

# COMMON GRACE AND THE ANTITHESIS

VAN TIL'S  
DOCTRINE OF  
COMMON GRACE

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# Van Til's Doctrine of Common Grace

Dr. Lane G. Tipton teaches a groundbreaking course on the doctrine of common grace in the theology Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987), a pioneer in a distinctly Reformed approach to defending the faith.

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**UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**



## UNDERSTAND

Van Til's unique contributions to the Reformed doctrine of common grace.



## APPLY

Van Til's doctrine of common grace to his doctrines of a philosophy of history, image of God, the testimony of the Spirit, total depravity, and fearless anthropomorphism.



## ANALYZE

Van Til's approach in relation to traditional Roman Catholic theology and clarify how he sought to reform the doctrine of common grace in the service of consistent Calvinism.



## EVALUATE

Van Til's doctrine of common grace within the broader reformed tradition from Calvin to Vos.



## PURPOSE

This course is designed to enable students to understand and express the Reformed doctrine of common grace and the antithesis between the believer and the unbeliever in light of the theology of Cornelius Van Til. Topics include the historical background of the doctrine of common grace, the nature of sin in relation to common grace, the general witness of the Spirit to the truth of natural revelation, the concrete line of positive thinking, the Reformed philosophy of history, and fearless anthropomorphism.

## EXPECTATIONS

### Disciplined Engagement

The lecture material and the reading are designed to overlap. You will be reading material covered in the lecture, and this should maximize the efficiency of your reading, and provide a context to construct critical questions and suggest creative theological solutions. While the format prohibits questions during lecture, the cohort will allow for wide-ranging theological discussion.

### Reading

The student is expected ideally to have finished all reading before watching the lectures. Emphasis in all courses is placed on reading primary sources. As already indicated, the readings will overlap with the lecture material, so that the reading is indispensable in order for full engagement with the lecture. The reading assignments are minimal in length in order to provide opportunity for in-depth reflection on the material.

### Self-Assessment

Eight quizzes have been designed to reinforce the main points of each lesson and to aid the student in self-assessment. Please complete each quiz and review any weak areas before advancing to the next section.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Section I: Introduction and Overview of Basic Issues

1. Common Grace in Reformed Theology

### Section II: The Holy Spirit, Natural Revelation, and Common Grace

2. The Non-Saving Witness of the Holy Spirit
3. The “New Relation” after the Fall and the Antithesis

### Section III: The Holy Spirit, Natural Revelation, and Common Grace

4. The Ontological Trinity as Concrete Universal
5. The Eternal Decree and the Historical Work of Creation and Special Providence
6. Earlier and Later Grace
7. Common Grace and the Preaching of the Gospel

### Section IV: Common Grace and Fearless Anthropomorphism

8. Fearless Pantheism in Contemporary Scholarship

## READING SCHEDULE

Week	Assigned Edition	Other Editions
1. Common Grace in Reformed Theology	Bahnsen, <i>Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis</i> , 405–460.	
	Bavinck, <i>Reformed Dogmatics</i> , 3:25–157.	
	Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (ed. McNeill), 1:241–348	Any edition of <i>Institutes</i> , II.I–VI (Book Two, Chapters 1–6).
	Hodge, <i>The Confession of Faith</i> , 105–119.	
	Van Til, <i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> , 14–22	<i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> (2nd ed.), 20–30.
	Vos, <i>Reformed Dogmatics</i> , 2:11–76.	
2. The Non-Saving Witness of the Holy Spirit	Murray, <i>Collected Writings</i> , 2:93–122.	
	Murray, <i>Collected Writings</i> , 4:113–132.	
	Van Til, <i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> , 23–58.	<i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> (2nd ed.), 31–72.
3. The "New Relation" after the Fall and the Antithesis	Kline, <i>Kingdom Prologue</i> , 8–13, 128–154.	
	Van Til, <i>The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought</i> , 1–105.	
4. The Ontological Trinity as Concrete Universal	Frame, <i>Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought</i> , 51–78.	
	Tipton, <i>The Trinitarian Thought of Cornelius Van Til</i> , 57–86, 131–158.	
	Cornelius Van Til, <i>The Defense of the Faith</i> (1st ed.), 23–39.	<i>The Defense of the Faith</i> (3rd ed.), 7–22; (4th ed.), 27–44.
5. The Eternal Decree and Historical Work of Creation and Special Providence	Vos, <i>Reformed Dogmatics</i> , 1:77–156.	
	Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in <i>Redemptive History</i> , 234–270.	
6. Earlier and Later Grace	Van Til, <i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> , 99–125, 148–233.	<i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> (2nd ed.), 117–144, 169–265.
	Frame, <i>Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought</i> , 187–240.	
7. Common Grace and the Preaching of the Gospel	Van Til, <i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> , 126–147.	<i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> (2nd ed.), 145–168.
	Frame, <i>Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought</i> , 423–445.	
8. Fearless Pantheism in Contemporary Scholarship	Oliphint, "Foreword," in <i>Common Grace and the Gospel</i> , 2nd ed., vii–xliv.	
	Tipton, <i>The Trinitarian Thought of Cornelius Van Til</i> , 23–56.	
	Tipton, "Locating the Mystery," <i>Confessional Presbyterian Journal</i> 17 (2021): 17–22.	<a href="#">"Locating the Mystery: Bavinck and Van Til on Immutability and Anthropomorphism."</a>

## READING LIST

- Bahnsen, Greg L. *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998), 405–460.
- Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 25–157.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 1:241–348.
- Frame, John M. *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995 (51–78, 187–238, 423–443).
- Hodge, A. A. *The Confession of Faith* (London: Banner of Truth, 1958), 105–119.
- Kline, Meredith G. *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 8–13, 128–154.
- Murray, John. “Common Grace.” In *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2, *Select Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 93–122.
- . “The Free Offer of the Gospel.” In *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 4, *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 113–132.
- Oliphint, K. Scott. “Foreword.” In *Common Grace and the Gospel*, by Cornelius Van Til, ed. K. Scott Oliphint, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), vii–xliv.
- Tipton, Lane G. “Locating the Mystery: Bavinck and Van Til on Immutability and Anthropomorphism.” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 17 (2021): 17–22.
- . *The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til* (Libertyville, IL: Reformed Forum, 2022), 23–86, 131–158.
- Van Til, Cornelius. *Common Grace and the Gospel*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972), 14–58, 99–233.
- . *The Defense of the Faith*. 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1955), 23–39.
- . *The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 1–105.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Theology Proper*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 77–156.
- . *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Anthropology*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 11–76.
- . “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology.” In *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B Gaffin Jr (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 234–267.



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