

## Correspondence

**From: Mr. H.C.Mullin, Glasgow.**  
Sir,

Years ago I bought a startling book. It was published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and was entitled: **The Forgotten Spurgeon**. In its pages I read how a Christian book publisher: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, had brought out some books by Charles Spurgeon; but had quite willfully deleted from these books doctrines that were the very essence of Spurgeon's belief system. I thought such conduct reprehensible.

Reading Issue No. 12 of your fine wee mag., "British Reformed Journal", I now discover that the Banner of Truth had adopted the very same practise with their publication of Arthur Pink's book, "The Sovereignty of God". You inform us that they left out a whole chapter on the solemn doctrine of "Reprobation".

If it was wrong for Marshall, Morgan, and Scott to cut out bits of Spurgeon's books because the publishers disagreed with his theology, it cannot be right for the Banner of Truth to do the same with Pink's book, now can it? Are we not fully entitled to read exactly what Pink believed and taught for ourselves, without some theologically correct censor deleting parts he does not like, or which he thinks we might have difficulty understanding? I certainly think so.

I've read lots of Pink's material, his commentaries on "Genesis", "Exodus", "Joshua", "The Life of David", "Elijah", "Hebrews", plus "The Satisfaction of Christ" and lots of other pamphlet sized books. I think him to be one of the most excellent commentators I have ever read (and that includes Calvin, Owen, and Spurgeon). One can see him altering some areas of his doctrinal stance over the years after further study, especially in relation to prophecy. He was not ashamed to say that he had held wrong beliefs, either.

Nevertheless, I honestly cannot ever recall in all the writings of Pink I have read, that he rejected the doctrine of reprobation. I am truly disappointed that the Banner people deprived me all these years from learning that Pink had a whole essay on reprobation excised from his "Sovereignty of God". Will the "British Reformed

Journal" now print a pamphlet entitled, "The Forgotten Pink"? If so, I would like to order a copy in advance.

I am, Sir, H.C.Mullin

**Editor's response:** We shall look into this matter of publishing a pamphlet as Mr. Mullin has suggested. Readers should note that the full "un-doctored" version of Pink's book is available from:

**Great Christian Books**  
**229 South Bridge Street**  
**P.O. Box 8000**  
**Elkton MD 21922-8000**  
**U.S.A.**

Make sure you specify the **BAKER unabridged** edition !{About £15 incl.p.& p.]

**From : Mr. Mark Punford**  
**Shrewsbury, Shropshire.**

Dear Chairman, Editor, Pastor Hanko, and officers of the Committee,

I have long wanted to write to you regarding certain questions and puzzles I have been hoping the Lord would eventually resolve for me; questions surrounding issues connected with the general theme of 'Common grace'.

Long ago now, I became convinced of the putative truth of the doctrines of Common Grace by way of the writings of Cornelius Van Til - because, however, this conviction was intellectual largely, rather than a deep devotional conviction in this area, I felt I had, out of honesty, to re-view and think the issues through in the light of the claims of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, and the comparable claims of the British Reformed, and Covenant Reformed Fellowships, respectively.

When I first accepted Common grace as a true doctrine, I was unaware of the Three Points of Common Grace as distinct doctrines, and was also unaware of the history and the debate betwixt the Christian Reformed Church in Holland and the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, and the parallel debates within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America. I simply found the 'Van Tillian' explication of the Christian Version of Mystery acceptable, including its application to the doctrine of the "well-meant offer of the Gospel".

I have recently acquired a copy of "Hyper-

## Correspondence

Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel" by Professor Engelsma, which work finally convinced me of the falsity of the doctrine of the "well-meant offer of the Gospel", (in spite of my not having been thus convinced by the various tapes which I had previously heard on the subject as put out by the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of N. Ireland). Whilst this book did the trick with regard to the 'well-meant offer', I remain as yet unconvinced of the truth of the doctrine of the "Serious Call of the Gospel", it seems to me that an effectual Call and Irresistible Grace toward the elect precludes the possibility of an ineffectual Call and Resisted non-grace to the Reprobate Wicked. In this matter, I feel the early Strict Baptists and Huntingtonians are correct.

Howbeit, I am glad to have been enlightened by the PRC and the BRF with respect to the doctrine of the 'well-meant offer', which I now agree is incorrect; nevertheless, there are other aspects of the doctrines of Common Grace which I am still disposed to retain, though not without a genuine openness to the Holy Ghost with regard to these tendencies being changed by Him in me. I should be glad for the opinions of the BRF with regard to these other aspects which I hope to make reasonably clear in the following paragraphs: It may also help us all, under God, to be open in these areas for further light upon the Sacred page with respect to them, and I hope everyone at the BRF will be open to adjust any possible errors in the details of their own position, just as I am open to changing my views as well, as God may lead.

It does seem to me that Scripture teaches, if not a Common Grace exactly, at least a Common-Mercy toward all, in as much as God sends His rain, Sun, etc. on both the just and the Unjust; it further seems to me that this mercy cannot exclude all possible modes of compassion, though, to be sure, it is not that love which God feels toward His elect - but is it not love as we commonly use the term as Christians, with reference to impartial compassion?

To claim that this mercy is only objective, and not a mercy and actual compassion in God, seems to me a bit hard to swallow, (simply because implausible.) On the other hand, I freely admit that I don't know how a justly angry God who eternally hates the Reprobate wicked could find grounds for loving them contemporaneously in some

sense, outside of the saving basis for love in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for the elect alone, since His just character cannot allow Him to love that which is wholly under His wrath - I certainly don't apprehend the logical basis for such a love, but there seems much apparent Scriptural basis for it, in, for example, the compassion of our Saviour toward the hungry multitudes which followed Him, which could surely not be a merely human compassion, since one can't separate His Divinity and His humanity out from His incarnated nature in action, so to speak. Also what would be your explanation for "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" etc. and similar Scriptures?

I find it hard to entirely reject the Kuyperian Version of Common Grace, since I don't know how to explain the fact, apart from it's concept, that the non-Christian doth oftentimes create that which is to be admired in terms of civic outward righteousness, albeit from ultimately corrupt motives, such as hospitals, baroque music, pleasant architecture, compassionate deeds etc..which his depravity ought, when worked out to its logical culmination, to exclude - surely fear of punishment cannot be the only restraining factor at work? I certainly wouldn't personally equate any restraining action with that consciously Supernatural work which the Christian finds himself conscious - but surely *something* is happening here?

I do admit that the use to which Kuyperian common-grace has been put, as a doctrine, by many of the Neo-Dooyeweerdians in their plea for what they call a "Reformed World-and-Life View" has had both licentious motives, and consequences, way beyond Kuyper's original intentions, and that they often deny that limited atonement to which he faithfully held.

Returning to a former point, why would our Heavenly Father ask us to be as merciful as Himself, if His own Mercy were not even as great as that required of us? by which, I mean, why would He request us to love our enemies if he did not in any sense, love them himself?

I do feel the BRF are rationalistic in some ways, rather than rational, the claim that Van Til & Co. are Barthians in disguise is not really credible - in fact it is not even remotely convincing to anyone at all sympathetic to Van Til-I personally rate Van Til very highly, as a philosopher, he was far more profound

a thinker than Gordon Clark, and I am somewhat astonished to see Clark apparently held up by the BRF as a paradigm of their position.

If the BRF follow Clark too closely, it is no wonder that you come over as being rationalistic - Van Til was in fact, a formidable critic of Barthianism, and his concept of paradox bears no resemblance, in my view, to that espoused by Karl Barth. (I hope you won't take this personally).

I await the Van-Til Clark Controversy book with eagerness. Meanwhile, I hope you will feel able to publish this letter, and to proffer your own responses to it for the prayerful interest of us all.

Yours, for His Sake, **Mark Punford.**

**Editor's response:** May I commend Mr. Punford for his diligent and candid researches. I would encourage him to persevere in this vein patiently. We plan (DV) in-depth future articles on these issues. But herewith some brief responses, with apologies for the terse brevity due to space restrictions.

We believe that the Gospel is the Promiscuous Proclamation of a Particular Promise, with a command to "all men everywhere to repent"[Acts 17:30], and that it should be preached to "every creature"[Mark 16 : 15]. The fact that the non-elect are unable to repent and believe in no way excuses them or eviscerates the Divine command, as their inability they took on themselves voluntarily in Adam.

Concerning "common-grace" [all '57 varieties of it!], we recommend Professor Hanko's articles in the PRC Theological Journal over the last few years for clarification in this area. We do not deny that God "long-suffers" over the reprobate, (Romans 9 : 22), but this St. Paul expressly says is "that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy"(Romans 9 : 23), the latter being of course, initially the earthly offspring of the reprobate former. Neither do we deny that God "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked", (Ezekiel 18 : 23), but note that the prophet goes on to say that God's pleasure is found in the wicked's repentance. We commend Calvin's exegesis of this passage. The sending of rain etc. on the reprobate is a matter of God's benevolence to maintain the race, without which it could not produce His elect. When God gives these good things to the reprobate

whom He has predestined to destruction, He knows that their rejection of His person will aggravate their guilt even further, so it is somewhat difficult to see this action as one of 'grace'. Judas, after three blessed years with the Lord, and granted by the Lord the gift of healing, heaped up on himself worse wrath as a result, and the scripture says of him "good were it for that man if he had never been born" [Mark 14 : 21]. Could it have been 'grace' that lay behind those very privileges that damned him all the worse? Or was it the Glory of the Divine Jurisprudence?

Likewise, the "works of civic righteousness" and "works of the arts" produced by reprobate man are nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as anything more than human skills. The Kuyperian view requires us to see the Holy Ghost operating in restraint and creative inspiration on the inner souls of cultural "greats" like the opium addict Coleridge, or the philandering Liszt, and many others tainted even with sodomy [ Cf. Romans ch.1]. It is no more common grace for, say, a reprobate woman to fiercely protect, love, and nurture her children [as, surprisingly, even many prostitutes do] than it is for a she-bear to do the same for her cubs. It is simply part of their created nature, nothing to do with any "grace". Again, it is gratuitous to imagine that without an inward restraint of the Holy Ghost human nature would *necessarily* erupt into some less-than-human beastliness, for the Scripture reminds us, that Satan himself is "transformed into an angel of light" and "his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" [2 Cor. 11 : 14-15]. It would take a great stretch of credulity to believe that all that was "common grace" ! Divine abandonment often co-exists with the highest levels of culture, witness the homo-sexual ancient Greeks ! Witness our culture now!

God commands us to "love our enemies" in the sense of manifesting justice and kindness to them, not of "affection". And we are told in this respect that doing good to our enemies will "**heap coals of fire**" on their heads! and that while *we* are to love them, *God takes vengeance upon them* ! (Cf. Romans 12 : 19-21). Vengeance is **appropriate to Him** as God, whereas, loving them is **appropriate to us** as creatures redeemed by grace alone!

Concerning the 'profound' Van Til, profundity is of itself no guarantee of accuracy, if it was, we should all *have* to follow atheists like  
*Continued on bottom of page 42.....*

men crept in unawares" (cf. Acts 15:24f & Gal. 2:3-10).

Jude accuses those hyper-independent individualists as having "gone in the way of Cain" — rather than having stayed in the good way of the **Presbyter** Abel (ver. 11 cf. Heb. 11:2-4). He even compares them with the unruly ante diluvians — who were preached against by **Presbyters** like Enoch and Noah (ver. 14 cf. Heb. 11:2-7 & II Pet. 2:1-5f). Finally, Jude urges his addressees to heed the words previously spoken by the **apostolic Elders** (verse 17f cf. Acts 15:4f & 15:13f & 15:23f).

Owen says (XXII:37) that the pre-Mosaic independent hyper-individualists mentioned "in Jude 7... 'are set forth for an example'...of what would be God's dealing with provoking sinners at the last day." Indeed, the great Congregationalist Theologian even refers to "the Socinians" alias the hyperindividualistic anti-trinitarian Unitarians. "Many things concerning God and his essential properties" such as His **Tri-unity**, explains Owen (I:87), "they have greatly perverted. So is that fulfilled in them which was spoken by Jude."

To this, we ourselves would only add that once people depart into Independency from connectional Presbyteries reflecting the Triune God Himself as the Ultimate Trinity — it is usually not very long before those Independents further lapse into at least a 'High Arianism.' That curtails the full co-importance of the Second Person, and also especially the Third Person, within the Ultimate Presbytery of the Holy Trinity.

It also undercuts the full deity even of the First Person Himself — by leaving Him, from all eternity, as a 'non-Father' bereft of the filial companionship of a Co-eternal Son and devoid of the perpetual fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in the very long run, Orthodox Trinitarianism and Orthodox Presbyterianism stand or fall together.

*To be concluded (DV).*

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## Correspondence..... continued from page 48.

Russell, and Wittgenstein, etc., whose works leave Van Til out of sight for sheer profundity! Also Van Til's work was built on the exegesis of others like John Murray, such that he admitted that "the lack of detailed scriptural exegesis is a lack in *all* of my writings"!!!! & emph. H.W.] and "I have no excuse for this" [! Jerusalem & Athens p.203]. This dependence on others means that as *their* exegesis totters over common grace etc., so his profound edifice of thought totters in sympathy. Van Til is also internally self contradictory and enigmatic, so difficult to understand that even his best student and authority on his work today, Prof. John Frame frankly admits this, "like any human thinker, he is fallible" and notes that Van Til said : "all teaching of Scripture is appar-

ently contradictory".[!!!] An evident failure here to discriminate between paradox and contradiction landed Van Til squarely in the same neo-Hegelian quagmire as Barth, *and Brunner*, this latter who could *also*, like Van Til, **rampantly oppose Barth** from within this *same* epistemological milieu but for different reasons! By contrast, Gordon Clark was an able exegete and commentator, and an excellent teacher able like all good teachers to express profundities in simple terms. With deepest respects, we do not regard him as a "rationalist", rather we regard Van Til as an "irrationalist", or a "contradictionalist"! But we do not hold out Clark, or any other man, including Calvin, as being an infallible "paradigm", **only the Lord Christ** can fulfill that role. (Cf. Matt. 23 vv. 8 - 10).