

## 6. Classic Calvinists on common grace

The 1559 *French Confession* of Calvin and his student Chandieu, says in its article 9 that "man was created pure and perfect in the image of God, and that by his own guilt...fell from the **grace** which he **had received** (*déchu de la **grâce** qu'il **avait reçue***)" - here citing "Genesis 1:26 & Ecclesiastes 7:10 & Romans 5:12 & Ephesians 2:2-3." He has now "lost all integrity," yet "he can **still** discern good and evil (*bien qu'il ait **encore** quelque discrétion du bien et du mal*)."

Also the Latin text here reads: "*sua ipsius culpa excidisse a **gratia** quam **acceperat***." Thus, **grace** even with sinless man in Paradise **before** the **fall**!

Too, even unregenerate fallen man (by God's unmerited common grace alone) still has the God-given ability to discern that which is **good**. Indeed, that is because there was an initial "**grace**" which he received at his creation; and because even fallen man - who "lost the integrity" - by God's unmerited and continuing goodness still maintains enough of that **common grace** and **common sense** so as yet to be able to distinguish evil from **good**.

Calvin's successor was Rev. Professor Dr. Theodore Beza. He stated in his *Christian Faith* (2.3 & 3.8) that the **prehuman good angels** were "preserved holy by a singular **grace** of God" - and that even after man's creation, "if sin had not...entered into the World, God would not have found such a great occasion to **magnify** His **mercy** (Romans 11:32)."

In his translation of the Greek New Testament into Latin, the Protestant Beza renders also John 1:16's *charis anti charitos* - as *gratiam **supra** gratiam* (meaning 'grace **upon** grace'). Together with Beza's previous paragraph, this rendition clearly implies both prelapsarian and post-incarnational **grace**. Indeed, all of the above in Beza - implies the existence of various kinds of 'graced' creatures before Adam fell. See too, similarly, also later Calvinists - such as Calvin's friend Bullinger (*Second Swiss Confession* 9:5f), Ursinus (*Heidelberg Catechism* and Guido de Brés's *Treasure Book* as later below), Zanchius (*Opera* VIII:646f), Witsius (*Oec. Fed.* III:12 & 52); Turretin (*Theol. Elenct.* X:5); Trigland (*Antapologia* 17); and De Moor (*Comment.* IV:826-29).

Also Guido de Brés's own 1561 *Belgic Confession* (article 12) shatters the Hoeksemaite and Schilderian illusions that grace was granted to man alone, and indeed only to the elect and solely after man's fall into sin. For, discussing the **pre-human angels**, it clearly says that God "created" them "good."

Even though some subsequently became "fallen from that excellency in which God created them," nevertheless "the others have by the **grace** of God **remained** steadfast and **continued** in their primitive state." In Guido de Brés's own words, "*les autres ont **persisté** et **demeuré** en leur premier état, par la **grâce** de Dieu*." To which he footnotes: "Matthew 25:31."

Thus, not just "**grace**" **before** the **creation of man** and so too before his later fall. But also **non-saving grace** before the fall even of some of the pre-human **angels**!

The *Belgic* at its article 13 teaches that God was and is good and gracious even when creating and maintaining pre-human birds, and even when restraining the pre-human and fallen devil - once again, also prior to man's creation. "Our most **gracious** and Heavenly Father Who watches over us with a paternal care," it insists, also continues "keeping all creatures so under His power that not...a sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father.... He so restrains the devil. Matthew 10:29-30."

Hence, God is **gracious** also toward the sparrow. He is gracious also toward reprobate humans, at least during history - by restraining their father Satan from hurting them as much as he yet shall.

Indeed, He is much more gracious yet - toward those of little faith who nevertheless savingly trust in Him. Matthew 10:30-31.

At article 14, the *Belgica* says: "God created man...**good** (*bon*)...and...**in honour** (*en honneur*). However, at his fall, man "lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God (*dons qu'il avait reçus de Dieu*) - and only retained a few remains thereof which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse (*est demeuré de reste que de petite traces qui sont suffisantes pour rendre l'homme inexcusable*). Acts 14:16-17 & 17:27."

Note that the *Belgica* does not here say that man before the fall was "savingly good"! But it does say that he was then "**good**." Indeed, after the fall, it is not being "good" that saves - but only Christ that then 'saves.'

Nor does it speak of unfallen man as then being only relatively good. Rather does it speak of him as then being "good." Indeed, only the truly good - is in fact good. It was the superlatively good God Who made prefall man and all of His other creatures 'very good' (Genesis 1:31). Also after the fall, there are still a few "remains" of this.

Nor does the *Belgica* here say that only fragments of God's image remain after the fall of man. Still less does it say with the Hyperlutheran Flaccius Illyricus that fallen man ceased to remain God's image but instead became the image of Satan. Indeed, even Schilder - the Hypercalvinistic rejecter of common grace - acknowledges this (in his *Heidelbergsche Catechismus* I:295)!

Instead, the *Belgica* presupposes that also fallen man is still God's image - albeit very tarnished (Genesis 9:6 & James 3:9), here states that even after the fall, non-saving fragments of man's supralapsarian gifts still remain. Indeed, this renders fallen man without excuse.

"A perdu tous ses excellents *dons* qu'il avait reçus de Dieu et il ne lui en est demeuré de *reste* que de petites *traces*, qui sont suffisantes pour *rendre* l'homme *inexcusable*." Indeed, those gifts are still 'gifts of **grace**' from the gracious God - regardless of man's fall from his God-given integrity and prefall blessedness.

Also in its article 36, the *Belgica* teaches that "our **gracious** God - because of the depravity of mankind - has **appointed** kings, princes and **magistrates**." For after the fall of man, there needs to be a continuing existence of non-saving **restraints** against human sin - also in the life of fallen human society.

Why? "To the end that the dissoluteness of men might **be restrained** (*soit réprimé*), and all things carried on among them with **good order** and **decency** (*bon ordre*)." Yes, even by sinners - and more especially, indeed **after** the fall of man.

Why? "For the punishment of evil-doers and for the **praise** of them that **do well** (*maintenir les gens de bien*). Proverbs 8:1-15 & Romans 13:1f etc." Thus, even unregenerated fallen men are (solely by the non-saving **grace** of "our **gracious** God") capable of 'doing well' civically - and are to be **praised** for so doing!

As Rev. Professor Louis Berkhof remarks in his *Systematic Theology* (p. 443): "Reformed theologians generally maintain that the unregenerate can perform natural good, civil good, and outwardly religious good. Cf. Calvin's *Institutes* III:14:2; Van Maastricht's *Godgeleerdheid* IV:4,11,12; Voetius's *Catechisatie* I:168-72; Ursinus's *Commentary on the Catechism* at Lord's Day II; Charnock's *Attributes of God* II:303f; and Brakel's *Redelijke Godsdienst* I:338. They call attention to the fact however that, while such works of the unregenerate are good from a material point of view as works which God commanded, they cannot be called good from a formal point of view since they do not spring from the right motive and do not aim at the right purpose.

"The Bible repeatedly speaks of works of the unregenerate as good and right. Second Kings 10:29-30 & 12:2 (cf. Second Chronicles 24:17-25) & 14:3,14-16,20,27 (cf. Second Chronicles 25:2); Luke 6:33; Romans 2:14-15." Thus Berkhof.

And so, as article 36 of the *Belgic Confession* concludes: "We detest the error of the **Anabaptists** and other seditious people who reject the higher powers and magistrates and would subvert justice...and confound that **decency** and **good order** (*l'honnêteté*) which God has established among men." Indeed, those Anabaptists, be it remembered - like the later Hypercalvinists Hoeksema and Schilder - **denied common grace**!

The 1563 *Heidelberg Catechism* in its Question 9 asks whether God did not injure or "wrong man - by requiring of him in His Law that which he cannot perform." It answers: "No! For God so **made** man that he **could** perform it. But man...by wilful disobedience **deprived** himself and all his posterity of **this gift** (*derselbigen Gabe beraubt*)."

For at its Question 12, the *Heidelberg Catechism* asks of fallen but redeemable man - "what is required so that we may escape...punishment and **again** be received into **grace**?" Here, the German clearly has "**wiederum** zu **Gnade** kommen." And that clearly implies that our first parents **were** in a state of **grace** already **before** their **fall**.

Indeed, even Herman Hoeksema - the strongest Hypercalvinist opponent of Common Grace - admits this in his book *The Heidelberg Catechism: God's Way Out*. There (II:11f), he concedes that "the Catechism itself reveals that its view of the matter is quite sound by the addition: 'and **again** be received into **favour**'" (emphases mine - F.N. Lee).

It is vital to see what one of the two authors of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Zacharias Ursinus himself, wrote elsewhere. He says in his *Treasure Book*: "There are three kinds of good:

"1, Natural - such as eating, drinking, walking, standing, sitting. 2, Civil - such as buying, selling, **doing good**, teaching or exercising some **knowledge**, and so on, which serve to **promote** our temporal welfare. 3, There is also a spiritual and supranatural good, which is completely necessary in order to partake of everlasting life; it consists of one heartily repenting unto God and believing in Christ.... In the **other** [two kinds above], one who is **unconverted** is [often] able to shine far above one who has been born again - even though the first-mentioned nevertheless has this from God (as a **common gift**)."

Calvin's friend Bullinger's 1566 *Second Swiss Confession* (9:5f) insists that "there is some **understanding** of earthly things (*terraenarum rerum intelligentia*) **remaining** in man **after** his **fall** (*in lapso homine non est nulla*). For God has **of mercy left** him **wit** (*Reliquit enim Deus ex misericordia ingenium*), though much differing from that which was in him before his fall.

"God commands us to **garnish our wit** (*excolere ingenium*), and therewithal He gives **gifts** (*dona*) and also the **increase** thereof (*profectum*).... The Scripture...refers **all arts** (*artibus omnibus*) to God. Yes, and even the Heathen ascribe the beginning of arts (*artium origines*) to the gods as the authors thereof (*ad inventores deos*)."

Disputation XVII:31 in the 1581 *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* of the Belgian Reformed Theologians Polyander & Rivet & Thysius & Walaeus, is very important as a link between the 1561 *Belgic Confession* and the 1618-19 *Decrees of Dordt*. For those Belgian theologians had a great influence upon those *Decrees* - and their earlier *Synopsis* clearly upholds the existence of non-saving or **common grace**, alias the 'light of nature (*gratiae universalis lucisque naturalis*).'

The *Five Arminian Articles* of 1610 are silent on the matter of non-saving **common grace** (in which **both** Arminians and Calvinists believed). Those *Articles* instead restrict themselves only to the Arminian perversion of the doctrine of special grace.

**That** latter is there variously described. It is called "the grace of the Holy Ghost [*de ghenade des heylighen Gheestes* or *gratiam Spiritus Sancti*]." Again: "this grace" [*de selve ghenade* or *eandem gratiam*] is "saving grace" alias "saving faith [*'t salichmaeckende Gheloove* or *salvificam fidem*]." Yet further: "this grace of God [*dese ghenade Gods* or *haec Dei gratia*]" is also called "prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and co-operative grace [*voorgaende ofte toecommende, opweckende, volgende ende medewerckende ghenade* or *praecedente sive praeveniente ista, excitante, prosequente et cooperante gratia*]."

Indeed, this same "grace of God in Christ [*ghenade Godts in Christo* or *gratiae Dei in Christo*]" alias "this grace [*derselver ghenade* or *ejus gratiae*] - is said to need the "assisting grace of the Holy Ghost [*den bystand van de ghenade des heyligen Geestes* or *auxilio gratiae Spiritus Sancti*]." Too, it is stated to be forfeitable - if its recipient is "becoming devoid of grace [*de ghenade verwaerloosen* or *gratiamque negligere*]."

Rightly did a 1618-19 international Synod of Calvinists held at Dordt, condemn the above as heresy - in its own *Five Points of Calvinism* alias the *Decrees of Dordt*. Throughout, it too (just like the *Five Arminian Articles* it refutes) pinpoints the doctrine of unlosable saving or **special grace** on which Calvinists disagreed with the Arminians (who considered it to be losable) - and not the different doctrine of non-saving or losable **common grace** on which they both agreed.

Thus at II:3, the *Decrees of Dordt* clearly state that the "death of the Son of God is...**more** than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole World" - *abunde sufficiens ad totius Mundi*. That in itself **might** already imply that in addition to saving benefits for the elect alone, there could well be also non-saving benefits for the whole of humanity on the basis of that "death of the Son of God" (Genesis 3:15 to 4:25f cf. First Timothy 4:10 & First John 2:2 and Second Peter 2:1).

At III-IV:1, the *Decrees* teach that "man was **originally**...adorned in his understanding with a true and wholesome knowledge of...**spiritual** things" [Genesis 1:26f; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24]. However, at the fall, "revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and of his own free will, he forfeited those excellent **gifts**."

Note, here Dordt is discussing only "those excellent **gifts**" which relate to "**spiritual** things" - *ab initio...rerum spiritualium notitia in mente...eximiis istis donis seipsum orbavit*. Nothing at all is here said about the forfeiture or not of the then many graciously-given **natural** gifts relating to prefall man's non-justifying knowledge of the **World and all its contents** - nor of the excellent gifts of artistry or political acumen *etc.*

The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:3 implies the doing of civil righteousness even by unregenerates. It states they are now "incapable of any **saving** good" (*omne bonum salutare*). Indeed, such fallen ones "without the **regenerating grace** of the Holy Spirit (*Spiritus sancti regenerantis gratia*)...are neither able nor willing to return to God (John 3:3-8 & First Peter 1:23)."

The above is stated to refer to "**saving** good." It does not say that fallen men are now incapable of doing any **civic** good. For such would not be true (*cf.* Romans 13:3-4 and First Peter 2:14-15). Indeed, it does imply that there are indeed also other non-regenerating operations of the Spirit on those who are fallen but who have not been regenerated. See Calvin on Genesis 4:17-24 & 6:3; Exodus 31:2f; and Job 32:8 & 33:4 *etc.*

At III-IV:4, for example, the *Decrees* teach: "There certainly **remains** in man - **since** the fall - **some light of nature** whereby he **retains** some **noticings** of God, of **natural things**, and of the **difference** between **honest things** and disgrace, and [whereby he] **discloses** some regard for **virtue**

and striving for external discipline. *Residuum quidem est post lapsum in homine **lumen aliquot naturae**, cujus **beneficio** ille **notitias** quasdam de Deo, de rebus naturalibus, de **discrimine honestorum** et turpium **retinet**, et aliquod **virtutis** ac disciplinae externae studium **ostendit**.*"

Indeed, this very "**light of nature**" (*naturae lumine*) is "not sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion (*abest ut...ad salutarem Dei...et...convertere possit*)."

Well, then - why not? Precisely because fallen man "suppresses in unrighteousness (*in injustitia detineat*)."

Too, this renders him "**inexcusable** before God (*coram Deo **inexcusabilis***)."<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:18-20 & 2:14. For fallen man can suppress only that which is still there exerting itself!

Here, clearly, this twice-mentioned "**light of nature**" which unregenerate fallen man still "**retains**" - is a **strong remnant** of a gift which God gave to prefall man according to His common grace. Though now often misperceived and resisted by the sin-weakened eyes of fallen men, it has not become darkness - but is still the "**light** of nature."

Hypercalvinistic Hoeksemaites and Schilderians, opposing the very existence of common grace, accuse their Calvinian opponents (such as Kuyper) of fanning this "light of nature" from what they see as mere 'sparks' - into a forest fire. But such Hypercalvinists in general, and the Hoeksemaites in particular, have rather gone and transubstantiated the still-shining '**light** of nature' into the **midnight blackness** of a **Neo-Anabaptistic** postfall mass of what to them seems little better than man's total depravity itself.

However, in so doing - they have come close to abandoning the Reformed distinction between God's **grace** on the one hand and on the other a God-created **nature** still driven by grace. Instead, they have almost adopted a Neo-Romish dichotomy between nature and grace - if not in practice even a Quasi-Manichaeistic or at least a Semi-Manichaeistic and Neo-Anabaptistic hostility between nature and grace - in the place of the Reformed opposition between grace and sin.

This they have done, despite the ongoing work of **God the Son as the Light of the World** Who keeps on shining in the darkness and Who keeps on illuminating every man that comes into the World with **grace** after **grace**! See John 1:4-9 & 1:14-16. Indeed, God's ongoing postfall "**light of nature**" is mentioned not only twice here in the *Decrees of Dordt* at III:IV:4. It is mentioned repeatedly also in Calvin's writings - and fully nine times even in the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*.

The *Decrees* at III-IV:5 next tell us to consider "**the Decalogue** in the same **light of nature** (*quae **luminis naturae** eadem haec **Decalogi***)."<sup>2</sup> Many Hypercalvinists would have us believe that only 'sparks' of God's unchanging Law can still be seen by man after the fall. Indeed, all Antinomians and polygamy-practising Anabaptists would even totally extinguish that Law.

But Paul tells us even the Heathen yet "show forth the work of the Law written on their hearts." Indeed, he says that often they also "by nature **do** the things of the Law" - which shall condemn them "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of man" (Romans 2:14-16).

Therefore these *Decrees* III-IV:5 immediately go on to state that this remaining and ongoing Decalogue "**manifests** the greatness of sin, and more and more **convinces** man thereof" (Romans 3:20). The *Decrees* do so - even though fallen "man cannot by this Law obtain **saving grace** (*salutarem gratia*)."

Be it noted here that the words "**light of nature**" are again being used not by the Arminian Remonstrants but by the **Calvinists** as the majority party at Dordt! It is the latter who here urge readers to view "**the Decalogue** in the same **light of nature**" which was man's external and internal environment both before and after his fall.

Even the censored Christian Reformed Old Testamentarian, Rev. Professor Dr. R. Janssen, realized this - as too did the Arminians themselves. For, at least once, in a moment of rare insight, also Janssen rightly pointed out in the *Banner* for 24th February 1921: "The Reformed fathers and the Remonstrants **both** held to the doctrine of common grace - or, as it was also called, 'the **light** of nature.'" But the **Anabaptists** did not.

Apparently, the Arminians at Dordt were saying that fallen man can rightly use the grace which he has - even through the Decalogue. Over against that - the Reformed majority there maintained that "man cannot, by this Law, obtain **saving grace** (*salutarem gratia*)." For God does not give fallen man the greater grace of the Gospel **because** he ever rightly used or ever could use the common grace which he still has.

Dordt at III-IV:5 thus closes **not** on the note of continuing common grace and the "light of nature" - but with the greater gift of "**saving grace** (*salutarem gratia*)." Also God's still-ongoing "**light of nature**" to man - is further mentioned repeatedly at III-IV:6 and III-IV:7.

On the other hand, "**saving grace** (*salutarem gratia*)" is mentioned as "**this** grace" again and again at III-IV:7 (*ea gratia*) & III-IV:13 (*istam Dei gratia*) & III-IV:15 (*hanc gratiam*) & III-IV:16 (*haec divina regenerationis gratia*) & III-IV:17 (*gratia hac*). For Dordt **principally** targets justificatory or saving grace - and only peripherally, and **obiter**, non-saving common grace.

Very significantly, III-IV:7 therefore teaches that "they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing [as saving grace] is communicated...are bound to acknowledge it...and with the Apostle to adore." They are "**not** curiously to pry into the severity and justice of God's judgments" displayed in others to whom "**this** grace (*ea gratia*) is not given."

For, also significantly, III-IV:16 clearly teaches that "man by the fall did not cease to be man **endowed** with **understanding** and **will**." Indeed - "sin, which pervaded all mankind, did not deprive him of human **nature**...and its **properties**."

Each section of the *Decrees of Dordt* is immediately followed by a sub-section titled "Rejection of the Errors." In the sub-section following III-IV, the *Decrees of Dordt* reject nine listed errors (1 to 9). Of these, errors 3 and 5 are germane to our present discussion.

Error 3 is that of those who teach that "in the **spiritual** death (*in morte spirituali*), the **spiritual** gifts (*dona spiritualia*) were not separated from man's will...but were only hindered from opportunities by darkening of the understanding and disorder (*ab hominis voluntate separata cum ea in sese nunquam corrupta fuerit*). When these hindrances have been removed, the will...is able to exercise...all kinds of good things."

However, it should be noted that Dordt's rejection of Error 3 does **not** reject **Calvin's** doctrine of ongoing God-given good gifts even to the reprobate! Instead, it rejects the **Arminian** doctrine that "whereas the will itself was never depraved...it is able **by itself** to exercise its own innate power of being able to desire and choose or not to desire and choose **all kinds of good things** (*quodvis bonum*) presented to it."

Error 5 is that of those who teach the **misuse** of common grace. The Error is the heresy of the Arminians that "depraved natural man is able to use...**common grace**...so **well**" - that **thereby** he might acquire saving grace.

Let us understand this error! Dordt says that those Arminians by **their** misuse of common grace, wrongly teach that "the **light of nature** or the gifts which remained after the fall" could indeed be employed by an unregenerate sinner "so **well** - that he by a **good** use thereof **is able** gradually **to obtain a greater grace**, namely the evangelical or **saving** one."

Here is the original Latin text. "*Hominum corruptum et animale gratia communi quae ipsis est lumen naturae sive donis post lapsum relictis tam recte uti posse - ut bono isto usu majorem gratiam puta evangelicam sive salutarem et salutem ipsam gradatim obtinere possit."*

Dordt's Calvinistic rejection of Error 5 is **not** directed by **Calvinists** against **Calvin's** doctrine of **non-saving common grace**! Nor is it directed against the concept of common grace as such. To the contrary.

It is **stated**, right there, to be directed instead against precisely the erroneous assertion that all can be **saved** by following **nature revelation**. That is the pernicious doctrine of **the Arminians** which **they** miscall 'common grace' - whereby "**they** understand" and misperceive that the **light of nature** or "the gifts which [indeed] remained after the fall" can "**well**...by a good use **thereof**" enable man without prior regeneration "**to obtain a greater grace**": namely a "**saving** one."

Here, precisely Dordt's Rejection of Error 5 itself confirms the **reality** of as well as the difference between what Arminians miscall 'common grace' and what is here rightly called 'a saving one' alias special grace. Yet, unlike the Arminians, the Calvinists here in their *Decrees of Dordt* rightly state that fallen man's use even of what Arminians miscall 'common grace' which the



Calvinists themselves here rightly call 'the light of nature' - can **never** lead to that **different kind** of **grace** which is called here "the evangelical or **saving** one."

As Rev. J. Groen rightly pointed out in *Our Future* (17th May 1922), the *Three Forms of Unity* all teach not only special or saving grace but also, albeit obliquely, the doctrine of common grace. Yet the *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Decrees of Dordt* teach also the latter, in varying proportions.

The *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, states Groen, are both full of the doctrine of **common grace**. In article 1 of the *Belgica*, God is called an "overflowing fountain of all good"; article 13 speaks of God's "goodness" in the beautiful work of providence; article 14 speaks of the "remains" of God's image in fallen man; and article 36 teaches that "our **gracious** God ('**genadige** God') has instituted magistrates to restrain evil among men."

Sunday X of the *Heidelberger* on Questions 27 & 28 - Groen opines - "gives a beautiful description of providence as a divine work not imaginable without His **common grace**."

Very significantly, to all of the above, even Hoeksema says he too concurs! This then raises the question as to whether Hoeksema acted circumspectly in the Christian Reformed Church of the U.S.A. before his excommunication therefrom.

On the 'Five Points of Calvinism' in the *Decrees of Dordt*, Groen further declares: "A. Such a common grace really exists. B. The light of nature and thus the natural knowledge of God therefore belong to it. C. It consists of gifts still remaining in man after the fall. D. It is given to the perverted natural man, and is thus altogether **common**. E. It is a gift which in itself never leads to salvation. F. Saving grace is another and a greater kind of grace. G. Common grace or the light of nature...includes the knowledge: 1, of God; 2, of nature; 3, of what is proper and improper; and 4, of an external consideration of virtue and discipline." Such still operates even today.

In Dordt's *Acts* I:294, the Anti-Arminian Calvinistic Delegate Paraeus clarified that the word 'grace' "in other respects is mentioned differently." In II:216, the Delegates from Nassau spoke of the light of nature as "common grace." In II:232, the Delegates from Bremen said the word 'grace' extends "in itself...both widely and broadly." And in II:237 & II:252, the Delegates from Emden spoke of "compelling grace" and "common and natural grace."

In III:240 of the *Acts of Dordt*, the Delegates from South Holland taught an "external grace which occurs through the book of nature." In III:284, the Delegates from Overijssel spoke of a "common grace." And in III:310f, the Delegates from Drent acknowledged a "common grace...whereby human society as well as the civil order might be maintained."

The greatest of all Anti-Arminian heroes at the Synod of Dordt, Franciscus Gomarus, in his *Opera* II:137b - distinguishes saving grace from "**another** grace" whereby the fury of Satan and the World and sin is **restrained** (*gratia alia...interna; lux mentis et fraenum cupiditatum: alia externa;*

*furoris Satanae en Mundi repressio*)." In I:427b, Gomarus adds that the **reprobate** are deprived of **saving grace** (*Deus tamen ad conservationem generis ac societatis hominum et ad reprobos benignitate sua reddendos eo magis inexcusabiles...Deum privatione gratiae suae*)."

Between the 1610 *Five Arminian Articles* and the 1618-19 *Decrees of Dordt* (also known as the Anti-Arminian *Five Points of Calvinism*), one encounters the Calvinistic Archbishop Ussher's 1615 *Irish Articles of Religion*. There, his 20th Article clarifies that those "**angels**" which "**continued** in that holy state wherein they were **created**...are by God's **grace** forever established **therein**." This shows that such angelic state was prelapsarian and prehuman, and that also the **angels** (which can never be saved) nevertheless received God's **grace**.

Significantly, many of the very words of these *Irish Articles* were later taken over *verbatim* into **their Standards** - at the 1643f Westminster Assembly (to which also Ussher was nominated as a Commissioner). Thus, also the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (13) would declare that God, "for the praise of His glorious **grace**...hath elected some **angels** to glory" - and, once again, with no forgiveness of angelic sin!

The German Reformed Rev. Professor Dr. Amand Polanus, in his 1624 *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* II:24f & II:122, states that "God's clemency is His most benign will by which, mindful of His mercy..., He is propitious to us and spares us.... The love of God is the essential property or essence of God whereby, delighting Himself in it, He wishes it the good which He approves."

This "general love of God" for His creation generally - he declares - is such that "no one, either of men or even of demons, may say that he is not loved by God." Different is the "special love of God, by which He peculiarly pursues the separate elect."

Another famous German Reformed Theologian, Rev. Professor Dr. Johann Wolleb(ius), states in his 1626 *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (I:7:1) that God's "rule over **good angels** means that He maintains them in their original rectitude...for the praise of His glorious **grace**.... The good angels were just as capable of falling, as the bad ones.... Their maintenance in goodness ought therefore to bring credit not to themselves but to the **grace** of God.... The Son of God is the Head of angels **not by right of redemption** but of **creation** and **gracious union** with God."

In I:8:1, Wolleb adds: "Such is God's rule over angels. His rule over human beings is apparent in the states of innocence and of misery - and finally in the state of **glory and grace**." Note how Wolleb here regards even the **ultralapsarian** state of man's future glory, as still being a state of **grace**.

In I:20:7f on "The **Common** Call to the State of **Grace**" - Wolleb even adds: "Concerning the elect, there is no doubt. As to the reprobate, although they are not called...to salvation, nevertheless they are called in earnest.... Nor are they mocked because they have been deprived of the [**saving**] **grace** of believing. Rather, because they destroyed the [non-saving] **original grace** of their own accord....

"Therefore, **common calling** is not the basis for any conclusion regarding election. Both because common calling is extended to both the reprobate and the elect, and because it is subject to the condition of faith."

To Wolleb(ius), then, God's "rule over **good angels**" was and is "for the praise of His glorious **grace**" - and "their **maintenance** in goodness ought...to bring credit...to the **grace** of God...**not by right of redemption** but of **creation** and **gracious union** with God." Too, not just elect man's original but also his final condition shall be one "of **glory and grace**." And indeed, even "the reprobate" who "destroyed the **original grace**" - are still subject to a "**common calling**."

Important too is the 1618-19 Synod of Dordt's commissioning of the 1637 *Dordt Dutch Bible*. That latter comments at Genesis 9:6 that God there "confirms political government and ordains the death penalty.

"Also after the fall, something of God's image remained in man. So He does not permit that image to be harmed without punishment.... Here, the office of political government is confirmed, and the sword is given to it to punish evil-doers. Romans 13:1 *etc.*....

"Although God's image has been harmed and broken by the fall, God has nevertheless for various reasons preserved a remnant of it in man. So He does not desire it be harmed, but here ordains punishments for such harmings."

Important too is the translation of Isaiah 26:10 in the *Dordt Dutch Bible*: "The godless being shown **grace**, he [nevertheless] learns no righteousness [*Wordt den goedelooze **genade** bewezen, hy leert [ewenwel] geene gerechtigheid*]." Significantly, this does **not** read: "**Even if** the godless **were** to be shown **grace**, he **would** still learn no righteousness." The choice of the indicative rather than the subjunctive mood by the Dordt Translators here, indicates that the impenitent godless is **indeed shown grace** - yet he **still remains unrighteous**.

Also at the '**Second-Adamic**' texts Luke 2:40 & 2:52 & 3:23 & 3:38, the Dordt Translators insist that **even the sinless Jesus received grace**. "*En het kindeken wies op, en...de **genade** Gods was over hem..., en Jezus nam toe...in **genade** bij God en den menschen..., zijnde (alzo men meende), de zoon van...Adam den (zoon) van God* ['And the little child grew up and...the **grace** of God was over him..., and Jesus increased...in **grace** with God and men..., being (thus it was supposed), the son of...Adam the (son) of God']."

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* had its original English text determined in 1647, and its later international Latin text in 1656. At 2:1*u* it rightly describes the "only living and true God" as "most...**gracious**." The Latin has: **gratia**. To prove this claim, it then cites Exodus 34:6-7.

At 7:1*a* to 7:2*i*, the *Confession* teaches that "the distance between God and the creature is so great that...reasonable creatures...could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness...but by some voluntary **condescension** [the Latin text has **condescensio**] on God's part - which He hath been

pleased to express by way of covenant. Isaiah 40:13-17; Job 9:32; First Samuel 2:25; Psalm 113:5f & 100:2f; Job 22:2f & 35:7f; Luke 17:10; and Acts 17:24f. The first covenant made with man, was a covenant of works." Hosea 6:7.

God's **condescension** here implies that He **graciously** stooped down to make this covenant with man **before** the latter sinned. God's grace as such toward man thus not necessarily implies man needs saving (nor gets saved). Indeed, man was totally sinless when God **graciously** made that covenant of works with man. Accordingly, that covenant of works was also one of **grace**.

Also at 10:4q, the *Confession* adds that those "not elected...may be called by the Ministry of the Word **and may have some common operations of the Spirit** (*communesque...operationes Spiritus*). Matthew 7:22 & 13:20f & Hebrews 6:4f" - cf. too Genesis 6:3 & Galatians 5:16-17. Yet such common-graced persons "cannot be saved..., be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature (*naturae lumen*)."

The mention of this "light of nature" in the *Confession* above, is repeated also at its 1:1a, 1:6o, 21:1a, and 21:7k. There, it cites the texts: Romans 2:1; 2:14f; 1:19f; 1:32; Psalm 19:1-3; First Corinthians 11:13f; Acts 17:24; Jeremiah 10:7; and Exodus 20:8f. Throughout, the implication is that God - through the enlightening **common grace** operations of His Spirit in nature - has enabled even fallen man to be utterly without excuse toward God.

At 16:7y, the *Confession* teaches that "works done by **unregenerate** men...**may** be things which God commands and of **good use** both to themselves and others (*opera nondum regenitorum licet quoad materiam praecepto divino conformia esse possint sibi et aliis item utilia*)." To prove this, it then cites: "Second Kings 10:30f; First Kings 21:27-29; and Philippians 1:15-18."

Then, while next stating that such works "cannot please God" - it still rightly concludes that unregenerate men's "neglect of them is **more sinful** and **displeasing** unto God (*operum neglectu, gravius quidem illi peccant Deumque offendunt vehementius*). Psalm 14:4 & 36:3; Job 21:14f; and Matthew 25:41-45 & 23:23." This even raises the issue of, but does not deal with, the question as to the usefulness and eschatological cleansability and preservability of such works in glory.

So then, without any **special** grace, also unregenerates "**may**" do "things which God commands" and which are indeed "of **good use**." Such are things or works which they are able to do despite their total depravity - works which they are hence enabled to do **only** by God's unmerited **common grace** toward them, and His **merciful enablements** of them.

Such works, because of the motives for which they are done, cannot please God. Yet the "**neglect** of them is **more sinful** and **displeasing** unto God" than the doing of them is! For just "as the door turns upon its hinges, so does the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hides his hand... It grieves him to bring it back again to his mouth." Proverbs 26:13-15 cf. 6:6-11. So then, even though "the ploughing of the wicked is sin" (Proverbs 21:4) - such a wicked person is even **more** sinful if he slothfully does **not** plough at all! Cf. Proverbs 20:4.

Similarly, also the one gifted with special grace should never be lazy. To the contrary, he should instead co-operate even with those who have only common grace - in the various areas of common interest outside of the Church and the Christian Home.

Such are the areas of the civil magistrate, commerce and commonwealth. This is pointed out in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 23:1-4 & 26:1-3 and the *Westminster Larger Catechism* 124g & 140-42.

Also the *Westminster Larger Catechism* 7i describes "God" as "most merciful and **gracious**" - again citing Exodus 34:6. At 13w (citing First Timothy 5:21), it declares that God "for the praise of His glorious **grace**...hath elected some **angels** to glory" (yet with no gracious forgiveness of such sinless angels, and still less of the sins of the other angels). So grace "needs" no sins!

Indeed, at 19g it even says that also after God "permitted some of the **angels...irrecoverably to fall into sin** and damnation (Jude 6 & Second Peter 2:4 & Hebrew 2:16 & John 8:44)," He still continues "employing them **all**...in the administrations of His power, **mercy**, and justice (Second Kings 19:35 & Hebrews 1:14)."

Hence, again, both the receiving and the granting of mercy not necessarily implies the forgiveness of sins. Hoeksema and Schilder, however, would later allege the opposite..

God's "light of nature" is mentioned in the *Larger Catechism* at its 2c, 60q, and 151.3m-w. 2c states: "The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God" - citing Romans 1:18-20 and Psalm 19:1-3 and Acts 17:28 as prooftexts. 60q states: "They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ and believe not in Him, cannot be saved - be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."

For a prooftext, it cites First Corinthians 1:20-24. And at 151.3m-w, it declares that "sins receive their aggravations...from the light of nature and quality of the offence" - appealing for support to Proverbs 6:30-35 and Romans 1:26-27.

Too, at its Question and Answer 68, the *Larger Catechism* even insists not only that "the elect, and they only, are effectually called." It also insists, regarding the **non-elect**, that also "others...often...have **some common operations of the Spirit** (Hebrews 6:4-6)" - but "who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of **the grace offered to them**, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ."

Clearly, the *Catechism* here says that "**grace**" is "offered" to those who are not of "the elect." This statement is a real **nightmare** to Anabaptists and Hypercalvinists who wrongly regard all grace as saving grace.

But **Calvinistic Confessionalists** know - that here, the offered grace is **common grace**. For the *Catechism* itself here says that the "others" who are not of "the elect" nevertheless "often...have

some **common operations of the Spirit**" upon them. Indeed, in the similar words of the *Confession* (10:4), those "not elected" who "have some **common operations of the Spirit**" on them "cannot be saved"; even "be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to **the light of nature**."

Some of the debates at the Westminster Assembly turned on the meaning of the words in John 3:16 - the words that "God so loved the world." This impinges also on common grace.

On the 22nd and 23rd of October in 1645, the Assembly agreed that redemption was for the elect only. Several men - Calamy, Gillespie, Rutherford and Vines - spoke up and discussed John 3:16. None was rebuked for his views.

Commissioner Edmund Calamy told the Assembly: "I am far from universal redemption in the Arminian sense! But that which I hold, is in the sense of our divines in the Synod of Dort (*Acta Synodi Dortrechtanae* p. 603), that Christ did pay **a** price for **all** - **absolute intention** for [the salvation of] the **elect**; **conditional intention** for [the non-saving care of] the **reprobate**....

"**Jesus Christ did not only die - sufficiently for all**.... The Arminians say all [were] equally redeemed.... I am for special election. And for reprobation, I am for *massa corrupta*....

"By virtue of Christ's death, there is... **grace** to the **reprobate** - that they do **wilfully damn themselves**.... [To the reprobate,] I neither hold sufficient grace nor special grace.... I argue from John 3:16 - in which words [are] a ground of God's intention of giving Christ, God's **love** to the **World** - a philanthropy of the World of elect and reprobate, and not of elect only.

"It cannot be meant [solely] of the elect - because of... 'whosoever believeth'.... The word 'World'...I grant...signifies the elect **sometimes**. But **sometimes** it [differently] signifies the **whole World** - and **so it must do here**....

"There is a **double** love: **general** and **special**. A **general love** to the **reprobate** - and the fruit of this, a general offer - and **general grace**, and general reformation." A general maintenance of the World - but no general salvation.

Commissioner George Gillespie remarked that "a man is bound to believe that he ought to believe.... It is his duty.... It is acknowledged the word 'World' may suffer another sense - the elect. But [**here** it is] said it must be a **larger** thing than **believers**.... I say it is very good sense.... The reconciling of a general love with absolute reprobation - is not answered.... The general offers of the Gospel, are not grounded upon the secret decree."

Commissioner Samuel Rutherford argued: "The **promise** of justification is made, no less to Judas, than of redemption.... For that of John 3:16, [there are] three grounds of an argument taken from this place. 1, from the word 'loved' - a general love to elect and reprobate. 2, from the word 'World' generally taken, be[cause] distributive afterwards. 3, grounded upon God's intention, upon condition of a faith."

Commissioner Richard Vines commented on the proposition as to "whether 'the World' here, do[es] not signify more than the elect. It seems it doth, be[cause otherwise] the words do not else run well.... We could not live, if there were not a general love...to mankind." 'For God so loved the World.' So then, to Vines, God loves the World and causes it to continue existing and even to live for the duration of earthly life. But God desires to save and indeed saves the elect alone.

In passing, we draw attention also to Utrecht's famous 'Dutch-Puritan' Theologian Rev. Professor Dr. Gisbert Voetius's lengthy 1648 *Selected Disputations*, and especially to its V:2:8 (*q.v.*). There, it is clear that with all his emphasis on special grace in order to be saved - he also stresses general grace too, especially as regards insights into the many non-theological sciences.

Voetius was a student of the great Dordt Theologian Franciscus Gomarus. Voetius himself successfully taught theology also in Britain. Learned and pious, Voetius had great influence on the English Puritans at the Westminster Assembly - also because of his close friendship with many of the leading British Commissioners there, including especially the Westminster Assembly's Assessor Rev. Dr. Burgess.

As we pointed out in our 1969 book *A Christian Introduction to the History of Philosophy* (p. 195), Voetius was a "godly man of encyclopaedic knowledge." **Clearly presupposing a strong doctrine of common grace especially in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge**, "he set a very high standard of academic achievement as a useful [and at the very least a highly desirable] prerequisite for theological study."

Such desirable achievements for this purpose included "knowledge of languages...; of rhetoric; of poetry; of history; of archaeology; [and] of theoretical philosophy" including medicine. Also desirable was a knowledge of "mathematics [including arithmetic, geometry, statistics, architecture, cosmography, astronomy, geography, optics, acoustics, music, painting, sculpture, *etc.*] - and of practical philosophy (*viz.* ethics, economics, politics, and jurisprudence)."

To prove our above assertions, merely consider the following excerpts from Voetius's *Selected Disputations* (on *Practical Theology* I:2 & III:1-5 & IV:3): "As for the Papists, we freely grant that some practical theology has carefully been prepared in their schools.... One may consult Bellarmine's *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, Possevinus's *Bibliotheca Selecta*, Philip Alegamb's bibliography of the Society of Jesus, Valerius Desselius's *Bibliotheca Belgica* (*etc.*).

"Enough, and more than enough, can be known to anyone who is interested in these matters - and indeed they are far superior to the Remonstrant writers when it comes to answering Socinians, Pelagians and other profane and half-sceptical rhetoricians and disputers.... Theft, rape, conspiracy, sedition and tyranny can be practised under colour of Christian freedom (as was done by the Anabaptists in Thuringia and in Munster)... Between us and the [common-grace denying] Anabaptists - questions in dispute include the oath, the magistracy, war, legitimate self-defence, and divorce because of religious differences....

"The means and help for the proper decision on moral questions and cases, are: (1) a sound **knowledge of Scripture**; (2) **the use of intelligence and trained judgment...**; (3) **knowledge of arts and philosophy** (especially logic, metaphysics, politics, and all practical philosophy). This should include a **knowledge of history and of biography....**

"The [Romish] Faculty of the Sorbonne reminds us in a tract of 1643 against the Jesuits...that the casuists **cannot afford to be ignorant of jurisprudence....** We who are writers on theology, especially if we have not studied jurisprudence (the study of which is needed in the more difficult cases) - ought not to trust our own resources but rather to follow the outstanding authorities....

"It will be useful to add Goldastus's collection of imperial charters and the *Ius Orientale Graecorum*, as well as **the laws of the kingdom or republic in which one lives**. In some cases of conscience, Paulus Zachias's **work on medico-legal questions is valuable....** To these - one may now add the *Florilegium* of John Buxdorf the younger..., the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, and similar **Jewish and Arab moral writings....** Our [students] do not do right, when they fail to devote themselves to constant reading and meditation!"

Last, in his *Selected Disputations (on Concerning 'Precision' in Interpretation of Questions 94 & 113 & 115 of the [Heidelberg] Catechism IX)*, Voetius gives '**precise**' advice. There, he declares that "individual and special **gifts of grace** are given and made evident.... We shall give no selections from Augustine, Chrysostom, and à Kempis. We prefer that these readily-available writers be read at your convenience."

Dr. Gisbert Voetius's recommendations for his Reformed Theological Students require not just a special-graced evaluation of common-graced Pagan and gifted Romish writers in a variety of fields. Also, his '**precise**' ethical and jurisprudential casuistry is well reflected in the '**precise**' treatment of the Decalogue and its practical applications in the *Westminster Larger Catechism (q.v.)*.

The Westminster Assembly minuted its first 1163 sessions, from A.D. 1643 until at least 1652. Already in A.D. 1642, the Puritan John Owen - the greatest British Theologian of all time - published his long Calvinistic essay titled *Display of Arminianism*.

There, at II:107f (1966 Banner of Truth Trust reprint of his *Works*), Owen states that "in the restoration of...abilities unto our minds in our renovation unto the image of God in the Gospel, it is plainly asserted that the Holy Ghost is the immediate Operator of them.... He doth thereby **restore** His Own work.... For in the new creation, the Father...designs it and brings all things unto a head in Christ, Ephesians 1:10, which **retrieves** His original peculiar work; and the Son gives unto all things a new consistency which belonged unto Him **from the beginning**, Colossians 1:16.

"So also the Holy Spirit **renews** in us the image of God, the **original** implantation - which was His peculiar work. And thus **Adam** may be said to have **had the Spirit of God** in his **innocency**." It was He Who first constituted Adam as the image of God. Thus, "in **all** men - from first to last - **all** goodness, righteousness and truth are **fruits of the Spirit**."



Again at X:134f, Owen states: "Concerning **grace** itself, it is either **common** or **special**." He then explains: "**Common or general grace** consisteth in the external revelation of the will of God by His Word with some illumination of the mind to perceive it, and [some] correction of the affections not too much to condemn it. And this, in some degree or other - to some more, to some less - is common to all that are called. **Special grace** is the grace of regeneration, comprehending the former, adding more spiritual acts; but especially presupposing the purpose of God on which its efficacy doth chiefly depend."

In Owen's 1654 massive *Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, he states (XI:641f): "There **is** an inferior **common work** of the **Holy Ghost** in the dispensation of the Word upon many to whom it is preached, causing in them a great alteration and change as to light, knowledge, abilities, gifts, affections, life, and conversation [alias behaviour] - when the persons so wrought upon are **not** quickened, regenerated, nor made new creatures, nor united to Jesus Christ. I suppose there will not be need for me to insist on the proof of this proposition, the truth of it being notoriously known - and confessed, as I suppose, amongst all that profess the name of Christ....

"Among these persons, many are oftentimes endued with excellent gifts, lovely parts, qualifications, and abilities - rendering them exceedingly useful, acceptable and serviceable.... Persons under convictions and works of the Spirit formerly mentioned - partakers of the gifts, light, and knowledge spoken of, with those other endowments attending them - are capacitated for the sin against the Holy Ghost.... That they are elected of God, redeemed of Christ, sanctified by the Spirit - that they are made holy - is **not at all** affirmed.

"The persons intended are [Hebrews] chapter 6 verses 7-8, compared to the ground upon which the rain falls, and (which yet) beareth 'thorns and briers.' True believers...are not such as do bring forth nothing but 'thorns and briers' - faith itself being an 'herb meet for him by whom they are dressed.'"

In his 1655 *Vindicae Evangelicae*, Owen states (XII:531-52): "There was at first, in the state of innocency, friendship and peace between God and man. God had no enmity against His creature. He approved him to be good - and appointed him to walk in peace, communion, confidence, and boldness with Him. Genesis 2. Nor had man, on whose heart the law and love of his Maker was written, any enmity against His Creator...and Rewarder....

"That God is good to all men, and bountiful - being a wise, powerful, liberal provider for the works of His hands in and by innumerable dispensations and various communications of His goodness to them, and may in that regard be said to have **a universal love** for them **all** - is **granted**. But that God loveth all and every man alike with that eternal love which is the fountain of His giving Christ for them and to them...is not in the least intimated by any of those places of Scripture where they are expressed for whom Christ died."

In 1658, Owen published his *Of Temptation*. There (VI:93f), he distinguishes *inter alia* between non-saving "preventing grace" and justificatory "renewing grace."

As regards the first, he states that even an unregenerate "man shall see that it is God alone Who keeps from all sin. Until we are tempted, we think we live on our own strength.... When the trial comes, we quickly see whence is our preservation, by standing or falling.

"So was it in the case of Abimelech, Genesis 20:6, '**I** withheld thee!'" Thus God - by His common grace - at times withholds even the unregenerate Abimelechs from sinning.

In 1674, Owen published his *Pneumatologia*. There (III:146f & III:236), he refers to those "operations of the Holy Ghost...whereby He improved, through immediate impressions of His Own power, the **natural faculties** and abilities of the minds of man.... These...have respect to things political, moral, natural and intellectual....

"Even **common illumination** and conviction of sin have in their own nature a tendency unto sincere conversion.... Where this end is not attained, it is always from the interposition of an act of wilfulness and stubbornness in those enlightened."

Owen also wrote a seven-volume *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. That is indeed the greatest commentary on that book ever written.

There, at the outset [III:67] on Hebrews 1:1f, Owen remarks of Christ that "God is glorified in Him and by Him - which is the great end of His Lordship over all the **gifts of the Spirit**.... As **natural gifts are the foundation** of and lie in an **especial** subordination unto **spiritual** - so are **spiritual** gifts...made effectual and **durable** by grace."

On the key passage Hebrews 6:4-12, Owen has no fewer than 151 pages of comment! *Inter alia*, he informs us there [V:75-84] that "the knowledge...of the doctrine...doth set up a **spiritual light** in the minds of men, enabling them to discern.... Of this light and knowledge, there are several degrees....

"The first property whereby the persons intended are described" - is that "they are such as were 'illuminated' by the instruction they had received in...the impression made...on their minds by the Holy Ghost. For this is a **common** work of God....

"It is a great **mercy**, a great **privilege**, to be 'enlightened' with the doctrine...by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost. But...it is such a privilege as **may be lost** - and **end** in the aggravation of the sin and **condemnation** of those who were made partakers of it."

Additionally, "there is a **saving**, sanctifying light and knowledge which **this** [above-mentioned] spiritual 'illumination' riseth **not** up unto. For though it [the latter-mentioned 'illumination'] **transiently** affects the mind with some glances of the beauty, glory and excellency of spiritual things - yet it doth **not** give that direct, steady, intuitive insight into them which is obtained by grace [here meaning saving or **special grace**]....

"The Holy Ghost is present with **many** as unto powerful operations - with whom He is **not** present as to gracious inhabitation.... Many are made partakers of Him in His spiritual **gifts** - who are **never** made partakers of Him in His saving graces, Matthew 7:22-23.... The persons **here** intended, are **not true and sincere believers**."

Geneva's famous Rev. Professor Dr. Francis Turretin states in his 1688 *Theological Institutes* (XV:5:4): "The principle of saving faith is the Spirit of regeneration and adoption, yet there is also a temporary illumination of the Spirit." Following Calvin, he too saw the Spirit as the Author of general human truth.

At XVII:7:2 & XVII:16, Turretin adds: "**God has love for men in general** as His creatures, and bestows various temporal blessings connected with the support of life. We do not deny that in this regard, God has never left Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). And we readily grant that there is no one who does not owe some thanks to God." For "there is no one at all "who is not bound to recognize that what[ever] he is or can be, he has received from his Creator.

"But there is debate concerning special and saving love - which leads to spiritual blessings, and by which God has willed to have mercy for salvation. We hold that **this** is solely for the elect, and is not universal or given to all mankind.... Nor does it follow that because there **are** degrees in the effective general love of God and common providence which is given to all His creatures in a variety of forms and which may operate with greater or less magnitude **in nature** - there are also degrees of affection in His special saving love. For since His love cannot be empty and ineffective, He must love fully and to the end anyone whom He loves for salvation (John 13:1)."

Turretin (I:241f) in fact distinguishes a threefold love of God: "The first..., called 'the love of the creature'; the second..., called 'the love of men'; the third, which is specially exercised toward the elect..., is called 'the love of the elect'.... A threefold love of God is commonly held - or rather, there are three degrees of one and the same love.

"First, there is the love of benevolence by which God willed good to the creature from eternity. Second, the love of beneficence, by which He does good to the creature in time according to His will. Third, the love of complacency, by which He delights Himself in the creature on account of the rays of His image seen in them."

Similarly, so too the famous Dutch Reformed Theologian Rev. Dr. Leonard Riissen. In his 1695 *Francis Turretin's Didactico-Elenctic Compendium of Theology* (III:41), Riissen states that the "goodness of God" is manifested toward His creation as being "beneficent."

Important too is the view of the Swiss Reformed Theologian, Rev. Professor Dr. John Henry Heidegger, in his 1696 *Corpus Theologiae*. There (III:94), he states that "God's grace is His virtue and perfection by which He bestows and communicates Himself becomingly on and to the creature beyond all merit belonging to it."

From 1700 onward, the Dutchman Willem Brakel (*Reasonable Religion* I:30:26 & I:3:32f) distinguished two kinds of grace - "common, or special." He said: "God shows **common grace** to **all men**, by impartation of bodily benefits. Acts 14:17.... Titus 2:11.... Hebrews 6:4-6." So too Rev. Professor Dr. Johan à Marck in his *Christian Religion* (IV:42 & VII:31).

Similarly, also the great British Calvinist Matthew Henry - in his 1704f *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. There, he says at Psalm 145:8f: "There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature.... 'The Lord is **gracious**'.... He is 'full of compassion' to those that need Him; 'slow to anger' to those that have offended Him; 'and of great **mercy**' to all that seek Him....

"There are streams of goodness in **all** the dispensations of His providence.... He 'is good to **all**' - to all His creatures from the highest angels to the meanest worm.... 'His tender **mercies** are over all His works'.... All His works, all His creatures, receive the fruits of His **merciful** care and bounty. It is extended to them all; He hates nothing that He has made."

At Proverbs 12:11, Henry remarks that "even the sentence of wrath has this **mercy** in it - 'thou shalt "eat bread," though it be "in the sweat of thy face" [Genesis 3:19].'" Thus, even reprobate descendants of the fallen Adam to whom God gave bread - according to Henry - received that bread as an act of God's **non-saving mercy** alias His **common grace**.

Again, at Matthew 5:45f, Matthew Henry rightly comments: "God 'maketh His sun to rise' and 'sendeth rain' on 'the just and unjust'.... 'Sunshine' and 'rain' are great **blessings** to the World, and they come from God....

"**Common mercies** must be valued as instances and proofs of the goodness of God, Who in them shows Himself a **bountiful Benefactor** to the **World** of mankind which would be very miserable without these **favours** and are utterly unworthy of the least of them....

"These gifts of **common** providence, are dispensed indifferently to 'good' and 'evil'.... The worst of men partake of the **comforts** of this life in **common** with others, though they abuse them and fight against God.... This is an amazing instance of God's patience and bounty....

"The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men that are in rebellion against Him, teach us to 'do good to those that hate us'.... To do good to them who do good to us, is a **common** piece of humanity which even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give as good proofs of as the best of them" - by God's **common grace**!

The Dutch Reformed Rev. Professor Dr. Pieter Mastricht, in his 1714 *Theoretico-Practica* [I:439], speaks of a "love of God toward [all] the creatures. **A general [love]**, Psalm 104:31 & 145:9 - whereby He has created, preserves, and rules all things, Psalm 36:7 & 147:9. **A common [love]**, directed to human beings...of all kinds without exception, the reprobate as well as the elect, of whatsoever sort or race they may be, to which He communicates His **blessings**, which are mentioned in Hebrews 6:4-5 & First Corinthians 3:1-2."

Mastricht insists [I:458] that the "Reformed acknowledge indeed that the unregenerate person, apart from saving grace, is able.... But they add to this that even these things are not done only through the exercise of the free will, but through God's common grace working in the unregenerate all the moral good which is in them or which is produced by them."

In II:17:3 & II:17:22, Mastricht states that God's kindness and love rest upon a "certain benevolent and beneficent propensity towards the creatures." His mercy is nothing but His "grace toward the miserable...."

"God's patience is His most benign will by which...He...long bears sinning creatures and puts off punishment...or He does not pour forth all His anger in one moment upon them, lest they should be reduced to naught.... God's clemency is His most benign will by which, mindful of His mercy in wrath, He is propitious to us and spares us, although we have deserved otherwise, preferring our repentance and conversion to our death."

Mastricht concludes [II:330] that "God, however, moderates the severity of this spiritual death and bondage: (a) internally by means of some remnants of the image of God and of original righteousness...to which things is added an internal restraining grace"; and "(b) externally through all kinds of means (*hulpmiddelen*) of State, Church, Family and Schools, by which the freedom and dissoluteness of sin is checked and restrained and to which even an incentive to practice what is honourable is added."

The Dordrecht Professor Rev. Dr. Johannes d'Outrein states in his 1719 *Golden Treasury of the Doctrine of Truth* (p. 266) - that the Holy Spirit is the Author of all goodness, righteousness and truth ever found among men. "Concerning some people, yet without distinction as to whether they are outside or inside the external Church, He [the Spirit] causes them to have a conscience - regarding good and evil. Romans 2:14-15.

"Sometimes He makes this alive and awakens it within them, and gives them great wisdom and a grasp of many matters. He restrains and compels them, so that they do not go and pour out all godlessness.... They are even outstanding in thinking about many moral virtues and duties."

The Utrecht Professor Rev. Dr. Friedrich Adolph Lampe discusses the general operations of the Spirit in his 1724 *Milk of the Truth* (p. 142). There, he states: "To that belongs the light of conscience in all men - in addition to the convictions and good movements which, while using the means of grace, are sometimes found with the unregenerate."

Also F. van der Groe made an important contribution, in his *Erskine's Works*. There (VIII:7), he states that just as there are two kinds of gifts or operations of God's Spirit - general (which also hypocrites and reprobates enjoy) and special or saving (which are only for the elect) - so too there are two kinds of convictions of the Holy Spirit in the minds of men (a general one as well as one which saves).

The French Huguenot Theologian and later Groningen Professor Dr. Samuel Des Marets was a close friend of Voetius. He ('Maresius') - in his 1763 *Systema Theologicum* (I:33) - compares the light of grace (*lumen gratiae*) with the light of reason (*lumen rationis*).

By the former, according to Maresius one believes in special revelation. By the latter, one firmly accepts that the whole is larger than the part, that twice two is four, and that we should pursue that which is good and avoid that which is evil. Indeed, this is so, only by the grace of God - both before and after the fall.

In 1845, the Scot Rev. Dr. Robert Shaw published his book *The Reformed Faith: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. On the "light of nature" in 1:1a, he understands "the senses and the reasoning powers which belong to the nature of man"; and on 10:4q, he states that in "those who are not elected...there are '**common operations**' of the Spirit' which produce convictions of sin...and joyous emotions...in the affections of men in their natural state which do not issue in conversion."

This is not dissimilar to W.L. Alexander. In his *System of Biblical Theology* (II:352), he states: "The **grace** is **common** - not in the sense of being given to all men in common but in the sense of producing effects which are ordinary and may fall short of a real saving efficacy."

In 1862, the Free Church of Scotland's Rev. Professor Dr. William Cunningham stated in his work *Historical Theology* [II:332f]: "It is not denied by the advocates of particular redemption or of a limited atonement that **mankind in general**, even those who ultimately perish, do derive some **advantages** or benefits from Christ's death.... No position they hold requires them to deny this. They believe that **important benefits have accrued to the whole human race** from the death of Christ - and that in these benefits those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving, partake....

"**Many blessings flow to mankind at large** from the death of Christ, collaterally and incidentally, in consequence of the relation in which men viewed collectively stand to each other. All these benefits were of course foreseen by God when He resolved to send His Son into the World [cf. Genesis 3:16f].

"They were contemplated or designed by Him, as what **men** should receive and **enjoy**. They are to be regarded and received as **bestowed** by Him...and they are to be viewed as coming to men through the channel of Christ's...sufferings and death. Witsius: *De Oec. Foed.* II:9:4."

When Principal Cunningham died, he was succeeded by Rev. Professor Dr. R.S. Candlish. He, in his book *The Atonement* (pp. 358f), stated: "The entire history of the human race, from the apostasy to the final judgment, is a dispensation of **forbearance** in respect to the **reprobate**.... Many **blessings** physical and moral, affecting **their** characters and destinies forever, accrue **even** to the **Heathen** - and many more to the educated and refined citizens of Christian communities. These come to them through the mediation of Christ - and, coming to them now, must have been designed for them **from the beginning**."

The American Calvinist Rev. Professor Dr. Charles Hodge published his massive three-volume *Systematic Theology* in 1871. There (II:654-75) - in his section on 'Common Grace' - he argues: "The word *charis, chesed*, means a favourable disposition or kind feeling; and especially love as exercised towards the inferior, dependent, or unworthy. This is represented as the crowning attribute of the divine nature....

"Nothing is given or promised on the ground of merit. Everything is an undeserved favour.... A work of grace, is the work of the Holy Spirit.... By **common grace**, therefore, is meant that influence of the Spirit which, in a greater or less measure, is granted to all who hear the truth. By **sufficient grace** is meant such kind and degree of the Spirit's influence as is sufficient to lead men to repentance....

"The great judgment which ever hangs over the impenitent hearers of the Gospel, is that God may withhold the Holy Spirit - leaving them to themselves and to the mere power inherent in the truth. Such are reprobates; **men with whom the Spirit has ceased to strive** [*cf.* Genesis 6:1-5]. It is obvious, therefore, that the Scriptures recognize an influence of the Holy Ghost which may be given or withheld, and which is necessary to give the truth any power on the heart....

"As distinct from...providential control, which extends over all creatures, the Scriptures tell of the sphere of the Spirit's operations. This does not imply that the Spirit has nothing to do in the creation, preservation and government of the World.

"On the contrary, the Bible teaches that whatever God does in nature, in the material World and in the minds of men - He does through the Spirit. Nevertheless, the Scriptures make a broad distinction between providential government and the operations of the Spirit in the moral government of men....

"The Bible therefore teaches that the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of life in all its forms - is present with every human mind enforcing truth, restraining from evil, exciting to good, and imparting wisdom or strength...in what[ever] measure seemeth to Him good. In this sphere also, He divides 'to every man severally as He will.' First Corinthians 12:11. This is what in theology is called **common grace**....

"That there is a divine influence of the Spirit granted to all men, is plain both from Scripture and from experience.... In Genesis 6:3...it is said, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man'.... The martyr Stephen (Acts 7:51) tells the Jews, 'As your fathers did...., ye do always resist the Holy Ghost' - as the prophet Isaiah 63:10 said of the men of his generation that they vexed God's Holy Spirit....

"The Bible therefore speaks of men as partakers of the Spirit who are not regenerated, and who finally come short of eternal life. It not only speaks of men repenting, of their believing for a time, and of their receiving the Word with joy - but still further of their being enlightened, of their tasting of the heavenly gift, and of their being made partakers of the Holy Ghost....

"The effects produced by **common grace** or this influence of the Spirit common to all men, are most important to the individual and the World.... To the **general influence of the Spirit** (or to **common grace**), we owe...all the decorum, order, refinement and virtue existing among men. Mere fear of future punishment, the natural sense of right, and the restraints of human laws - would prove feeble barriers to evil, were it not for the repressing power of the Spirit which...is universal and powerful although unfelt....

"Besides those operations of the Spirit which in a greater or less degree are **common to all men**, the Scriptures teach that the covenant of redemption secures the Spirit's certainly efficacious influence for all those who have been given to the Son as His inheritance.... It is necessary that he [each individual human being] be regenerated, and wholly renewed...in Christ through...the added energy of the Holy Spirit."

The above Dr. Charles Hodge's son, Rev. Professor Dr. A.A. Hodge, in 1869 wrote his own book *The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding the Westminster Confession*. On 7:1a to 7:2i, he states that "the very act of creation brings the creature under obligation to the Creator, but it cannot bring the Creator into obligation to the creature. **Creation itself, being a signal act of grace**, cannot endow the beneficiary with a claim for **more grace**.... The **creation** of the first can lay the foundation of no right upon the part of man for the gift of the second.... **Far less** can the fact that in creation God endowed men with a religious nature lay the foundation of **any right** on their part for the **infinitely more precious gifts** of the personal communications of His Own ineffable love and **grace**."

In 10:2i-4s, the *Confession* contrasts "God's free and **special grace**" with "**common operations** of the Spirit" and "the **light** of nature." There, Hodge explains that "**all** sinners are active in resisting the **common influences of grace** before regeneration - and all **believers** in co-operating with **sanctifying grace after** regeneration."

Thus, there are "certain influences of the Spirit in the present life which extend to **all men** in a greater or less degree" and which "tend to **restrain** or to **persuade** the soul." They are "exerted in the way of **heightening the natural** moral effect of the truth upon the understanding, the heart, and the conscience.... The non-elect will certainly fail of salvation.... Although they may be persuaded by some of the **common influences of the Holy Ghost**, their radical aversion to God is never overcome.... The grace of effectual calling extends to all the elect, and **only**."

Hodge also wrote in his 1879 *Outlines of Theology* (pp. 449f): "'**Common grace**' is the restraining and persuading influence of the Holy Spirit acting only through the truth revealed in the Gospel or through the natural light of reason and of conscience, heightening the natural moral effect of such truth upon the understanding [and] conscience and heart. It involves no changes of heart, but simply an enhancement of the natural powers of the truth, a restraint of the evil passions, and an increase of the natural emotions in view of sin...and self-interest. That God does so operate upon the hearts of the unregenerates is proved first from Scripture (Genesis 6:3 & Acts 7:31 & Hebrews 10:29) and second from universal experience and observation....



"Common differ[s] from efficacious **grace**...as to its subjects. All men are more or less the subjects of the one; only the elect are subjects of the other.... **Common grace** is only mediate, through the truth. And it is merely moral - heightening the moral influence natural to the truth, and exciting only the natural powers of the soul.... The effects of **common grace** are superficial and transient, modifying the action but not changing the nature."

In 1875, Rev. Professor Dr. James Henley Thornwell wrote in his *Collected Writings* (I:266) that "it was a great thing to have been created in the image of God with a heart to love and adore His great name.... To have thus been **made a man**, a holy man, an immortal man, with the prospect of endless good - surely this was grace; it was **grace upon grace**!....

"It was **amazing goodness** [for God] to have furnished him with all the **blessings** that crowned his lot... Surely, our God is love; creation shows it, as well as the cross! Surely, our **God is grace**; the first covenant proves it, as truly as the second!...

"Two principles...pervade every dispensation of religion to our race - the principle of justification and the principle of imputation.... They are principles grounded in grace springing from the free and spontaneous goodness of God.... The Covenant of Works, as founded in a goodness and contemplating a reward which nature could not have anticipated - necessarily implies the intervention of revelation" (I:274).

"The dispensation under which man was placed after his creation [yet before he fell, is] commonly called the Covenant of Works.... He was liable to fall."

**After** man's fall, "the Covenant of Grace is the answer which God gives to the question 'How shall a sinner be justified and established in holiness for ever?' As the Covenant of Works was an answer to the question 'How shall a moral creature be justified and confirmed?'" (II:17f).

Thornwell also states (II:161f): "The plain doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is that God has no purpose of salvation for all.... It is often forgotten that **love** is ascribed to God under two or three different aspects. Sometimes it expresses the complacency and approbation with which He views the graces which His Own Spirit has produced in the hearts of His children; and in this sense, it is plain that God can be said to love only the saints....

"[But] Sometimes God's **benevolence** or **general mercy** [alias **common grace**] is intended, such as He bestows upon the just and the unjust, the evil and the good. As in Psalm 145:9: 'The Lord is good to **all**, and His tender **mercies** are over **all His works**.' The **common bounties** of Providence may be referred to this head....

"The special love of God is confined exclusively to the elect. The **general** benevolence is **common**, but it implies no purpose of salvation at all. And therefore, in that sense, God may be said to **love the reprobate** and disobedient.

"Even the **vessels of wrath** fitted to destruction, are **borne with** - in **much long-suffering** and patience [Romans 9:22].... In this sense, therefore, **God may be said to love [those] sinners** for whom, however, He has **no purpose of salvation.**"

Attacking Rome (III:353-59), Thornwell says that "a legal dispensation, until its disadvantages are forfeited by failure - necessarily implies **that degree of grace** which shall fit its subjects to render the obedience exacted.... Whatever may be the law which God in the first instance prescribes to His creatures, He imparts to them strength abundantly adequate to keep it.

"Adam was unquestionably placed under an economy of works. If he had kept his first estate and been justified, he would have been justified as a doer of the law. And yet, the ability with which he was endowed in his first creation - was as truly from God as that which the saints receive at their new creation in Christ Jesus. Hence it is evident that obedience does not cease to be legal, because it is rendered by Divine aid. To be justified by graces, is not to be justified by grace.... Adam's original nature was as much the offspring of God as the believer's new nature.... Adam was able to stand, in consequence of what God **had** done for him" - namely, **by grace to create him with God-given gracious abilities** to please his Maker. "As God's **kindness** furnished Adam and gave him strength for his first trial, so the death of the Redeemer" (Second Adam).

In 1888, Rev. Professor Dr. W.G.T. Shedd states in his *Dogmatic Theology* (I:390f & I:431f): "Grace is an aspect of mercy. It differs from mercy in that it has reference to sinful man as guilty - while mercy has respect to...man as miserable.... The two terms, however, in common use - are interchangeable. Grace, like mercy, is a variety of the Divine goodness.

"Both **mercy** and **grace** are exercised in a **general** manner - toward those who are **not** the objects of their **special** manifestation. All blessings bestowed upon the [fallen] natural man are mercy in so far as they succor his distress, and grace so far as they are bestowed upon the undeserving.

Matthew 5:45, 'He maketh His sun to rise upon the evil.' Psalm 149:9, 'The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works.' Psalm 145:15-16, 'The eyes of all wait upon Thee.'

"This **general** manifestation of **mercy and grace** is in and by the works of **creation** and **providence**. It is also seen in **one** aspect of the work of redemption. Men who are not actually saved by the Divine mercy, yet obtain **some blessings** from it. (B) The delay of punishment, is one.... God's forbearance and longsuffering with a sinner who abuses this by persistence in sin, is a phase of **mercy**.... This is also taught in First Peter 3:20, 'The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.' (b) **The common influences of the Holy Spirit** are another manifestation of **mercy** in its **general** form.

"**Special** grace and mercy are exercised **only in redemption**. Ephesians 1:4-6.... Reprobation relates to **regenerating** grace - **not to common grace**.

"It is an **error** to suppose that the **reprobate** are entirely **destitute of grace**. **All** mankind enjoy **common grace**.... **Every** human being experiences **some** degree of the **ordinary** influences of the **Spirit of God**. St. Paul teaches that God **strives** with man **universally**. He convicts him of sin, and urges him to repent of it and forsake it. Romans 1:19-20 & 2:3-4 and Acts 17:24-31....

"The **reprobate resist** and nullify **common grace**; and so do the elect. The obstinate selfishness and enmity of the human heart defeats the Divine mercy as shown in the **ordinary** influences of the Holy Spirit in both the elect and non-elect. Acts 7:51, 'Ye stiff-necked, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost!' The difference between the two cases is that in the instance of the **elect**, God follows up the **common grace** which has been resisted - with the **regenerating grace** which **overcomes the resistance**. While in the instance of the reprobate, He does not....

"The **impenitent** shall **not** be **condemned** for **want** of that singular power, grace, that was the privilege of the elect - but for receiving **in vain** that measure of **common grace** that they **had**. If he that received one talent, had faithfully improved it - he had been rewarded with more. But upon the slothful and ungrateful neglect of his duty - he was justly **deprived** of it, and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of **Hell**." There is no grace at all - **not even common grace** - there!

"Reprobated persons are striven with by the Holy Spirit, and are convicted of sin. But they resist these strivings, and the Holy Spirit proceeds no further with them. In His sovereignty, He decides not to overcome **their resistance of common grace**.

"The **non-elect are the subjects of common grace**, to which they oppose a strenuous and successful determination of their own will. Every sinner is stronger than common grace - but not stronger than regenerating grace!

"**The non-elect** 'may be and often are outwardly called by the Ministry of the Word, and have **some common operations of the Spirit** Who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of **the grace offered to them**, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.' *Westminster Larger Catechism* 68.... The resistance and **abuse of common grace**, is followed by **desertion of God**." That is to say, God finally deserts them.

"A man who has had **common grace**, has been the subject of **mercy**, to this **degree**. If he resists it, he cannot complain because God does not bestow upon him **still greater mercy**, in the form of **regenerating grace**. A sinner who has quenched the convicting influence of the Holy Spirit cannot [with any degree of truthfulness] call God unmerciful because He does not afterwards grant him the converting influence.

"A beggar who contemptuously rejects the five dollars offered by a benevolent man cannot charge stinginess upon him because after this rejection of the five dollars he does not give him ten. A sinner who has repulsed **the mercy of God in common grace** and demands that God grant a yet larger degree [in the form of saving grace], virtually says to the Infinite One: 'Thou hast tried once to convert me from sin; now try again, and try harder!'"

Such a one is worthy only of Hell - and that is where he is heading. For he has despised not only the well-meant offer of special or saving grace. He has also utilized - and, indeed, misutilized - God's generous and general gift of common grace which He actually conferred upon him.

Shedd continues (II:483): "The special grace which God bestows upon the elect - does not prevent the non-elect from believing. Neither does it render faith any more difficult for him. The non-elect receives common grace - and common grace would incline the human will, if it were not defeated by the [fallen] human will. If the sinner should make no hostile opposition, common grace would be equivalent to [or of similar worth to] saving grace." Such is not the situation of fallen man. But it was indeed the situation of man before his fall.

"To say [with Supralapsarian Calvinists] that common grace, if not resisted by the sinner, would be equivalent to regenerating grace - is not the same as to say [with Infralapsarian Arminians] that common grace if assisted by the sinner would be equivalent to regenerating grace. In the first instance, God would be the Sole Author of regeneration; in the second, He would not be."

Shedd then concludes with two Scriptures. "Acts 7:51, 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears - ye do always resist the Holy Ghost!' Second Timothy 3:8, 'As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses - so do these [first-century A.D. reprobates] also withstand the truth.' See Howe's remarks on common grace. *Oracles*, II:ii."

In his supplementary volume (III:419f), Shedd concludes: "The Arminians did not carefully distinguish, as the elder Calvinists did, between atonement [which produced temporal benefits even for the reprobate] and redemption [which benefits the elect alone].... In First Timothy 4:10..., God is 'the Saviour of all men' as universal Preserver and Upholder of all things.... Turretin (XIV:14) explains 'Saviour' in the first part of this text in the sense of Preserver, quoting Psalm 26:6 & Acts 17:28 - and citing Chrysostom, Oecumenius, Ambrose and Aquinas in support of this....

"It is important to show that the fault is man's, not God's - when common grace fails of success.... It evinces that although common grace is not the highest grade of mercy, it is nevertheless a grade of it....

"Common grace in this way has a real value which is not nullified by anything in its own nature but by the enmity and resistance of the sinful will. But in bringing out this fact, it is important not to nullify the distinction between common and special grace by combining common grace with the sinner's co-operation whereby common is converted into special and regenerating grace by the sinner's agency....

"To say that common grace would succeed if it were not resisted by the sinner, is not the same as saying that common grace would succeed if it were yielded to by him.... Owen thus describes the sinner's action under common grace, showing both his voluntary resistance of it and his guilt in frustrating it. Owen's *Dominion of Sin and Grace*, in *Works* XIV:411 ed. Russell."

Also important is Shedd's book *Calvinism: Pure and Mixed* - sub-titled *A Defence of the Westminster Standards*. There (pp. 94f), he states:

"The following, then, are some of the marks of **distinction between common and special grace**. (A) In **common grace**, God demands faith in Christ but does not give it; in **special grace**, God both demands and gives faith.... (B) In **common grace**, man must of himself fulfill the condition of salvation, *viz.* believe and repent; in **special grace**, God persuades and enables him to fulfill it. (C) In **common grace**, the call to believe and repent is invariably ineffectual because man is averse to faith and repentance and in bondage to sin; in **special grace**, the call is invariably effectual because his aversion and bondage are changed into willingness and true freedom by the operation of the Holy Spirit. (D) **Common grace** is universal and indiscriminate, having no relation to election and preterition.... **Special grace** (this is connected with predestination)....

"Calvinism asserts that **common grace** cannot be made successful by the co-operation of the unregenerate sinner with the Holy Spirit, and thereby be converted into special or **saving grace**.

"Arminianism asserts that it can be. The Arminian contends that the ordinary operations of the Divine Spirit which are experienced by all men indiscriminately will succeed, if the unrenewed man will cease to resist them and will yield to them."

It has sometimes been suggested that Rev. Professor Dr. Robert L. Dabney's 1878 *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (pp. 581-85) present no Calvinistic doctrine of common grace. Yet it clearly condemns the Arminian doctrine of 'Common Sufficient Grace.'

It must not be forgotten, however, that later in that same work (pp. 554-59) Dabney forthrightly states: "Calvinists admit...two kinds of call...to man - the **common**, and the effectual.... The common call...is made generally to the whole human race....

"The effectual call... 'doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.' Arminians indeed assert that the call is one and the same.... This we shall more fully disprove....

"God's...design in making the common call universal, was the exercise of the...goodness and compassion of His nature (which generally regard all His creatures), in dissuading all from sin.... God's **mercy** and goodness...towards **the human race**...make it proper that He shall dissuade all from self-destruction....

"This **benevolence** not only offers a benefit to sinners generally, but actually confers...a **temporary enjoyment** of a dispensation of **mercy**...with all the **accompanying mercies**.... This offer is itself a **benefit**: only man's perverseness turns it into a curse.

"Blessed be God! His Word assures us that this **common call** is an expression of sincere **benevolence** toward **all** sinners, **elect** and **non-elect**.... **Earthly blessings** are overtures of **mercy**,

and are intended as such. God...is able to add to these suasives...the **efficacious grace** which would certainly bring the recipients to repentance. But He does not see fit to add them."

Dabney expounds on this still more in his essay *God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy*, published in 1890. There, he quotes the British Puritan John Howe and the American Calvinist A.A. Hodge with approval - disapproving of the view that since "God had **no volition** towards the **salvation** of the **non-elect**...He could not have any propension or **affection** at all towards it....

"God is perfectly free in every exercise of His essential principles. Yet He freely does some things necessarily, and other things optionally.... As God had the natural and appropriate affection of disapprobation against Jacob's ill desert, and still elected him, which he had against Esau's - so doubtless He had the same affection, appropriate to His infinite goodness, of **compassion** for **Esau's misery** and **yet rejected him**, which he had for Jacob's deserved misery....

"The divine compassion existing towards Esau's misery - was counterpoised by some holy, wise, and sovereign motive unrevealed to us. So that righteous disapprobation for his sin remained the prevalent motive of righteous preterition.... It is most worthy of His truth and benevolence that He shall acquit Himself by exhorting men from their own self-destruction - whether they reject or accept His **mercy**....

"The Reformed Confessions do indeed usually teach, with Dort, '*Quotquot per Evangelium vocantur, serio vocantur* [‘Whosoever are called through the Gospel, are **called seriously**].’ Some...neutralize that concession by applying here the distinction of God's will of *euaresstia* [or acceptability] and of *eudokia* [or approval] in a manner which betrays a bondage to the **Scholasticism** we have attempted to expose....

"Do all the solemn and tender entreaties of God to sinners express no more, as to the **non-elect** - than a purpose in God, uncompassionate and merely rectoral, to acquit Himself of His legislative function toward them?... We cannot but deem it an unfortunate logic which constrains a man to this view of them.

"How much more simple and satisfactory to take them for...evidences of a **true compassion**...in the case of...the **non-elect**.... It was entirely consistent for God to compassionate where He never purposed nor promised to save - because this sincere compassion was restrained within the limits God announced by His Own wisdom....

"When we see Jesus weeping over lost Jerusalem, we ‘have seen the Father’ - we have received an insight into the divine **benevolence** and **pity**.... The sacrifice of Christ was designed by the Trinity to effect precisely what it does effect - **all** this, and no more....

"What, then, are the results which Scripture shows to be effected by Christ's sacrifice? 1. The manifestation of God's supreme glory, and especially that of His love.... 2. To ransom, effectually call and glorify, an elect people.... 3. To **procure** for the **whole** race a **temporal** suspension of

doom, with **earthly mercies**, so as to manifest the...infinite **compassion** of God toward **all** sinners...and establish...the most tender and **sincere mercy** wherever it is not conquered by **efficacious grace**....

"God makes the **sincere** offer of **mercy** through Christ to a Judas - first [to] glorify His infinite love... And then, when it is slighted, as was permissively decreed - [to] illustrate the stubbornness of Judas's sin...and also God's clear justice in destroying him.... It enables us not indeed to comprehend, but to apprehend - how God may be sincere...and, omniscient of its result, may permissively ordain to let Judas reject the **mercy**....

"We may best exemplify the manner in which the correct view applies, by that most important and decisive passage John 3:16-19.... **If** 'the World' in verse 16 means [or **were** to mean] 'the body of the **elect**' - we are required to carry the same sense throughout the passage for the phrase 'the World'....

"But in verse 19, 'the World' into which the Light has come, working with some the alternative result of deeper condemnation, must be taken in the **wider sense**.... A fair logical connection between verse 17 and verse 18 shows that 'the World' of verse 17 is inclusive of 'him that believeth' **and** 'him that believeth not' of verse 18....

"It is hard to see how - if the tender of Christ's sacrifice is in no sense a true manifestation of divine **benevolence** to that part of 'the World' which 'believeth not' - their choosing to slight it is the just ground of a deeper condemnation, as is expressly stated in verse 19.... **Calvin** is too sagacious an expositor to commit himself to the extreme exegesis!....

"The words 'so loved the World' were not designed to mean the gracious decrees of election...but a propension of **benevolence** not matured into the volition to redeem - of which Christ's mission is a **sincere** manifestation to **all** sinners.... Those who will not believe, will perish notwithstanding.... It is not the tendency or primary design of that mission to curse, but to bless; not to condemn, but to save.

"When it becomes the occasion...of deeper condemnation to some - it is only because these (verse 19) voluntarily **pervert** against themselves, and acting (verse 20) from a wicked motive, the **beneficent** provision.... Christ's mission is in its own nature **only beneficent**, and a true disclosure of God's **benevolence** to **every** sinner on Earth to whom it is published."

In 1894, Bavinck's *Algemeene Genade* (alias *General Grace*) appeared - still nearly a decade **before** Kuyper's great trilogy on *Common Favour* (or *Grace*)! Bavinck refers to his own *Algemeene Genade* in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* [alias *Reformed Dogmatics*] (I:273), which itself first appeared in 1895 and subsequently went through four unchanged impressions till 1928.

In his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Bavinck distinguished between three successive periods in the History of Doctrine. First, the early *Ecclesia Formata* alias the 'Formed Church' which

acknowledged common grace; second, the mediaeval *Ecclesia Formata* alias the 'Deformed Church' which denied it; and third, the reconstituted *Ecclesia Reformata* alias the 'Reformed Church' which re-acknowledged it.

Regarding the first period, Bavinck (*op. cit.* I:272f) notes that the A.D. 150f "Justin Martyr speaks of an *anthropeios didaskalia* [or 'human teaching'] which is obtained by *to emphuton panti genei anthroopoon sperma tou Logou* [or a 'sowing of the implanted Word that was in them'] and by a *gnoosis kai theooria* [or a 'knowledge and contemplation'], which is imparted to us only through Christ (*Apology* II:8,10,13)."

Bavinck further refers also to "Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* II:6,9,28 & III:25 & IV:6." Here, however, Bavinck does not actually cite from Irenaeus.

Bavinck then states that the A.D. 200 "Tertullian has a separate treatise *De Testimonio Animae* [alias *The Soul's Testimony*], and speaks of one knowledge of God from the works of creation and of another more complete one through men filled with the Spirit.... Tertullian appeals to the internal testimony of the soul and to envisaging the works of God.... *Apology*...[17-]18.....

Then Bavinck further notes that "Augustine says expressly that God can be known from the things that are visible.... *De Gen. Ad Litt.* [*On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*] 4:32; *De Civ. Dei* [*City of God*] 8:11f & 19:1 *etc.*"

He then goes on to deal with the Deformed Church of the Middle Ages. Explains Bavinck: "The distinction between natural and supernatural theology was, however, increasingly stretched as regards its length and strictness in Scholasticism - and was transformed into a complete contrapolarization....

"Thomas [Aquinas] became very firmly convinced of this.... The Anabaptists totally rejected the natural order, and attempted to establish a Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth in a revolutionary way."

Bavinck then comes to the Reformed Church of the Protestant Reformation. "**Calvin**," he insists, "through his doctrine of **common grace** - was in a much more favourable situation than Luther [*cf.* Bavinck's 1909 Princeton publication *Calvin and Common Grace*].... Scripture indeed knows the concept of a fixed natural order, but nevertheless makes no difference between natural and supernatural.... Providence [or maintenance] was connected to creation immediately.... All that is and happens, is a work of God in the real sense, and...a revelation of His virtues.... The Scripture...teaches such a revelation not just after but also even already before the fall....

"**Thomas [Aquinas]** had argued]...that man as a reasonable being can know the truths of nature **without supernatural grace**.... The **Reformed** were much better off through their **doctrine of common grace (gratia communis)**."



"Hereby, they were on the one hand protected against the heresy of the Pelagians.... Yet on the other hand, they were still able to acknowledge all that is true and beautiful and good which was present also in the Pagan World [cf. Philippians 4:8].

"Science, art, moral, domestic, social life *etc.*, were derived from **common grace** and acknowledged and praised with gratitude.... Calvin's *Institutes* II:3:12f & III:3:3f; Zanchius's *Opera* VIII:646f.... Witsius's *Oec. Foed.* III:12:52.... Turretin's *Theol. El.* X:5; Vossius's *Hist. Pelag.* III:3; Pfanner's *Syst. Theol. Gent.* XXII:33; Trigland's *Antapologia* 17; De Moor's *Comment.* IV:826-29.

"Usually, this operation of **common grace** was indeed seen in the moral and intellectual, the social and political life - but less frequently in the religions of the Pagans.... However, not only in science and art, in morals and law, but also in the religions - an operation of God's Spirit and of His **common grace** is to be noted. **Calvin** rightly spoke of a *semen religionis* [or 'seed of religion'], a *sensus divinitatis* [an 'awareness of divinity']. Calvin's *Institutes* I:3:1-3; I:4:1; II:2:18."

In his *op. cit.* III:196f, Bavinck adds: "The first promise of grace which proceeded from the mouth of God to Adam and Eve after the fall, was entirely universal and concerns the whole of humanity.... That grace extends itself without any limitation to the whole of mankind. **Common and special grace** still flow forth in one and the same watercourse [*nog in ééne bedding*].

"In the punishment which God pronounced against the serpent to the woman and the man after the transgression, **mercy** rather than wrath were **still speaking**. It is promise and punishment at the same time; it is ['a **gracious** joyful punishment' or] *eine gnädige fröhliche Strafe* (Luther)....

"It is expressed especially in the strength and the much greater longevity of men before the flood, Genesis 5:5f. And in the much more powerful operation of the natural elements, which were restrained only after that time, Genesis 8:22....

"A new period begins with Noah. The **grace** which revealed itself immediately after the fall, is now more powerfully evident in restraining evil. God formally makes a covenant with all His creatures.

"That covenant with Noah, Genesis 8:21-22 & 9:1-17, indeed has its origin in the **grace** of God. It also stands in the closest connection to the actual covenant of grace, because it carries and prepares it. But it is not identical to it. It is much rather a covenant of longevity made by God with all men and even with all creatures. The curse upon the Earth is thereby limited...by the command for capital punishment for murder....

"The **grace** of God thus operates much more powerfully after the flood than before that time. Thanks to it, the existence and the life of humanity; the extension and development of the nations; the states and societies which have gradually formed themselves; religion and morality which even among the most neglected nations [*de verwilderdste volken*] have not been lost completely; the arts

and sciences which have highly exalted themselves - everything which after the fall is still good in all fields even in sinful man; the entire civil law - is the fruit of **God's common grace**.

"God indeed allowed the Heathen to walk in their own ways, Acts 14:16. But He did not withdraw Himself. He did not leave Himself without witness. He determined their residence; was not far from any of them; and revealed Himself in the works of their hands. Acts 14:16f; 17:27f; Romans 1:19; James 1:17. The Word illuminates every man who comes into the World, John 1:9. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all life, power and virtue - even among the Heathen. Genesis 6:17; 7:15; Psalm 33:6; 104:30; 139:2; Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 3:19. By this **grace**, and under the economy of this covenant of nature, humanity was led before [the advent of] Christ - and prepared for His coming."

Finally, in his *op. cit.* IV:7f, Bavinck adds: "All the religious and moral realizations of dependency and honesty and respect and duty and responsibility *etc.*, maintain themselves in man and in humanity - without which the human race could not exist. Religion, morality, law, art, science, family, society, state - all have their root and foundation in the calling which goes out from God to all men. Take that away, and a war of every man for himself arises; the one man becomes a wolf toward the other.

"Calling through Law and Gospel restrains sin, reduces guilt, and resists the deterioration and misery of man. It is a **gratia reprimens** [a '**restraining grace**']. It is a proof that God is God and that He is not indifferent; that not just the **Jenseits** [or 'the **Next** Life'] but also the **Diesseits** [or 'the **Present** Life'] have value before Him.... Compare... **common grace**, and further also: Twissus's *Op.* I:660f; Trigland's *Opuscula* I:430f & II:809f; Gomarus's *Op.* I:97f; *Synopsis Pur. Theol.* 30 & 40-46; Voetius's *Disp.* II:256; Maastricht's *Theol.* VI:2,16; Turretin's *Theol. El.* XV qu. 2 and also XIV:14 & 51; Witsius's *Oec. Foed.* II:9 & 4 and III:5 & 20; Heidegger's *Corp. Theol.* XXI:9-11; Altling's *Theol. Prob.* p. 187; De Moor's *Comment.* III:1071; Hodge's *Syst. Theol.* II:641f; Shedd's *Dogm. Theol.* I:451 & II:582f; Candlish's *The Atonement* 1861 pp. 169f; A. Robertson's *History of the Atonement Controversy in Connection with the Secession Church* (1846)."

In his later volume *Magnalia Dei* (pp. 29f & 148 & 229 & 277f & 308 & 315f & 487), Bavinck again has much to say about common grace. There, he states that God's "general revelation directs itself to all men - and, through **common grace**, restrains sin from exploding....

"General revelation is thanks to the Word Who was in the beginning with God, Who has made all things, Who has shone like a light in the darkness, and Who has illuminated every man coming into the World. John 1:1-9. Special revelation is thanks to that same Word - but to that Word as He has become flesh in Christ, and Who is now full of grace and truth. John 1:14.

"**Both** revelations have **grace** as their contents - one, **common**; the other, particular. But in such a way that the one is indispensable to the other. It is **common grace** which makes particular [grace] possible, prepares it, and continues to carry it. Particular grace in its turn leads common grace to itself and constantly utilizes it....

"Good and grace on the one hand and holiness and righteousness on the other hand are attributed to God.... He is also the Only Good God; He alone is good. Matthew 10:18.... He is the Fountain of all that is good in creatures. Psalm 145:9. This goodness of God extends itself over the whole World.... Matthew 5:45....

"This view...permits the total teaching of Holy Scripture to come into its own completely. It at the same time maintains the connection and the difference between nature and **grace**, between creation and recreation. It gratefully and fully acknowledges the **grace** of God which causes man to **remain** man **also after** the fall - and which keeps on regarding and treating him as a reasonable, moral, and responsible being....

"There is the **restraining grace** of God.... If God were to let men go and to hand them over to the desires of their hearts - it would be Hell on Earth, and no human society and no human history would be possible. But just as the fire inside the Earth is kept under restraint by the Earth's hard crust, and only explodes terribly into volcanoes from time to time and at some places - so too are the evil thoughts and desires of the human heart suppressed and held back at all corners....

"God has not unleashed man; but He put the wild beast who lives within him - on a chain. Thus He can maintain and execute His counsel with the human race. He supports natural love in man - and the tendency toward socializing, the realizations of religion and morality, conscience, the feeling of what is right, reason, and the will. And He places him in the midst of a family, a society, a state - which restrain him with their public opinion, concepts of behaviour, obligations to work, discipline, punishment *etc.* - and oblige and train him for a honourable civil life....

"Unto that which is savingly good, man is by nature totally incapable.... But that is not at all to say that man is unable through **common grace** to do many kinds of good. In his personal life, he can - through reason and will - suppress his evil thoughts and desires and control himself unto virtue. In his personal life - he can love and seek what is good for his wife, his children, his parents, his brothers and sisters.

"In society, he can fulfil his calling honourable and faithfully - and work together to multiply welfare and civilization, science and art. In one word, through all the powers with which God surrounds natural sinful man - He still equips him to lead a human life here on Earth.

"Yet all those powers are not able to renew man inwardly - and often appear even to be inadequate to suppress unrighteousness.... It is of the Lord's **mercies** that we are not consumed, because His **compassions** do not fail. Lamentations 3:22....

"This **grace** of God can lead man to humble himself, even if only as in the case of Ahab. First Kings 21:29.... But he can also constantly resist grace.... The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20-27. Then again, he [*viz.* reprobate Pharaoh] hardened his own heart. Exodus 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:34. Or, his heart was hardened. Exodus 7:14; 9:7; 9:35.

"In hardening, there is a Divine and a human operation; an operation of God's **grace** which more and more becomes a judgment; and an operation of human resistance which more and more assumes the character of conscious and definite enmity against God.... Such an operation is connected to **common grace**. But it is especially particular grace which has this quality of being a judgment which brings sifting and division among men. John 1:5; 3:19; 9:39....

"Grace is something different to and higher than nature. Yet it still joins up with nature. It does not destroy it, but repairs it.... Recreation is connected to creation; grace to nature; the work of the Son to the work of the Father. Redemption is built upon foundations laid down in creation.... There was an indwelling and an inworking of the Word (of the Logos) in the entire World and in all men. But although the Light shone in the darkness - the darkness did not snuff it out (*niet begrepen*).... John 1:5,10....

"This doctrine of the existence and the operation of the Word before He appeared in the flesh in Christ, is of the highest importance for a right assumption about the history of humanity.... For thereby does it become possible to acknowledge all that is true and good and beautiful [Philippians 4:8] which is encountered even in the Heathen World....

"Saving faith is...different.... Historical faith, temporary faith and faith in miracles are not wrong in themselves. They are better than complete infidelity and bitter enmity. They even have temporary usefulness.

"But they are still only gifts of God's **common grace**, and are given also to natural men. Yet saving faith is a gift of God exactly like salvation, Ephesians 2:8. It is a gift of God's **special grace**, Philippians 1:29. It is a result of election - Acts 13:48; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:5. It is a work of the Holy Ghost, First Corinthians 12:3. It is a fruit of regeneration, John 1:12-13."

The modern Hypercalvinistic deniers of common grace concede that the Kuypers (Abraham Sr. and his sons Abraham Jr. and H.H.) all taught common grace. Indeed, many of those modern Hypercalvinists blame the Kuypers for 'inventing' common grace in Reformed circles.

There is no doubt that the Kuypers wrote more voluminously on common grace than any of their Reformed predecessors. Especially Abraham Kuyper Sr.'s three volumes on *Common Grace* - great, though ameliorable - themselves merit a separate article just to discuss them alone. But, as we have shown above, Abraham Kuyper did not invent common grace. For it is clearly taught by Scripture; is traceable in Church History from Justin Martyr down to Calvin; and was faithfully taught by every faithful and knowledgeable Calvinist long before the Kuypers did.

We could certainly quote at length about the **common grace theology** in many works of those three Kuypers. Yet here, we deliberately refrain from doing so. For to do so adequately, would require from us a major book - far longer than this present article. Too, that would irritate those Hypercalvinists who are allergic to Kuyper's views on grace. Instead, we rather urge the reader himself to go and read them. (See our Select Bibliography at the end of this present work.)

In any case, **common grace** was **merely boosted** by **Kuyper Sr.** He simply took it over from a long line of predecessors, who all taught it in one form or another.

"For enough has already been said above from Holy Scripture, to ground the doctrine. Indeed, its long existence and ongoing advocacy is established further also through Augustine, Calvin, and Classic Calvinism (such as that of the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Decrees of Dordt*, Gomarus, the *Dordt Dutch Bible*, the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, Polanus, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Calamy, Vines, Owen, Heidegger, Brakel, Matthew Henry, Maastricht, Shaw, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, Thornwell, Shedd, Dabney and Bavinck).

Kuyper's magisterial three-volume work *Gemeene Gratie* (alias *Common Favour*) appeared only in 1902. Yet the fact of the matter is - **all** authentic Calvinists from the Reformation until the beginning of the twentieth century either explicitly or implicitly taught not just Limited Atonement but also Common Grace.

Nor must it be forgotten that **Kuyper too** defended also the doctrine of **Limited Atonement by way of Special Grace**. Compare, for example, his book *Dat de Genade Particulier Is* [alias (*Special*) *Grace is Particular*]).

It must also not be overlooked either, that in his famous trilogy *Pro Rege*, Kuyper proclaimed the Kingship of Christ over all spheres of human endeavour - insisting on the duty of Christians so to proclaim it. Indeed, Kuyper even clearly and **deliberately distinguished** between the very **words Genade** (by which he meant **Special Grace**) and *Gratie* (alias **Common Favour**).

Consequently, the attempt by later admirers of Hoeksema and Schilder to label the **Calvinian and Calvinistic doctrine of Common Grace** merely an **innovation by Kuyper** - is devoid of truth. Here, then, let us omit Kuyper altogether - and proceed straight to Kuyper's later critics.

We call them 'Hypercalvinists.' Why? Because on the matter of common grace (and other matters), they significantly depart from Calvin and the Classic Calvinians above.

## **7. Modern Hypercalvinism against common grace**

Tertullian, Athanasius, Augustine, Calvin, the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Decrees of Dordt*, Gomarus, the *Dordt Dutch Bible*, the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, Polanus, Wollebius, Voetius, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Calamy, Vines, Owen, Turretin, Heidegger, Brakel, Matthew Henry, Maastricht, Shaw, the two Hodges, Thornwell, Shedd, Bavinck, the three Kuypers, Warfield, Vos, Hepp, Berkhof, Berkouwer, Potgieter, and Van Til - **all affirm the Classic-Calvinistic doctrine of common grace**. Lesser lights, such as Hoeksema and Schilder, deny the teaching.

Note that we call Hoeksema and Schilder "lesser **lights**" - and Hoeksema, let us add, very much less than Schilder. We certainly do not call them utter darkness, nor even twilights. We call them "**lights**" indeed - though much **lesser** lights than Augustine, Calvin, Bavinck and Kuyper.

Many Hypercalvinists seem to confuse **common revelation** (which they affirm) with **common grace** (which they deny). They do not seem to grasp that totally depraved fallen man could no longer understand anything from common revelation - if pre-fall common grace were not to continue also after the fall.

For that matter, without common grace Hypercalvinists cannot satisfactorily explain how some of the reprobate (such as Cain and Esau and Pharaoh) could understand even anything at all about special revelation. Yet Cain understood God's speech to him; Esau was able properly to grasp the value of and even to misappropriate Jacob's blessing; and Pharaoh rightly realized that Aaron's serpent had consumed those of his own magicians.

In 2001, I (Dr. Lee) gave a series of lectures on a wide variety of subjects in South Africa. Apart from one lecture on *Abraham Kuyper and the Rebirth of Christian Higher Education* - I did not then even mention Common Grace. Yet that (and other of my lectures) then incurred opposition from at least one Hypercalvinist.

The convinced Schilderian Piet van der Kooi, Editor of the magazine *Die Kerkpad* (alias *The Church Path*), did not like my praise of Kuyper in my lecture. When I got back to Australia, I noted his opposition - on the Calvin E-mail List.

Translated here below from Afrikaans into English (by me) is the gist of Mr. van der Kooi's posts - and my answers thereto, *seriatim*. I also include the contributions there made by a Theological Student at Potchefstroom University, Slabbert le Cornu.

Where I deem it necessary, I have inserted my own further explanations in square brackets []. May readers find this gist of the e-mails here below, all to be both insightful and edifying!

From: Piet van der Kooi [Editor of *Die Kerkpad* (or *The Church Path*, Pretoria, South Africa)]

Date: June 3, 2001;11:47 p.m.

"As a conservative Member of The Reformed Churches in South Africa, I am in this connection appealing to participants on the Calvin E-mail List to be led less by English/American theological works, and please again to turn back to the Dutch theological works of the first half of the previous century. That is of inestimable significance for the interpretation of and dogmatization from Scripture - and for the ethics which thereby get presented to us....

"We should also be particularly critical of the *holus bolus* acceptance of Kuyperian views which clearly shines through Professor Lee's presentations. This is said respectfully.

"The question of two kinds of grace has been refuted sufficiently by Professor Schilder in many of his works. Professor Lee has passed them over.

"With hearty greetings, Piet van der Kooi."

From: Piet van der Kooi  
Sent: June 04, 2001 9:47 a.m.  
Subject: Arminianism

"Dear Friends of the Calvin E-mail List. I refer particularly to the works of Professor Dr. Klaas Schilder, especially his commentaries on the *Heidelberg Catechism*.....

"As a conservative Member of The Reformed Churches in South Africa, I am in this connection appealing to participants on the Calvin E-mail List to be led less by English/American theological works, and please again to turn back to the Dutch theological works of the first half of the previous century.

"The matters currently disturbing the Reformed Churches in South Africa [GKSA] as well as the Dutch Reformed Church of S.A. [NGK] and the Dutch Reformation Church in Africa [NHKA] are chiefly the result of the foreign influence of English and German theologies. Dr Fika van Rensburg and also some of the NGK theologians constantly used this as an excuse for attributing current theology thereto.

"We should also be particularly critical of the *holus bolus* acceptance of Kuyperian views which clearly shines through Professor Lee's presentations. This is said respectfully.

"The question of two kinds of grace has sufficiently been refuted by Professor Schilder in many of his works. Professor Lee has passed them over. Cordially, Piet van der Kooi."

From: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: June 5, 2001; 8:41 p.m.

"Brother Piet van der Kooi should clearly realize that my recent lecture in South Africa to which he listened (*Abraham Kuyper and the Rebirth of Christian Higher Education*) was not concerned with Schilder (for whom I too have high regard). Yet I find it very reprehensible that he wishes to canonize precisely Schilder in assessing greater minds such as that of Kuyper.

"That does not mean I have no respect for Schilder too. Brother v.d. Kooi should certainly read my book *The Central Significance of Culture* (Preface by [his own hero] the late Rev. Dr. Andries Treurnicht), in order to see what great appreciation I have also of Schilder.

"Brother van der Kooi has championed the Calvinistic writings specifically of **Netherlandish** theology (excepting Kuyper!) - [and, indeed, specifically what he has called 'the Dutch theological works of the first half of the previous century'] - above those of America and England. This betrays an extremely restrictive Netherlandish outlook!

"He also seems to be unaware of the fact that the present batch of deviationistic Afrikaans theologians received their doctoral education not in America or England (or even Germany). For the most part, they received it precisely in the now-apostate Netherlands.

"Has Brother van der Kooi never read the masterly English-language Reformed writers such as Owen and the Hodges and John Murray *etc?* Or even the Non-Dutch Americans North and Rushdoony, who together with Brother van der Kooi question common grace?

"Brother van der Kooi also seems to be ignorant **in practice** of the fact that the greatest of all the Reformers was not the Netherlander Johannes Calvin but precisely the Non-Netherlandish **Frenchman** Jean Cauvin! He, by the way - just like the Netherlander Kuyper - made a place also for common grace!

"It is high time Calvinists Worldwide rejected this pernicious doctrine of the alleged superiority of precisely Netherlandish theology. After all, it rests on the uncalvinistic doctrine of selective depravity (*viz.* that Netherlandish Calvinism is supposedly less pernicious than that of all other lands)!

"Sincerely in the Lord's service, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee.  
Professor-Emeritus of the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College  
'God tri-une, at the start, created the tri-universe' (*cf.* Genesis 1:1-3)  
Website: <http://www.dr-fnlee.org>."

From: Piet van der Kooi  
Date: Wed. June 6 2001, 6:55 a.m.  
Subject: Arminianism: Answering the reply of Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

"I would like to react to Dr Francis Lee's reply to my message of Monday 4th June.

"1. In referring to Kuyperian views which clearly peep through in Professor Lee's addresses, I was not thinking of just the one address on *Abraham Kuyper and the Rebirth of Christian Higher Education* - but to all of his addresses. Again with respect, it is clear Dr Lee bypassed the ecclesiastical struggle of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. That finally (in 1944) led to the censure and defrocking of conservative Professors, Ministers, and Elders - and to the resultant 'liberation' from ecclesiastical sentences of banishment, and to the coming into being of the [Free or 'Liberated'] Reformed Churches (maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order).



"I am certainly not trying to canonize this, and I am also aware that even the 'Liberated Churches' in the Netherlands now - as regards their past - have deviated from their previously conservative direction. Nevertheless, I did not notice in Dr. Lee a knowledge of Schilder's work which dealt with the doctrinal disputes in the Netherlands Reformed Churches. On the other hand, in almost every one of his addresses which I listened to, I observed the uncritical influences of Abraham Kuyper - against which Schilder advanced Scripturally-motivated objections.

"2. Dr Lee has not answered my comment which I posted on this list on 11 May 2001 regarding 'the matter of common and special grace.' I asked for comment thereon!

"3. I do take it to heart that Dr Lee more than once told me, and now yet again, that he highly appreciates Schilder. But has he ever read his critical theological studies, his polemical and his general works - and also received insight and guidance therefrom? That, I do not detect!

"4. Since the [Second] World War and thereafter, there has from the side of Afrikaners in the Reformed Church [NHK or Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk of South Africa] been much contact with German Lutheran theologians. Too, in the Dutch Reformed [NGKSA] and Reformed [GKSA] Churches, there has been more inward looking (in their own universities) - and at a higher level (postgraduate and pre-theological studies) a look for these things in the English-speaking World. The result has been the present hermeneutics and homiletics, which differ from our reformatory heritage as much as Heaven itself does. The alarming [*bedenklike*] actions and writings of scores of Professors, confirm this.

"5. The argument mentioned by Dr. Lee that the 'Non-Netherlandish Frenchman Jean Cauvin' also had a place for common grace, I would answer with a citation from *De Heidelbergsche Catechismus* [*The Heidelberg Catechism*] by Schilder (Vol. I, pg. 182). That is clearly different from the first of Dr Lee's three lectures in the Afrikaans Protestant Church Building in Pretoria, concerning innate or natural knowledge of the laws of the Lord. Here it follows....

"The natural heart is crafty [*arglistig*], even in its self-critique. Therefore, only when one again follows the voice of Calvin and Ursinus - is one able to protect the practical syllogism against errors of thought:

"(a) from Barthians, who do not wish to see "the Word of God" reduced to human reasonings [*in het kader van menselijke redeneeringen willen zien ondergebracht*]; (b) from the reason-immanentists [*rede-immanisten*], who - either from philosophical or theologico-philosophical considerations (of "natural theology") - wish to see the "major" (A-premiss) of the syllogism derived from an innate God-consciousness, conscience, the "light of nature" or whatever.

"That was then also the error of Meister, the above-mentioned Lutheran. It is an error which, before the Synod of 1618-19 drew up the *Decrees of Dordt*, occurred even among many of the Reformed. It manifested itself in their theory that the contents of "the book of conscience" in "natural theology" essentially [*zakelijk*] corresponded to the Ten Commandments.'

"6. From this, it clearly appears that Dr. Lee is on a completely different wavelength to Schilder. His lectures (this is said with respect!) rest too much upon philosophical reasoning and the non-critical views of the scores of theologians to whom he appeals - than dogmatically upon the 1618-19 Synod of Dordt's binding exegesis of Scripture and the rejection of the errors in theology currently dominant in our country's three 'Sister Churches' [ viz. the NGK, NHK and GKSA].

"7. Finally, I would like to express great appreciation for Dr Nigel Lee's achievements on the academic level, and the inputs [*insette*] which he made here. But one needs to listen conservatively and critically. Therefore it was a defect [*leemte*], and unfortunate - that there was hardly any opportunity for in-depth discussion of the matters he touched upon.

"With hearty greetings, Piet van der Kooi."

From: Dr Francis Nigel Lee

Date: Wed. June 6, 2001; 8:39 p.m.

Subject: Arminianism: Answering the reply of Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

"I respond as follows. Once again, during my recent tour of South Africa, I was never asked to deal specifically with Schilder (and still less with Post-Schilderian Dutch Problematics).

"Why then keep blaming me [*verkwalik*], for what I was never asked to deal with? After all, I do not blame Brother [Piet] van der Kooi for not yet mentioning even the very existence of the well-known Dr. John Owen!

"Secondly, Brother van der Kooi states I had not answered the comment which he posted on the list on the 11th of May 2001. On May 11, I was so busy in South Africa, that for almost a month I did not have the time even to look at any message on the scores of group lists of which I am a member - [and I only got back to Australia on May 22nd 2001]!

"Thirdly, I am asked whether I have ever read Schilder's critical theological studies, his polemical and his general works. Yes, I have. And I would have supported Schilder against H.H. Kuyper and Berkouwer in the former's ecclesiastical struggle during the war years.

"But that would not be reason enough for me to go and exchange Calvin's own doctrine of grace for an (in my opinion) anabaptizing denial of the existence of common grace. Nor even Abraham Kuyper's.

[Incidentally, also Schilder sometimes saw the light even on common grace! There is no common grace in Hell - and Christ, in dying, as Second Adam went for men to a Hell devoid even of common grace.

As Schilder rightly remarks in his book *Christ Crucified* (chapter six): "Just as the narrative of the creation of the first Adam out of the dust of the earth and the breathing upon it of the Almighty definitely affects all basic problems of philosophy and theology - so the violent breaking down of the body of the Second Adam as it is recorded in the Bible directly affects Christian philosophy and theology. In the last analysis, the Life-and-World View of thinkers who are faithful to the Scriptures, must reverently bow to it...."

"Now, the curse of the vicious circle has broken out - and is having its effect. It is taking the form of its catastrophe. Now [when dying], **common grace** no longer exists for the Second Adam. Indeed, **common grace** no longer exists for Him.

"The robe of Christ will presently be raffled away. God's sun will presently disappear. **Now**, these things assume their proper places for **us**, for in this way we can see God Who is withdrawing His common grace from the Second Adam. In this, the curse attains its catastrophe."

In other words, **Adam had common grace**.

For **before the fall**, he sinlessly had the common grace benefits of "God's sun." Cf. Genesis 1:16-31 cf. 3:8.

**After his sin**, Adam and his wife even had the common grace benefits of first aprons and then of God-given "coats of skins." That was Adam's "robe" (cf. Genesis 3:7-21).

The latter was true also of the sinless Second Adam Jesus Christ (Luke 2:40-52 & 23:11 & 24:34-44f). But in order to enable that Sinless One to die, God had to remove His favour by "withdrawing His common grace from the Second Adam."

Thus that Second Adam was **enabled** to die. And, as the second man, for man He then went to Hell where there is **no common grace** at all.]

"Fourthly, it is true that since the Second World War and thereafter, there has from the side of Afrikaners in the Reformed Church [NHK or Hervormde Kerk of South Africa] been much contact with German Lutheran theologians - and that in the Dutch Reformed [NGKSA] and Reformed [GKSA] Churches, there has been a movement toward the theology of the English-speaking world. Yet the modern Netherlands remains, in my opinion, the greatest influence on deviant [*afwykende*] Afrikaner theologians.

"Fifth, I have no comment to make on Brother van der Kooi's citation from Schilder's *De Heidelbergsche Catechismus* (Vol. I, pg. 182). **Of course** that is clearly different from the first of Dr Lee's three lectures in the Afrikaans Protestant Church Building!

"Sixth, I am naturally in various respects on a different wavelength than Schilder (although his citation above has little to do with Calvin or even with the concept of grace in the Confessions of

Faith). Once again, I am a Calvinian Calvinist - and an implacable Confessionalist who totally continues to uphold every jot and tittle of the most copious Reformed Confessional Writings.

"Seventh, I thank Piet van der Kooi for his appreciation of some of my achievements. I too have much appreciation for his own militancy. But he needs to remember that I am his fellow soldier, and not the enemy of his faith! Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

From: Piet van der Kooi

Date: Wed. June 6, 2001;12:51 p.m. Subject: Answer to Dr Lee's reply of 6 June

"For the sake of Dr. Nigel Lee who, during his visit to our land and his busy programme, did not read it - I would again like to publish the insert which I posted on the question of general/special grace, concerning which the discussion arose.

"In his message of 6 June, Dr. Lee stated *inter alia* that he would not 'go and exchange Calvin's (or even Abraham Kuyper's) own doctrine of grace for an (in his opinion) anabaptizing denial of the existence of common grace.'

"Dear Dr. Lee, thank you for declaring that you are not the enemy of my faith, but precisely a fellow soldier. Yet I wish, essentially, to contradict you.

"It is precisely Dr. A Kuyper's doctrine of presumed regeneration which in its results leads to Anabapticism (regeneration and faith-obedience as the basis of baptism). Over against that, Schilder stands firmly - at one's view of the covenant as the basis of baptism.

"Baptism is administered as a sign and seal of being taken into the covenant: 'the covenantal promises to believers and their children unto far generations.' This covenant is one-sided in its origin and two-sided in its existence - whence, promise and demand. It is not converted man who chooses God. But God chooses (election); and works it out in the line of the covenant.

"That is Schilder's view of baptism, which accompanies the rejection of Dr. Kuyper - for whom he, for the rest, just like you yourself, had a great appreciation! Hence the emphasis on the continuity of the cultural mandate, as mentioned below. I would like to discuss also this issue further, in depth.

"I would like to attempt to make a contribution to the question of general/special grace. This has led not only to ecclesiastical disruption in America (Herman Hoeksema), but also the Netherlandish ecclesiastical struggle in The Reformed Churches has been part of the matters of contention which led to the suspension of Professor Klaas Schilder (K.S.) and many others who were conservative and which finally led to the 1944 reformation with the coming into being of The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order).

"What is here in parentheses, only served as a postal (*postale*) distinction. In colloquial speech, it was the 'liberated' Churches over against the 'bonded' or 'synodically' Reformed.

"The liberated regarded themselves as the continuation of the GKN [Reformed Churches in the Netherlands]. It concerned Kuyper's (three volume) work, *De Gemeene Gratie* [*General Favour*]. Therein, he speculatively fell back upon the errors of the Arminians [*Remonstrante*] - that, apart from the particular guilt-forgiving and recreative grace of God, so much good is still found on Earth.

"According to Kuyper, God still restrains the curse which He had pronounced. Thus, both the (constantly sinning) wicked as well as (regenerated and saved) good people still receive health and wisdom and the opportunity to exist on this Earth.

"In this theory, Kuyper again makes a separation between nature and grace - which Calvin rejected against his Roman-Catholic predecessor Thomas Aquinas as well as the [Pagan] Greek philosophers and to some extent even Augustine.

"Over against this, Schilder (and perhaps also Hoeksema) maintain that the cultural mandate which was placed upon man in the garden of Eden - falls short in producing culture as the human use and processing of nature. It is not to be rubricated under so-called 'common grace' (*'niet te rebruceeren valt onder de zoogenaamde „algemeene genade"*). Thus K.S.

"Schilder puts this matter (in my opinion correctly) into the perspective of the cultural mandate. If God were to make Himself dependent upon the fall as the deed of man - then His Counsel would have lapsed for the creation of a Heaven and a Hell, with the Earth as the operating theatre upon which the numbers for the future population of Heaven and Hell would be born and develop.

"This matter of grace and curse, thus depends upon the continuation of God's work. God created not only the Earth and its inhabitants, but He also maintains it unto the purpose for which He triunely predestinated it before the foundation of the World. The so-called 'restraining' of the curse, is no blessing for those who are lost.... It would have been better had they not been born.

"'Thank God we know more than that Hell is coming! Heaven too stands in the programme of divine action.

"'In order to fill it too with as many as God shall call into it, an extension of time is needed for this. It is necessary to be born of parents. Cultural work as well as both economic and climatological balance, is a condition.' (K.S.).

"That continuation and development, is no grace. Just as little is it curse or judgment, says Schilder.

"'Grace does not therefore inhere in *colere* [or "cultivating"]. Neither does it "inhere" in eating, drinking, breathing, or raising children. Grace, if it is there, shall "inhere" only in **godly**

cultivating, eating, drinking, and raising children. Not as the dead, but as the living. And the curse does not inhere in cultivating.

"Nor does it inhere in eating, drinking, breathing, or raising children. Not as those who are alive, but as those who are dead. Within the framework of time, after the fall (into sin), the antithesis is unavoidable - **not** in **nature**, but in the use of **nature**. And therefore in culture; in the antithesis between the believer's and the unbeliever's exact cultural achievements' (K.S.).

"This matter is connected with what the Libertines taught in the time of Calvin, and later during the 1618-1619 Synod of Dordt. Namely, that outside of God and His Biblical Revelation - man has still retained so much good in himself that he is able to do good without the guidance and insight of God's Word and His Holy Spirit. According to this, evil does not reside in human depravity as Scripture teaches us - but in the circumstances of society.

"Man is [then alleged to be] able to explain nature, his environment and circumstances purely rationally - and to [be able to] improve the World. God and His recreative work are [then] not needed for this. [This is] separation of nature and grace(!) - which we strongly observe and experience today with *e.g.* the acceptance of (rational!) human rights as the foundation for society. Not the norms of God and His Word, but a humanistic solution of problems.

"That this is no real solution, is proved by the practices to which we are being subjected. Therefore, even in the circumstances of life and in that of society and co-existence (*samelewing*), the divine plan of creation and maintenance primarily needs to be accepted and believed - but, thereafter, also to be investigated and applied. Therein lies the solution of the social and political problems (*staatkundige vraagstukke*), as well as the politics for our time and society.

"There is but one kind of grace. That is the guilt-forgiving, redemptive grace in which Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone and Mediator. That creates the operating theatre for the antithesis in human existence between those who use it as the point of departure for their thought and actions - and those who trust only in themselves, their 'healthy understanding' and so-called human goodness and abilities (*a lá* Immanuel Kant) to do good from purely human reason.

"Common grace is a deceptive term. Man deceives himself with a false trust in his abilities - which he misuses, and which finally contribute to his everlasting judgment in the Hell which God created and which must also get filled up (in His eternal counsel of election and reprobation). Finally, it serves those (*dien dit vir diégene*) unto the curse which God placed before Adam and Eve - together with the command to fill and to cultivate and to guard the Earth.

"Therefore, even here in South-Africa - the terms common and special grace ought to be viewed and used with more discretion. Also the Scriptural antithesis should very clearly be maintained regarding the pursuit of science, social affairs and politics - according to the Biblical guidelines.

"Again, many thanks for the opportunity of being enabled to state this. With cordial greetings especially to Dr. Lee.

"With Calvinistic national greetings [*Boeregroete*], Piet van der Kooi."

[Dr. Lee certainly agrees with the above-mentioned antithesis, and would himself insist that the matter of special grace must constantly be emphasized - and indeed offered to all, without exception! However, to eliminate prefall and continuing postfall common grace - is to make both ongoing culture and evangelism impossible!

*Passim*, Kuyper derived his views of prebaptismal presumed regeneration (and of common grace) from Calvin. The former was demonstrated in Dr. Lee's doctoral dissertation *Baby Belief Before Baptism* - and the latter has been demonstrated earlier in this present article.

Also Dr. Lee (just like Calvin and Kuyper and Schilder) believes in emphasizing the continuity of the cultural mandate - and the ongoing obligations of God's prefall covenant with Adam and all his descendants. See Dr. Lee's works *Man's Origin and Destiny*, his *The Central Significance of Culture*, and his *Life and Works* (subtitled *God's Creation Covenant with Adam*). So, then - Dr. Lee agrees with much in Piet van der Kooi's above citations from Schilder. Much - **apart** from the issue of common grace!

Before Dr. Lee could respond to Piet van der Kooi's above valuable citations from Schilder, Theological Student Slabbert le Cornu offered a clarifying definition of 'common grace.' He also raised some pertinent material anent Psalm 145:9. That material he collected from the late (and very careful) Calvinist, Rev. Professor John Murray (of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia) - as well as from John Calvin, the genius of Geneva himself. Here follows Slabbert's contributions.]

From: Slabbert le Cornu  
Sent: Friday, June 08, 2001 1:40 a.m.  
Subject: Grace: common and/or special?

"Not all of us are so well-read in Calvin, Kuyper and Schilder. So I would like to suggest we follow this *modus operandi*:

"a) We need clear definitions from both points of view for or against the doctrine of common grace. Mr. Van der Kooi (*Oom Piet*) has already done this in what he wrote. Perhaps it would be good if Dr. Lee could also shortly do the same from his point of view?

"b) We should then begin with Scripture and look at the various portions of Scripture used by both points of view to confirm their point of view and to reject the other point of view. In my

opinion, we are - at this stage - following an unhealthy methodology in our debates. Namely, we are beginning with that which is unknown (to many of us) - *viz.* certain theologians' specific theological points of view - and [only] then do we wish to move on toward that which is known [to many of us], namely the Scriptures.

"I thus wish, therefore, to make a first attempt:

"As regards a), I wish to give the following definition and to hear if everyone agrees with it: 'The word "common" in the topic's title is not used in the sense that each particular favour is given to all without discrimination or distinction, but rather in the sense that favours of varying degrees are bestowed upon this sin-cursed world - favours real in their character as expressions of the divine goodness, but which are not in themselves and of themselves saving in their nature and effect.

"So the term "common grace" should rather be defined as every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed World enjoys at the hand of God.' *Collected Works of John Murray*, Vol. 2: Systematic Theology, 1977: pp. 93-119.

"As regards b), I wish to begin with Psalm 145:8-10, which states: 'the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. **The Lord is good to all**: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.' Psalm 145:8-10. See the entire Psalm hereinafter for the context.

"Calvin's comments on the above-mentioned verses, are then as follows. They are rather long, but I am also trying to give his context of the text concerned:

"[Ps. 145:]8. "Jehovah is gracious," *etc.* He opens up the goodness of which he spoke by using several expressions - [such] as that God is inclined to mercy (for such is the proper meaning of the word *channun*); and that He helps us willingly, as One sympathizing with our miseries. It is to be noticed that David has borrowed the terms which he here applies to God, from that celebrated passage in Exodus 34:6...

"As the inspired writers drew their doctrine from the fountain of the Law, we need not wonder that they set a high value upon the vision which is there recorded, and in which as clear and satisfactory a description of the nature of God is given us as can anywhere be found. David, therefore, in giving us a brief statement of what it was most important we should know in reference to God, makes use of the same terms employed there. Indeed, no small part of the grace of God is to be seen in His alluring us to Himself by such attractive titles.

"Were He to bring His power prominently into view before us, we would be cast down by the terror of it rather than encouraged, as the Papists represent Him [as] a dreadful God from Whose presence all must fly; whereas the proper view of Him is that which invites us to seek after Him. Accordingly, the more nearly that a person feels himself drawn to God, the more has he advanced in the knowledge of Him.



"If it be true that God is not only willing to befriend us, but is spoken of as touched with sympathy for our miseries, so as to be all the kinder to us the more that we are miserable - what folly were it, not to fly to Him without delay?! But as we drive God's goodness away from us by our sins, and block up the way of access - unless His goodness overcomes this obstacle, it would be in vain that the Prophets spoke of His grace and mercy.

"It was necessary, therefore, to add what follows - that great is His mercy; that He pardons sins, and bears with the wickedness of men so as to show favor to the unworthy. 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.

"To the wicked, it is said: "To what end is the day of the Lord for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light; affliction and not joy"(Amos 5:18). We see in what severe terms Nahum threatens them at the very beginning of his prophecy. Having referred to the language used in the passage from Moses, he adds immediately, on the other hand, to prevent them being emboldened by it - that God is a rigid and severe, a terrible and an inexorable judge (Nahum 1:3). They therefore who have provoked God to anger by their sins, must see to secure His favor by believing.

"[Ps. 145:]9. "Jehovah is good to all," *etc.* The truth here stated, is of wider application than the former. For the declaration of David is to the effect that not only does God with fatherly indulgence and clemency forgive sin - 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. As elsewhere it is said: "Come ye to Him, and be ye enlightened - and your faces shall not be ashamed! Taste, and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:5,8).

"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.

"[Ps. 145:]10. "All thy works," *etc.* Though many would suppress God's praises, observing a wicked silence regarding them - David declares that they shine forth everywhere; appear of themselves; and are sounded, as it were, [even] by the dumb creatures.

"He then assigns the special work of declaring them to believers, who have eyes to perceive God's works and know that they cannot be employed better than in celebrating His mercies. What

is added - "they shall speak the glory of Thy Kingdom" - I consider to have reference only to believers.

"If any incline to think that these words rather apply to God's creatures universally, I would not object to that view. But the particular kind of speaking or teaching which David here refers to, applies only to saints.

"Accordingly, I have retained the future tense of the verbs. Rather than the optative mood, as others have done.

"In using the term "Kingdom" - David intimates that this is the tendency of the manifestation of God's works, to reduce the whole World to a state of order and subject it to His government. He insists upon the excellency of this Kingdom, so that men may know that things are to be considered as in disorder and confusion - unless God alone be acknowledged supreme.

"He denies it to be transitory, like all earthly kingdoms - asserting that it will stand fast for ever. And to call our attention more particularly to its everlasting nature - he breaks out into an admiring exclamation, and addresses his discourse to God.' *John Calvin's Commentaries: Psalms* (Albany, Ore.: Ages Software, Inc.), 1998.

"Two citations from the above-mentioned portions from Calvin, deserve our attention: i) 'It was necessary, therefore, to add what follows - that great is His mercy; that He pardons sins, and bears with the wickedness of men so as to show favor to the unworthy.' ii) 'That not only does God with fatherly indulgence and clemency forgive sin - 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.'

"My questions which follow from this: 1) Is God good to all? What is meant by 'all'?... Can the Hebrew gurus please help us here? 2) If He indeed is, does this mean that He is therefore 'positively' favourable in respect of the many things which the ungodly do? 3) What, if anything, is the difference between God's 'goodness' which is obviously for all, and His 'favour' which then is thus only for the godly?

"A final observation. We should please not too quickly read things into one another's arguments and questions - as if everything written is the viewpoint of a particular brother. For we do wish to convince one another precisely in love and truth, do we not?

"I believe that many of those of us who are younger really do want to learn about the actual matters which are at stake, but that cannot be done without first investigating the matters really thoroughly.

"Thus, one must first ensure what something really is - before one can accept or reject it according to Scripture.

"Let us then be patient with one another - and especially, please, with those of us who still know so little about the subject. Thus, everyone would be able to determine for himself whether this doctrine is indeed in line with the Scriptures. Not only the honour of God, but also our brotherhood should be precious to us during the times in which we live. Thank you. With covenantal greetings, Slabbert le Cornu."

From: Dr Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: Frid. June 8, 2001; 10:28 p.m.  
Subject: Grace common and/or special

"Agreed [to Slabbert's suggestions, although I believe 'common grace' was operative even before the human fall and the sin of man]. Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee...."

From: Piet van der Kooi  
Date: Sat. Jun. 9, 2001; 3:49 a.m.  
Calvin Group Discussion List  
Subject: Grace common and/or special

"I react to Slabbert le Cornu's suggestion (dated 7 Junie 2001) concerning modes of operation relating to the discussion of common and particular grace, as already come up for discussion.

"In my opinion, he is approaching the matter from the wrong side. That does not concern the terms regarding God's grace, goodness, favour *etc.* in general - as they are found in Afrikaans, Dutch or English translations of the Bible. But the matter concerns specifically whether God after the fall into sin (Genesis 3:6) exhibited common grace in the continuing existence of humanity. For He previously expressly said: 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die!' (Genesis 2:16-17).

"Is the mere continuing existence of humanity 'grace' in the sense of the forgiveness of guilt - while everything goes along in its usual way? Is there a difference between special grace, the guilt-forgiving grace which God announced in Genesis 3:15 (the *protevangelion* [*moederbelofte*]), the promise of the coming Redeemer as regards the children of the Lord alone - and common grace given to all men equally?

"Does 'grace' mean that the sun rises and sets, that the seasons run their circle, that the Earth yields its fruit, that man has a reasonable understanding with which he can reason and decide and execute acts? If a criminal condemned to death gets pardoned - he receives grace, and his punishment is remitted. Is that (humanly speaking) the same which occurred in the garden of Eden

when God punished Adam en Eve and at the same time announced the way of salvation - the recreation in Jesus Christ?

"This is where we must begin. Did God - after the transgression of the 'test commandment' - totally execute (*voltrek*) the curse which He pronounced in Genesis 2:16-17? Or did He grant common grace - in our words, 'amnesty'?"

"What is the essential meaning of 'in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die' (Genesis 2:17)? Did God, instead of that, give 'common grace' to all men - and special guilt-forgiving and recreating grace only to believers?"

"What is now the situation with the internal knowledge of God and the natural knowledge of the Law of which the Heathen partake? How should it be explained? There are a few texts in the Bible which are being explained contradictorily!"

"In order to get an answer to these questions, we should not re-invent the wheel - but in the first place consult the *Decrees of Dordt*. There, the Reformed truth stands against the errors of the Libertines of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. That is where the background lies of the matter with which we have to do. It was then penetratingly investigated and discussed, and the errors of the Arminians [*Remonstrante*] were refuted. Let us please, in an orderly way, reflect on this, and then proceed further hence.

"Further, we need to note Dr Abraham Kuyper's 'sample'-doctrines ( '*proef*'-*leerstellingen*) concerning common and special grace - how he motivates and verifies them with that which the Dordt Fathers confessingly accepted and established in the confessional writings.

"Then we should carefully become acquainted with the Scripture-motivated critique by Professor Schilder, and his views, as set out in scores of his works (such as *Wat is de hemel?* [*What is Heaven?*], *Christus en Kultuur* [*Christ and Culture*], *Is die term 'algemene genade' wetenskaplik verantwoord?* [*Is the term 'Common Grace' Scientifically Responsible?*], and others).

"In other words: back to the matter concerned! All kinds of arguments should not be sought for - in order to try to prove, through a back door, that which has been accepted in advance (*by voorbaat*). Please do not confuse the issue, but aim at the goal with an open mind!"

"With Calvinistic brotherly greetings, P van der Kooi."

From: Slabbert le Cornu

Date: Mon. June11, 2001; 2:43 p.m.

"I profess my ignorance concerning the subjects, and shall sit and listen to the right modes of operation and answers. Thank you. Covenantal greetings, Slabbert le Cornu."

From: Dr Francis Nigel Lee

Date: Mon. June 11, 2001; 8:48 p.m.

"A few remarks [on Piet van der Kooi's communication of Sat. Jun. 9, 2001, 3:49 a.m.]. He stated the matter does not concern the terms regarding God's grace, but whether God after the fall into sin (Genesis 3:6) exhibited common grace in the continuing existence of humanity.

"No, the matter specifically concerns **common** grace - alias common **grace**. And **grace** began before the fall, with **God** - and not only after **man's** fall into sin. Here we need the hermeneutics of Christ, Who first asked how matters were 'at the **beginning**' (Matthew 19:4f).

"Yes, the mere continuing existence of fallen humanity and the forgiveness of guilt till the end of World History, are both matters of grace. Naturally there is a difference between special grace which God gives to the children of the Lord alone and common grace given to all men equally - except that (thus John Murray) common grace is not distributed to all men in one and the same essence (*eenswesens*).

"Piet asks whether the rising and setting of the sun, and the seasons running their circle, and the Earth yielding its fruit - are matters of grace. I would counter-ask whether those matters are then **un**-merciful - both before and after the fall?

"Piet says it is grace when a **criminal** condemned to death gets pardoned and his punishment is remitted. But notice that this has **nothing** to do with the forgiveness of **sin[ners]**! Amnesty granted by a human court to one convicted of a **crime** - in no way constitutes remission of the **sins** at the root of that crime]!

"Piet further asks whether that is the same which occurred in the garden of Eden when God punished Adam and Eve and at the same time announced the way of salvation - the recreation in Jesus Christ? No, because that was an offer of special **saving** grace!....

"Piet asks whether God after the transgression of the 'test commandment' totally executed the curse which He pronounced in Genesis 2:16-17 - or whether He granted common grace 'amnesty'? I answer God **began** totally to execute it. Regarding the word 'amnesty': is the Pope Polish?

"Piet asks: 'What is the essential meaning of "in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die!" (Genesis 2:17)?' I answer: '*Moot jamoot*,' meaning: very definitely die!

"Piet asks if God instead gave 'common grace' to all men - and special guilt-forgiving and recreating grace only to believers? I answer: No, for 'common grace' roots prelapsarianly.

"Piet asks what is now the situation with the internal knowledge of God and the natural knowledge of the Law of which the Heathen partake? I answer the latter are inexcusable.

"Piet asks how this should be explained? I answer by way of prelapsarianly-rooted **common** grace.

"Piet observes there are a few texts in the Bible which are being explained contradictorily. I answer: Indeed!

"Piet says: 'In order to get an answer to these questions, we should not re-invent the wheel - but in the first place consult the *Decrees of Dordt*.' I answer: No, we must in the first place consult the Holy Scriptures.... Otherwise, we would be putting the cart of Dordt with its invented wheel(s) - before the horse of Scripture!

"Piet says: 'There [at Dordt], the Reformed truth stands against the errors of the Libertines of the fourteenth and fifteenth century.' I reply: Yes, but that concerned the five points of Calvinism; not non-saving common grace....

"Piet says: 'We need to note Dr Abraham Kuyper's "sample"-doctrines concerning common and special grace - how he motivates and verifies them with that which the Dordt Fathers confessingly accepted and established in the confessional writings.' I ask: Who is that Kuyper? Where in the **Word** does one encounter him?

"Piet says: 'Then we should carefully become acquainted with the Scripture-motivated critique of Professor Klaas Schilder.' I ask: Who is that Schilder? Where in the **Word** does one encounter him?

"But I do note that the names of both Kuyper and Schilder end in -er. That is different to names in Scripture itself (except, of course, for Er in Genesis 38)!

"Piet says: 'All kinds of arguments should not be sought for - in order to try to prove, through a back door, that which has been accepted in advance.' I answer: It seems to me both Kuyper and Schilder are here back doors!

"Cordially in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

From: Piet van der Kooi

Date: Tue. June 12, 2001; 7:04 a.m.

"The highly-respected Dr. Francis Nigel Lee has climbed in at my reaction concerning Slabbert le Cornu's suggestion (dated 7 June 2001). In that way, he apparently wishes to reason about the matter of common/special grace in the way Slabbert proposed and I rejected.

"His reply more or less consists of agreement with Slabbert's proposal. I am answering his reply (tentatively), as he placed it as the first point as to its order.

"According to Dr. Lee, grace began already before the fall. That is in my opinion the beginning of confusing terminology.

"What is the meaning of the word 'grace'? My dictionary says: 'undeserved attitude of forgiveness, mercifulness, compassion, forgiveness....' That is not applicable to the circumstances and the condition of creation as such.

"In that respect, Professor K. Schilder (K.S.) is right in putting it thus: 'He who makes almost everything grace, removes marrow and kernel from the concept of grace. Grace is, taking the word in the strict sense - not elevation (heightening - PvdK), but reparation.

"It is no advancement to a higher plan - but repair from the fall in the first plan. It is no multiplication of but little capital - but the giving back of capital. Already in the struggle against Pelagius, Augustine pleaded to reserve the use of the word "grace" ...for what God in Christ does to a fallen world' (*Heidelbergsche Catechismus*, Part I, pg. 285).

"Before the fall, there is mention of God's good pleasure (*welbehae*). Dr. K. Dijk describes it fairly extensively in the first edition of the *Christelijke Encyclopaedie voor het Nederlandsche Volk* [*Christian Encyclopaedia for the Dutch People*], IV:658-63 and V:702-704. Dr. Dijk answers the question: 'What is the root meaning of good pleasure?' - as follows:

"In the Hebrew word which we translate as good pleasure, resides the root idea encompassing a stretching out or spanning of itself. Thus this concept got the meaning of the inclination of the heart stretching itself out. It would thus suggest that the desire, or if you wish the love, of the soul - goes out to some or other object, and takes a delight and finds its joy therein.

"From this, it immediately flows forth that the object of the good pleasure must have something in itself which arouses love and desire.... No good pleasure is possible, without some kind of quality of goodness or beauty which draws the heart like iron does a magnetic needle.

"This is also where the difference lies between mercy or tenderheartedness - and good pleasure. Mercy bows itself down to the miserable, and we have pity upon the unfortunate who has nothing in himself in which we can rejoice.

"But our eye rests in self-desire and good pleasure toward that which is good and beautiful and lovely. "A fallen child shall arouse compassion in the father's heart; while the child who gave him joy is an object of his good pleasure"....

"Also the eternal God knows His good pleasure and self-desire.... In what does the Lord then in the first place have a good pleasure? Not in creatures - and, among the creatures, not in man. But God in the first place has a complete good will in Himself - and He first of all completely loves Himself.

“He does all things according to the counsel of His Own will [or good pleasure]. He has His Own reasons for everything He does. He can seek nothing other than His Own honour, and in a similar sense His good pleasure extends itself also to the Son....

"The deepest motive of God's love, lies in His Own Being. Thus alone does God's good pleasure become clear to us. It is therefore the perfect love of the Eternal toward Himself, and God's Self-pleasure in His Own virtues.

"Thus the Lord takes reasons from Himself for all He does, and He seeks His honour with everything which shall occur in time. Thus understood, the Scripture introduces us to the concept of good will as the deepest ground of God's works.' Thus K. Dijk.

"That confirms the difference between the position of man before and after the fall. Therefore the matter of grace is incidental (*bykomend*). Without the fall, grace was not an issue. After the fall, the World and the humanity which had to and would proceed from Adam and Eve could not continue to exist.

"This confirms the critical refutation by Professor Schilder of Kuyper's theories concerning general and particular grace. Schilder is concerned about the grace God brought about through Jesus Christ - the continuation of His plan of creation, of His 'good will in and for the sake of Himself' toward the goal which He in His Triune Counsel had decided already before creation.

"Let us then first reach agreement about this matter. The rest of Dr. Lee's answer is indissolubly connected with this. Once again with Calvinistic national greetings (*Boeregroete*), P. van der Kooi."

From: Piet van der Kooi

Date: Tue. June 12, 2001; 7:39 p.m.

Subject: Once again the matter of Arminianism and general/particular grace

"The matter of general/particular grace has in my opinion not been terminated with my last reply to Dr. Lee's viewpoint that 'grace' was there already before the fall. That, I motivatedly refuted - with arguments by Klaas Schilder and Dr. Karl Dijk (on this post list dated 1.06.12). There is, till now, a silence about this - on the part of Dr. Lee.

"However, I would like to exhaust the matter. In the latter-mentioned reply, I asked to reach agreement about the matter that there was no question of 'grace' before the fall - but that, as Dr. K. Dijk explained it, '[before the fall it was] God's good pleasure in Himself and for His sake.' That is the exposition which agrees with Klaas Schilder's.

"If we agree in this, the question remains which can further be discussed as to whether two kinds (*tweëerlei*) of grace (general and particular grace according to Dr. Abraham Kuyper's theories)



- were granted by God after the fall (Genesis 3:14f). Then we are again back at the views set out in my replies to Dr. Lee's views (on this postal list dated 01.05.14 and 01.07.06).

"This matter is in my opinion important enough to discuss further, precisely because of the far-reaching consequences connected to it as regards the struggle of the Dordt Fathers concerning Arminianism in which the internal depravity as a result of the fall (the so-called 'original taint') was not accepted. This is motivatedly rejected in the *Decrees of Dordt*. I refer particularly to chapters III-IV:3 at the Rejection of the Errors:

"The Synod rejects the error of those who teach that "in spiritual death the spiritual gifts (*viz.* 'good habits and virtues like goodness and holiness and righteousness' [in paragraph 2]) were not separated from man's will, seeing that the will in itself was never perverted but was only hindered from opportunities by the darkening of the understanding and disorder. When these hindrances have been removed, the will is then again able to exercise its free inherent power. That is to say, it can itself desire and even choose - or not choose or not desire to will and not to choose - all kinds of good things proposed to it."

"The Synod teaches: "That is a novelty and an error, whereby the powers of the 'free will' are exalted. It is against the pronouncement of the prophet: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9); and that of the apostle: 'Among whom (namely the children of disobedience) we all had our behaviour in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Ephesians 2:3).'"

"Back to today's practice! Can we, for example, regards the matter of 'human rights' which are today a fundamental part of society - as a fruit of 'common grace'?"

"Or have we here the consequences of internal depravity so that, without the wholesome operation of Christ and without recreative particular grace as revealed in the Word of the Lord - man is not able to do good, his understanding and will being perverted? Is the matter of 'human rights' thus not serving to heal society, but in many respects precisely promoting chaos in society?"

"I regard this matter as of such great importance as to discuss it further on this postal list - with the hope of finally agreeing about this, and thus in a Christian way being able to give an answer against 'the enemies inside the city-gates.' With cordial Calvinistic national greetings (*Boeregroete*), P[iet]. van der Kooi."

From: Francis Nigel Lee

Date: Sun. June 17, 2001;10:34 p.m.

"[With reference to Piet's last letter above,] I think we first need to wind up the question of general and special grace. That - before I would, with him, wish to reject Arminianism. [Piet's sustained attempt to try to couple Kuyper's doctrine of common grace with Arminianism - is in my

opinion quite amusing. Was it after all not Kuyper himself who wrote the book *Dat de [Reddende] Genade Particulier Is* [[Saving] Grace is Particular]?!].

"Meanwhile: 'Make haste, O day in God's Own plan -  
when Heathen, Jew, Muhammadan (and Heretic Arminian) -  
shall come to Jesus, Son of man!'  
[*'Laat breek die dag dan spoedig aan,  
dat Heiden, Jood, Mohammedaan (en Ketter soos Arminiaan) -  
voor Jesus neerkniel, diep bewoë!*']].

"Piet wrote: 'The matter of general/particular grace has in my opinion not been terminated with my last reply to Dr. Lee's viewpoint that "grace" was there already before the fall. That, I motivatedly refuted with arguments by Klaas Schilder en Dr. Karl Dijk.... There is, till now, a silence about this - on the part of Dr. Lee.'

Dr. Lee then replied: "What should I then say? I agree that not just Schilder's but also Dijk's books are precious to me.

[For example, in this regard see especially Dijk's *Om 't Eeuwig Welbehagen (Concerning the Eternal Good Pleasure)* and his *De Voorzienigheid Gods (God's Providence)*. My copy of the first book is personally autographed: 'To Nik Lee, in memory of our interesting conversation on 20th April 1959 in Cape Town. K. Dijk.'

"In both of those books, Dijk constantly praises Kuyper's trilogy *Gemeene Gratie* or *Common Favour* far more lavishly than I have ever done! For example, in his *Providence* (pp. 5-7 & 86 & 240-44), Dijk is 'reminded of the mighty work of men like Kuyper and Bavinck....

"Especially in *De Gemeene Gratie*, Kuyper freshly exhibited the treasures which lay hidden in this doctrine. And he drew out these old and pure lines in opposition to many kinds of misunderstanding....

"This idea, Kuyper works out more closely.... We could not put it more clearly and sharply than the writer of *De Gemeene Gratie*.'

"Thus Piet van der Kooi's own hero, Rev. Professor Dr. Karl Dijk. All emphases above, are by me (Dr. Lee). I shall have more to say right after this present letter of mine, about the Dutch *Christelijke Encyclopaedie (Christian Encyclopaedia)* and the two articles by Dijk in it to which Brother van der Kooi in his June 12th letter directed my attention.]

"In spite of that [my admiration for Dijk], I am till today dissatisfied with Dijk's 20th April 1959 answer to me - when I asked him if women according to First Corinthians 11 should still have long hair. For he then replied, sub-biblically: 'Even my godly mother wore her hair short!'

"Thus the first question should not first be: 'What does Schilder or Dijk say?' But: 'What does **Scripture** itself say - about grace?'

"Piet says he wants 'to exhaust the matter.' He says he wants 'to reach agreement about the matter that there was no question of "grace" before the fall.' But, as I have already said..., the viewpoint above [*viz.* Piet's] is not that of the *Heidelberg Catechism* at its Question 12! For it there indeed speaks of '*wiederum zu Gnade kommen*' ['being **again** received into grace'] - **precisely** in connection with the repair (*herstel*) of man!

"I do agree with Piet and with Dr. K. Dijk that grace is 'God's good will in Himself and for His sake.' And I trust that Schilder's definition [hopefully] agrees with this.

"Piet wrote if we agree about this, we can then discuss whether two kinds of grace (general and particular) were granted by God after the fall. No, we should **not yet** discuss **that**! Piet should first say whether he agrees with Question 12 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Was man in a state of **grace** also before the fall - yes, or no?

"And if Piet further here refuses to agree with the *Heidelberger*, I wish to ask the now-silent Slabbert (who launched this subject) - whether he here agrees with the *Heidelberger*, or not.

"Cordially in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

[In his letter June 12 2001, Brother van der Kooi, instead of there and then discussing the concepts of "grace" and "common grace" - referred me to two articles in the Dutch *Christelijke Encyclopaedie* by Dr. Karl Dijk (*viz.* his article *Raad Gods* [alias *God's Counsel*] and *Welbehagen* [alias *Good Pleasure*]). Neither article is about "Grace."

"Yet, as I have shown in my previous letter immediately above, it is very interesting Piet van der Kooi's hero Dr. Dijk does not with Hoeksema and Schilder and Piet van der Kooi reject Calvin's and Westminster's and Kuyper's doctrine of "Common Grace." Dijk warmly upholds it.

It is very unfortunate that Piet apparently did not also consult the articles in his 1925 Dutch encyclopaedia written by Rev. Dr. Henry Beets, Rev. Professor Dr. G.Ch. Aalders, Rev. J. Bosch, J.J. Hangelbroek, Mr. G.M. den Hartogh, Dr. J.H. Haverkate, Rev. Professor Dr. V. Hepp, Rev. Professor T. Hoekstra, Rev. Joh. Jansen, Rev. Dr. C.N. Impeta, Rev. Dr. Abraham Kuyper Jr., Rev. Dr. J.H. Landwehr, Dr. J.C. Rullmann, and Rev. J.P. Tazelaar. Had he done so, he might have been surprised to learn that **all** of them support the Calvinian doctrine of Common Grace.

For example, the article *Grace* in Piet's Dutch encyclopaedia declares: "Grace is the virtue of God to think in love about and to take care of poor insignificant...creatures, and is also the name of everything which they receive from that gracious God both for temporal as well as for eternal life. By 'grace' - many are accustomed to think only and exclusively of the forgiveness of sins.... But the

word 'grace' comprehends much more, and needs to be taken much more widely. For in general, it means the unmeritedness of God's mercy....

"God was not obliged to give Adam a place in such a glorious Paradise. It was grace that He did so. God was not obliged to give Adam a promise to give him everlasting life as a reward, if the covenant of works was fulfilled. It was grace that He nevertheless did so. Grace refers not only to the spiritual benefits which God gives for eternity, but also to the temporal blessings given for this life. Therefore one distinguishes between common and special grace. Common grace is given to all people, for God benefits all creatures.... It is grace in the general sense when God in condescending goodness wishes to grant favour to mere human beings in the realm of nature."

Again, in the article *Common Grace* in Piet van der Kooi's Dutch encyclopaedia, one reads: "Our Reformed Fathers spoke of *gratia communis* (communal grace).... Common grace thus involves: 1. Individual men - it does not permit that the depravity of the human personality comes to full manifestation [before the very end of history].... 2. Humanity - it makes it possible that man co-operates with man; that the human race propagates itself; that the State...can maintain itself.... 3. The cosmos - that the World around us still maintains a certain regularity; that the Earth still produces something other than just thorns and thistles; that natural history is not only one of catastrophes; that the nightingale enchants the ear with its song; that the lily blossoms in stainless whiteness. This can only be explained from common grace."]

From: Piet van der Kooi

Date: Mon. June 18, 2001; 7:20 a.m.

Subject: Once again the matter of Arminianism....

Answer to Dr. Lee's replies dated 18 [17] June 2001.

"To the response by Dr. F.N. Lee (hereafter F.N.L.) against my reply regarding his viewpoint that there was indeed 'grace' even before the fall, I would like to answer as follows.... If I consult my concordances, I nowhere find the little word 'grace' mentioned in the first three chapters of Genesis. It therefore has to be derived from other Scriptural data.

"We find an important reference with the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:23-24: 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and they are justified by His grace without merit, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.' That confirms the view that grace exists only in the meaning of the forgiveness of guilt.

"That is even more strongly confirmed in Romans 5:15. 'But it is not with the offence as it is with the grace-gift. For if through the offence of one, many are dead - much more has the grace [*charis*] of God, and the gift through grace by One man Jesus Christ, abounded for many.'

"There are scores of similar prooftexts in Scripture. The onus rests on F.N.L. himself - to show from Scripture that grace was mentioned in human existence before the fall.

"As Scripture reveals it, Christ is the Mediator of the covenant of grace. Was Christ that - even already before the fall? Was a Mediator needed when no sin had yet been committed? How does F.N.L. explain his concept of grace before the fall?

"Here I refer in the first place to Abraham Kuyper in *E Voto Dordraceno* (3rd ed., I:81), where he says: 'Immediately note that the *Heidelberger* [Q. 12] asks: "Is there a means to be received into grace again?" Grace does not here mean remission of guilt, but that blessed condition of being united to God in which Adam stood before his fall. "Grace" would here mean: peace with God, God's glorious favours. Man stood in that favour. Through sin, he fell out of those favours. Wrath arrived, in the place of those favours. And now the question asks: is there a means whereby the wrath can go away and the favour return - or, as the *Catechism* literally expresses is, "a means to escape this punishment and be received in grace again?"' Thus Kuyper.

"K. Schilder gives also his comment on this, It is as follows (*Heidelbergsche Catechismus*, 1949, I: 8-9): 'The editing [*redactie*] of the first Question [12] of this Part [II], has often given rise to some headaches. It has said "again be received into grace." Well, now - was there then "grace" **also** already before the fall? Does so maintaining this, indeed agree with our consistent [*doorlopend*] view that "grace" was actually there only after the fall - namely when God's favour had been forfeited by sin?

"'We don't need to go into this broadly. Ursinus's Latin has "*reconciliemur*" - and thus asks whether also reconciliation [*verzoening*] is possible. Reconciliation - again to live at peace with the other party. Something similar was also intended by the Dutch "*wederom tot genade komen*" ["again to come to grace"]. We do not here need a dissertation about "nature and grace" and to enquire about the relationship in which the two stand to one another.

"'For such a dissertation is not intended. "Grace" is here equivalent to "favour" ["*Genade*" *is hier zooveel als "gunst"*]; and that had not yet been forfeited before the fall. It had just as little been "merited" ["*Verdiend*" *was ze natuurlijk evenmin*]. The meaning of the term "grace" in the sense of "favour" is still to be found in the expression "to fall into disgrace" ["*in ongenade vallen*"].' Thus K.S. [Klaas Schilder].

"As I understand it, the theories of general/special grace stand apart from the question as to whether there was or was not a question of grace before the fall. That itself is a matter about which I also disagree with F.N.L. This matter has not yet thoroughly been discussed [*uitgepraat*] in the sense that we agree about it.

"I stand firmly by the conviction stated, that there was no question of grace before the fall into sin - with the meaning which has normally been given to it. Kuyper, Dijk and Schilder all interpret it in a different sense to F.N.L. Dr. Lee shall have to come with stronger arguments to convince me of his view. With Christian greetings, P. van der Kooi."

From:Slabbert le Cornu  
Date: Mon. June 18, 2001;12:49 p.m.

"F.N.L. wrote...‘Piet should first say whether he agrees with Question 12 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Was man in a state of **grace** also before the fall - yes, or no? And if Piet further here refuses to agree with the *Heidelberg Catechism*, I wish to ask the now-silent Slabbert (who launched this subject [re Psalm 145:9]) whether he here agrees with the *Heidelberg Catechism* - or not?’

"My silence is twofold. A) I am now so busy trying to fulfil the vocation of special grace on the territory of ‘common grace’ - the public school - that I do not get the time to study each message thoroughly.... B) The arguments from both sides have confused me even more, and therefore it would be foolish of me already now to try to appear to be wise about this subject.

"Lastly, a question. We do not find the word ‘covenant’ before the fall into sin. Did the covenant thus become necessary only as a result of the fall into sin, and therefore not exist before the fall into sin? Thank you. Covenantal greetings, Slabbert le Cornu."

From:Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: Wed. June 20, 2001; 9:07 p.m....

FNL: "'Covenant' indeed occurs in the Hebrew at Hosea 6:7 [‘They, like Adam, transgressed the Covenant’] - and thus proves what Diemer rightly calls: *Het Scheppingsverbond met Adam* [*The Creation Covenant with Adam*]. So too the *Westminster Confession of Faith* [7:1-2], Warfield, Kuyper, Aalders, and Pink [and, indeed, also Schilder!].

"Cordially in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

From: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: Wed. June 20, 2001; 9:25 p.m.  
Subject: Once again the matter of Arminianism and general/particular grace

"I regret I received no e-mails last week end! Fortunately/by grace, everything is now again working correctly. I answer [Piet van der Kooi’s letter of June 18, 2001] as follows.

"Piet wrote: ‘If I consult my concordances, I nowhere find the little word "grace" mentioned in the first three chapters of Genesis.’

"That is true [not just of **common** but] also of **special** grace. Yet its first mention [as ‘grace’] at Genesis 6:8 does not mean there was no special grace already at Genesis 3:15*f*. And even at 3:15, there was no special grace for the serpent there addressed!

"Piet wrote that the existence of the concept of grace during the period covered by the first three chapters of Genesis 'therefore has to be derived from other Scriptural data.' I respond: "Correct. Especially from data about the sinless Second Adam - Luke 2:40-52. And, according to Rev. Professor John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and apparently also Slabbert le Cornu, even from Psalm 145:8-10.

[Indeed, according to many others (such as Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, the *Qur'an* at its 20:115, Abarbanel, Luther, the *First Swiss Confession of Faith*, Bullinger, the *Dordt Dutch Bible*, Burroughs, Turretin, Matthew Henry, Mastricht, Jonathan Edwards, Robert Shaw, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Hodges, Gravemeijer, Shedd, Keil, Delitzsch, Warfield, Bavinck, and the Kuypers) - this is taught also by Scripture in general and by Hosea 6:7 in particular. See my study *Life and Works: God's Creation Covenant with Adam*.

Incidentally, Calvin and Beza and de Brés's *Belgic Confession* and Ussher's *Irish Articles* and the *Westminster Larger Catechism* and Matthew Henry - all wrote about God making a "covenant" with the angels even before His covenant with the unfallen Adam. Compare too God's covenant with the pre-human day and night and animals according to Genesis 1:1-5 cf. 8:22 & 9:12-17 and Job 5:23 cf. 12:7f and Jeremiah 33:2-25 and Hosea 2:18.

Indeed, this is admitted by Schilder too. See his address *The Main Points of the Doctrine of the Covenant*.

Moreover, also the *French Confession* authored by **John Calvin** (and his student Chandieu), says in its article 9 that "man...fell from the **grace which he had received** (*déchu de la **grâce** qu'il **avait reçue***)." See too Hosea 6:7.]

"Piet wrote: 'We find an important reference with the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:23-24.... That confirms the view that grace exists only in the meaning of the forgiveness of guilt.'

"Correct [as to Piet's first sentence above; but the conclusion he drew in his second sentence above, is incorrect]. The contextual special grace clarifies that this redemption here implies precisely the forgiveness of guilt." [However, that context - while not denying that Adam's prefall condition was one of 'grace' - certainly implies that before all so sinned, man's original condition was indeed one of gracious sinlessness. See too at Romans 5:12-14f.]

"Piet wrote that forgiveness of guilt 'is even more strongly confirmed in Romans 5:15.' [There, the grace-gift is called a *charisma*, and God's grace *charis*, and the gift by grace *doorea en chariti*. None of which is discussing grace as such.]

"Piet wrote: 'The onus rests on F.N.L. himself to show from Scripture that grace was mentioned in human existence before the fall.' Dr. Lee responds: 'Is it not true that the onus rests on the *Heidelberg Catechism*, at its Question 12?'

"Piet wrote: 'As Scripture reveals it, Christ is the Mediator of the covenant of grace. Was Christ that - even already before the fall?' Dr. Lee responds: 'The eternal Son was both Mediator of Creation as well as God's Covenant-Word to the unfallen Adam.'

"Piet asked whether a Mediator was needed 'when no sin had yet been committed.' To this, Dr. Lee responds: 'Yes. Without God's Son-Word, the unfallen Adam could have understood nothing about God.'

"Piet asked: 'How does F.N.L. explain his concept of grace before the fall?' Dr. Lee responds: 'Undeserved favour alone! And how does Piet explain communication [between God and man] before the fall?'

"Piet wrote that Kuyper said the *Heidelberg* [Q. 12] teaches that 'grace' there means God's glorious 'favours.' Here I agree with Kuyper. Thus, 'grace' not necessarily implies the forgiveness of sin..

"[As Piet noted, Kuyper himself said at Q. 12: 'Grace does not here mean remission of guilt, but that blessed condition of being united to God in which Adam stood before his fall.'] But remember that the *Heidelberg Catechism* needs neither Kuyper nor Schilder!

"Piet wrote that Schilder gives also his comment on the *Heidelberg*, admitting that its Question 12 has often given him headaches where it asks how fallen man 'again comes to grace.' Schilder asked: 'Well now - was there then "grace" **also** already before the fall?' Dr. Lee responds: 'Yes, according to the *Heidelberg Catechism*!'

"Piet wrote that Schilder asked: 'Does...maintaining this, indeed agree with our consistent view that "grace" was actually there only after the fall?' Dr. Lee responds: 'No, so Schilder **here differs** with the *Heidelberg Catechism*!' [Lee here agrees with the *Heidelberg* against Schilder.]

"Piet wrote that Schilder stated: 'We don't need to go into this broadly.... We do not here need a dissertation about "nature and grace".... "**Grace**" is here equivalent to "favour"...and that had not yet been forfeited before the fall.'

"Dr. Lee responds: 'Comment on this...is unnecessary.' [For if as Schilder here rightly states, "'**grace**" is here equivalent to 'favour'" - and **that favour** 'had not yet **been forfeited before** the fall' - then it follows there was indeed **grace** also before the fall! *Quod erat demonstrandum!*]

"Piet wrote 'that there was no question of grace before the fall into sin' and that 'Kuyper, Dijk and Schilder all interpret it in a different sense to F.N.L.' Dr. Lee responds: 'That is incorrect (*onwaar*)! FNL interprets it like Kuyper [and Dijk] (and the *Heidelberg* and Calvin)."

"Cordially in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee,  
Professor Emeritus of the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College."



From: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Subject: General grace once again.  
Date: Wed. 11 [= 21<sup>f</sup>?] July 2001.

"It is unfortunate that the discussion on common grace on the Calvin Group Discussion List - after my last remarks about it - seems to have reached a bit of a dead end.

"[However,] the little word 'again' (*wiederum*) in the 12th Question of the *Heidelberg Catechism* - 'How is man again received into grace?' - has not yet been analyzed sufficiently on the Calvin List. **Whatever** the word 'grace' may mean there - Ursinus's Latin word '*reconciliemur*' in no way presupposes the forgiveness of sin but simply means 'to win **back once more**' or '**re**-pair' or '**once again** make unto good counsel' (*re* + *concili* + *emur*). It is, accordingly, undeniable that this 'grace' indeed operated also **before** man's fall into sin.

"So the word 'grace' - **confessionally** - may not be narrowed down merely to the forgiveness of sin (however important that may be!). Thus too that Arch-Calvinian and Arch-Confessionalist, the Promoter of my first doctoral dissertation, the late Rev. Professor Dr. F.J.M. Potgieter.

"Further, it is also clear from the mention of 'grace' in Psalm 145:8-10 that it is there a **creational** category. Accordingly, it is therefore not a **remissional** category.

"Thus that excellent Calvinist the late Professor John Murray (of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia). And this, in spite of the fact that he (like Hoeksema *cum suis* and in my view altogether wrongly) and quite contrary to the *Westminster Confession* 7:1-3 questioned the **covenant-of-works character** of the supralapsarian condition of God's acts upon Adam. *Per contra*, however, the Hebrew of Hosea 6:7 - thus Aalders, Warfield and Pink *etc.*

"It is also clear to me that even the earthly conception and continued existence and gifting of the reprobate Cain and the Cainites - is a **general** fruit of the cosmos-embracing *Protevangelion* in Genesis 3:15, which **specialy** guarantees the forgiveness of sins only to the elect. Even that Adamite *par excellence*, Christ the Second Adam, increased in a 'grace' which involved no forgiveness of sin. Luke 2:40-52.

"As I pointed out in the revised edition of my [1974] book *Man's Origin and Destiny*: 'The dominion charter, and man's dominion over all created things - then - is intimately connected with the very nature of man as the image of the all-dominating God. Man - even fallen man - is hardly thinkable in any other terms.

"It is, of course, perfectly true, on account of the fall - that man is now no longer able (as he was before the fall) to execute the dominion charter exclusively to God's glory. But it is not true that God ever withdrew the charter because of man's fall. To the contrary, He did not.

"Nor did God the Son expect the impossible of fallen man. For, in the *Protevangelium* or First Gospel Promise made right after the fall, He - the pre-incarnate Word of God - not only immediately arrested the uncontrolled spread of sin by His common grace, thus guaranteeing the continuing unfoldability of the pre-fall potentialities in creation. In addition, He also gave special grace to His elect - not only to be saved, but also to do all things specifically to His glory, even after the fall.

"For it was God's undeserved grace alone which, variously: caused Him to condescend to create man; caused Him to permit fallen man to continue to exist; enabled even Cain to be born and to become a gardener and a city-builder; and enabled his ungodly descendants to become cattle-ranchers and tent-makers and harpists and organists and metallurgical instructors and ironmongers and brassmongers and even poets *etc.* Genesis 4:1-3,17,20-24 and Job 32:8 & 33:4 with Isaiah 28:24-29.

"As Calvin observes (against especially the Anabaptists) in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* II:2:15-17 & II:3:3: "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....

"Let us not forget 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....

"There are most excellent blessings which the Divine Spirit dispenses to whom He will for the **common** benefit of mankind.... [For God] fills, moves and invigorates all things by the virtue of the Spirit...

"In this diversity, we can trace some remains of the divine image distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures.... We ought to consider that notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, there is some room for divine grace - such grace as, **without purifying** it, may lay it under internal restraint."

"On John 1:5, Calvin comments: "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."

"And at Genesis 4:20, Calvin adds: "The sons of Cain, though deprived of the Spirit of regeneration, were yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind.... 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[out] the whole human race."

"See too 'condescension' and 'covenant' and '**grace**' in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 7:1-3 [before the fall into sin]. Note too '**common** operations of the **Spirit**' [also after the fall] in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 10:4 [and in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* 68].

"Amicably in Christ, Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

From: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: Aug. 1st, 2001; 11:05 a.m.  
Subject: Final word on common grace

"Till today, no reply has appeared on the Calvin List to my message 11 July [= 21<sup>st</sup>?]. So I wish in conclusion (here off that Calvin List) just to mention that the Holy Scripture itself clarifies that **grace as such** - has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins only after the fall.

"Christ was the sinless Second Adam. And Christ Himself 'grew and became strong in spirit and filled with wisdom; and the **grace** (*charis*) of God was upon Him....

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in **grace** (*chariti*) with God and man.' Luke 2:40,52.

"Rev. Professor Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr. therefore writes in his *Dictaten Dogmatiek* [*Dogmatic Dictations*] (Kok, Kampen, 1910, I:1:365): 'We therefore have to regard the *gratia* [grace] as *bonitas exeuns* [outgoing goodness], an expression of goodness from the *Fons omnium bonorum* [Fountain of all good things]. In that sense, the concept of "grace" comprehends **all** gifts coming from God to His creation [*cf.* James 1:17] . Hence we read in First Peter 5:10: "But the God of '**all** grace' [*Theos pasees charitos*]".... This makes known that **all kinds of good flow to us from the Fons omnium bonorum**. Hence too that we find *charis* [grace] used not only for grace shown to the sinner, but also to the creature - **without** consideration of sin.

"*Cf.* Luke 2:52. Here, of course, there is no question of grace shown to the sinner; because it applies to God's holy Child Jesus. *Theos* [God] is there combined with *anthroopos* [man]. It thus means here - that Jesus could rejoice in the favour, the good will, of both God and men. So too in Luke 2:40, where we find the reflexive concept of what we read in verse 52. Here the reference is to the good will which Jesus draws from God.

"In Luke 1:30, there is just as little mention of forgiving grace. For Mary is indeed a sinner, and she was saved only by grace. But that is not what stands here. **Here** it says she was chosen to become the mother of the Messiah. That was a high favour.

"In John 1:14, there is mention of a *doxa* [glory] which streamed forth in *charis* [grace] and *aleetheia* [truth]. Once again, then, not a **forgiving** grace [benefitting the Word alias the spotless Son of God].

"In Acts 7:10, we read in respect of Joseph that God gave him grace [*charin*] and wisdom before Pharaoh. This does not refer to forgiving grace, but to a pleasantness in the view of the king of Egypt.'

"In his *E Voto Dordraceno* (Wormser, Amsterdam, 1992, I:81), Dr. Kuyper explains Question 12 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* as follows: 'Notice immediately that the *Heidelberger* asks: "Is there a means **again** to come to grace?" Here, grace thus does not mean: remission of guilt, but that condition of being blessedly united with God in which Adam stood before his fall.

"**Grace** here suggests peace with God - God's glorious favours. Man stood in those favours. Through sin, he fell away from those favours.'

"On Question 61 of the *Heidelberger*, Kuyper here further explains (*op. cit.* II:327f and 331) that '**grace** in Holy Scripture almost always means: the **unmerited** [*ongehoudene*] tender mercy [*goedertierenheid*] of God whereby He, Who as our **Creator** owes us **nothing**, nevertheless brings to us all kinds of good both temporal and spiritual. When the angel says to Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found **grace** (*charin*) with God!" [Luke 1:30] - it does not at all mean that her punishment had been remitted, but only that God in His free power had prepared the very particular favour for her among all women of becoming the most blessed mother of the Messiah....

"This does indeed imply that what is **gracious** in this grace, comes to light ever more strongly where it goes forth to a damnable sinner. But that is only because, with a sinner, that which is unmerited [*ongehoudene*] in God's grace - comes out all the more vigorously (*nog zoveel te krasser*). In itself, grace does not at all presuppose that the one to whom it is given, is a sinner. For otherwise, how could it be said of the Mediator - that God's **grace** was upon Him (Luke 2:40)?...

"With **grace**, you should thus always go back to "God the Father the Almighty **Creator** of Heaven and Earth." As **Creator**, He stands **unmerited** toward the **creature**. "Nothing bound or compelled Him to **create** you. Already [the fact] that He **created** you, is pure **grace**....

"And now, here are "the riches of God's **grace**" [Ephesians 2:7]! He Who **created** us out of pure mercy (*uit loutere goedertierenheid*); He Who gave us His Law as a rule, out of pure mercy (*uit loutere goedertierenheid*) - does not allow us who broke the Law to kill ourselves with work. But out of altogether unmerited tender mercy and without us having had any right to demand it - He in His eternal Counsel ordained together with His Law also the means of healing us. And He appointed a way of salvation whereby He **again** brings an ungodly and damnably-guilty lawbreaker back to His Law - and everlastingly saves him [*Heidelberg Catechism* Question 12].'

"Finally, in the 4th impression of his work *Common Favour* (*De Gemeene Gratie* II:135f & II:147 & II:153), Kuyper draws the only possible conclusion. There he writes: 'That now is indeed in fact (*metterdaad*) possible - if the significance of "common grace" for the entire **dwelling of Christ among us** may be placed in the correct light.

"**"Particular grace"** - obviously - did not devolve upon **Christ**. Particular grace saves the **sinner** - not the **Holy One of God!** Where we also read in Luke 2:40 that "the **grace** of God was upon Him"; and in Luke 2:52 that "He increased in **grace** with God and with man" - one cannot think of "particular" [or saving] grace either in the first or in the second statement.

"In the first statement, by **grace** nothing else is to be understood than the particular good will of God (*goedgunstigheid Gods*) which is the joy of the angels and which rested also on Adam in Paradise before the fall. Whereas in the second statement, the addition "with God and man" already shows that nothing else can here be intended than elicited and aroused good will [toward Christ the sinless Second Adam].

"All **particular** (or saving) grace is thus excluded in the case of Christ. So the indwelling and internal operation of the Holy Spirit within the Mediator which was given to Him "without measure" [John 3:34] - and whatever more is stated in the Gospels - should never be explained otherwise than either of official unction or personal fellowship.

"This fellowship of [Christ the Second Adam's alias] Jesus' human existence and human consciousness of the Divine life and the Divine knowledge - may not be compared to the way in which we as regenerated children of God during this life enjoy fellowship with the Eternal Being. But it was capable of comparison only with the fellowship which: Adam had, before the fall; the angels had, apart from the fall; and the saved can possess, after their glorification in the everlasting Kingdom....

"There can for that reason be no question that Jesus [acquired saving or] particular grace. But it is quite different as regards **common grace**. Also an angel never partakes of [saving or] particular grace. Simply because a fallen angel is unsaveable; and a blessed angel never fell....

"Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in **grace** with God and man.' Luke 2:52.... That stands fast. **Therefore** it is also apparent...**that common grace even here yielded fruit [also] for Jesus!**

"In his e-mail of Saturday 9th June 2001, Piet van der Kooi asked six questions for which he later wanted answers. Here follow his six questions, *seriatim*, and my short answers to them.

"Question 1. Did God execute the curse which He pronounced in Genesis 2:16-17? Did He fully execute it after the transgression of the "test commandment"?"

"Answer: He immediately began to execute that curse. That very day, man began to die spiritually. Thereafter, Adam died physically - at 930 years of age. And thereafter his reprobate descendants remain dying in Hell for ever - without there ever being able to cease to exist.

"Question 2. Or did He grant "common grace" - in our words, "amnesty"?"

"Answer: Whereas God's common grace was granted also before the fall, and even persisted thereafter, God after the fall started to carry out the sentence for the primordial sin of man and all resultant human sins. He did this in Christ, and only for His elect. However, that is not to say that there were and are **no non-saving** fruits thereof at all even for the **reprobate**. For even the reprobate Cainites were, after the fall, born and raised and gifted only because Christ would later die (Genesis 3:15 to 4:24). However, amnesty is not a Biblical concept - and all unreconciled or reprobate sinners irrecallably go to Hell just like the Cainites [*cf.* First John 3:9].

"Question 3. What is the essential meaning of "if you eat of it you shall surely die"(Genesis 2:17)?"

"Answer: That very day, Adam and Eve died spiritually. They were cut off from their fellowship with God - until restored to that fellowship with God and His elect by His eternal particular grace through faith in Christ (Genesis 3:15*f* and 4:4 & 4:26 *etc.*).

"Question 4. Did God, in the place thereof, grant all men "common grace" - and particular guilt-forgiving and recreative grace only to the believers?"

"Answer: Even before the fall, God gave His common grace in varying degrees to all His creatures. But after the fall, He gives His forgiving special grace only to His human elect.

"Question 5. How do matters now stand with the internal knowledge of God and the natural knowledge of the Law imparted to the Heathen?"

"Answer: As Calvin states - even after the fall, those who became Heathen preserved enough *sensus divinitatis* [awareness of divinity] and *semina religionis* [seeds of religion] in order to perpetuate their total legal accountability. Romans 1:20*f*.

"Question 6. How is that to be explained?"

"Answer: From the fact that also the reprobate are broken images of God upon whose perverted hearts God's Law remains ineradicably inscribed. Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 9:6; Hosea 6:7-10; Romans 2:14-16; James 3:9.

"In his e-mail of Tuesday June 12th 2001 at 7:39 p.m., Brother van der Kooi wrote: 'This matter is in my opinion important enough to discuss further, precisely because of the far-reaching consequences connected to it as regards the struggle of the Dordt Fathers concerning Arminianism whereby the internal depravity as a result of the fall (the so-called 'original taint') was not accepted. This is motivatedly rejected in the *Decrees of Dordt*. I refer particularly to chapters III-IV:3 at the Rejection of the Errors.'

"Concerning this, [I (Francis Nigel Lee) would now make seven observations. Here below,] I would just like to point out:

"(1) According to the 1561 *Confessio Belgica* alias the *Dutch Confession of Faith* (article 14), even **after** man's fall into sin it is the non-saving remnants of man's pre-lapsarian **gifts** which render man without excuse. 'A perdu tous ses excellents **donis** qu'il avait reçus de Dieu et il ne lui en est demeuré de **reste** que de petites trace, qui sont suffisantes pour **rendre** l'homme **inexcusable**.'

"(2) The 1619 *Decrees of Dordt* II:3 clearly state that the 'death of the Son of God is...**more** than sufficient to expiate the sins of the entire world - **abunde sufficiens ad totius mundi**.' This indeed may suggest that over and above [or rather in addition to] saving benefits only for the elect, there **may** also be non-saving benefits for the whole of humanity as a result of the 'death of the Son of God' (Genesis 3:15 to 4:25 *cf.* First Timothy 4:10 and Second Peter 2:1).

"(3) The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:1 teach that man was 'from the **beginning**...equipped in his understanding with...spiritual things' but that 'he robbed himself of these excellent **gifts**. **Ab initio**...*rerum spiritualium* notitia in mente...*eximiis istis donis seipsum orbavit*.'

"(4) The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:3 teach that fallen ones do not return to God 'without the **grace** of the **regenerating** Holy Spirit (*Spiritus sancti regenerantis gratia*).' This presupposes that there are also other non-regenerating operations of the Spirit upon fallen ones. See Calvin on Genesis 4:17-24 & 6:3 and Exodus 31:2 *cf.* Job 32:8 & 33:4 *etc.*

"(5) The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:4 teach that '**after** the fall some light of nature has indeed still remained in man' - and that 'by this **gift** he **retains** a measure of the knowledge of God, of natural things, [and] of the **difference** between what is honest and what is disgraceful - and [that] he manifests a certain striving after **virtue**. *Residuum quidem est post lapsum in homine lumen aliquot naturae, cujus beneficio ille notitias quasdam de Deo, de rebus naturalibus, de discrimine honestorum et turpium retinet, et aliquod virtutis ac disciplinae externae studium ostendit*.'

"(6) The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:4 do **not** teach at their Rejection of Error 3 that **Calvin's** doctrine of spiritual gifts also for the reprobate is rejected. Instead, they there reject the **Arminian** teaching that inasmuch as the human will in itself was [allegedly] never corrupted... [it] is able to exercise its [averred] free innate power. That is to say - it can will or choose, or not will and not choose, **all kinds** of good things presented to it (*dona spiritualia non esse in morte spirituali ab hominis voluntate separata cum ea in sese nunquam corrupta fuerit*).'

"(7) The *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:4 do **not** teach at their Rejection of Error 5 that **Calvin's** doctrine of the non-saving **common grace** nor the concept of common grace as such is rejected. Instead, they there reject 'the pernicious teaching of the **Arminians** that "common grace" (by which they [mis]understand the light of nature) or the gifts which [indeed] **remained after** the fall, can **well**...by a good use thereof...**obtain a greater grace**, namely the evangelical or saving one. *Exposita doctrina orthodoxa Synodus rejicit errores eorum...qui docent "Hominum corruptum et animalem gratia communio quae ipsis est lumen naturae sive donis post lapsum relictus tam recte uti posse, ut bono isto usu majorem gratiam puta evangelicam sive salutarem et salutem ipsam gradatim obtinere possit."*

"As a matter of fact, it is precisely the *Decrees of Dordt* III-IV:4 at their Rejection of Error 5 which themselves confirm both the actuality as well as the difference between what is here called 'common grace' and what is here called 'special grace'! However, unlike the Arminians, the *Decrees of Dordt* here rightly acknowledge that fallen man's use of 'common grace' can never 'gradually' lead to that different kind of grace which is here called 'saving grace.'

"O yes indeed, both common grace and saving grace come from God - just as both men and women come from the gracious God. Yet common grace can never even gradually develop into saving grace. Just as little as a woman can develop into a man, regardless of the fact that both genders are derived from God and are perpetuated as such different genders precisely by His grace." Yes, by His **common grace!**

"Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee."

From: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee  
Date: Sept. 1st 2001.  
Subject: Common grace

"Dear Piet [van der Kooi],

"I would very much like to know how you understand Judges 1:24-26. And also, please, Psalm 117:2.

"In Judges 1:24-26, we read of Josephitic spies who conditionally promised 'mercy' (*chesed*) to a man from the then-heathen Luz alias Bethel - provided he would show them a place from which they could get into that city.

"Does that *chesed* then not point to the man's possible **merit** - and [certainly] not to the spies' pure good will alone? Moreover [and far more importantly] - after he had shown them that place and they had shown him that [non-redemptive] 'grace' or 'favour' (*chesed*) - he (unlike Rahab) did not then join the people of God, but went to reside precisely among the heathen Hittites.

"In Psalm 117, 'all nations' and 'all peoples' are commanded to praise the Lord - '**for** His **mercy** (*chesed*) is great over us'; viz. over **all** nations and precisely over all **nations**-as-such. Would the Lord then have elected all nations - **as** nations? Or is this here speaking about a non-elective, non-redemptive *chesed*?

"Is this command to submit - then not in itself sovereign and self-causative? But then, **why** are all nations commanded to praise the Lord - out of gratitude for this *chesed* (whether common or particular grace) which the Lord apparently gives to **all** nations (and thus also to **all men**)?"



"I would like to hear your Schilderian explanation of this. For it seems to me that both of the above-mentioned texts are much more easily reconcilable with the concept of 'common grace' than with an exclusive view of [elective and redemptive] '**particular** grace.'

"Amicably in Christ as always, Nigel Lee."

To: Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

Date: Sept. 8th 2001.

Subject: Common grace

"Dear Nigel,

"In answer to your last message..., I first of all wish to request you not to treat alike all Bible texts in which the little word 'mercy' occurs. The context of Judges 1:24-26 certainly does not stand in connection with common grace as Dr. Abraham Kuyper intended it in his theories.

"Here it is a personal deed of the spies to a specific person who gave assistance, doing him the favour of not being put to the sword together with his fellow citizens. His life was spared. And that is also all.

"It gave him no grace in the sense that he escaped from the everlasting curse which rests upon those not sanctified in Christ. His life continues, without the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and [without] being incorporated into it.

"Concerning Psalm 117, I can let Professor Schilder himself speak in his work: *Heidelberg Catechism*, Sunday 8-9 ( III:172). I cite literally. I hope you understand the language and style in which he puts it:

"'But how then can it be said that this light illuminates every man? Did it not come only to Israel? To understand this, we must first of all consider that God announced the coming of the Son and the work of salvation already in Genesis 3:15, the so-called *Protevangelion* - and that this promise went forth to the whole of humanity, to all men. Though they did not preserve it but neglected and forgot it, it still adheres to them (*cf.* II:383/4 & II:342). The promise yet long remained in man's memory, and as the contents of tradition. Genesis 4:26; 5:29; Numbers 24:17. "Sinai" came only centuries after the fall.

"'Further. We should not forget that much of what God later gave to and worked in Abraham and Israel, was known not only to Israel but also to the surrounding nations. Exactly how the knowledge of all this penetrated through to other nations, we cannot say. But already the hatred of various nations toward Israel in the course of the centuries shows they knew there was something special about Israel. And what God gave to and worked in Israel - He called upon also other nations, to turn to Israel and to acknowledge Israel's God. Psalms 117 & 148; Isaiah 49:6.

"For this reason, it is understandable that it is said in John 1 that the true light with or through its coming illuminates or irradiates every single man - and that it did so also already **before** the incarnation of the Word. This illumination does not imply that every man now also sees this. That which is universal in John 8:12a, does not take away what is particular in 8:12b.... Note Romans 8:7; John 3:19; 8:47; 18:37,41.' Schilder's own emphasis.

"Note 'the light of life' which testifies about Christ. Ask your question about Psalm 117 :2 in this perspective! The message to the nations to praise the Lord, is conditional in respect of the salvation which is given only in Christ. Psalm 117:2 cannot be loosened from the first verse - just as little as John 8:12a can from 12b. With Christian greetings, Piet van der Kooi."

Here is Dr. Nigel Lee's final response in September 2001:

"Dear Piet,

"Thank you very much for this! As regards Judges 1:24-26, you are missing my point. This does not concern **Kuyper's theologoumena**. Was it then Kuyper who wrote Judges 1:24f?

"It rather concerns what **God's Word** says here! That says the spies showed **mercy**, and indeed conditionally, to somebody who neither then nor later [and thus **never**] got **incorporated** into **the people of God**.

"It was indeed mercy. God Himself says so. Whether that was then common or special grace, is quite another question. But inasmuch as the recipient of that mercy never externally joined up with the covenant people, it seems to me [and you] unlikely indeed that this was saving grace.

"As regards Psalm 117, I am particularly grateful for your citation from Schilder. In my opinion, it almost concedes that God's revelations of grace - whether common or special - are always greater than humanity acknowledges them to be.

"Thus - *ut gratia specialis sola est, non liquet* (it cannot be proved that grace is **solely** special)! With high regard in Christ as always, Nigel Lee."

## **8. Our own conclusions about common grace**

The doctrine of common grace roots in Holy Scripture. Thenceforth, it was developed further by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine.

Opposed by Mediaeval Romanism (and her Anabaptist stepchildren), it was re-asserted perhaps also by Luther and certainly by Zwingli, Bullinger, and Dr. John Calvin. The latter boosted it in his Bible Commentaries, and especially in his *Institutes*.

It was then re-endorsed by Calvin's successor Beza, the Classic Calvinistic Confessions of Faith, Calamy, Vines, Owen, Heidegger, Brakel, Matthew Henry, Maastricht, Shaw, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, Thornwell, Shedd and Bavinck. Then, Abraham Kuyper Sr. became the first to devote three whole volumes to the subject.

All common grace *theologoumena* after Kuyper's massive trilogy on the subject - whether for or against the doctrine - are little more than a series of footnotes to Kuyper. Thus, Geerhardus Vos, Valentine Hepp, B.B. Warfield, Cornelius Van Til, F.J.M. Potgieter and many others have upheld common grace.

Yet Hoeksema and Schilder *cum suis* have denied it. Sadly, this denial of the (pre-fall and still-continuing) doctrine of **common grace** often seems to go hand in hand with a denial also of God's gracious and still-binding **Adamic covenant of works**.

In many cases, such denials often lead toward the personal ungraciousness of a **rank Antinomianism** not only in the Church but also throughout the whole of human society. This is seen especially, though not exclusively, in Dispensationalism.

On this, see my *Life and Works: God's Creation Covenant with Adam*. Also my *Origin and Destiny of Man*; my *Calvin on the Sciences*; and my *The Anabaptists and their Stepchildren*.

Even including Romish Southern Europe, there is probably no place on Earth with so many churches as the American South. When there told that the South was full of grace, a modern British Puritan visiting Dixie recently replied: "You mean, 'full of graciousness?'"

Applying this a little differently to many Hypercalvinists, I myself would prefer to say: "They're not devoid of saving grace. But many of them do seem to lack some graciousness!"

By "grace" - there is no doubt that both the **Bible** and **Calvin** usually mean: special **saving** grace. But sometimes, by "grace" they **both** mean: non-saving **common grace**.

**Hypercalvinism** is blind to the second-mentioned teachings of the Bible and Calvin. Thus it has difficulty in grasping the **gracious** nature of Christ's healings of unbelievers. Conversely, over-reacting Pentecostals ground His physical healings in His to-them-unlimited atonement!

The consequences to which the denial of common grace has led, were well stated in Leeuwarden's *Gereformeerde Kerkblad* [or the Frisian *Reformed Church Magazine*] of 20 November 1937: "Marriage between two Non-Christians has been declared to be a sinful relationship and whoredom. Even the general offer of the Gospel to all people has been condemned - although our *Decrees of Dordt* expressly teach this general offer of God in the Gospel."

Often, such a sweeping absolutization of one's loving solidarity only with those deemed to be God's graced co-elect - is coupled with a lamentable minimization of one's love toward those one believes even God Himself does not love, and whom one wisely or otherwise perceives or rather

misperceives to be devoid of any kind of grace. This then often promotes sub-ethical behaviour toward especially those deemed as "non-elect" - on the part of those who claim to be elect.

Believing Christ is God **and** that God hates the non-elect, and not sufficiently realizing that Christ as man loved His neighbour **as Himself** - makes it hard for Hypercalvinists to love folk as Jesus did, and adequately to act ethically. It also easily leads toward an erroneous christology. Anabaptism rides again!

Let me, reluctantly, give just three examples of this. I do so, simply by way of illustrating how the denial of common grace may make Christians less gracious than they should be.

My first illustration. Hoeksema and Schilder both vehemently denied common grace. Too, Hoeksema had a weaker view than Schilder of God's ongoing original covenant to mankind. Despite that being a matter of cardinal importance to Schilder, the latter defended the Hoeksemaites against the Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A. which had excommunicated the Hoeksemaites in the nineteen-twenties.

Schilder urged reconciliation. But Hoeksema - despite his colleague's Danhof's defection even from Hoeksema's own Protestant Reformed Church (P.R.C.), shrugged off Schilder's urgings. To Hoeksema, the true state of affairs was misperceived by Schilder.

Later, at the end of the Second World War, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands excommunicated Greijdanus and Holwerda and Schilder - who promptly started the 'Liberated' Reformed Churches (L.R.C.) Subsequently, many Schilderians from the L.R.C. emigrated to the U.S.A. and joined the P.R.C. The latter went into schism in 1953, and blamed the Schilderians. Incredibly, the Hoeksemaites then started blaming those emigrants as the vehicle whereby "a 'common grace' and 'free-will' theology was imported into the sphere of the covenant." Thus the Hoeksemaite H.L. Williams, in his *75 Years: The Fight for the Reformed Faith* (31:37).

My second illustration. Consider the woes of the Schilderians themselves! All of them, excommunicated by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, denied common grace - as too do the 'Liberated' Reformed Churches they then went and formed. But before long, those thus 'Liberated' started wrangling also against one another.

Complains the 'Liberated' Veenhof (*Om Kerk te Blijven* pp. 315f): "Schilder was not the only one concerned about the fragmenting forces which became constantly more virulent in the Liberated Churches especially in the last years of his life.... Also and especially Holwerda....

"He restlessly signalled the spirit of arrogance, hardness, smugness, intellectualism and legalism which had penetrated into the life of the churches - and the resultant evil fruits thereof: more and more suspicions, opposing themselves to one another, and leaving one another. More than once he stated that if this spirit were to spread through - the Lord's blessing would dissipate from over our churches. Then they, note well - after they had recently liberated themselves from sectarian tendencies - would themselves sink into the asphyxiating quagmire of sectarianism!"

My third and last illustration - is not the break-up of American Reconstructionism into warring parties of Rushdoony-ans, North-ites, and Sandlin-ians. It is the schism in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia toward the end of the twentieth century.

Standing against the alleged "apostasy" of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the 'Evangelical Presbyterians' - though themselves denouncing common grace - started a small theological college together with the Exclusive-Psalmody (but common grace-affirming) Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. It did not work out. But then, after separating themselves from that two-denominational Joint Theological Enterprise - the common grace-denying 'Evangelicals' at length became unable to agree even with one another as to how Christ as God hated the reprobate while Christ as man loved His reprobate neighbour as Himself.

To this very day, these 'Evangelicals' have never invited me (an asserter of common grace) to preach for them - nor defiled themselves by coming to hear even one of my worship sermons. Yet both the 'Christ as God hated the reprobate' faction and the 'Christ as man loved His reprobate neighbour' faction separately came to me and sought my own theological advice - long after they had ceased taking one another's advice. They were all good men. But their denial of common grace had blinded them toward much good - even in one another!

Behold then the fruit of the denial of common grace! **Little graciousness** remains - even toward "those who seceded or who were excommunicated with us" but who then later went off and seceded from or were excommunicated by the seceders!

Contrarywise, however, Christ alias God the Son **is** gracious. First Peter 2:3f. But so too, even toward the reprobate till the end of history, is **God the Father of mercies** (plural). Second Corinthians 1:3 *cf.* James 1:17. And so too is God the Spirit. Hebrews 10:29. For, as James 5:11 tells us of the sorely-tested Job, God the Triune "Lord **is** very pitiful and of tender **mercy**."

As First Chronicles 21:13 tells us about the Lord, "very great are His **mercies**" (plural). Hence we read in the prayer at Nehemiah 9:17-31: "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" - not even the many **reprobates** among those Israelites.

"According to your **manifold mercies** [plural], You gave them deliverers.... Many times You delivered them, according to Your **mercies** [plural].... For the sake of Your great **mercies** [plural], You did not utterly consume them.... You [the thrice-plural Triune Lord] are a **gracious** and **merciful** God!" For, as Paul tells us (in First Timothy 4:10): "**God...is the Saviour of all men - especially** of those that believe."

Also Klaas Schilder himself realized this, back in 1936, in his *On "Common Grace."* There, he too rightly pointed out: "If grace is to be 'grace' - regardless as to whether one further calls it 'general' or 'particular' - it must in any case both in **principle** and also in process of **continuation** '**repair**' that which was there '**from the beginning**.'" Emphases mine - F.N. Lee.

Indeed! In the beginning - that is, before the fall of some of the angels, and before the even later fall of the entire human race - the gracious God graciously created an unmeriting universe. He graciously created angels who had no claim thus to be created. And He graciously prevented His elect angels from falling into sin.

Our gracious God then graciously created and established His Covenant of Life with Adam and his seed. Thereafter, He graciously maintained and continues giving good gifts of common grace during this earthly life even to fallen unregenerates. Most of all, He also gave His special saving grace to His elect human images - in Jesus Christ the Second Adam, for time and eternity!

But is there not also 'fruit for eternity' - even from common grace? After history, do the kings and the nations then saved, not bring the then-renewed glory and the honour even of the nations themselves into the everlasting City of God on the New Earth? Revelation 21:24-26.

Here one might easily cite with approve from Kuyper's three-volume *Common Favour*, or from his four-volume *On the Consummation*. However, many Hypercalvinist readers would be allergic to Kuyper. So let me instead finally cite from the Hypercalvinist Klaas Schilder instead.

Mercifully inconsistent with his own rejection of common grace, in a moment of rare insight Schilder wrote in his book *The Revelation of John and Social Life* (pp. 207f & 238f): "Kings and nations...in **Babylon's** shining cultural life...gathered for themselves treasures.... Revelation 18:15 & 18:23....

"Shall culture have blossomed in vain? Must all that wealth disappear without a trace? Is God's Day of Judgment a furious iconoclasm, a blind and total and unsparing destruction of everything that is?

"Scripture know nothing of this! **Babylon has not lived in vain**, and neither has she garnered and guarded her riches in vain.... That which is **sinful** in Babylon's culture, is to be burned away. But that which is **cultural** in Babylon's sin - **that**, God will not reject....

"When God's New Jerusalem - His city of peace, comes down from God out of Heaven - culture, then divested of its sinful stains, shall surrender its fruits to God's Kingdom. The glory and the honour not only of the kings but also of the nations - yet not only of the masses, but also of that in which the individual brilliance of the style-formers and the pace-setters is to be seen - will all be brought into God's new paradise of the future [Revelation 21:24-26]." Amen, Dr. Schilder!

As I wrote in 1976 in my book *The Central Significance of Culture* (pp. 88-95): "The glory and honour of the nations! The cultural treasures of all the peoples of the Earth! The tremendous technology and commercial products of the United States; the music of Germany & Russia; the art of ancient Greece & Rome, of Spain & France, and of Holland & Italy; the exquisite gardens of Japan and of southwestern England; the breathtakingly beautiful carpets of Persia and Afghanistan; the folklore of the Afrikaners and the Irish; and the rockpaintings of the Bushmen!

"The music of Beethoven, Greig, and Rimsky-Korsakoff; the paintings of Rembrandt and Constable and da Vinci; the poetry of Goethe and Milton and Eugene Marais; the theology of Luther and Calvin and Augustine and Warfield - all cleansed from their present sinful accretions, and all exhibited and enjoyed and seen or heard in the halls and museums of the New Jerusalem, for all eternity! Enjoyed! For the meek shall inherit the Earth....

"Hence, all works of true culture now being performed on this present Earth - whether being executed by believer or unbeliever - have everlasting value, as implied in the *Westminster Confession* (chapter 16). Everything 'good' which man does on Earth, bears fruit for all eternity.... Isaiah 35:1f; 55:12f; Micah 4:4; Ezekiel 37:12; Matthew 5:5; and Revelation 14:13 & 22:1f....

"Jesus shall bring the Heavenly City with Him down to Earth; purify the Earth with fire; and transform it into the everlasting dwelling-place of His people. They shall thenceforth not only enjoy all the true and then-purified culture which they and others ever produced previously when on our present Earth. But they shall also continue to produce that culture on the New Earth, as they thenceforth too continue to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever!"

**All** of that, because of the **manifold** wisdom of God and His abiding **grace**. Special grace, and common grace - both harmoniously operating in men on the New Earth. Eternally!

\* \* \* \* \*

Some might object to our calling Hoeksema and Schilder 'Hypercalvinists.' But why should they? For Hoeksema and Schilder certain go 'hyper' or **beyond** Calvin, in their denial of common grace. Just as Hyper- and/or Sub-calvinistic Baptists like John Gill did centuries earlier.

Note, we do not call Gill and Hoeksema and Schilder Anti-Calvinists or Non-Calvinists. For that would be incorrect and unloving. We could call Gill, but not Hoeksema and Schilder, both Neo-Anabaptistic and Sub-Calvinistic as regards his rejection of infant baptism.

Hoeksemaites and Schilderians have not hesitated to label the Calvinians who support Calvin's doctrine of common grace: 'Kuyperians.' Even when many such Calvinians lived and died **before** Kuyper; and even when other **Post**-Kuyperian Calvinians by no means endorse all of Kuyper's own *theologoumena*!

All Calvinists deny that Satan and his demons have ever had any grace at all since their fall. They all deny the existence of any grace at all for humans, in a thirst-ridden and a waterless Hell. Cf. Isaiah 14:9-20 & Luke 16:24f and Revelation 14:10-11.

Too, it should be noted we have not called Hoeksemaites and Schilderians 'Pseudo-Calvinists' or 'Quasi-Calvinists' - for such would be unkind and untrue. They are Calvinists-with-a-minus, Calvinists-minus-common-grace. In the latter respect, they are Ultra-Calvin and Sub-Calvin - and

hence: 'Hypercalvinists.' We shall not call them Neo-Anabaptists. But we might well regard them as Quasi-Anabaptists as regards their views on common grace.

For that matter, also Schilderians might well consider the Hoeksemaites' *kulturfremde Überjenseitigkeit* or 'culture-shy Otherworldliness' to be 'Quasi-Anabaptistic' - if not even downright 'Neo-Anabaptistic.' And Hoeksemaites in turn might well consider the Schilderians' view of the covenant to be *überdiessseitig* or 'overly-mundane' and 'culturally-overloaded' - if not also downright worldly!

The Greek word *hyper* (meaning "hyper") seems to be the equivalent of the Latin word *ultra* (meaning "beyond"). Hence, one might perhaps euphemistically say that Hoeksemaites are sub-sub-calvinistically Hypercalvinist - while Schilderians are merely sub-calvinistically Ultracalvinist. Yet in both the British *King's English Dictionary* and the U.S. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, "ultra" sounds harsher than "hyper." So, in the judgment of love - it might perhaps be better to call both Hoeksemaites and Schilderians Hypercalvinists rather than Ultracalvinists. Yet the point is, both **differ from Calvin in denying common grace.**

Labels are quite indispensable, at least during history. Moreover, they are often very helpful. So let us then keep on calling a spade - a spade!

We commenced this present article with two citations from the writings of my revered friend the late Rev. Professor Dr. Cornelius van Til. Symmetrically, we shall now conclude with final quotations from three other writings by that same esteemed theologian.

In his *Common Grace and Witness-Bearing* (pp. 23 & 29), Van Til declares: "If we are to witness to the God of Scripture, we cannot afford to deny common grace.... Going off to the right by denying common grace [with Hoeksema and Schilder], or going off to the left by affirming...the natural theology of Rome [with the Anabaptists and the Pietists] - is to fail, to this extent, to challenge the wisdom of the World.... In denying common grace - we say, in effect, that God does not really call some men to repentance at all. In affirming a natural theology..., we fail to show that God calls all men everywhere and in all dimensions of life."

Indeed, in his *Particularism and Common Grace* (pp. 12f & 17 & 20), Van Til declares further: "God was originally favourable to mankind.... All mankind in Adam have turned against this favour of God, given and offered to them...."

"When God therefore gives His gifts to men, the gifts of rain and sunshine in season, these gifts are the means by which God's challenge to man speaks forth. God's challenge means that men are asked to love God their Creator, and to repent of sin and ask Him for His forgiveness. In [His] long-suffering patience, God calls men to Himself through these gifts...."

"To say that the facts of rain and sunshine in themselves do not tell us anything of God's **grace** - is to say in effect that the World and what is therein does not speak forth the revelation of God...."



However, God not only gives good gifts to men in general. He not only calls men with the good news of the Gospel to a renewed acceptance of their original cultural task. He also restrains the wrath of man....

"Those who reject the Christ...but who have sinned in Adam, are still laborers - even though unwilling, in the cultural task of man.... All the skills of those who are artificers in iron and brass, all the artistry of painters and sculptors and poets, is at the service of those who under Christ are anew undertaking the cultural task that God in the beginning gave to man.... Through Adam, He confronted the entire human race with one cultural task.... That cultural task continues to speak, through every fact of man's environment....

"The particularism of the Gospel must be supported by a commonness of the call of God to all men everywhere. Common grace must support special or saving grace. Saving or special grace cannot adequately be presented except in relationship to and in connection with common grace. Together, they form the covenant-framework in which the sovereign God deals with man."

Last, I close with a citation from Professor Van Til's book *The God of Hope*. He gave me a copy of it when staying as our last guest in our home before we moved at the end of 1980 from the Academic Deanship of Graham Bible College in the U.S.A. to take up my Professorship in Theology at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College in Brisbane (Australia).

The book is personally inscribed: "To the Nigel Lee family, Cornelius Van Til, 9/26/80." In words predictive of my own first words in this present article, *cf.* Exodus 2:20-22 & 11:2 and Isaiah 45:14 & 61:6 with Revelation 21:24-26, pages 182*f* of Van Til's book declare:

"Over fifty years ago, Abraham Kuyper published his famous three-volume work *Pro Rege*. It followed fast upon the heels of another famous three-volume work on *Common Grace*. By means of these works and many others like them, Kuyper sought to stir up the minds and hearts of the Reformed people....

"Kuyper raised up Christian educational institutions; he raised up a Christian press; he published books to make known to all men that there is not a square inch of ground that does not belong to Christ as King. *Pro Rege!* For the King!

"That, said Kuyper, must be our motto. We must not separate from the World, except for the purpose of conquering it for Christ. Christ must rule in science. Christ must rule in art. Christ must rule in politics. Christ must rule in philosophy. Christ must rule everywhere.

"As the Muslims cry aloud that Allah must rule, so we as Christians must make all men know that Christ must rule. His it is of right to rule....

"Many of us, now older, were gripped by it. It gave vision and direction to our youthful enthusiasm and optimism.

"How marvelous an ideal that not only Ministers of the Gospel but 'Laymen' of every description could take an active and significant part in wresting from Satan and his minions the Kingdom he had usurped - in order to restore it to our Christ! And how literally enthralling the prospect that, as the Israelites [took over or] 'robbed' the Egyptians of the products of their culture in order to use them in the desert and at last take them into the promised land - so we might, **by the common grace of God**, bring the culture of the nations at last into the New Heavens and the New Earth, and cast them as trophies at the feet of our glorified King!"

***Sola gratia!*** Only by God's grace - by both His **common graciousness or kindness** toward His creatures in general, and particularly by His **special grace** toward His elect alone!

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### **POSTSCRIPT**

A few lines from an article by Rev. Professor Dr. Henry Beets in the 1931 Dutch *Christelijke Encyclopaedie* or *Christian Encyclopaedia* [VI:356f], is very instructive. Beets was later the editor and warm endorser of the 1937-40 English translation of Schilder's trilogy on *Christ's Passion*. States Beets in his article:

"'Protestant Reformed Church' [of Herman Hoeksema *cum suis*] is the name of a group of churches in the U.S.A. which originated through the agitation surrounding the doctrine of Common Graciousness [*Gemeene Gratie*]. In the July 1922 issue of the monthly journal *Religion and Culture*, Professor H.J. van Andel of Calvin College pointed to the problem of Common Graciousness as **the** problem in the Christian Reformed Church of North America. He stated that this General Grace [*Algemene Genade*] was denied by a few in the Church, and portrayed this denial as the greatest enemy within her walls. 'The greatest foe inside the gate is the minimizing of God's general revelation and Common Grace; and the upshot of this - Pietism and Anabaptism'....

"Apparently Professor van Andel had his eye on the Ministers H. Hoeksema...and H. Danhof.... Meanwhile the ferment in the Congregation served by Rev. Hoeksema began - especially when one of her members, Rev. J. van der Mey, in a brochure reprimanded his Minister for a faulty view of

God, incorrect life- and worldview, inadequate gospel preaching, and the making powerless of the Second Table of the Law....

"The matter finally came up in the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, held in 1924. It determined three points.... [However:] Concerning the doctrine of General Grace in all of its branches, the 1924 Synod wished 'at the moment to make no pronouncement'....

"The *Standard Bearer*, a monthly journal, at that time had Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema and a few supporters on its editorial board. Among other things, they went and said there: 'Our viewpoint has undergone no change, and there is no thought of retiring'.... Subsequent to quite a lot of delay, after continual resistance to presbyterial pronouncements the deposing of the two Ministers and of a third supporter took place.... The deposed Ministers with their followers speedily formed a Presbytery.... Their ecclesiastical grouping took the name of 'Protesting (later changed to "Protestant") Reformed Church'....

"Before long, however, a breach occurred between Rev. Danhof and his followers (who continued with a 'Protesting' Church) - and Rev. Hoeksema and his followers. Two nephews of Rev. Danhof...had earlier returned to the [Christian Reformed] Church, professing their error. In the *Standard Bearer* of 15 July 1930, one of the Members of the Protestant Reformed Church called himself and his supporters 'Hyper-Calvinists.'

"We think that the account given here above by Rev. van der Mey of the doctrinal direction, is accurate. The one-side representations mentioned there...at the same time show the declension from the Old Reformed Way...."

Regarding Schilder's 'Liberated' Reformed Church which originated right after World War II in the Netherlands, the situation is somewhat happier (through its emphasis on the binding cultural mandate for believers). Yet there too its over-reaction to Kuyper and even to Calvin on the issue of 'Common Grace' - has borne some sad fruit. As Ex-'Liberated Reformed Church' Presbyterian Rev. Dr. Benno Zuiddam noted in a e-mail to the author on March 9 2004:

"Kuyper's misfortune resided not so much in his choice of words, but in the English and modern Dutch translation of '*algemene genade*' or common grace (and perhaps in the culture model construction which followed). Kuyper spoke of '*gemene gratie*' [or common favour or graciousness], which in Latin technically can mean 'favour' (*gratia*) and may thus be used.... Schilder, possibly in reaction against Kuyper's followers, moved out in another direction and saw in the Noachitic Covenant only a 'preservation for the day of judgement.' He speaks of a cultural mandate based on Christ Who conquers the World for God and which is an obligation for those who stand in the Covenant.... It indeed produces the same activist fruits as what the Puritans saw as faith.... If that is not correct[ly done], one gets an activism of deeds which are not from faith; and faith gradually receives another definition.... In any case, the practice does not much differ from that of Kuyperians. It is just another road. That is the irony of the Liberated Churches....

"But for Schilder and the 'Liberated' there is now hope for the World in Christ *via* His Church. And usually also an acknowledgement of God's general offer of grace for sinners. The Protestant Reformed [Church in the U.S.A.] and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church [in Australia] do not believe in either of these two things. They philosophize where they should have theologized. They and Schilder understand and emphasize that everything which is not done from faith, is sin. But for both it has very different consequences. Schilder reaches out to the World, through active Church Members. For Hoeksema, that is meaningless.

"Schilder emphasizes the objective truth of what God promises. Hoeksema probably follows Kuyper and others by presupposing a True Covenant within the Visible Covenant, and by doubting the External [Covenant] more than Kuyper did. In other words: Hoeksema and Schilder people together, are a formula (*resep*) for problems....

"I would be very careful about saying that the 'Liberated' in the Netherlands oppose the matter of common favour (*algemene gratie*). Kuyper's outworking, yes. But not denial of the fact: at least, not these days. As far as I know, Veenhof then left with the Dutch Reformed (*Nederlands Gereformeerdes*) in the sixties. After his death, Holwerda's writings were misused to enforce upon the churches a rigidly hyperchristological preaching method as the only one accepted by the group as the correct one. Implicitly they thereby declared Augustine, Calvin, Matthew Henry and just about any great preacher in history to be illicit (*onwettig*). In the Netherlands, most of those sectarian ideas are no longer in the majority. Now, they struggle more with liberalistic influences. People of the old stamp separated from the 'Liberated' only last year, because they could tolerate these 'novelties' no longer.... In Australia, the sectarian mentality of the fifties and the sixties has taken over completely....

"For Hypercalvinists, this [Nehemiah 9:17-31] is covered by their covenant concept.... It is just not covered effectually, except for the elect. But I am with you.... God is more gracious than some of His people! Perhaps we should avoid the words 'common grace' to help Hypers break through their philosophical barriers?"

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