

The Reformed Worldview on Behalf of a Godly Culture

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Preface

For a long time, I have thought that the Protestant Reformed Churches have failed to set forth a full, systematic, positive statement of their belief concerning worldview and culture. The writers have repeatedly and thoroughly criticized the common grace worldview and culture of Abraham Kuiper. But a positive statement of the worldview and culture belonging to the Reformed faith and life described in the Reformed confessions has been lacking. An exception is Herman Hoeksema's pamphlet, *The Christian and Culture*, which is, however, brief and incomplete.

The ministers and Christian schoolteachers have always taught the truth of a distinctively Reformed worldview and the reality of a genuinely Christian culture, even though the terms were not used. The people have always possessed the Reformed worldview and lived a Christian culture, even when they were ignorant of the words.

Only the statement has been lacking.

The lack has been harmful. Members of the Protestant Reformed Churches have tended to look askance at the "cultural calling" of the Reformed Christians and to regard the term "culture" with suspicion. Opponents of the Protestant Reformed Churches have been encouraged to charge "world-flight" (although they hardly needed this encouragement).

An accusation by Dr. Richard J. Mouw occasioned the positive statement concerning worldview and culture that is the content of this booklet. He made the accusation in a public debate over common grace. The accusation was that their denial of common grace keeps Protestant Reformed people from being as active in society as they ought to be. Mouw made the accusation in a part of the debate that precluded a response at the time.

This booklet is my response, not only to the milder and kinder charge of Dr. Mouw, but also to the harsher form of the charge against the Protestant Reformed Churches, made by many in the past, and still made by some today: "Anabaptists! World flight!"

The work is, at the same time, at least a first effort at the positive confession, explanation, and defense of a Reformed worldview that owes nothing to common grace.

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Introduction

In the course of a public debate in September 2003 over common grace and culture, Dr. Richard J. Mouw charged that members of the Protestant Reformed Churches are not as active in society as Christians should be.¹ Mouw's charge, although milder in tone, was essentially the charge that the Reformed community has been making against members of the Protestant Reformed Churches since the beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924. Because the Protestant Reformed Churches deny a common grace of God as taught by the Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper and as adopted as dogma by the Christian Reformed Church, the members of these churches are unable to live a full, active earthly life in every sphere of creation.² The harsher expression of Dr. Mouw's charge against the Protestant Reformed people is: "Anabaptists!" Members of the Protestant Reformed Churches are accused of world-flight. They are the equivalent in the Reformed community of the Amish or Hutterites. Since full, active life in the world arises out of a worldview, or world-and-life view, the charge is that the Protestant Reformed Churches do not have a worldview.

The thinking that prevails in the Reformed churches is simply this: no common grace, no worldview.

Underlying the charge that the Protestant Reformed Churches have no worldview and, therefore, are guilty of world-flight is the assumption that the only possible worldview for Reformed Christians, if not for all Christians, is the worldview of common grace. This was certainly Kuyper's contention in his Stone Lectures at Princeton and in his three volumes on common grace, *De Gemeene Gratie*. This is the position of Richard Mouw in *He Shines in All That's Fair*. This is also the thinking, widely, in evangelical circles today. Writing in the August 2004 issue of *Christianity Today*, influential evangelical Charles Colson begins his "Back Page" article this way:

Some weeks ago I exhorted a gathering of pastors to engage today's cultural battles, particularly to support the Federal Marriage Amendment. Afterward, the pastors had many questions—but they were also confused. One asked: "But won't engaging the culture this way interfere with fulfilling the Great Commission? Isn't this our job—to win people to Christ?" That people still raise this question surprised me. "Of course we're called to fulfill the Great Commission," I replied. "But we're also called to fulfill the *cultural* commission." Christians are agents of God's *saving grace*—bringing others to Christ, I explained—but we are also agents of his *common grace*: sustaining and renewing his creation, defending the created institutions of family and society, critiquing false worldviews.³

The worldview of common grace dreamed up by Abraham Kuyper a little more than one hundred years ago holds that, alongside His purpose of saving a church in Jesus Christ, God has another purpose with creation and history, namely, the development of a good, godly, and God-glorifying culture. God accomplishes this cultural purpose with creation and history by bestowing a certain grace upon unregenerate, unbelieving people. This common, cultural grace of God works wonders in the ungodly. It restrains sin in them so that they are no longer totally

depraved, as otherwise they would be. It enables these godless, Christ-less men and women to perform deeds in everyday, earthly life that are truly good, and please God. It empowers the wicked to build a culture, an entire way of life of a society, or a nation, that glorifies God.

God is supposed to give this cultural grace also to His regenerated people. Hence, it is called common grace. It is a grace of God that is common to elect and reprobate, believer and unbeliever, alike. According to the proponents of the theory, the believer lives his life in the world by the power of common grace. And with it he must cooperate with unbelievers in carrying out their mutual task of building a good, God-glorifying culture.

Kuyper and his contemporary disciples propose the worldview of common grace as the basis of the entire earthly life of the Christian. Regarding his life with God in worship, prayer, Bible study, and witnessing, the Christian lives and works by the special, saving grace of God, which is particular, that is, not shared by the unbeliever. But with regard to his everyday, earthly life of job, citizen of a country, and neighbor in society, he is called to live and work by common grace. “The third fundamental relation” of the Calvinist, in addition to those he sustains to God and to man, according to Kuyper, is “the relation which you bear *to the world.*” This relation is based on, and controlled by, “a *common grace*” of God.⁴

Although the common grace worldview is certainly a worldview and although it is a worldview adopted and defended by many Reformed people, it is not the Reformed worldview. The alternatives are not the common grace worldview, or no worldview at all, that is, world-flight. Particularly for Reformed, or Calvinistic, Christians, the alternatives are the common grace worldview, or the worldview of particular, sovereign grace, that is, the worldview of the Reformed confessions.

The issue is not merely theoretical. After one hundred years, the worldview of common grace has proved to be a colossal failure. It has not produced a godly culture anywhere. On the contrary, it has been a Trojan horse, or more fittingly a bridge, to let the depraved world into the churches, into the lives of professing Reformed Christians, and especially into the Christian schools.

During the same century, other Reformed saints have embraced and practiced the genuinely Reformed worldview of the Reformed creeds, even though these Reformed believers never spoke of worldview and though many of them were ignorant of the term “worldview.” They had the genuinely Reformed worldview in their hearts. This worldview sent these Reformed Christians into the world, in every sphere of creation, vigorously to live earthly life to the glory of God, while guarding them against worldliness. It is time that this genuinely Reformed worldview be spelled out and defended.

There is another reason for this apology for the Reformed worldview. We are privileged to live at the time—the end of the ages!—when the worldview of autonomous, sovereign Man (spell “Man” with a capital “M” for “Man” who has made himself god) ruthlessly eradicates every vestige of Christianity from Western civilization and cajoles or coerces all of human life into the worship and service of Man. This worldview and its powerful development are evident in the legalizing of the murder of the unborn and the half-born and in the sanctioning by society and state of the perversions of sodomy and lesbianism. As prophesied by Daniel 7:25, in its rebellion against God this worldview thinks to change every law of God the creator, including the fundamental laws revealed in nature itself. The worldview of deified Man has no fixed principles, except the fixed principle that whatever pleases godless Man is right.

Andrew Hoffercker and Gary Scott Smith are right in stating, “one theme dominates the Western mind since the Enlightenment—autonomy. Autonomy has replaced the Judeo-Christian God as the single most important worldview issue.”⁵

Against this aggressive worldview of the sovereignty of Man stands, and alone can stand, the Christian gospel and worldview of the sovereignty of the triune God in Jesus Christ.

There is indeed a “culture war,” as Robert Bork,⁶ J. Budziszewski,⁷ Charles Colson,⁸ and others have told us, and a “culture war” is a clash of worldviews. These worldviews are not those of the Democratic and Republican parties. Nor are they the worldviews of political liberals and political conservatives. But they are the worldview of the spirit of antichrist, which is already in the world and will produce the man of lawlessness, according to the apostle in II Thessalonians 2, and the worldview that sees all things in light of the truth that God is God and that frames the life of the godly man and woman accordingly.

This latter, which alone is able to resist and demolish the worldview of autonomous Man, is emphatically not the worldview of common grace. The history of the past one hundred years has proved that the supposedly Christian worldview of common grace is powerless before the juggernaut of the worldview of autonomous Man. By its teachings of a grace of God in the world of the ungodly and of a grand cultural project of the Spirit of God among the unregenerate, the worldview of common grace has opened up churches, schools, and individuals to the mind and practices of the worldview of sovereign Man. This is fatal.

The worldview that invincibly withstands the force of the worldview of sovereign Man, and demolishes it, is the worldview of particular grace, that is, the worldview of the Reformed faith.

Worldview

By worldview, or world-and-life-view, is meant a comprehensive, unified view of all creation and history in light either of the knowledge of the triune, one, true, and living God revealed in Jesus Christ, or in light of the unbelieving rejection of this God. This view of all things determines how one lives the whole of his or her earthly life in the world. The power of worldview is that it frames one’s entire life.

This understanding of worldview is in basic agreement with the definition of the worldview scholars. James Orr states that worldview denotes “the widest view which the mind can take of things in the effort to grasp them together as a whole from the standpoint of some particular philosophy or theology.”⁹ James Sire describes a worldview as a “set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world.”¹⁰ In his recent examination of the common grace worldview of Abraham Kuyper, Peter S. Heslam defines worldview as a “set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action.”¹¹

The Reformed worldview is that comprehensive, unified view of all creation and history inherent in the Reformed faith. The Reformed faith is the body of biblical truths recovered and developed by the sixteenth century Reformation of the church especially by the theological work of John Calvin. This faith is officially and authoritatively expressed in the Reformed creeds, the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt) and the Westminster Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger Catechism, and Westminster Shorter Catechism).

In these creeds, there is no doctrine of a common grace of God, much less of a grand purpose of God in history to create a good culture by reprobate, ungodly men and women. The common grace worldview, which by this time is a sacred cow in Reformed circles, has no basis in the Reformed creeds—absolutely none. This all by itself is fatal to the worldview of common grace. Such an important aspect of Calvinism as its worldview surely must have some basis in Calvinism’s confessions. But all such basis in the confessions is lacking. The only mention of “common grace” in the Reformed confessions attributes the teaching to the Arminians as an essential element of their heresy of universalizing the grace of God.¹²

In their fundamental doctrines, the Reformed confessions demolish the foundations of the worldview of common grace. God has no attitude of grace toward the reprobate ungodly, who are outside of Jesus Christ in time and in eternity, but an attitude of wrath: “The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel.”¹³ The unregenerate have no ability to perform good works, whether by nature or by common grace, but, as totally depraved, are wholly incapable of any good: “Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness? Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.”¹⁴ As even the secular scholars are well aware, rather than teaching a grace common to all men without exception, the Reformed confessions teach particular, discriminating grace, grace that has its origin in election: “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.”¹⁵

The Reformed faith, which is authoritatively defined in the Reformed confessions, not in Abraham Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism*, has a worldview. It has its own unique worldview. Kuyper was right when he asserted that Calvinism is not “a religion confined to the closet, the cell, or the church”¹⁶ and when he denied that “Calvinism represents an exclusively ecclesiastical and dogmatic movement.”¹⁷ But there was nothing profound, or novel, about these observations by the Dutch theologian. Calvinism is the pure Christianity of the Bible, and Christianity, obviously, is not confined to closet, cell, or church. One needs only to read the book of Proverbs and Ephesians 4-6.

A worldview is made up of the following basic elements. First, every worldview is grounded in a certain belief concerning God and, in light of this fundamental belief about God, in beliefs about man, the world, the purpose of human life, and the goal of all things. Belief about God is the vantage point from which worldview views the world. This vantage point is the unquestioned starting point for worldview. The issue for worldview is theological: “Who is God?”

Second, a worldview lays claim to all of reality, to all of human life. This is true of the worldview of the Roman Catholic Church, of the worldview of Leninist/ Marxist communism, and of the worldview of autonomous Man, now reigning in the West.

Third, a worldview authorizes and urges men and women to live earthly life in all its aspects energetically, enthusiastically, joyously, and hopefully, as a good, honorable, useful life. That is, earthly life is good inasmuch as it is lived according to the adopted worldview.

Fourth, worldview has a positive regard for culture and for the use and enjoyment of the products of culture. By “culture,” a notoriously difficult concept to pin down in a brief statement, we may understand simply man’s work with creation, whether by mind or body; man’s development of the creation, including a man or woman’s own gifts and abilities; man’s production of various inventions, to make human life easier or more enjoyable; and man’s ordering of his society. Mozart’s composition of a symphony is culture. The discovery of anesthetics, especially for use by dentists, is culture. The ordering of the United States politically by the founding fathers is culture. But so also are the farmer’s cultivation of his field, the wife’s care of her home, and the child’s learning to read, culture.

The Reformed worldview, inherent in the faith set forth in the ecumenical and Reformation creeds, is characterized by all these elements of worldview. The vantage point of the Reformed worldview is the God-given faith that receives Holy Scripture as God’s own revelation of Himself, of His plan for creation and history, and of His will for His elect, redeemed, and regenerated people in the world.

Second, the Reformed worldview imperiously claims all of created reality. All things are ours because we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s (I Cor. 3:22, 23). Since God has given all things

to the risen Christ Jesus, Abraham Kuyper's famed statement, that Christ claims every square inch of the creation, is true.

Third, the Reformed worldview sends its disciples into all of earthly life. It instructs the Reformed Christians that their earthly life is a holy calling. In the world, in every human ordinance, they must serve their God. Jesus prayed, not that God would take Jesus' disciples "out of the world," but that in the world God would "keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

Fourth, the Reformed worldview does not despise, reject, or even fear culture, that is, all kinds of human activity upon creation and its resources. The Reformed worldview requires that we hate, despise, and reject the corrupt culture of ungodly people, as is the command of I John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Living the Reformed, Christian worldview, one hates and rejects a concert of music by avowed lesbians crooning the pleasures of same-sex lust; a movie blasphemously depicting the sufferings of the Christ; and the dishonest business practices that defraud customers, investors, and creditors.

But the Reformed worldview calls Reformed believers enthusiastically to fulfill the mandate of Genesis 1:28, subduing the earth, having dominion, and that aspect of the mandate that many of its noisy proponents tend to ignore and even reject: being fruitful and multiplying.

The Reformed worldview insists on obedience to the *purpose* of the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28: serving and glorifying the true God, the creator of the world and all things in it. The cultural mandate is not merely the command to rule and develop creation. The cultural mandate is the divine charge to rule and develop the earthly creation in the service and to the glory of God. Without this purpose, and in defiance of this purpose, there is no fulfillment of the cultural mandate. This is conveniently overlooked by many who stress the cultural mandate on behalf of a Christian worldview. The reprobate, ungodly man or woman does not, will not, and cannot fulfill the mandate of Genesis 1:28, because he or she cannot subdue, rule, and develop creation in the service of God and to the glory of God. God is not in all his or her thoughts. Therefore, he or she will not seek God (Psalm 10:4). Because he does not seek God in his cultural activities, even the plowing of the wicked is sin (Prov. 21:4). The ungodly subdue the earth and have dominion in the service of the devil and his kingdom. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father ye will do" (John 8:44).

The only fulfillment of the cultural mandate is by the Christian, who works with the creation and lives in the ordinances of creation by faith in Christ, in obedience to the law governing human life, and to the glory of God.

The Reformed Worldview

What now is the Reformed worldview?

The Reformed view of all created reality is determined and shaped by the Reformed faith's knowledge of the Godhead of the triune, one, true, living God, who is revealed in Jesus Christ in the gospel of Holy Scripture. James Orr rightly said "the fundamental postulate [of the Christian worldview] is a personal, holy, self-revealed God."¹⁸ "There be gods many and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor. 8:5, 6). This God is truly God, so that His people must serve Him in all their life. Indeed, all things do serve Him, willingly or unwillingly. The truth of the sovereign God of Scripture establishes the Reformed worldview and distinguishes it from all other worldviews

The Reformed worldview sees the world as created by this God for the purpose of His own glory in His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. As the handiwork of the good God, the creation—the universe—is good. The fall into sin did not make the creation evil. The fall corrupted the human race (Rom. 3:9-13). It brought the curse of decay and death on the earthly creation (Gen. 3:17, 18). “But every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused,” the apostle writes in I Timothy 4:4. The basis of the goodness of every creature is its creation by God.

Having created all things, God continues to uphold His creation, care for it, and govern it by His providence. Providence is power; it is not grace. “Providence [is] the almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures.”¹⁹ Providence keeps creation in existence after the fall. Providence maintains man as a human, not allowing him to become a beast or a devil. Providence preserves the ordinances of creation in which humans live their earthly lives: marriage, family, government, and labor. Divine power does all this, not divine grace.

On the basis of the doctrine of creation, which includes providence, the Reformed Christian may freely live in and work with creation, using and enjoying all the various creatures. This is the teaching of the apostle in I Timothy 4:1ff. The heretical doctrine that the Christian life consists of abstinence from marriage and foods is refuted by the truth of God’s creation of all things: “which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (v. 3).

But it may not be overlooked, as many enthusiastic advocates of worldview do overlook, that God made all things and now upholds and governs all things for the sake of His glory in Jesus Christ. “All things were created by him [Jesus Christ], and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”(Col. 1:16-19).

A culture vaguely characterized by “Judeo-Christian principles” does not satisfy a Reformed Christian. It certainly does not please God. God demands, and God realizes, a culture characterized by the Spirit of the risen Christ, a Christian culture, a life in and work with creation that openly honors Jesus Christ as Lord.

In the light of Scripture and on the basis of the Reformed confessions, the Reformed worldview views the human race as fallen from its original righteousness by the disobedience of Adam (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12ff.). Apart from Jesus Christ, all humans are totally depraved, in bondage to sin, spiritually dead, and rebels against God and His Christ (Eph. 2:1-3; Canons of Dort, III, IV/1-5). As divine punishment, death now destroys every man, woman, and child, and the curse lies heavy on a groaning creation (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 6:23; 8:19-22).

All possibility of a good, godly culture from fallen, unregenerate humans is cut off. The hope of unbelieving humanity that by dint of its own efforts and with the help of the natural process of evolution the race and its earthly home will become a world of peace and prosperity is illusory. The just God curses the guilty sinner and his culture. This is the message of Ecclesiastes: “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.” This is also the message of history.

Knowledge of the fall of the human race into sin and willing servitude of Satan warns Reformed Christians that they must expect opposition and warfare as they devote their lives to the service of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. The ungodly hate them. The culture of the ungodly opposes the culture of the godly. In Jesus Christ, “light is come into the world” in the holy lives of the saints, and the men and women of darkness hate the light (John 3:19, 20).

The Reformed worldview understands that, carrying out His original purpose with creation, God redeems an elect church out of the fallen race by the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The work of redemption includes the renewal of the elect by the grace of the Spirit of Christ so that they

love, obey, and serve God. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28. This is the possibility of good, God-pleasing culture.

In a book that is widely regarded as a classic on the relation of Christ and culture, H. Richard Niebuhr contended that Christ is the “transformer of culture.” “The movement of life . . . issuing from Jesus Christ is an upward movement, the rising of men’s souls and deeds and thoughts in a mighty surge of adoration and glorification of the One who draws them to himself. This is what human culture can be—a transformed human life in and to the glory of God.”²⁰ Niebuhr was right. What Niebuhr ignored was that Christ is the transformer of culture *in the lives and deeds of His elect, renewed people*—*exclusively* in the lives of His elect, renewed people. Niebuhr ignored this, because Niebuhr denied predestination. Ignoring this, Niebuhr was profoundly wrong in his assertion that Christ is the transformer of culture. Christ is not, and never will be, the transformer of the general culture of the human race universally.

Because God’s purpose with the redemption of the new human race, made up of the elect in all nations, is not only their salvation, but also His glory by their lives, God sends the regenerated saints into all the ordinances and spheres of earthly life, to live, work, and play to the praise of God.

The Christian life is not withdrawal from creation and abstinence from the use and enjoyment of the creatures as much as possible. World-flight is forbidden. World-flight is sin. The will of Christ for those whom the Father has given Him is not that they go out of the world, even if this were possible, but that in the world they be kept from evil (John 17:15). Paul condemns the religious theory and practice of world-flight as the “doctrine of devils” (I Tim. 4:1). In his searing indictment of asceticism and world-flight in I Timothy 4:1ff., the apostle exposes the root of this erroneous notion of the nature of the life of the Christian in the world. World-flight supposes that material reality is inherently evil, thus denying the biblical doctrine of creation. In addition, world-flight misunderstands the will of God for the Christian life: *in* the world, but not *of* the world. The purpose of God is that the light of His own truth and holiness shine the more brightly in stark contrast with the darkness of the falsehood and depravity of the wicked world.

The Reformed worldview, convinced of the goodness of creation and obedient to the will of God, calls every Reformed believer and child of believers to a full, active earthly life, in home and family; usually in marriage; in the schools; in labor and business; in the church; and in the state. At the same time, this worldview frees the Reformed Christian to use and enjoy the various creatures, to benefit from the cultural products of the ungodly that are usable, to work with and develop all aspects of creation, and to develop his or her own natural and spiritual abilities—all in the service of the Lord Christ and to the glory of the triune God.

This was the message of the Reformation, which saw all of earthly life as a “vocation,” a sacred calling. This is the teaching of the practical parts of all the New Testament epistles, for example, Ephesians 4-6 and I Peter 2:11-5:14. “Occupy till I come” is the charge of the Lord Jesus to His disciples in the time between His departure to a far country and His return to conduct the judgment of His servants, “how much every man had gained by trading” (Luke 19:11-27).

World-flight is a perennial threat to Christians in every age. It is especially a threat when, as in our day, the visible church becomes thoroughly worldly. Then especially, the more godly, spiritual people are tempted physically to flee society. Against this temptation, the true church must warn. But world-flight has never been, and is not now, the doctrine and practice of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The implication, or hidden agenda, of the denial of common grace is not world-flight.

The charge against the Protestant Reformed denial of common grace that it results in world-flight, “Anabaptistic” world-flight, is false. This charge has been leveled against the Protestant Reformed Churches from the very beginning of their history in the common grace controversy in

the Christian Reformed Church in the early 1920s. A favorite tactic of the Christian Reformed opponents of Herman Hoeksema was smearing him as a modern Anabaptist advocate of world-flight. In 1922 Christian Reformed theologian Jan Karel Van Baalen warned the Christian Reformed Church that, in the controversy over common grace, she stood “on the eve of the most important struggle that she has yet known. That is the struggle between *Calvinism and Anabaptism*.”²¹ Van Baalen charged that “the denial of common grace is Anabaptist.”²²

Hoeksema regarded the charge as mere “mud-slinging.” He repudiated it.

Where have you ever heard us defending that we must leave off the various institutions of society, that we may occupy no government position, that we may carry on no war? Exactly the opposite is our conception. We exactly will *not* to go out of the world. It is exactly our purpose to abandon no single sphere of life. We have exactly called God’s people to occupy the whole of life. However, it is our will that this people of the Lord, which is His covenant people, in no single sphere of life shall forsake or deny its God. That people is called, in every sphere, to live out of grace, out of the one grace by which they are implanted into Christ and love God, so that they keep His commandments.

Hoeksema added:

Therefore, “world-flight” is not applicable to us, as you yourself will now agree, brother [Van Baalen]. If “world” is understood in the sense of “nature,” then you see very well that we do not separate nature and grace but want to live out of grace everywhere. And if “world” is understood in the evil sense, then we do not take to flight, but rather fight the good fight to the end, so that no one may take our crown.²³

In a much later work, Hoeksema described his own worldview, which he called “life-view,” more fully.

And this people of God have their own life-view with regard to every sphere of life and every institution of the world. The home is an institution existing primarily for the perpetuation of God’s covenant in the world. The school is an institution for the purpose of instructing the covenant children according to the principles of Holy Writ for every sphere of life. Society, with business and industry, art and science, and all things that exist, must ... be controlled by the principles of the Word of God and be made subservient to the idea of God’s kingdom in the world. In a word, they have a new life-view. They are members of God’s covenant, His friends in the world, subjects of His kingdom. And, in principle at least, they want to live the life of that kingdom also in the present world.²⁴

The lives of the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches give the lie to the charge that their denial of common grace fosters world-flight. Protestant Reformed people do not ride in buggies pulled by horses; do not dress the women in black; do not live in communes; do not abstain from good food and drink or any other lawful earthly pleasure; do not reject modern technology; do not avoid education; do not forbid involvement in civil government; do not prohibit working in the various professions. In short, the Protestant Reformed Churches do not conceive the Christian life as sitting “*met een boekje in een hoekje*” (“with a little [religious] book in a little corner”). On the contrary, by the Word of God these Churches call all their members to a full, rich, active, holy earthly life in all the ordinances and every sphere of creation. This call is part of Christ’s redemption of His people.

It is another important aspect of the Reformed worldview that it promises victory to Reformed Christians and their obedient lives in the world. Every worldview encourages its disciples with the prospect of future victory. Every one who lives and fights for the Reformed worldview will live and reign with Jesus Christ in the new world (Heid. Cat., Q. 32). The cause of the Reformed faith, which is simply the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, will conquer all the rival kingdoms of man and establish itself triumphantly in all creation (Psalm 72; Dan. 2:1-45; Rev. 21, 22). The creation itself will be renewed as a new heaven and new earth in which the

righteousness preached and practiced by the Reformed faith shall dwell (Rom. 8:19-22; II Pet. 3:13).

The Reformed worldview, which must do battle and endure reproach throughout the present age, will have this perfect victory, not *in* history, but as the *goal* of history, in the day of Jesus Christ. Already in this age, the Reformed worldview is victorious in the pure worship, sound confession, and holy life of the true church, as in the faithfulness of believers and their children to Jesus Christ their Lord. This is a spiritual victory.

But this worldview does not delude its confessors and practitioners with the promise of a carnal victory within history. The Reformed faith has always condemned as illusory the “Jewish dream” of a golden age in history during which the world is “Christianized” and Reformed politicians in Amsterdam; or Presbyterian theologians in Vallecito, California, Tyler, Texas, or Moscow, Idaho; or Reformational philosophers in Toronto, Ontario, Canada rule mankind. The Second Helvetic Confession expresses the Reformed conviction concerning the teaching of a carnal victory of the kingdom of Christ in history.

We further condemn Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth. For evangelical truth in Matt. Chs. 24 and 25, and Luke, ch. 18, and apostolic teaching in II Thess., ch. 2, and II Tim., chs. 3 and 4, present something quite different.²⁵

The Reformed faith maintains an amillennial eschatology. The same chapter of the Second Helvetic Confession that condemns the notion of a golden age as nothing but “Jewish dreams” also warns Reformed Christians of apostasy, persecution, and the coming of Antichrist in the future.

And from heaven the same Christ will return in judgment, when wickedness will then be at its greatest in the world and when the Antichrist, having corrupted true religion, will fill up all things with superstition and impiety and will cruelly lay waste the Church with bloodshed and flames (Dan., ch. 11). But Christ will come again to claim his own, and by his coming to destroy the Antichrist, and to judge the living and the dead (Acts. 17:31).²⁶

The worldview of common grace intoxicates those who inhale its vapors with the giddy prospect of an earthly triumph of the kingdom of God by the creation of a good, godly culture in history. Charles Colson thinks that the cooperation of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in building a culture informed by a biblical worldview can yet, by the power of common grace, win the culture wars and redeem the culture. In the face of the pessimism that concludes that evangelicals have lost the culture war, Colson is optimistic.

The new millennium is a time for Christians to celebrate, to raise our confidence, to blow trumpets, and to fly the flag high. This is the time to make a compelling case that Christianity offers the most rational and realistic hope for both personal redemption and social renewal.²⁷

Richard Mouw is more cautious about the possibilities of culture building common grace. But he too urges the worldview of common grace among all churches and professing Christians in the hope of accomplishing great, good, and godly things in the life of society. An aggressive exercise of “common grace ministries” will promote “the welfare, the shalom, of the larger human community.”²⁸ In this way Christians are agents of one of God’s “Kingdom goals” in history.²⁹

Abraham Kuyper, sober amillennialist though he was in his dogmatics, became a delirious postmillennialist in his advocacy of the worldview of common grace. The cooperation of believers and unbelievers in building a good culture by common grace will result in the “Christianizing” of nations, if not of the world. The task of the “church as organism” is nothing less than “the transformation of human society by bringing it into harmony with the insights provided by the Christian faith. ... Kuyper aimed ... to encourage ... the Christianization of

society.... The Christianization of society would involve bringing all aspects of human life into conformity with Christian principles.”³⁰

The hope of the common grace worldview, an incipient postmillennialism, is vain. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual, not carnal. Its victory in history is a spiritual victory in the gathering and preservation of the church and in the salvation of the elect, which includes their holy lives in all the ordinances and spheres of creation. The perfection of its victory, when all enemies will be destroyed and the saints will reign with Christ over the renewed creation—the true “golden age”—awaits the end of history at the coming of Jesus Christ. This reality, and not a postmillennial dream, is the prospect of victory that sustains and encourages those who are committed to the Reformed worldview.³¹

In the Reformed worldview described above, what is lacking, so that a Reformed Christian is hindered from a full, active life in every sphere of creation?

What about this worldview, which is nothing other than the faith and life of the Christian religion, deserves the harsh charge, “world-flight!”?

What are Christians called to do in the world, that they are prohibited from doing by this worldview?

As the worldview inherent in the Reformed faith, a hallmark of which is predestination, as all the world knows, this worldview is a worldview, not of common grace, but of particular grace. It is a worldview in harmony with, based on, and empowered by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ bestowed on elect believers and their children, and on them alone. This worldview has distinctive features.

Biblical

The Reformed worldview is biblical, not philosophical, speculative, or emotional. The common grace worldview in Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism* is highly philosophical and speculative. It lacks all biblical foundation and exposition. Indeed, there is hardly any mention of Scripture. Kuyper spun the worldview of common grace out of his fertile mind, a mind bent on political power and influence in the Netherlands.

In Mouw’s *He Shines in All That’s Fair*, the common grace worldview is emotional, as well as philosophical and speculative. Its source is not the teaching of Scripture, but the feelings of Richard Mouw: his approval of many of the works of the ungodly; his empathy for the suffering and rejoicing wicked; and his longing to cooperate with “decent” unbelievers in creating a culture of justice and peace.³²

Particularly with regard to its fundamental tenet of the building of a good, even godly, culture by a grace of God shared by Christian and non-Christian, the common grace worldview is plainly, egregiously, absurdly unbiblical. The Bible does not teach a culture-forming work of God in the world of the ungodly. The Bible does not know a work of grace in the society of men and women who hate God and His Son Jesus Christ resulting in a culture that is good and pleases God.

On the contrary.

God destroyed the world of the ungodly with all their impressive Cainite culture in the flood (Gen. 4:16-24; 6-8).

The great cultural work of mankind after the flood was the Tower of Babel. This grand achievement of the seed of the serpent, God hated and ruined (Gen. 11:1-9).

Great civilizations and impressive cultures appeared in the time of the Old Testament and are recognized in Old Testament Scripture: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Tyre, and others. The prophets did not admire them, but condemned them for their idolatry and unrighteousness. Think of the

Nebuchadnezzar's great image representing four mighty world-powers and splendid civilizations in Daniel 2. God's little stone—the kingdom of Messiah—demolishes the four world-kingdoms. Against highly civilized Tyre, the prophet pronounced the divine woe in Ezekiel 26-28.

The only culture Jehovah approved in the time of the Old Testament was that of Israel, insofar as it was godly, and that national and societal way of life was the product of saving grace.

Where in the New Testament is there a hint, even so much as a hint, of a positive cultural work of God by His grace among ungodly men and women, or of a calling of the church to cooperate with unbelievers in building a good, God-pleasing culture? About the idolatrous civilizations of Greece and Rome, the “glory that was Greece,” over which Reformed college professors sigh and swoon, Romans 1:18ff. states that the wrath of God fell on them, giving the people over to a reprobate mind, so that they were full of perverse sexual desires and practiced sodomy and lesbianism.

In Revelation 18, the last apostle recognizes the marvelous civilization and remarkable culture of humanity at the end of time—a “mighty city” of wealth and luxury, of industry and trade, of music and inventions. He recognizes this civilization and culture, calls on the reader of the Revelation 18 to recognize it, and then pronounces the destruction of Babylon the great, and rejoices over its destruction.

God is not pleased to build a culture by means of the ungodly. He is pleased to destroy the culture of the ungodly.

One culture, and one culture only, pleases God: the godly way of life, spiritual and earthly, of the holy nation, the city of God, that is, the church. This pleases Him, because this way of life is His own work by the Spirit and grace of Jesus Christ. The reality of this culture, the manner of the building of this culture, and the way of life of this culture are the biblical teaching about the sanctified life of the church and about the holy life of believers and their children in the world.

Mighty Grace

A second distinctive feature of the Reformed worldview of particular grace is its requirement that believers and their children live their earthly lives in the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and of the mighty grace that has its source in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Son of God. The Christian works on the farm or in the factory, runs a business, studies at school, does research, plays or listens to music, and eats and drinks by the same grace that empowers him to worship, confess, pray, and witness to his neighbor. The only power and possibility of an earthly life that pleases God and contributes to good culture is the life of the risen Jesus Christ, which is received through faith in Him. The urgent exhortation of the Bible is: “Live out of Christ! Walk in His Spirit! Do all in the name of Jesus Christ!”

The Christian does not and may not carry out his worldview, or pursue his cultural task, by the power of some other grace, by some common grace. This, however, is what the common grace worldview teaches. Abraham Kuyper wrote: “And thus now it is one and the same man who enjoys God's common grace in the life of society and God's particular grace in the holy sphere.”³³ At church we live by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and saving grace; throughout the week, we live and work by the power of another grace, “common grace.” To propose another power, another grace, than the power of God's grace in Christ for the Christian's life in society is attempted murder of the Christian life, nothing less.

Their attempting to live and work in the world by common grace goes a long way towards explaining why those who practice the common grace worldview invariably become thoroughly worldly. They are attempting to live by a wrong and wholly inadequate power, as though a soldier would go to war with a squirt gun, rather than a machine gun, or would clothe himself

with a nightgown, rather than armor. They are vulnerable to the destructive influence of the wicked world.

Neither Scripture nor the Reformed confessions attribute the calling of Christians to live a full earthly life, or the power to carry out this calling, to a common grace of God, but to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is as those who have learned Christ and who are renewed by the Spirit of Christ, so that they are new men and women in Christ, that the Ephesian Christians are truthful with the neighbors; labor faithfully at some earthly vocation; are kind to each other; avoid sexual filth; abstain from drunkenness and its debauchery; honor marriage and the family; and are active in the sphere of labor and business, whether as employer or employee (Eph. 4:17-6:9).

In the explanation of the law of God and of the model prayer that is the third part of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Catechism certainly calls the Reformed believer to live a full, active life in the world. This life includes right public worship at church; submission to the civil magistrates; honorable behavior in marriage and the family; honest dealings in business; and upright conduct with all one's neighbors in society. By this life, one seeks and promotes the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ (Heid. Cat., Lord's Days 32-52). This calling is grounded, not in some original purpose of God with mankind to create a good culture, or "Christianize" society, but in the redemption of the cross of Christ. The power of this earthly life in all its aspects is not a common grace of God that the godly share with the ungodly, but the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ. "Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image."³⁴

Honoring Jesus Christ

The honoring of Jesus Christ in confession and practice is a third distinctive feature of the genuinely Reformed worldview. The Reformed worldview confesses that the one purpose of God with all things is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, our dear Savior, and the Lord over all. The Reformed worldview demands a life lived in subjection to and service of Him. Basic to the Reformed worldview is the confession that God made all things for Jesus Christ, that all things cohere in Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ must have the preeminence in all things. Jesus Christ, the head of the church, is the one purpose of God with creation and history. In raising Jesus Christ from the dead, God has exalted Him to a position of prominence over all things (Col. 1:13-20).

Whatever worldview ignores Jesus Christ, whatever worldview does not ascribe this centrality, this preeminence, to Jesus Christ, is false. Whatever culture, however decent and humane it may be, does not confess and obey Jesus Christ as Lord of the culture is cursed.

The common grace worldview ignores Jesus Christ. It leaves Jesus Christ out of the fine culture it is building with the help of those who deny Jesus Christ. The common grace worldview ignores Jesus Christ and leaves Him out of its culture *by its own frank admission*. According to the worldview of common grace, God has a cultural purpose with creation and history altogether apart from His saving purpose in Jesus Christ. God has two distinct purposes with creation and history. One is the redemption of a church by the saving grace of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. The other is the development of good culture by reprobate, unregenerate men and women, with the help of Christians, as the original purpose of God with creation. God realizes this purpose by His common grace. This cultural purpose has nothing to do with Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen head of the church. He is certainly not the source, foundation, life, lord, and goal of this culture.

Abraham Kuyper, who is the father of the common grace worldview, wrote that "there is beside the great work of God in *special* grace also that totally other work of God in the realm of *common* grace." This "totally other work" is the gracious activity of God in heathens and

idolaters “to consummate the world’s development.” God takes “delight in that high human development” of heathens and idolaters. For by this cultural development of humanity “all the glory of God’s image can mirror itself.”

Common grace, according to Kuyper, achieves “a purpose of its own” in history. “Independently [of Jesus Christ as head of the redeemed church and of His saving grace],” common grace brings about “the full emergence of what God had in mind when he planted those nuclei of higher development in our race.” By the independent working of common grace, “humanity arrives at its goal, it lifts itself up from its sunken state, it gradually reaches a higher level. The fundamental creation ordinance given before the fall, that humans would achieve dominion over all of nature thanks to ‘common grace,’ is still realized *after* the fall. Only in this way, in the light of the Word of God, can the history of our race, the long unfolding of the centuries as well as the high significance of the world’s development, make substantial sense to us.”³⁵

Richard Mouw’s recent defense and expansion of Kuyper’s worldview of common grace likewise asserts that God pursues a cultural purpose in history that is separate from His saving purpose in Jesus Christ. Mouw speaks of “multiple divine purposes.” “As God unfolds his plan for his creation, he is interested in more than one thing. Alongside of God’s clear concern about the eternal destiny of individuals are his designs for the larger creation.”³⁶

Positing two, independent purposes of God with creation and history is dualism. Dualism is the destruction of worldview! By definition, worldview sees all of created reality whole. Worldview is a comprehensive, unified view of history and the world. The advocates of the worldview of common grace do not have a worldview, but *worldviews*. One is the worldview of God’s work of glorifying Himself by the redemption of a church by the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The other is the worldview of God’s work of glorifying Himself by the development of good, godly culture by the ungodly by the common grace of God.

Still worse, the common grace worldview teaches a great purpose of God with, and a marvelous work of God in, history that has nothing to do with Jesus Christ, the incarnate, crucified, and risen Son of God. And if this worldview ignores Jesus Christ, it denies Him. It denies Him with regard to its worldview. Nothing less than this is the damning Reformed indictment of the worldview of common grace: It denies Jesus Christ with regard to what is proposed as one of the great purposes of God with history and with regard to what is advanced as the foundation of all human life in the world.

Kuyper struggled with these two weaknesses of his theory of common grace, its inherent dualism and the separation of God’s work of cultural development from Jesus Christ. He tried to solve his problems by uniting both the work of redemption and the cultural work of common grace in the person of the eternal Son of God. “Holy Scripture repeatedly tells us of the intertwinement of the life of special grace with that of common grace but simultaneously discloses that the point at which the two come together is not Christ’s birth in Bethlehem but his eternal existence as the *Eternal Word*.”³⁷ “The work of creation and the work of redemption—and to that extent also the work of common and of special grace—find a higher unity in Christ only because the eternal Son of God is behind both starting points.”³⁸ In support of this attempt to overcome both the dualism and the ignoring of Jesus Christ that characterize the worldview of common grace, Kuyper appealed to Colossians 1:13ff.

Kuyper’s attempt failed. It merely thrust the dualism back into the person of the eternal Son. Now the eternal Son of God has two independent purposes with, and works in, history. Besides, Colossians 1:13ff. does not make the person of the eternal Son of God the beginning and goal of all creation, the one purpose of God with the existence and movement of all things in history, and the one who must have preeminence in all things. The one who has this importance with regard

to creation, all things, and history is the dear Son of God, into whose kingdom elect believers have been translated (v. 13); in whom we have redemption through His blood (v. 14); who is the firstborn of every creature, which cannot be said of the eternal person of the Son (v. 15); who is the head of the church (v. 18); and who is the firstborn from the dead (v. 18). This is not the person of the eternal Son, although Jesus Christ's person is the eternal Son, but the *man* born of Mary, suffered under Pilate, and raised bodily on the third day. *Him* God has honored with such incomparable honor. *Him* the Reformed worldview honors. And *Him* the common grace worldview denies.

Righteous

A fourth distinctive feature of the Reformed worldview is its insistence that the norm, or standard, of all of everyday, earthly life, in all the ordinances and spheres of creation, is the law of God as clearly revealed in Scripture. God's law in Scripture governs sexual conduct; marriage; the family; life in the church; labor; business; medicine; relations with the neighbor; and the behavior of the Christian towards the state.

Reformed, Christian life is not lawless. It is not ruled by man's own will. It is not governed by the current thinking and practices of the depraved world, which contraband are then smuggled into Reformed churches as the cargo of "general revelation."

The worldview of common grace opens up the individuals, churches, and schools that embrace it to the world's lawlessness. In the name of common grace, they approve feminism and egalitarianism; divorce and remarriage for any and every reason; the rebellion of "servants" against their "masters" in the realm of labor; Sabbath desecration; the enjoyment of Hollywood's vilest and most violent, even blasphemous, movies; and now homosexuality, at least in a "committed relationship." Acceptance of the wicked world's "wisdom" and ways by those who hold the worldview of common grace is inevitable. For the common grace worldview posits the gracious operation of the Spirit in the ungodly world and therefore also a great deal of truth and righteousness.³⁹

Antithetical

In sharp contrast to the conforming mentality of the worldview of common grace, the Reformed worldview is antithetical—unashamedly, boldly, urgently antithetical. This is a fifth distinctive feature of the genuinely Reformed worldview. Two radically different groups of people, hostile to each other, live in the closest proximity. They develop two fundamentally different cultures in the same spheres of creation. One group confesses the sovereignty of the triune God and Father of Jesus Christ and willingly submit to the Lordship of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. The other rebels against God and His Messiah. The Reformed worldview calls Christians to be separate from those who deny Jesus Christ and thus the one, true God.

Is any truth clearer, or more emphatic, in Scripture than the antithesis?

God Himself set the history of the human race on its way with the word of Genesis 3:15, dividing the race into two antagonistic families: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Old Testament Israel must dwell in safety alone (Deut. 33:28). It is no different for the New Testament church and child of God.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come

out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Cor. 6:14-18).

So overpowering is this truth of the antithesis everywhere in Scripture that it frustrated the strenuous efforts of H. Richard Niebuhr to gainsay it. In his acclaimed study of the relation between Christ and culture, Niebuhr searched for evidence in the Christian tradition and in Scripture that Christ, the *transformer* of culture, is not *against* culture. Again and again, he was forced to admit, honest scholar that he was, that his champions of “Christ-as-transformer-of-culture” taught Christ as the foe of culture.

Niebuhr liked to claim Augustine as a “Christian who set before men the vision of universal concord and peace in a culture in which all human actions had been reordered by the gracious action of God in drawing all men to Himself, and in which all men were active in works directed toward and thus reflecting the love and glory of God.” But Niebuhr was forced to acknowledge that Augustine “did not develop his thought in this direction. He did not actually look forward with hope to the realization of the great eschatological possibility...—the redemption of the created and corrupted human world and the transformation of mankind in all its cultural activity.” Due largely to “his predestinarian form of the doctrine of election, Augustine[’s] ... vision [is that] of two cities, composed of different individuals, forever separate. Here is a dualism more radical than that of Paul and Luther.”

“Calvin,” alas, “is very much like Augustine.” There are in this Reformer ideas that led Niebuhr to hope that Calvin might have taught “the transformation of mankind in all its nature and culture into a kingdom of God in which the laws of the kingdom have been written upon the inward parts.” But this is not, in fact, the cultural doctrine of Calvin.

To the eternal over-againstness of God and man, Calvin adds the dualism of temporal and eternal existence, and the other dualism of an eternal heaven and an eternal hell. Though Calvinism has been marked by the influence of the eschatological hope of transformation by Christ and by its consequent pressing toward the realization of the promise, this element in it has always been accompanied by a separatist and repressive note, even more markedly than in Lutheranism.

Niebuhr was compelled to fall back on the minor, and heretical, figure of F. D. Maurice.⁴⁰

The Bible proved to be as unhelpful for Niebuhr’s thesis as Augustine and Calvin. Christ as transformer of culture “is most clearly indicated in the Gospel of John.” But, added Niebuhr immediately, “the close relation of this work to the First Letter of John at once suggests, it is accompanied there also by a separatist note.” Misunderstanding the “universalistic statements” in the gospel according to John, Niebuhr thought that John seems “to look forward to the complete transformation of human life and work.” However, Niebuhr recognized that “such universalistic statements ... are balanced in the Gospel by sayings that voice the sense of the world’s opposition to Christ and of his concern for the few.” Niebuhr concluded by agreeing with the analysis of another scholar: “The Fourth Gospel ... is ... the most exclusive of the New Testament writings. It draws a sharp division between the Church of Christ and the outlying world, which is regarded as merely foreign or hostile.”⁴¹

The worldview of the Bible is antithetical, and the antithesis is grounded in divine predestination. Whatever worldview fails to reckon with the antithesis, weakens the antithesis, or denies the antithesis is false.

The antithesis that is basic to the biblical worldview for the church and Christian in the New Testament is spiritual. It is the separation and warfare between faith and unbelief. The believer thinks God’s thoughts after Him; God is not in all the unbeliever’s thoughts. The believer does all to the glory of God; the unbeliever lives for self, humanity, and sin. The believer trusts in God in Jesus Christ for salvation and, indeed, all things; the unbeliever trusts in the arm of human

flesh, or frankly despairs. The believer obeys God in love; the unbeliever either tramples the commandments of God underfoot, or outwardly observes the laws of God out of self-interest.

The antithesis between the seed of the woman—Jesus Christ and those who are His by divine election—and the seed of the serpent—those who are Satan’s progeny according to divine reprobation—in the New Testament age is not physical. The antithesis certainly must, and does, come to physical expression. The Christian does not worship with the pagans or with the false church (I Cor. 10:14-22). He may not date and marry an unbeliever (I Cor. 7:39). He may not cultivate friendship with an unbeliever (II Cor. 6:14-18). He may not cooperate with unbelievers in ungodly enterprises, for example, building an earthly kingdom of God apart from Jesus Christ, the pardon of sins, and lives of holiness (II Chron. 19:2). Reformed parents educate the children of the covenant in their own schools, where the instruction is based on Scripture and the Reformed confessions and where the law of God rules the speech and conduct of all the students (Eph. 6:4).

But it is not the nature of the antithesis that it consists of, and requires, physical separation of the church from the ungodly world and of the believer and his children from unbelievers and their children. The antithesis is not world-flight. The Reformed Christian may live fully and freely in every ordinance and sphere of creation, for example, marriage, labor, and the state. He may develop and exercise all his natural gifts, for example, scholarship, building houses, making music, or playing ball. He may associate with the ungodly in everyday, earthly life, for example, neighborhood, labor, and state. He may cooperate with the ungodly in all kinds of earthly activities, for example, business and the defense of the nation. He may use and enjoy all the cultural products of the ungodly that are not so defiled and defiling as to be intrinsically unclean. He may enjoy and learn from the world’s great literature. He may enjoy classical music. He may avail himself of the computer. He may benefit from advances in medicine.

All of this earthly activity of the Reformed Christian, including association with the ungodly and use of their inventions, is due to the truths of creation and providence. By virtue of God’s creation of all things, “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused” (I Tim. 4:4; cf. I Cor. 10:26). Life in the ordinances and spheres of creation, which is the will of God for His redeemed people, necessarily involves physical contact and cooperation in earthly affairs with the ungodly (I Cor. 5:10). Christians and non-Christians have all things earthly in common, because of creation and providence.

What they do not have in common is grace. Therefore, although they share earthly life, they live this earthly life in two radically different ways, the one to the glory of God and the other in defiance of God. Knowing that the thinking and practices of the ungodly world are not the fruit of grace, the Christian is always on his guard against the ignorance and licentiousness of the ungodly with whom he associates and cooperates (Eph. 4:18, 19).

The worldview of common grace breaks down the antithesis. It is a breach in the spiritual wall, a bridge over the spiritual moat, between the church and the world, between the believer and the unbeliever, between Christ and Belial. Through the breach and over the bridge of common grace, the godless thinking and unholy practices of the wicked world pour into the lives of the people, the churches, and the schools where the worldview of common grace reigns. Abraham Kuyper proposed the worldview of common grace as a bridge between the church and the world by which the church could influence the world. Kuyper forgot something about bridges. They allow two-way traffic.

After some one hundred years, since the invention of the common grace worldview by Kuyper and his colleague Herman Bavinck,⁴² the worldview of common grace has proved to be a failure. It has not “Christianized” the Netherlands. It has not “Christianized” the United States.

It has not “Christianized” Grand Rapids, Michigan. On the contrary, it has made the people, churches, and schools that advocate and practice it thoroughly worldly.

The deleterious effect of the worldview of common grace on its proponents is being recognized of late by some who have not historically been involved in the controversy over common grace and who therefore cannot be accused of having an ax to grind. James D. Bratt speaks of a “basic ambiguity in his [Kuyper’s] thought. On the one hand, Kuyper preached religious antithesis: the life-principles of Christians and unbelievers were diametrically opposed, the spiritual qualities of their respective actions were inevitably antagonistic.... Later in his career ... Kuyper resurrected the doctrine of common grace: that God gave to humanity grace which, while not ‘saving,’ enabled them to attain much virtue and truth ... and that cooperation between Christians and unbelievers was therefore possible and necessary.”⁴³ “Basic ambiguity” regarding the antithesis is fatal to the antithesis.

Writing in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Presbyterian theologian William D. Dennison judges that “Dutch neo-Calvinism,” whose father is Abraham Kuyper, whose project is to “transform and reclaim the post-enlightenment culture for the Lordship of Jesus Christ,” and whose worldview is that of common grace, “has become more a child of the Enlightenment and modernity than a movement preserving historic orthodox Calvinism.”⁴⁴

Sean Michael Lucas sees the same worldliness (he calls it “secularization”) where the common grace worldview dominates. He attributes this worldliness to the doctrine of common grace.

Although Kuyper himself used language of the antithesis, his later followers, particularly in the United States and Canada, more often emphasized the other two intellectual contributions of the Kuyperian vision: common grace and the ordering structures of sphere sovereignty. As common grace came to override Kuyper’s emphasis upon the difference that the *palingenesis* [regeneration] made—with its two kinds of people and two kinds of science—the secularization of the sacred not only became a possibility, but actually happened at places such as the Free University of Amsterdam. As a result, American neo-Calvinists continue to worry that their institutions committed to Kuyper’s ideals could follow Free University’s path, and such concern is warranted.... As modern Kuyperians attempted to transform culture by obeying God’s law in every human sphere and by cooperating with God’s common grace, the temptation became the identification of social “progress” ... with God’s activity. As the sacred was secularized, or as things common were identified with the continued unfolding of redemptive history, the public positions that Kuyperians held looked suspiciously like moderate-to-liberal American politics granted divine sanction.⁴⁵

Pilgrimage

By no means the least significant of the distinctive features of the Reformed worldview is that it keeps before the Christian that he is a pilgrim on the earth and that his life, including his cultural life, is a pilgrimage. The Reformed worldview has a perspective on earthly life that pays attention to the “cloud of witnesses” of Hebrews 11. “These all died in faith ... and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country ... that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:13-16). Active as we are, may be, and ought to be in earthly life, we may never forget that our life is a pilgrimage to the celestial city.

The common grace worldview destroys this truth about the Christian and his life. This worldview makes the “Christianizing” of society, the building of a grand and good culture, and the improvement of the world as a form of the kingdom of God the main thing for the Christian. It tends to fix one’s heart on this life. It tends to make cultural achievements the goal of the Christian life.

The worldview of common grace also obscures Scripture's warning that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). The church in the world is always a church "under the cross." Why would unbelievers hate and persecute those with whom they share the grace of God? How can there be tribulation for Christians at the hands of unbelievers when both are cooperating by the common grace of God to fulfill one of God's great purposes with creation and history? More to the point, why would non-Christians kill, or even ridicule, professing Christians who are ready to adopt the current thinking and practices of the non-Christians (as "general revelation"), who studiously avoid naming the name of Jesus Christ (since the common grace worldview and enterprise have nothing to do with Him), and who refrain from condemning the unbelief and unrighteousness of the non-Christians (because the lives of the non-Christians are good, true, and beautiful by the power of common grace)?

But Christ warns that all who lose their hope of His return and of heaven, because they are wrapped up in this earthly life with its cares and disappointments, but also with its pleasures and successes, will perish in the coming conflagration, as the worldly contemporaries of Noah perished in the flood (Matt. 24:37-41). Christ also pronounces His woe upon professing disciples of whom all men speak well (Luke 6:26).

The worldview of common grace is not only false. It is also spiritually dangerous in the extreme.

Ordinary

The last distinctive feature of the Reformed worldview is that it presents the life—the *cultural* life—of the Christian as mainly ordinary, unnoticed, and insignificant according to human standards. In God's mind, this "ordinary" life of the Christian is amazing, a wonder of His grace in Jesus Christ that has brought life out of death, purity out of filth, and freedom out of slavery.

There is room in the Reformed worldview for the artist, the doctor or nurse, the official of civil government, the successful businessman, the lawyer, the godly man or woman who has impact on society. The Reformed worldview welcomes a Martin Luther, a John Calvin, a J. S. Bach, and (his philosophy of common grace aside) an Abraham Kuyper. But these high profile positions do not constitute the cultural life envisioned by the Reformed worldview. They do not even touch the essence of godly culture as the Reformed worldview conceives it. To suppose so is elitism: the foolish thinking of the ungodly world that fawns over talent, power, riches, and success.

Usually, those who practice the Reformed worldview are lowly people, men and women of no-account, the weak, the base, and despised, for God has chosen such. God has chosen the nobodies to confound the wise, the mighty, and the somebodies, not only in salvation, but also *in the matter of culture*. His purpose is that no flesh should glory in His presence over *culture*, as no flesh should glory in His presence over salvation (I Cor. 1:26-31).

Godly Culture

The Reformed worldview is not mere intellectual theory. A conviction of the heart, it expresses itself in a life. This life is godly culture, the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, as renewed in Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

This is the contour of a godly culture, as marked out by Scripture, the Christian tradition, and the Reformed confessions. First and foremost, one is a lively, faithful member of a Reformed church that clearly shows the marks of the true church. Article 29 of the Belgic Confession

defines the marks as the preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and the exercise of church discipline upon impenitent sinners.

It is astounding, and significant, that much of the writing about worldview and godly culture ignores church membership—church membership *in a true institute*. In fact, leading worldview scholars disparage church membership, if they do not hold church membership in contempt. Prominent theorists of a “Reformational worldview” at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, Canada have themselves abandoned membership in a Reformed church to affiliate with the United Church of Canada, which has so apostatized as to be a false church. Charles Colson encourages the union of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the movement known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together so that together they can fight the culture war. Not only does this movement imperil the church membership of evangelical Protestants by approving Rome as a true church. It also minimizes the importance of church membership by making church membership secondary to the building of a good culture.⁴⁶

But membership in the true church is the primary expression in one’s life of the Reformed worldview, as the right worship of the triune God in Jesus Christ is the beginning of all godly culture. The very word *culture*, like *cult*, denotes worship.

In addition, it is the church, the true instituted church, that is the powerhouse of the Reformed worldview and the source of the good culture of a godly life in all the ordinances and spheres of creation. Not the schools! Not the man-made organizations, like Evangelicals and Catholics Together! The church has the means of grace, the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments. Jesus Christ inscribes the blueprint of the Christian and Reformed worldview on the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls by the pure preaching of the doctrine of the gospel by the church.

One who lives the Reformed worldview marries in the Lord Jesus and lives faithfully with wife or husband until death parts them. Fundamental to the covenant and kingdom of God and to godly culture is the family, and basic to the family is marriage.

When I see that the great enthusiasts for worldview, culture, and the kingdom of God tolerate and practice divorce and remarriage at the same lawless rate and on the same lawless basis as does secular society, I conclude that these enthusiasts are not serious about godly culture and the kingdom of God.

And when the well-known proponents of a “Reformational worldview,” Hendrik Hart and James Olthuis, write in defense of homosexuality, including homosexual “marriage,” I conclude that their “Reformational worldview” is the same godless, lawless, pagan worldview, upon which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, that the apostle condemns in Romans 1:18ff. Hart has written a fervent recommendation of homosexual Pim Pronk’s advocacy of homosexuality, *Against Nature*?⁴⁷ Olthuis teaches that homosexual “marriages” are not only permitted, but also recommended. A committed, loving homosexual relation is a “sign of God’s abundant grace, a token of God’s future in a fallen world.”⁴⁸

The Reformed worldview honors marriage and the family, to say nothing of basic Christian sexual ethics. It calls the single to the chastity of abstinence and locates the sexual relationship exclusively in the lifelong bond of marriage of husband and wife.⁴⁹

The wife and mother works in the home, caring for her family and managing the household. No position and work are esteemed more highly for the believing woman by the Reformed worldview than those of wife and mother. With the steel in its backbone that derives from basing the life of Christians on the wisdom of God in Scripture, rather than on the wisdom of society, the Reformed worldview resists the strong pressures of feminism. Christian mothers may not ship their children to the day care centers so that they can pursue careers. They may not ship their children to the day care centers so that they can make ends meet. Rather, they must shrink their

ends, or have their husbands get help from the deacons. God calls mothers in His covenant to seek the kingdom of Christ by rearing God's children (I Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:4, 5).⁵⁰

The husband and father is called to work diligently at his job, whether farmer, or mechanic, or laborer in a factory (which was the occupation of some of the most godly and most culturally productive men in the kingdom of Christ I have known), or employer, or college professor, in the service of the Lord Christ (Eph. 6:5-9). To the utmost of his ability, he must support his family, as well as other forms and activities of the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 4:28; II Thess. 3:6-12). This is not merely a necessity of earthly life. It is godly culture.

Of vital importance to worldview is the instruction of the covenant, baptized children in the Reformed faith and life by the parents. Those gripped by the Reformed worldview regard children as a blessing. They are determined to hand the worldview down to their children and grandchildren. It is anathema to them that their children be ignorant of the worldview they regard as true, or that the children be educated in another, false worldview. Education of the children in the truth of the word of God—the Reformed faith—is the command of God to believing parents: “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them [the praises of the LORD, His strength, and His wonderful works] known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born” (Ps. 78:4-6). God wills that the right worldview be passed on from generation to generation, for He is a covenant God, saving His people in the line of generations.

This instruction of children takes place in the home and in the true church, which feeds Christ's lambs, as well as His sheep (John 21:15). But it must also take place in good Christian schools. Especially in the Christian schools is all the teaching about worldview—about a comprehensive view of all things created, in light of God the creator of all and Jesus Christ the lord over all and on the basis of the Bible and the Reformed confessions. How objectionable, and often ruinous to children and young people of the covenant, is the instruction of the state schools, which teach the worldview of deified Man! How objectionable, and increasingly harmful to Reformed children and young people, is the instruction of the Christian schools committed to the world-conforming worldview of common grace!⁵¹

And then there are observance of the Sabbath, submission to civil government, care of aged parents, love to the neighbor, sitting loose to riches and things, and all the other aspects of the Christian life as prescribed by the gospel of the Scriptures.

The ordinary life of every child of God is godly culture.

The godliness in everyday, earthly life of many Reformed Christians in a locality may very well influence a certain city, or even a certain nation. Good! There is a powerful witness to truth and righteousness. More likely, especially in our day, when the forces of darkness are angry and aggressive, the godliness of the Reformed worldview, advantageous though it obviously is, will arouse hatred, scorn, and persecution. This too is good. The war of the ages is raging, as rage it must in the last days, and in the war we expect opposition.

What matters is that the godly life that springs from the Reformed worldview works out the salvation of the elect believers and their children, testifies against the godless world, and glorifies God in Jesus Christ.

The godly life in the world of elect believers and their children is the beginning of the culture that Christ will perfect in all the renewed creation at His coming, when the Reformed worldview triumphs in the new heaven and the new earth. That will be a culture produced and lived by the power of the particular, saving grace of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the source of which is election, as even the most ardent defenders of the worldview of common grace admit.

The culture of Jesus Christ, the last Adam, who alone fulfills the cultural mandate, will fill the new world after the destruction of that which Abraham Kuyper regarded as the finest flowering of the worldview of common grace. Kuyper taught, and presumably his modern disciples agree, that the fullest and most glorious development of culture by the common grace of God will be the kingdom of the Antichrist at the end.

The closing scene in the drama of common grace can be enacted only through the appearance on stage of the man of sin.... “Common grace” ... leads to the most powerful manifestation of sin in history.... At the moment of its destruction Babylon—that is, the world power which evolved from human life—will exhibit not the image of a barbarous horde nor the image of coarse bestiality but, on the contrary, a picture of the highest development of which human life is capable. It will display the most refined forms, the most magnificent unfolding of wealth and splendor, the fullest brilliance of all that makes life dazzling and glorious. From this we know that “common grace” will continue to function to the end. Only when common grace has spurred the full emergence of all the powers inherent in human life will “the man of sin” find the level terrain needed to expand this power.⁵²

Common grace produces the beast!

The common grace worldview is busy building the culture of Antichrist!

The proponents of the common grace worldview who are alive at that time will be hard-pressed to resist the temptation to regard that glorious development of culture as the kingdom of God in its finest form. If they do resist (God being gracious with His grace in Christ Jesus), they will, at long last, join with us defenders of the Reformed worldview of particular grace in rejoicing over the utter and final destruction of the worldview and culture of common grace as damnable in the judgment of God.

With us, they will then enter a world of new heaven and new earth that always had Jesus Christ as its goal (Col. 1:19, 20), a world in which Jesus Christ is preeminent (Col. 1:18), a world that Jesus Christ has redeemed (John 3:16), a world that was always groaning under the curse of the culture of the ungodly and longing for the glorious liberty that Jesus Christ would give (Rom. 8:19-22), and a world in which the righteousness of Jesus Christ dwells (II Pet. 3:13).

They will then notice that the only works performed by humans in history that are allowed into the new world are the works of the saints. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13). |

Footnotes were separate copy in pamphlet. Hence, they are now endnotes.

1. The topic of the debate was “Is the Doctrine of Common Grace Reformed?” Mouw answered the question in the affirmative. Answering the question in the negative was the present writer. The debate, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was occasioned by the publication of Mouw’s book, *He Shines in All That’s Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) and by a series of editorials by the present writer in the Reformed periodical, the *Standard Bearer*, responding to the book. These editorials have been published as *Common Grace Revisited: A Response to Richard J. Mouw’s He Shines in All That’s Fair* (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 2003). Audio and video copies of the debate are available from The Evangelism Society, Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, 1535 Cambridge Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

2. Kuyper propounded the doctrine of a common grace of God as a fundamental tenet of Calvinism in his Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898. These speeches were published as *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953). Kuyper developed his doctrine of common grace extensively in a three-volume work, *De Gemeene Gratie* (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1902-1904). This work has not been translated into English. The Christian Reformed Church adopted the doctrine of a common grace of God as official church dogma at its synod of 1924 in Kalamazoo, Michigan. These decisions describing and adopting common grace are found in the original Dutch in the *Acta der Synode 1924 van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 145-147. An English translation of the 1924 “Acts of Synod” of the Christian Reformed Church by Henry De Mots has been published by the Archives of the Christian Reformed Church: *1924 Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church Held from 18 June until 8 July 1924 in Kalamazoo, MI, USA* (Grand Rapids: Archives of the Christian Reformed Church, 2000). Evidently, the publisher of the English translation took care that the pages of the translation should correspond exactly to the pages of the Dutch original. The decisions adopting common grace in this English translation are also found on pages 145-147. More readily available is Herman Hoeksema’s English translation of the Christian Reformed Church’s decisions on common grace in his and Herman Hanko’s *Ready to Give an Answer: A Catechism of Reformed Distinctives* (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 1997), pp. 63, 101, 125).

3. Charles Colson, “Reclaiming Occupied Territory,” *Christianity Today* (Aug. 2004): 64.

4. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, pp. 28, 30. Cf. Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 268-270: “The doctrine of common grace . . . provided him [Kuyper] with the only sound solution to the problem of Christianity and culture, and supplied an incentive and justification for active Christian pursuit of cultural renewal.”

5. *Building a Christian World View*, ed. W. Andrew Hoffecker, associate ed. Gary Scott Smith, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), p. xvi.

6. Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

7. J. Budziszewski, *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Dallas, TX: Spence, 1999).

8. Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999).

9. James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World as Centering in the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 3.

10. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 16.

11. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, pp. 88, 89.

12. Canons of Dordt, III, IV, Rejection of Errors/5: “The Synod [of Dordt] rejects the errors of those . . . who teach that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand

the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely, the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion” (“The Three Forms of Unity,” Grandville, MI: Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1999), p. 64.

13. Canons of Dordt, I/4, in “The Three Forms of Unity,” p. 49.

14. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 8, in “The Three Forms of Unity,” p. 4.

15. Westminster Confession of Faith, 10.1, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), p. 624.

16. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 53.

17. *ibid.*, p. 78.

18. James Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 9.

19. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 10, in “The Three Forms of Unity,” p. 7.

20. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, Harper & Row [Harper Torchbooks], 1975), pp. 195, 196.

21. Jan Karel Van Baalen, *De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeerd of Doopersch?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans-Sevensma, 1922), p. 9 (the translation of the Dutch is mine; the emphasis is the author’s). The title in English would be *The Denial of Common Grace: Reformed or Anabaptist?*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

23. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema, *Niet Doopersch Maar Gereformeerd: Voorloopig Bescheid aan Ds. Jan Karel Van Baalen betreffende de Loochening der Gemeene Gratie* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids Printing Co., n.d.), pp. 67, 68 (the translation of the Dutch is mine). The title in English would be *Not Anabaptist but Reformed: A Provisional Answer to Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen concerning the Denial of Common Grace*.

24. Herman Hoeksema, *Behold, He Cometh!: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000), p. 211.

25. “The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566,” Chapter XI, in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 245, 246.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

27. Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?*, pp. 302-307.

28. Mouw, *He Shines*, p. 84.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

30. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, pp. 134, 135.

31. For a refutation of the postmillennial hope especially of Christian Reconstruction, but also of the expectation of the common grace worldview that it will “Christianize” societies and nations, and a defense of the hope of victory of (Reformed) amillennialism, see David J. Engelsma, *Christ’s Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism* (Redlands, CA: The Reformed Witness, 2001).

32. For a critique of the “real reasons” for the common grace worldview as presented in Mouw’s *He Shines*, see Engelsma, *Common Grace Revisited: A Response to Richard J. Mouw’s He Shines in All That’s Fair*.

33. Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, vol. 2, p. 634. The translation of the Dutch is mine. In his treatment of the covenant with Noah, which Kuyper regarded as one of the main biblical bases of his theory of common grace, if not the main basis in Scripture, Kuyper did not merely distinguish, but separated—compartmentalized—our “spiritual life of our soul” from “our external existence in the world and on earth” (“*het geestelijk leven van onze ziel*” from “*ons uitwendig bestaan in de wereld en op de aarde*”). The former we live by special grace; the latter we live by common grace (*De Gemeene Gratie*, vol. 1, p. 19).

34. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 32, in “The Three Forms of Unity,” p. 19.

35. Abraham Kuyper, “Common Grace,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 176-179.

36. Mouw, *He Shines*, p. 50. In an intriguing theological move, designed to establish a cultural purpose of God independent of His purpose with Jesus Christ, Mouw grounds the purpose of God to develop a godly culture in an infralapsarian arrangement of the divine decrees. On Mouw’s conception of the eternal counsel, Jesus Christ is ignored by God in one of His two great purposes with the creation, the human race, and history. If this were the implication of infralapsarianism, it would be reason to condemn infralapsarianism out of hand. Jesus Christ is first in the counsel of God, however the order of the decrees is viewed.

37. Kuyper, “Common Grace,” p. 183.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 185.

39. The flooding of those circles espousing and promoting the worldview of common grace with the lawlessness of the ungodly world, by virtue of the theory of common grace underlying the worldview, is by this time massive and pervasive. Witness the decadence of Abraham Kuyper’s Free University of Amsterdam, and the death of his Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). I mention several concrete instances in the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in its college, Calvin College, certainly centers of the worldview of common grace. Common grace played a powerful, if not decisive, role in the approval of the evolutionary theory of origins by the Christian Reformed Church in 1991 (see David J. Engelsma, “Creation and Science ... and Common Grace,” the *Standard Bearer*, 67, no. 10, Feb. 15, 1991: 221-223, and no. 11, March 1, 1991: pp. 245-247). Evolutionary theory is lawlessness of thought. Evolutionary theory results in lawlessness, indeed savagery, of behavior. Although the decision of the Christian Reformed Church in 1990 opening the offices of minister and elder to women and rejecting the husband’s headship in marriage did not mention common grace, it was in fact the openness to the world worked by common grace over many years that made feminism irresistibly attractive to that Church. Christian Reformed theologian Harry Boonstra acknowledges in a recent book that Calvin College’s enthusiastic endorsement of the vilest and most violent of Hollywood’s movies as standard fare for its students roots in the college’s common grace worldview. “The college often emphasized the doctrine of common grace, especially in the approach to culture and learning.... One could learn from ... *On the Waterfront* and.... *A Clockwork Orange*” (Harry Boonstra, *Our School: Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, p. 104). In 2002, Calvin College sponsored a concert on campus by the notorious lesbian singing troop, the Indigo Girls. When some complained, the college administration publicly defended the college’s having avowed lesbians crooning to a packed house of students of the virtues and pleasures of lesbian love. The basis of the defense was common grace (see Cathy Guiles, “Calvin Debates Common Grace in Music,” *Calvin College Chimes*, Oct. 4, 2002:3). Prominent Christian Reformed theologian Lewis B. Smedes has publicly urged the Christian Reformed Church to accept and approve “homosexual people who live faithfully in covenanted partnerships,” that is, as Smedes himself put it, homosexual “marriage” (see Lewis B. Smedes, “Like the Wideness of the Sea,” *Perspectives*, May 1999, pp. 8-12). In a book defending homosexual activity and relationships (the foreword of which is a hearty recommendation of the book and its message by Christian Reformed

philosopher and theologian Hendrik Hart), a theologian of what formerly was the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), Pim Pronk, points the way that the Christian Reformed Church will likely follow in approving homosexual “committed relations.” This way is the grounding of the decision of the goodness of homosexual relations, not on the Bible, but on “general revelation.” This is the way the Christian Reformed Church has already gone in its decisions approving theistic evolution and women in church office with the concomitant denial of the headship of the husband in marriage. And “general revelation” in these contexts is the code phrase for the latest thinking and behavior of ungodly society, which thinking and behavior are attributed to the gracious working of God in the world of the ungodly, that is, common grace (Pim Pronk, *Against Nature? Types of Moral Argumentation regarding Homosexuality*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993, especially pp. 265-325).

40. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 206-229.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-205.

42. For Bavinck’s significant contribution to the worldview of common grace, see Herman Bavinck, *De Algemeene Genade* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans-Sevensma, n.d.). The work has been translated into English by Raymond C. Van Leeuwen in the *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (April 1989):38-65.

43. James D. Bratt, “The Dutch Schools,” in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 146. Bratt’s description both of the antithesis and of the theory of culture-building common grace is accurate.

44. William D. Dennison, “Dutch Neo-Calvinism and the Roots for Transformation: An Introductory Essay,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 2 (June 1999): 284.

45. Sean Michael Lucas, “Southern-Fried Kuyper? Robert Lewis Dabney, Abraham Kuyper, and the Limitations of Public Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 198, 199. Lucas illustrates his charge against neo-Calvinism’s common grace worldview from the now defunct magazine, the *Reformed Journal*. The list of causes by which that group thought to “Christianize” North America is a brief for the platform of the far left wing of the Democratic party.

46. *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, ed. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1995). Shrewdly, Colson appeals to Abraham Kuyper’s politico-religious alliance with Roman Catholics to “Christianize” the Netherlands in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: “Kuyper forged a coalition of fellow Calvinists and Dutch Roman Catholics led by Hermanus Schaeppman. Together, they helped bring moral and social reform to the Netherlands” (p. 39).

47. Hendrik Hart, “Foreword,” in Pim Pronk, *Against Nature?*, pp. vii-xxi.

48. Cited in William D. Dennison, “Dutch Neo-Calvinism and the Roots for Transformation,” p. 287.

49. For the doctrine of marriage that is basic to the traditional Christian worldview, see David J. Engelsma, *Marriage, the Mystery of Christ & the Church: The Covenant-Bond in Scripture and History*, rev.ed. (Grandville, MI:RFPA, 1998).

50. A treatment of the chief cultural calling of the Christian woman that does not run scared before the feminist furies of our day, but fears Him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell is *Far Above Rubies: Today’s Virtuous Woman*, ed. Herman Hanko (Grand Rapids: RFPA, 1992).

51. The importance of truly Reformed education in good Christian schools is developed in David J. Engelsma, *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*, rev. ed. (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 2000). Chapter 3 is titled, “Reformed Education and Culture.”

52. Kuyper, “Common Grace,” pp. 180, 181.

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