in it...that can justify the love of any good man.... When we are told that God loves the World, it is as much as if we were told that He loves the flesh...."

"The passage...certainly does not teach that God loves all men alike and visits each and every one alike with the same manifestations of His love.... As little was it intended to teach...that His love is confined to a few especially chosen individuals selected out of the World...."

"This passage explicitly forbids us to believe, proceeding at once to divide the 'World' into two classes - those that perish, and those that have eternal life.... But neither will the text allow us to suppose that God grants this His immeasurable love only to a few abstracted from the World, while the World itself He permits to fall away to its destruction. The declaration is not that God has loved some out of the World, but that He has loved the World; and we must rise to the height of this divine universalism!....

"Through all the years, one increasing purpose runs - one **increasing** purpose! The kingdoms of the Earth become ever more and more the Kingdom of our God and His Christ.... It is God Who is building.... Under His hands, the structure rises as steadily as it does slowly.... In due time, the capstone shall be set into its place. And to our astonished eyes shall be revealed - nothing less than a saved World....

"To enter into the life that is life indeed, [is] to become portions no longer of the World that lies in the evil one - but of the reconstructed World that abides in Him.... Thus, thus, then, it is that God is saving the World - the **World**, mind you; and not merely some individuals out of the World - by a process which involves not supplanting but reformation, recreation....

"The nations shall walk amidst the light thereof; and the kings of the Earth do bring their glory into it [Revelation 21:24-26].... Only those written in the Lamb's book of life; and yet **all** the **nations**! It is the vision of the saved World."

See too, later below, what Calvin and Dabney - the latter hardly the most outspoken advocate of common grace - say about John 3:16-19. That should prove to be an eye-opener to all who restrict grace only to saving grace!

Also John 8:12^f seems to teach this same truth. For there, Christ tells not only His disciples that He was their light - nor their light alone only in spiritual matters. To the contrary, there He tells also the Pharisees that He was **the** Light of the **World** as such.

In Acts 14:15-17, Paul tells Pagans that "the living God...**permitted all nations** to walk in their own ways...[and] **did good** and gave us rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and **gladness**." Clearly, this means God does **good** also to the Heathen.

As Rev. Professor Dr. Valentine Hepp therefore asks: "Is that not benevolence, favour, unmerited **grace**? Do they not have the rain and the fruitful seasons they received - thanks to the undeserved goodness and **grace** of God?"

In Acts 17:25-30, Paul told the **unbelieving Athenians** of the Creator God: "In Him **we** live.... As your own poets have said...., '**we are His offspring**'.... The times of this ignorance, God **winked at**" or took into account. For, as Rev. Professor Dr. Valentine Hepp here observes - Paul, though here speaking to unbelievers, does not say "we were" God's offspring - but only before the fall. Instead, Paul tell them: "we are" God's offspring - despite the fall.

In Romans 1:19-20, the invisible things even concerning God's everlasting power and divinity, are still understood and grasped. From the creation of the World onward, before the fall of man. And also now, even after man's fall into sin.

Indeed, in Romans 2:4 - just after His condemnation also of outrageous unnatural sins in the previous chapter - God asks an important question even of the most wicked of sinners. Namely: "Do you despise the riches of His mercy (*chreestototees*) and tolerance and patience?"

Meantime, during this life, God not yet lets His wrath burn freely. Not yet. During **history**, He still restrains it.

Here, the word 'mercy' - as the 1637 *Dordt Dutch Bible* explains at this text - "is an attribute of God whereby He blesses and does good, also and even to those who are evil. Matthew 5:45." For at the word "*goedertienheid*" (alias mercy), it here footnotes: "*Dit is eene eigenschap Gods, waardoor Hij zegt en weldoet, ook selfs degenen die kwaad zijn.*" (English above).

This *Dordt Dutch Bible* was commissioned precisely by the 1618*f* *Synod of Dordt* which rejected the Arminian misapplication of the doctrine of common grace. So the above comment rightly illustrates its Dordtian alias the correct Calvinistic application.

The text further implies God was 'merciful' to the entire human race before the fall - and is still 'merciful' after the fall not only to those who do good but also to evil-doers. Hence, there was and is non-saving mercy toward both undegenerates before the fall and toward evil unregenerates thereafter. Cf. Romans 2:14-15

In Romans 9:22, only the 'elect' clay gets justified. Yet meanwhile, even the other and 'reprobated' clay is not only endured with much longsuffering by God. It also gets shaped into temporarily-useful objects - at least while they are still here on Earth, before going to Hell.

Romans 11:28 seems to distinguish between God's love and His saving grace. His loving goodness proceeds also toward the unbelievers.

Indeed, even such Jews as were then hostile toward the Church - some of whom died in that wretched condition - are still said to have been "beloved" for the sake of their forefathers. Yet that no way implies their election unto everlasting life.

First Corinthians 7:7 calls both marriageability and chastity *charismata* - alias gifts graciously bestowed by God. That both of those two gifts are often enjoyed also by reprobates, would indicate the gifts are *charismata* divinely donated not by particular election but by common grace.

As Calvin says, "virginity is a special gift." But, as can be seen even from Buddhism's and Romanism's celibate monks and nuns and priests, it is by no means a fruit of election. The same applies also at least to some of the *charismata* listed in First Corinthians 12:4-11 & 12:28-30.

In First Timothy 4:10, Paul says: "God...is the Saviour of all men - especially of those that believe." Here, God protects and preserves not only the believers. In addition, His mercies extend also to all mankind - at least until the end of history.

In Hebrews 6:4-13f, we are told that some taste but do not swallow God's grace - even as frequent rains bring a temporary blessing from God. Yet such is but a common grace and general blessing - qualitatively difference to the special grace and blessing God gave to Abraham.

Hebrews 10:29-39 tells us that some 'commonly' spite the Spirit of grace and draw back unto perdition. Such are they who misuse special grace. The elect, however, are not like them, but are those who keep on believing unto the saving of the soul through God's saving grace.

First Peter 3:19-20 states that the longsuffering of God toward the reprobate waited while His elect were constructing the ark for more than a century. Doubtless Noah purchased some of the building materials from unbelievers - and perhaps even hired some of the reprobate to help him build his huge vessel. Hence even the reprobate were of some temporary use in the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Cf. too at Romans 9:22 (above). For we are told that "the patience of God waited (apexedexeto)" - toward the time of Noah's Flood. Greijdanus comments that the imperfect tense is used here - "to indicate patient, constant waiting.... It expresses both the fervent desire that conversion might result, as well as the great effort to bring this to pass and to postpone the judgment and if possible to turn it away.... God had no desire in the death of the ungodly. That is why He spared them as long as could be, and worked for scores of years in a special undeniable way to lead them to repentance - and waited, so that the judgment might perhaps be left out."

First Peter 4:10-11 teaches all have some or other God-given *charisma*. This is apparently true not just of the elect, but also of mankind in general - thus presupposing also **common grace**.

Second Peter 3:9 states that God "is patient toward you, not willing that some should be lost but that all should repent." Even Greijdanus, who hardly advocated common grace, comments: "It is thus out of **mercy**, in order to give opportunity for repentance and for coming to preservation to all who are purchased by the Lord Christ...[that] God not yet caused the Day of Judgment to come.... The **scoffers** sorely **misacknowledge** the Lord's **mercy and grace**, in His **not-yet-coming**."

But that "Day of Judgment" shall surely come! For the consummation of God's Kingdom shall come (First Corinthians 15:22-28), and God's will shall be done here on Earth as it is in Heaven. When the daily bread of all of God's elect has been given to them, and all of their sins have been forgiven them - they shall be delivered from the evil reprobate. For God's is the Kingdom and the power and the glory! Matthew 6:9-13.

Now, God in His long-suffering common grace tolerates the reprobate. Indeed, right now He even uses them - while His Own Kingdom is still coming, and while His wheat is yet ripening (together with Satan's weeds) in the World as **God's** cornfield. Matthew 13:38-43.

By His ongoing common grace to man, God for His Own sake and for the sake of elect mankind as His Own image, develops the gifts of His elect for time and eternity (Revelation 14:13). He also restrains the progress of sin and keeps on developing His gifts within reprobate humans who can never be saved. *Cf.* Genesis 6:3 with First Peter 3:15-20 and Second Peter 3:3-15.

When done, He removes the reprobate from those gifts and their products (Matthew 25:15-30). He cleanses and then gives the latter gifts and products to His Own elect people (Exodus 3:21-22 & 11:2 & 12:35-36 *cf.* Isaiah 45:14a and Revelation 21:21-26). And He casts the unsaved offscourings of humanity into everlasting Hell (Revelation 14:10-11 & 21:8,27 & 22:14-15).

For the reprobate shall **then** be the offscourings and offscrapings of the human race. Now, those reprobate toenail-ends are still growing, and unwittingly even offer protection to the body as such (Romans 9:22f). But when the image of God is fully displayed in the mature body of Christ - the reprobate ends of those toenails of that final humanity shall be cut off, and cast out into the Lake of Fire. The sweet and elect kernel of the nut, God's human race, shall then be ripe. However, its now-useful but then-useless shell - shall then be thrown into Hell and the Lake of Fire.

In the latter days of the coming of God's Kingdom, Revelation 20:2-6 states that "Satan...[shall be] bound...a thousand years..., so that he would deceive the nations no more.... I saw thrones and those [who] sat upon them.... And they live and reign with Christ a thousand years.... Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection [of the soul].... They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

This implies that, during that future postmillennial millennium - special grace shall increase; restraining common grace shall decrease; and non-saving enabling grace toward the then-Christian increasing majority and the then-Antichristian decreasing minority shall finally embrace humanity as a whole. All three such graces shall then work in collaboration with one another much more harmoniously - as the Earth then becomes full of the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah-Jesus, unfolding toward a later New Earth totally devoid of the reprobate.

So, as implied at the very end of the Bible - just like the end of the pre-flood World that was - the end of World History will be characterized by the increase of God's special grace among His elect and the diminution of His common grace among the damned. Finally, His elect shall inherit the New Earth where grace thoroughly leavens all nature and culture - and the reprobate shall slide into that graceless place called the Lake of Fire.

For Revelation 14:10f makes it clear there is no grace at all in everlasting punishment. Hell is continuing existence in endless agony - unmitigated by compassion, despite the different degrees of suffering there (*cf.* Luke 12:48 & 16:24f).

The opposite is true in Heaven, and later on the New Earth. There, the inhabitants are with the gracious God and His gracious people - despite different degrees of reward in glory (*cf.* Matthew 13:23). Cleansed 'common grace fruit' for eternity, is there - and the leaves of the tree of life promote the ongoing healing and increasing health of the nations (Revelation 21:26 & 22:2).

Revelation 22:2-5 makes it clear there is no disgrace at all but only grace upon grace - in everlasting bliss. As Revelation 22:11 (*cf.* Genesis 6:3) urges: "He who is unjust - let him keep on becoming yet more unjust!.... And he who is holy - let him keep on becoming yet holier!"

There is grace even on the sinless New Earth, forever. There too, our ever-gracious Lord will never stop condescending to fellowship with His graced and renewed creatures.

2. Common grace from the Apostles down to Luther

Jesus Christ Himself presupposes God's common grace toward the Heathen, and even toward those who are evil. Matthew 5:44-48 and Luke 6:35. Also especially His Apostles John (1:5-9 & 3:16 & 8:12) and Paul (Acts 14:15-17 & 17:28 & Romans 1:19 to 2:4) illustrate the existence and importance of common grace.

So too, of course, did the Post-Apostolic Church. We shall now demonstrate this - from Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine.

Even before Augustine, the Early Church recognized the existence of non-saving grace in unbelievers. Thus the first great Christian Apologist, the A.D. 165 Justin Martyr of Samaria (*Apology* 2:8-13), takes an essentially Biblical position on these matters.

Says Justin: "Those of the Stoic school...so far as their moral teaching went...were admirable...on account of the seed of the Word [*sperma tou Logou*] implanted in every race of men.... The demons have always effected that all those be hated who anyhow live a reason-able [*cf.* log-ical] and earnest life and shun vice...by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Word which is Christ.... Lawgivers or philosophers...contemplating some part of the Word..., since they did not know the whole of the Word which is Christ, often contradicted themselves....

"The teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ.... They are not in all respects similar.... Each man spoke well, in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic Word....

"Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of Christians.... For all the [Pagan Greek] writers were able to see realities darkly, through the sowing of the implanted Word that was in them...according to the [common] grace [!] which is from Him" - but which, of course, did not save them. *Cf.* Acts 17:28; First Corinthians 15:32; Titus 1:12.

Also the A.D. 185 Irenaeus of Lyons asks (in his *Against Heresies* II:6:1-2): "How, again, could...the angels...have been ignorant of the Supreme God - seeing they were His property and His creatures?.... His invisible Essence is...omnipotent greatness... All do know that one fact at least - because reason, implanted in their minds, moves them and reveals to them that there is one God.... How could it be that those angels who were superior to us...did not know the Almighty - when even dumb animals tremble and yield at the invocation of His name?"

Irenaeus maintains further (II:9:1-2) that the obvious fact "God is the Creator of the World, is accepted even by those very **persons** who in many ways speak **against** Him and yet **acknowledge** Him.... The Ancients on their part reserved with special care, from the tradition of the first-formed man, this persuasion....

"The very Heathen learned it from creation itself. For even creation reveals Him Who formed it.... They are thus convicted, by their own views, of **blasphemy** against that God Who really exists - while they conjure into existence a god who has no existence, to their own **condemnation**."

The same famous Church Father also insists (III:25:3-4) that "the Father will excel in wisdom all human and angelic wisdom.... He is good and **merciful** and patient, and saves whom He ought.... **Neither** does He show Himself **unmercifully** just.... The God, therefore, Who does **benevolently** cause His sun to rise upon **all** and sends rain upon the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45) - shall judge those who, enjoying **His equally distributed kindness**, have led lives not corresponding to the dignity of His **bounty**; but who have spent their days in wantonness and luxury in opposition to His benevolence and have moreover even blasphemed Him Who has conferred such great **benefits** upon them."

Finally, Irenaeus states (IV:6:6-7): "By means of the creation itself, the Word reveals God the Creator. And by means of the Word [does He declare] the Lord the Maker of the World.... These things do indeed address **all** men in the **same** manner - but all do not in the same way believe them... It was fitting that the Truth should receive testimony from all - and should become Judgment for the salvation indeed of those who believe, but for the condemnation of those who believe not....

"He therefore Who was known, was not a different Being from Him Who declared 'No man knows the Father' - but One and the Same. The Father made all things subject to Him.... The Son, being present with His Own handiwork from the beginning, reveals the Father to **all**....

"Therefore, then, in all things and through all things, there is one God - the Father, and one Word and one Son, and one Spirit - and one salvation to all who believe in Him." Yet no salvation to those who do not, even though He has [by His common grace] adequately revealed Himself in creation to all. See John 1:1-18.

There is no indication that any of the Ante-Nicene Fathers thought differently. Even the A.D. 200 Tertullian, for example, in chapter 17 of his *Apology* - states that "the One God" **prelapsarianly** "brought forth from nothing this entire mass of our World with all its array of elements, bodies, spirits.... He is incomprehensible, though in **grace** [!] He is manifested."

However, also **postlapsarianly**, "this is the crowning **guilt** of **men**, that they **do not wish** to recognize the One of Whom they **cannot possibly be ignorant**.... Would you rather have it from the testimony of the soul itself? O noble testimony of the soul, **by nature** [*naturaliter*]!"

Also in his work *The Soul's Testimony* (1 & 5), Tertullian adds: "A man becomes a Christian; he is not born one." Nevertheless, "testimonies of the soul are simple as true; **commonplace** as

simple; **universal** as **commonplace**; **natural** as **universal**; **divine** as **natural**. *Quanto simplicia, tanto **vulgaria**; quanto **vulgaria**, tanto **communia**; quanto **communia**, tanto **naturalia**; quanto **naturalia**, tanto **divina**.*

"I don't think they can appear frivolous or feeble to **anyone**, if he reflect on the majesty of **nature** from which the soul derives its authority.... Nature is the mistress here, and her disciple is the soul.... Everything the one has taught or the other learned, has come from God."

"Those writers," declares Calvin (*Institutes* II:2:9-11), "hold **human** virtue in little or no account - and ascribe the whole **merit** [by God-given **grace**] of **all** that is good, to the Holy Spirit." Thus also the A.D. 250 Cyprian said: "Let **us** boast about nothing, because **nothing** is **ours**!"

Around A.D. 318, the great Athanasius of Alexandria declared in his *Incarnation of the Word* (3-5) that "God made the universe to exist...by His Own Word - Jesus Christ our Lord.... Having taken especial **pity** above all things on Earth upon the **race of men**..., He **gave them a further gift** and...even of the power of His Own Word - so that...they might be able to **abide** ever in **blessedness**.... But knowing once more how the will of man could sway to either side, in anticipation He **secured the grace given them** - by a law, and the spot where He placed them.

"For He brought them into His Own garden, and gave them a law so that, **if they kept the grace** and remained good, they might still keep the life in Paradise without sorrow or pain or care.... For God has not only made us out of nothing; but He gave us freely, by the **grace** of the Word, a life in fellowship with God." So, to Athanasius - God **gave** mankind **common grace before** the fall.

Among the Post-Nicenes, the A.D. 400 Chrysostom (in his *Advent Homily*) said: "Every man is not only naturally a sinner, but is wholly sin!"; and "The foundation of our philosophy, is humility" (Chrysostom's *Homily on the Perfect Gospel*). Indeed, his contemporary Augustine (*49th Homily on John*) declared: "Let no man flatter himself!... What do you have, but your own sin? Take your sin which is your own! For righteousness, is from God!"

From A.D. 401f, Augustine had been writing his great work *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. There (VIII:12:25), he rightly insisted regarding the prefall Adam: "Man was **not** so constituted that he would be able, when once created, to perform **any** good deed by his **own** powers.... He would always keep receiving justification from his Creator.... God keeps on cultivating a just man."

Clearly, that implies **prefall grace** given by God to Adam. Adam's God-given **prelapsarian grace** was an *adjutorium qua fit et sine qua non fit* - a help by which he could do things, and without which he could not do things. It was a non-saving **common grace**.

But Adam's God-given **postlapsarian grace** was an *adjutorium sine qua non* - a help which he could not do without at all. It was a new and a justifying or saving help - alias a **special grace** without which he was doomed.

In his A.D. 426 *On Rebuke and Grace* (XI:29), Augustine stated: "Did not Adam have the **grace** of God? Yes, truly - he had it **largely**! But of a **different kind** [*viz.* pre-fall **common grace**]. He was placed in the midst of benefits which he had received from the goodness of his Creator. For he had not procured those benefits by his own deservings....

"But [postfall] saints in this life, to whom pertain this [**special**] **grace of deliverance**, are in the midst of evils.... He [the common-graced prefall Adam with his wife Eve], in those benefits, did not need the death of Christ; these [special-graced postfall saints, for their spiritual welfare do indeed need] the blood of that Lamb."

Important too are Augustine's *De Trinitate* (4:20) and his *City of God* (19:1), where he states that even the Heathen saw the truth in the shadows. In the latter (8:11f), he adds that the truth was not hidden from them. In his *Christian Doctrine* (2:60), he declares that Christians should profit from and appropriate that which is **true** even in pagan philosophy. And in his mature *Retractions* (I:4), he observes that also many unclean people acknowledge **much** that is **true**.

The A.D. 1609-64 Calvin, the World's greatest theologian since the death of the last Apostle, was himself an Augustinian. Augustine had stated that "man's natural gifts were corrupted by sin" yet not annihilated, even though "his supernatural gifts were withdrawn."

On this, Calvin (*Institutes* II:2:12) remarks: "I feel pleased with the well-known saying...of Augustine." The latter called God's remnantal post-fall gifts even to the Pagans, 'splendid.'

Indeed, Calvin himself adds (*Institutes* II:2:16): "Augustine rightly teaches that man has, through the fall, been robbed of **grace-gifts** - so that the **natural gifts which remained**, were corrupted after the fall.... *Verissime enim Augustinus...ut gratuita homini post lapsum detracta esse, ita naturalia hae quae restabant, corrupta fuisse docet.*"

Yet this clearly means that both Augustine and Calvin believed man **had** such '**grace-gifts**' **before** the fall. So that **grace-gifts** do not and did not require **the prior** occurrence of **human sin**, in order to exist as "**grace-gifts**"! Too, also the **natural gifts** were (remnantal) **grace-gifts**.

With the Post-Augustinian deformation in **Romanism** - **all nature was separated from grace**. No longer was God regarded as essentially gracious to all of His creatures, and as particularly gracious solely to His elect human children.

No longer did the grace of God drive all of God's creatures and all of their actions. Now, prelapsarian and indeed prehuman nature was **contrasted** against postlapsarian and indeed ever sacramentalized grace.

Now, Romanism qualitatively **contrasts** nature and grace - and regards all natural gifts of God as essentially **non-gracious**. She restricts **grace** only to (*sic!*) 'super-natural or supra-natural gifts' - to be accessed principally through the ecclesiastical sacraments.

This prepared the way for Rome's Anabaptistic stepchildren. The doctrine of Common Grace, grounded in the Bible and developed in the Early Church, finds no place either in Mediaeval or in Post-Mediaeval Romanism - nor in Crypto-Romish Anabaptism or Arminianism.

Romanism has no concept of common grace. Only of prehuman benevolence and human but losable original justice and superadded preternatural gifts - and even of losable postfall yet allegedly 'supernatural' grace.

Indeed, for Rome, even the latter, supposedly imparted *via* the sacraments, is obfuscated by further distinctions within its *gratia gratum faciens* or acceptable-making grace - such as 'prevenient grace' and 'actual grace' and 'habitual grace' and 'infused grace' *etc. (sic)*! Here, see *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* Romish works such as: R. Downey's *Divine Providence* (pp. 63f); C.C. Martindale's *Man and his Destiny* (p. 73); E. Towers's *Actual Grace* (pp.10f & 65); and his *Sanctifying Grace* (pp. 48f & 52f & 77).

Such 'super-natural' or 'supra-natural' deformations are clearly averse to First Corinthians 7:7 & 12:4-11. The Neo-Augustinian and Calvinistic Reformation was needed, to return Christians to the teachings of Holy Scripture and the Early Church - the teachings that grace is not opposed to but drives even nature toward its goal. *Gratia non tollit et non contra sed perficit naturam.*

Rather sadly, the Anabaptists in this respect lapsed back toward Romanism. So too, to a lesser extent, do both Arminians as well as later Hypercalvinistic deniers of common grace like Schilder and his followers in general (and especially Hoeksema and his followers in particular).

The Anabaptists even regarded nature itself as sinful. They radically opposed the prelapsarian and the postlapsarian World Orders - and even the antediluvian and the postdiluvian Worlds.

Like their dispensationalistic descendants, the Anabaptists also opposed the Older Testament to the Newer - of God's one and the selfsame Covenant renewed by Christ. They promoted not the Reformation of, but rather separation from, the Historic Christian Church.

Indeed, with their anti-incarnational and polygamous and anarchistic excrescences - Anabaptists even **denatured** the Kingdom of God. For them, this results not in Revelation 21 & 22 - but rather in a *jenseitige* or this-worldly chaos.

3. The nature of grace from Luther to Calvin

The Protestant Reformation started when the Augustinian Martin Luther asked himself the question: "How can I find a **gracious** God [*Wie krieg' ich einen **gnädigen** Gott*]?" Although Luther then became almost exclusively concerned only with postfall alias **saving grace** through the incarnate Christ - he did understand even such grace also to be **restorative** and **consummative** of what the prefall Adam had possessed.

Indeed, the eternally-**gracious** God had always been gracious to all of His creatures even **before the fall of man**. Thus, Luther had a fine doctrine of God's prehuman benevolence.

Moreover, in his *Answer to the Celebrated Romanist at Leipzig*, Luther proclaims that the unfallen "Adam was a type of Christ" - and that this "I learn not from myself, but from St. Paul in Romans 5." He also realized that even Christ the **sinless Second Adam** increased in **grace** and **favour** with God (Luke 2:40-52).

In the unfallen Adam, Luther observes further in his *Treatise on the New Testament*, whenever "man does God the honour of regarding and confessing Him as true - He becomes to him a **gracious** God Who in turn honours him.... Such a promise **was** given to Adam after the fall" - and, *a fortiori*, surely also **before** the fall.

Too, commenting on even what is left **after** man's fall - on his **primordial** dominion in Genesis 1:26-28, Dr. Martin Luther states: "Even our **leprous** body, by the **grace** of God, has **some** show of a dominion over the other creatures. But it is...far inferior to that dominion in which there **was** no need of art....

"We now **retain** the...word of dominion.... Yet it is good to know...that we may long for that day in which all the things which we have **lost** in Paradise, shall be **restored** to us....

"We, so deformed by sin...as it were - should be enabled through the merits of Christ to look for that **same** glory of a spiritual life which Adam would have looked forward to." That is to say, "**if** he had **remained** in the earthly life which possessed the image of God."

This can only mean that to Luther, God by His grace gave unfallen man a huge degree of dominion. After man's fall, Adam again "by the **grace** of God" still "has some show of a dominion over the other creatures."

Yet that greater dominion shall still "be **restored** to us." For we shall "be enabled through the merits of Christ to look for that **same** glory of a spiritual life which Adam would have looked forward to - **if** he had **remained** in the earthly life" he had before the fall.

Thus, that "**grace**" not only restores man to exactly what he had before the fall. It even gives him what he would ultimately have attained through that same grace, had he never fallen at all.

As the Lutheran Pieper states in his *Christian Dogmatics* (II:77): "We perceive the excellent **natural gifts** of a sinless human nature in Adam before the Fall. Genesis 2:19-23."

Luther himself comments at Genesis 2:16f, "the creation indeed is good, and the blessing is good. If they [Adam and Eve] had not fallen into sin..., this tree of the knowledge of good and evil...would have been the Church at which Adam together with his descendants would have gathered on the Sabbath....

"He would have praised God and lauded Him for the dominion over all the creatures on the Earth which had been given to mankind. Psalms 148 and 149 suggest a kind of liturgy for such thanksgiving - where the sun, the moon, the stars, the fish and the dragons are commanded to praise the Lord....

"Adam would have extolled the greatest **gift** - namely, that he, together with his descendants, was created according to the likeness of God.... Until a predetermined time had been fulfilled when he [without Christ's incarnation yet surely not without the grace of God] would have been translated to Heaven." Indeed, "**we** have the **remnants** of this worship - since Christ has **restored** it, in some measure, amid this weakness of our flesh."

Also after the fall, at Genesis 4:14 Luther posits his doctrine of **twofold favours** and **accidental mercy**. "**After he had lost his claim**," Luther comments regarding the reprobate Cain, "**yet** God grants this infamous murderer a **twofold favour**.... He keeps his life, and his descendants. God promises him protection of life, and gives him a wife. These are two **favours** which should not be regarded lightly.... They are a matter of **accident**....

"Similarly, under the papacy, we obtained **mercy** only by **accident**.... These two **favours** happened to **Cain**, because of the elect. For it is very plausible that many of Cain's descendants who joined the true Church, were saved." Indeed, a footnote there adds: "The **accidental mercy** of God is a way of speaking about what other theologians have called '**common grace**' or 'the **uncovenantal mercies** of God' - *i.e.*, His **mercy** to those who did not or **do not belong** to His covenant people."

On Genesis 4:15, the Augustinian Luther comments further: "Augustine [*City of God* V:12] declares that God gave the Romans their Empire, because of their superior **virtues**. Similarly even today the **blessings** of those nations which **refrain** from murder, adultery, and theft - are **greater** than the **blessings** of those who do **not refrain** from these crimes. And yet, governments which have been established in accordance with reason in the best possible way - do not have anything more than those **temporal promises**.

"The Church, however, has promises of [**saving**] **grace** - which are **eternal**. Although Cain lacked these, it was still something **momentous** that the physical promises were **left** to him - that he was not immediately killed; that a wife was given to him; that children are born to him; that he founds a city, tills the ground, breeds cattle; and that he is not completely cut off from the society and companionship of all human beings.... Just as...God takes away all **blessings**, the spiritual or such as pertain to the **Church** as well as those pertaining to the **State** - so here He **tempers** that sentence and commands that no one should kill Cain.... I am unable to state with certainty whether Cain was killed.... He perished with his race (as the crude proverb has it), 'without cross and without light and without God' - **except** for the few who were saved by **accidental mercy**.... God has left him only an **uncertain mercy**."

On Genesis 4:17f, Luther comments: "The Seed of the woman possesses a **spiritual blessing**. But the seed of the serpent obtains for itself a **physical blessing**.... Even though Cain's descendants

are mentioned first, nevertheless we see that the descendants of the godly were objects of **greater concern** to the Holy Spirit....

"If Cain was not married at that time, it is surely a far more remarkable fact that later on he obtained a wife. Furthermore, the girl who married him must lavishly be praised.... Although Cain was cursed and was bearing the punishment for his sin, God would nevertheless preserve her who was innocent and would **bless her**....

"I have no doubt that because of his wife, who married her bloodthirsty brother in holy trust in God and out of obedience to her parents, God bestowed **many personal blessings** on **Cain** through all his **descendants**.... In the family of Cain, Enoch is the beginning of a **physical blessing**." So too in Enoch's **gifted** Cainite descendants Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain. Genesis 4:20-22.

At the commencement and cutting edge of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland, Zwingli (in his *Opera* IV:89) said that all truth, wheresoever it be found and by whomsoever it be advocated, is derived from God and more particularly from the Holy Spirit. "*Veritatem ubicunque en per quemcunque adferatur a Spiritu Sancto esse.*"

This triggered off a violent reaction from the Anabaptists, who in their own weird way in turn re-asserted the Mediaeval-Romish **separation** between grace and nature. Many of the Anabaptists denied the incarnation of Christ - and condemned the solemn swearing of oaths even before the law-courts. Many also promoted soul-sleep, or annihilationism, or both. The Anabaptists disclaimed dependence upon the Reformers. For the wayward Anabaptists are really re-emergent variants of neo-paganized sub-Christian early- and mid-mediaeval heretics.

The great German Church Historian Rev. Professor Dr. Albrecht Ritschl, in his famous three-volume *History of Pietism*, confirms this. There, he attribute the origin of the Anabaptists to the mediaeval 'Spiritual Franciscans.'

Drs. G. Kramer, the noted Dutch Historian of Doctrine, considered the Anabaptists to have agreed with Romanism in many weighty matters of faith. Such would include the separation of the Older from the Newer Testament - and of nature from grace.

Again, still before Calvin wrote his *Institutes*, Bullinger and Grynaeus and Myconius and other Reformers wrote their *First Swiss Confession* in A.D 1536. In articles IX & X, they state that "God the **gracious** Father (*Gott der **gnädige Vater***)" after creation and Adam's fall, "brought man **back** (*den Menschen...**wieder**gebracht habe*)" by an act of "**reparation** of man (***reparatione** hominis*)" when he was "enlightened by the **grace** of Christ (*durch die **Gnade** Christi erleuchtet or **gratia** Christi illustrati*)."

This clearly presupposes that it was indeed "**grace**" which had sustained man also **before** his fall and his subsequent "reparation" through Christ. For also prelapsarianly, man was sustained by the great Creator - by "God the **gracious** Father."

4. Calvin's comments on Bible texts implying common grace

Calvin was converted from Romanism to Protestantism in 1533. Rome then falsely accused him turning Anabaptist.

So in 1534, he wrote his *Psychopannychia* against Anabaptism's soul-sleep and mortalist doctrines. Too, Anabaptism stressed only special grace, and denied the very existence of common grace. But Calvin said that God by grace created unfallen and unannihilable man to be quite unlike the animals - viz., to be God's (unique and immortal) earthly image.

To Anabaptism, after its essentially-mortal 'Adam' fell, his flesh was deemed to have become "irredeemable" or "unsavable." Wrongly so! Yet to Anabaptists, because fallen man became so "unsavable" that even their 'Christ' could not without taint assume the Adamite Mary's flesh - He brought His Non-Adamic flesh into the World from Heaven. Indeed, they viewed even themselves not as repaired earthly Adamites - but as brand-new and 'heavenly Christ-ians.'

Christ, they said - at His birth into this fallen World - merely brought His Non-Adamic heavenly flesh through the earthly Mary like water through a pipe. Indeed, Hell-denying mortalist Anabaptists believed that Adam both before and after his fall was gracelessly annihilable.

As Rev. Jan Karel van Baalen later observed in his polemic against Hoeksema, the denial of common grace is not Reformed - but Anabaptistic. See, with the same meaning, the former's 1922 work *De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeerd of Doopersch?*

To Calvin in his *Psychopannychia*, the Anabaptists advocate "absurd dogma" - and are "triflers." He insists these Anabaptists are "babblers" and "dreamers" in their "insanity" - full of "error" and "madness" and "follies." He says their "evil" views "originated with some Arabs" and just "lay smouldering for some ages" until - "being stirred up by some dregs of Anabaptists" - they then reflected the "vain opinions" of such "giddy spirits."

The "noxious stream" of this "nefarious herd of Anabaptists" is a "pernicious pest" from "the devil's darkness" - argues Calvin. Against it, he states "we acknowledge no Unity except in Christ" the Second Adam and only God- man; no grace or "charity of which He is not the bond."

Opposing these Anabaptists, Calvin then says that "we will begin with man's creation" as the image of God. "In all other creatures, His image nowhere shines forth." The human "breath of life is distinguished from the souls of brutes."

Christ graciously repairs a creation stained by sin as a result of Adam's fall. To Calvin, in "Ephesians 4:24" the words 'Put on the new man which has been created after God in knowledge'" - are very pertinent.

"Man...was made partaker of the wisdom, justice and goodness of God.... Christ exhorts His followers not to fear those who...cannot kill the soul...{Matthew 10:28).... Graciously[!] therefore has the Lord acted toward us....

"Jesus Christ is Son of God and man. That which He is by nature as God, He is also by grace [as the sinless Second Adam] as man - so that thus we may all receive from His fullness, and grace upon grace....

"Though as God He had life in Himself, yet when He assumed human nature, He received from the Father the [gracious] gift of having life in Himself in that [human] nature also.... Christ could not be extinguished by death, even in respect of His human nature....

"Although He was truly and naturally delivered to the death which we all undergo - He, however, always retained the [gracious] gift of the Father. True, [also for Christ the Second Adam,] death was a separation of soul and body. But the soul never lost its life....

"Our confession, which is sufficiently established, is this: 'In Adam all die. But in Christ [all] are made alive' (First Corinthians 15:22)." For Christ is truly the Adamic Second Adam.

"The thief...implored mercy. He prayed: 'Lord, remember Me when You come to Your Kingdom!' And he hears the reply: 'Today, you shall be with Me in Paradise!' (Luke 22:42).... The robber, on that day, was restored from the misery into which Adam fell....

"Brutes...too have their own life [Genesis 1:21f]. But they live after one way - man, after another. Man has a living soul, by which he knows and understands [Genesis 2:7].... The soul of man possesses reason, intellect, and will.... It subsists without the body, and does not perish like the brutes....

"The Apostle...says: 'The first Adam was a living soul, the Last Adam a quickening spirit' (First Corinthians 15:45).... Accordingly, we read in the book of Job [10:9]: 'Remember how You have made me out of clay'.... "Life and mercy You have given me, and your visitation has preserved my spirit' (Job 10:12).... Begin with Adam!.... The whole controversy turns on a comparison between Adam and Christ.... Everything which has fallen in Adam, is renewed in Christ [the Second Adam].... The power of grace [given to Adam even before his fall] was stronger than that of sin....

"Christ has been more powerful in restoring, than Adam in destroying.... The [postfall gracious] gift...is much more exuberant [than the prefall gracious gift]...by bestowing rich-er blessings on those whom it includes."

God's blessings to the prefall Adam were therefore indeed gracious and rich. But Christ the Second Adam's blessings to the postfall Adam and his elect descendants, were more gracious and "more exuberant" and "rich-er"!

"The **elect now** - are such as Adam **was**, **before** his sin.... He was **created** inexterminable. **So** now have those become - who have been **re**-new-ed by Christ to a **better** nature."

Thus, **special grace** upon, or added to, **common grace**. "Grace **upon** grace!" Cf. John 1:16's *charis anti charitos* - which Calvin's successor Beza renders: *gratiam **supra** gratiam!*

Continues Rev. Professor Dr. Calvin: "Solomon thus writes in his Ecclesiastes (3:21), 'Who knows whether the spirit of the **sons of Adam** ascends **upwards**, and the spirit of beasts descends downwards?'.... The wisdom of God explains - **assuring** us that the spirits of the sons of Adam ascend upwards!...

"Let no one then who has heard the Word of the Lord, have any doubt that the spirit of the children of Adam ascends upwards. By 'ascending upwards' in that passage, I understand simply - subsisting and **retaining immortality**. Just as 'descending downwards' seems to me to mean **lapsing**." So, by God's **grace**, also unfallen man was **upward** bound - even **before** he fell.

"David...says (Psalm 39:11) that **man**, if the Lord withdraw His **mercy** from him, falls away and perishes. **We** teach that he is supported by the **kindness** and power of God - since He alone has immortality (First Timothy 1:17 & 6:15f); and whatever life exists, is from Him."

What then happened at the **fall** of man? The Lord then withdrew from His image man - His **merciful gift** of losable life. Yet also by God's mercy, man did not then become an annihilable animal! He continued and still continues to exist - without "life" - **unannihilably**. Therefore God's prefall **mercy** of unannihilability for man, continues for all men - even **after** the fall of Adam.

Calvin compares the Anabaptist **denial of common grace** to the Mediaeval Romish silence about the latter - in Rome's sacramentalistic separation between nature and grace. In his *Reply to the Letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva* as to the "**similitude...between the Pope and the Anabaptists**" - Calvin observes that "the principal weapon with which they both assail us, is **the same**. For when they boast extravagantly of the Spirit - the tendency certainly is to sink and bury the Word of God, so that they may make room for their own falsehoods!"

Calvin also wrote *Against the Fantastic and Furious Sect of the Libertines Who Are Called Spirituals*. He even issued a *Brief Instruction for Arming All the Good Faithful Against the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists* - in his *Treatise Against the Anabaptists*.

Indeed, Calvin was so incensed when Romanists accused him of Anabaptism, that he at the end of his *Prefatory Address to Francis King of France* - at the front of the Reformer's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* - distantiated himself from Satan's "Catabaptists and other portentous miscreants." For further details, see F.N. Lee's *The Anabaptists and their Stepchildren*.

In his *Treatise Against the Anabaptists*, Calvin declares: "It is not good for me to close my eyes to...gravely persistent and spiteful views...so common among them.... Concerning the body or the

human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must note that there were two ancient heresies that conform to or approach - what they [the Anabaptists] say about it.

"For the Manichees fantasized that Jesus Christ brought a **heavenly** body into the womb of the virgin His mother. The Marcionites [too] had a...delusion that He did not have a truly substantial body....

"The end of both [heresies], has been to deny that Jesus Christ was descended from human [alias Adamic] seed.... The Anabaptists in this way only stir up errors that the devil has kept alive for one thousand four hundred years" since Marcion's till Calvin's time - errors "that were refuted by the Word of God.... **From the beginning of the World**, [however,] our Lord promised Eve that **her** Seed would be victorious over the serpent! Genesis 3:15."

Thus, since becoming a Protestant in 1533 - and then being neither an Anabaptist nor a Romanist - Calvin, **like Jesus**, began his Protestant theologizing '**from the beginning of the World**' (cf. Matthew 19:4 & John 8:44). Already **then** - God's **gracious Spirit** was at work.

At Genesis 1:1f, Calvin points out that "although there is no mention made of the Spirit antecedent to the account of the creation - He is not there introduced as a shadow, but as the essential power of God.... Moses relates that the shapeless mass was upborne by Him.... It is obvious that the Eternal Spirit always existed in God - seeing He **cherished** and sustained the confused materials of Heaven and Earth before they possessed order or beauty." *Institutes* I:13:22.

Yes, "**cherished**." For He **graciously** brought an **unmerited** "order or beauty" into the created "Heaven and Earth." That was even prior to His creation of light itself, almost six full days before He later graciously created man - and probably at least seven days before He later by grace saved that man after his fall into sin.

Now Calvin was reluctant to say just when God created the **angels**. But it is clear he believed all the angels had been created before some of them fell - and that all of them who fell, had fallen before the fall of Adam and Eve when misled by Satan the leader of the fallen angels.

It was by **condescending grace** that God had created also all of the angels, and indeed all of them "very good" and **truthful**. But then, **some** of those angels had not remained thus. They, like Satan their leader, "**did not abide** in the **truth**." Genesis 1:1f; 1:31; 2:1; 3:1f and John 8:44.

That latter text says that "the devil...was a murderer from the beginning, and did not keep on standing in the truth." Calvin comments: "As soon as **man** was created, **Satan** was impelled by a wicked desire to hurt - and directed his strength to destroying him."

When the Son of God says that 'the devil...was a murderer from the beginning' - explains Calvin - "Christ does not mean the beginning of the creation, as if it were God Who had planted in him a desire to hurt. But He is condemning in Satan the faultiness...which he brought upon

himself.... He says [of Satan], 'he did not keep on standing in the truth'.... These words plainly express a **change** for the worse and say that Satan...deserted from the truth."

To Calvin, God's **grace** existed not only **before the fall of man** - but even **before the creation of man**. Thus, even the pre-human **elect** angels needed - and still need - the **grace** of God! Genesis 1:1-5 & First Timothy 5:21 *cf.* Colossians 1:13-20.

The latter passage states that God the Father's eternal Son was and is the First Producer of the entire creation. That includes even His faithful **angels**.

Calvin there **thrice** says those angels have grace: "As to angels..., how can there be reconciliation - where there is no discord?.... Men have been reconciled to God, because they were previously alienated from Him by sin....

"Between God and [His good] **angels**, the relationship is very different. For there was there no revolt, no sin, and consequently no separation."

Yet as regards **those unfallen angels** "being creatures - they were not beyond the risk of falling, had they not been confirmed by the grace of Christ.... They have, therefore, need of a Peacemaker, through Whose **grace** they may wholly cleave to God.

"Hence Paul rightly declares that the grace of Christ does not reside in men alone but is **common** also to the [unfallen] **angels**. *In angelis...summam puritatem...gratiam penitus Deo adhaereant.*" [Thus too in Kuyper's *Locus de Angelis* (46), in his *Dictaten Dogmatiek*_(II).]

In Genesis 1:20-28 we are told that God first created and then **blessed** first the creatures of the water and the air; then the various land animals; and finally man, both male and female. This is clearly a **common grace blessing** prior to and irrespective of man's later fall into sin.

"For God," Calvin comments, "**blesses** His creatures when He commands them to increase and grow.... He infuses into them fecundity, by His Word.... The force of the Word which was addressed to the fishes was not transient - but rather, being infused into their nature, has taken root, and constantly bears fruit....

"Here, Moses would simply declare that Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that men might fill the Earth." Indeed, also Calvin's comments at Genesis 25:21 & 30:2 and Deuteronomy 7:11-15 later below (*q.v.*), make it quite evident that he considers fecundity not just in animals but also in man to be a matter of God's **favour** alias His **grace**.

In Genesis 1:26*f*, we are told further that God made **the unfallen Adam**. Obviously, as previously in respect of His creation of the angels, God again did so **by His non-saving grace**. For He later made and sustained also Christ as the unfallen Second Adam - by that same **non-saving grace**. Luke 2:40 & 2:52 & 3:23-38.

As Calvin comments on Luke 2:40 & 2:52 & 3:23-38: "We must not suppose that Adam, while he remained in innocence, knew all things. Angels also are, to some extent, ignorant.... Luke thus declares that whatever wisdom exists among men and receives daily accessions, flows from that single fountain...the Spirit of God.....

"The grace of God was upon Him' [viz. Jesus the Second Adam]. For it includes all the excellence of every description that shone brightly in Christ.... Luke exhibited Christ to us, as the son of Adam.... Let us know therefore that to the whole human race, there has been manifested and exhibited salvation through Christ. For not without reason is He called...the son of Adam."

Genesis 2:2-4 tells us that - still before the fall of man - "God rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made, and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.... These are the births of the Heavens and of the Earth when they were created."

That blessing, being unmerited, again implies (non-saving) grace. Just as earlier God's blessing on all the animals and upon man in Genesis 1:20-28 (*q.v.* above), implies the same.

Calvin comments on Genesis 2:3 that "His blessing sometimes means the favour which He bestows upon His people - as the Hebrews call that man the blessed of God who by a certain special favour has power with God. See Genesis 24:3.... Thus we may be allowed to describe the day as blessed by Him - which He has embraced with love....

"That benediction is nothing else than a solemn consecration by which God claims for Himself the meditations and employment of men on the seventh day.... Afterwards in the [Mosaic] Law, a new precept concerning the Sabbath was given which would be peculiar to the Jews...forthshadowing a spiritual rest the truth of which was manifested in Christ."

In Genesis 2:7-8, we are told that God graciously condescended to make man from the dust of the Earth - yet with a glorious heavenly goal! Comments Calvin: "Adam was, by Divine appointment, an inhabitant of the Earth - in order that he might, in passing through his earthly life, meditate on heavenly glory.... He had bountifully been enriched by the Lord with innumerable benefits - from the enjoyment of which he might infer the paternal benevolence of God."

Calvin amplifies this in his *Institutes* I:15:5, where he states: "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7).... From the words of Paul, when treating of the removal of the image (Second Corinthians 3:18), the inference is obvious that man was conformable to God not by an influx of substance but by the grace and virtue of the Spirit."

By "grace"; and before the fall! Yes indeed. For unfallen man, says Calvin, was made "by the grace...of the Spirit" - by that gracious Spirit, and through His common grace.

Also Genesis 2:9 & 3:22 imply that Adam's prefall condition was one of grace. Indeed, it was only after his creation but yet before his fall - that his destiny was sealed by the tree of life.

Comments Calvin: "The Holy Spirit ...relates...the greatness of Adam's **happiness**.... That benediction of God...had in this place poured itself forth wonderfully....

"He [God] gave the tree of life...in order that it might be a symbol and memorial of the life which he [Adam] **had** received from God. For we know it to be by no means unusual that God should give to us the **attestation** of His **grace** by external symbols....

"If Adam, hitherto **innocent** and of an upright nature, had need of monitory signs to lead him to the **knowledge** of divine **grace** - how much more necessary are signs **now** in this great **imbecility** of our nature **since** we have **fallen** from the true light?.... The chief thing in life [is] namely the **grace** of intelligence" - which Adam had **especially before the fall**.

Such then, was the condition of the unfallen Adam. Comments Calvin: "For him, to live was not simply to have a body fresh and lively, but also to excel in the **endowments** of the soul.... There never was any intrinsic efficacy in the tree" of life.

However, even before man's fall, "God **made** it [that tree] life-giving." That is, "so far as He **had** sealed His **grace** to man in the use of it."

In Genesis 3:15, **after** man's fall, God gave His **special saving grace** to elect mankind. Yet He did not thereby removed His common non-saving grace with which He had previously equipped man as His very image.

Thus, even in Genesis 4:15 - before the later post-flood death penalty - God graciously prevented men in general from slaying the murderer Cain. And in Genesis 4:17-22 - God enabled Cain to become the ancestor of Jabal and his cattlemen and tentdwellers; of Jubal and his harpists and organists; and of Tubal-cain and his metalworkers.

Comments Calvin: "The descendants of Cain shone in arts and sciences. These we may admire as riches of God's **grace (gratiae)**."

Here, Calvin insists that "with the evils which proceeded from the family of **Cain** - some **good** has been blended. For the invention of arts, and of other things which serve to the common use and convenience of life, is a **gift of God** by no means to be despised, and a faculty worthy of commendation. It is truly wonderful, that this race, which had most deeply fallen from integrity - should have excelled the rest of the posterity of Adam in rare endowments (*dotibus prae Adae posteris excelluisse*).

"I, however, understand Moses to have spoken expressly concerning those arts...having been invented in the family of Cain - for the purpose of showing that he was **not so accursed** by the Lord but that He would still scatter some **excellent gifts** among his posterity.... Moses, however, expressly celebrates **the remaining benediction of God on that race**, which otherwise would have been deemed void and barren of all good.

"Let us then know, that **the sons of Cain, though deprived of the Spirit of regeneration,** were **yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind.** Just as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely **the rays of divine light** have shone on **unbelieving nations,** for the **benefit of the present life.** And we see, at the present time, that the **excellent gifts of the Spirit** are diffused through the **whole human race.**

"Moreover, **the liberal arts and sciences** have descended to **us** from the **Heathen.** We are, indeed, compelled to acknowledge that we have received astronomy - and the others parts of philosophy, medicine, and the order of civil government - from them.

"Nor is it to be doubted, that God has thus liberally enriched them with excellent **favours** - so that their impiety might have the less excuse. But, while we admire the riches of His **favour (gratiae)** which He has bestowed on **them** - let us still value far **more** highly **that grace (gratia)** of regeneration with which He peculiarly sanctifies His elect unto Himself!"

In Genesis 9:1-21, "God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth!... This is the token of the **Covenant** which I am [re-]making between Me and you and **every living creature** that is with you for **perpetual generations.** I am setting My **rainbow** in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between Me and the **Earth.**"

Note that the rainbow here is appointed to be a sign of this Covenant **benefitting all living creatures** and even the **Earth** as such. The rainbow as a sign of this Covenant can be seen not only by God's elect (and **reprobate** humans too), but also by equally-unsavable **animals** *etc.*

Indeed, even **plants and trees** are benefitted by this Covenant of which the rainbow is the sign. And that, even though plants and trees **cannot even see** the rainbow!

Here, (re-)permission was granted to the Noachides to eat meat and institute the death penalty for murder. That is so, regardless of their religious orientation in terms of this Covenant.

As Calvin comments: "We must firmly retain the liberty given us by the Lord which He designed to be recorded as on public tables. For by this word, He addresses **all** the posterity of Noah and renders His **gift common** to **all ages.**" A **common Covenant** of **common grace!**

Calvin comments further: "God, making His Covenant with the **sons** of Noah, commands them to hope for the best.... Moreover, there is **no doubt** that it was the design of God to provide [not only for Noah but also] for **all** his **posterity.**

"It is was **not** therefore a **private Covenant** confirmed with one family only, but one which is **common** to **all** peoples (*Foedus omnibus populis commune*), and which shall flourish **in all ages** to the end of the World." Consequently, it is a **'non-saving' Covenant.** - that is to say, a Covenant of **common grace.**

Indeed, continues Calvin: "The **favour** which the Lord promises, extends **also to animals**.... We enjoy the sky and the air in **common** with the beasts, and draw the same vital breath....

"First, God - as in a matter of present concern, makes a Covenant with Noah and his **family**.... Secondly, He transmits His Covenant to **posterity**...so that, as by continual succession, the effect may reach to other ages.... Thirdly, He declares that He will be **propitious** also to **brute animals** - so that the effect of the **Covenant** toward **them** might be the preservation of **their lives** [too]....

"As many [men] as withdraw their life from this protection of God - (since the greater part of **men** either despise or ridicule the divine Covenant) - deserve by this single act of ingratitude, to be immersed in eternal fire.... Noah, with a collected mind, though now an old man, **returned** to the culture of the fields and to his **former** labours." For God's pre-fall **common grace** continues also after the flood on this re-new-ed Earth!

On Genesis 11:1, **before** the confusion of tongues, Calvin comments that "when Moses says 'the Earth was of one lip' - he commends the peculiar **grace of God** (*Dei gratiam*) in having willed that the...bond of society among men far separated from each other, should be retained by their possessing a **common** language among themselves." Thus, the **one** language **before** the confusion of tongues - clearly evidenced the general or **common grace of God** maintaining the bond of community and mutual understandibility among men.

In Genesis 11:8, also **after** the confusion of tongues, God's **common grace** maintained each community speaking its own new language. Again, common grace still continued.

Comments Dr. Calvin: "Men had already been spread abroad. And this ought not to be regarded as a punishment, seeing it rather flowed forth from the **benediction** and **grace of God** (*ex Dei benedictione potius et gratia*)."

Compare here the prefall Genesis 1:28, and the comment thereon at Acts 17:26f. Once again, such a grace was not a saving but clearly a "general" or **common** one. Deuteronomy 32:8.

In Genesis 20:6-8, God told the unbelieving king of Gerar that the latter had acted with integrity toward Abraham. So He withheld the king from sinning - by sleeping with Sarah.

Calvin comments: "God had **respect** not only to Abraham, but also **to the king**. For because he had no intention of defiling another man's wife, God had **compassion** on him. And it frequently happens that **the Spirit restrains** by His bridle those who are gliding into error....

"God brought to the **heathen** king, who had not been guilty of deliberate wickedness, a timely **remedy**.... Abimelech, alarmed at the voice of God, arose in the morning not only so that he himself might quickly obey the command enjoined upon him, but so that he might also exhort his own people to do the same.

"An example of such ready **obedience** is shown us [here] in **a heathen king** - so that **we** may no more make excuses." Is this not an example of God's **common grace**?

In Genesis 25:21, we are told about a woman who was barren. Here, Calvin comments: "Fruitfulness is a special **gift** of God (*donum*).... The **favour** (*gratia*) of obtaining offspring was widely diffused over **the whole human race**." Biological fruitfulness too therefore results from grace - *viz.*, from **common grace**.

Also as regards Genesis 30:2, Calvin in his *Institutes* (I:16:7) again ascribes reproductive fruitfulness to the grace of God. "While man **naturally** possesses the power of continuing his species," explains the genius of Geneva, "God describes it as a mark of His special **favour**...."

"While some continue childless, others are **blessed** with offspring. For the fruit of the womb is His gift. Hence the words of Jacob to Rachel.... Genesis 30:2."

Yet at that very time, there were more unbelievers than believers who had been **blessed** in that way. Indeed, even the unfallen Adam and Eve did not have **that** blessing **before** their fall - though they right then indeed did have the much greater (though **then**-losable) spiritual blessing of special fellowship with God.

The Pre-Adamic animals and especially the fishes, however - though then untainted and though even now unredeemable - right then had an even greater 'common grace' blessing of reproductive fruitfulness than had the unfallen Adam and Eve! Cf. Genesis 1:20-25 with 1:26-28 & 2:18-25 & 3:6-16 & 4:1-2f and Deuteronomy 7:11-15.

In Genesis 39:5, "the Lord **blessed** [Potiphar] the Egyptian's household - for Joseph's sake. And the **blessing** of the Lord was upon all that he [the unbeliever Potiphar] had in the house and in the field."

Calvin comments that "the Lord often soothes **the wicked** by such **favours**.... We here see how abundantly the **grace** of God is poured out upon the faithful, since a **portion** of **His kindness** flows from them **even to the reprobate**!

"We are also taught what an advantage it is to receive the elect children of God to our hospitality or to join ourselves to those whom **the divine favour** thus accompanies - so that it may diffuse its fragrance **also** to those who are near them."

In Exodus 4:11-16, the Lord asked Moses: "Who has made man's mouth?... Have not I, the Lord?" So the Lord appointed Moses' more eloquent brother Aaron to be His spokesman - instead of Moses himself.

Calvin comments: "It is of His...**grace** (*gratia*) alone, that some **exceed** others in eloquence.... By this example, God bore witness that **the gifts** of the **Spirit**, as well as our vocations, are

distributed by Him at His Own good pleasure - and that none excels either in honours or in **gifts**, except according to the measure of His free bounty."

Both Aaron and Moses were recipients also of God's special grace. So the greater degree of 'grace' given to Aaron to **exceed** that of Moses - is to Calvin the **greater** degree of God-given **common grace** eloquence that the Lord had seen fit to give to Aaron rather than to Moses.

In Exodus 31:2f, God says: "I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom...and in all kind of workmanship to devise artistic works - to work in gold and in silver and in brass." Such abilities proceed from God's **common grace**.

For here, Calvin comments: "**Nobody** excels even in the most despised and humble handicraft, except in so far as God's Spirit works in him. For although 'there are diversities of gifts' - still it is the same Spirit from Whom they all flow (First Corinthians 12:4) and also as God has seen fit to distribute and measure them out to **every man**."

"Nor is this only the case with respect to the 'spiritual' gifts which follow regeneration." It is the case also "in **all** the branches of knowledge which come into use in **common** life" - viz., by God's **common grace**.

Here - as in Bezaleel's case - also in **ours!** The "**grace** of God was...given in aid of that ability which **we naturally** possess.... **We** are taught by this passage that, when **anything** grows in **us**, and our **endowments** manifest themselves more conspicuously - our progress is derived only from the continued operation of the Spirit." Thus Calvin.

In his *Institutes* II:2:16, Calvin here even adds: "Moreover, let us not forget that there are most excellent **blessings** which the Divine Spirit dispenses to whom He will - for the **common benefit** of **mankind**. For if the skill and knowledge required for the construction of the Tabernacle, behooved to be imparted to Bezaleel and Aholiab by the Spirit of God (Exodus 31:2 & 35:30) - it is not strange that the knowledge of those things which are of the highest excellence in human life is said to be communicated to us by the Spirit. Nor is there any ground for asking what concourse the Spirit can have with the **ungodly**.... He [God Triune] fills, moves and invigorates **all** things by the **virtue** of the Spirit."

This is obvious also from Exodus 34:6-7. There, Moses calls upon "the Lord God, **merciful and gracious**, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

In his *Institutes* I:10:2, Calvin here comments: "Moses indeed seems to have intended briefly to comprehend whatever may be known of God by man.... Moreover, the perfections thus enumerated are just those which we saw shining in the **Heavens** and on the Earth - **compassion**, goodness, **mercy**, justice, judgment and truth."

Clearly, then, to Calvin, God showed and shows "**compassion**" and "**mercy**" even "in the **Heavens** and on the **Earth**." Thus, He showed and shows His "**mercy**" alias His **grace** - even before the very existence of, and also quite independently of, the fall of man.

In Exodus 35:20*f*, God describes the coming to Moses of "every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom His Spirit made willing." Such folk then "brought bracelets and earrings and rings and tablets, all jewels of gold."

Here Calvin comments that "Moses, even while praising their spontaneous feelings, does not mean to exclude the **grace** of the Spirit.... This stirring up is contrasted with the unwillingness by which ungodly men are withheld and restrained."

Note again Calvin's reference, under Exodus 31:2*f* above, also to this present passage Exodus 35:20-30*f*. What Calvin said for Exodus 31:2*f*, he himself applies also to Exodus 35:20-30*f*.

In Exodus 36:2*f*, God says: "Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to the work.... They received from Moses all the offerings which the children of Israel had brought."

Here, Calvin comments: "Moses so often exalts the **grace** of God's Spirit in the ingenuity and artistic skill of the workmen.... He speaks of them as skilful architects, and...adds that they were furnished from above with such intelligence.... The question is - from whence comes their intelligence, their will, and their zeal in well-doing? Scripture decides that they are the **gifts** of God and the **Spirit**...."

"We see, then, how God directed them **all** to undertake the work of the sanctuary, and impelled them to persevere in it by His Spirit.. This **grace**, however, manifests itself most fully in the marvellous ardour of the people.... Let us learn from this that the pious **zeal** which existed in them for a short time, emanated from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - and further that all our best feelings vanish, unless the **gift** of steadfastness be superadded."

In Numbers 11:17-24*f*, where God put His Spirit upon seventy of the Elders, Calvin comments: "Also nowadays, when He calls both the Pastors of the Church and **Magistrates** to their Office - although He furnishes them with new **gifts**..., still He...chooses rather with reference to their **spiritual endowments** - wherewith He has destined to **any** exalted office...."

"Thus the gift of 'prophecy' in **Saul** was a kind of mark of **royalty**, so that he might not ascend the **throne** without credentials. First Samuel 10:10." Yet the fact that Saul was apparently not a recipient of special saving grace, clarifies that these "spiritual endowments" of him were **gifts** of **common grace**!

So too in Numbers 16:22. There, the Prophet Moses inspiredly speaks about "the God of the spirits of **all** flesh."

On this, Dr. John Calvin comments: "Moses carried his address...to the [**common** or] **general grace** of the creation (*generalem gratiam creationis*). It is of little importance whether we choose to expound this with reference to **all animals**, or only to **the human race**."

"Since Moses merely prays that, since God is the Creator and Maker of the World, He should not destroy the men whom He has formed but rather have **pity** upon them as being His work.... It is, however, more fitting to restrict it to **men**."

Clearly, by "**grace**" - Calvin here means not saving but **common grace**. For even if that grace were here indeed not to apply to all animals, it certainly applies to what Calvin himself here calls "**the human race**."

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin has several relevant statements relating to God's general graces and favours. Here are some of them.

Regarding Deuteronomy 2:9-23, Calvin says: "It is His will that the **Moabites and Ammonites** shall still **enjoy the lands** that **He had given them**.... Although God bestowed **His blessings** so largely upon those two nations - yet they were never the better for it."

From this, it is clear that Calvin believed God gave "**blessings**" also to those unbelieving folk. Consequently, such blessings were not those of special but therefore of common grace.

Regarding Deuteronomy 4:36-38, Calvin says: "God does not give His **graces** [plural] to all men indifferently.... To set the greater show upon His goodness, He gives **that** thing to **one** - which He **denies** to **another**."

Note here Calvin's use of the plural: "**graces**." Indeed, he means this apparently also as regards His non-saving **graces** or **gifts**.

Regarding Deuteronomy 7:11-15, Calvin says: "When God restrains His **benefits**, as we see He does - that is to say, when He gives us them in small and slender portion - it is to the intent we should not be hindered to keep on our way still, in going right forth to Him.... If we serve our God, let us not doubt but He will bless us even toward the World - and make us to **prosper** better than the wicked!..."

"Specially, let us mark well how He tells us here - expressly - 'that He will bless us in our issue [or children], and in the increase of our cattle'... If the **favour** which God shows us **extends even to the brute beasts**, so as the mark of His fatherly goodwill toward us shall be printed in **them** - what will He do to ourselves and to our children, and to the things that touch us much nearer?"

Thus, to Calvin, God's non-saving favour or grace extends even to dumb animals. With his above comments here on Deuteronomy 7:11-15, compare too his earlier comments also on Genesis 1:20-28 & 25:21 & 30:2.

Regarding Deuteronomy 11:8-15, Calvin says God "does not cease to say 'Do the things that I have commanded you, so that you may enjoy the **benefits** which I have promised you!?'... **All** that we **ever** have at God's hand, is only from His **free gift**....

"But God will not have His **gracious** goodness so disgraced. For His showing of Himself **favourable** to us, is to another end and purpose - namely, to provoke us to love Him again.... That is the thing which Moses tells us here, when he says 'See to it that you obey your God, if you mind to possess the **land** which He promised to your fathers!'"

Note here that "**all**...we **ever** have at God's hand, is only from His **free gift**" and "His **gracious** goodness." Even the very "**land**" itself, He graciously gives us. And that land includes also the common grace gifts of "corn" and "wine" and "oil" - Deuteronomy 11:15.

Regarding Deuteronomy 12:19-28, Calvin says: "God is ready on His part to give us our fill. He is not niggardly.... When a man runs gadding here and there, and forsakes a fountain, and goes on wandering into desert places where he is in danger to die of thirst" *etc.* - "is he not worthy to die of thirst, seeing he has so forsaken the fountain? So, then, let us mark that God **withdraws** His **blessings** from us - because we have forsaken Him!"

However, such withdrawable "blessings" are only those of God's common grace. For the blessings of His saving grace - are unwithdrawable. At least - to all five-point Calvinists, they are! Therefore the withdrawable blessings are only the common grace ones. Thus, some of God's blessings - are losable **common grace blessings**. *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

Regarding Deuteronomy 16:20-22, Calvin says about 'groves of any kind of trees' *etc.*: "If we wish to **prosper** through God's **favour**, we must keep order continually among us so that every man may have his right. And so that, on the contrary part - if we do not do so - God threatens to **bereave** us of His **blessing**, though He had given us it before."

Once again, however, this applies only to withdrawable blessings. For saving blessings are unwithdrawable. Therefore there are indeed not just unforfeitable **special grace blessings** - but **also** forfeitable **common grace blessings**.

Regarding Deuteronomy 28:9-14, Calvin says that "the wretched **infidels** - albeit that God bestow ever **so many blessings** upon **them** - yet they cannot profit by them." A clearer Calvinian statement that God gives blessings even to infidels alias unbelievers - is unimaginable.

Finally, regarding Deuteronomy 33:20-25, Calvin says: "It is not good that all men should be dealt with all alike. And why? For we have diverse dispositions and diverse complexions.

"All men are not to be fed with one kind of food.... That is the reason why I said that the **whole sum** of God's **blessings** is a mirror unto us - to show us that He so distributes His **gracious gifts**...so that every man has his measure and quality." *Cf.* too First Peter 4:10-11.

Note that Calvin here regards even "food" as an important one "of God's blessings." However, God gives food also to unfaithful infidels - and even to faithless lion cubs (*cf.* Psalm 104:21). Therefore He gives some (non-saving) blessings also to unbelievers!

On Psalm 33:5, Calvin comments: "The design of the Holy Spirit here, is to maintain the glory of God in opposition to the poison of ungodliness which is deeply seated in many hearts.... 'The Earth is full of His goodness'...."

"The more experience which **any** man has of His beneficence and **mercy** - the more strongly is he influenced to worship Him. Farther, the discourse is still concerning **all** the benefits of God which He scatters over the **whole human race**." Additional comment is redundant!

In Psalm 36:7-9, David exclaims: "How excellent is Your **lovingkindness**, O God! Therefore the **children of men** put their trust under the shadow of Your wings... For with You is the fountain of **life**. In Your light, we shall see **light**."

Here Calvin comments: "Some explain these words in this sense: 'That the mercy of God is precious - and that the children of men who put their trust in it, are precious.' But this is a sense too far removed from the words of the text...."

"David has hitherto been speaking in commendation of the **goodness of God**, which extends to **every creature**.... The language seems to refer in **general** to **all** of the **sons of men**...."

"God **condescends** to gather under His wings **the mortal offspring of Adam**.... He means that there is not a drop of **life** to be found without Him, or which flows not from His **grace**...."

"**Men** are altogether destitute of light, except in so far as the Lord shines upon them.... This is true of the light of **this** life.... We must maintain that the measure of understanding with which **men** are **by nature** endued, is such that 'the Light keeps on shining in darkness'.... John 1:5.... **Men** are enlightened only by a supernatural gift. But it is the **godly alone** who **perceive** that they derive their light from God."

This certainly seems to teach that **all men** are sufficiently enlightened also in earthly matters - by Jesus Christ the Light of the World. But only those who acknowledge Him, "**perceive** that they derive their light from God."

The others, indeed illuminated by the Divine Christ's **common grace**, are therefore without excuse. Why? Because they enjoy, but do not acknowledge, such illumination.

On Psalm 104:10-13, Calvin comments: "The Psalmist here describes another instance both of the power and **goodness** of God - which is, that He makes fountains to gush out in the mountains.... He obviously spake in this manner for the purpose of enhancing the **grace** [Calvin has '*gratiam*'] of God Who vouchsafes to extend His care to the **brute creation**...."

"Rivers run even through great and **desolate** wildernesses, where the wild beasts **enjoy** some **blessing** [or *benedictione*] of God.... Even those regions where all lies waste and **uncultivated** [by humans], furnish manifest tokens of the Divine **goodness**."

Now there are indeed "countries where...not only grass grows for the feeding of wild beasts, or where the singing of birds is heard not only from a few trees but where a manifold and varied **abundance of good things** everywhere presents itself to our view. Our [human] stupidity is more than brutish - if our minds by such manifestations of the **goodness** of God, are not fixed in devout meditation on His glory!"

Here Calvin says God gives **grace** to bovine cattle and even to **wild animals**. The Reformer's Latin insists: "*ad amplificandam Dei gratiam...quod suam curam ad bruta pecora extendere dignatur....illic ferae bestia aliqua Dei benedictione fruuntur.*"

To Calvin, then, "grace" is by no means limited solely to saving the elect - nor even just to the temporal feeding of all mankind. His **general grace** is **common** also to **all** His **creatures**.

In Psalm 104:15, God states that "wine gladdens the heart of **men** and oil makes the face to shine and bread to strengthen the heart of **man**" - of all men in common. This, of course, is in addition to God's care of His animals - and also in addition to the Lord God's very different and special care of His elect.

Here, Calvin comments that "wine is owing to God's superabundant **liberality**" or generosity toward mankind in general. Its purpose, he adds, is "to commend to us the **grace** of God - in His tenderly and abundantly nourishing **men**. (*ad commendationem gratiae Dei posita est - dum molliter et laute **homines**...educat*)."

Such divine "grace" is here dispensed not just to believers but indeed also to all mankind. See too at Calvin's *Institutes* III:10:2, cited later below.

Psalm 104:16 states that even "the trees of the Lord are full of sap." Here too, Calvin succeeds in finding evidence of God's **common grace** care even of **trees**.

For he comments: "The Psalmist again treats of God's **general providence** in **cherishing all** parts of **the World**. No part of the World is forgotten by Him Who is the Best of fathers.... **No creature** is excluded from **His care**...."

"It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourished [all] **men** who have been created after His Own **image** - since He does not begrudge to extend His care even to **trees**!" For God feeds **all** living creatures - "by His mere **grace** and generosity (*mera **gratia** et libertate*)."

In Psalm 104:21f, the Lord says that even "the lions roar after their prey...from God." Calvin comments: "There are, however, still some remains of the original [**common grace**] **blessing**

conferred by God on **men** - inasmuch as **He holds in check** so many **wild beasts** by daylight [*cf.* Genesis 1:28 with 9:1-7]....

"God in a wonderful manner provides food for...ravenous beasts.... Did God not put a [**common grace**] **restraint** upon so many wild beasts which are hostile to us - the **human race** would soon become extinct.... Wild beasts since the fall of man may seem to be born to do us hurt and to rend and tear in pieces all whom they meet with. This savage cruelty must be kept under **check** by the providence of God.... In order to keep them shut up within their dens - the only means which He employs, is to inspire them with terror simply by the sunlight. This instance of divine grace (*gratiam*), the prophet commends the more - on account of its necessity.... Man is thus protected by the [day]light against the violence and injuries of wild beasts. In this is to be seen the unparalleled goodness of God Who in so fatherly a manner has provided for his [man's] convenience and welfare."

In Psalm 107:6*f*, God speaks about the **multitude** of His **mercies** (plural). "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His **goodness** and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

On Psalm 107:10-17, Calvin therefore comments: "If a person fall into the hands of robbers or pirates and...expects death every moment - surely the **deliverance** of such a one is a striking proof of the **grace** of God.... And when the transgressor shall find that it is God Who is administering **correction** to him - this will pave the way for his arriving at the **knowledge** of His **grace**."

Then, in Psalm 107:20, it says **God heals men**. Calvin comments: "God has but to will it or to speak the Word, and instantly all diseases...are expelled.... I acknowledge indeed that it is of comparatively little consequence to us to be the subjects of bodily care - if our souls still remain un sanctified.... Hence it is the intention of the Prophet that we consider the **mercy** of God as extending [even] to the **evil** and **unthankful** (*Dei clementiam in reprobis quoque et ingratis*)."

Again, in Psalm 107:23-39, it speaks of "the **mercy** of Jehovah" (thus Calvin) to all mariners whom God rescues from storms at sea. Indeed, most mariners then known to the Ancient Israelites were **not** believers in Jehovah (*cf.* Jonah 1:1-5).

Comments Calvin on the Psalm: "Here we have another instance of God's **superintending care** toward **mankind**.... The goodness of God...appear[s] the more conspicuous when the tempest happily ceases without any loss of life....

"**The Spirit of God**, by this change of the storm into a calm, places the **providence** of God as presiding over **all**.... God **restrains** the raging of the billows." Conversely, there is trouble whenever "God withdraws His **grace**, which hitherto formed the hidden spring from which **all** their **prosperity** issued."

Thus, to Calvin, there is a multitude of God's **general mercies** or His **common graces**. Thereby, God: (1) delivers people from robbers; (2) administers correction to transgressors; (3) heals

even those who are **evil**: (4) delivers rough sailors from peril on the sea; and (5) promotes **all prosperity** only by His "**gratia**" - His non-justificatory or **common grace** to all such humans.

On Psalm 136:1 - regarding God's "**mercy** enduring for ever" (there repeated some 26 times) - Calvin comments: "The insertion of this clause again and again, in so many short and abrupt sentences, may seem a vain repetition. But...why should we object to the reiteration?....

"**Men** may not deny the divine goodness to be the source and fountain of **all** their **blessings**, but the **graciousness** of His **bounty** is far from being recognized fully and sincerely.... The wisdom of God [is]...displayed in the skill with which 'the Heavens have been framed'.... Next he comes to speak of 'the Earth' - so that he may lead us to form a proper estimate of this great and memorable work of God, stretching forth, as it does, a bare and dry surface above the waters....

"God has seen fit to secure a place of habitation for **the human family**.... It is ascribed to His **mercy** - because His only reason for displacing the waters from their proper seat, was that regard which He had in His infinite goodness for the interests of **man**....

"In the close, he [the Psalmist] speaks of the **paternal providence** of God as extending not only to all mankind, but to every living creature.... **Men** are much better than brute **beasts**, and there is a great difference between **some** men and **others**.... Yet as regards the privilege of the divine adoption..., the Psalmist is to be considered as reasoning from the less to the greater and enhancing the incomparably **superior** mercy which God shows to **His Own children**."

Yet God still keeps on manifesting also His '**inferior mercy**' even to unsavable animals. For, as Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* I:16:7, "God...fulfils the office of the Best of parents.... [David] reminds them that He 'keeps on giving food to **all** flesh' (Psalm 136:25).... We infer not only that the **general providence** of God, **continuing** the **order** of **nature**, extends over [all] the creatures - but that by His wonderful counsel, they are adapted to a certain and **special purpose**."

So then, God's **justificatory mercy** toward His elect is certainly **superior** to His non-saving mercy toward reprobate mankind. Yet even the latter, in turn, is superior to His lesser mercies toward His sub-human creatures. Nevertheless, to Calvin - God does have an **inferior mercy** even toward the sun and moon and stars and our Earth - and all of its sub-human contents too.

On Psalm 145:8f, Calvin comments that "Jehovah **is** gracious.... God is inclined to mercy, for such is the proper meaning of the word *channun*.... As regards the ungodly, although God shows them His long-suffering patience, they are incapable of perceiving pardon. So that the doctrine on which we insist - has a **special application** to believers only, who apprehend God's goodness by a living **faith**."

Nevertheless, "Jehovah is good to **all**.... Not only does God with fatherly indulgence and clemency forgive sin [in His elect] - but is good to all without discrimination, as He makes His sun to rise upon the good and upon **the wicked** (Matthew 5:45).

"Forgiveness of sin is a treasure from which **the wicked** are excluded, but their sin and depravity **does not prevent God from showering down His goodness upon them**, which they appropriate without being at all sensible of it. Meanwhile believers, and they only, know what it is to enjoy a reconciled God....

"When it is added that the **mercy** of God extends to **all** his works - this ought not to be considered as contrary to reason, or obscure. Our sins having involved the whole World in the curse of God - there is everywhere an opportunity for the exercise of **God's mercy, even in helping the brute creation.**"

Moreover, just six verses later on Psalm 145:15, Calvin refers to "God's pure **grace** and generosity (*mera gratia et liberalitate*) in giving food to **all living creatures.**"

Even more significantly. In his *Institutes* I:5:6, Calvin states that when he comes "to treat of the Scriptural account of the creation," the method of "investigating the divine perfections by tracing the lineaments of His countenance as shadowed forth in the Firmament and on the Earth - is **common** both to those within and to those outside the pale of the Church.... If it be asked what cause induced Him to create all things at first, and now inclines Him to preserve them - we shall find that there could be no other cause than His Own **goodness**....

"Nothing more should be required to draw forth our love towards Him - **every creature**, as the Psalmist reminds us, participating in His **mercy**. 'His tender **mercies** are over **all** His works.' Psalm 145:9."

Also in his *Institutes* I:10:2, Calvin refers to this very same "Psalm (145) in which a summary of the divine perfections is so carefully given that not one seems to have been omitted. Still, however, every perfection **there** set down, may be contemplated in **creation**" - and thus without regard to the repair of postfall man, who was priorly created only as the last of all of God's manifold creative acts.

Once more, in his *Institutes* III:2:29, Calvin insists about God that "He is exhibited...as 'good and...plenteous in **mercy**,' 'slow to anger,' '**good to all**,' and shedding 'His tender **mercies** over **all** His works.' Psalms 136:6; 103:8; 145:8-9."

To Calvin, then, God's mercy is also prefall and even prehuman. In addition, it was and is, later - also restorative of fallen man.

On Psalm 147:7-9, Calvin's comment is striking. He says that "in connection with the proofs of His power, God sets before our eyes, those of His **grace** and paternal love toward the human race (*gratiae paternique erga genus humanum amoris*).... He does not overlook **even the wild beasts**.... We know that it was for man's sake the World was made at all, and endued with fertility and plenty....

"In proportion as we are nearer in the scale of existence to God, He shows us the more of His goodness. But if **He condescends** to notice **the brute creation**, it is plain that to us He will be a nurse and a father.

"For the same reason He names 'the ravens' - the most contemptible of all birds - to teach us that **the goodness of God** extends to **every part of the World**. When He says that their young 'cry unto God' - He no doubt...simultaneously hints they acknowledge they must be in want unless God give them meat.... The **whole system of nature** is so regulated by God."

On Proverbs 8:22, John Calvin insists in his *Institutes* II:14:8 that the Second Person of the Triune God alias the pre-incarnate **Wisdom** is "Christ the Son of God. Thus, the eternal generation of Wisdom celebrated by Solomon (Proverbs 8:22 *seq.*)."

Indeed, on Proverbs 8:15*f*, Calvin states in his *Institutes* IV:20:4 that this "**Wisdom** affirms by the mouth of Solomon: 'By **Me** kings reign and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles - even all the judges of the Earth' Proverbs 8:15*f*.... Since **He** is present - and also presides in enacting laws and exercising judicial equity.

"This, Paul also plainly teaches - when he enumerates offices of rule among the gifts of God which, distributed variously according to the measure of **grace**, ought to be employed.... Romans 12:8.

"In that place [Romans 12:8], however, he is properly speaking of the Senate of grave men who were appointed in the primitive **Church** to take charge of public discipline.... Still, as we see that **civil** power has the same end in view - there can be no doubt that he is recommending **every** kind of just government....

"Therefore, no man can doubt that **civil authority** is in the sight of God not only **sacred** and lawful - but **the most sacred** and by far **the most honourable** of **all** stations in mortal life." See too in "governments" at First Corinthians 12:28 (later below).

In Isaiah 3:1*f*, God mentions "bread and...water" and "the Man-of-war [or Soldier]; the Judge, and the Prophet; and...the Captain over fifty; and the Honourable [Senator (thus Calvin)]; and the...Skilled Artist; and the Eloquent Orator." The 'Captain of fifty,' explains Calvin, is what "the **Romans** had [in their Semi-]Centurions..., which the **Greeks** call *Penteekontarchous*."

On all of them, Calvin comments: "We must attend to this comprehensive description of a well-regulated State. For Isaiah has placed first corn and other things necessary for bodily support; secondly, military forces; thirdly, skill in governing a nation and civil government; fourthly, the prophetic office; and fifthly, the mechanical arts.

"With these ornaments does God adorn **the Nations** (*Gentiles*), which He intends to render safe.... Let us therefore know that **everything** which we find to be profitable for the support of life,

flows from the undeserved **grace** of God (*ex mera Dei gratia*). Hence, also, there follows another instruction - namely that we ought to beware lest by our ingratitude we deprive ourselves of **those excellent gifts of God.**" Clearly, to Calvin - **common grace** rides again!

On Isaiah 26:10, Calvin comments: "Isaiah...had said that the godly, even when they are afflicted or see others afflicted, still rely on the love of God and trust in Him. But now he declares on the other hand that the wicked cannot be brought in any way to love God - **though He endeavours** by **every sort** of kindness [or '**favour**'] to draw and gain them over; and that whatever aspect the Lord assume toward them, they do not become better.... Whatever may be the acts of **kindness** by which God **draws** the **wicked** - they will never learn to act uprightly."

Thus, God gives "every sort" of **common grace** also to the wicked reprobate. Yet they never desire to, nor can, embrace His saving **special grace.**

Isaiah 28:23-29 discusses the abilities of the plowman with which God gifts him. Comments Calvin: "Isaiah here declares that those who do not see the wisdom of God in things so obvious, are stupid.... God has His seasons....

"Ploughmen do not 'every day' cleave the Earth or break the clods. This ought not to be attributed to their want of skill... On the contrary, their skill requires them to desist.... Thus God does not act with bustle or confusion, but knows the times and seasons for doing His work....

"From Whom did the farmer **learn** these things, but from God?.... Every person of great modesty - will think that those things are not done idly or at random.... The passage is explained by some as if the Prophet had said that the science of agriculture proceeded from the Lord.... Not only agriculture, but likewise **all the arts** which contribute to the advantage of mankind are the **gifts of God!**....

"**All** that belongs to skilful invention, has been imparted by Him to the minds of men. Men have no right to be proud on this account.... The Prophet shows that such arts ought to be ascribed to God from Whom they have been **received**; Who alone is the Inventor and Teacher of them.

"If we ought to form such an opinion about Agriculture and Mechanical Arts - what shall we think of the learned and exalted sciences such as Medicine, Jurisprudence, Astronomy, Geometry, Logic, and such like? Shall we not much more consider them to have proceeded from God? Shall we not in them also behold and acknowledge His **goodness** - so that His praise and glory may be celebrated both in the smallest and in the greatest affairs?" **Common grace** gifts ride again!

In Isaiah 44:3, Calvin hold the reference is not just to the reviving of the people of God. Here, comments the genius of Geneva, "the Prophet...does not speak merely of the Spirit of regeneration, but alludes to the **universal grace** extended over **all creatures** (*allusio est ad **universalem gratiam** quae per **omnes creaturas** expansa est*)....

"This is mentioned in Psalm 104:30 - 'Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created; and He will renew the face of the Earth!'.... David declares in that passage that **every part of the World is enlivened.**" And "**universal grace**" is **common grace.**

On Daniel 4:10, anent **the political rule** of the **then-still-pagan** and as-then-not-yet-saved **King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,** Calvin comments: "God appointed the existence of governments in the World.... This ordinance of God flourishes, because tyrants - howsoever they are removed from the exercise of just and moderate dominion, whether they wish it or not - are compelled" to rule by Almighty God and His **common grace.**

"It is better to live under the most cruel tyrant," Calvin insists, "than without any government at all. Let us suppose all to be on one equal level [= individualistic anarchy as the end of the road of egalitarian democracy?!]. What would such anarchy bring forth? No one would wish to yield to others. Every one would test the extent of his powers. And thus, all would end in prey and plunder and in the mere license of fraud and murder - and all the passions of mankind would have full and unbridled sway.

"Hence I have said tyranny is better than anarchy, and more easily borne. Because where there is no supreme governor - there is none to preside and keep the rest in check.... Although tyrants and other princes forget their duty, it is still divinely enjoined upon them - and yet God's **grace** always shines forth in **all governments** (*lucere tamen semper **gratiam** Dei in **omnibus imperiis**).*

"**Tyrants** endeavour to extinguish the whole light of equity and justice, and to mix up all things. But the Lord meanwhile **restrains** them in a secret and wonderful manner. And thus they are compelled to act **usefully** to the human race - whether they wish, or not."

To Calvin, then, God's **common grace** shines through even in **pagan tyrannies.** But **individualistic anarchy** is a preview of **graceless Hell!**

On Jonah 4:6-11, Calvin comments: "Here God explains the design He had in suddenly raising up the gourd, and then in causing it to perish or wither through the gnawing of a worm. It was to teach Jonah that his conduct toward the Ninevites was **very inhuman.**....

"God preserved men for the purpose for which He has designed them.... God does not create men in vain; it is then no wonder that He **wishes** them to be saved.

"We hence see Jonah was not unsuitably taught by this representation how **inhumanly** he conducted himself toward the Ninevites. He was certainly but one individual. Since, then, he made such an account of himself and the **gourd** only - how was it, that he cast aside all **care** for so great and so populous a **city?**

"Ought not **this** to have come to his mind - that it was no wonder that God the Creator and Father had a **care** for so many thousands of men? Though indeed the Ninevites were alienated from

God, yet...God, as He is the **Father of the whole human race**, acknowledged them as **His Own** - at least to such an extent as to give them the **common light** of day and **other blessings of earthly life**." Cf. the **light of nature** and **common grace**!

"We now, then, understand the import of this comparison. 'You [Jonah] wished to spare,' He says, 'the **gourd**. And should I [the Lord] not spare this great **city**?... Should I Who am God in Whose hand are all things, Whose prerogative and Whose constant practice it is **mercifully** to **bear** with **men** - should not I spare them, though they were worthy of destruction?'....

"If then **men** are inclined to **mercy** through some hidden impulse of [common grace working through the light of] **nature** - what may not be hoped from the inconceivable goodness of God Who is the Creator of the whole World and the **Father of us all**? And will not He Who is the Fountain of all goodness and **mercy** - spare us?...

"God then shows here to Jonah that he had been carried away by his own **merciless** zeal.... Jonah was influenced by a feeling far too vehement. This God proved, by sparing so many infants.... And to infants, He adds **the brute animals**."

Jonah, on the other hand - here, quite unlike God - had wished for **mercy only** toward that **vegetable** that was the **gourd**. But **unlike God**, he had **not** wished for **mercy** toward the **human beings** and their **animals** in Nineveh - nor even toward the **worm** which destroyed the gourd!

In Nahum 1:2-5, we are told that "God is jealous...and is furious. Notwithstanding that, Calvin there comments that even "**the mountains** cannot continue in their own strength - except as far as they are supported by the **grace** of God (*montes non stare in sua firmitate nisi quatenus suffulti sunt gratia Dei*). **The World** cannot for a moment stand, except as it is sustained by the **grace** and goodness of God (*non posse orbem stare ad momentum, nisi quatenus sustinetur gratia et bonitati Dei*)."

Clearly then, to Calvin, **grace** is by no means limited only to the **elect**. To the genius of Geneva, even the unjustifiable **mountains** and the **World** itself need God's (**common**) **grace**.

In Malachi 1:2, God says He loved Jacob but hated Esau - a truth that Romans 9:11-13 grounds in God's predestination even before they were born. Comments Calvin: "Though tokens of God's **grace** shone forth **everywhere** (*tametsi enim ubique refulgeant signa gratiae Dei*) - and the **Earth**, as the Psalmist says, is **full** of His **goodness** (Psalm 104:24) - yet there was in Judah something **special** (*fuit tamen speciale aliquid in Judea*)."

God's **special grace** was then pre-emiunently to be found in Judah. Yet to Calvin, tokens of God's (**common**) **grace** even then shone forth **everywhere** - throughout the **Earth**.

Coming now to the Newer Testament, on Matthew 5:43-48 Calvin comments: "It is astonishing that the Scribes fell into so great an absurdity as to limit the word 'neighbour' to benevolent persons.

For nothing is more obvious or certain than that God, in speaking of our neighbours, includes **the whole human race**....

"**All** men are our brethren, because they are related to us by a **common nature**.... Though the greater part of men break off in most instances from this holy society, yet their depravity does not violate the order of **nature**....

"Believers ought...to 'bless their enemies.' In the meantime, they do not fail to commit their cause to God - till **He** take **vengeance** on the **reprobate**. For they desire, as far as lies in them, that the wicked should return to a sound mind so that they may not perish. And thus they endeavour to promote their salvation....

"The example of God is held out for our imitation.... It is His will that we should imitate His fatherly **goodness** and **liberality**.... Christ therefore proved from the **effect** - that none are the children of God, but those who resemble Him in **gentleness** and **kindness**....

"'He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.' He quotes two instances of the divine kindness toward us.... By a *synecdoche*, He includes a vast number of **other favours**.... 'Be ye therefore **merciful** - as your Father also is **merciful**.' For '**mercy**' is contrasted - with a mercenary regard which is founded on private advantage."

On Mark 10:21, Calvin makes useful remarks on the distinction between God's common or general love for all and His particular or special love only for His elect. This parallels His common grace toward all creatures and His special grace toward His elect alone. However, such elect include also His unfallen angels (*cf.* First Timothy 5:21) - which shows that even special grace not necessarily involves the prior existence of sin!

Comments Calvin: "**All** the creatures of God without exception, are the objects of His love. To distinguish the degrees of love, is therefore a matter of importance.... It is necessary to state some **distinction**, and to observe that there are **various degrees** of love in God (*il est besoin de mettre quelque **distinction** et reconnoistre qui'l a **divers degrez** d'amour en Dieu*)....

"God embraces in fatherly love none but His children whom He has regenerated with the Spirit of adoption.... But God is sometimes said to **love** those whom He does not approve or justify.... Under various points of view, God **loved** Aristides and Fabricius, and also **hated** them. For, in so far as He had bestowed on them outward righteousness, and that for the general advantage, He **loved** His Own work in them.

"But as their heart was impure, the outward semblance of righteousness was of no avail for obtaining righteousness.... It is not inconsistent that the good seed which God has implanted in some natures shall be **loved** by Him, and yet that He should reject their persons and works on account of corruption."

On the Divine Word Who became Christ in John 1:4-5, Calvin comments: "The Logos of God was not only the Source of life to **all** creatures - so that those which were not, began to be. But His life-giving power causes them to **remain** in their condition.

"For were it not that His **continued** inspiration gives vigour to the World - everything that lives would immediately decay, or be reduced to nothing. In short, what Paul ascribes to God - that in Him, we have our being and move and live (Acts 17:28) - John declares to be accomplished by the **blessing** of the Word.... And so, when the Evangelist has put forward a general consideration of the **grace** of Christ, to persuade men to give it closer attention, he shows what was given to them in particular - that is, that they were not **created** in the likeness of the beasts, but endowed with **reason**.... Since God effectually illuminates their minds with His light, it follows that they were created to the end they might know that He is the Author of such a unique **blessing**."

In his *Institutes* I:15:4, Calvin insists that "the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed" when Adam fell. Then he further goes on to say that "the same thing in different terms is declared by St. John when he says that the Light which was from the beginning in the eternal Word of God, was the Light of man (John 1:4)."

Why does John do this? According to Calvin, "his object is to extol the **singular grace** (*gratia*) of God - in **making** man excel the other animals" (*cf.* Genesis 1:20-26f).

Clearly, then, Calvin here says that God's **grace** was given to man **already** when God **made** him. In other words, even **before** the human fall.

In his *Institutes* II:2:19, Calvin states that at "John 1:4-5" the Bible "intimates that the human soul is indeed irradiated with a beam of Divine Light." Consequently, "it is never left utterly devoid of some small flame or rather spark - **though** not such as to enable it to comprehend God."

And in his *Institutes* II:6:1, Calvin states "John teaches that there was 'life in Christ' from the beginning, and that the whole World had lost it (John 1:4). It is necessary to return to that Fountain.... Accordingly, Christ declares that...He is life [John 14:6 *cf.* 15:6]."

This can only mean Calvin believed mankind had "life in Christ" [the Son-Word] before that life was lost at the fall - and that Christ is that life to which Christians "return" at their conversion. Indeed, even before their conversion, Christians together with the rest of fallen humanity were in spite of the fall still "never left utterly devoid of some small flame or rather spark" of what before the fall had been a bright light - and what even after the fall still was "a beam of Divine Light."

Commenting further on the same John 1:5 (in his work *The Gospel according to St. John*), Calvin states that "if **no** light is visible in men, this witness of the Evangelist to the divinity of Christ is destroyed.... The light given to men in the beginning must not be assessed by their present state.... And yet, he [John] **denies** that the **light** of reason is **completely** put out.... In the darkling gloom of the human mind, there still **shine** some sparks of that **brightness**....

"The Evangelist maintains that in the midst of the darkness, certain **remnants yet exist**.... His statement that the light shines in the darkness, is not at all meant as praise of corrupt nature but rather to **deprive ignorance of excuse**....

"Although the Son of God has **always** called men to Himself by this poor **light** still **left in us** [fallen humans], the Evangelist says that it was ineffectual.... [Yet] even those who are not regenerate by the Spirit of God, still exercise a certain reason....

"The **light** which still dwells in corrupt nature, consists chiefly of two parts.... **All** men naturally possess some seed of religion; and secondly, the distinction between good and evil is engraven on their consciences....

"Man especially was endued with an extraordinary gift of understanding. And though by his revolt he lost the light of understanding, yet he still sees and understands - so that what he **naturally** possesses from the **grace** of the **Son of God**, is not entirely destroyed."

On John 1:9, Calvin comments: "Christ is light, reflecting from Himself and through Himself and thence shining brightly upon the **whole** World. There is no other source or cause of its brightness anywhere. And so John calls Him the true Light Whose Own nature is to be light.

"'He illuminates every man'.... Christ makes us **all** partakers of His brightness.... **All** are enlightened by Christ, since **none** can boast that he has obtained the light of life otherwise than through His **grace**....

"Beams from this light are shed upon **the whole race of men**.... There is no man to whom some awareness of the eternal light does not penetrate.

"But since fanatics eagerly seize on this verse and twist it into saying that the **grace** of illumination is offered to all without distinction - let us remember that it is only referring to the **common light of nature**." Indeed, it is **not** at all referring to **saving** grace.

On John 1:14-16, Calvin comments that the sinless "Christ...is in very truth the inexhaustible Fount of **grace**.... The fullness of **grace** in Christ is the Well from which we **all** must draw.... From the beginning of the World, all the Patriarchs drew **whatever gifts** they had from Christ....

"From Him...they obtained **grace**.... Whatever **graces** God heaps upon us, flow equally from this Source.... We are watered with the **graces** which were poured out on Christ" - common, and special!

In John 3:16-18, Calvin comments that "the Heavenly Father does not wish **the human race** to perish.... The cause, lies in the **love of God**.... He is **favourable** to the **whole World** - when He calls all without exception to the faith of Christ....

"**Faith** is **not common** to **all**.... God **opens** the eyes **only** of the **elect**.... None need now wonder or worry how he can escape death, since we believe it was God's purpose that Christ should rescue us from it. The word 'World' comes again - so that no one at all may think he is excluded, if only he keeps to the road of faith....

"**Unbelievers** are completely **ruined**.... Christ is speaking especially of those whose ungodliness will be shown in open contempt of the Gospel.... He directs His discourse against those who deliberately and maliciously extinguish **the light kindled** by God.... He tells us that every man should put the blame on himself.... He punishes unbelief with eternal death."

So to Calvin, while God saves only the elect - He also loves **the World as such**. Thus also all unbelievers in the **World** are now **graciously** given the **light** - and, if they do not repent, are later punished everlastingly for having **rejected** that **light**. John 3:19f.

As Calvin here rightly points out, "**faith** is not common to all." But **the light is common!** For "in the **love of God**...He is **favourable** to the **whole World**" - and "the word '**World**' comes **again**, so that no one at all may think he is excluded if only he keeps to the road of faith."

Hypercalvinists question the common grace implications of Calvin's exegesis of John 3:16f. They argue that the full context ends at John 3:36 - which they allege negates any doctrine of common grace. And they wrongly think that just because Christ does not save the reprobate, He gives them no common grace at all between their births and their deaths.

However, for Calvin the true context of John 3:16, is John 1:5 to 8:12f. That broader context clearly implies **common grace**, For the Eternal Word and Son of God graciously **illuminates every man who comes into the World**, and is Himself **the Light of the World**.

Thus, on John 8:12 Calvin comments: "Christ says He is '**the Light of the whole World**'.... Outside Him there is not one spark of true light.... The power and function of enlightening is not confined to Christ's physical presence. For though He is far from us bodily, He nevertheless **daily sheds His light upon us**.... The fountain of **all** knowledge and wisdom, is hidden in Him."

On Acts 14:16-17, Calvin acknowledges that God does good also to the Heathen. "The kind of witness mentioned, **deprives men of excuse**.... From the **beginning**, God has indeed made Himself known to all mankind through the Word.... Paul and Barnabas show that there was **no age** on which God did not bestow His **blessings**....

"In the order of nature, there is a certain and clear manifestation of God.... The Earth is watered by rain.... The heat of the sun quickens its growth.... Is it not worse than foul depravity, that he [the unbeliever] is unmoved by such **divine bounty** in providing **benefits** in **generous abundance**?.... Out of His infinite indulgence, God lavishes **more** on men than their need requires....

"Never did such great barrenness exist, that the **blessing** of God in feeding men dried up altogether.... We go hungry through our own fault, when we do not admit the **beneficence** of Heaven.... However mean we may be, the **fatherly love of God** still breaks through **even** to the **unworthy** . In particular, **mankind as a whole** is evidence that the **benefits of God** in which He is seen to be our Father - **never cease** ."

On Acts 17:25-28, "men" - Calvin comments - "have nothing, except by the **grace** of God's beneficence (*nihil habent nisi ex **gratuita** Eius beneficentia*). They are nothing, except **purely** by His **grace** (*nihil sunt nisi ex **mera** Eius **gratia***). For they must soon be reduced to nothing, if He withdraws the Spirit by Whom they live....

"It is certainly shameful ingratitude on the part of men - when **all** enjoy a **common life** - not to consider why God has given them life.... From whatever place they have sprung, or whatever region of the World they inhabit, yet there is one Creator and Father of all Who must be sought by all with **common consent** ."

" **True** knowledge of God is a **special** gift.... Faith, by which He is known properly, proceeds only from the illumination of the Spirit.... **Paul is not speaking here about the ability of men** . But he is **only** warning that they are inexcusable, when they are blind **in such a clear light**

"Life is superior in **men** , because not only do they **have sensation and movement in common with the brute beasts** - but they are endowed with reason and intelligence.... So in John [1:4], when mention is made of the creation of all things, there is added separately and not without good reason that 'the Life was the **Light** of **men** '....

"Men are imbued **by nature** with **some knowledge** of God.... Men are 'the offspring of God' - because they reproduce something divine in the superiority of their nature.... The same Scripture teaches in many places that we are made the sons of God by faith and **gracious** adoption (*docet quidem eadem Scriptura multis locis... **gratuita** adoptione*)....

"It gives various names to the Spirit Himself, on account of His **numerous** **graces** (*propter **multiples** Eius **gratias** variis nominibus insignit*). Hence, God's involvement also with **unbelievers** bears a **gracious** character.

In Acts 17:27, Paul told Heathen in Athens that God "be not far from **every one of us** ." On that text, Calvin's *Institutes* I:5:3 remarks that this is because of " **every man** having within himself undoubted evidence of the heavenly **grace** by which he lives and moves and has his being."

Note, Calvin is not here talking about the necessity of receiving saving grace in order to become justified before God! Calvin is here clearly talking about the **common "grace"** by which " **every man** " - regardless of his unrighteousness - right now "lives and moves and has his being" already here and now on Earth.

In Acts 17:28, Paul told the Heathen in Athens: "Certain of your own poets have said [about God], 'For we are His offspring.'

In his *Institutes* I:16:1, Calvin here observes that though the philosophers of such Heathen "subscribe to the sentiment of Paul that in God 'we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28) - yet they are far from having a serious apprehension of the **grace** which He commends. Because they have not the least relish for that special care in which alone the paternal favour of God is **discerned**."

Note here that Calvin blames the pagan philosophers for not "having a serious apprehension of the **grace**" Paul commends! Paul blames them, "because they have not the least relish for that special care in which alone the paternal favour of God is **discerned**."

Calvin does **not** state that such pagan philosophers were devoid of such common "**grace**" - simply because they themselves had not "**discerned**" such common grace. Some Hypercalvinists do. But not John Calvin!

On Romans 2:4, Calvin comments that "**all** the **favours** of God are so many proofs of His fatherly goodness. Yet, because He often has a different object in view, the **ungodly** are wrong to congratulate themselves on their **prosperity** - as though they were [savingly] **dear** to Him, while He **kindly** and **bountifully** supports them....

"**While** the Lord treats His Own servants favourably and given them **earthly blessings**, He makes His **benevolence** known to them.... **When** He treats the transgressors of His Law with the **same** indulgence, His object is to mollify their stubbornness by His Own **kindness**. Yet He does **not** declare that He is **pleased** with **them**!"

So Calvin here at Romans 2:4 seems to be implying are two kinds of grace. Cf. too perhaps also at Romans 2:14f.

Indeed, at Romans 8:14 he adds: "There is a **multiple** operation of the Spirit. There is a **general** operation, whereby **all** creatures are maintained and moved.

There are also **special** operations of the Spirit among men, and these too are **varying** in their character. But by 'Spirit' Paul here means **sanctification**, with which the Lord favours none but His elect. *Esse multiplicem Spiritus actionem. Est enim universalis, qua omnes creaturae sustinentur ac moventur. Sunt et peculiares in hominibus, et illae quidem variae.*"

On First Corinthians 2:14, Calvin comments that even though "all men are by nature devoid of the Spirit of God" as to His **indwelling** - nevertheless "the **light of reason** which we **all** have, is from the Spirit of God. *Est quidem a Spiritu Dei qualescunque hoc lumen rationis quo vigemus omnes.*"

We saw earlier above how First Corinthians 7:7 calls both marriageability and chastity *charismata* - alias gifts graciously bestowed by God. Both gifts are often enjoyed also by reprobates, indicating they are gifts by virtue of **common grace**.

As Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:8:42, "the marriage tie [is] doubly necessary - save in the case of those whom God has by **special grace** exempted." He could also have added that not just celibacy but also the **gift of marriage** itself is constituted by a similar "**grace**" - yes indeed, by **common grace**.

For Calvin does indeed add: "Every man has his proper **gift** [or *charisma*] from God - one after this manner [*viz.* the *charisma* of celibacy], and another after that [manner, *viz.* the *charisma* of marriage]." Consequently, both celibacy and marriage are gifts of God's **common grace**.

Calvin believed the **same**, as regards at least some of the **gifts** mentioned in First Corinthians 12:4f. For, while commenting on Exodus 31:2f about the artistic gifts and wisdom-gifts of God, Calvin observes:

"**Nobody** excels even in the most despised and humble handicraft, except in so far as God's Spirit works in him. For although 'there are diversities of gifts' - still it is the same Spirit from Whom they all flow (**First Corinthians 12:4**), and also as God has seen fit to distribute and measure them out to **every man**. Nor is this only the case with respect to the 'spiritual' gifts which follow regeneration, but in **all** the branches of knowledge which come into use in **common** life" - *viz.*, by God's **common grace**.

Indeed, in his *Institutes* II:3:6, Calvin even says "that **everything** good in the will - is entirely the result of **grace**. In the same sense, the Apostle elsewhere says: 'It is the same God Who keeps on working all things in all people [*ta panta en pasin*]' (First Corinthians 12:6)."

For here Paul "discoursed about the various gifts of the Spirit (First Corinthians 12:10)." Thus Calvin in his *Institutes* III:2:9.

Again, on First Corinthians 12:11, Calvin comments: "Nothing is duly vowed to God save what we have received from His hand - since **all things** which are offered to Him, are merely His **gifts**. But seeing that some things are given to us by the goodness of God, and others withheld by His justice - every man should have respect to the measure of **grace** bestowed on him, as Paul enjoins (Romans 12:3 & First Corinthians 12:11)."

Needless to say - as with the *charismata* of celibacy and marriage in First Corinthians 7:7, so too with these other *charismata* mentioned later in First Corinthians 12:1-31. They are God-given gifts of **common grace** - intensifiable into God-given gifts of **special grace**, according to the specific will of God for each of His elect. On this, compare Calvin's *Commentary on First Corinthians* (from 12:1 to 14:40) - and also his remarks at his *Institutes* II:14:8 (earlier above).

In First Timothy 4:10, Paul says that God is the 'Saviour' (*Sooteer*) of all men - especially of them who believe. Here Calvin comments "that God's **kindness** extends to **all** men. And if there is no one without the experience of **sharing in God's kindness** - how much more of **that** kindness shall the **godly** know who **hope** in Him? Will He not take **special** care of **them**? Will He not pour out of His **bounty** **much more freely** upon **them**? In short, will He not keep **them** in **all** things - safe **to the end**?" Of course He will!

So then, to Calvin - there is a **general kindness** toward **all** men, and a **special kindness** toward the **godly**. To him - there is a **general care** of **all** men, and a **special care** of the **godly**. God has a **general bounty** for **all** men, but a **special bounty** only for the **godly**

God's **general** kindness and care and bounty toward **all**, are **only** for a time. But His **special** kindness and care and bounty toward the **godly**, are for time and eternity, - "**to the end**!" For He has a **general grace** even toward the **reprobate** - but also a **special grace** only toward the **elect**.

On Hebrews 6:4f, Calvin comments: "God certainly bestows **His Spirit** of regeneration **only** on the elect.... But I do not see that this is any reason why He should not touch **the reprobate** with a taste of **His grace** [*gratiae Suae*] or **illuminate their minds** [*irradiet eorum mentes*] with **some glimmerings of His light** [*aliquibus lucis Suae scintillis*] or affect them with **some sense of His goodness** [*bonitatis Suae sensu*].... Therefore there is **some knowledge** in the reprobate, which later vanishes away.... Such men are deprived, as they deserve, of the Spirit of God - and are given over to a reprobate mind."

So to Calvin, Hebrews 6:4 teaches that even the reprobate taste His **grace**. They **taste** it, but they do **not swallow** it! For the **grace** they taste, is not saving grace but **only common grace**.

Also in his comments at Hebrews 10:29-39, Calvin distinguishes between **common grace** and **saving grace**. There, he says that "the Spirit of grace...enlightens our minds.... All those who of their own accord render His grace useless, when they had enjoyed its favour - are contemptible of the Spirit of God.... No wonder that He precludes from the way of **salvation** those who reject the Holy Spirit as their one true Guide!"

However, it is different with **the elect**. "We are not of them that shrink back'.... He has warned them already not to deprive themselves of the faith and **grace**.... Now he teaches them that they have been called not to shrink back....

"We whom God has once **favoured** with the light of the Gospel, ought to see this purpose in our calling that we should **advance** more and more in obedience to God.... By so doing, we escape eternal death."

Calvin's comments on First Peter 4:9-10, are very enlightening. There he states: "In saying 'as each one has received a gift [or *charisma*]' - he mentions the many different **graces** which God variously distributes to us, so that each might bring his own share into **the common pool**....

"The Lord has so divided His manifold **graces** among men, that no one is content with one thing and with his own gifts.... Men...cannot live without mutual assistance.... This bond for promoting unity, has been observed by **Heathens**. Peter teaches us here that God had done this on purpose, to bind men one to another."

In his comments on Second Peter 3:9, Calvin has nothing to say regarding **common** grace. Yet his remarks there concerning the **special** grace of salvation, are nevertheless well worth citing. "God puts off His advent, so as to call **the whole human race** to repentance....

"He refrains from bringing forward the end of the World, so as to give **everyone** time for repentance.... This is His wondrous **love** toward the **human race**, that **He desires all men to be saved**.... God is prepared to receive **all** men into repentance....

"No mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His **loving-kindness** as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There, God stretches out His hand to **all alike** - but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the World."

Second Peter 3:15 states that "the **long-suffering** of our Lord **is** salvation" or **healing** at least till the end of the World. Calvin comments that Peter here "takes it for granted that Christ puts off the day of His coming - because He [Christ] has a concern for our salvation.... From this, he [Peter] encourages the faithful that in this long delay they have a sign of their salvation." Too, during "this long delay" - **even the reprobate benefit** from "the long-suffering of our Lord."

5. Calvin's Institutes on common grace

Calvin was the greatest theologian the World has known since the death of the Apostles John and Peter and Paul. We have seen, above, Calvin's own 'common grace comments' on various texts in the Bible itself.

Now we should note how he focuses it all - after mature theological reflection thereon - in the fifth and last edition of his World-famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. There, he largely follows Africa's greatest theologian of all time - Augustine of Hippo-Regius.

It needs to be understood that Calvin initially wrote his *Institutes* specifically **against the Anabaptists**, who **denied** both **God's common grace** and **Christ's incarnation in human flesh**. He wrote in the 1557 *Preface* to his *Commentary on the Psalms*, that around 1533 "God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame."

However, at that time - continues Calvin - "certain wicked and lying pamphlets were circulated" by the persecuting French Romanists. They cruelly assailed the true Protestants - only obliquely, yet very effectively. They did so, he says, by "stating that none were being treated [by

Romanists] with such cruelty - except **Anabaptists** and seditious persons who by their perverse ravings and false opinions were overthrowing not only religion but also all civil order....

"It appeared to me, that unless I opposed them to the utmost of my ability - my silence could not be vindicated from the charge of cowardice and treachery. This was the consideration which induced me to publish my *Institutes of the Christian Religion*" - in 1536.

Let us now look at those Anti-Anabaptist *Institutes*. **Before the fall**, as Augustine remarks, **Adam received losable grace by which he may have kept on standing. After the fall**, he needed to receive **unlosable grace without which he could not keep on standing even after again being made right with God**. Calvin concurred.

In man's God-given prefall religiosity, even Paganism is finally rooted in the ongoing original revelation of the Triune God which it perverts. As Calvin explains in his *Institutes* (I:3:1-2): "There is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God.... A sense of Deity is inscribed on **every** heart. Nay, even idolatry is ample evident of this fact.... It is most absurd therefore to maintain, as some do, that religion was devised by the cunning and craft of a few individuals....

"Designing men **have** introduced a vast number of fictions into religion.... But they never **could** have succeeded in this, had the minds of men not **previously** been imbued with that **uniform** belief in God, from which, as from its **seed**, the religious propensity springs....

"We do not read of any man who broke out into more unbridled and audacious contempt of the Deity, than C[aius]. Caligula - and yet, none showed greater dread when any indication of divine wrath was manifested.... Even the wicked themselves, therefore, are an example of the fact that some idea of God **always exists in every human mind**" - even **after** man's fall.

Indeed, even **after the fall** of man and his resulting depravity, explains Calvin, "to investigate the motions of the heavenly bodies [as did the Ancient Arabs]...demands skill." And that was and is a skill "which God alone continued to give them.

"The same is true in regard to the structure of the human frame. To determine the connection of its parts, its symmetry and beauty, with the skill of a Galen..., requires singular acuteness." *Institutes* I:5:2. Note that Rome's A.D 130-200 Greek Court Physician Galen, was a Pagan!

Observes Calvin in his *Institutes* (I:15:4): "When Adam lost his first estate, he became alienated from God.... We grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed.... It was, however, so corrupted - that anything which remains, is fearful deformity....

"Our deliverance begins with that **renovation** which we obtain from Christ Who is therefore called the Second Adam.... He **restores** us to true and substantial integrity.... The end of regeneration, is to form us **anew** in the image of God....

"St. John...says that the light which was from the beginning, in the eternal Word of God, was the light of man (John 1:4). His object is to extol the singular **grace** of God (*singularem Dei gratiam*), which permits man to stand out above the rest of the living creatures (*qua homo reliquis animantibus praecellit*).

"He at the same time shows how he was formed in the image of God,." Why? "So that He may separate him from the common herd as possessing not ordinary animal existence but one which combines with it the light of intelligence.

"The image of God constitutes the entire excellence of human nature as it shone in Adam before his fall. It was afterwards vitiated and almost destroyed. Nothing remained but a ruin confused...and tainted with impurity.... It is now partly seen in the elect, in so far as they are regenerated by the Spirit. Its full lustre, however, will be displayed in Heaven."

To Calvin, the first Adam kept on standing in Paradise only by the **grace** of God. For though Adam was then still un sinful and un fallen, he was nevertheless still a rather weak creature.

Geneva's genius remarks that "God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil.... Man excelled in these **noble endowments** in his **primitive** [prefall] condition - when reason, intelligence, prudence and judgment not only sufficed for the government of his earthly life, but also enabled him to rise up to God and **eternal happiness**....

"In this upright state, man possesses freedom of will by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life.... It was because his will was pliable in either direction and he had not received constancy to persevere, that he so easily fell....

"At first, every part of the soul was formed to rectitude.... If any one objects that it was placed, as it were, in a slippery position because its power was weak - I answer that the degree conferred was sufficient to take away every excuse." *Institutes* I:15:8.

Here as elsewhere, Calvin is very clear. **Unfallen** man **had** "noble endowments" which enabled him to rise up to eternal happiness. When, against Calvin, Hypercalvinists refuse to call those God-given endowments "gifts of **grace**" - they are implying that the un fallen Adam could have risen up to **eternal** happiness **without** God's **grace**!

Calvin continues: "If it is said that God fully manifests His beneficence to the human race by furnishing Heaven and Earth with the ordinary power of producing food, the explanation is meagre and heathenish - as if the **fertility** of one year were not a **special blessing**; [and] the penury and dearth of another [year] a special punishment and curse from God!....

"In the Law and the Prophets, He repeatedly declares that as often as He waters the Earth with **dew** and **rain**, He manifest His **grace (gratiam)**." *Institutes* I:16:5. And, indeed - by that same **common grace** - God graciously causes also His **rain** to fall even on the ungodly. Cf. Matthew 5:45.

Moreover, "man naturally possesses the power of continuing his species. God describes it as a mark of His...[common] grace (**gratiae**) - that while some continue childless, others are blessed with offspring. For the fruit of the womb, is His **gift**.... Hence we infer not only that the **general providence** of God continuing the order of nature, extends over the creatures - but that by His wonderful counsel, they are adapted to a certain and **special purpose**." *Institutes* I:16:7.

Furthermore, after the fall of both the wicked angels and of man, God controls them all by **His restraining grace**. Observes Calvin (*Institutes* I:17:7 & I:17:11): "It is the Lord Who gives us **favour** not only with those who wish us well but also in the eyes of the the Egyptians (Exodus 3:21).... For the good and safety of His people, He overrules all the creatures - even the devil himself....

"Everything, therefore, which turns out prosperous and according to his wish, the Christian will ascribe entirely to God - whether he has experienced His beneficence through the instrumentality of men, or been aided by inanimate creatures.... He will have no doubt that he owes all his prosperity to the divine blessing and, admonished by so many circumstances, will feel it impossible to be ungrateful....

"The devil, and the whole train of the ungodly, are - in all directions - **held in** by the hand of God.... They can neither conceive any mischief, nor plan what they have conceived, nor...move a single finger to perpetrate - unless in so far as He permits."

Calvin develops his doctrine of common grace in relation to the various sciences. This he does, particularly in the second chapter of Book II of his *Institutes*.

Thus, as regards the situation **before** the fall of man, Calvin says "that man...overflowed with the riches of His **grace** (*divitiis gratiae Eius afflueret*)." *Institutes* II:2:1.

Here, the past tense of the word "overflowed (*afflueret*)" is very important. For it clarifies that, to Calvin, also **pre-fall** man was a recipient of God's **grace (gratiae) before** man ever became a sinner.

Too, especially **after** man's fall, "it will be beyond dispute that free will does not enable any man to perform good works unless he is assisted by **grace**; indeed, the **special grace** which the elect alone receive through regeneration.... *Et gratia quidem speciali, qua electi soli per regenerationem donantur.*" *Institutes* II:2:6.

This implies Calvin knows also of **another kind of grace** even after the fall. We mean that **non-special kind of grace** which he elsewhere calls: **common grace**.

This is that grace which enables God-gifted fallen men to do humanly useful things. Even though those things fall short of amounting to **really** 'good works' in the sight of God.

So Calvin teaches that even after man's fall, "there is still some residue of intelligence and judgment - as well as will.... **Reason**, by which man discerns between good and evil and by which he understands and judges - **is a natural gift**.

"It could not be destroyed entirely. But being partly weakened, and partly corrupted - a shapeless ruin is all that remains.

"In this sense it is said (John 1:5) that 'the light keeps on shining in darkness, and the darkness did not extinguish it.' These words clearly express...that in the perverted and degenerate nature of man, there are still some sparks which show that he is a rational animal and differs from the brutes, inasmuch as he is endowed with intelligence....

"To charge the [fallen] intellect with perpetual blindness so as to leave it no intelligence of any description whatever - is repugnant not only to the Word of God, but to common experience." For "the human mind...is naturally influenced by the love of truth." *Institutes* II:2:12.

Now, man's depravity is indeed total - extending to every part of his existence. Nevertheless, he is not absolutely depraved. For he is not yet as bad as he shall be - in graceless Hell.

"Man's efforts are not always so utterly fruitless as not to lead to some result, especially when his attention is directed to inferior objects" - explains Calvin. "Nay, even with regard to superior objects - though he is more careless in investigating them, he makes some little progress....

"We have one kind of intelligence of earthly things, and another of heavenly things.... To the former belong matters of politics and economics, [and] all mechanical arts and liberal studies.... Since man is by nature a social being, he is disposed from natural instinct to cherish and preserve society.... So we see that the minds of all men have impressions of civil order and honesty....

"Every individual understands how human societies must be regulated by laws, and also is able to comprehend the principles of those laws. Hence the universal agreement in regard to such subjects, both among nations and individuals - the seeds of them being implanted in the breasts of all, without a teacher....

"The truth of this fact is not affected by the wars and dissensions which immediately arise.... Some, such as thieves and robbers, would invert the rules of justice.... Others (a vice of most frequent occurrence) deem that to be unjust which is elsewhere regarded as just.... Such persons...quarrel with what is clearly reasonable....

"Quarrels of this latter kind do not destroy the primary idea of justice. For while men dispute with each other as to particular enactments, their ideas of equity agree in substance.... Some principle of civil order is impressed on all.... No man is [totally] devoid of the light of reason." *Institutes* II:2:13.

It is, however, in the "manual and liberal arts" in which "the full force of human acuteness is displayed." Although "all are not equally able to learn all the arts..., there is scarcely an individual who does not display intelligence in some particular art.... Its principle is **naturally** implanted in the human mind....

"While these proofs openly attest the fact of an universal reason and intelligence **naturally** implanted, this universality is of a kind which should lead every individual for himself to recognize it as a special **gift** of God (*Dei gratiam*). To this gratitude we have a sufficient call from the Creator Himself when, in the case of idiots, He shows what the endowments of the soul would be - were it not pervaded with His light.

"Though natural to all, it is so in such a sense that it ought to be regarded as **a gratuitous gift** (*gratuitum*) of His beneficence to each.... As they are bestowed indiscriminately on the good and the bad, they are justly classed among **natural endowments**." *Institutes* II:2:14.

In the light of this profound truth, Calvin rhetorically asks: "How then, can we deny that truth must have beamed on those ancient **lawgivers** who arranged civil order and discipline with so much equity? Shall we say that the **philosophers**, in their exquisite researches and skillful description of nature - were blind? Shall we deny the possession of intellect to **those who drew up rules for discourse**, and taught us to speak in accordance with reason?

"Shall we say that those who, by the cultivation of the **medical art**, expended their industry in our behalf - were only raving? What shall we say of the **mathematical sciences**? Shall we deem them to be the dreams of madmen?

"Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration; an admiration which their excellence will not allow us to withhold. But shall we deem anything to be noble and praiseworthy - without tracing it to the **hand of God**?

"Far from us be such ingratitude; an ingratitude not chargeable even on heathen poets, who acknowledged that philosophy and laws and all useful arts were inventions of the gods! Therefore, since it is manifest that men whom the Scriptures term 'natural' are so acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior things - their example should teach us how many **gifts the Lord** has left in possession of human nature, notwithstanding of its having been despoiled of the true good." *Institutes* II: 2:15.

So, therefore, concludes Calvin, "let us not forget that there are most excellent blessings which the **Divine Spirit** dispenses to whom He will for the **common** benefit of mankind!... Nor is there any ground for asking what concourse the Spirit can have with the ungodly who are altogether alienated from God....

"He fills, moves and invigorates **all** things by the **virtue of the Spirit** - and **that**, according to the peculiar nature which each class of beings has received by the **Law of Creation**. But if the Lord

has been pleased to assist us by the work and **ministry of the ungodly** in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences - **let us avail ourselves of it**, lest, by neglecting **the gifts of God** spontaneously offered to us, we justly be punished for our sloth!"

Calvin concludes this section by stating that "Augustine...says **most correctly** that...the **gratuitous gifts** (*gratuita*) bestowed on man were withdrawn - so that the **natural gifts** (*naturalia*) which remained, were corrupted **after** the fall. Not that they can be polluted in themselves, in so far as they proceed from God. But that they have ceased to be pure to polluted man, lest he should by their means obtain any praise." *Institutes* II:2:16.

This means exactly what it says. **Unfallen** man had **grace-gifts** or *gratuita*. Yet, notwithstanding his fall, his **God-given** and essentially unpollutable **natural-gifts** have still **remained** - despite their misuse by **now-polluted man**.

"One of the essential properties of our [human] nature, is reason - which distinguishes us from the lower creatures, just as those by means of sense are distinguished from inanimate objects. For although some [human] individuals are born without reason, that defect does not impair the **general kindness** of God (*generalem gratiam* [alias '**common grace**']) - but rather serves to remind us that whatever we **retain** [after Adam's fall] ought justly to be ascribed to the **Divine indulgence**....

"In that some excel in acuteness, and some in judgment, while others have greater readiness in learning some peculiar art - God, by this variety, commends His **favour** (*gratiam*) toward us [human beings]. Lest anyone should presume to arrogate unto himself that which flows from His [God's] mere generosity (*liberalitate*). For whence is it that one is more excellent than another - but that in a **common nature** (*natura communi*) the [**common**] **grace** (*gratia*) of God is specially displayed?... In this diversity, we can trace some remains of the divine image - distinguishing the **whole human race** from other creatures." *Institutes* II: 2:17.

John 1:4-5, explains Calvin, "intimates that the human soul is indeed irradiated with a beam of divine light - so that it is never left utterly devoid of some small flame or rather spark - though not such as to enable it to comprehend God. And why so? Because its acuteness is, in reference to the knowledge of God, mere blindness....

"For this reason, it is said that **believers**, in embracing Christ, are 'born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God' (John 1:13).... Human nature possesses none of the gifts which the elect receive from their Heavenly Father through the Spirit of regeneration." *Institutes* II:2:18.

Yet, concludes Calvin (citing Paul), "whenever the Gentiles which do not have the Law, by nature do the things contained in the Law - these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves. They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. Romans 2:14-15."

Observes Calvin: "If the Gentiles have the righteousness of the Law naturally engraved on their minds - we certainly cannot say that they are altogether blind as to the Rule of Life! Nothing, indeed, is more **common** than for man sufficiently to be instructed in a right course of conduct by Natural Law - of which the Apostle here speaks.... The end of the Natural Law, therefore, is to render man inexcusable." And that implies the post-fall continuing existence of **common grace** - to enable unregenerate fallen man sufficiently to be able to understand that Natural Law. Compare Calvin's *Institutes* II:2:22.

In his *Institutes* II:3:3-4, he continues: "In every age there have been some who, under the guidance of nature, were all their lives devoted to virtue." Such were some of the **Heathen**.

Consequently, "we ought to consider that, notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, there is some room for [non-saving] **divine grace** (*gratia*) - such grace (*gratia*) as, without purifying it, may lay it under **internal restraint**....

"Thus God, by His providence, **curbs** the perverseness of nature - preventing it from breaking forth into action, yet without rendering it inwardly pure....

"We must either put [the wicked] Cataline on the same footing with [the virtuous] Camillus - or hold Camillus to be an example that nature, when carefully cultivated, is not wholly void of goodness.... The specious qualities which Camillus possessed, were **divine gifts**....

"Those are not common endowments of nature, but **special gifts of God** which He distributes in diverse forms and in a definite measure to men otherwise profane. For which reason we hesitate not in common language to say that one is of a good, another of a vicious, nature.... God has conferred on the one a [non-saving] **special grace** - which He has not seen it meet to confer on the other."

In his *Institutes* III:10:2, Calvin rightly states: "Let this be our principle, that we do not err in the use of the **gifts** of Providence when we refer them to the end for which their Author made and destined them - since He created them for our good and not for our destruction!... If we consider for what end He created food, we shall find that He consulted not only for our necessity but also for our enjoyment and delight....

"In clothing, the end was - in addition to necessity - comeliness and honour. And in herbs, fruits, and trees - besides their various uses - **gracefulness** of appearance and sweetness of smell. Were it not so, the Prophet would not enumerate among the **mercies** of God - wine that maketh glad the heart of man; and oil to make his face to shine (Psalm 104:15)." On the latter point, see too Calvin's comment on Psalm 104:15 (earlier above).

In *Institutes* III:14:2, Calvin states: "I do not deny that whatever **excellent endowments** appear in **unbelievers**, are **divine gifts**. Nor do I set myself so much in opposition to **common sense**, as to contend that there was no difference between the justice, moderation and equity of Titus and Trajan;

and the rage, intemperance, and cruelty of Caligula, Nero, and Domitian; between the continence of Vespasian, and the obscene lusts of Tiberius; and (not to dwell on single virtues and vices) between the observance of law and justice, and the contempt of them.

"So great is the difference between justice and injustice that it may be seen even where the former is only a lifeless image. What order would remain in the World, if we confound them? Hence this distinction between honourable and base actions, God has not only engraved on the minds of each - but also often confirms in the administration of His providence. For we see how He visits those who cultivate virtue - with many temporal blessings....

"He is pleased thus to show how much He delights in true righteousness, since He does not leave even the outward semblance of it to go unrewarded. Hence it follows...that those virtues...of whatever kind, are divine gifts - since there is nothing in any degree praiseworthy which does not proceed from Him."

Yet one also needs to see that **truly good works** are not preparatory to faith in Christ. Rather are they the fruit of faith in Christ. The Mediaeval Romish "Schoolmen...say that good works are not of such intrinsic worth as to be sufficient to procure justification. But it is owing to 'accepting grace' that they have this effect....

"I answer, that the 'grace' which they call 'accepting' - is nothing else than the free goodness with which the Father embraces us." Thus Calvin's *Institutes* III:14:12 (*q.v.*).

Finally, there is the question of *adiaphora* - things which God graciously permits to fallen men in general and to Christians in particular, but which He has neither enjoined nor forbidden. Here. gracious gifts of God such as meat and wine *etc.*, are to be used only in accordance with our 'Christian liberty' - and with due deference to the 'weaker brother.' Romans 14:1-21 and First Corinthians 8:1-13. See too Calvin's *Institutes* III:19:7f.

Regarding such Christian liberty, Calvin says: "In those actions which in themselves are neither good nor bad and concern the **corporeal** rather than the spiritual life, the liberty which man possesses...had not yet been explained.... We owe it to the special **grace** of God [*gratiae Domini*] whenever on the one hand we choose what is for our advantage...and on the other hand whenever with heart and soul we shun what would otherwise do us harm."

Clearly, here too, explains Calvin, it is by (a common and non-saving) **grace** that men make decisions "which in themselves are neither good nor bad." But that is not the same as the different **saving grace** of God, which comes only to the elect (regardless how they use *adiaphora*). See too Calvin's *Institutes* III:10:2 above.

Never then, did Calvin confuse non-saving common grace with saving special grace. Nor either should we!

